
The Story of the Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze

From Donatella Lippi, *Associazionismo femminile fra Ottocento e Novecento. La storia del Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze*, in *Rassegna Storica Toscana*, 2016/2, a. 62, pp. 189-224. Freely translated and adapted by Diana Panconesi Sears

Today witnesses the opening of the very first mixed and international Congress comprised of individuals of both sexes and from all nations. The object of this Congress is to study from the triple point of view of conscience, science and reason, the question of Women's Rights. I say Rights, because that is our aim.*

These words, spoken by "Maria Deraismes (1828-1894), essayist and journalist, passionate orator, republican and founder with Léon Richer of one of the first French women's associations (*Association pour le Droit de la Femme*) at the opening of the *Congrès International de Droit des Femmes* (Paris, 1878, coinciding with the great exposition), mark the passage from individual national movements for the civil and legal equality of women to an international movement."¹

The choice of the American Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), abolitionist and active supporter of women's suffrage and the foremost figure in the emancipation movement at the time, as President of the Congress assigned worldwide importance to the event.²

The process had started some time before. In fact the reasons for the emancipation of women had already been discussed at the founding assembly of the *Association internationale des femmes* (IAW - International Association of Women) founded by Maria Goegg of Geneva, Switzerland in connection with her activities in the International Peace and Freedom League³ (IPFL) just before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War.

There were many connections between the IAW and the IPFL and their active members, and they shared a common political background and ideals: the emancipation and rights of women, the unrealized, undelivered inheritance of the democratic principles of the French revolution, with emphasis, in regard to the congress of 1878, on civil rather than political rights.⁴ Then in 1888 at the congress of the National Woman's Suffrage Association (founded in 1869) the International Council of Women (IWC) was formally established. American historians consider the latter the true beginning of an effective international movement with structured programs and deadlines.⁵

The practically contemporaneous foundation of associations and movements indicates the realization in the 1870s of a female internationalism based on recognition of the need to establish relationships between the associations and movements that shared

* Original quote: Aujourd'hui s'ouvre, pour la première fois, un Congrès international et mixte, c'est-à-dire composé d'individus des deux sexes et des toutes les nations. Ce Congrès a pour objet d'étudier au triple point de vue de la conscience, de la science et de la raison, la question du Droit des Femmes. Je dit Droit, car obtenir le Droit est le but que nous poursuivons.

¹ E. GUERRA, *L'Associazionismo internazionale delle donne tra diritti, democrazia, politiche di pace 1888-1939*. Doctoral thesis M-STO/04, Università degli Studi della Tuscia di Viterbo, Tutor Leonardo Rapone, XXIV ciclo, p. 12 (http://dspace.unitus.it/bitstream/2067/2468/1/eguerra_tesid.pdf).

² See L. KLEJMAN, C. ROCHEFORT. *L'Égalité en marche. Le féminisme sous la Troisième République*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1989.

³ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 12

⁴ See A. ANTEGHINI, *Parità, pace, libertà: Maria Goegg e André Léo nell'associazionismo femminile del secondo Ottocento*, Genoa, NAME Ed., 1998.

⁵ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 13

the same objectives albeit in different national contexts.⁶ The international associations were founded in different ways and at different times. Some were the result of unification of different local movements, others were newly founded movements. In any case, all were the result of the new economic processes related to market expansion and development of better communications, and they all reflected a strong desire for open discussion at a time when the horizons of the workers' world were widening thanks to easier travel and emigration.

The international expositions played a fundamental role in this new reality; they created occasions for people to meet and debate. The two decades around the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries witnessed the establishment of almost 40 publicly recognized women's organizations, mostly in the 20 years before World War I, and more than 100 private organizations.⁷

That is the background. Two different paths proceeded from there on, one originating in France and the other in the United States; both touched on England forming a triangle of international women's associations which also included the Lyceum Club. The phenomenon of women's associations was due to a variety of circumstances: personal and political exchanges and relationships that originated with participation in other movements already present on the international scene, including those advocating moral reform such as alcohol prohibition; the abolition of legalized prostitution and the male- female double standard; the forerunners of socialism; the activities of the lay and religious peace movements that evolved in Europe after the end of the Napoleonic wars; the increase in tourism and travel; and the greater and faster circulation of literary works and exchange of ideas.⁸

Nor should we ignore the Theosophical Society's influence on the formation of apolitical women's organizations in the early period of feminism, partly a result of Anglosaxon spiritualism, some of which are active still today. It was not mere chance that the first international congress for the rights of women (Paris, 1878) was held in the hall of the Grand Orient of France and organized by Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer, the founders of the first Masonic lodge that accepted women. The strong spiritualist vein evident in the declarations of the emancipation movements around the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century confirms this influence. There was an idealization of the society of the future: not only would it include women's rights, but it would be a morally regenerated society thanks to female spirituality.⁹

Meantime, various interesting methods of association were realized in the different individual national and international contexts. Rotary was established in the United States in 1905. It was one of the first service organizations, formed to offer a meeting place and to encourage friendships among professionals from different sectors. It later became an international service club (1922, Rotary International), but membership was open to men only until 1989. The English general Robert Baden Powell founded the Boy Scouts in 1907, a lay movement for children, aimed at educating youngsters to teamwork and the respect of nature. The first Soroptomist Club was established in 1921 in California, and then in 1928 in Italy. The members were emancipated, avant-garde women who joined together to promote the spirit of service as the basis of good deeds and assist members in the realization of their various professional objectives, through involvement in the social and civic affairs of the community.¹⁰

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See F.S.I. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe 1815-1914*, Leyden. A.W. Sythoff, 1963, p.14.

⁸ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 14

⁹ L. SCARAFFIA, A.M. ISASTIA, *Donne ottimiste. Femminismo e associazioni borghesi nell'Otto e Novecento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2002, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The symbols, the liturgy of the meetings, and the uniform (of the Scouts) are some of the many ties between the various movements and the Masonic and theosophical cultures in which they were rooted, ties which have now been forgotten and have left few traces.¹¹

All these organizations were non-confessional and apolitical and aimed to transmit Western progressive life styles in which one of the main issues was transforming the role of women. These are the reasons why, in addition to the connections with their remote origins, the Roman Catholic Church looked on such movements with suspicion. Referring specifically to women's organizations Pope Leone XIII, in his letter of December 8, 1892 addressed to the Italian people, invited women to be extremely cautious regarding involvement with philanthropic societies, unless they were well aware of the nature or aims. He advised that women get knowledgeable counsel regarding the aims and nature of these societies from wise, experienced persons before joining them, because the "passport" to Masonry was often that of pompous, chatty philanthropy, in place of Christian charity.¹²

The International Council meeting in London

The years between the first international congresses and the beginning of WWI were a period of particular ferment in the evolution and expansion of women's movements. Adverse reactions to the phenomenon developed and became "an integral part of the nationalist and authoritarian political cultures of the 20th century."¹³

Many publications of the period were titled the "new woman." She was a "modern figure", the protagonist of a variety of literary works, many satirical, in the ambit of all the media of the time, newspapers, theater, advertising, cinema.¹⁴ Women, alone and in groups, aware of their belonging to the same sex and with the common bond of criticism toward institutions wanted and established by males only, felt and exercised their commitment "to raise the level of 'civilization,' by realizing a network of higher levels of living together as human beings."¹⁵ This plurality of methods and influences, due also to the great transformation taking place in society in these decades, meant that there was dialectic within the women's movement. The dialectic became evident at the second 5th year meeting of the International Council of Women, which is important for understanding the context of the founding of the Lyceum Club in London in 1904.¹⁶

The International Council of Women's 1899 meeting in London was the organization's first meeting in Europe, giving proof of the structure that the movement had achieved, thanks above all to the efforts of the American (USA) women who had promoted a meeting in Washington in March-April 1888, and then a second meeting in 1893 in

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Inimica vis. Lettera del Santissimo Nostro Leone Papa XIII al popolo italiano*, 8 dicembre 1892, "La Civiltà cattolica", XLIV, 1893, V della serie XV, p. 12.

¹³ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁴ Ivi, p. 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Chicago where they elected an Executive Committee to organize the next meeting in Europe, under the presidency of Ishbel Aberdeen, a liberal minded British aristocrat.¹⁷ The meeting had a dual purpose. It was both the regular meeting for the members of the Council and a large international congress "open to diverse contributions and articulated in sessions dedicated to the most important questions regarding the presence of women in a world undergoing rapid change. [Thus, the meeting] represented the synthesis of the preceding paths in the United States and France and introduced the fundamental role of the representatives from Great Britain and the delegates from other important European countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Austria."¹⁸

The London meeting was animated by discussion and debate on topics important also to the emancipation movement on both sides of the Atlantic, such as what position to take in regard to the anti-war movements and on women's suffrage, with the opposing positions of the moderate current and the radical suffragettes. It was a grand occasion for visibility and led to important developments. The proceedings were conducted solemnly in the presence of numerous representatives from different countries, some appointed by their governments (such as Maria Montessori of Italy), others on behalf of associations or institutions such as the *Bureau International Permanent de la Paix*. The official presentations were mostly by English and American (USA) speakers. There were also many important talks on nursing, journalism, art, and other professions¹⁹ by representatives from New South Wales in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and The Netherlands as well as discourses by both men and women in the various sections dealing with education, social life, and politics, the latter certainly the hottest topic of all.

Ishbel Aberdeen opened the proceedings with a speech appealing for caution regarding politics while recognizing the positive aspects of the variety of positions due to differences of opinion and nationality. She considered this the very reason behind the association, a vision of unity that did not lie "in identity of organization or in identity of dogma, but in a common consecration to the service of humanity in the spirit of that love which we hail as the greatest thing in the world."²⁰ At the same time, the aristocratic MS Aberdeen emphasized that the there united international association must be the reference point for female workers of all races, creeds, classes and political opinions who were united in the desire to contribute to making the world a better place, but without excluding collaboration with men of goodwill. She was proposing a balance between the two "halves of the world:" the intent was to overcome the dichotomy between the sexes in the traditional social and familial hierarchy without revolutionary leaps ahead, but rather in a spirit of collaboration wherein women would both continue their domestic, family roles and actively share reciprocally recognized responsibility with men. The realization of this spirit would center around the family unit, and thus become the foundation of the true concept of Nation, in a patriotic sense and according to a vision that could then be extended to all humanity. It would be a red thread passing through civilized community living, beginning with the role of parents, on to that of the citizens of individual countries - men and women - and to the

¹⁷ See International Council of Women, *Women in a Changing World: the Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women Since 1888*, London, Routledge & Keagan, 1966.

¹⁸ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁹ See *Women in Professions Being the Professional Section of the International Congress of Women, London, July 1899*, T.F. Unwin, 1900.

²⁰ I. Aberdeen, cited in E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

protagonists of the two sexes who agreed on making the world better, because "That is the future for which we are met here to work. May God be with us."²¹

Thus, the International Council of Women was an organization that wanted to be the interpreter of all women²² whose mission was essentially ethical-moral, with a vision in which Christian principles, in moderate terms, were united with the principle of recognition of natural birthrights, and international spirit was carefully balanced with "patriotic" sentiment. Although the IWC addressed all women without distinction of creed, race or class, it was welcomed in Europe mostly by "prominent women," due to their social positions, family relationships, or professional situations.²³ Many of the topics discussed at the London meeting had already come to the attention and even sensitized the varied community of organized women, that included a constant flow of newcomers. The debates were rich, touching on professions, domestic matters, new habits, transformations, factory work and regulations protecting female workers, early forms of social security, and women's unions. There were also new themes. The abundant acts of the Council evidence the perception and auto-representation that the *élites* active in the movement were passing on to the 20th century. It was vigorous, responsible auto-representation that went beyond the effective weight the movement had on public opinion, but it presented itself as promising and witnessed the incidence of women's activism on the social fabric. The female protagonists had already shown their ability to modify customs that were still inveterate only a few years before and impose a modern image of womanhood.

As mentioned, however, two particular moments were of particular political importance and destined to give fruits in the first years of the 20th century. On one hand at the Council's London meeting a women/peace rapport became manifest, played out through rhetoric, to justify the choice of intervening in that sphere of international politics that had always been a male domain. On the other, the theme of woman's suffrage was further developed, thanks to a new group of emancipationists who were more markedly feminist. This led to the founding in 1904 in Berlin of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) with the aim "to secure the enfranchisement of the women of all nations, and to unite the friends of women suffrage throughout the world in organized co-operation and fraternal helpfulness."²⁴

The IWSA, founded in tandem with the 1904 IWC meeting (held every 5 years), followed certain organizational methods of the latter, including the periodic congresses. By the time of the meeting in Copenhagen in 1906 the structure of the IWSA was outlined and the objective was women's vote in the various countries, how to obtain it and realize electoral law reform, particularly complex in countries where class or social status was a discriminating factor. The socialists tended to favor overcoming class discrimination, but in the 1908 congress in Amsterdam the prevalent line was to support obtaining voting rights for women, but not necessarily universal suffrage, to affirm at least the fact of *female citizenship*. These two different positions evidenced the division between the democratic

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ivi*, p. 26.

²³ See L.J. RUPP, *Worlds of Women. The Making of an International Women's Movement*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 35ff.

²⁴ E. GUERRA, *op. cit.*, p. 38. Citing from: *Constitution of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance* adopted in Berlin, Germany, June 3 and 4,

1904, in: THE INTERNATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE ALLIANCE, Report Second and Third Conferences of the International Woman Alliance, Copenhagen, Bianco Luno, 1906, p.116.

and politically aligned participants and those with a gender based objective who remained equidistant from all political factions in order to guarantee the cohesion of the women's associations. There were consequences, however. The following year in London the Congress "had to deal with the division within the British suffrage movement between the *constitutionals* [...] and the *militants* [...] who in 1903 had founded the radical Women's Social and Political Union, destined to remain in "the sphere of Fraternal Association but without voting rights because the regulations specified that only one national association per country could be represented in the Alliance."²⁵ Despite the split the IWSA remained quite strong; it comprised about twenty associations with varied political tendencies and from various countries with very different political systems, including some under Hapsburg rule where women overcame certain legal impediments (women were forbidden to join political associations) thanks to special privileges regarding the Statutes of the Association.²⁶

The London Lyceum

The context in which the Lyceum was founded, the city of London with its already numerous separate clubs and meeting places for men or women,²⁷ is well illustrated in an essay by Grace Brockington²⁸. The Lyceum Club was founded in 1904 by Constance Smedley, an intellectual who with the collaboration of her father and her husband, wanted to create a network of places where women could meet.²⁹ Ms Brockington reminds us that an advertisement placed in the 1910 edition of The Englishwoman's Year-book outlined the characteristics that distinguished the Lyceum Club from other women's clubs.³⁰ It was not intended to be an elite club. The main characteristic was to support women in the exercise of their professions. Other peculiarities were the establishment of a permanent art gallery and a network of clubhouses throughout Europe.³¹ The advertisement continued pointing out the aims of the Lyceum: "to establish centres of intellectual and artistic life [worldwide...] to promote interchange and thought between the cultured women of all nations."³²

Constance Smedley (Birmingham, England, 1876-West Wycombe, 1941) was the daughter of a wealthy businessman; her mother was well educated and had been decorated by the French government for her activities in promoting French-English relations.³³ After her studies at the Birmingham School of Art Constance dedicated herself

²⁵ E. GUERRA, *op.cit.*, pag 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See S.E. BRAINE, *London's Clubs for Women*, in: *Living London*, Ed. G.R. SIMS, London, Cassell & Co., 1906, pp. 114, 118 and *Dictionary of British Women's Organizations 1825-1960* (Eds. D. DOUGHAN, P. GORDON), London, Woburn Press, 2001, p. 5

²⁸ G.E. BROCKINGTON, "A World Fellowship. The Founding of the International Lyceum Club for Women Artists and Writers," *Transnational Associations. The Review of the Union of International Association*, 1, 2005, pp. 15-22 (https://www.uia.org/sites/uia.org/files/journals/Transnational_Associations_Journal_2005_1_O.pdf).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 15

³¹ See *The Englishwoman's Yearbook*, Ed. L. Hubbard, London, Hatchards, 1882, p. 213; *The Englishwoman's Year-book and Directory*, Ed. Janes, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1900, pp. 167-169, 202-205.

³² G.E. BROCKINGTON, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

³³ *Ibid.*

first to the theater and then, especially after the family moved to London, to writing and journalism with particular attention to women's rights, which she treated with irony as well as tact.³⁴

Constance Smedley's first publications were well received by the critics who acclaimed her novel, fresh approach with statements like "new wine in a new bottle! The champagne of youth, originality, cleverness and self-confidence."³⁵ Her novel An April Princess was published just before the foundation of the Lyceum Club, and her subsequent novel, A June Princess, when she was about to leave the club to begin a new life with a new profession.

The International Association of Lyceum Clubs was created as the objective of that young woman and her friends and colleagues, some American, who were all members of the Writers Club. Constance Smedley's negative experience in the latter club pushed her to found the Lyceum. The name Lyceum was suggested by an American, Jessie Trimble: the word was comprehensible in the United States and in Europe it would recuperate the evocative force of its classical roots, guaranteeing both comprehension and success.³⁶ Brockington emphasizes Constance specifying in her memoirs that the club "was intended to be a corporate social home for educated women, wherein women of small or large incomes could feel part of the aristocracy of intellect, and come into free and helpful contact with men and women from all over the world."³⁷

In Crusaders Constance Smedley mentions that the reasons for conflict that might have arisen in regard to men's clubs were avoided with great diplomacy. She cites Lady Balfour,³⁸ the President of the Lyceum, who at the first anniversary of the founding of the Club, referred to high family morals: "we would have this Club, made by women [...], what we have always been proud that our British homes should be, as made by our women -places of good repute, places full of purity and high ideals."³⁹

Constance's writings, instead, went well beyond the idea behind those words. She affirmed that women should have full civil rights, including voting rights, a concept at the time actively proposed by radical feminist groups, and the recognition of their professional rights: "we cheerfully admit that we are just as human as men [...] and are universally deciding to come down to the level of his comrades and his equals."⁴⁰ These concepts were also present in her novels. For example On the Fighting Line, written in the first year of WWI, evidences the limitations imposed by family, where women were unprotected and taken advantage of: "men aren't to be trusted with so much power. It isn't good for them. They can use it to make things comfortable for themselves, not to protect the weak."⁴¹ In addition, female work had value, regarding freedom from want and social affirmation as

³⁴ C. SMEDLEY, *Woman: A Few Shrieks! Setting Forth the Necessity of Shrieking Till the Shrieks Be Heard*, Letchworth, Herts, Garden City Press, 1907; *The Boudoir Critic*, London & New York, Harper & Brothers, 1903; *An April Princess*, London, Cassell & Co., 1903; *The June Princess*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1909. Cited by G.E. BROCKINGTON.

³⁵ See [ANON], "Caviare for General?", in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 April 1903, p. 7. Cited by G.E. BROCKINGTON

³⁶ See V. GROSSI, *Frauen, Kultur und Gesellschaft*, Geneva, Lyceum International de Suisse, 2012.

³⁷ C. SMEDLEY, cited by G.E. BROCKINGTON, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

³⁸ Lady Frances Balfour, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Argyll and sister-in-law of the British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, was the first President of the Lyceum Club. Constance Smedley was the secretary until 1909.

³⁹ C. SMEDLEY, *Crusaders*, in: G.E. BROCKINGTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-61, 72

⁴⁰ C. SMEDLEY, *Woman: A Few Shrieks!*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁴¹ C. SMEDLEY, *On the Fighting Line*, London & New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915.

well as in relation to self-esteem: "a remarkable thing is happening [... Woman] is not only learning to earn her living, but she is learning to enjoy work."⁴²

The Lyceum was to be a point of reference for women especially those with a vocation and who were interested in the satisfactions of working. The Club's aristocratic atmosphere was denied by the founder in words only; it was fully evident both in the magnificence of the Club's rooms in Piccadilly and the network of social relationships of the members, given their family ties and professions. This was an environment of the upper classes, one where well-educated female intellectuals, writers, artists, as well as "wives and daughters of distinguished men"⁴³ were exalted. Constance's correspondence from Berlin, where she went in 1904 to promote the Lyceum, evidences her full awareness of the social status of the members as well as her satisfaction at involving well-known personages of social standing, such as Countess von Buhlow, Baroness von Sutton and Princess de Rohan (whom she described as "the most beautiful looking woman in a lovely pale blue frock, very young with snow white hair and covered with wonderful diamonds."⁴⁴ She was also enthusiastic about the efforts of another prominent society woman, Countess von Gröber, instrumental in easing the tensions between the "working members and society members," in the newly formed club, contributing to the realization of one of Constance's main aims, to "fuse the elements [and] make them feel all one sisterhood."⁴⁵

It is evident that Constance intended to overcome class differences as well as gender differences. She considered it worthwhile to do so through "an ideal Club [for women] with its branches in all countries of the world and [a] chain of Clubhouses in the world's chief capitals." Her aspirations went beyond demolishing the ghetto of gender discrimination; she wanted to create an international cultural organization that would promote democracy and world peace.⁴⁶

Even before setting up the rooms in Piccadilly, Constance took on the task of creating the network of clubhouses. There are traces of this undertaking in some of her writings. For example her 1909 novel The June Princess presents the international ideal related to exalting the worth of women: "It isn't for other people; it's for Internationalism. The Club is really bringing the women of the different countries together, and making them understand how much they can do for one another [...] You see, it is such a sensible and beautiful idea to bind the world together."⁴⁷

One sees in that novel a reflection of the preoccupation of many, men and women, regarding what was happening in Europe, and that the foundation of the Lyceum was a part of a much wider debate involving war and peace, patriotism and internationalism. The English were well aware of the recurrent winds of war; they had lived through the years of the Anglo-Boer war, and they were still, these 7 years later, experiencing the negative consequences of that conflict. Meanwhile other menacing events were taking place, such as German rearmament, the debates regarding both disclosed and secret international

⁴² C. SMEDLEY, *Woman: A Few Shrieks!*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴³ C. SMEDLEY, *Crusaders*, London, Duckworth, 1929, pp. 59-61.

⁴⁴ C. SMEDLEY, letter to "Dearest People" (9 June 1904, Gordon Bowe), in: G.E. BROCKINGTON, op. cit., p. 18, n.24.

⁴⁵ C. SMEDLEY, letter to William Thomas Smedley (7 November 1906, Gordon Bowe), *ivi*, p. 18, n. 25

⁴⁶ C. SMEDLEY, *Crusaders*, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

⁴⁷ C. SMEDLEY, *The June Princess*, cit., p. 2.

treaties founded on war alliances, the return of aggressive nationalist sentiments, and important conflicts such as that between Russia and Japan and the turmoil in the Balkans.

Some English women supporters of the Empire founded imperialist women's organizations, such as the Ladies' Imperial Club and the Victoria League. On the other hand there was a proliferation of international organizations that proclaimed support of peace and were a point of contact between socialist and pro-feminist positions, including the *Concordia* society (1895) in France, the British International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers (1897), the Italian *Società internazionale degl'intellettuali* (1909), and the German society *Die Brücke*.⁴⁸

The Lyceum belonged to the latter movement. The cooperation between women who were artists, writers, intellectuals was to be an occasion to support internationalism and peace. Constance Smedley's travels and her friendship with the German Harry Kessler,⁴⁹ a passionate patron of contemporary artists, were important factors in her intellectual enrichment. The discussions with Kessler on the new theories regarding esthetic unity contributed to a broader foundation for her internationalism, inspired by art. Thus, in *Crusaders* she hypothesized the possibility of "a unified world where mutual understanding and love of beauty reigned, seemed natural and inevitable."⁵⁰ The organization of exhibitions of English artists in Berlin and modern German art in London were truly diplomatic events aimed at consolidating the relationship between the two countries.⁵¹ Constance states in *The June Princess*, "the different forms of Arts must be the surest links to bind the world together, because Art holds universal understandings."⁵²

Distant from the hierarchical concept typical of the British colonial experience, Constance declared more than once that the connection between the various Lyceum clubs should be circular, without a beginning and an end. Each club should create its own programs in its own national context, while being part of a network of sister clubs that were equals but autonomous. Her belief in the balance between global cooperation and national diversity was confirmed by her approval of the decision of the Florence (Italy) club not to accept English money and the right of the Paris (France) club to autonomous administration.⁵³

The chronicle of these events together with the history of Constance Smedley's thought, reconstructed from her works rather than programmatic declarations, confirm her commitment to civil and social reform and her profound conviction in favor of specific gender participation also regarding war. In 1909 she resigned from her position as secretary of the Lyceum Club, after 6 years. Her marriage and career would not have allowed her to continue to dedicate herself to the club. The Lyceum had been the institutional mantle for her reformist ambitions. After her resignation she focused her interest on the theater, with her husband, and continued to promote the principles of international cooperation, equality and professional achievement. Those are the very same

⁴⁸ G.E. BROCKINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ See E.L. MCLEOD, *The Red Count: The Life and Times of Harry Kessler*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002.

⁵⁰ G.E. BROCKINGTON, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵¹ See W. CRANE, *Preface to Catalogue of the Works of Contemporary German Artists in London*, London, Prince's Gallery, 1906, pp. 7-8 and *Inaugural Dinner*, "The Times", 23 May 1906.

⁵² C. SMEDLEY, *The June Princess*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁵³ C. SMEDLEY, *Crusaders*, *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 177.

principles that had inspired the founding of the Lyceum, and from London they spread rapidly around the world.

In Italy

Great Britain played a fundamental role in the development of these events. At the end of the 19th century Scipio Sighele dedicated an entire chapter of his book *La donna nova* (*The New Woman*) to the totally English miracle of emancipation of the inimitable men's clubs.⁵⁴ The year was 1898; women's associations were being founded and spreading rapidly, especially in England, and had a variety of aims. Sighele expressed his opinion that:

For sure! More than half of mankind, desiring to imitate all that the worse half does, has founded clubs where one neither smokes nor gambles - or so I suppose - but where certainly there is much more discussion and gossip than in the clubs frequented by men only. To be truthful, I have been too cavalier in defining the clubwomen as more than half of mankind. Pretty young women, in England like in the rest of the world, generally get married or...they enjoy a pleasant life, but in any case, except for very rare exceptions, they do not participate in the doings of that class of Spinsters or Old Maids to whom we owe the luminous idea of women's clubs. These Spinsters, in their psychology, replicate the anecdote of the fox and the grapes.⁵⁵

He continues classifying the various institutions into three categories. "There have been in London for many years buildings, a sort of hotel, where only women reside. The first of these female hives was built by Sir Curtis Lampson about twelve years ago." He then recounts how that particular personage - baronet, merchant, promoter of the transoceanic telegraph - had started the Ladies Residential Chambers Company.⁵⁶ These residences provided widows and other single women who were not particularly wealthy with a dignified place to live under very strict rules of conduct. Sighele's sympathies, however, lay with the women's clubs that he had divided into different categories: the Spinsters' clubs, the clubs for working women, those for women of the upper classes, and finally those for women with academic degrees.

"There are now many such clubs in London and all very different regarding the type of membership, the aims they promote, and their achievements. Some reflect the exclusive attitude of the Spinsters who frequent them and resemble salons for conversation under the reign of the gossip spirit of those persons with brains as limited as their environment. Others instead must be considered very useful institutions that help women develop feelings of reasonable independence and become aware of their rights and duties. At this point the slightly ironic smile that has so far accompanied our words must be put aside and we must limit ourselves to approve and admire all that has been done in the past and continues to be done in

⁵⁴ S. SIGHELE, *La donna nova*, Roma, E. Voghera, 1898. pp. 142-160.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143

⁵⁶ See E. GEE, "Where Shall She Live?", *Housing the New Working Woman in Late Victorian and Edwardian London*, in: *Living, Leisure and Law .Eight Building Types in England 1800-1941*, Ed. G.K. Grandwood, Reading, Spire Books- Victorian Society, 2010, pp. 89-109

England towards women's education. In London there are already twenty working women's clubs where the proletarian women, whose years of youth are consumed by work, are taught the advantages of association to defend their social interests and where they are nourished with intellectual and moral stimulation that encourages them to better themselves. There are other clubs for young ladies and women of the educated classes. The members of these clubs are usually well-read, some are writers. They are the blue-stocking category and it is here that they discuss their professional affairs, thus avoiding the inconvenience of having to wait in the often intolerable promiscuous circumstances of newspaper and journal offices, so full of employees, delivery boys and such.

Finally, there are the clubs reserved exclusively for women with academic degrees. Single or married, any woman of this category can become a member, and the club admits men to tea once or twice a week. Could we hope to see such a thing in Italy? An issue of some journal - I do not remember whether it was in *l'Ora presente di Roma* or the *Rivista per le signorine*, of which that truly noble and female soul Sofia Bisi-Albini is editor - published an article about associations of young ladies and working women in the United States, contemporary to or perhaps precursors to the clubs in London.

The article said that these associations do much good for wealthy and poor girls. The latter learn and the former through teaching learn. Spending time with girls who have not been so fortunate in their birthright, those more fortunate become familiar with the feelings of the others. They come to respect and love them, and they do not remain closed in that egoism aimed only at finding a husband. In sum, they see life as it is and do not harbor the illusion that the world ends at their restricted family horizon. The example proposed by the article has not been repeated, as far as I know. Unfortunately, we manage to do very little on our own initiative: almost everything positive that one dares do in Italy is an imitation of things done abroad. We sincerely hope that at least imitation of this initiative is not delayed.

It may be a paradox, but I believe that we would be better if our women were better educated.⁵⁷

Ten years after the publication of Sighele's *La donna nova* his wish was granted with the foundation of the first women's club in Italy: the *Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze*. The title of his book was appropriate. The woman was precisely that, new. New women not only in literature, but also in society; daughters of the processes of modernization, break with tradition, affirmation of free, conscious individuality who saw in voting rights the conquest of this individuality.

The women's associations had a marked philanthropic component, which differed from the assistance furnished by local administrations. It was a period of great social transformation and the first forms of "welfare" were being established in Europe and the United States. The women's groups focused on assisting single mothers, education and professional formation of girls and young women, and support for migrating populations.

⁵⁷ S. SIGHELE, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Meeting and connecting, albeit through a women's association that had specific aims and branches abroad, was an act of courage and faith. In Italy the creation of such associations was delayed compared to what was happening in other countries. In fact, at the end of the 19th century the Italian socialist Emilia Mariani wrote that "the spirit of association, that path to modern social improvement, is either not known or not appreciated by most Italian females."⁵⁸

Italian women's associations had to learn first of all how to foster and manage open, frank, modern feelings of friendship. The problem was due in part to the way females were brought up in 19th century Italy, where the prevalently traditional Roman Catholic society was diffident toward friendships among women, and in part to social antagonisms grounded in the generally accepted idea that young women had to marry well. The foundation of an association whose statute included the aim of friendship among members as its fundamental binding factor was a novelty in Italy. This was true when the Lyceum Club di Firenze was established in 1908 and still true 20 years later when the Soroptimist Club was founded.

The Lyceum di Firenze

The Florentine Lyceum was founded on February 10, 1908 at the home of *Signora* Berta Fantoni, in the presence of Constance Smedley and her husband, when a group of women formed a Promoting Committee which soon after organized an assembly that voted the foundation of the Club. The local press reported the news in March-April, sometimes with slight irony, as in the article entitled "The first Italian women's club: what women want to do, what they must avoid, what we hope they will do."⁵⁹

The first president, Beatrice Pandolfini dei principi Corsini, specifically clarified the objectives of the Club: "The doors of the Association are open wide [...]. But we ask one thing of you all, that is to aim high with our activities: whatever one does must be done absolutely in the best manner possible." Furthermore, at the inauguration she emphasized the apolitical and non-party aspects of the Club, inserted in the Regulations of 1908 and reconfirmed in all subsequent Regulations. The aim was to "encourage Women to become educated or to do literary, artistic, scientific and humanitarian work and to cultivate and support women's activities in each of these intellectual fields."⁶⁰

The members were 'ordinary', 'professional', 'equivalent to professional', and 'resident outside the Florence postal district' and they enrolled in one of the club's six Sections of activity: Literature; Painting, Sculpture and Industrial Art; International Relations; Music, Science; Teaching; Philanthropy and Public Interest.⁶¹ The list of Sections was based on their pertinence to the local context and the feasibility of integrating professional objectives and cultural interests. The London Club also had sections of Journalism, Civic Interest and Public affairs, but these were deemed unrealistic activities in a city like Florence.

⁵⁸ See E. MARIANI, *Associazioni femminili*, "Flora letteraria," n. 10, December 1892, p. 73.

⁵⁹ *Il Marzocco* Firenze, April 5, 1908.

⁶⁰ ARCHIVIO STORICO DEL LYCEUM [henceforth ASL], series 1/1.2, f. 2, *Verbali, Verbali del Comitato 10 febbraio 1908, 14 giugno 1909*, seduta del febbraio 1908.

⁶¹ ASL, series 1/1.1, *Statuti e Regolamenti*, 1908: "Conoscenza varie opere di assistenza e previdenza, delle difficoltà che incontrano, dei risultati che ottengono e dei bisogni che svelano, aiutando per mezzo d'informazioni e di studi, le possibili iniziative in questo campo."

The organizational details have been well described by Barbara Imbergamo, the curator of the Inventory of the Florence Lyceum's Historic Archives.⁶² The first site of the Club was in via Ricasoli, where it remained until 1949 when it was transferred to Palazzo Naldini, between via dei Servi and piazza Duomo;⁶³ then in 1953 the Club moved to the current site in Palazzo Giugni Fraschetti at via Alfani 48. This setting had various rooms, including a smoking room, a kitchen with restaurant service, and for a time rooms for foreigners. All Section activities were organized on site, each directed by the relative Section President or one of the Vice-Presidents and the Section Secretary; all these positions were of minimum one year duration.

There were service and secretarial personnel for approximately the first 25 years. The Club was managed by a 21 member Board of Directors, comprising the Section Presidents and other representatives elected by the Assembly. Board members served for a term of 2 years, but elections were held every year when half of the members stepped down. A General Assembly was held twice a year to deliberate the budget and elect the most important Club positions: in addition to Board members the Assembly elected the President, two Vice-Presidents, two Secretaries, one Vice-Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Accountant. The original mechanisms for nominations, appointments, and Board turnover were quite cumbersome, but they remained in effect until the 1998 revision of the Statutes.

The first President of the Florence Lyceum, Beatrice Pandolfini (1868-1955), held the office from the foundation until 1945, more than 30 years. The first Vice-Presidents were Ida Uzielli De Mari and *Contessa* Giulia Tommasi Baldelli; Laura Milani, Berta Fantoni and Rita Michiel were the Secretaries and Elisa Uzielli Philipson was the Treasurer. The Promoting Committee was comprised of *Marchesa* Natalia Antinori, *Contessa* Iva Pucci Bossi, *Marchesa* Fiammetta Bourbon Del Monte, *Marchesa* Luisa Corsini, Augusta Della Noce, Donna Giovanna Denti di Piraino, Maria Fasola, *Baronessa* Elena French, Nerina Gigliucci, Onorata Grossi Mercanti, *Contessa* Francesca Guicciardini Corsi, *Marchesa* Gabriella Incontri, Eutilia Orlandi, Giorgina Roster Del Greco, *Contessa* Edita Rucellai, Nina Sierra, *Principessa* Maria Strozzi, *Marchesa* Anna Torrigiani, and Linda Villari.

During her presidency Beatrice Pandolfini adapted the principals of the English Lyceum to the Italian milieu, but included the original commitments to internationalism, support of world peace, cosmopolitan open-mindedness, and an ethical role of the Arts. It was not mere chance that the Florentine Lyceum Club organized in 1910 the first Italian exhibit of impressionist art, including paintings by Cézanne, Monet, Renoir and van Gogh, mentioned in the catalogue of the exhibit *Cézanne in Florence* organized almost a hundred years later by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi (in 2007). This exhibition was highly lauded by Ardengo Soffici in the May 12, 1910 issue of *La Voce*: "For the last two weeks The "Lyceum" of Florence in via Ricasoli 28 has been giving Italy a lesson. A practical lesson, a moral lesson, and, above all, an art lesson."

⁶² B. IMBERGAMO, *Breve introduzione alla storia del Lyceum*, in: *Lyceum (1908-2005). Inventario*, ed. Barbara Imbergamo, online, p. 4 (<http://www.soprintendenzaarchivistatoscana.beniculturali.it/fileadmin/inventari/LyceumFirenze.pdf>).

⁶³ ASL, series 1/1.6, *Lyceum di Firenze. Assemblee generali, Assemblea 26 marzo 1949*: "Fortunatamente si è reso libero un appartamento nel Palazzo Naldini Via dei Servi 4." The assembly expresses its gratitude to *Marchesa* Niccolini and *Principessa* Strozzi.

During its early years the Club was extremely vivacious and rich in initiatives, and events were reported regularly in the Bulletin, circular notices, and invitations to promote specific events and activities. The Bulletin received new incentive with the insertion of advertisements in 1911 thanks to the initiative of Laura Orvieto. In 1915 new Statutes were approved together with new Regulations that defined the norms for competitions, exhibits and awards (art. 50, 51, 53-56). Up until the early 1920s the Lyceum organized competitions for artists, gave awards for short stories, novels, and illustrations, published offers for work in the Bulletin, and organized exhibits and sales of hand-made items.

The Teaching section - abolished in 1945 - actively promoted the rights of teachers and female government employees up until the First World War. All the Sections welcomed participation of the most qualified representatives of Italian and foreign culture at the time, as witnessed by the Section signature books.⁶⁴

War

During the First World War the Lyceum Club's cultural activities were suspended, but all the Sections participated in activities in support of soldiers on the Club premises. The Philanthropic Section, in particular, collected information on all the charity institutions in Florence, participated in the foundation of a committee to study emigration, and collaborated with the committee involved in housing for the poor.

In the period immediately before the war, the president of the Literature Section, Amelia Rosselli⁶⁵ pleaded for an agreement among all the clubs to adopt a common line of conduct and clear affirmation of patriotism. The Florence Lyceum Board was not unanimously in favor of this stance and it was rejected. In addition, the invitation already sent to the Triestine poet Haydeé⁶⁶ was postponed for fear that her works might contradict the internationalist spirit of the Lyceum because they contained anti-Austrian sentiment. However, once Italy had joined the war, against Austria, the meeting was organized with great success.⁶⁷

Otherwise, various lectures were held, all focusing on the war, and there were concerts for soldiers and activities for children. The Lyceum also gave hospitality to the *Comitato per la Patria* of the Tuscan Women's Federation with the aim of supporting the entry of women into the workforce since the men were away at the front. The network became larger and the Lyceum contributed productively to the works of other groups and

⁶⁴ ASL, series 1/1.3 *Libri di firme*.

⁶⁵ Amelia Rosselli was born in Venice on Jan. 16, 1870 in a Jewish family; she lived for a period in Rome and after her marriage to Giuseppe Emanuele Rosselli in Vienna, Florence, and Rome. Inspired by the values of the *Risorgimento*, she was a writer, including theater, and frequented the most progressive intellectuals of the time, especially in Florence. She was an outspoken antifascist and the mother of Aldo, killed in WWI, as well as of Carlo and Nello, both prominent in the fight against Fascism, of which they were both victims. See G. AMATO, *Pincherle Rosselli Amelia* in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LXXXIII, Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015.

⁶⁶ Pen name of the Triestine poet Ida Finzi (1867-1946) of Jewish origin.

⁶⁷ The relationships with non-Italian members of the Florence Lyceum were very complicated in this period; only Maria Fasola was asked to resign from her Club position, apparently without any consequences. See ASL, series 1/1.4, *Verballi, Verballi delle Sedute di Consiglio*.

associations that were intent on divulging the reasons for the war and teaching people the history of the areas that had been taken away from Italy and those where the battles were being fought. The circular issued on 4 February 1917 by Minister Comandini led to the promotion of a more rational and attentive policy of consumer goods that was the topic of a talk by Gaetano Salvemini at the Lyceum on 12 May 1917. Women were expected to be the protagonists in sensitizing the public on this issue. It was precisely in this period that women were given a new social role as the staff within the family. We note that in 1931 Gaetano Pieraccini, whose sister Leonetta was a Lyceum member, published a book dedicated to women's role in the conservation and improvement of the human species.⁶⁸ Moreover, cookbooks were written for mothers, and doctors addressed comments and advice regarding health, hygiene, vaccination, and even the respect due their children directly to mothers.

The First World War marked a turning point also for the Lyceum. Although the club's commitment to cultural topics and support of working women remained focal points of activity, with the organization of lectures, debates, and contests, in some of the Sections there was a change in spirit, in particular in the Teaching and Philanthropy Sections. The latter focused on assistance to the poor (with its *Laboratorio per i poveri* - Laboratory for the Poor) from the onset of the economic crisis of the 30's through the Second World War.

Meantime, in 1920, the Italian Federation of Women with Secondary School and University Degrees (*Federazione italiana laureate e diplomate di istituti superiori – FILDIS*) was founded. This federation promoted the census of women with a profession and/or a degree of higher education, and organized meetings and lectures and assigned scholarships for women. From the very beginning the federation had international ties. The Fascist regime did not approve of the Federation and was hostile to the point of forcing its disbanding; the federation was later re-established and is active still today.⁶⁹

It was unusual in the twenties in Italy for a young woman of good social position to decide to study and then have a profession, and it was very difficult for young women to succeed in doing so, because of both family and social obstacles. In fact, in the decade 1921-1930 only 1,166 women received a university degree, almost all in northern Italy.⁷⁰

During the 1920's various other changes in the Florentine Lyceum indirectly reflected the political climate. The Agrarian Section established in 1920 received great impulse from the regime's stance in support of rural politics. The Literature Section, headed by Jolanda De Blasi, undertook important initiatives based on her sympathies for the topics and personages close to the regime, despite the presumed apolitical position of the Club. In 1922 the Philanthropy Section was renamed, becoming the Social Activities Section, perhaps related to nationalistic feelings, given that some of the officers of the club were foreigners. The question regarding the difference between Italian and foreign members was discussed many times and then eliminated.⁷¹

⁶⁸ G. PIERACCINI, *La donna nella conservazione e nel perfezionamento della specie*, Siena, Stab. Tip. S. Bernardino, 1931.

⁶⁹ See F. TARICONE, *L'associazionismo femminile in Italia dall'Unità al fascismo*, Milano, Unicopli, 1996, p. 175.

⁷⁰ A.M. ISASTIA, *La nascita del Soroptimist dagli Stati Uniti all'Europa. Il club di Milano* (http://www.soroptimist.it/public_nuovo/0000COP.pdf).

⁷¹ *Statutes*, 1945.

An episode that took place in 1923 (never fully explained by those involved) gives good measure of the tensions among the Board members at the time. The two Vice-Presidents, Elisa Uzielli and Amelia Rosselli resigned from the Board and two other Board members followed suit (Giorgia Zabban and Laura Orvieto). The Board called new elections, which did not take place because no Assembly was held for the purpose. However, Laura Orvieto's account of the events is eloquent:

An opposition formed against the two vice-presidents, both Jews, who were [Laura's] friends [the opposition did not regard her personally, although she was also Jewish]. The opposition comprised only a few members, but certainly the will of a few, even if beyond their intentions and wishes, can cause harm. The membership took sides: the majority were with the President who was indignant and unhappy about what was happening; only an absolute minority were against the two resigning officials. The former group won, but the poison had been inoculated and all the Jewish members eventually left the Lyceum, although they continued to pay the membership fee.⁷²

In 1924 Amelia Rosselli also resigned from the board, although she remained a member, most probably after a Fascist squad attack on a cultural association of which her sons and her friend Salvemini were members. Numerous other members resigned after that, including Elisa and Ida Uzielli, Bianca Viviani della Robbia, Elvira Pierini, Maria De Matteis Giovannozzi, Blara Passigli, and Elisa Frontali Milani. This was the beginning of a diaspora of the members, many of whom were Jewish and who had played an active and vital role in the life and activities of the club. These incidents were not directly related to the dramatic events that were to take place about 15 years later.

On the first of January 1939, following the government's publication of the racial laws, the Board sent a letter to 23 members informing them of the addition of a new article to the Statutes: "Being of Aryan race is an indispensable condition for membership in the Association."⁷³ This led to the expelling of some members, all of whom had participated in the Club activities since its founding. To date this has been the story⁷⁴ of what happened at the Florentine Lyceum in those years, and it is certainly one of the darkest episodes in the history of the Club.⁷⁵

Viewed in the panorama of the associations active in Italy in those years, the Board's action had a twofold meaning. Article 211 of the *Testo Unico delle leggi di Pubblica Sicurezza* (Public Safety laws) passed in 1931 had forbidden the promotion, constitution,

⁷² See C. DEL VIVO, *Costruirsi una storia: miti e realtà nell'autobiografia di Laura Orvieto*, "Espacio, Tiempo y Educación", 1, 2014, pp. 55-75. Laura Cantoni Orvieto (Milan, 1876-Florence, 1953) was Jewish. She was married to Angiolo, the founder of the newspaper "Il Marzocco" and she was a writer, first of stories for children and then of her own family life and events which she treated with profound consideration.

⁷³ "Condizione indispensabile per poter essere socie del Circolo è l'appartenenza alla razza ariana."

⁷⁴ M. SANDIFORD, *Profilo storico del Lyceum Club di Firenze fra cultura e impegno civile, internazionalismo e nazionalismi*. In: *Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze, 1908-2008. Cento anni di vita culturale del primo circolo femminile italiano*, Ed. M. Sandiford, Firenze, Polistampa, 2008, pp. 35-68. Here pp. 65-67.

⁷⁵ L. INSANA, *Fascist Appropriations. The Case of Jolanda De Blasi's "Le scrittrici italiane."* In: *Strong Voices, Weak History. Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, Ed. P.J. Benson and V. Kirkham, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2005, pp. 314-338. Here, p. 316.

organization or management of international associations without the authorization of the Minister of the Interior and forbade Italian citizens to participate in such associations without explicit authorization. The Lyceum had continued its activities, different from other associations. For example, the Soroptimist, founded in Milan in 1928, was forced to cease all activities in the spring of 1934 and resumed them only in 1948, receiving official permission on 30 May of that year.⁷⁶

Also many other associations were compelled to comply with the racial laws. The decisions of the Lyceum Board in January 1939 were similar to those of many other institutions; the actions were the least that could be done in compliance with the regulations imposed by the racial laws. This was an inevitable and painful decision as evidenced by the documentation; the only one that allowed the continuation of the association without sanctions that would have compromised not only the Lyceum, but the individual members personally.

This interpretation is supported by a letter written by the President Beatrice Pandolfini to the *Questore* of Milan, care of his wife, requesting a special waiver of compliance in favor of Alice Milani Comparetti.

Dear *Donna* Maria

I am writing to you taking one step ahead and one back! But I am propelled by ancient friendship and old memories. *Signora* Alice Milani Comparetti,⁷⁷ a Jew, has requested a discrimination. Knowing about my friendship with *signora* Laura Milani Comparetti and Professor Milani,⁷⁸ the famous archeologist, she has asked me to intervene in her favor with His Excellency the *Prefetto*. I address you, dear *Donna* Maria. Please ask His Excellency [the husband] to review the file! These are situations that must follow their course, no recommendation has weight. However, I can certainly and willingly state that the parents of Albano Milani, the in-laws of *signora* Alice, were worthy of the esteem and friendship that Florentine society of culture had for them, because good people are such in all races. I will be there soon, and I will bring you greetings from the Florentine Lyceum. Best wishes and greetings from Beatrice Pandolfini Corsini.⁷⁹

This letter clearly reflects Beatrice Pandolfini's personal position, which she tried to make the position of the Club, and it supports the interpretation that the Florentine Lyceum was forced to follow the dictates of Bottai's circular and did so in the minimum degree possible. However, it must be stated with certainty that not all the members approved of this

⁷⁶ See V. DE GRAZIA, *How Fascism Ruled Women, Italy 1922-1945*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1992, p. 257.

⁷⁷ Alice Weiss (1895-1978) and Albano Milani Comparetti were the parents of don Lorenzo Milani Comparetti (1923-1967), founder of the school of Barbiana. The family had close ties to the Olschki, Valori, Pavolini, Castelnuovo Tedesco, Spadolini and other well known Florentine families, many of whom have a part in the history of the Florentine Lyceum. She is requesting special consideration and preferential treatment.

⁷⁸ Luigi Adriano Milani (1854-1914), archeologist and numismatist, married Laura Comparetti (1865-1913), the daughter of the great philologist and Senator Domenico Comparetti (1835-1927).

⁷⁹ Letter from Beatrice Pandolfini Corsini to Maria Mangano, Florence, 22 Dec. 1938. In: ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI MILANO, Gabinetto di Prefettura, II serie, Pratiche relative a cittadini di origine ebraica, Fascicoli personali, b. 52, fasc. Weiss in Milani Comparetti, Alice (on back: "Beatrice Pandolfini Corsini informs "donna Maria" of the discrimination of Alice Milani Comparetti and asks that her husband, the *Prefetto*, look at the file"). I wish to thank the Director of the Archivio Dr. Benedetto Luigi Compagnoni, for informing me of this letter.

position. We note, in fact, that Jolanda De Blasi⁸⁰ and Beatrice Rosselli Del Turco, who held important positions on the Board, were sympathizers of the regime and actively promoted events that were in line with Fascist propaganda.

In sum, the Florentine Lyceum and in general all women's associations in Italy were noticeably weakened by the end of the 1930's. This marked the end of the long first phase of female political movement in Europe, defined as an autonomous movement separate from other cultural and political organizations. On one hand the economic crisis conditioned the path of female emancipation in regard to work, and on the other the totalitarian regimes repressed directly and explicitly as well as through absorption of the autonomous women's associations by party organizations.

The Lyceum survived thanks to the acumen of the President, but it suffered the consequences of the changes in this historical period. The deep, structural cause of the crisis may have been due in part to the lack of generational exchange, which was common in the entire sphere of women's associations. The women themselves were aware of this and tried to remediate by establishing committees dedicated to encouraging participation of young women and opening centers for documentation and youth sections. But the determining factor was that the younger women were not interested in or attracted by these associations: the earlier generations were daughters of the 19th century, and although they had lived through the fracture of the First World War they were not able to comprehend fully and integrate with the new mass society.

Throughout the Second World War the Club maintained the same commitment of solidarity that it had exercised in WWI, and even after the war it continued this effort by organizing and selling articles made by mutilated veterans. There was also an important obligation to fulfill. At the end of the war, the Acting Board was extremely solicitous, in particular compared to the timing of the 1939 circular, in sending out a letter of apology to the members who had been expelled, asking them to return.⁸¹

Upon the termination of the presidency of Beatrice Pandolfini the Acting Board took the reins until the election of the new President, Ludovica Niccolini da Camugliano. The Club was housed temporarily in the hall of the *Società Dante Alighieri* in the *Palagio dell'Arte della Lana* because the official rooms were occupied by the Allied forces. The Club then returned to via Ricasoli; in 1949 it moved to Palazzo Naldini, and 4 years later to the current site in Palazzo Giugni-Fraschetti, at 48 via degli Alfani.

The assembly's first task was to draw up new Statutes, which involved days of long, heated debate. The discussions can be reconstructed from the documents in the club archives in Florence, and thanks also to the copy of the new Statutes that had been

⁸⁰ Jolanda De Blasi (1888-1964) taught history and literature at the *Liceo Ginnasio Dante* in Florence from 1915 to 1918 and then from 1922 to 1940 literature at the Educandato della SS. Annunziata at Poggio Imperiale in Florence. She also wrote stories, essays, and articles and did translations; she was a vivacious organizer of cultural activities. She joined the Lyceum in 1912; in 1925 she became President of the Literature Section realizing a continuous activity of lectures and events related to divulgation of cultural topics. She was a monarchist and admired Mussolini. During the Fascist era she was met and corresponded with many personages with positions at Court and in the regime. ("Archivi in Toscana. Il patrimonio, le istituzioni, gli eventi", portale online: <http://www.archivitoscana.it/index.php?id=281>, consulted on 18 November 2016).

⁸¹ ASL, serie 1/1.7.1, *Corrispondenza*, fasc. 5, typewritten letter from the Acting Board of the Lyceum, dated 19 November 1944.

deposited in the Lyceum central archives in Zurich.⁸² An undated, subsequent copy of the Statutes must have been approved at the assembly meeting held on 27 October 1950, given that the articles in the document and the fees listed coincide with those deliberated at that meeting.⁸³

From this period on the number of members⁸⁴ decreased progressively until 2013. The foreign members and the members from the aristocracy left the club and were replaced only partially, beginning in the 1980's by women with professions who have been very active in organizing worthwhile cultural programs and social events despite the chronic lack of funds and the competition of so many other associations.

The most recent Statutes, drawn up and approved in 1998, present some important modifications: the club became an association, men were eligible to belong as "Friends of the Lyceum" but without voting rights, education was no longer an "official" aim (although it remained implicit in the cultural function), and there was a minor change in the name of the Social Activities Section, resulting from the clarification of the Section's tasks.

Section Names 1908-2016:⁸⁵

1908: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations; Music, Science; Teaching; Philanthropy and public interest

1909: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations; Music, Science; Teaching; Philanthropy and public interest

1914: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations; Music, Science; Teaching *and education*; Philanthropy and public interest

1921: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations; Music, Science; Teaching and education; Philanthropy and public interest; *Agriculture*

1935: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations; Music, Science; Teaching and education; Philanthropy and public interest; *Social activities*; *Agriculture*

1938: Literature; Painting, sculpture and industrial art; International relations, Music, Science; Teaching and education; Philanthropy and public interest; *Social activities*; *Agriculture*

1945: Literature; Music; Art; *Social activities*; *Sciences*⁸⁶

1950 (?): Literature; Music; Art; *Social activities*⁸⁷; *Sciences*; *International relations*⁸⁸

⁸² ASL, serie 1/1.2, *Verbali*, fasc. 6, *Verbali delle Adunanze*, 17 and 20 July 1945. The original copy of the Statutes is missing from the Archives of the Florentine Lyceum. A copy was found in the International Archives of the Lyceum Club in Zurich. We thank the President of the Geneva Club, Verdiana Grossi and Esther Seifert-Iseli (Archivarin Internationaler Lyceum Club) for their assistance in finding this document.

⁸³ A copy of the undated Statutes is on file in the Archives of the Lyceum in Florence.

⁸⁴ Many of the members who had been faithful to the fascist regime were expelled when the war ended; one, Flora Righi Amante, was not readmitted. ASL, serie 1/1.2, *Verbali*, fasc. 7, *Verbali delle Adunanze*, 7 January 1947, 7 February 1947, 17 May 1949, 13 June 1950.

⁸⁵ The Section names listed here are those in the Statutes. The changes seen in the 2016 Statutes were intended to clarify ambiguities and improve management. Variations are noted in italics.

⁸⁶ The new Statutes were drawn up by the Regency Commission of the Acting Board (Uzielli, Greppi, Moravia). They decided to abolish the age limit (18 years) and to allow an indefinite number of members. After long discussion it was decided to make no reference to the nationality of the members, and all were eligible for Board positions. The category of Sustaining members was reintroduced.

⁸⁷ ASL, series 1/1.2, *Verbali*, fasc 6, *Verbali delle Adunanze*, meeting of [] March 1951, 9 June 1951 and 27 November 1951. The meaning of the word "sociale" was discussed at length; the final deliberation was that it referred to both social problems and club activities.

1976: Literature; Music; Art; Social activities; Sciences; International relations
1998: Literature; Music; Art; Social activities⁸⁹; Sciences; International relations
2016: Literature; Music; Art; Social activities; Sciences *and Agriculture*; International relations

International relations

The international character of the Lyceum was a distinctive element from the beginning insofar as the network of relationships between clubs was one of the fundamental factors of Constance Smedley's project. Foreign members were accepted from the onset. In fact the Minutes of the meeting held at the Tommasi home on 10 February 1908 report Constance Smedley's invitation to membership directed to women who were "conscious of the new and grave responsibilities that weigh upon women of the governing class" and "recognized the usefulness of an international association of truly female aristocracy."⁹⁰

The "*Bollettino*" (Bulletin) reported events in foreign clubs, with ample space for their activities in a special column entitled "News of Foreign Lyceum Clubs" (*Notizie di Lyceum esteri*). The drafting of the first Constitution of the International Association of Lyceum Clubs⁹¹ was the fruit of long, hard work, involving continuous discussion and changes and complex mediations that took place prevalently at the international congresses. The first congress held in London in 1912 approved the Constitution of the Lyceum Clubs, defined as circles "comprised of women of all nationalities who are interested in Literature, Journalism, Science, Art, and Music and who want to support the reciprocal understanding and friendship that can be realized only through personal relationships."⁹²

The Statutes recognize the supremacy of the *Bureau Central* of the International Association, with headquarters in London, and establish the internal organization: the International Board would be composed of one or more delegates from each Club, depending on the number of members, and would meet once every two years.

The mission of the IALC is to develop and enhance the spirit of international friendship and understanding between Lyceum Clubs around the world. The IALC seeks to achieve this by promoting the formation of Lyceum Clubs worldwide, especially in countries where there is not currently any Lyceum presence, and by nurturing an environment of openness, discussion and exchange between all Clubs. In this way, the IALC acts as a catalyst for inter-Federation and inter-Club contact, thereby promoting the international spirit of Lyceum, as well as contributing to the intellectual, artistic and social enrichment of individual Lyceum Clubs and their members.⁹³

⁸⁸ There was discussion about creating Commissions for topics not included in those of the Sections.

⁸⁹ The task of the Social Activities Section was specified as follows: "To promote the life of the Association in all its associational and recreational aspects." This profoundly modified the character of the Section.

⁹⁰ ASL, series 1/1.2, *Verbali, Verballi delle sedute del Comitato promotore*, meeting of 10 February 1908.

⁹¹ In June 1910 the London Lyceum presented a draft of Statutes that had already been approved by the Berlin and Paris clubs, but the Florence Lyceum did not accept it because it was not coherent with the spirit of the club.

⁹² *L'Associazione de Lyceum Clubs. Constitution*, Art. 1.

⁹³ http://www.lyceumclub.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=114&lang=en

The 2nd International Congress was held in Paris in 1914 and the 3rd in Florence in 1922. At the Florence congress Amelia Rosselli presented a request that the presidents of the Sections be allowed to participate in the meetings, thereby increasing the representation of the individual club memberships, given that at the beginning members registered for a single, specific Section, although they were allowed to participate in all Club activities. A wide range of other topics were discussed at the congress: annual fees were defined, members were authorized to belong to other associations, there was a deliberation on organization of international art exhibits in the individual Clubs, as well as discussion regarding international competitions and work exchanges.⁹⁴

In 2014 Florence hosted another international congress. Currently the International Association of Lyceum Clubs (IALC)⁹⁵ holds an annual congress, between the months of March-June; the congresses are held in cities with a Lyceum Club and any Club in the world can participate. Except for the periods of the two World Wars, the congresses were held every two years until 1950; from then on they have been held every three years. Since 1992 the congresses have been followed by Cultural Days, dedicated to cultural events and social occasions. Between congresses the International Association of Lyceum Clubs is governed by the International Central Bureau, an executive committee composed of the International President, two Vice-Presidents (Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere), the international Secretary, the international Treasurer, and the presidents of the national federations.

The Lyceum Bulletin (*il "Bollettino"*)

94. BULLETTINO DEL LYCEUM DI FIRENZE

from n. 6, May 1920, BOLLETTINO DEL LYCEUM DI FIRENZE;

from n. 1, January 1931, LYCEUM DI FIRENZE. BOLLETTINO MENSILE⁹⁶

Subtitle: from n. 1, January 1931, under the majestic patronage of H.R.H. Maria José Princess of Piedmont; from n. 23, January 1931, until Supplement to "Bollettino del Lyceum" of June 1943, Majestic Patron H.R.H. the Princess of Piedmont.

Place: Florence

Duration: year I, n. 1 (February 1912) - year XXXVIII (November-December 1945)

[resumed with a new series after WWII and continued until 2004]⁹⁷

Frequency: monthly, in the period of major club activity (usually the first 6 months of the year) which resumes in November or December, for a total 7-8 issues per year

⁹⁴ *Atti del Congresso: Lyceum di Firenze, Terzo congresso dell'Associazione internazionale dei Lyceum*, Florence, 7-11 October 1922, Firenze, Stab. Tip. Enrico Ariani, 1923.

⁹⁵ International Association of Lyceum Clubs (2014): "The International Association of Lyceum Clubs is the association of the National Federations of Lyceum Clubs [...]. The members of the International Association of Lyceum Clubs are the national Federations which have paid the annual subscription for the current year. The members of a National Federation are the Lyceum Clubs which operate within a country [...]. The International Council governs the International Association of Lyceum Clubs. It consists of the delegates nominated by the National Federations and is chaired by the International President. It meets every three years."

⁹⁶ S. SOLDANI, *Bollettino del Lyceum di Firenze*, in: *Giornali di donne in Toscana. Un catalogo, molte storie (1770-1945), II, 1900-1945*, Ed. S. Franchini, M. Pacini, S. Soldani, Firenze, Olschki, 2007, pp. 393-394. Only the bibliography has been updated. I wish to thank Simonetta Soldani for all the information she has furnished.

⁹⁷ Actually, the publication is still active.

*Translator's note: instead of "dicembre"

Manager: Giuseppe Santini; from n. 5, March 1926, the wording changes to "manager responsible for the publication of the *Bollettino*;" from n. 5, March 1926 to n. 6, July 1935, Lyceum member Elena Pacciani; from n. 4, April 1936, Corradina Roini (non-member)

Printer: Tip. Ariani, Florence

Measurements: 23 x 15 cm; the issues published as a single printed sheet folded in four (exceptionally in two, June 1943; sometimes there are Supplements of the same size, to communicate changes in the monthly program): 21.5 x 14.5 cm

Pages: until the end of 1929, 10-12 pages + cover. From 1930-1932 the number of pages was reduced; they returned to the original number in 1933, the first issue of 1934 and in 1935.

Price: post-office subscription mailing to members

Notes: the year of the fascist era first appeared on the November-December (written "decembre" *) 1936 issue.

Publication was suspended after n. 7, June 1915; it was resumed with n. 1, December 1919 and continued in the format of a true bulletin until n. 1, January 1934 (except for the year 1921 when publication was suspended until December). After that the only issues published in regular format were n. 2, December 1934, n. 1-6 (January, February, March, April, May, July) 1935, and the one for February 1940. For all the other months the publication was reduced to a single folded page with the monthly program, sometimes including a page of publicity with the index of the volumes and the lectures held at the Lyceum, sent to the members by mail. Nothing was published in the month of February 1934.

Note the incongruous progressive numeration in the early 1930's: 1933 was marked as year XVIII, but 1934 was XXVI and 1935 XXVIII, probably to reconnect with the year of founding of the Florentine Lyceum.

Place of deposit: BncFi: yr I, n. 1, February 1912 - yr XXX, n. 1, March 1937 (issues missing: n. 5, April 1924; n. 1, 1 December 1924; n. 6, May-June 1928; n. 4, April 1930. BmarFi: yr I, 1912 - yr XXX, n. 1, March 1937; incomplete Lyceum Fi: yr I, n. 1 (February 1912) - yr XXXVIII, November-December 1945, complete.

Bibliography: B. IMBERGAMO, *Un Club femminile del Novecento. Il Lyceum dalla fondazione agli anni Settanta*, In: *Carte di donne II*, Ed: A. Contini and A. Scattigno, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006, pp. 95-125; S. MAIONCHI, *Per una ricostruzione dell'archivio del Lyceum Club Internazionale di Firenze*, In: *Carte di donne. Per un censimento regionale della scrittura delle donne al XVI secolo al XX secolo*, Ed: A. Contini and A. Scattigno, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006, pp. 135-140; B. RIGHINI, *I periodici fiorentini (1597-1950). Catalogo ragionato*, 2 vol., Firenze, Sansoni, 1955, vol. I, pag. 324.

For some time now the "*Bollettino*" has been strictly informative, presenting the Club's monthly calendar of events, albeit with an editorial by the President with an explanation of the connections and reasons for the events programmed. The original scope was very different and more complete insofar as it was much less an instrument related to the functional life of the Florentine Lyceum Club than a way to communicate and divulge the Club's activities also in relation to the International Association and the activities of the Clubs in other countries.

Publication began in 1912, four years after the foundation of the Club. From 1912 to 1915 the bulletin was divided into various columns (Communications from the Board, Section News and Commentary, News from the Rome Lyceum, News from Foreign Lyceum Clubs, Miscellaneous News, Books Received, Section Announcements, Monthly Program).⁹⁸ Two members of the Club, both ex-directors of the National Women's Union, were particularly active in the preparation of the bulletin, Bice Cammeo⁹⁹ (Philanthropy Section) and Ernesta Dal Cò Viganò¹⁰⁰ (Teaching Section).

During those first years the commitment to feminist issues is evident in the type of events proposed, for example the evenings in honor of Amalia Guglielminetti, Térésah¹⁰¹ and Sibilla Aleramo. Notwithstanding the declarations in support of both the campaigns to reconquer lost territories and the war in Libya, the "*Bollettino*" continued to express also the international commitment of the Lyceum, confirmed by the President Beatrice Pandolfini at the general assembly in June 1914.¹⁰² Upon the outbreak of WWI the "*Bollettino*" reflected the first signs of tension among the club members. The president of the Literature Section, Margherita Sarfatti, had requested that the members maintain a demeanor of "silent thoughtfulness." To the contrary, Jolanda De Blasi, the vice-president, headed a manifestly more aggressive group of members whose attitude was confirmed later in the positions assumed in the fascist period.

The war led to suspension of publication from 1915 until late 1919. At the end of 1921 an agreement was made with the publisher Bemporad, who offered a substantial discount on printing costs in exchange for free advertising of his publications. The membership lists, published annually in the "*Bollettino*", show that the number of members increased progressively, arriving at 502 in 1925-1926, thanks to the participation of women from the new ruling class.

The lists continue to evidence growth of the membership until 1932, when it reached the peak of 546 after which it decreased constantly; this tendency showed signs of

⁹⁸ A column entitled *Activities of our members* appeared irregularly from issue n. 3 of 1913 through n. 6 of 1930; there was a column entitled *Announcements*, of jobs available, in 1912 and in 1923.

⁹⁹ Bice Cammeo (1875-1961) founded a "refuge" for abandoned children (*Rifugio temporaneo e immediato per fanciulli abbandonati*) in Florence in 1910 with the support of the "Office of Assistance" that she had opened in 1904 in piazza S. Maria Novella when she returned to Florence after her experience in the Women's Union in Milan. The *Rifugio* was a home that cared for minors waiting to be taken in by a family; it was preceded by *L'Opera dei bambini vagabondi* (an organization for assistance to homeless children) that she had inaugurated in 1906. The aim was to provide assistance in social emergencies involving families and situations of "material and moral" abandon of children. See P. GUARNIERI, *Tra Milano e Firenze: Bice Cammeo a Ersilia Majno per l'Unione femminile*, In: *De Amicitia*, Ed. G. Angelini and M. Tesoro, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 504-515.

¹⁰⁰ Ernesta Dal Co, married name Viganò, was on leave of absence in 1907 from her position as director of the "scuola normale." Since 1896 she had been active in the fight against discrimination of female teachers, compared to their male colleagues, on the part of municipalities and the government. She collaborated with Ersilia Majno Bronzini's *Unione femminile* and wrote articles published in "*La Corrente*". This weekly magazine represented the ideas of the Milanese association of middle school teachers (founded in 1901); it did not mask its support of the reformist socialism proposed by Turati and was strongly in favor of public schools free of interference from the Church. She was active in the National Council of Italian women; in 1923 she protested against the heavy-handed restrictions on the presence of women in Secondary schools that were imposed by the reform drawn up by Giovanni Gentile. See E. DAL CO, *La pensione ai figli delle maestre*, "Unione Femminile," October 1903, p. 163 and S. SOLDANI, *Lo Stato e il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia liberale*, "Passato e presente", 24, 1990, pp. 23-71.

¹⁰¹ Pseudonym of the writer Corinna Teresa Gray Uberty (1877-1964).

¹⁰² ASL, series 1/1.2, fasc. 3, *Verballi, Verballi delle Assemblies del Consiglio direttivo e delle Assemblies delle socie*, meeting of 6 April 1908.

reversal only in late 2013. The social environment of the city has undergone changes; cultural initiatives have increased remarkably in the last 25-30 years and the club's initial motivations have progressively faded. The evolution is reflected in the anachronism of the various original member "categories" (regular members; regular members residing outside Florence; professionals; wives; widows; daughters; orphans of professionals - the latter two groups were subsequently united.)

In the years following WWI the "*Bollettino*" evidenced some important changes regarding both the names of the Sections as well as the themes of the initiatives, which reflect the topics most debated in the political sphere at the time. There were lectures and exhibitions involving the Tuscan *macchiaioli* painters, and also discussions regarding the value of futurism.¹⁰³ The modifications in scholastic programs were the topic of various lectures from April 1923 to January 1924¹⁰⁴; there was ample treatment of politics, the parties and their electoral campaign programs as well as the question of women's voting rights (1920 and 1924).

In the mid-twenties Club events took on a more official tone, especially with the increasingly predominant role of Bianca Ventura Garbasso and Jolanda De Blasi in Club affairs over the next 20 years. Bianca Ventura Garbasso, elected Vice-president in the summer of 1927, was the delegate of the women's fascist group for the province of Florence as well as the wife of the podestà of Florence, Antonio Garbasso. Jolanda De Blasi, a long-term president of the Literature Section was a staunch fascist. It was the latter who decided to transfer publication of the *Bollettino* from Bemporad, first to the publisher Le Monnier (owner: cav. Armando Paoletti) and then, 10 years later, to Sansoni (owner: Giovanni Gentile).

The *Bollettino* included the numeral referring to the fascist year relatively late, the first time on the cover of the November-December 1936 issue. The various Club initiatives in this period reflect the attempts to maintain a balance between the original aims of the Club and the new political-social environment. This desire to "give voice to continuity and compatibility between the old and the new"¹⁰⁵ are evident in the type of events organized, some more traditional and others regarding current affairs, ranging from theater in popular local dialect, to lectures by critics and writers, including Luigi Russo, Alfredo Panzini, Tatiana Soukhotine Tolstoi, Ada Negri, and Gianna Manzini.

One especially important event was Aldo Sorani's lecture¹⁰⁶ on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, which is an example of the attention to contemporary ideas, particularly in reference to feminism and pacifism.¹⁰⁷ This was the very period in which Virginia Woolf wondered, in *Three Guineas* when she refers to being asked for assistance to prevent the war, how one could prevent the conflict. In fact, the original title was *On Being Despised*, and it was published in June 1938 when a new conflict was brewing. The essay can be considered an expression of so-called "feminism of difference," meaning an attitude intent

¹⁰³ S. SOLDANI, op. cit. p. 396: "the outcome of the very politically charged debate between the national-fascist Fernando Agnoletti and the démocrat Diego Garoglio, was the clear defeat of the latter": from *Bollettino*, n. 4, 1 March 1920, p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ The speakers included Giovanni Calò, Ernesto Codignola and Piero Calamandrei, among others.

¹⁰⁵ S. SOLDANI, *Bollettino*, cit., p. 397

¹⁰⁶ *Bollettino*, n. 1, January 1931, pp. 29-30

¹⁰⁷ S. SOLDANI, *Bollettino*, op cit., p. 397.

on pointing out the diversity of the two sexes, rather than realizing parity between the sexes.

The author imagines that a lawyer who belongs to an anti-fascist men's association asks her for a contribution to subsidize anti-war initiatives and advice on how to prevent war. She has only 3 guineas, and decides to devolve them to three different charities active in such initiatives.

The first guinea would go to a female college in financial difficulty, to support teaching of the arts that favor peace and create ties between humans - medicine, mathematics, music, painting, literature. The art is the art of human relations: the art of understanding the life and mind of others as well as the minor arts of conversation, proper dress, and cooking. Subjects that can be the cause of war should be excluded from the curriculum: the art of governing, killing, accumulating land and capital.¹⁰⁸

The second guinea would be given to an association that helps women enter a profession, but only in a company managed by women. Women are different from men and given their different ways war could be avoided.

The third guinea would go to a pacifist men's association, but the existence of a pacifist women's association would have been auspicious. The name would be "Society of the Outsiders" and it would be comprised of daughters of well educated men. It would be different from other associations insofar as there would be no headquarters, no committees, no secretariat; no meetings would be called and no conventions would be organized.¹⁰⁹ Without the traditional liturgies, the ceremonies and swearing of allegiance, it would have been nonetheless the duty of the women in this virtual congregation never to fight with arms, always to refuse to help fabricate arms, and in case of war to work as nurses. The instinct of combat was a sexual characteristic that a woman could not share or even judge: thus the only possible attitude was indifference.

In the closing pages, Virginia Woolf discusses the crux of the problem of fascism and nazism. She proposes a gender based analysis of the construction of the male, precisely "Man himself, the quintessence of virility, the perfect type of which all others are imperfect adumbrations."¹¹⁰

The Lyceum programs covered present and timeless themes simultaneously, even when treating the technical and scientific fields, and they included important contemporary topics such as the complete bonification (spring, 1929) and the revaluation (not only economic) of rural lands launched by Mussolini. This was not sufficient, however, because the political climate had already started to change, as pointed out in the Club's 2012 program reviewing the situation and life of women in the 1930s (*Gli anni trenta al femminile. Libri e documenti d'archivio del Lyceum*).

The intellectual environment remained fairly intact. Up to 1936 Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco¹¹¹ continued to give concerts at the Lyceum, as did Fernando Previtali and the duo Materassi-Dallapiccola, who played modern and "even very modern" sonatas (*Bollettino n. 1, January 1934, p. 9*). In 1935 there were exhibitions of works by Karl Hofer

¹⁰⁸ V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, London, Quentin Bell and Angelica Garnett, 1938, p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75

¹¹¹ Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco was a great musician and composer; the contents of his library in Florence were donated to the Lyceum by his heirs and are now being inventoried.

(inaugurated by Primo Conti), Leonetta Cecchi Pieraccini, Felice Carena and Gio Ponti. There were also extremely high quality literary events, with the participation of Luigi Pirandello, Achille Campanile, Emilio Cecchi, and Giuseppe Ungaretti. The main problem was subjugation to the regime. Notwithstanding the famous names and the repeated visits of Queen Maria Josè, the focus of the club had been profoundly changed. First, all attention to non-Italian Lyceum clubs had disappeared, and the great topics of interest that were essential in the foundation of the Lyceum were not included in the programs. Thus, there was no international involvement and the social components had faded. The original identity had been transformed: the club was still able to organize high quality cultural events, but the organizers had to steer clear of all the great topics of the day.

This situation was confirmed by the topics of the readings held at the Florentine Lyceum (*Lecture tenute per il Lyceum di Firenze*) from the autumn of 1928 to the spring of 1944, organized by Jolanda De Blasi and published in part by Le Monnier and then Sansoni. The first series included *L'Italia e gli italiani del secolo XIX* (1930); *Visioni spirituali d'Italia* (winter 1931-32, with the participation of Corrado Alvaro, Lorenzo Viani, Francesco Flora and others); *Pensiero religioso contemporaneo in europa* (spring 1935, not published). The titles in the second series are *Giovanni Pascoli* (1937); *Giacomo Leopardi* (1938); *I Savoia, dalle origini al 1900* (1940); *Romanità e Germanesimo* (1941); *Italiani nel mondo* (1942); *Firenze* (1942); *Santi italiani* (1947). The lecturers and writers involved in the events and the subsequent publications were all famous names in the history of Italian literature: Manara Valgimigli, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Giorgio Pasquali (*Pascoli*); Alberto Savinio, Giovanni Gentile, Arnaldo Momigliano, Giulio Caprin, Luigi Russo (*Leopardi*); Romolo Quazza, Arrigo Solmi, Niccolò Rodolico (*Savoia*); Roberto Longhi, Leonida Repaci, Giovanni Ansaldo, Carlo Morandi, Guido Manacorda, Francesco Ercole, Ugo Spirito (*Romanità e Germanesimo*); don Giovanni De Luca, Giacomo Devoto, Alberto Savinio, Alessandro Bonsanti, Giuseppe De Robertis (*Italiani nel mondo*); Nicola Ottokar, Armando Saponi, Bernardino Barbadoro, Carlo Pellegrini, Eugenio Garin (*Firenze*); Paolo Lamanna, Giovanni Papini, don Giulio Facibeni, Adolfo Oxilia (*Santi italiani*).¹¹² Some of the series were not published, including the one on D'Annunzio held in 1939, and some underwent remarkable changes while being prepared for press.¹¹³

The turning point in the history of the Bulletin came in 1934 when it was transformed into a folded, single printed sheet. The change was supposedly the result of a new administrative regulation (n.1, March 1937, p. 7), but in fact without the advantageous agreement with Le Monnier that included insertion of advertisements, the Club could not afford the publication costs. The reduced space inevitably limited the content, to the detriment of explanations and even commentaries in support of the regime. Another important change was the suspension of the printed membership lists, which makes it difficult to verify the make-up and provenance of the membership in those years. We do know that the number of members dropped by 90 in a single year, from 473 in 1938 to 383 in 1939, probably a result of the racial laws.

The Bulletin, thus, became a mere calendar of events, with rare exceptions of 16 page issues that included articles about the regime referred by or involving only a few members

¹¹² See S. SOLDANI, *Bollettino*, op. cit., pp. 398-399.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

with significant positions in the club, such as Bianca Ventura Garbasso, Jolanda De Blasi, Marina Battigelli (club secretary in the 1930s), and Beatrice Rosselli del Turco, who were all loyal to the regime. The Bulletin did not comment on the dramatic events of 1944, just as it had avoided any reference to the exceptional events in Italian history around and during WWII; the sole exception was an appeal for collection of woolen clothing for those who had lost their homes or belongings because of the war, as well as veterans, persons interned in Germany, and wounded and mutilated hospital patients (March 1944).

The Bulletin has continued, with a new series from then on, but publication has been regular only in the last three years.¹¹⁴ Costs of printing and publication do not allow for a format different from what is currently provided: an editorial by the President, including a brief summary/commentary on the club initiatives, followed by a calendar of events and methods of participation.

¹¹⁴ The "Bollettino" is currently edited by the Club President and the President of the Music Section.