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# An Italian in Scandinavia: Elisa Capelli's Idealizatons of the North


## ABSTRACT

Women occupy a tiny place in the tradition of Italian travel writing, otherwise rich in well known male records; their presence is highlighted only in recent studies and their existence is circumscribed to XIX-XX century travel literature.This chapter deals with two of the few Italian women who chose the Scandinavian countries as their destination at the turn of the twentieth century. Some of these women travelled on their own, others in small groups of tourists from different countries. Companionship assumed a varied relevance: men were always present, albeit mostly side figures; in some cases, though, they represented the narrative voice; at times the authors had to create male figures in order to fill an unbearable emptiness. Therefore, even if at first sight these women's travelogues seem wholly self-referential, it becomes crucial to disclose their companions' role, their relationship with the authors, and why they are necessary to these women's journeys. Of the two travellers in this chapter one chose the company of a female friend, the other toured with her husband.



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**Italians in the Arctic**

Throughout the nineteenth century, during the Golden Age of Polar exploration, a number of expeditions were conducted to the Artic area. Primarily the United Kingdom and the United States set out on these travels, in an attempt to discover the Northwest Passage and to reach the North Pole. At the height of these activities was the celebration of the First International Polar Year in 1882, when twelve nations participated in creating twelve stations in the Artic and two in Antarctica.[1] This wave of explorations opened the area to the imagination of a wider public. After it had been the base of many expeditions during the second half of the nineteenth century, Scandinavia became the target of an ever increasing number of foreign travellers, the first daring tourists of the area.

Among them were primarily the British, who saw in Scandinavia a more temperate version of the Arctic, and who wanted to relive the Romantic myth of an ildyllic country life that had been destroyed in their own country due to the Industrial Revolution.[2] Their presence in the North soon led to the transformation of Scandinavia from a frontier land into a touristic target[3] British 'spinsters' (as female solo travellers were often scathingly referred to) started to visit Scandinavia and write their travelogues. Famous examples include Henrietta Kent's *Within the Arctic Circle: Experiences of Travel through Norway, to the North Cape, Sweden and Lapland* (1887) and Mrs Alec Tweedie's. The latter visited Scandinavia after Iceland in the winter, and crossed Finland by carriage, being one of the bravest female visitors of the Northern Countries in her times. A final example is Helen Peel, who sailed along Norway heading for Siberia on a steam ship in 1894[4]. After these British forerunners, the redefinition of this area in touristic terms started to attract female travellers of all nationalities. Among them were also Italians who, having been excluded from explorative expeditions so far, headed northwards between the last years of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century.

Italy was a relatively young country: it had become an independent nation between 1860 and 1870, after a long period of conflicts and negotiations with the powerful, long lasting neighbouring nations: France and the Austrian Empire. During the Italian *Risorgimento* women had played a crucial role, hosting political discussions in their *salotti,* backing street upheavals, taking part in secret societies (*Le Giardiniere,* a female equivalent of the more renowned *Carboneria*), and following and protecting, at home and abroad, patriots like Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Felice Cavallotti, the Cairoli brothers[5].

However, after the unification, the figure of the emancipated woman, who fought along with men, underwent a radical change. Suddenly, women were forced to resume their role of "angel of the hearth", according to their assumed 'natural inclination'. The 1865 Code Pisanelli, the new Family Law, put them in a subordinate position to their fathers and husbands. Women should embody their role of mothers and wives, and the long awaited equality of rights never took place. Nonetheless, gender emancipation was unavoidably taking place in other parts of society. Due to the proliferating industrialization, especially in the North of Italy, an increasing number of working class women were employed (and exploited) in factories. Although they were excluded from political life at first, thanks to the influence of socialist leaders like Anna Kuliscioff, the first Women Labour Unions were founded later on, which eventually led to the first laws protecting women's (and children's) labour.[6] On the basis of civil rights, the fight for women's suffrage started immediately after the unification, with Anna Maria Mozzoni's pamphlet *The Woman, and Her Social Relationships in Connection to the Review of the Italian Code*[7] (1864); indeed voting, which had been formerly promised, was now denied.[8] However, slowly but unavoidably changes occurred. In 1868 the journal *Women* started its publication in Padua. In 1874 women were admitted to high school and university education (but not to professions).

As for professional life, women engaged especially in such "caring occupations" as teaching, education and nursing, considered "suitable for ladies"[9]; some of them acquired a temporary reputation, writing books and lecturing; nevertheless, they were soon ignored and eventually disappeared from the cultural scene after a few years.[10] In such a context the woman writer remained an exception, struggling to acquire a recognized status. Few writers enjoyed a limited reputation, and mainly in a gendered field (children's books and books for young women). Eventually, only some actresses and sopranos – that is, professionals in the field of entertainment – acquired international fame.[11] In general, Italian women were certainly not encouraged to emancipate in society or public debate. Instead, they were searching for their own identity, struggling with their paradoxical role of embodying the wife and the mother on the one hand, and taking part in industrial labour on the other, rebuilding a *Terza Italia* which should lead Europe towards a new Renaissance.[12]

On the international scene, Italy was economically weak, but nonetheless aspired to a leading position. Although it was not a colonial power yet, it started to to take part in the "scramble for Africa", as well as other parts of the world.[13] Although Italy was still absent in the organization of the Polar Year of 1882, it did claim a role in various Arctic expeditions. For instance in the last

years of the nineteenth century, some officers of the Italian Royal Navy sailed with Nordenskiöld in search for the Northeast passage[14]. Moreover, between 1899 and 1900, Luigi Amedeo d'Aosta, Duke of Abruzzi, organized an expedition that earned him national (and international) fame: sledding to the North Pole, on April 25th, 1900, he reached the latitude of 86°33' 49", that remained unsurpassed for 6 years.[15] In addition,, in 1880, Paolo Mantegazza and his friend Stephen Sommier visited Scandinavia and wrote a detailed travelogue of the area, which was rich in cultural and environmental features, and can be considered one of the first tourist guides in Italian.[16] However, explorers and scholars travelling for scientific purposes did not involve women in their staff, as they considered them to be too emotional, and therefore unsuitable for scientific projects of any kind.[17] As they were excluded from men's parties, whether professional or scientific, Italian women did not have a valid reason to travel. If they did travel (abroad), it was usually there to accompany their husbands or relatives, and escort them during diplomatic missions or business ventures. Italian women had to wait for the advent of tourism to start travelling on their own – at least without having to account for it.

**A journey of one's own: Italian women head northwards**

In this atmosphere, at the dawn of the twentieth century, it seems that few Italian women chose the "extreme North" for their journeys. Although these women usually represented a wealthy, educated, international upper class, they all "carried the luggage", as they were the subordinate members of a rigid patriarchal culture. By venturing to the idealized world of the Nordic Countries, they could provisionally escape. Female travelogues remain extremely and conspicuously rare in the field of Italian travel literature, in which male writing was unrivalled.[18]

We cannot speak of these female Italian travellers as "group", but certainly of a minor, elitist trend, a fringe fashion, that started and ended in a few decades. There have only been eight women who travelled northwards and reported on their trips in this period, ranging from the first travellers who visited the North in 1898[19], and the last who visited that area in 1937.[20]

**Elisa Cappelli in Sweden**

Elisa Cappelli (Firenze, 1845-??) daughter of Luigi, a goldsmith in Florence, was a teacher and a educational developer. Nowadays her name and her books are forgotten, but in her time, she was a prolific writer of several volumes, covering a wide variety of topics. Her production convered a variety of subjects related to educational methods, and were regularly reissued until 1938. Her schoolbooks were used in primary and secondary schools until the 1940s. She was also a translator of French and English. As a teacher at Italian state schools, she was involved in the theoretical debate on educationall her life; she was responsible for *Storia universale della pedagogia*[21] (1884, MI-Trevisini), the first Italian translation of J. Paroz's *Histoire Universelle de la Pédagogie* (1867), in which Cappelli introduced and supported Pestalozzi's intuitive method. She took an active part in the educational debate, which was particularly lively in Italy during those years. As a new nation, Italy had to address the problem of the lack of a common syllabus or language, as local dialects still prevailed in everyday communication. Elisa Cappelli was deeply involved in the effort of creating a common language within the educational system. She aimed to spread new models of behaviour and new values among the "new" Italians; this is why her production is so varied and widens from simple textbooks to theoretical handbooks on didactics, from children's books to translations, from her own fiction to, eventually, her travelogue.

Cappelli's detailed travelogue was written in 1898 and published in 1902; at that time she was a lady of 53, and probably the first Italian woman reporting about her experience in Scandinavia, in times when independent travelling was neither fashionable nor recommended for a middle-aged Italian woman.[22] Cappelli writes a faithful daily report of the events occurred while travelling. Far from creating an imaginary world, or reworking events subjectively, her travelogue aims to describe facts and events.[23] The book's title *In Svezia* (*In Sweden*) simply clarifies the destination of her journey. Interestingly, it is followed by a double subheading. The first, *Impressioni di viaggio* (*Travel impressions*) hints at her subjective impressions. The second, *Libro per la Gioventù* (*A book for the Youth)* states her mission: the book is addressed above all to the young generation, the brand new Italians that were born after the unification, those same pupils Cappelli used to teach. Although it is never openly declared in the text, she aims at widening young people's minds and offering a glimpse

of a distant, attractive country – unknown to most of them, and not at all popular as a touristic destination in those days. Indeed the clarity of the author's aim recalls Braidotti's assertion that "a vision requires a politics of positioning" which, in its turn, "implies responsibility".[24] In the case of Cappelli, her "politics of positioning" can be seen in what she considers her mission, that of widening young Italians' minds by showing how their Swedish peers behave, especially between the two sexes, both in the social and in the family sphere. Writing a travelogue allows her to depict a social system that may influence Italy positively, especially in light of the relationship between the two sexes, and urges the new generation to favour women's emancipation.

By following this line of thought , and thus deliberately neglecting the more consistent descriptive one about the places, cities and natural landscapes visited, the reader is left with two possible enegagements with the text. The first is to investigate Cappelli's descriptions of human relationships, including the people she meets directly and how they welcome and host her. The second possibility, is to focus on the development of relationships among people, described through her eyes as an outsider, all the more impartial as she belongs to a foreign culture.

**The Idealized North**

Apparently, during her transit[25] from Florence to Sweden Cappelli only travels in feminine company: she and Ebba, her female companion, share the accommodation, their impressions, their opinions; nevertheless, male encounters are very frequent, as all the workers they meet are men, who prove to be essential both for the progression of the journey and to substantiate the writer's remarks. Observation plays an important role in defining the author's "travel impressions", and often substitute a direct interaction that, given her state of a female traveller in transit, is neither possible nor advisable.[26] A striking detail, is that, during the entire trip, Cappelli is attracted by the elegant uniforms of coachmen, soldiers and policemen even before they have reached 'the North', as she writes as early as in Lucerne (Cappelli: 10). In Berlin, again, she is attracted by the physicality of the handsome, broad-chested soldiers, goose-stepping. (Cappelli: 23). And then again, in Stockholm she meticulously describes the changing of the guard, where the soldiers are (of course) tall, young men, with a proud posture (Cappelli: 170). In fact, she is quite frequently impressed by people's physical appearance: first the Bavarians, who "…are healthy and strong people, taller than usual, also the women, and with a frank and honest spirit, though a bit rude superficially."[27]

Later, Cappelli praises the first 'Nordic' students she encounters, singing in a park in Copenhagen: "that superior crowd of handsome, tall, white-dressed, white-cap youth."[28] These are all examples of how the author tries to apply her theoretical knowledge about physiognomy and phrenology in practice; she shows her interest for, and competence in, the "new sciences", and shares Lombroso's theories on physical types. These theories enjoyed a valid scientific reputation in Italy (and in the whole of Europe) at the time.

When she finally reaches Sweden, the author's appreciation for the Nordic type becomes more and more evident. Tall, blue-eyed, usually 'long haired' workers immediately attract her attention (Cappelli: 74). Similarly to descriptions of the Germans, these physical features are considered signs of good temper and high moral values. For example, train conductors in Dalarna are described as

> handsome and strong, like all the people in charge for public services in Sweden, proceed calm and self-confident, and are of an extraordinary politeness.[29]

At Ludvika, "kind and friendly" workers politely greet her on the road, even though they are walking home quickly and deliberately after a hard day's work (Cappelli: 111); the farmer that leads her and her friend into a small historical house in Ornäs, once Gustav Wasa's refuge, is not only "handsome and strong" (Cappelli: 64) but so hospitable as to invite the two women into his humble house for a snack. Additionnaly, to underscore Swedish men's gentle inclination, Cappelli writes that there are "no bird hunters in Sweden" (Cappelli: 73).

Cappelli's direct experiences reinforce her opinion: Swedish people's flawless behaviour depends on the perfect examples given by the Royal family and the representatives of the Luteran Church. Among her random encounters, one proves to be particularly meaningful: Karl, the Prince of Sweden, son of King Oscar, that she meets him by chance at Stockholm Station. Here a small crowd is gathering to see him getting off a train, where he travels like any of his subjects: he's "tall and thin", but his attitude is "quick and assertive" (Cappelli: 171). Dressed in civilian clothes, he politely greets everybody and reaches his carriage. In Frescati, Cappelli is hosted by a Minister and his young wife; far from being scandalized as a Catholic by a married Lutherian clergyman, she receives the young couple's friendly hospitality, and gratefully describes the man, again by starting with his physical appearance and relating it to his good attitude and morals: "[…] the husband, a Minister, young, light-haired and strong, whose sportive and fair face expressed the purity of his thought and habits".[30] As it was the case with Prince Karl, the Minister's appearance reflects a positive moral attitude.

After these experiences, Cappelli feels entitled to draw some striking conclusions: the Swedes are "honest and disciplined" (Cappelli: 176) because of the positive examples of the King and the Protestant Ministers, that "proceed in a mutual accord" which lays the foundations for an equal and peaceful society, where people can live a pleasant life (Cappelli: 176). However, the travelogue is not only aimed at persuading her readers of the Swedes' high moral values. Addressing young people, the author tries to amuse them and arouse their curiosity, while relying on rhetoric of equality and peace.

As Cappelli travels in the summer, she has the opportunity to participate in traditional festivities. First of all, Midsummer Night's Eve, that she celebrates in Leksand: here all the country people, men and women, dance together around the Pole, dressed with their traditional costumes (Cappelli: 82). It is noteworthy that Cappelli includes this performance of 'tradition' in her travelogue. She also notices some drunkards, but even in their drunken state, they don't damage the idealized image Cappelli had envisioned: "…their drunkenness lasts a short time and does not damage anyone; it gives a good mood instead!".[31] After midnight couples continue to dance outside in the meadows, until dawn, which would have been an unthinkable transgression in Italy (Cappelli: 86). Although she is usually full of admiration for Swedish traditions and folklore in every small town or village she visits, Cappelli's encounter with the Laplanders reveals her prejudice against this people: she sees them in Skansen, Stockholm's open air museum, and subsequently dismisses them with the openly despising sentence: "…short and ugly […] by nature melancholic and suspicious, and we didn't dare speak to them, lest we'd be offended".[32] The author does not consider that these people lived in captivity and were on display like animals within the confines of the open air museum. Instead, she views their hideous physical appearance as an indication for their attitude and character, so that the Laplanders are the only negative people she reports of in her whole stay in Sweden.

However, on matters of gender, she pertains a more equalitarian view. This view comes to the fore when she expresses her amazement over the equality between men and women, both in the intellectual possibilities they are granted in Sweden as well as their ability to engage in physical activities. In Rattvik Cappelli meets groups of sportswomen trekking, wearing boots and rucksacks (Cappelli: 74), and on the Siljan Lake women are rowing "like men" (Cappelli: 87). Her amazement primarily stems from the fact that, in her home country, these activities were considered unsuitable for women. Moreover, she observes groups of university students of mixed sex in Swedish cities like Uppsala and Stockholm. This would be quite unusual in Italy, where separation between sexes was the norm, and university education was considered unsuitable for women.[33] These students are either friends of her host Ebba, or just strangers, relaxing in parks or attending social events. Although it is

not emphasised excessively in her travelogue, their mere presence in her description suggests an appreciation of gender equality. While events such as open air parties, choirs, orchestras, dances, decorate Cappelli's narrative, apparently just ornamentatively, she continuously underscores her admiration to lead a quiet and dignified life in a condition of evident equality (Cappelli: 30-31; 48; 135-137; 142; 197). At the end of her journey Cappelli visits the so-called "Society of Work" in Stockholm, where women of all social classes (even one of the Princess' Ladies-in-Waiting) offer their handwork for sale, be it tapestry, knitting, embroidery, under the supervision of the Swedish Court itself, "…and to the women who contribute the gratitude of the whole Country is righteously deserved."[34] Herself a model of independence, she meets women busy both at home and outside; consequently she maintains that

> Northern women's industriousness is unquestioned. In Sweden all ladies work, be they rich or poor, and they do not waste their time with visits or useless gossips. If they go to meet a friend, they take a handwork with them; rich ladies work for the poor, experiencing those true and intimate rewards that are not possible to those who live a fake and superficial life.[35]

Such statement sounds not only as a praise to Northern women, but also as an indirect criticism to the Italian social convention of paying visits and gossiping. More importantly, passages like these reveal how Cappelli discretely (and continuously) submits her readers to issues of women's emancipation.

**Enjoying Ebba's company: Travelling with 'My Swede'**

Cappelli's travel is rich in new and unusual relationships. First of all, she travels with a younger female friend: her former student of Italian in Florence, who accompanies and assists her all along the way, and will be her host once in Sweden.[36] As a matter of fact, this woman is never described thoroughly, possibly due to the rules of decency of the times, which recommended a general characterization, rather than a detailed one, when dealing with close friends that could be identified by the readers.[37] Indeed, this travel companion is first referred to with her Christian name only, and only in chapter 7, when the two women reach Copenhagen: "…Ebba (this is my Swede's name)."[38] However, she represents a steady reference point, albeit anonymous, since the first lines of the book, depicted as

> a Swedish young lady, my former pupil and now very dear friend who, in a bit longer than two years, has learnt Italian so well as to overtake her teacher; and she is now more Italian than Swedish, both because she has lived in Florence for a long time, and because of her feeling.[39]

Later, she is often referred to as "my friend", "my Swede" (Cappelli: 4, 14, 19, 22, 29, 30). Very often Cappelli uses the personal pronoun we, implicitly including Ebba in her narrative. Ebba is a silent but essential companion: she speaks German and, of course, Swedish, so she can arrange all the details of the journey, book hotels or buy tickets, and more generally interact with the natives; until their touching farewell in Hamburg, on Cappelli's way back to Italy:

> And it was time to leave. My good friend took care of everything, she gave me all the necessary information, had thousands of loving concerns for me, and we regretfully separated for good.[40]

As an Italian abroad, Cappelli is the guest of honour in a number of events. The first invitation she receives is in Berlin, where a Swedish friend of Ebba's, married to a famous German painter, welcomes the two women to a picnic in the forest, with a group of friends of hers. The author's description of the hostess is quite conventional, and Cappelli will repeatedly use the same words for most of the Swedish hostesses she meets: she omits the woman's name, defining her as "beautiful and kind, and very nice" (Cappelli: 19). The same adjectives characterize women all over the travelogue: Ebba's family members in Goteborg (Cappelli: 39), who learnt some Italian words of welcome; the Swedish extended family in Ludvika (Cappelli: 95-99); the hosts in Uppsala (Cappelli:135, 141); the Minister's wife in Frescati (Cappelli: 171).

Cappelli is not just a tourist, fascinated by the beauty of the Swedes; she also has the priviliged opportunity of living within Swedish families, observing the relationships between men and women in this intimate context. She admires the partners' balanced collaboration in a traditional structure, with men functioning as the wise head of the household, and women satisfied with an active, albeit complementary, position. Cappelli never explicitly compares the patriarchical Italian family to the Swedish family structure. Instead, she eloquently depicts the latter, thus providing her readers with a wealth of meaningful examples to enable them to draw their own conclusions. At times she cannot avoid noticing a difference with her home country: in Sweden, middle class women are first of all wives, and secondly mothers. In fact, they accompany their husbands on scientific or business trips, while the children stay at home with "reliable, honest" nannies (Cappelli: 127).

Social events follow one another along Cappelli's journey with an amazing frequency; since the first occurrence in Berlin she speculates that, to overtake the sombre winter solitude, Northern people take advantage of the short, bright summer days by spending as much time as possible together in the open, for instance by arranging very informal events. Picnics, as well as concerts in parks, soon become a reccuring opportunity to socialise with the locals. Moreover, because of her nationality she is welcomed everywhere as a special guest. Among the Nordic middle-class, educated people she meets, her Italian heritage is perceived as the mark of a refined culture and an illustrious historical past. Since the first picnic in Germany the people she meets are generally "appreciators of the arts and literature"[41] and students, who "praise Italy and express their will to visit it".[42]

As a life-long teacher, Cappelli feels at ease with young people and all the students she meets: she draws some interesting conclusions based on her observations, as well as direct interactions with the local people,; ranging from Berlin to Gothenburg, from Ludvika to Uppsala to Stockholm, and describing both public spaces and family's houses, her observations describe a wide range of interactions. One of her conclusion concerns the close relationship of the Swedes with nature, which "explains the Swedes' temperament as excellent workers, however simple and honest in their thoughts and actions, and maybe also happy"..[43] Consequently, children are also good-natured, and show great respect for the adults (Cappelli: 19, 119, 120). Moreover, nature inspires their creativity: "Fantasy prevails also in children, which is explained with the environment around them".[44]

A visit to Ebba's family friends in Ludvika absolutely assures the author of the Swedes' good and strong nature: this wealthy old couple, living in a beautiful villa, receives her in the friendliest way (Cappelli: 94). The wife is, as are all the women in the narrative, extremely kind and hospitable, and treats the author as an old friend. (Cappelli: 98). Her husband, the unquestioned head of the family is, an old, handsome gentleman with an assertive countenance, who suffers from a serious heart disease. When the children of the family come to visit their parents, Cappelli notices their "reverent respect", which shows even in the "simplest gestures of everyday life". (Cappelli: 120). The husband's behaviour towards her confirms her opinion about the Swedes' extreme decency. When she leaves to continue her journey, the man has reached the final stage of his disease; nevertheless:

> he apologized (via Ebba), as he was receiving me in bed…he, a dying person! […] I saw him raise […] and lower his head in a deep and respectful bow… .[45]

Cappelli draws her conclusions:

> […] Such a principled people –I thought- can only be strong and good-natured, and indeed the Scandinavians are, uncorrupted from the climate or the excessive refinements.[46]

Again, the author's indirect allusion to her home country's habits (that is, instead, affected by the climate and the refinements) is clear.

Lastly she has the opportunity to visit Stockholm Royal Library and some schools, and is able to interact with the Heads of these institutions. The Library Director is a very learned and polite gentleman who speaks Italian: Cappelli is very satisfied, as eventually she can exchange her opinions freely, using her native language. The Director tells her about his visits to Italy, and his amazement in Naples: "Everybody is shouting! – he said – and for us, used to quietness, this is absolutely disturbing."[47] He is very proud of being Swedish, since "Here we are happy – he said – we are peaceful, and we don't have to worry about politics."[48] Cappelli is ready to comment:

> Indeed the Swedes, because of their geographical position, their temperament and their educational orientation, are such an ordered people that they reject any disagreement or turmoil."[49]

Again, her comment offers an indirect reference to the confusion, restlessness and disorganisation that prevail in her home country. She visits two schools, and meets the Director of one of them in Nääs, near Gothenburg. Here she is received in the most respectful way:

> The Director had been informed of my visit and […] displayed the Italian flag. Hospitality, innate in Northern people, emphasizes when they meet Southern people. Because they spend most of the year between snow and ice, they take Italy in the utmost consideration, calling it "the Country of the Sun", and therefore they urge upon welcoming Italians in the most sincere and affectionate way.[50]

Cappelli comments on the syllabuses as well, a subject she is particularly passionate about. She praises the homogeneity of teaching for both boys and girls, as there is no apparent difference in their syllabus in primary schools. She has the opportunity to observe the students, working harmoniously together in vocational schools.She notes that,all the students, boys and girls, have to exercise every day between their classes, and that corsets are forbidden for girls. She describes that physical activities and loose clothes allow them to be particularly healthy (Cappelli: 198).

## Conclusion

Cappelli is a scholar and an educator; albeit in this capacity she is a professional writer, *In Svezia* is her only travelogue and, as the subtitle declares, it is devoted to expose the young generation to a foreign culture, and involve them in considering its social values. Therefore companionship is important, presented as an example of peaceful, respectful social and familiar coexistence; whereas the readers' amusement and the description of an exotic environment are only ancillary themes. Indeed, this journey represented a unique opportunity for Cappelli, interested as she is – as a woman, as a teacher and as a scholar in pedagogical studies – to experience the differences in social structures and human relationships in Swedish society, both through observations and direct interaction. As she is perfectly aware of her role in society – that of a teacher and educational developer – she is very careful not to shock her readers, and gradually guides them to share her positive opinion about Sweden. To do so, she approaches her destination carefully- not just the real one – the foreign country - but also an ideal one, for what it represents in terms of differences with Italy.

It might be said that she is careful not to reject Italy (perhaps keeping her audience in mind), as its glory, fame, history are well known and admired by the hosting people. Rather, she wants to be inspired by that other possible world. I suggest that the implicit message of Cappelli's travelogue, is a highly emancipatory and idealistic one: what if there was a place in Italy's new and still-developing identity for the kindness, politeness, social equality that the Swedish society embodies? In a way, her traveling companion Ebba is a crucial character in this project, and not just because her very presence clearly opens doors up North since they often visit her friends and relatives. Ebba is *both* Swedish and Italian – in fact, as we have seen, she is even called "now more Italian than Swedish, both because she has lived in Florence for a long time and because of her feeling"- and therefore in a sense embodies what Cappelli seems to stand for: a kind of synthesis between South and North, or more precisely: an Italy that remains true to itself but that has adapted what is valuable from Northern models.

Although it is very conventionally written, Cappelli's travelogue is not ordinary and underscores her personal approach. By citing the words of the people she meets and describing their behaviour both in public and private, she indirectly points to a positive example of social coexistence for her fellow country people. She offers a variety of observations, substantiated by physognomic theories - which were considered scientific and reliable in her time. Thus, her observations are "scientifically" justified to serve as evidence for the Swede's nature and their moral attitude. Moreover, she

concludes that the Swedes' attitudes are responsible for the Swedish peaceful way of life, thus openly expressing her personal approval of this (exotic) sensibility. By providing a wealth of observations of harmonious coexistence, she indicates a positive example for her target readers, namely students and young people in general: the image of a country where men and women live in harmony and equality.

[1] https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/arctic-zone/ipy-1/index.htm; http://www.ipy.org/; Malaurie, J. (2001) *Ultima Thulé*, 2nd edition. Paris: Chêne ;Berton, P. (2001) *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909*. Toronto: The Lyons Press.

[2] Fjagesund, P. & Ruth A. Symes, R.A. (2003) *The Northern Utopia: British Perceptions of Norway in the Nineteenth Century*. Amsterdam:

[3] Bayard Taylor, *Northern travel. Summer and Winter Pictures of Sweden, Lapland and Norway* (London, 1858*);* Dimitrios Kassis*, Representations of the North in Victorian travel Literature* (Cambridge, 2015); Heidi Hansson*, The Gentlemen's North: Lord Dufferin and the Beginnings of Arctic Tourism,* 2009 Studies in Travel Writing 13 (2009): 1, 61-73.

[4] Dea Birkett, *Spinsters abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford, 1989); Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women Travellers and their Writings* (New York, 1990); Dea Birkett, *Off the beaten Track: Three Centuries of Women Travellers and Their Writings* (London, 2004); Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, *Exotic Norths? Representations of Northern Scandinavia* in S. H. Kent's *Within the Arctic Circle* and Bayard Taylor's *Northern Travel, Nordlit*, 26 (2010) http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/nordlit/article/view/1047; Heidi Hansson, Henrietta Kent and the Feminised North, *Nordlit,* 22 (2007) http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/nordlit/article/view/1572

[5] VV. AA. *Le donne del Risorgimento* (Bologna, 2011) with examples of the manifold role of women in the *Risorgimento.*

[6] In 1902 a law was issued that forbade working in mines and limited the daily timetable to twelve hours (Carcano Law, or 242/1902 Law)

[7] A.M. Mozzoni, *La donna e i suoi Rapporti Sociali in Occasione della Revisione del Codice Italiano* (Milano, 1865)

[8] Some States in the Italian peninsula had already granted women's participation to local elections (the former Lombardo-Veneto; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany); in 1861 women from Lombardia presented in vain a petition to Italian Parliament. Giulia Galeotti, *La sconfitta di Atena*, in *Storia del voto alle donne in Italia* (Roma, 2006). Even in 1912 the PM Giovanni Giolitti refused the vote to women, defining it a "leap in the dark". Eventually, Italian women voted in 1946.

[9] Opinions on women's intelligence witnessed the belief of her inferiority. As an example, Paolo Mantegazza wrote: "woman is shorter, and her brains are lighter (la donna è più bassa […] il suo cervello ha minor peso)"(*Fisiologia della donna,* Milano 1893 :13*)*;"Oppression in itself, in which woman is bred, is not enough to justify her inferiority (L'oppressione, in cui fu tenuta fino ad oggi la donna, non basta a spiegare la sua inferiorità)" (ibidem :269).

[10] The advent of Fascism played an important role in erasing women from the Italian cultural scene. The most famous example is Maria Montessori, still well known abroad, where her educational programme is followed in many schools, but is recognized in Italy only at the elementary level (see: Victoria De Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Venezia, 1993).

[11] In 1877 Ernestina Puritz, of Russian origins, received a university degree in medicine; Rina Monti, in 1907 was the first female professor in an Italian University. The most famous actresses were Eleonora Duse, Lyda Borelli and Francesca Bertini; writers Matilde Serao, Sibilla Aleramo, Carolina Invernizio and Grazia Deledda (who won the 1926 Nobel Prize in Literature, but even nowadays is underestimated and mostly ignored in school textbooks); sopranos Luisa Tetrazzini and Lina Cavalieri.

[12] Although this will be the leit-motif of Fascist culture, the idea is already very popular in post-unitary Italy, supported, among the others, by Giuseppe Carducci, the "*Vate della terza Italia*", one of the most authoritative poets and scholars of the period and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1906. Guido Armellini, Adriano Colombo, *La letteratura italiana*, vol. C1 (Bologna, 1999), 323-364; Victoria De Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista* (Venezia, 1993).

[13]Franco Bandini, *Gli italiani in Africa. Storia delle guerre coloniali 1882-1943,* Res Gestae*,* 2014; Enrico Corradini, *Report to the First Nationalist Congress,* Florence, 3 December 1919; Gabriele Abbondanza, *Italia potenza regionale. Il contesto africano dall'Unità ai giorni nostri.*(Roma 2016, ch.I); G Pascoli, *La Grande Proletaria si è mossa,* speech held in Barga (Lu) 11-11-1911.

[14] The most important was Giacomo Bove, 1878-80.

[15] Giuseppe Nencioni, *The Italians in the Arctic Explorations* (Umeå 2010).

[16] Alessandra Orlandini Carcreff, *Paolo Mantegazza e Stephen Sommier in Lapponia* (Monaco, 2014); S.Puccini, *Bozzetti lapponici. Il viaggio in Lapponia di Paolo Mantegazza e Stephen Sommier, antropologi,* (Manziana, RM 2003); Mantegazza, *Un viaggio in Lapponia con l'amico Stephen Sommiers,* (Milano, 1881)

[17] P. J. Möebius, *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*. (Halle, 1900, Volume3, H.3.) maintaining that women are less clever than men because their brains are lighter; on women's inferiority, see also C. Lombroso, G. Ferrero, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (Torino, 1893)

[18] In the second half of the nineteenth century few Italian women ventured abroad and wrote about their journeys; among these, Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso wrote about her journey to Palestine, deepening her permanence in Turkey; Amalia Nizzoli wrote about Egypt, where she accompained her husband in a diplomatic mission. The first wrote in French, while the second had very little, if any, follow up.

[19] Possibly there are more diaries,that were never published.

**[20]** Elisa Cappelli, an educationist and teacher from Florence, wrote a detailed report on her journey to Sweden in 1898. Maria Savi Lopez, a scholar of folklore and an anthropologist from Turin, narrated about Norwegian landscapes, legends and traditions. Giulia Kapp Salvini, from Ancona, Stefania Türr from Rome, two wealthy noblewomen, and Ester Lombardo, a Sicilian reporter, sailed on cruises along the Scandinavian coasts in different periods: the first visited the Baltic area in 1904 and took part to the launching cruise to Iceland the following year; Stefania Türr achieved her childhood dream, visiting Norway and the Svalbard Archipelago in 1924; Ester Lombardo was the last Italian woman to write a report of her cruise northwards in 1926. Luisa Santandrea, a writer and translator from Milan, undertook an introspective journey that led her onto the meanders of Norwegian fjords - and of her own psychological malaise - in 1924. Maria Albertina Loschi and Anna Maria Speckel, two representatives of the Fascist Party, visited the Baltic and the Finnish area as members of diplomatic delegations: the first to report about Finnish culture and its assumed similarities with the Italian in 1924, the second to spread Italian culture to the far North in 1935.

**[21]** All the translations from Italian in this paper are by the author, unless otherwise specified.

**22** However, during the same years two other Italian women set their writings in Scandinavia: Giulia Kapp Salvini, that is also the object of this paper; and Maria Savi Lopez, a scholar of folklore and a forerunner of ethnology in Italy, who transcribes Nordic legends and writes fictitious novels on the foreground of the extreme North.

**[23]** L. Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge 2009)

**[24]** Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects - Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York, 2011)

**[25]** I use the term “transit” as defined by E.J.Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler. From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York, 1991: 13)

[26] As early as 1889, Lillias Campbell Davidson recommended first of all "coolness and self-possession" to women travellers on theri own. L. Campbell Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers (at home and abroad),* London 2011, first published london 1889

[27] "I Bavaresi sono gente sana e robusta, di altezza non comune, comprese le donne, ed anche di animo schietto ed onesto, quantunque un po' ruvidi in superficie." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 31)

[28] " quella schiera eletta di giovani belli, alti, tutti vestiti di bianco, col berrettino parimenti bianco"( Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 31)

[29] "belli e forti, come tutte le persone addette ai servizi pubblici in Svezia, vanno calmi e sicuri, e sono di una cortesia straordinaria." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 59)

[30] "Il marito, un pastore, giovane, biondo e forte, sulla cui faccia gioviale e serena era scritta la illibatezza del pensiero e del costume" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 177)

[31] "…la loro ubriachezza è momentanea e non reca danno a nessuno; anzi mette di buon umore ed essi e chi li vede." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 84)

[32] "…piccoli e brutti […] per natura tristi e diffidenti, non osammo rivolgere loro la parola per timore di ricevere un mal garbo." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 164-165)

[33] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy,* (London, 2010).

[34] "…e le donne che vi contribuiscono col loro lavoro, hanno un titolo alla riconoscenza di tutto il Paese." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902:.181)

[35] "L'operosità della donna del Nord è proverbiale. In Svezia le signore, ricche e povere, lavoran tutte, né perdono tempo in visite e chiacchiere inutili. Se vanno a trovare un'amica, portano il lavoro; e le ricche lavorano per i poveri, provando così quelle soddisfazioni intime e vere che non son date a chi vive di vita fittizia e superficiale:" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 57)

[36] The end of the XIX and the first decades of the XX century see a deep interest from the Nordic countries for Italy, especially as for figurative arts. M.Stella Bottai, "Perché vai in Italia?" – Artisti finlandesi in Italia e la rinascita della pittura murale in Finlandia tra Otto e Novecento (Ph.D. diss., University Roma La Sapienza, 2009). Probably Edda is one of these Nordic people, interested to learn about Italian Arts and history.

[37] The same attitude can be noticed in the other author of this paper, Giulia Kapp Salvini, that hints at her travel companions using only the first letter of their surnames.

[38] "…Ebba (è questo il nome della mia Svedese)" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 31)

[39] "… una signorina svedese, già mia alunna ed ora carissima amica, la quale, in poco più di due anni, ha imparato così bene l'italiano, da superare la sua maestra; ed è più italiana che svedese, sia per la consuetudine dell'aver abitato per molto tempo a Firenze come per il sentiment." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 1)

[40] "E venne l'ora della partenza. La mia buona amica provvide a tutto, mi dette le istruzioni necessarie, ebbe per me mille pensieri affettuosi, e con vivo rincrescimento ci lasciammo." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 211)

[41] "cultori di arte e di lettere" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 20)

[42] "Fu inneggiato all'Italia ed espresso il desiderio di visitarla" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 20)

[43] "Così spiegasi l'indole del popolo svedese, lavoratore per eccellenza, e perciò semplice e onesto nel pensare e nell'operare, e forse anche felice" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 48-49)

[44] " Il senso del fantastico predomina anche nei bambini, il che è spiegato dall'ambiente che li circonda" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 130)

[45] "…mi fece chiedere scusa (by Ebba) per esser costretto a ricevermi in letto, egli, un moribondo! […] lo vidi sollevarsi, e farmi con la testa un profondo e reverente inchino…" Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 133)

[46] "Un popolo che ha tali principi –pensavo- non può che essere forte e buono, e tali sono gli Scandinavi, non corrotti dal clima o dale raffinatezze soverchie." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 120)

[47] "Tutti gridano! -escalamva- e per noi avvezzi alla quiete, ciò produce grande impressione." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 158)

[48] "Qui siamo felici -mi diceva;- abbiamo la pace e le questioni politiche non ci preoccupano." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 158)

[49] "In fatti gli Svedesi, sì per la loro posizione geografica come per l'indole e per l'indirizzo dato alla loro educazione, sono un popolo talmente disciplinato che rifugge da qualunque dissidio o turbamento." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902, 158)

[50] "Il Direttore era stato avvisato, e per far onore a un'italiana che andava a visitare la sua scuola, aveva messo fuori la bandiera tricolore. Il senso dell'ospitalità, innato nei nordici, si accentua di fronte agli abitanti del mezzogiorno. Essi che passano buona parte dell'anno fra le nevi e i ghiacci, hanno un vero culto per l'Italia che chiamano "il paese del sole" e perciò sentono il bisogno di festeggiare gl'Italiani nel modo che più si confà al loro animo schietto e affettuoso." Elisa Cappelli, *In Svezia* (Firenze, 1902: 195-196)