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Laura Schettini. 2011. *Il Gioco Delle Parti: Travestimenti e Paure Sociali Tra Otto e Novecento.* Milan: Le Monnier. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-8-800-74072-2

Laura Schettini is one of Italy's foremost young historians of women and gender. She joins historians such as Chiara Beccalossi, Lorenzo Benadusi, Mary Gibson, and the late pioneer Bruno Wanrooij in exploring the intersecting roles of the press, psychology and criminal anthropology in the modern construction of homosexuality and gender non-conformity in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italy. Her debut work, currently only published in Italian, is a fascinating walk through the years leading up to the fascist persecution of homosexuality and gender non-conformity that seeks to explain the role of the popular press and the sexologists in the persecution of working-class gender non-conforming Italians.

Historiographically, Schettini's work contributes to a vast and still growing body of literature on the history of homosexuality and gender non-conformity in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Europe. Readers should

add this work to their bookshelves if they enjoy the work of historians on sexology (e.g. Lucy Bland, Laura Doan and Siobhan Sommerville), or historians on policing (e.g. H.G. Cocks, Matt Houlbrook, William Peniston, Dan Healey, Florence Tamagne, and Theo van der Meer).

Schettini begins her work with an explanation of how various forms of gender non-conformity, or what she calls 'transvestism,' have a long European history both within the contexts of the Catholic Church and the theater. She explains, however, that there are more Italian sources on people who transgress gender boundaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of the explosion of published scientific and social investigations on gender and sexuality. This era, identified by Foucault as the time of the 'birth of the homosexual,' is significant in Italian and European history because many psychologists, criminal anthropologists, and medi-

cal doctors published thousands of studies on homosexuality and gender non-conformity. As Schettini notes, in these years, which directly followed Italy's Risorgimento, or the movement for national unification, Italians found new identities and social circles – those of the 'homosexual' and of the 'New Woman' (activists and benefactors of feminism's first wave) – that complimented this proliferation of public discourse on gender non-conformity. This is precisely why studying gender transgression can be a useful way for historians to better understand the making of the Italian citizen. Gender non-conformity can be an illuminating lens through which to understand the gendered expectations of the new Italian citizen. As Schettini writes:

That way, transvestism became on one hand, a metaphor for the aspirations for change and to stretch the liberties for important, new social subjects; and on the other, it embodied the personifications of fears and the anxieties felt by most of society while confronting the changes that were threatening the old order of sexual models and traditional genders (7).

Any expression of gender change in this era was important because it echoed the new freedoms of turn-of-the-century women and the increasingly less masculine roles of

men as well. The decadent authors popular before World War One and the treatment of World War One veterans as increasingly feminine exemplify this anxiety. In a time of 'making Italians,' transvestism stood for the anxieties and fears of the hegemonic Italian citizen. Schettini explains how her book is a 'framework where you can witness the complex and mutual game between models of gender and sex, scientific discourse, the construction of the nation, and the role of media in public life, which is still present today' (8). But readers will not find decadent authors or members of the elite in this work; one of Schettini's major historiographical contributions is that she focuses on working-class subjects (both masculine and feminine) persecuted for their gender non-conformity.

Schettini's work is situated within turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italy for many reasons. Firstly, it is the era in which Italians defined citizenship in their new nation and therefore hegemonic models of gender were all the more important. Secondly, it was the era of the sexologists – a cadre of Italian and European scientists ranging from criminal and social anthropologists to psychologists and social-advice authors who wrote about gender non-conformity and sexual deviancy in an effort to promote a healthy 'race' under the guise of eugenics. Thirdly, Schettini chose the years 1870–1930 because of the court cases that dem-

onstrated a paradigm shift between these years. She begins in 1871 with a case of a person who was hardly punished for crossing gender lines and thus received only a light sentence. She ends in 1931 with a similar case that, contrastingly, resulted in the defendant receiving a year's imprisonment and being labeled as 'socially dangerous.' This shift was marked by the enactment of TULPS (Consolidated Laws of Public Safety) and the new civil code in the early years of the fascist regime. TULPS sought to regulate the daily life of individuals and give authority figures a standardized way of monitoring the activities that could be seen as threatening to public security. Therefore, Schettini's book follows the transition from the semi-compassionate sexologists (for example, European sexologists Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld both made arguments against the criminalization of homosexuality) to the homosexual-as-criminal model espoused by the fascist regimes.

Regarding sources, Schettini surveyed thirty-four years of two major daily newspapers, 'Roma' and 'Il Messaggero/The Messenger.' From these, she found approximately seventy articles pertaining to cross-dressing and other instances where people physically transgressed gender norms. From psychological journals, she studied fifty cases of gender transgression, and from the Criminological Museum in Rome, she utilized approximately twenty

unpublished photographs of individuals, some of which are reproduced in the appendix. She claims that these photos enabled her to better understand how gender ambiguity was a common attribute to those assigned the stereotype of the criminal and social deviant in turn-of-the-century Italy. But most notably, in her analysis of these photos, she explains how one can see the influence of the police departments themselves in the choice of costume, jewelry, shoes and backdrop for the images. In this way, the police helped to construct the image of the gender deviant. The police were trained by a new school of investigation, which began in 1902 as the Italian Forensic Police. Schettini's investigation of police records focuses on this department and their methods and training of officers in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Brilliantly, Schettini does not just study the cases of the people accused of gender non-conformity, but also the methods of profiling developed by the Forensic Police in the first years of the twentieth century. Building on the conclusions of famous criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso, the Forensic Police trained investigators and patrol officers to identify criminal types both inside the prison and on the streets. But while this style of profiling seems reminiscent of Lombroso, Schettini notes that those practising these new methods dis-

tanced themselves from believing completely in the criminal profile. They used the profiles to highlight potential for criminality, but did not want to assume criminality or guilt based on the physical characteristics highlighted by the photographic profiles. Yet, as her work demonstrates, police were taught to look for gender non-conforming individuals and regularly brought them in for questioning, detainment and often, prosecution. Schettini's book brings to life the lives of the investigators and scientists, such as the criminal anthropologist Angelo Zuccarelli, as much as the lives and stories of the gender non-conforming Italians.

Another protagonist in her story is the press itself, whose role is investigated in the book's second chapter. For each newspaper she used, Schettini tracked its publication history, the number of copies printed daily, its readers' tastes for sexual scandals, and how each publication handled these gripping curiosities. Schettini paints a picture of an early-twentieth-century Italian readership entranced by stories of mistaken identity, eloping couples, infanticide, brutal and clever crimes, scientific studies of deviance and abnormality, and among all of this, individuals who wear 'travestimenti' or cross-dressing 'disguises' that portray something other than the gender of their birth. For example, while soldiers, bicycle messengers and barbers were generally thought to be men's trades, women occupy-

ing these positions populated the country's popular press resulting in increased paper sales. Unlike the scientific studies that proliferated in the publishing industry and were consumed by the intelligentsia, the newspapers regularly brought the transvestite, the invert and the homosexual into the minds of more Italians than any scientific book ever could.

Schettini's work takes the reader on a journey through the Italian cities, its streets, asylums, prisons, and imagination. Readers are treated to the viewpoints of those in power and those being analyzed. Unlike much work on the history of gender non-conformity and homosexuality in Europe, this is not a story of the bourgeoisie or a story that focuses on only one gender; readers can get a sense of working-class sexualities that are not limited to the masculine or feminine. Because of this in-depth investigation of the popular press, they are also treated to a voyeuristic tour through the Italian sexual imagination. It becomes evident what type of sensation was sold in the press and how that sensation marked the turn of gender non-conformity from curiosity to criminality. For these reasons, Schettini's book is quite successful. Educators may also want to share the photographs in the appendix with their students in order to demonstrate the availability of visual evidence for turn-of-the-century gender non-conformity and/or police manipulation.

Schettini's work suffers from one issue. I suspect that it has exposed just the tip of the proverbial iceberg of sources on working-class gender non-conformity in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italy. This is for two reasons – neither of which were within the author's control. Firstly, Schettini is a pioneer in this field. While she joins a vast group of European historians, there are only a few scholars who do this type of research in Italy although their numbers are growing. Schettini has chosen to focus on major newspapers and I suspect that in the near future, others will utilize her methods and discover parallel stories of gender non-conformity in the local press. Secondly, every year research like this gets more efficient due to the growing availability of electronic sources and databases. Future research may include searching Italian records for name changes, which would further enable more comprehensive searches in police and medical archives as well as in the popular press. Transgender history is currently, and excitingly, further enabled by new digital technologies, so it will be fascinating to see what other evidence is found by Schettini and other Italian researchers following this pioneering work.