

Crossing the Borders and Challenging the Boundaries of White Feminism in Italy: Situated Rearticulations of Difference and the Impact of Antiracist Feminisms¹

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The increasing inequalities and power gaps among women fostered by the neoliberal restructuring of global economies have prompted some white feminists in the Global North to reckon with the colorblindness of their own theories. Responding to the criticism of Black and women-of-color feminisms around the world, white feminists have begun to confront the flaws of their traditions that have centered only on white and Western women's experiences. The present article investigates how some feminists in Italy are contributing to this development of a critical white feminism by addressing second-wave Italian feminism's lack of attention to intersectional oppression while working to create more inclusive theories and strategies of emancipation. Recent reexaminations of Italian feminist archives have demonstrated that, although early radical forms of second-wave Italian feminism, known as *il pensiero della differenza* (the thought of difference), were inspired by anticolonial and antiracist movements, they drew universalizing analogies between female subordination and racial oppression that did not examine the interweaving of these categories and the existence of interlocking oppressions.² As a result, instead of analyzing how women of color experience gender discrimination differently from their white counterparts, such feminist discourse, like that of other second-wave feminist traditions, appropriated antiracist strategies of resistance to serve the cause of white, Western and, typically, middle-class women. An examination of feminist texts from both Marxist and non-Marxist traditions will provide an example of the colorblind discourse of 1970s Italian feminism, and its failure to address the divergent experiences of women from different ethnic backgrounds who, as a result of both colonialism and postcolonial mobilities, were *already* present in Italy during those years. I will then argue that, beginning in the 1990s, as growing mobilities made women from the Global South increasingly visible in the Global North, some white Italian feminists began taking note and reversing this tendency, challenging the essentializing frameworks of earlier theories. Adopting a critical politics of positionality, these feminists have attempted to reconceptualize the practices of the philosophy of difference in order to address intersectional forms of gender oppression while

¹ The author would like to thank Clarissa Clò, Luisa Del Giudice, Emilia Di Martino, and Pasquale Verdicchio for variously supporting the work that went into this article, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers and editors at *California Italian Studies*. Please note that for the quotations in this article, when available, I used the Italian version first followed by a translation (mine or published). When the Italian version was not available, I used only the published translations. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

² See, for instance, Vincenza Perilli, "L'analogia imperfetta: Sessismo, razzismo e femminismi tra Italia, Francia e Stati Uniti," *Zapruder* 13 (May-August 2007): 9–25; and Liliana Ellena, "L'invisibile linea del colore nel femminismo italiano: viaggi, traduzioni, slittamenti," *Genesis* 10, no. 2 (2011): 17–39. Italy's *pensiero della differenza* is commonly associated with theories, such as those elaborated by La libreria delle donne di Milano (The Milan Women's Bookstore) collective and the Diotima community beginning in the 1980s, which I mention later in my discussion. Its genesis, however, traces back to the activism of the diverse radical groups who, in 1970s Italy, as in other parts of the West, had already rejected the emancipationist demand for parity and grounded the feminist struggle in sexual difference.

also meaningfully incorporating the strategies of resistance developed by alternative feminist traditions.

My analysis will examine how former members of Lotta femminista (Feminist Struggle) and co-founders of the transnational Wages for Housework campaign such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, have broadened the focus of their Marxist analysis of social reproduction to address the struggles of women from the Global South and learn from the oppositional strategies that decolonial and indigenous feminists have developed against the oppressions produced by a neocolonial global capitalism, which they first understood to be simultaneously sexist, racist and speciesist. Further, I will also examine how, inspired by feminist activism from the Global South and the intersectional theories of Black feminists and feminist women of color in the U.S. as well as the alternative local feminism developed by transnational activists in Italy, more recent feminist groups, such as Non una di meno (Not One Less), have critically reengaged with both classic Marxist feminist arguments about the devaluation of social reproduction and the intersubjective symbolic practices of *il pensiero della differenza* to redirect these discourses on behalf of intersectional gender identities.³ My ultimate goal is to demonstrate that although feminism in Italy as a whole is still far from systematically centering the discourses of those who have been traditionally marginalized, some contemporary Italian feminists, who speak from a position of privilege, have been attempting to cross borders and expand theoretical boundaries. They have been doing so by engaging in constructive dialogue with other activist traditions and meaningfully integrating alternative feminist perspectives. My contention is that these critical white feminists should be seen as contributing, alongside pioneers in the field, such as the transnational Italian feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti and historian Luisa Passerini, to the reimagining of the practices of the philosophy of difference in Europe, of which *il pensiero della differenza* has been an important proponent. Like Braidotti and other, earlier feminists, such as the American Adrienne Rich, who have inspired Braidotti's nomadic or posthuman feminism, these feminists are taking white, middle-class, national, and ethnic privilege as a "point of location for which [...] to take responsibility" in order to develop a coalitional, oppositional practice that does not ignore intersectional experiences of oppression and the alternative forms of resistance they have engendered, or transnational decolonial approaches called for in current geopolitical contexts of global heteropatriarchal imperialism.⁴ I will interpret this change as a consequence of a deeper engagement with antiracist feminisms that has moved beyond the logic of appropriation. Going beyond the essentializing discourses of the 1970s, white feminists in Italy are attempting to develop a more horizontal dialogue vis-à-vis alternative feminist struggles and perspectives that acknowledges the divergent positionalities of women's discourses, but nonetheless aims to establish transversal alliances which might serve the cause of differently situated subjectivities. In

³ Intersectionality is a term coined by legal scholar and civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw to define an approach that has been used by Black feminists, most likely beginning with the Combahee River Collective, and also by feminists of color and Chicana feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa since the 1970s. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139–67. One of the earliest and most important anthologies of intersectional feminism is Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back. Writing by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983). See also Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016).

⁴ Found in: Adrienne Rich, "Notes Towards a Politics of Location," in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (London: Women's Press, 1986), 211–31. For Braidotti, see Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); and *Posthuman Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022).

the case of *Non una di meno*, as mentioned above, I will read this shift as an outcome of a deeper engagement also with the longstanding activism of transnational Italian women and the alternative local feminist discourses that these activists have developed through their intersectional practices of resistance. As I will briefly demonstrate, transnational feminists have long been trying to reshape feminist imaginaries in Italy by foregrounding past and present experiences that have been rendered invisible, or erased, because they do not conform to reductive and essentializing ideas about Italian womanhood, and making space for perspectives that have been relegated to the periphery of established feminist discourses. Representing divergent experiences of womanhood that make power differentials visible but also foreground the need for shared commitments, transnational feminists, as Sandra Ponzanesi has argued in her analysis of diasporic women's writing, have been advancing the development of a feminist politics that "can guarantee solidarity and the respect of difference at the same time."⁵ Responding to the call of transnational feminists, while incorporating their criticism, critical white feminists in Italy are beginning to decolonize their practices and contribute to the development of a more inclusive and liberatory feminist struggle that might generate alliances across difference.

Universalizing Parallels Between Sexism and Racism: The Colorblindness of *il Pensiero della Differenza*.

The growing power asymmetries that, following neoliberal economic recolonizations and increased global migrations, separate women both "under" and also "within" the gaze of former Western empires, have prompted some Italian feminists to critically reexamine their own national histories.⁶ Such reexaminations, as scholars such as Vincenza Perilli and Liliana Ellena have demonstrated, show that second-wave Italian feminists borrowed from antiracist discourses without adequately engaging with the issue of racism or addressing the disparities generated by the intersection of gender and racial oppression.⁷ Like white radical American and French feminisms, which were among the first to establish a parallel between racism and sexism, and whose work often directly inspired Italian feminists, early articulations of *il pensiero della differenza* were significantly influenced by antiracist struggles such as the Civil Rights and the Black Power Movements in North America, as well as anticolonial movements and theories such as those developed by the French Martiniquan scholar and activist, Frantz Fanon. Yet, similarly to their American and French counterparts, white Italian feminists in the 1970s ultimately drew what Perilli defines as only "analogia imperfetta" ("imperfect analogy") between feminist and antiracist vindications.⁸ They created universalizing comparisons that highlighted a shared experience of

⁵ Sandra Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture. Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (New York: Suny Press, 2004), 24.

⁶ I am quoting from Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes': Revisited," in *Feminism without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 221–51.

⁷ Perilli, "L'analogia imperfetta"; and Ellena, "L'invisibile linea del colore."

⁸ As Perilli writes, Anabasi's collection, *Donne è bello* [Women is beautiful] (Milan: Gruppo Anabasi, 1972), whose very title, inspired by the "Black is beautiful" movement, is emblematic of how Italian feminism often appropriated Black discourses, is one of several documents that show how alongside numerous texts by international white feminists (primarily from North America and France), excerpts from works by Black feminists were also translated and circulated in Italian feminist circles at this time. However, such works, like the exchange on contraception between Black brothers and Black sisters from the Black Unity Party of Peekskill included in *Donne è bello* ("Donne nere povere" ["Poor, Black Women"], 81–82), were not adequately contextualized to show how they addressed issues specific to Black women. Serena Castaldi from the Milan-based Anabasi, and Maria Teresa Fenoglio from the Turin-

oppression between women and racially marginalized groups without examining the divergences between sexism and racism or analyzing the differences that separate white and racialized women subjected to intersectional forms of oppression. Aimed primarily at legitimizing the revindications of white, Western and, typically, middle-class women, such analogies, as Perilli contends, showed an affinity with the discourse of white feminist abolitionism in nineteenth-century America, a movement that the formerly enslaved Sojourner Truth eloquently challenged in her widely read “Ain’t I a woman” speech, developing a critique of hegemonic feminism and its obliviousness to the experiences of Black women that Black feminists would later expand and also apply to universalizing second-wave notions of “sisterhood.”⁹ Likewise, the same imperfect analogies also evoke the orientaling parallels between the domestic subordination of Western women and the familial and sexual servitude of Asian and Middle Eastern women that, as Catia Papa demonstrates, early Italian emancipationist discourse drew upon to support a universal quest for equality which was fundamentally rooted in the belief that emancipation could only be achieved via modern Western democracy.¹⁰ Initially anchored in the Risorgimento-inspired belief that women of all races are capable of self-determination, and associated with a critique of post-unitary militarist colonialism, this feminist discourse eventually shifted its focus to promote the myth of the moral superiority of Western (social) domesticity. By variously referring to this myth in their argument for the advancement of bourgeois and white women’s rights to full citizenship, subsequent Italian feminists advertently or inadvertently endorsed the racist sexual politics of colonialism.¹¹

Failing to develop what one of the earliest critical white feminists, Adrienne Rich, defined as a “politics of location,” second-wave feminists in Italy, just as white and middle-class feminists on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as earlier emancipationists in the Global North, continued to use race primarily as a way to serve the cause of white and Western women while remaining blind to the struggles of differently situated gendered subjectivities.¹² In the specific case of second-wave Italian feminists, they also failed to recognize their implicitly racist attitudes towards women connected to Italy’s colonial past and settings of direct or indirect postcolonial mobility that were becoming visible in 1970s Italy as they already had in other centers of European colonialist empires. In her critique of hegemonic Western feminist discourses of sexual difference, transnational feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty reads second-wave feminists’ analogies between sexism and racism as appropriations of the struggles of disadvantaged women that, ultimately, deprived these women of agency. Racialized women were denied their specificity as subjects of historical and political contexts beyond the universalizing category of woman elaborated by second-wave feminism. Likewise, the alternative strategies of resistance these women had

based Comunicazioni Rivoluzionarie (Revolutionary Communications), who had both spent time with radical groups in North America, had a key role in the dissemination of international feminist texts. Perilli, “L’analogia imperfetta.”

⁹ Perilli, “L’analogia imperfetta,” 9–11. Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman,” speech delivered May 29, 1851, Woman’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio. Three of the most vocal Black critics of white second-wave feminism have been Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and bell hooks.

¹⁰ Papa refers to Anna Maria Mozzoni and some of the other emancipationists who also collaborated to the post-unitary periodical *La Donna*. Catia Papa, *Sotto altri cieli. L’Oltremare nel movimento femminile italiano (1870-1915)* (Rome: Viella, 2009), 47–102.

¹¹ As Papa demonstrates, in the early 1900s, as Italy attacked Libya, Italian emancipationist discourse often moved away from or silenced its earlier anticolonialist stance. *Ibid.*, 147–200.

¹² Rich, “Notes.” After Rich, what is commonly defined as Standpoint Theory has become prominent among critical white feminists such as Sarah Harding and Donna Haraway, among others.

developed were disregarded by white and Western feminists who deemed them too backward to develop effective emancipatory discourses.¹³

Some examples of these reductive and universalizing analogies between sexist and racial discrimination can be found in the texts produced by two Marxist feminist collectives from the Seventies, *Il cerchio spezzato* (The Broken Circle) and *Lotta femminista*. For both of these collectives, the revindications of the Black struggle for liberation and racial equality were crucial to developing an awareness of how women, similar to racialized subjects, were excluded from conventional, that is, gender- and color-blind Marxist theories of class oppression, such as those that informed student and labor movements of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴ They claimed that modern capitalism had produced not only industrial-waged servitude but also a different and more perverse form of bondage rooted in the family, unwaged domestic work, more comparable to traditional forms of Black slavery. According to them, like the work of racialized subjects, domestic work was constituted as socially inferior and unproductive even though in reality it was just as essential as waged labor in producing surplus value as is demonstrated, for instance, by its rearing and caring for the existing as well as the future labor force. In a section of their manifesto, *Non c'è rivoluzione senza liberazione della donna* (There is No Revolution without Women's Liberation), titled "Le donne e i neri. Il sesso e il colore" ("Women and Black People. Sex and Race") the Trento-born collective *Il cerchio spezzato* claims that the Black liberation struggle generated their awareness that, similar to racialized subjects, women have been biologically constructed as a subordinate category in order to be kept at the margins of capitalism and, thus, like those Black subjects, women also need to pursue an autonomous struggle.¹⁵ In the collective's opinion, inspired by Black freedom fighters, women should stop merely fighting alongside male comrades and accepting the false emancipation of waged employment that supports private profit and would thus turn them into a female version of "'il negro con la testa da bianco' discriminato tra i bianchi e odiato tra i neri" ("a Black man with the head of a white man' who is discriminated against by whites and hated among Black people").¹⁶ Similarly to Black Americans who "si riconoscono sfruttati per un fatto che non dipende solo dalla loro appartenenza di classe, ma dal colore della loro pelle e [...] lottano contro una società che oltre ad essere capitalistica, è anche bianca" ("recognize themselves as being exploited not only for belonging to a specific class, but also because of their skin color [...] and fight against a society that in addition to being capitalist is also white"), women must engage in a separatist fight against "la società che, oltre ad essere capitalistica, è maschile" ("a society that, in addition to being capitalist, is also male").¹⁷

If, as can be evinced from the previous paragraph, *Il cerchio spezzato* borrows from Fanon's economic and psychosocial expansion of the Marxist analysis to demonstrate that patriarchy, like racism, is a form of capitalist oppression, the Padua-born collective *Lotta femminista*, as Ashley Bohrer argues, more openly appropriated "anticolonial discourses in a way that covers the unique intersections of systems and histories that constitute the experience of women of colour under

¹³ Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*.

¹⁴ Both groups were formed by women who left existing radical left-wing groups (student groups in the case of *Il cerchio spezzato*, and the workerist movement in the case of *Lotta femminista*) finding that they were essentially blind to women's struggles, and placed female members in subordinate roles.

¹⁵ *Il cerchio spezzato*, "Le donne e i neri. Il sesso e il colore," *Non c'è rivoluzione senza la liberazione della donna*, in *Donne è bello*, 127.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 127–28.

capitalism.”¹⁸ A group of women who turned Italian feminism into a transnational Western practice by contributing to the international Wages for Housework campaign, the members of Lotta femminista also produced flawed analogies that homogenized women’s experience. In the 1971 essay “Donne e sovversione sociale” (“Women and the Subversion of the Community”), a piece widely popularized also by the author’s collaboration with a feminist active on both sides of the Atlantic such as Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa establishes a parallel between what she defines as “sottosviluppo del terzo mondo” (“underdevelopment in the Third World”) and “sottosviluppo [...] nelle cucine della metropoli” (“underdevelopment [...] in the kitchens of the metropolis”).¹⁹ In the author’s view, both are expressions of a capitalist system that excludes certain “castes” from the main mechanisms of production in order to exploit them through unwaged or unfairly compensated jobs. According to Dalla Costa, women of urban nuclear families have been divided from one another and segregated into a domestic “ghetto” that is comparable to a colony. Here, serving as “serv[e] dell’operaio” (“slave[s] of a wage slave”), women conduct labor of social reproduction that is essential yet construed as inferior to factory work in order that such work can be removed from the wage-relation and women can be exploited by capitalist societies with the complicity of the nuclear family.²⁰ Women’s revolt, Dalla Costa posits, is “veramente conness[a]” (“intimately connected”) to the rebellions of working-class racialized groups against the institutionalized forms of racism that are perpetuated in schools as well as in factories. In both cases, the author writes, we are dealing with the revolt of those “che sono stati separati dal sistema di produzione e che esprimono nella loro azione il bisogno di distruggere quelle forze che impediscono loro di vivere socialmente, ma questa volta come individui” (“who have been separated from the system of production, and who express in action their need to destroy the forces that stand in the way of their social existence, but who this time are coming together as individuals”).²¹ Taking this analogy into account, the women’s movement, in Dalla Costa’s opinion, must reject the false notion that the assembly line will liberate women from the “schiavitù del lavandino di cucina” (“slavery to a kitchen sink”) and repudiate the logic of economic development that capitalism has offered as a solution to the problems of inequality existing both in the Global South and in the domestic spaces of Western cities.²² Waged occupations, Dalla Costa writes, not only would not dismantle the racist and sexist logic of private accumulation but would also create new forms of exploitation. In the case of women, they would most likely be underpaid extensions of the housewife condition that produce the burden of a “doppia schiavitù” (“double slavery”), since they would not eliminate the domestic labor that falls on women’s shoulders.²³ Applying antiracist discourses and, as Bohrer illustrates, particularly Fanonian theory to the feminist struggle, Dalla Costa views emancipation as depending on two important points: women’s ability to revolt against unwaged domestic labor and exploitative

¹⁸ Ashely Boher, “Fanon and Feminism. The Discourse of Colonization in Italian Feminism,” *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 3 (2014): 379.

¹⁹ Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale” in *Potere femminile e sovversione sociale con “Il posto della donna” di Selma James* (Padova: Marsilio editori 1972), 70; “Women and the Subversion of the Community,” trans. Richard Braude, in *Women and The Subversion of the Community. A Mariarosa Dalla Costa Reader*, ed. Camille Barbagallo (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 42. On the genesis of the Wages for Housework movement and the collaboration between Dalla Costa and James see the last footnote to the 2012 edition of “Women and the Subversion of the Community”: Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Women and the Subversion of the Community,” 47–49.

²⁰ Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 59; “Women and the Subversion of the Community,” 34–35.

²¹ Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 42; “Women and the Subversion of the Community,” 23.

²² Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 52, 70; “Women and the Subversion of the Community” 29, 42.

²³ Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 70; “Women and the Subversion of the Community” 42.

waged occupations that will not allow them to “riscoprire completamente le loro possibilità” (“discover their own possibilities”), and, as she later claims in the speech that helped launch Wages for Housework in Italy, the demand for a redistribution of collective wealth based on the recognition of the productivity of care work that has been wrongly devalued, made invisible and feminized.²⁴

Dalla Costa’s analogy between what the author defines as Western domestic “slavery” and racial and colonial oppression sheds light on how sexism, like racism, is also inherent to the capitalist logic of accumulation. Yet, by glossing over the differences between sexism and racism, and positing that the role of the working-class Western housewife “è determinante per la posizione di tutte le altre donne” (“is *the* determinant for the position of all other women”) under capitalism, the author overlooks the experiences of racialized women in addition to also homogenizing the experiences of women from different social classes.²⁵ She thus fails to conduct the type of comparative gender analysis, that, as Mohanty claims, is crucial to accomplishing the anticapitalist feminist mission of liberating, not only some, but *all* women from the violence of economic exploitation. This mission, Mohanty writes, requires establishing a comparative dialogue between the different experiences of womanhood that can be found both across geographic borders and within the Western metropolis with the objective of understanding how gender inequality may vary and the ultimate goal of redefining the grammar of rebellion accordingly.²⁶ In another essay from the early 1970s, “Riproduzione e emigrazione” (1974; “Reproduction and Emigration”), Dalla Costa’s analysis begins to move in this direction when the author compares different female experiences of mobility.²⁷ As Dalla Costa had already suggested in “Donne e sovversione sociale,” and as she further elaborates in “Riproduzione e emigrazione,” her view is that the domestic servitude of the Western metropolis is a phenomenon typical of a specific economy, the economy of postwar Italy and Western Europe in general, which prefers to import its labor from less economically developed areas, pitting different categories of oppressed people, including women, against one another, while using this as a counteroffensive strategy against Western European women’s increasing refusal, at that time, to continue to procreate in line with state policy and capitalist needs. French women’s rejection of agricultural labor and their fight against the demands of reproductive labor in the aftermath of World War II, for instance, prompted immigration from both Southern Europe as well as from colonized territories such as Algeria. As a result, Dalla Costa contends, “hierarchies of power” were created not only between local and migrant women but also among migrant women of different national, ethnic and racial origins.²⁸ Migrant women from Algeria, Dalla Costa writes, paid a particularly high price for ensuring that French women’s struggle did not threaten the French government’s plan for reconstruction. However, the author also claims that this is largely attributable to the fact that Algerian women, unlike Southern European women, did not come from a social fabric where industrialization was modernizing

²⁴ Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 70; “Women and the Subversion of the Community” 42. Parts of Dalla Costa’s 1974 speech are available in translation: Dalla Costa, “On the General Strike,” *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 52–54. As Bohrer writes, Dalla Costa’s theory and, more generally, the theory behind Wages for Housework, could be seen as an adaptation of Fanon’s vision of decolonial praxis and its claim that, among other things, a liberation project entails recognition of past labor and redistribution of wealth based on this recognition. See Bohrer, “Fanon and Feminism,” 382–83.

²⁵ Dalla Costa, “Donne e sovversione sociale,” 33; “Women and the Subversion of the Community,” 18.

²⁶ Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, 242–45.

²⁷ Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Reproduction and Emigration,” trans. Silvia Federici and Harry Cleaver, in *Women and The Subversion of the Community*, 69–108.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 84–97.

gender relations and were thus less likely—if only out of fear of retaliation—to reject the extended family model that they were asked to reproduce abroad. Such a claim suggests that, instead of historically analyzing the combination of sexism and racism, Dalla Costa is reading the additional oppression of women from the Global South primarily as the result of a lack of advancement of their communities of origins.²⁹ A similar type of binarism can be found when Dalla Costa later argues that the women from “less developed areas” who, after 1968, as in the case of Britain, joined European women in the revolt against capitalism, were second-generation daughters who, “freer from the innate constraints of their parents,” had “the same attitude to wage labor as any of their peers internationally, although their struggle [was] sharpened by the struggle against racism within the labor market.”³⁰ Lastly, Dalla Costa’s analysis does not consider how even though mobilizations led by African American women, such as that of the Welfare Mothers, had essentially laid the groundwork for the movement, *Wages for Housework*, in its Italian iteration, and unlike more intersectional proponents of the movement such as Black Women for Wages for Housework, did not ultimately advance the cause of racialized women.³¹ Unlike white housewives, these women often found themselves in a position where, in order to earn wages in a racist job market, they had no choice but to perform care work on behalf of others. Additionally, their reproduction became publicly regulated also through forced sterilization. As Angela Davis argued in her criticism of the movement, proponents of *Wages for Housework* such as Dalla Costa failed to meaningfully consider that the personal domestic lives of Black women around the world have been historically deemed unimportant or even threatening to capital, including those of women who, as Dalla Costa herself remarks in “Riproduzione e emigrazione,” were at that time being sterilized in the U.K., as in the U.S., to prevent them from reproducing what was regarded as an inferior or subversive workforce.³² Although Dalla Costa will later rethink her position, her earlier work, I will argue, is nonetheless indicative of how, as Jacqueline Andall contends, Italian feminism had not traditionally included race as a critical aspect of its political formation and had thus overlooked both diverging female experiences and the contributions they could have made to the overall cause of emancipation in Italy by contributing their different knowledges and forms of activism to the feminist struggle.³³ As Fiamma Lussana and Camille Barbagallo have argued, Lotta femminista developed a sophisticated feminist analysis of capitalism that acknowledged the existence of global experiences of class, race and gender.³⁴ Yet, they ultimately did not adequately explore the combination of sexism and racism, and did not pay enough attention to the differences that, in the present as in the past, separated women not only in the U.S., Britain, or France but also in Italy.

²⁹ Ibid., 93–95.

³⁰ Ibid., 98–100.

³¹ Silvia Federici, who helped start *Wages for Housework* groups in the US and has been working primarily from that region, recognized that the mobilizations of Welfare Mothers led by African American women prepared the ground for the movement. Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2020) 3, 34. The U.S./U.K. based group Black Women for Wages for Housework focused on issues related to social reproduction from Black as well as lesbian perspectives. See Beth Capper and Arlen Austin, “‘Wages for Housework Means Wages Against Heterosexuality’: On the Archives of Black Women for Wages for Housework and Wages Due Lesbians,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24, no. 4 (2018): 445–66.

³² Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 222–244. Dalla Costa, “Reproduction and Emigration,” 100–01.

³³ Jacqueline Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The Politics of Black Women in Italy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 251–55.

³⁴ Fiamma Lussana, *Il movimento femminista in Italia. Esperienze, storie, memorie* (Roma: Carocci, 2012), 171; and Camille Barbagallo, introduction to *Women and The Subversion of the Community*, 4.

Additional flawed analogies between sexism and racism can be found among other radical feminist movements, such as the Rome-born Rivolta femminile (Feminist Revolt). *Rivolta* altogether rejected Marxism and the theory of class struggle, which they considered to be too compromised within the framework of the patriarchal culture that produced it. They considered the practice of starting from the self in a relational women-only space as the only way for women to unlearn male-dominated structures of meaning, and engender, through the rediscovery of sexual difference, a symbolic system which moved away from the individualistic self of capitalist and imperialist patriarchy. Although *Rivolta*'s practices of deculturalization through *autocoscienza* (consciousness-raising) were crucial to feminism in Italy, they were not devoid of blind spots, as is demonstrated by one of the collective's main documents, Carla Lonzi's "Sputiamo su Hegel" ("Let's Spit on Hegel").³⁵ As Ellena contends, although Lonzi was inspired by antiracist texts from the U.S. and borrowed from the language of anticolonial struggles, she ultimately also reaffirmed universalizing parallels between different forms of oppressions which failed to confront the role of race and silenced Italian colonialism by relegating it, as most post-war public discourses did, exclusively to the anomaly of a fascist past.³⁶ Maintaining that all women are oppressed primarily as a sex, in "Sputiamo su Hegel," Lonzi silences the differences among women from different social classes as well as those between women from the Global North who have been oppressed by patriarchy, and women from the Global South who have been doubly oppressed by male domination and colonial imperialism.³⁷ She claims that "[q]uella tra donna e uomo è la differenza di base dell'umanità" ("[t]he difference between woman and man is the basic difference of mankind"), and that "[l]'uomo nero è uguale all'uomo bianco, la donna nera è uguale alla donna bianca" ("[a] Black man may be equal to a white man, a Black woman to a white woman").³⁸ Following this claim, the feminist revolt, in Lonzi's opinion, must focus on destroying the institution which "ha res[o] [la donna] più schiava e schiava più a lungo degli schiavi" ("made [women] into slaves even after slavery had been eliminated"), "[n]on fa[ndo] distinzioni di proletariato, borghesia, tribù, clan razza, età, cultura" ("mak[ing] no distinctions—bourgeois, proletariat, race, age, culture, clan or tribe").³⁹ The author, however, fails to reflect on how intersubjective feminist practices of sexual difference, such as those she and her movement supported, might have inadvertently reproduced the master-slave dialectic they had sought to overcome, through their disregard of material distinctions and the power differentials they create among women.

Even though her argument was dismissed by peers such as Lonzi, another co-founder of *Rivolta*, the Eritrean Italian Elvira Banotti, was not in favor of exclusively following the logic of *autocoscienza*; she felt that philosophy and learning only from women as opposed to learning through experience, including sexual experiences with men, could not allow women to truly know

³⁵ Carla Lonzi, *Sputiamo su Hegel, La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti* (Milan: Rivolta femminile, 1977). Translated as "Let's Spit on Hegel," in *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader*, ed. Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 40–59.

³⁶ Liliana Ellena, "Turbulence Zones: Diasporic Resonances Across Carla Lonzi's Archive," in *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy. The Legacy of Carla Lonzi*, ed. Francesco Ventrella and Giovanna Zappieri (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), 111–36.

³⁷ "La donna è oppressa in quanto donna, a tutti i livelli sociali: non a livello di classe, ma di sesso." Lonzi, *Sputiamo su Hegel*, 24 ("Woman is oppressed as a woman, at all social levels: not as class, but as a sex" [Lonzi, "Let's Spit on Hegel," 42]).

³⁸ Lonzi, *Sputiamo*, 21; "Let's Spit," 41.

³⁹ Lonzi, *Sputiamo*, 45, 61; "Let's Spit," 52, 59.

the Other.⁴⁰ During a 1969 TV show, Banotti openly confronted and accused Italian journalist Indro Montanelli of rape after he dismissed his experience of buying an underage Abyssinian girl as a “wife,” that is, essentially a concubine, while serving in the Italian colonies, as a normal practice of those times, facilitated by the different sexual customs of African communities: “Il vostro era veramente il rapporto violento del colonialista che veniva lì e si impossessava della ragazza di dodici anni” (“Yours was really the violent relationship of the colonialist who came there and took possession of a twelve-year-old girl”), Banotti denounced.⁴¹ This is one of the few instances in which Banotti, in spite of her mixed heritage and past commitment to finding legal solutions for illegitimate children of East African women and Italian fathers, as an employee of the Italian Consulate in Asmara, appears to have made race, ethnicity or nationality explicit elements of her feminist practice.⁴² Nonetheless, as Mary Jane Dempsey contends, Banotti’s dissenting voice within *Rivolta*, her condemnation, in her biography, of her peers’ silencing of her position, and the personal narrative through which the author continued to expose and challenge the patriarchal system in Italy (particularly through her work on maternity and abortion), should nonetheless be seen as an indication that a different idea of womanhood *was* circulating within the Roman movement.⁴³ Perhaps precisely because this idea was seen as a product of a more primitive way of thinking attributable to the author’s African origins, as Banotti herself suggested, it was discarded and confined to a subaltern space.⁴⁴ Moreover, as Dempsey adds, Banotti’s diverging perspective on womanhood should be seen as reflecting not only a positionality at the intersection of gender and race, as experienced by Banotti’s herself, linked to the silenced history of Italy’s colonialism, but also the different positionalities of women in the 1960s and 1970s, who were reaching the country’s urban centers from former direct colonies such as Eritrea or Ethiopia, as well as from the former colonies of other empires, such as Cape Verde and the Philippines.⁴⁵

In fact, around the same time that Italian Marxist feminists were fighting for the recognition of reproductive work as productive labor, another movement developed which had similar

⁴⁰ See Banotti’s memoir, *Una ragazza speciale* (Aprilia: Ortica Editrice, 2011), 16–17. On Banotti’s role in 1970s feminism in Italy, and her relationship with other members of *Rivolta femminile*, see Mary Jane Dempsey “Finding Postcolonial Figures: Rediscovering Elvira Banotti and her Role in the Italian Feminist Movement,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 7 (2018): 1043–64.

⁴¹ Elvira Banotti, *L’ora della verità*, Rai, 11 November 1969. Available online at: <https://archivio.quirinale.it/aspr/gianni-bisiach/AV-002-001325/indro-montanelli#a>. On the racist sexual politics of Italian colonialism see, for instance: Giulia Barrera, *Dangerous Liaisons: Colonial Concubinage in Eritrea (1890-1941)* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Program of African Studies, 1996); Barbara Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi. Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali interrazziali nella Colonia Eritrea (1890-1941)* (Naples: Liguori, 1998); Nicoletta Poidimani, *Difendere la “razza.” Identità razziale e politiche sessuali nel Progetto imperiale di Mussolini* (Rome: Sensibili alle Foglie, 2009); and Angelica Pesarini, “‘Blood is Thicker than Water’: The Materialization of the Racial Fascist Body in East Africa,” *Zapruder World: An International Journal for the History of Social Conflict* 4 (2017), / <https://doi.org/10.21431/Z33S32>.

⁴² As Dempsey claims, in her book on maternity and abortion, *La sfida femminile. Maternità e aborto* (Bari: de Donato, 1971), Banotti refers to patriarchy as a form of sexual colonialism. However, beyond this parallel, and the author’s inclusion, in the same volume, of some interviews to women of non-Italian origins, Banotti did not explicitly focus on the struggle of transnational women. Dempsey, “Finding Postcolonial Figures,” 1056–57. In any case, Banotti’s feminism undoubtedly deserves to be further investigated.

⁴³ Dempsey, “Finding Postcolonial Figures.”

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1054–55.

⁴⁵ On this topic see Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*; Wendy Pojmann, *Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy* (London: Routledge, 2006); Sabrina Marchetti, *Le ragazze di Asmara. Lavoro domestico e migrazione postcoloniale* (Rome: Ediesse, 2011); and Beatrice Busi, ed., *Separate in casa. Lavoratrici domestiche, femministe e sindacaliste: una mancata alleanza* (Rome: Ediesse, 2020).

objectives but did not cross paths with Lotta femminista nor other feminist movements. Migrant women working as paid domestic workers and often replacing local women who were beginning to work for a wage or, such as some Eritrean women, following Italian colonial families returning to Italy, were also mobilizing for better conditions. At times, these transnational women also collaborated alongside Italian women in workers' organizations such as the Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani (ACLI-COLF; Italian Workers Christian Associations).⁴⁶ However, not only were the specific experiences and concerns of this new category of reproductive workers not well integrated into the agenda of Italian organizations, whose subordination of ethnicity and race to class and gender equality led many to form independent transnational women's associations, but they were also largely ignored by feminists.⁴⁷ Thus, Italian feminism failed to include in their mission the struggles of women linked to both Italy's colonial past and a postcolonial present where the "margins" were travelling to the "center" of a former (Italian) empire, which, though less extensive than others, had indeed also committed just as atrocious crimes, racist sexual crimes included, as demonstrated by Montanelli's and many other Italian colonists' abuse of racialized women in Africa.

The lack of any serious reckoning with colonialism, and a failure to address the presence of migrant and hyphenated Italian women, seem to be the underlying causes behind the phenomenon that Ellena has defined "l'invisibile linea del colore nel femminismo italiano" ("the invisible color line in Italian feminism"), that is, the failure of 1970s Italian feminist theory to adequately address past and present intersections of sexism and racism.⁴⁸ As is further demonstrated by some of their travels and studies on the struggle of people and women in African countries, Italian feminists of the time were receptive to antiracist and anticolonial vindications. Yet they did not adequately reflect on the different positions of white and racialized women, nor on the limitations of authorial perspectives that came from privilege.⁴⁹ In addition, they appear to have been less receptive to the multipositional identities and changing female landscapes of their own past and present communities.⁵⁰ As a result, they failed to meaningfully engage in dialogue with women of Afro-Italian descent, such as Banotti, nor did they pay enough attention to the other women who were arriving from former colonies and the Global South more generally. In the case of Lotta femminista, as mentioned above, feminists also failed to engage with the transnational women who were involved in the same type of reproductive labor as local "operaie della casa" ("houseworkers").⁵¹ Nor did they dialogue with the migrant and multicultural organizations that, though often inspired by ideologies different from their own, such as Christianity in the case of ACLI-COLF, were also fighting against the devaluation of domestic work. Dalla Costa herself indirectly references this missed encounter in an article from the early 1980s, "Emigrazione, immigrazione e composizione di classe in Italia negli anni '70" ("Emigration, Immigration, and

⁴⁶ See, in particular, Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*, as well as Busi, ed., *Separate in casa*, 11–36, 159–280, and 205–29.

⁴⁷ See, in particular, Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*; and Pojmann, *Immigrant Women*.

⁴⁸ Ellena, "L'invisibile linea del colore."

⁴⁹ Ellena writes that although feminists' travels to African countries, such as those by Luisa Passerini and Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, were informed by a desire to critically engage with the dynamics of colonialism (a desire that, in Passerini's case, may have inspired the historian's later critique of Eurocentrism), they produced analyses and published works that were not immune to such limitations. Ellena, "L'invisibile linea del colore," 37.

⁵⁰ Perilli writes that, although some works, such as Dacia Maraini's 1976 documentary *Le ragazze di Capo Verde*, acknowledged the presence of Black women in Italy, the racialized subjects to whom most Italian feminists of the time were referring were not these women, but African Americans. Perilli, "L'analogia imperfetta," 23.

⁵¹ *Le operaie della casa* was the title of the journal created and circulated by Wages for Housework in Italy.

Class Composition in Italy in the 1970s”), where she comments on how Italian women’s increasing shift to waged labor, combined with their reluctance to do both unpaid and paid live-in domestic work, as well as the lack of public welfare measures in support of the collectivization of care work, would commodify this sector and relegate it primarily to the realm of women from Asia and Africa. Like their male counterparts in the factories, migrant women employed as care workers, the author writes, would be paid famine wages as the Italian labor market reorganized around the “classical imperialist division of labor, according to a color line imposed on the ‘Blacks’ who accept[ed] the jobs that no one else in Italy [was] any longer willing to perform at the wages offered in compensation.”⁵² However, as Andall points out, Dalla Costa’s optimistic conclusion, that these new subjectivities would be included in local proletarian movements, alongside her continued lack of consideration, in her theoretical framework on social reproduction, of the specificity of racialized women’s experience under capitalism, denotes that even at this stage, the author’s analysis had not yet examined the broader implication of the intersection between racism and sexism. Furthermore, Dalla Costa had also neglected to reflect on how, as racialized women were being increasingly confined to subaltern and more exploitative domestic rungs, white women in Italy, for their part, were becoming once again complicit with racist forms of gender oppression similar to the ones of colonial times.⁵³

The tendency of 1970s feminism to leave the intersection of sexism and racism unexplored continued with later generations of Italian feminists and their subsequent articulations of *pensiero della differenza*. Developing Lonzi’s position, La libreria delle donne di Milano (The Milan Women’s Bookstore) collective and the later Verona-based Diotima group, paired women’s intersubjective rediscovery of difference with the reconstruction of broken female genealogies, particularly the reestablishment of an interrelational mother-daughter ontology in the case of Diotima.⁵⁴ As Braidotti contends, feminists associated with these groups, such as Luisa Muraro and Adriana Cavarero, provided a more politicized adaptation of the relational ontology that was first proposed by post-structuralist feminists such as the Belgian-born French thinker Luce Irigaray because they theorized sexual difference “in terms of a social and symbolic alliance of women.”⁵⁵ Nonetheless, they neglected to examine how material disparities and power inequities among women might affect practices of relationality in ways that reproduce male dynamics of domination.⁵⁶ This primary emphasis on sex and the failure of Italian feminism to reflect on the existence of divergent gender locations and account for one’s own privilege, have been recently addressed by some Italian feminist historians, including second-wave feminist and scholar of

⁵² Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Emigration, Immigration, and Class Composition in Italy in the 1970s,” trans. Richard Braude, in *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 121.

⁵³ Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*, 254.

⁵⁴ See La libreria delle donne di Milano, *Non credere di avere dei diritti. La generazione della libertà femminile nell’idea e nelle vicende di un gruppo di donne* (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1987). Among Diotima’s publications, see *Il pensiero della differenza sessuale* (Milan: La Tartaruga 1987) and *Mettere al mondo il mondo. Oggetto e oggettività alla luce della differenza sessuale* (Milan: La Tartaruga, 1990), in addition to important works by Luisa Muraro and Adriana Cavarero: Luisa Muraro, *L’ordine simbolico della madre* (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1991); Adriana Cavarero, *Nonostante Platone: figure femminili nella filosofia antica* (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1991); and Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti: filosofia della narrazione* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1997).

⁵⁵ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 147.

⁵⁶ In *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti* Cavarero’s discussion of the relationship between the white narrator and Black storyteller of *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena* hints at the possibility that an intersubjective narrative might reproduce a dynamic of domination between a narrator who is in a position of privilege and a storyteller who is not (Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi*, 86–88). Yet, the author does not elaborate on the risk of “cultural colonization” and “instrumental appropriation” that, as she mentions, this type of relational narrative carries.

critical European studies, Luisa Passerini. Critically reflecting on her own work, Passerini has claimed that one of the most fruitful results of her recent examination of human mobility within Europe, which involved interviews with mobile women and men from various continents, has been precisely a new awareness of the ethnocentric limitations of an intersubjective methodology which does not include a politics of positionality.⁵⁷ Directing a similar criticism also to other second-wave Italian feminists, the author has recognized that, like other Western feminisms, Italian feminism has been traditionally anchored in a predominantly white and middle-class framework.⁵⁸ Drawing on omissions and poor contextualizations of Black radical feminist texts from the 1970s in Italian translations, she concludes that “il problema del corpo colorato [...] non era stato recepito in Italia” (“the problem of the Black body [...] had not been recognized in Italy”).⁵⁹ Thus, according to the author, and in hindsight, even within the Italian context “assumono senso le critiche delle femministe nere al ‘corpo bianco’ delle femministe borghesi, tema che varrebbe la pena aggiornare al contesto attuale” (“Black feminists’ criticism of the ‘white body’ of middle-class feminists is understandable and it would be useful to further investigate the issue based on the current context”).⁶⁰

Broadening the Focus of Social Reproduction Theory: The Reframing of Italian Marxist Feminism in the 1990s and the Impact of Decolonial Feminisms.

Connecting more meaningfully and extensively with diverse feminist networks, some white feminists in Italy have recently begun recognizing and addressing the colorblindness of their discourses and are working towards challenging and expanding the boundaries of their theories. In so doing, they seem to be moving in a similar direction to historians such as Passerini, and working alongside feminist theorists, such as Braidotti, who have redefined the philosophy of difference, working toward “the development of a transnational and antiracist European perspective” and “radical relocations of whiteness.”⁶¹

Beginning in the 1990s, neocolonial economies and neoliberal social policies increased inequalities between the Global North and the Global South, giving rise to human mobility and making the power divides among women more visible “within western eyes.” Thus, an increasing number of activist organizations led by white Italian women began to engage, though rarely very

⁵⁷ I am referring in particular to the 2013–2018 European Research Council Project, “Bodies Across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond (BABE),” of which Passerini has been the principal investigator. The project collected memories of mobility that can help rethink European identity beyond exclusionary paradigms and in the direction of affective relations that promote equal rights of participation. The project has produced various publications. Among them see, in particular, Luisa Passerini, *Conversation on Visual Memory* (Florence: European Research Council, 2018), <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/60164>. On the recent decolonization efforts of Italian historians and anthropologists, see Catia Papa, “Studies on Colonialism and Racialisation: Itineraries in Women’s and Gender History in Italy,” in *Women’s History at the Cutting Edge. An Italian Perspective*, ed. Teresa Bertilotti (Rome: Viella, 2020), 61–78.

⁵⁸ Luisa Passerini, “Corpi e corpo collettivo. Rapporti internazionali del primo femminismo radicale italiano,” *Il femminismo degli anni Settanta*, ed. Teresa Bertilotti and Anna Scattigno (Rome: Viella 2005), 181–96.

⁵⁹ Passerini comments, for instance, on the omission of a section on “Black Feminism” from the translation of *Notes from the Third Year* and on how the translated exchange between Black brothers and Black sisters from the Black Unity Party of Peekskill included in Anabasi’s *Donne è bello* stresses gender conflict (women’s criticism of their brothers’ request not to take the pill), while failing to explain, for Italian audiences, the context of Black women’s sterilization in America, and the Black genocide, which produced the exchange. *Ibid.*, 192. On this topic see also Ellena, “L’invisibile linea del colore,” 26–27.

⁶⁰ Passerini, “Corpi e corpo collettivo,” 192–93.

⁶¹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 80, 148.

successfully as Andall and others have demonstrated, with the struggles of transnational Italian women and the demands set forth by mobilizations, organized by migrant women themselves, demanding more equitable political and social rights, beyond gender emancipation.⁶² As Heather Merrill and Wendy Pojmann have shown, some mixed associations such as Alma Mater/Almateria (Nourishing Mother/ Nourishing Earth) in Turin, and, as Pojmann has demonstrated, a number of intercultural organizations, particularly in the Emilia Romagna region, have also attempted to overcome the paternalistic, savior/victim or teacher/student, relationship, and the ethnic and racial blindness, which has compromised the mission of several of these organizations.⁶³ Even though these multicultural organizations have also inevitably been impacted by the power imbalances that inform women's relations in Italy, they have made some meaningful attempts to create a more horizontal dialogue among diverging positionalities. They have sought to place on equal grounds different material concerns, empowerment strategies, and emancipatory agendas, while, in some cases, also attempting to create an opportunity for native and transnational Italian women to exchange gendered forms of cultural and artistic expressions in non-unilateral, top-down modalities. In scholarly feminist circles, the same global context of increased inequalities prompted former members of Lotta femminista and Wages for Housework to interrogate the ethnocentrism of their discourses and to contest the limits of a white Marxist feminist critique that, as Black feminists had exposed, homogenized women by failing to consider historically situated perspectives which exceed that of the white and Western housewife and have generated both different struggles and alternative feminist knowledges. According to Bohrer, synthesizing Marxist and intersectional frameworks, as several Black feminists and feminist women of color, from the Combahee River Collective to Angela Davis and María Lugones, among others, have done since the 1970s, these feminists have revised their theory of social reproduction in a way that shows “a sensitivity to and an awareness of global geopolitics, colonization and neo-imperialism in a much more comprehensive manner than most other Western feminist traditions.”⁶⁴

In the 1994 essay “Capitalismo e riproduzione” (“Capitalism and Reproduction”), Mariarosa Dalla Costa writes that the increased devaluation of reproductive labor created by the neoliberal reorganization of production prompted her to redirect the focus of her work on those women who have become the targets of overlapping forms of global oppression.⁶⁵ Alongside colleagues such as Silvia Federici and Giovanna Franca Dalla Costa, Dalla Costa began to focus her analysis on

⁶² Andall refers specifically to the debates among the native and transnational women who collaborated in the two Rome-based leftist multiethnic organizations *Donne senza frontiere* and *Libere, Insieme*. Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*, 251–85.

⁶³ Merrill and Pojmann have, however, also confirmed that even the most successful organizations have not always placed native and transnational women on equal grounds or adequately incorporated the material concerns and feminist perspectives of the latter. By Merrill see: Heather Merrill, “In Other Wor(l)ds: Situated Intersectionality in Italy,” in *Spaces of Danger: Culture and Power in the Everyday*, ed. Heather Merrill and Lisa Hoffman (Athens: Georgia University Press, 2015), 77–100; “Making Space for Antiracist Feminisms in Northern Italy,” in *Feminism and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice*, ed. France Winddance Twine and Kathleen M. Blee (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 17–36; and *An Alliance of Women: Immigration and the Politics of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006). By Pojmann see: Wendy Pojmann, *Immigrant Women*, 111–33; and “Creativity as a Feminist Practice: Intercultural Women's Associations in Italy,” in *Contemporary Italian Diversity in Critical and Fictional Narratives*, ed. Marie Orton, Graziella Parati and Ron Kubati (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2021), 103–15.

⁶⁴ The quote comes from Bohrer, “Fanon and Feminism,” 390. Bohrer's discussion on the integration of Marxist and intersectional theory, however, can be found in Ashley Bohrer, “Intersectionality and Marxism: A Critical Historiography,” *Historical Materialism* 26, no. 2, (2018): 46–74.

⁶⁵ Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “Capitalism and Reproduction,” trans. Julian Bees, in *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 217–28.

communities in the Global South, at the center of the contemporary crisis of social reproduction, where women activists, as her and her colleagues' study revealed, had developed alternative feminist practices that could more effectively counter a logic of profit which, in addition to producing multiple enhanced forms of inequality, also doomed life to extinction.⁶⁶ In the neoliberal economy, Dalla Costa writes, women who belong to discriminated races and nations are more prominently affected by the systemic violence caused by capitalist economies. If the global politics of austerity and debt restructuring ushered in by international financial agencies has led to the erosion of social welfare, decreasing salaries and a rise in precarious employment worldwide, the practice of land privatization and collective dispossession that accompanied such policies in the Global South has been also altogether depriving indigenous populations of the ability to reproduce life. In the new and highly exploitative male wage economies introduced in the Global South, women have been deprived of their central roles in subsistence economies where labor was not divided along gender lines and the reproduction of life depended on women's and men's equal access to free natural resources. Further, the lack of adequate alternative occupations made these women the primary targets of an international gendered and racialized labor market that supports a coercive underground sex economy, and sacrifices the social reproduction of disadvantaged communities, relegating them to low-cost care work for a Global North that has come to depend on it, thereby reducing its public welfare budget and cheapening the cost of labor in a competitive global market.⁶⁷ As Dalla Costa writes in the essay, "La porta dell'orto e del giardino" (2000; "The Door to the Garden"), the discourse of social reproduction that she and her colleagues developed in the 1970s can continue to offer an important framework for the contemporary feminist struggle, but on the condition that it be reworked to adequately address the struggles of women who experience greater exploitations, forced as they are to assume unprofitable and riskier care occupations, including through forced migration, in order to support themselves and their communities.⁶⁸ This revision, Dalla Costa suggests, will not only entail meaningfully incorporating the experiences of such women, differently situated to the other care workers whose needs have been traditionally addressed by the Italian Marxist feminist demand for a guaranteed salary and the collectivization of housework. It will also require learning from the wealth of feminist knowledges and the alternative strategies of resistance that women in the Global South have developed to resist a wage economy that is not only misogynistic but also (as these feminisms were first to argue) both racist and speciesist. Indigenous movements, such as those spearheaded in Latin America by the Mayan Guatemalan peasant activist Rigoberta Menchú and the Zapatista anti-neoliberal and gender justice movement based in Chiapas and in India by the Chipko women,

⁶⁶ See, for instance, the contributions by all three authors, M. Dalla Costa, G. F. Dalla Costa, and Federici, to the following volumes: Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Giovanna Franca Dalla Costa, eds., *Paying the Price. Women and the Politics of International Economic Strategy* (London: Zed Books, 1995); and Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Giovanna Franca Dalla Costa, eds., *Women, Development, and the Labor of Reproduction: Struggles and Movement* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999). See also later works by Federici, such as the above-mentioned *Revolution at Point Zero*.

⁶⁷ See both Dalla Costa's "Capitalism e Reproduction" and the more recent "Women's Autonomy and Remuneration of Care Work in the Emergencies of Eldercare," trans. Silvia Federici, *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 160–79).

⁶⁸ Dalla Costa, "La porta dell'orto e del giardino" (lecture given during the seminar organized at the occupied Rialto, June 1–2, 2002, for the launching of Guido Borio, Francesca Pozzi and Gigi Roggero, ed. *Anteriore* (Rome: DeriveApprovi, 2002), <https://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdallacosta.htm>; "The Door to the Garden," trans. Fulvia Serra, in *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 229–47.

who inspired ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva, have taught feminists an important lesson.⁶⁹ They have demonstrated that oppositional strategies rooted in precolonial knowledges, which supported collective forms of social reproduction and opposed the privatization of the material commons, propose the most powerful and compelling strategies against the necropolitics of capitalist development. Fighting land enclosure, dispossession, environmental commodification, and financialization as the primary causes behind the loss of women's self-determination, decolonial and eco-feminisms indicate a way forward for feminism. They demonstrate how the feminist struggle can effectively antagonize an economy that continues to devalue social reproduction and confine women to domestic-based capital-producing activities, while also globally exploiting the care work of women from underprivileged communities that capital considers expendable, and condemning altogether to extinction the reproductive powers of human and nonhuman life. "Che ne potremo fare di un salario ("What are we going to do with a paycheck"), Dalla Costa asks, "se potremo comprare solo veleno?" ("if everything we can buy is toxic?"); "[s]ono maturi i tempi per cominciare a coniugare le riflessioni su una garanzia di reddito con quelle sulla disponibilità della terra e la salvaguardia dei suoi poteri riproduttivi?" ("[a]re the times ripe for starting to make a connection between a guaranteed salary, the availability of the land, and the safeguarding of its reproductive powers?").⁷⁰ The author's answer to these questions is indicative of her move toward an anticapitalist borderless feminism, similar to that described by Mohanty. This approach, which, in white feminist circles, as Mohanty claims, has been initiated by German scholar Maria Mies, centers both the struggles and the feminist resistance strategies elaborated by indigenous women. Dalla Costa suggests that the transnational collaborations which indigenous farming and fishing communities from the Global South and similar communities in the Global North have begun to establish in the 1990s to antagonize the neoliberal economy, forming organizations, such as La Via Campesina (The Peasants' Way) and the World Forum of Fisher People, that are strongly inspired by feminist activism and committed to gender emancipation, will enable the critical transmission of oppositional strategies and knowledges.⁷¹ Influenced by the indigenous women who in Guatemala, India, and elsewhere in the Global South first engaged in the dual struggle to resist land dispossession and expropriation of bodily self-determination, these movements will likely encourage the development of broader and transversal practices of self-determination through the reappropriation of both social rights and the material commons.

⁶⁹ Dalla Costa explains that her later theorizing was influenced by Menchú's *testimonio* about the struggles of Guatemalan indigenous farmers against expropriation at the hands of European-descended landowners and foreign companies and the violent repression of rural movements carried out by the Guatemalan government. Menchú, like other women who also grew particularly aware of the connection between expropriation, the struggle for social reproduction, and gender violence, took on a leading role in the resistance against this neocolonialism. See Rigoberta Menchú and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, trans. Ann Wright (London: Verso, 1984). Likewise, Dalla Costa claims that Shiva's *Staying Alive* was also a crucial reading for her more recent work, particularly the author's account about the Chipko women's resistance against the lumber companies who had offered them jobs in the saw mills in exchange for tearing down the local forests that gave them sustenance. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989). In addition to Dalla Costa's "La porta dell'orto e del giardino," see also her earlier "Capitalismo e riproduzione," as well as the article, "L'indigeno che è in noi, la terra a cui apparteniamo," in Alessandro Marucci, ed., *Camminare domandando. La rivoluzione Zapatista* (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 1999), 278–315. Zapatismo's internal movement for gender justice culminated in the drafting of the Women's Revolutionary Laws.

⁷⁰ Dalla Costa, "La porta dell'orto e del giardino"; "The Door to the Garden," 246.

⁷¹ On the Fisher People movement, see Monica Chilese and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, *Nostra madre oceano. Questioni e lotte del movimento dei pescatori* (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2005).

Critical Reworkings of Difference in the Era of a New “Feminist International”: *Non una di meno* and Recent Engagements with International and Local Antiracist Feminisms.⁷²

A redefined and more broadly transnationalized version of Marxist feminism that also rearticulates the more typically symbolic intersubjective practices of Italian *pensiero della differenza* appears to be one of the main springboards from which other white Italian feminists have more recently addressed the interlocking oppressions produced by the systemic violence of global economies and a neoliberal politics that institutionalize the practices of a sexist and racist market. In addition to being inspired by international antiracist feminisms and to being directly connected with transnational feminist networks originating in the Global South, this branch of critical white Italian feminism appears to be more clearly indebted also to the local transnational women activists who, working outside established feminist spaces, had already been making the Italian feminist struggle more inclusive. It is these transnational feminists who have laid the groundwork for the development of an intersectional theory that is specifically Italian.

Transnational Italian women have been actively developing an alternative narrative of feminist social activism through their own self-organizing. As Pojmann and Camilla Hawthorne have demonstrated, respectively, single and multiethnic migrant women’s organizations and more recent entrepreneurial initiatives led by second-generation Italian women of African descent have been mobilizing to enable racialized women of different generations to move beyond unilateral narratives of cultural identity and social integration that fail to valorize race and ethnicity and persist in organizing identity around the sexist and racialized forms of labor supported by the institutionalized discrimination of hard-to-obtain citizenship and resident status.⁷³ On the other hand, as Andall and more recently Sabrina Marchetti, as well as other Italian investigators of the international DomEqual initiative have shown, transnational women’s mobilizations have also been supporting the many overrepresented women in the field of care work by reframing and revitalizing local preexisting discourses of Marxist feminism in ways that might make them more effective for all women in Italy.⁷⁴ In addition to being characterized by high levels of irregularity, legal noncompliance and a national collective agreement that does not afford the same rights as other work in relation to health, parental leave, social security coverage and working-hours for live-in workers, domestic work is also affected by punitive immigration policies. The Bossi-Fini

⁷² Verónica Gago, one of the founders of Ni Una Menos in Argentina, has used the term “Feminist International” to define the recent wave of mass transnational and (trans)feminist mobilizations originating in the Global South. Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*, trans. Liz Mason-Deese (London: Verso, 2020).

⁷³ As Pojmann contends, organizations of women from countries such as Cape Verde, the Philippines, Eritrea, and South America, alongside multiethnic organizations such as Candelaria in Rome, have developed well-organized networks as well as forms of cooperation with Italian institutions that facilitate the type of integration that transnational women want. Pojmann, *Immigrant Women*, 81–110. Hawthorne, for her part, has focused on the second-generation women activists who, in addition to mobilizing for the reform of citizenship law, have been remaking Made in Italy to advance a more cosmopolitan vision of Mediterranean identity and create opportunities in sectors from which Afro-Italian women are often excluded. Camilla Hawthorne, “Making Italy: Afro-Italian Entrepreneurs and the Racial Boundaries of Citizenship,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 22, no. 5 (2021): 704–24. See also Hawthorne’s more recent *Contesting Citizenship: Race and Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).

⁷⁴ Andall, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service*. See the leading publication of the international research initiative on global domestic work led by Marchetti at Ca’ Foscari University in Venice: Sabrina Marchetti, Daniela Cherubini, and Giulia Garofalo Geymonat, *Global Domestic Workers: Intersectional Inequalities and Struggles for Rights* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021). More information on DomEqual can be found on the following website: <https://domequal.eu/about/>.

Law, for instance, ties residence permits to a quota system and stable employment contracts, further decreasing migrant women's opportunities for self-determination while essentially aiding exploitative employers.⁷⁵ Transnational activists have added to the local feminist agenda the need to address the interlocking oppressions produced by the connection between the public devaluation of social reproduction labor, the exploitation of often invisible and unregulated care work, and restrictive migrant rights. In so doing, as Marchetti and her co-investigators contend, they have shown the way forward for Italian Marxist feminism in order for it to make up for missed alliances of the past. Transnational activists have demonstrated how the ongoing struggle for the public support of collective care in Italy can be broadened and strengthened in ways that that might benefit various gendered positionalities, both transnational and non, that continue to disproportionately carry the burden of unpaid and low-paid domestic work in Italy.⁷⁶

For their part, continuing the work of social activists, transnational cultural activists have developed creative discourses that more openly contextualize this activism within the context of feminist theory. Focusing on experiences of coloniality, post-coloniality, and neo-coloniality, in the past thirty years, the storytelling of first- and second-generation transnational Italian women, which has also produced anthologies such as *Pecore nere* (Black Sheep) and the more recent *Future: Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi* (Futures: Tomorrow Narrated by the Voices of Today), have developed powerful counter-histories.⁷⁷ In addition to questioning hegemonic and restrictive notions of Italianness, these counter-histories often expose the universalizing and limiting notions of Italian womanhood with which local feminist discourses have reinforced exclusionary theories of identity and institutionalized forms of racism. Reclaiming the intersectional differences of the Italian gendered experience, transnational writers have directly or indirectly invited white feminists to expand local feminist genealogies and integrate different feminist perspectives into their theorizing. They have thus supported the development of a shared oppositional praxis that, in the words of African American feminist bell hooks, might replace false and essentializing notions of sisterhood with mutual solidarities based on the shared responsibility for fighting oppressions which, as a consequence of unequal privileges, affect women differently.⁷⁸ Consider, for example, the short story "Ana de Jesus" by first-generation Brazilian Italian author, Christiana de Caldas Britos, which exposes the neocolonial, "madam-maid" relations that many privileged women employers with a white savior complex have established with transnational female domestic workers.⁷⁹ Although her "Madam" does not give Ana the comforts and affection of a home away from home, she also does not understand nor does she make time to listen to Ana's explanation as to why she longs to return to her less privileged and yet also less individualistic and more caring community, not to mention her family, in Brazil. In the novel *Amiche per la pelle* (Best Friends), first-generation Indian Italian writer Laila Wadia provides a compelling example

⁷⁵ Marchetti et al., *Global Domestic Workers*, 44–47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 96–126.

⁷⁷ Flavia Capitani and Emanuele Coen, eds., *Pecore nere. Racconti* (Roma: Laterza 2012); and Igiaba Scego, ed., *Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi* (Florence: effequ, 2019). On transnational Italian woman's writing see, among others, Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture*; Lidia Curti, "Female Literature of Migration in Italy," *Feminist Review*, no. 87 (2007): 60–75; sections from Cristina Lombardi-Diop's and Caterina Romeo's *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Romeo's *Riscrivere la nazione. La letteratura italiana postcoloniale* (Milan: Mondadori, 2018).

⁷⁸ bell hooks, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Among Women," *Feminist Review*, no. 23 (1986): 125–38.

⁷⁹ Christiana de Caldas Brito, "Ana De Jesus," *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 162–64.

of how similar paternalistic attitudes can be observed also among white Italian women activists.⁸⁰ Laura, a character who is helping the four central female protagonists from India, Albania, Bosnia, and China to navigate Italian society, feels endowed with the mission of familiarizing her students with the civilizing lesson of white and Western feminism, as if the oppression of women from the Global South depended on their inability to theorize emancipation, and the lack of a feminist tradition of their own, rather than the material disadvantages created by the history of empires: “Assieme ai verbi irregolari e alla s impura, cerca d’inculcarci l’importanza di questa libertà, e spesso ci parla di quello che l’emancipazione femminile ha significato per la sua città natale. A volte però sembra dimenticarsi che non sempre viene offerta la stessa possibilità a chi è nato altrove” (“Together with irregular verbs and the impure ‘s,’ she tries to inculcate in us the importance of this freedom, and often talks about what female emancipation meant for her birth city. Sometimes, however, she seems to forget that those who are born elsewhere are not always given the same opportunities”).⁸¹

Familiarizing uninformed white audiences with the alternative feminist epistemologies that racialized women have been developing from the “margins,” in the memoir *Traiettorie di sguardi. E se gli altri foste voi?* (Reversing the Gaze: What if the Other Were you), first-generation Cameroonian Italian anthropologist, Geneviève Makaping, explains that, although her encounter with a group of white feminists and race theorists (Colette Guillaumin, Paola Tabet, Laura Balbo, Clara Gallini, Annamaria Rivera, and Renate Siebert, among others) was crucial in inspiring her to position herself within the intersectional tradition of feminists like bell hooks, she doubts that the majority of white women have developed the degree of self-awareness that is needed to contribute to the development of a coalitional feminism, or “panfeminism.”⁸² Following hooks, Makaping suggests that the creation of shared alliances that support emancipation for all women depends on white women’s awareness of both the privileges associated with their whiteness and the additional oppression that they often cause nonwhite counterparts as a result of their internalized racism. White Italian women’s “assenza di presa di coscienza e di dialogo” (“absence of awareness and dialogue”) is demonstrated by their many-sided blindness to the forms of sexism

⁸⁰ Laila Wadia, *Amiche per la pelle* (Rome: Tascabili e/o, 2009).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁸² “Mi chiedo se sia possibile parlare di in panfemminismo. In nome di che cosa la donna del ‘Primo mondo’ ed io dovremmo, insieme, intraprendere delle azioni comuni contro il potere del maschio, suo e mio, se io parto già svantaggiata, visto il privilegio della sua bianchezza? Un privilegio di cui le donne occidentali non sempre hanno una consapevolezza critica. Non so se un dibattito sull’argomento sia già stato fatto. Nella mia esperienza a volte ho avvertito il potere della donna bianca su di me, tale e quale a quello che detiene il suo maschio nei miei confronti. Se lei ha un padrone, io ne ho due. Se ci sono delle esperienze che attraversano la nostra vita e ci rendono eguali, ve ne sono altre che nettamente creano delle differenze, a volte incommensurabili per assenza di presa di coscienza e di dialogo” (“I wonder if it is possible to talk about panfeminism. In the name of what should the woman of the ‘First World’ and I, together, undertake common actions against male power, hers and mine, if I am already disadvantaged, given the privilege of her whiteness? A privilege of which Western women do not always have a critical awareness. I don’t know if a debate on the subject has already been held. In my experience, I have sometimes felt the power of the white woman over me, just as much as the power that her male has over me. If she has one master, I have two. If there are experiences that cross our life and make us equal, there are others that clearly create differences, sometimes immeasurable due to the absence of awareness and dialogue”). Geneviève Makaping, *Traiettorie di sguardi. E se gli altri foste voi?* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2001), 52–56. As Caterina Romeo notes in the foreword to the English translation of a recently revised edition of Makaping’s book, even though the author references intersectional theory explicitly only in the later edition, she had already introduced an intersectional feminist approach in Italy at the beginning of the new millennium. Caterina Romeo, “Producing Transnational Black Studies with an Intersectional Approach”, in Geneviève Makaping, *Reversing the Gaze: What if the Other Were You*, trans. Victoria Offredi Poletto and Giovanna Bellesia Contuzzi (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2023), xi–xxi.

experienced by racialized women, who, like the author, are often typecast in roles such as the housemaid or the hypersexualized “Black Venus” simply because they are Black.⁸³ This lack of awareness, Makaping suggests, transforms difference into separation and further fosters the divide favored by the politics of patriarchy that works to prevent the development of broader feminist mobilizations.⁸⁴

Continuing to claim, for transnational Italian women, active roles as both disseminators of alternative feminist traditions developed in different parts of the world, as well as producers of a more inclusive Italian feminist theory, recent memoirs, such as *E poi basta. Manifesto di una donna nera italiana* (Enough is Enough. An Italian Black Woman’s Manifesto) and *L’unica persona nera nella stanza* (The Only Black Person in the Room), by two young second-generation writers, the Rwandan Italian Espérance Hakuzwimana Ripanti and the Sri Lankan Italian Nadeesha Uyangoda, expose white Italian feminism’s complicity in rendering Black women and women of color invisible. The authors call on feminists to reverse their complicity in a racist patriarchy by encouraging them to incorporate intersectional theory and recognizing that, in the specific case of Italy, antagonizing the colonial legacy of sexism and racism and fighting for better immigration and citizenship policies should be prioritized by the feminist struggle.⁸⁵ In conversation with the Haitian Italian and Peruvian Italian authors Marie Moïse and Sonia Garcia, Uyangoda comments on Italian feminism’s failure to establish a meaningful dialogue with antiracist feminist traditions and to address the struggles of transnational Italian women. The majority of white feminists in Italy, the authors contend, have not dealt with the challenges faced by migrant domestic workers, whose care work they themselves often exploit, and second-generation Italian women who are denied fundamental rights of citizenship that Italian feminists have historically fought to obtain but seem less invested in helping their transnational counterparts secure: “[...] non c’è l’associazione che femminismo possa anche significare una battaglia per i documenti’ [...] spiega Marie [...] Il femminismo civilizzatore si batte per un’uguaglianza di genere che non tiene conto delle donne razzializzate” (“feminism is never associated with the struggle to obtain legal papers’ [...] Marie explains [...] ‘Civilizing feminism fights for a gender equality that does not account for the lives of racialized women’”).⁸⁶ As Uyangoda claims, her gendered experience “è inscindibile da quella di nera” (“is inseparable from that of a Black person”), and, thus, she and other Black Italian women “in quanto tali, nella totalità di questo io politico, [hanno] diritto a un [loro] posto nel femminismo italiano” (“as such, in the totality of this political self are entitled to their place in Italian feminism”).⁸⁷ In her memoir, Ripanti explains that, due to the invisibility of Black women in Italy, she also had to turn to international antiracist feminists, such as Angela Davis, in order to articulate her gender identity. White women who do not believe that racialized women experience overlapping forms of harassment, who claim that “è la stessa cose per tutte” (“it is the same for everyone”), Ripanti adds, are “né femministe, né antirazziste” (“neither feminist, nor anti-racist”); they do not know “né cosa sia il femminismo intersezionale né la storia coloniale italiana e i danni che ha portato e trascinato con sé nell’immaginario dell’uomo e della donna africana e straniera sul nostro territorio” (“either what intersectional feminism is, or Italian colonial history and the damage this has caused and

⁸³ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 52–56.

⁸⁵ Espérance Hakuzwimana Ripanti, *E poi basta. Manifesto di una donna nera italiana* (Gallarate: People, 2020); and Nadeesha Uyangoda, *L’unica persona nera della stanza* (Roma: 66thand2nd, 2021).

⁸⁶ Uyangoda, *L’unica persona nera della stanza*, 152–53.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 155.

perpetuated by shaping how men and women from Africa and of foreign descent are perceived in the Italian imaginary”).⁸⁸ It is precisely in order to correct this blindness and to help other Black Italian women articulate their intersectional identities, that the author decided to write her own story, a story about how “[il suo] essere donna e nera [l’]ha format[a] negli insulti, negli approcci sessuali degli altri, nel disprezzo, nel pregiudizio e nella mancata considerazione” (“her being a woman and Black shaped her through insults, the sexual approaches of others, contempt, prejudice and lack of consideration”).⁸⁹

For their part, earlier second-generation transnational Italian women writers have amply confronted white Italian feminists with the colonial genesis of the intersecting oppressions described and/or experienced by the authors mentioned above, and the need to reverse their silence and indirect complicity with a patriarchal order whose powers continue to extend across multiple lines of gender, class, and race into the present. In the novel *Regina di fiori e di perle* (*Queen of Flowers and Pearls*), through the fictional stories of the Ethiopian women Amarech and Woizero Bekelech, the Ethiopian Italian writer Gabriella Ghermandi shows how the combination of sexism and racism, most overtly codified in the fascist racial laws that prohibit interracial marriage between Amarech and Italian soldier Daniel, also carries over into postcolonial times. Woizero Bekelech is made to feel like “un oggetto” (“an object”), “un’invisibile [...] persona senza passato [...] proveniente da un paese senza storia” (“an invisible [...] person without a past [...] and from a country without history”) by the families who exploit her domestic work in present-day Italy—including women employers who accuse her of being thankless when she dares denounce her exploitation: “Bel ringraziamento! [...] Siamo noi che ti abbiamo portato fuori da quel tuo buco africano!” (“How ungrateful! [...] we are the ones who took you out of that African hole!”).⁹⁰ Supported by racist theories positing that women from the Global South embodied a less evolved and moral femininity and enhanced by the Fascist racialization of citizenship, the sexual politics of colonial times attempted to relegate racialized women to a second-class domesticity that would ultimately deny them the right to affective, familial, and maternal identities. This is an issue that has rarely been examined by white feminists in Italy even though readers are reminded that *Regina* is narrating a history that does not only belong to the Ethiopian people but is also “la vostra” (“your own”). Readers are also reminded that the effects of such history continue to be visible in a contemporary Italy that attempts to segregate racialized women, like Woizero Bekelech in Ghermandi’s novel, into social roles that force them to neglect their personal identities to serve the care needs of others.⁹¹ As Papa contends, it is only around the new millennium, and with the international development of a critical debate on Italian colonialism, that Italian feminist historians and anthropologists have begun to explore Italian women’s direct or indirect connivance with the racist sexual politics of empire. Only recently have Italian feminists begun to confront, for instance, how some suffragists’ support of a model of femininity rooted in social motherhood and philanthropic activism which they hoped would prove bourgeois Italian women worthy of full citizenship rights led to their complicity in racist colonial hierarchies.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ripanti, *E poi basta*, 163.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁹⁰ Gabriella Ghermandi, *Regina di fiori e di perle* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007), 216, 221, 209.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁹² Papa, *Sotto altri cieli*, 39–40. In postcolonial Italian literature and cultural studies, see the seminal work of Cristina Lombardi-Diop: *Writing the Female Frontier: Italian Women in Colonial Africa, 1890–1940* (PhD diss., New York University, 1999); “Mothering the Nation: An Italian Woman in Colonial Eritrea,” in *ItaliAfrica: Bridging Continents and Cultures*, ed. Sante Matteo (Stony Brook: Forum Italicum, 2001), 173–91; and “Pioneering Female Modernity: Fascist Women in Colonial Africa,” in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave

Connecting the racist and sexist politics of imperial and colonial times to a contemporary border politics that continues to subject racialized women to intersectional forms of violence, Igiaba Scego's latest installment in her "trilogia della violenza coloniale" ("trilogy on colonial violence"), *La linea del colore* (*The Color Line*), offers an even broader and more direct criticism of white feminist traditions from the Global North, blind to the struggles of racialized women.⁹³ Leila, the novel's Somali Italian protagonist in those sections set in contemporary Italy, decides to become an art curator after she witnesses the blindness of her university peer and fellow student of Arabic, Lorella, to the fear of corporal punishment visible on the faces of the Black prisoners sculpted in the *Fontana dei quattro mori* (*Fountain of the four Moors*) in her hometown of Marino, particularly the two bare-breasted women in chains who are captured by the artist in their likely impending rape.⁹⁴ This blindness, the narrator suggests, mirrors the contemporary disregard of white Italian women for women from the Global South, such as Leila's cousin, Binti, who continue to experience the trauma of a racist sexual violence. Due to the limitation on mobility imposed by today's racist immigration policies and border regimes, Binti is raped by traffickers who abuse her and other women who attempt to cross the African desert to reach Europe as undocumented migrants. *La linea* suggests that such blindness is directly connected to the indifference white feminism has demonstrated towards racialized women from its inception. The protagonist of the central chapters of the novel, Lafanu Brown, an American artist of Chippewa and African Haitian descent, in spite of being a free woman in abolitionist, nineteenth-century North America, experiences similar traumas of a sexist and racist violence at the hands of white women and female activists. First, Lafanu is raped on behalf of a group of white female students from her university cohort who enlist male students to punish her for trying to attend an opera with them. Then, she is made to relive the trauma of this violence when she is put on public display by her own benefactress, Betsebea McKenzie. An abolitionist who, like the other white feminists portrayed in the novel, is more concerned with advancing the social position of white women than with truly helping those who have been socially and racially marginalized, Betsebea asks Lafanu to sit on a rug and pose as one of the main attractions at a party that she has organized to increase her own reputation as charitable Pygmalion. She spectacularizes her protégée's pain because, as she claims, "Basta che la gente mangi e giri intorno a questi martiri [...] intorno a Lafanu [...] Stasera tutti vedranno quanto sono buona" ("All that matters is that people eat and circle around these martyrs [...] around Lafanu [...] Tonight everyone will see how good I am").⁹⁵

Similarly to Leila but long before her, Lafanu the artist had turned to the creative line of color to cross what African American activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, who is intentionally referenced in the novel's title, defined the "color line."⁹⁶ She had also chosen art to decolonize the perspective of white women who, with their intentional or unintentional blindness, replicate the

Macmillan, 2005), 145–54. See also Gaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani* (Milan: Mondadori, 2013).

⁹³ Igiaba Scego, *La linea del colore* (Milan: Bompiani 2020). In a section at the end of *La linea* entitled "Making of" Scego writes that the novel could be seen the last in a trilogy that began with *Oltre babilonia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2008) and continued with *Adua* (Milan: Giunti, 2015). Scego, *La linea*, 360. Scego's novel references artworks from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which demonstrate that Italian states participated in various practices of slavery before colonialism. Some of these artworks are portrayed in Rino Bianchi's photographs included at the end of the novel.

⁹⁴ Scego, *La linea del colore*, 61. The fountain celebrates Marcantonio II Colonna's role in the Holy League's victory against the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Lepanto.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

vertical and voyeuristic gaze through which white Western male artists have symbolically repeated colonial acts of sexual conquest by visually dominating their subjects while remaining blind to the violence of the national pasts inscribed on such bodies.⁹⁷ Like Leila's, Lafanu's creative interventions are prompted by her recognition of the look of fear portrayed on the eyes of the captive women of the *Fontana dei Mori* and on other Black female protagonists portrayed in subaltern roles in Italian artworks from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Lafanu herself must have replicated that gaze on the night of her rape, and the women who were repeatedly raped on slave ships, like her friend Baby Sue, must have done so before the protagonist. Like the other transnational authors mentioned above, in *La linea del colore*, Scego suggests that only when white women have developed an awareness of their privileged position and their direct or indirect complicity in white patriarchy, will they be able to *see* racialized women and join them in the creation of a new outlook that will ultimately strengthen the feminist struggle. Only when women of privilege come to terms with how they often reproduce a gendered coloniality will they be able to meet the eyes of diversely situated women on *equal* grounds with them, and, as Audre Lorde contends, realize that it is not difference itself that separates them, but rather a refusal to recognize difference.⁹⁸ Such refusal produces complicity in a "profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people" instead of encouraging women to explore the subversive potential of difference.⁹⁹ Within "an interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences," Lorde writes, women will be able to test "the creative function of difference"; they will be able, that is, "to make common cause [...] to define and see a world in which we can all flourish," and where women "take our differences and make them into strengths."¹⁰⁰ A non-dominant mutual exploration of the creative and subversive power of difference is symbolically represented in Lafanu's later art. The protagonist's "arte libera" ("free art"), as she herself will admit, is the product of the meeting of different female gazes. Lafanu herself needed "altri occhi per vedere. I suoi non erano bastati" ("other eyes to see. Hers had not been enough"), as is demonstrated by her struggle to find a style true to her mature vision.¹⁰¹ The protagonist may, in fact, have unknowingly and unwillingly also internalized the gaze of the master through her training in Western art. The bonds of affection that Lafanu establishes with her protectress, Betsebea, and her daughter, Hillary, enables these characters to at least partially decolonize their vision, and help Lafanu identify the theme of one of her most important and mature paintings, *Forever Free*. This work is the reimagining of a figurative iconography of Africa represented by Andrea Pozzo in the vault of the church of Sant'Ignazio in Rome. Lafanu had noticed the Black royal woman who represents Africa in Pozzo's fresco only after Betsebea had pointed out that someone resembling the protagonist "sembrava guardare proprio verso di loro" ("seemed to be really looking at them").¹⁰² Lafanu's

⁹⁷ In *La linea del colore*'s epilogue, Scego references the following monumental work on the visual representation of Black people in Western Art: David Bindman et al., *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Press, 2010). On the representation of Black women, specifically in Italian visual culture, see, for instance, Barbara Sòrgoni, "'Defending the Race': The Italian Reinvention of the Hottentot Venus during Fascism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8, no 3 (2003): 411–24; Sandra Ponzanesi, "Beyond the Black Venus: Colonial Sexual Politics and Contemporary Visual Practices," in *Italian Colonialism. Legacy and Memory*, ed. Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (Oxford: Peter Lang 2005), 165–89; and Gaia Giuliani, *Race, Gender and Nation in Contemporary Italy: Intersectional Representations in Visual Culture* (London: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁹⁸ Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Defining Difference," in *Sister Outsider. Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (New York: The Crossing Press, 2007), 114–23.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰⁰ Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider*, 111–12.

¹⁰¹ Scego, *La linea del colore*, 322.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 319–20.

reinvention of Pozzo's subject, however, is only "una copia pedissequa" ("a derivative copy") of the original, until Hillary suggests that the protagonist free her Black subject from the "futuro nefasto" ("ill-fated future") that can be read in her eyes, a destiny of oppression similar to one that must have awaited the captive women in Marino.¹⁰³ The "aria di sfida" (look of defiance) that, following Hillary's suggestion, Lafanu gives the proud and empowered "Venere nera" ("Black Venus") of *Forever Free* is not only inspired by an intersubjective process of creation; it is itself also a product of the meeting of different female gazes: "[...] in quello sguardo Lafanu aveva convogliato lo sguardo di tutte le donne che aveva conosciuto" ("in that gaze Lafanu had combined the gaze of all the women she had met").¹⁰⁴ *Forever Free* interweaves the eyes of women from different classes, nationalities and races that empires have attempted to divide and conquer but that Lafanu's art symbolically reunites, reconceptualizing the feminist struggle in a way that it might serve the cause of diverging gendered subjectivities while also creating transversal alliances. The eyes of the woman portrayed in the painting intertwine the gaze of sisters, such as Lafanu's real indigenous sister Timma, the formerly enslaved Baby Sue, the Sicilian maid, Concetta, and Lafanu herself—all of whom have experienced, but also resisted, overlapping forms of oppressions—with the eyes of privileged white women who, like Lafanu's protectress and her daughter, in the end, confront their racial blindness and turn out to be allies.¹⁰⁵ The white women philanthropists Lafanu encounters, including an anticonformist preceptor, Lizzie Manson, who first incites the protagonist to cross the color line and connects her with the women who take her to Europe and an Italian woman, Silvia Peruzzi, without whose intervention Lafanu's work would not have been preserved for posterity, were initially focused primarily on emancipating themselves. Yet, through the bond they established with Lafanu, these white women ended up participating in the creation of "affective communities" that ultimately supported the protagonist in finding her voice.¹⁰⁶

Just like Lafanu's *Forever Free*, Leila's contemporary masterpiece, materializing her exhibition dedicated to Lafanu, lays the groundwork for the reconstruction of a feminist counter-narrative that, without silencing differences, enables the collaboration of both sisters and allies. Leila could not have planned the exhibit without Alexandria Mendoza, the American art historian of African Dominican descent who first introduced her to an artist, Lafanu, who, like the real-life protagonists of the Black female Atlantic that she represents, should be recognized as part of those nineteenth-century women who "avevano cominciato a scalpitare, alcune in nome di tutte" ("had

¹⁰³ Ibid., 321–22.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 340.

¹⁰⁵ Lafanu's real sister, Timma, uses her carving skills not only to make souvenirs for the tourists who visit indigenous reservations but also to create goddesses in her and Lafanu's image. Baby Sue overuses sugar in her cooking as an act of defiance against the bitter taste of the oral rape she experienced as a slave. Conversely, Concetta challenges the condition of subalternity the new Italy reserves for *meridionali* (southern Italians) through the ability to embrace color that she uses to help Lafanu mix her shades and treat her canvas. In the novel's epilogue, Scego states that she was also inspired by works on the Italian diaspora, like that of Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, that have dealt with the racialization of unprivileged Italians. Scego, *La Linea del colore*, 360; and Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, eds., *Are Italians White?: How Race is Made in America* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ I am borrowing from Leela Gandhi's theory about affective communities. The critic uses an alternative definition of friendship, Epicurean *philoxenia*, as the lens to interpret the bonds of affinities and anti-imperialist alliances that some individuals or groups in the West have formed with the victims of their own expansionist cultures. Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). As I explain later, Passerini claims that a politics of affective relations might generate new and inclusive paradigms of identity also in contemporary Europe.

begun to rebel, some on behalf of all women”).¹⁰⁷ Or without Uarda, the Italian artist of Ghanian and Nigerian descent who travels with her to Somalia to help her recruit artists for a panel in honor of Lafanu. Likewise, Leila could not have achieved her goal without the artists themselves, men and women, including Binti, who confront the traumas of their failed mobility through a visual response to Lafanu’s work, which creates itself a new perspective on reality. Much like the visual narrations produced by Passerini’s real-life transnational interlocutors in the author’s recent intersubjective project on mobility, the fictional artists who react to and actualize the message of Lafanu’s free art, convey a different idea of European identity, one based on “the right of participation and of affective relations with Europe.”¹⁰⁸ Yet, Leila’s work of recovery and the critical revision of cultural and feminist imaginaries was also facilitated by white allies who, unlike her former university peer Lorella or other women who, capitalizing on the experience of less privileged women, speak in their place and “e tolgono [loro] il diritto di parola, il diritto di esistere” (“take away their right to speak, the right to exist”), interrogated white privilege.¹⁰⁹ These allies are the various friends, scholars, librarians, bookstore keepers, of all genders, who, in one way or another, helped support Leila’s research and who mirror in real life (see the novel’s epilogue) the many who supported the author, Scego’s, work.¹¹⁰

La linea del colore exposes how female relationality cannot gloss over differences among women or women’s own interiorization of power dynamics without reproducing and enhancing a sexist oppression, which is inextricably interconnected with racism and classism. Yet, it also suggests the possibility that a dissident and “pluralist friendship,” similar to that described by decolonial critic Lugones, might indeed develop if feminism focused on understanding the diverse realities among women and the logic that informs them, fostering a “dialogue among people who are fluent in the ways of their own position in the racist and ethnocentric state and in the ways of people who are differently positioned than themselves.”¹¹¹ Inspired, as they have recently stated, by the work of cultural activists like Scego and Ghermandi but also, as they claim in their *Piano femminista contro la violenza maschile sulle donne e la violenza di genere* (Feminist Program against Male Violence against Women and Gender Violence), by the social mobilizations of migrant women, Non una di meno, the Italian iteration of the transnational collective that first developed in Argentina in 2015, is perhaps the most successful example of how white feminists in Italy have more recently reengaged with preexisting feminist discourses of difference in the light

¹⁰⁷ Scego, *La linea del colore*, 101–03. Lafanu is inspired by African American sculptor Edmonia Lewis and physician Sarah Parker Remond. As Sirpa Salenius argues in her expansion of Paul Gilroy’s argument, Lewis and Parker Remond were two protagonists of a female “Black Atlantic” who sought to promote a transnational coalition politics in support of not only racial and social equality (they also supported the Italian Risorgimento, as referenced in Scego’s novel), but gender emancipation as well. See Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad: Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ Luisa Passerini, “Affective Narratives for Europe,” speech delivered April 9, 2014, award ceremony for the All European Academies Madame de Staël prize for Cultural Values, Brussels, http://www.allea.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/050514Speech_LuisaPasserini_ALLEA_090414.pdf. Binti and the other Somali artists produce a collage in which they are about to board a plane. They thus construct Europe as a place where everyone is accorded the right to mobility. Scego, *La linea del colore*, 325–27. The work of intersubjective visual narration to which Scego refers here reminds us of Passerini’s recent work on visual memories of mobility. In her quest for new ways of conceptualizing Europe, Passerini uses artists’ representations of borders and migrations to elicit visual responses from her interviewees from Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. Passerini, *Conversations on Visual Memory* (BABE project, 2018), <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/60164>.

¹⁰⁹ Scego, *La linea del colore*, 206,

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 348, 363–65.

¹¹¹ María Lugones and Pat Alake Rosezelle, “Sisterhood and Friendship as Feminist Models,” in *Feminism and Community*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Marilyn Friedman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 143.

of intersectional struggles and to collaborate on wider mobilizations informed by a “pluralist friendship”.¹¹² A broad coalition that at the local level brings together activists and scholars from different generations and cultural backgrounds with pre-existing networks and organizations, Non una di meno, as stated in its *Piano*, aims to develop “reti solidali e transfemministe” (“transfeminist and solidarity networks”) which promote political, social, and cultural practices that foster the self-determination of differently positioned subjectivities.¹¹³ The members’ objective is to develop a more inclusive feminism that makes visible the connection between economic exploitation and heterosexist, racist, and speciesist violence, while redirecting the struggle for emancipation on behalf of transversal and non-homogenizable insurgencies. One of the main theoretical premises of Non una di meno as two members, Miriam Tola and Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz, have claimed, is to critically rethink, broaden, and redefine the framework of the Italian *pensiero della differenza*.¹¹⁴ The collective’s intention, Tola and Ribeiro Corossacz write, is to reconnect a philosophical discourse of difference that, particularly in its more mature stages, has focused almost solely on sexism, with the materialist focus of some early radical Italian feminisms and in light of the crucial contributions that antiracist feminisms have made to the feminist struggle. Such a reinvented practice of difference aims to analyze the overlapping forms of oppression resulting from a heteropatriarchal and racist violence which, as Black, brown, and indigenous feminists affirm, carried over from colonial to neoliberal exploitation and is inherent to the structure of contemporary societies. Furthermore, Tola and Ribeiro Corossacz contend that following a path that, as I have highlighted above, has been laid out by transnational Italian feminists, Non una di meno seeks to adapt the practices of intersectionality as developed by Black feminists and feminist women of color in the US, from the Combahee River Collective to Latina feminists, from Kimberlé Crenshaw to Cathy Cohen, Sirma Bilge, Patricia Hill Collins, and the Black Lives Matter movement, to the Italian context. For the collective, these are the starting points for initiating collaborations among diverse constituencies which will address differing needs, while avoiding homogenization, erasure, and the reproduction of relations of dominance.¹¹⁵ To accomplish this goal, Non una di meno has adopted a “politica del posizionamento” (“politics of positioning”) that aims to promote alliances while recognizing, through locating subjectivities comparatively in their geopolitical contexts and interrogating the privileges afforded those who are white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied, and/or Catholic Italian citizens, that members and audiences are differently affected by inequality and separated by power disparities.¹¹⁶ Expanding the earlier Marxist feminist struggle for social reproduction in order to tackle the multiple inequities and different forms of gender violence generated by contemporary economies, policies and societies—including what they have elsewhere defined as “the afterlives of slavery and coloniality”—in their *Piano*, Non una di meno, as recently attempted by Dalla Costa and former Italian members of Wages for Housework, calls for the development of more inclusive “politiche di trasformazione radicale della

¹¹² Non una di meno, *Abbiamo un piano. Piano femminista contro la violenza maschile sulle donne e la violenza di genere*, 2017, https://nonunadimeno.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/abbiamo_un_piano.pdf. At a keynote speech delivered at the 2021 AAIS conference, Non una di meno, specifically Miriam Tola, claimed that transnational Italian writers such as Scego and Ghermandi have played a fundamental role in changing feminist imaginaries and inspiring counter-narrations of feminism in Italy. Miriam Tola (Non una di meno), keynote speech delivered June 1, 2021, Annual Conference of the American Association of Italian Studies.

¹¹³ Non una di meno, *Piano femminista*, 56.

¹¹⁴ Miriam Tola and Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz, “Non una di meno in Italia,” *Dinamo Press*, 20 April 20, 2017, <https://www.dinamopress.it/news/non-una-di-meno-in-italia-un-movimento-intersezionale/>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Non una di meno, *Piano Femminista* 8.

società, di redistribuzione della ricchezza, del welfare e di diritti” (“politics of radical transformation of society, redistribution of wealth, welfare and rights”).¹¹⁷ They seek to continue opposing a sexual division of labor that, due to a progressive dismantlement of social welfare, has increased women’s confinement to domesticity or “doppio carico di lavoro, dentro e fuori casa” (“double workload, in and out of the home”), or has enhanced their segregation to “alcuni settori lavorativi” (“certain working fields”).¹¹⁸ At the same time, they also aim at breaking down the additional barriers against self-determination that especially affect intersectional subjectivities as a result, for instance, of enforced heterosexuality and the systemic racism that begins with “la violenza dei confini [...] che colpisce doppiamente le donne migranti—in quanto donne e in quanto migranti—sia nei paesi di partenza che in quelli di arrivo di transito” (“a border violence [...] that doubly impacts migrant women—as women and as migrants—both in the countries of origin and in those of arrival and transit”).¹¹⁹ Non una di meno most strikingly demonstrates its critical reengagement with and further broadening of the objectives of Marxist feminism through a reformulation of the Wages for Housework struggle that both applies the collective’s politics of positioning and adapts intersectional theories to the specificities of the Italian landscape. Challenging the early ethnocentric framework of the Italian proponents of Wages for Housework, while also emphasizing one original aspect of the movement that has generally remained underdeveloped, namely, its critique of the capitalist imposition of heterosexuality and the heteronormative household, they have transformed the demand for a guaranteed salary against the feminization of reproduction into the call for a Reddito di Autodeterminazione (Income of Self-Determination), alongside a EU-wide minimum wage, universal welfare, and policies which support parental leave and afford benefits to *all* workers.¹²⁰ Unlike similar initiatives which have recently been instituted in Italy, such as Il Reddito di Cittadinanza (Citizenship Guaranteed Minimum Income), these measures cannot exclude people based on factors such as lack of citizenship, documented residency, type of labor or heteronormative family structure, all of which increase exploitation and harassment in the workplace or experiences of domestic violence. Further supporting practices of resistance that, as they write, have already been set in motion by migrant women, Non una di meno more broadly antagonizes European border regimes that perpetuate intersecting forms of gender violence by demanding also the approval of an unconditional European residency permit that is not linked to work, study, family or income.¹²¹ Likewise, their conviction that the politics of migration and citizenship should be dealt with as feminist issues informs their open support also for the transformation of the Italian citizenship law, currently based

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 8–9. In the article “Life beyond the Pandemic,” the collective more openly discusses how they critically reengage with Wages for Housework in light of a deeper awareness of intersectional struggles caused by the afterlives of colonialism and slavery. Non una di meno, “Life Beyond the Pandemic,” *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 12, no. 1 (July 2020): 109–10. <https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Interface-12-1-full-PDF.pdf>. This translation is by Emma Gainsforth and Miriam Tola.

¹¹⁸ Non una di meno, *Piano Femminista*, 27.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 27–31. On Wages for Housework’s denunciation of enforced heterosexuality as a mechanism of private profit and capitalist control see, for instance, Silvia Federici, “Why Sexuality is Work,” *Revolution at Point Zero*, 20.

¹²¹ “Muovere da questo posizionamento significa innanzitutto riconoscere che le donne migranti, con le azioni di resistenza e di rifiuto della violenza razzista, mettono in questione l’ordine patriarcale ogni giorno alle frontiere (esterne e interne), nei Centri di Permanenza e Rimpatrio (CPR), nei centri di accoglienza, nei luoghi di lavoro, nelle case” (“Starting from this positioning means, above all, recognizing that migrant women, with their acts of resistance and rejection of racist violence, challenge the patriarchal order every day at the borders [external and internal], in the Centers of Permanence for Repatriation [CPR], welcome centers, work places, homes”). Non una di meno, *Piano femminista*, 35–36.

on *ius sanguinis*—which, as previously mentioned, excludes many Italian-born children of migrants from being recognized as citizens—to *ius soli*.¹²²

To further guarantee the right to self-determination of all gendered subjects who have experienced violence, Non una di meno calls for international asylum and free movement while demanding public support for local and self-administered safe spaces and women’s centers, such as Centri antiviolenza (CAV; Antiviolence centers) and Case delle Donne (Women’s Houses)—the very same structures that local administrations, focused on sanitizing and financializing urban space, have been threatening to close. In addition to defending existing feminist centers, Non una di meno also encourages the creation of new non-institutionalized and collectively administered spaces where, combining an intersectional approach with a decolonial feminist ethos, individuals can further reclaim and repurpose public space to serve public needs, as Latin American movements have done by turning neighborhoods into communities where reproduction work is socialized and new economies and forms of collective life are created outside the logic of private profit.¹²³ As we read in the *Piano*, the separate spaces of liberation and autonomy that the collective has in mind and has been variously supporting combine practices of deculturalization typical of Lonzi’s line of difference feminism, such as “partire da sé” (“starting from the self”) and giving “spazio al racconto” (“space to storytelling”) and “[alla] pratica della relazioni tra donne” (“to the practice of interrelation among women”), with “saperi intersezionali” (“intersectional knowledges”) in order to offer diverse positionalities opportunities for empowerment, while generating “contesti in cui si possano decostruire relazioni di potere e le asimmetrie; luoghi [...] dove sperimentare nuove modalità di relazione e di cura” (“environments where [...] asymmetries of power can be deconstructed; places [...] where new modes of relationality and collective care can be tried out”).¹²⁴ Ultimately, the *Piano* suggests that collective feminist spaces should serve as sites where the different constituencies Non una di meno aims to bring together can simultaneously develop antiauthoritarian intersubjective practices of personal and collective resignification as well as transversal political alliances which will help them work against the root causes of intersecting forms of violence and inequality. The primary goal of such alliances is to tackle social reproduction in order to counter the logic of private accumulation that, by disintegrating social welfare and healthcare systems, collapsing collective economies that foster the wellbeing of ecosystems, and increasing the exploitation of female care work, oppress especially the most vulnerable women. In other words, similar to critical white Marxist feminists like Dalla Costa, the members of Non una di meno also believe that the struggle to improve and broaden collective welfare should be integrated within strategies of communitarian resistance, such as those laid out by decolonial and eco-feminists from the Global South, which emphasize the connection between self-determination and the socio-ecological dimension of reproduction.¹²⁵ They affirm that the feminist struggle must

¹²² Ibid., 36–37.

¹²³ Ibid, 41–51. See also, Non una di meno, “Life Beyond the Pandemic.” On the communitarian approach of Latin American feminist movements, see Silvia Federici, “Women’s Struggles for Land and Common Good in Latin America,” *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 134–150, as well as Gago, *Feminist International*. One example of the type of communitarian reappropriation of public space that Non una di meno has supported is Ri-Make bene comune. This is an organization connected with Non una di meno in Milan, which organizes activities of mutual aid in a salvaged factory of Trezzano sul Naviglio. Similar initiatives, also linked to antiracist feminist activism, have been emerging in other parts of Italy. Various collective care initiatives and solidarity networks emerged also as a result of the COVID–19 pandemic (see Non una di meno, “Life Beyond the Pandemic”).

¹²⁴ Non una di meno, *Piano femminista*, 12, 41–51.

¹²⁵ Non una di meno has also endorsed a self-managed ecological collective, Laboratoria Ecologista Berta Càceres, recently founded in Rome and named after the brutally killed indigenous environmental activist from Honduras.

center collective practices of care for human and nonhuman life while rejecting the private profit motive that Western empires have imposed both at home and, as Federici and Lugones have demonstrated, even more violently on the indigenous populations that they sought to colonize, through the establishment of logics of accumulation “che vogliono queste attività a esclusivo e naturale appannaggio delle donne” (“that want these activities to be an exclusive and natural prerogative of women”).¹²⁶

In addition to further reconceptualizing the goals of Marxist reproduction theory, while simultaneously reimagining intersubjective practices *and* the mission of women-only spaces in ways that focus intersectional differences, Non una di meno’s “politics of positioning” has addressed another crucial issue raised by transnational feminists in Italy. The collective has challenged the generalized tendency among white Italian feminists to gloss over Italy’s colonial past and its legacy, leaving decolonization efforts entirely up to the transnational Italian feminists who have initiated them. For Non una di meno, feminist deculturalization takes on broader meanings as their *Piano* invokes the urgency to promote “un’educazione delle differenze” (“an education about differences”), in the plural, which will question artificial “*canoni dell’italianità* a partire dalla presunzione di ‘bianchezza,’ rileggendo la storia coloniale ed europea e il nesso tra razzializzazione, sessismo e sfruttamento” (“*canons of Italianness* beginning with the assumption of ‘whiteness,’ while reinterpreting colonial and European history and the link between racialization, sexism and exploitation”).¹²⁷ Reexamining this history, Non una di meno claims, will also entail dealing with “il ruolo della violenza sui corpi delle donne nei processi storici di colonizzazione (“the role that the violence on women’s bodies has had in historic processes of colonization”).¹²⁸ This work of cultural transformation is in line with that of Braidotti, who first addressed the ethnocentric limitations of the European philosophy of difference and recombined the affirmation of difference with the material struggles for social and gender equality.¹²⁹ As Braidotti writes, she aims at expanding and correcting the blind spots of the ontological theory of relational subjectivity theorized by Irigaray and, later, by the Italian proponents of *pensiero della differenza*.¹³⁰ Braidotti’s nomadology rests on the claim that today, the philosophy of sexual difference *must* posit the distinction between *Woman* and women so as “to recode or rename the female feminist subject not as yet another sovereign, hierarchical, and exclusionary subject, but rather as a multiple, open-ended, interconnected entity.”¹³¹ Drawing on Rich’s “politics of location” and on the Black feminists and feminist women of color who have inspired it, feminist relationality, Braidotti claims, must foster a sense of accountability of one’s location in relation to that of others, which recognizes and deconstructs the power many women inhabit (as a result of their privilege) and generates a “dialogue among different female-embodied genealogies,” ultimately engendering transversal alliances which recognize differences.¹³² Like other critical white feminists who, with the help of theories deriving from the “margins,” have attempted to deconstruct the “center” from within, difference feminism in Europe, Braidotti writes, should

¹²⁶ Non una di meno, 38–40. See also: Silvia Federici, *Caliban and The Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004), 219–42; and María Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186–209.

¹²⁷ Non una di meno, *Piano femminista*, 13, 16.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 21–68.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 105–8, 147. As Braidotti points out, Teresa de Lauretis, another transnational Italian feminist, has also gone in a similar direction.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 15, 56, 156.

create relational cartographies of power that help relinquish “the image of sisterhood in the sense of global similarity of all women qua second sex.”¹³³ It should rather contribute to the development of a “sense of intersubjectivity that would allow for the recognition of differences to create a new kind of bonding, in an inclusive (i.e. non-exclusionary) manner,” that is, in a way that finds how common interests and visions intersect with differences.¹³⁴ The nomadic vision of subjectivity and relationality, as Braidotti has more recently claimed, is the starting point for transforming difference feminism into an ethics that goes in the direction of the cosmopolitan posthumanism theorized by ecofeminist and postcolonial and critical race theorists. What matters, as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva have claimed, is

the assertion of the need for new universal values in the sense of interconnectedness among humans, on a worldwide scale. Thus, universal needs are amalgamated to universal rights and they cover as much basic and concrete necessities, such as food, shelter, health, safety, as higher cultural needs, like education, identity, dignity, knowledge, affection, joy and care. They constitute the material grounding of the situated claims to new ethical values.¹³⁵

In light of this need, a nomadic or posthuman subjectivity, recently theorized by Braidotti, “expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building.”¹³⁶ Not so dissimilarly from Dalla Costa’s (or Federici’s) reimagining of Marxism feminism, and anticipating Non una di meno’s recent reconfigurations of pre-existing discourses of Italian difference feminism, Braidotti’s nomadic and posthuman reconceptualization of the theory of difference, aims to connect subjectivities who do not share the same experiences of oppression but nonetheless *do* share the desire to feel mutually empowered by their collaborative transformation of systems of domination that produce multiple forms of marginality and oppression across human and nonhuman landscapes.

One of Non una di meno’s recent acts of feminist “urban guerrilla” warfare, is a demonstration of how the collective is blending cultural and political practices to put into practice the goals of a nomadic or posthuman difference feminism. And it also further demonstrates how the collective contributes, alongside former members of Lotta femminista and Wages for Housework, to the creation of an inclusive anticapitalist feminism aimed at creating, as Mohanty suggests, “imagined” communities of resistance centered on the struggles of the most exploited that can also include women who are differently situated—as long as there is an awareness of the specificity of historical and social locations, and different relations to power.¹³⁷ On March 8, 2019, Non una di meno symbolically reappropriated one of many public spaces indicative of state-sanctioned attempts to erase the memory and legacy of Italian colonialism from the public imaginary. Connecting with and, this time, placing Elvira Banotti’s attack against the racist and sexist crimes of Italian colonialism at the center of white feminist action, they defaced, with pink paint, a statue of the journalist Montanelli, the namesake of a Milan park bordering a local historical Eritrean

¹³³ Ibid., 66.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 49. Braidotti is referencing Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva’s *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 1993).

¹³⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹³⁷ Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, 46–47, 107.

neighborhood. Scego, whose own politics of urban decolonization and remapping of Italy's cartographic, cultural and feminist imaginaries, *Non una di meno* appears to have emulated, has remarked that the pink paint that *Non una di meno* used to "uncover the venom of Italian sexism and racism" might be the symbolic "preface to a great resurgence" of feminism in Italy.¹³⁸ Although it cannot be overlooked that transnational Italian women continue to have a marginal direct presence in the movement, *Non una di meno* has demonstrated, in Scego's words, that some Italian feminists have begun to confront the movement's predominant whiteness and have developed an awareness that a push to decolonize Italy must also come from their ranks.¹³⁹ Scego's claim appears to be supported by a lively cultural production recently authored by critical white Italian women writers and scholars who have joined transnational Italian feminists in their investigation of the legacy of colonialism and fascism, or in popularizing alternative feminist struggles and knowledges.¹⁴⁰ These efforts have focused on deconstructing ethnocentric essentialism, colorblindness, and subconscious forms of racism which reproduce patterns of discrimination and racialization also among women. As Scego claims elsewhere, however, although some white feminists have developed an awareness of the need to move historically marginalized perspectives to the center of feminist discourses, there is much work which remains to be done by Italian feminism to become inclusive. Italian feminism, Scego adds, must work towards addressing more meaningfully race as well as other systems of oppression to which the movement has been traditionally blind, and which the contemporary global awareness of anti-Black racism should not put on the feminist backburner.¹⁴¹ In fact, according to Scego, we might confirm that white Italian feminism is truly dismantling its internal hierarchies, rather than merely repeat the tendency of white feminism to include token Black voices, without surrendering its hegemony, only when there will be a more systematic antiauthoritarian move to address the various intersections of sex, race, class, ethnicity, and religious orientation that characterize the Italian gender experience.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Igiaba Scego, "Not One Less," *World Literature Today* (Autumn 2019), <https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2019/autumn/not-one-less-igiaba-scego>. Article translated by Aaron Robertson. Additional examples of Scego's revisioning of memory through the redefinition of urban space and cartographic maps, can be found in her memoir *La mia casa è dove sono* (Turin: Loescher, 2012), and the nonfiction book, Rino Bianchi and Igiaba Scego, *Roma negata: Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (Rome: Ediesse, 2014). Together with general strikes on March 8, *Non una di meno* also organizes transfeminist marches and other actions against Italy's toponymy, the country's use of commemorative monuments, and local administrations' attempts to promote decorum by relocating or evacuating collective spaces that are meeting points of various gendered and also transnational subjects, and groups.

¹³⁹ Scego, "Not One Less."

¹⁴⁰ Among women writers see, for instance, Francesca Melandri, *Sangue giusto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2017). Among feminist scholars, in addition to those mentioned earlier both in the body and the footnotes of this article, see, for example, those who have edited and collaborated on *Altri femminismi* and *La straniera*, and the works published by the Ediesse series titled *sessismoerazzismo*, such as the dictionary, *Femministe a parole*, in addition to the above-mentioned Marchetti's *Le ragazze di Asmara* and Busi's *Separate in casa*. See also the translations of works by Global South and Black feminists recently published by independent publishers such as Tamu edizioni in Naples and Capovolte, whose founder, Ilaria Leccardi, is an activist connected with *Non una di meno* in Alessandria. Teresa Bertilotti et al., eds., *Altri femminismi. Corpi, violenza, riproduzione, culture, lavoro* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2006); Chiara Bonfiglioli et al., eds., *La straniera. Informazioni, sito-bibliografie e ragionamenti*, (Rome: Edizioni Alegre, 2009); and Sabrina Marchetti et al., eds., *Femministe a parole. Grovigli da districare* (Rome: Ediesse, 2012).

¹⁴¹ Carla Panico, "Sulla linea del colore. Una conversazione con Igiaba Scego," *Dinamo Press*, 31 July 2020, <https://www.dinamopress.it/news/sulla-linea-del-colore-conversazione-igiaba-scego/>.

¹⁴² This is how bell hooks describes this tendency in white feminist circles in the US: "Despite the current focus on eliminating racism in the feminist movement, there has been little change in the direction of theory and praxis. While white feminist activists now include writings by women of colour on course outlines, or hire one woman of colour to

Il femminismo storico deve lavorare sulle divisioni: che sia un movimento ancora molto bianco non è cosa solo italiana, è cosa mondiale. Non è solo molto bianco, ma spesso anche molto borghese, di classe elevata: non c'è soltanto un privilegio dato dal fatto di essere le “cosiddette bianche,” ma anche dal fatto di avere un benessere materiale. C'è tanto da lavorare sul concetto di classe nel femminismo, italiano e non. Però, ecco, io vedo ultimamente una cosa che mi preoccupa molto: una sorta di moda nel femminismo di cercare delle donne nere da “introdurre” nel movimento, però senza dar loro ascolto davvero, solo perché il nero è “cool” in questo momento: come diceva la canzone, “L’Afrique c’est chic.” E quindi delle voci nere, nel femminismo come in altri ambiti, vengono cooptate o elevate ad icone, però poi non vengono veramente ascoltate; non si può avere un femminismo completamente bianco che poi si pulisce la coscienza chiamando due o tre donne nere; non funziona così, anche perché—soprattutto in Italia—non è solo “una questione nera” [...] abbiamo donne musulmane, donne induiste, donne che vengono dal Sud America, figlie di donne che vengono dal Sud America, donne nate qui di tantissime origini differenti, e non è soltanto una questione di colore.

(Historical feminism must work on divisions. It is still a very white movement not only in Italy but worldwide. It is not only very white, but often also very bourgeois, upper class: there is not only a privilege given by the fact of being the “so-called whites,” but also by the fact of having material well-being. There is a lot of work to do on the concept of class in feminism, in Italy and elsewhere. But, well, lately I see something that worries me a lot: a sort of fashion in feminism to look for Black women to “introduce” into the movement but without really listening to them, just because Black is “cool” right now: like the song said, “L’Afrique c’est chic.” And, therefore, Black voices, in feminism as in other areas, are being coopted or elevated to icons, but then they are not really listened to. You cannot have a completely white feminism which then clears its conscience by calling two or three Black women. It doesn't work like that, also because—especially in Italy—it's not just “a Black issue” ... we have Muslim women, Hindu women, women who come from South America, daughters of women who come from South America, many women born here of different origins, and it's not just a question of color.)¹⁴³

teach a class about her ethnic group, or make sure one or more women of colour are represented in feminist organizations (even though this contribution of women of colour is needed and valuable), more often than not they are attempting to cover up the fact that they are totally unwilling to surrender their hegemonic dominance of theory and praxis, a dominance which they would not have established were this not a white supremacist, capitalist state [...] When feminist activists are anti-racist and against class exploitation, it will not matter if women of colour are present or poor women, etc. These issues will be deemed important and will be addressed, although the women most personally affected by particular exploitations will necessarily continue in the forefront of those struggles.” hooks, “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Among Women,” 133–37.

¹⁴³ Panico, “Sulla linea del colore. Una conversazione con Igiaba Scego.”