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Rethinking Care: Unpaid Labor, Feminism, and the Wages for Housework Campaign in 1970s Italy

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Introduction	3
CHAPTER 1 – (REPRODUCTIVE, EMOTIONAL, INTIMATE, AND DOMESTIC) GENDER LABOR: A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR THE EXISTENCE AND MAINTENANCE OF A CAPITALIST SOCIETY	6
1.1 Choice of terminology and the different meanings and attitudes towards labor and work	7
1.2 Reproductive work, a continuum of service and caring labor	11
1.2.1 Different definitions of Gender Work	11
1.2.2 Reproductive and intimate labor	13
1.3 Emotion as currency	15
1.3.1 Emotional labor of women at the service of women.....	18
1.4 Devaluation of care work	22
1.5 The shared gender responsibility of women	25
1.5.1 Two full time jobs.....	28
1.5.2 What remains of care after digitalization and the persistence of gender labour ...	31
CHAPTER 2 – THE CAMPAIGN FOR A DOMESTIC WAGE	34
2.1 A brief introduction	35
2.2 The international context	38
2.3 A workers’ movement created by women for women	44
2.3.1 Acting despite the opposition and passivity of men.....	48
2.3.2 On earlier theorists and events/ approaches.....	55
THIRD CHAPTER – THE RELEVANCE OF THE BODY AUTONOMY FOR THE UNPAID LABOUR DISCOURSE	64
3.1. Overview of attitudes and legislation regarding abortion through the centuries	67
3.2 The secrecy around abortion: a trace of voices and rumours - a double-edged sword 69	
3.2.1 The body on trial: the Pirobon case.....	75
3.2.2 Women's reproductive health and self-determination, a doctor and husband’s decision	80
3.3 Motherhood, abortion, and family in a new feminist perspective	82
3.3.1 Against a capitalistic and traditional view of the family.....	86
3.3.2 The difficult approval of divorce laws in Italy.....	89
3.4 The relevance of the discussed themes and fights in contemporary society	91
Conclusion	93
Bibliography	95
Sitography	112
Abstract in Italian	114

Introduction

The concept of gendered and unpaid care work has been the main focus of my dissertation. Thus, the main purpose of the dissertation is both to address unpaid work, performed in almost all cases by women, as a necessary condition and basis for the survival of modern and contemporary society, and to shed light on the work done in this regard by feminist groups in the first half of the 1970s.

This is not a recent topic, although it has recently been re-evaluated in the academic field following the experience of the global pandemic.

Indeed, the feminist groups of the time were the first to claim economic and social recognition for the unpaid work performed by women, especially housewives, which was the occupation of almost all Italian women at that time.

For feminist activists, the obligation for women to perform unpaid care work represented the ultimate common denominator for all women. It still remains obscured and invisible as it is denied and never defined as work, even though it occupies several hours of the day and occurs at all stages of a woman's life: it starts with indoctrination from an early age into domestic duties, to parental support for younger siblings, to reappear at an older age when parenting and personal self-fulfillment seem unable to coexist peacefully, and finally up to elderly age, when involvement with children and grandchildren is regarded as a given.

The woman is subject to a constant demand for self-sacrifice, endless and gratuitous availability, and assistance towards her neighbor, be it her partner or her family, throughout her existence as an unpaid worker in a wage economy.

The Archive of Lotta Femminista for wages for housework, Donation by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, (*Archivio di Lotta Femminista per il salario al lavoro domestico, Donazione Mariarosa Dalla Costa*) located at the Biblioteca Civica di Padova, was of fundamental importance in the drafting and study of unpaid care work and feminist theory of the 1970s. Indeed, it preserves countless materials of various kinds, such as documents, handwritten letters, typewritten letters, self-published books, printed books, and translations. The

preservation and collection work began from the 1970s onwards and is the result of the militant activity of Mariarosa Dalla Costa, who was strongly active in the Feminist Movement and is a researcher on the condition of women; it includes documents from the various Italian, European and international feminist groups that collaborated incessantly, inspiring each other.

This material is still very contemporary and relevant today, as it initiated subsequent discussions concerning not merely unpaid work, but also other topics that remain closely connected to it, for example gender medicine and reproductive health.

The original documents preserved were conceived for immediate use in practical militancy work through leaflets and pamphlets, but also present more analytical material intended for the political training of women activists.

The ultimate goal of these activists was to liberate women from male authority, economic dependency, and violence, to enable them to choose their own destiny, their own sexuality, not merely aimed at motherhood.

To adequately discuss the vast topic of unpaid labour, I decided to divide the thesis into three different chapters.

The first chapter aims to provide an explanation of what unpaid care work consists in, as mentioned so far. Care work can be subdivided into different categories: reproductive, intimate, emotional. It is customary to conceive of care work as the performance of household chores for the upkeep of the home, and tasks such as the care and maintenance of bodies, the attention to be paid to people's emotional, affective, and sexual needs are often ignored.

In addition, the first chapter also discusses the choice of terminology regarding care work, and the different meanings and attitudes that different terms can encompass, starting with the primary difference between work and labour.

The gender responsibility shared by women as such and its presence in contemporary society is examined, along with the way in which motherhood represents a discriminatory condition in many respects. Indeed, care work carried out by women today is presented as a second full-time job, often alongside full-time paid work.

The second chapter offers a historical excursus on the theory of Italian feminist groups of the 1970s, on the methods of struggle and action, and on the international context thus providing an overview of the feminist experience of the years analyzed.

Light is shed on the hindering intervention of men with regard to women, who abandoned extra-parliamentary left-wing organizations due to the devaluation of their feminist struggles in order to found autonomous groups. Moreover, it discusses the determining theories that founded the left-wing movements and their limitations regarding the condition of women.

Finally, the last chapter analyses the struggles waged by feminist movements and the importance of the autonomy of the body, against a society that intends to regulate reproductive labour for its own ends and interests, starting from the family unit, the factory of reproduction.

Their efforts materialized in the fight for self-determination and the possibility of choosing or not choosing motherhood, the right to abortion and divorce.

The last chapter covers the direct experiences of women who gradually became aware of their condition and decided to tell their own stories without hiding the horror of clandestine abortions, in a strongly moralistic and religious country that considered this practice unacceptable and non-existent. Furthermore, Pierobon's abortion trial is presented, compared with Marie-Claire Chevalier's French abortion trial.

At last, the importance of the discussion of these issues, which are still topical today, is highlighted for a society that, although aware of its dependence on care work, does not treat it with due importance, relegating it in particular to the new categories of the most vulnerable population groups, namely immigrant women, in a new process of exploitation.

CHAPTER 1 – (REPRODUCTIVE, EMOTIONAL, INTIMATE, AND DOMESTIC) GENDER LABOR: A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR THE EXISTENCE AND MAINTENANCE OF A CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The redefinition of intimate and domestic work as labor is a process that modifies and updates its history: in the beginning labor was concentrated at the family level, agricultural in particular; with the advent of industrialization, it then shifted from the family to the factory.

The birth and development of the factory, in fact entails a reorganization of the family and consequently changes the whole set-up of society as it had been known until now, since family had been the basis of the economy, precisely defined as domestic economy. Labor was then considered circumscribed to the factory, and later extended to the offices¹.

Modernization and the advance of technology changes the economy into a public context: it expands beyond subsistence and mere earnings. In many Countries reclaiming their rights and shaping their values, including Italy, work is directly linked to identity and citizenship², hence why it is fundamental to discuss what is defined and considered work and what is excluded from its definition.

Conceiving the physical tasks, the mental and emotional load performed by millions of women every day for hours as a job of equal dignity to others, erases and denies the separation of home and work in our current society.

¹ Stearns, 2013

² Article 1 of the Italian Constitution: Italy is a democratic republic, founded on labour. Sovereignty belongs to the people, which exercises it in the forms and within the limits of the Constitution.

In addition, a phenomenon that has arisen mostly in the recent years is eliminating the physical distance between home and work, influenced not only by the gradual evolution of work, technology, by the appearance of new job types and contracts that do not necessarily require the presence of more and more workers in a given place, but has also been accelerated by the advent of a highly infectious global pandemic (Covid-19) that has called for a ban on social gathering and has limited the contact with people outside one's family circle as much as possible: WFH (*working from home*) or remote working³.

In fact, to be able to talk about the campaign for wages for domestic work brought forth by activists for decades now, it is necessary to define what is part of the definition of domestic and reproductive work, which guarantees the day-to-day work that individuals and society require to survive. Even actions such as sexual activity and intimacy, which may appear natural and individual⁴, are closely intertwined with this classification of labor.

As it is easily intuitable, the various types of usually unpaid work shouldered by women of all ages and race such as reproductive, emotional, care labor etc. are all so closely interconnected that a clear and precise separation is quite difficult.

1.1 Choice of terminology and the different meanings and attitudes towards labor and work

Defining and explaining the various terms assigned to identify the various types of paid and mostly unpaid gender work is deemed vital in the discussion of this thesis, which focuses on women's rights, their status in current society and how their unpaid work is necessary for the capitalistic society.

Initially supported by the works of L. Näre⁵, the term “*domestic*” was chosen to be used in this work to indicate all the type of labors endured by women and had been chosen as

³ *working from home*: “work carried out by a person ... (i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; (ii) for remuneration; (iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used” (Convention No. 177, Art. 1). International Labour Organization. 2021. *Working from home. From invisibility to decent work*.

⁴ Hewitt-Stubbs, Zimmer-Gembeck, Mastro and Boislard, 2016, 4

⁵ Näre, 2012

it resonates more easily with the Italian language (*lavoro domestico*⁶). However, the term mentioned above refers specifically to "household chores" and is mostly composed by a list of physical activities while excluding others.

The term "intimate labor" was then preferred as it encompasses and binds together "care, domestic, and sex work. Against a scholarship that considers nurses, nannies, home aides, cleaners, prostitutes, and hostesses apart from each other"⁷, its definition shows a continuum of tasks that although appear different, share different aspects.

The term preferred by activists denouncing the unpaid work carried out by women for centuries has been reproductive labor, that in some way shares some characteristics with intimate labor. It consists in the supporting of the current and future workforce that will be occupied with productive work and includes childcare of course, but also meals preparation, "care for the sick, socialization of the young, attention to ritual and cultural activities through which the society's work ethic is transmitted, and the community sharing and support which is essential to the survival of economic stress"⁸.

Furthermore, an etymological and linguistic approach that takes into consideration the same word designated to identify work in various languages such as labor, travail, arbeit, work and labour can be of aid to understand the various positive and negative connotations that various peoples in different eras have attached to it⁹.

For instance, as Raffaella Sarti, Anna Bellavitis, and Manuela Martin analyze, "work" is linked to an "accomplished task", as in fact already in Old English the definition of the term *weorc/worc* is as follows "something done, [a] discreet act performed by someone, [an] action (whether voluntary or required), [a] proceeding, [a] business; that which is made or manufactured, products of labor."¹⁰ Words derived from the Latin word "labor"

⁶Particular subordinate labor relationship constituted by the provision of services of a domestic nature and governed by Art. 2240-46 of the Civil Code, l. 339/1958, Presidential Decree No. 1403/1971, and industry collective bargaining. L. No. 339/1958 defines a domestic worker as one who works for the functioning of family life, whether personnel with specific qualifications or personnel assigned to general duties. [...] A special category is formed by workers admitted to family life, who, under the Civil Code, are entitled, in addition to monetary remuneration, to board and lodging and, for short-term infirmities, to medical care and assistance. Dizionario Treccani, *Lavoro domestico*, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lavoro-domestico/>. Retrieved October 1, 2023.

⁷ Boris & Salazar, 2010, 8

⁸Christodoulou, 2005, and updated by Zobnina, August 2009.

⁹ Fayard, 2021, 208- 211

¹⁰ Sarti, Bellavitis & Martini, 2022, 5

(toil, hence something demanding and tiring) such as Labor, Lavoro and Arbeit implicitly communicate negative feelings of pain and fatigue. The very act of women giving birth is termed as labor.

Many scholars reflected on the coexistence of these words, Hannah Arendt is reported stating how every Indo-European language tends to express the concept of work by dividing it into two etymologically distant and unrelated words, whose definitions and attitudes in this regard have changed over the centuries and have been influenced by various factors: "The Greek language distinguishes between *ponein* and *ergazesthai*, the Latin between *laborare* and *facere* or *fabricari* . . . , the French between *travailler* and *ouvrer*, the German between *arbeiten* and *werken*. In all these cases, only the equivalents for 'labor' have an unequivocal connotation of pain and trouble".¹¹

Reflecting on the evolution and branching out of the various words related to work allows us to analyze in more detail the succession of various attitudes in its regard.

Religion, among other factors, has also played a significant role towards work attitude and ethic¹²: for a long period, Catholicism was more inclined toward a vision of work as an atonement and consequence of the original sin (with Eve being the first instigator, tempting Adam), considering labor and pain being its direct consequences; differently, Protestantism was the breeding ground for the development of individualism, the attitude of appreciation for hard work, and devotion to labor¹³.

The use of specific terminology implies a precise theoretical content and criticisms or at least doubts as to which term is best have arisen, or whether the use of certain adjectives is appropriate. For instance, an analysis on the various terms used, starting with housework, often shows the limits when it is traditionally associated with the task performed by a couple in a household, especially regarding its first world connotation, which is not applicable to all women¹⁴.

Even the term 'unpaid work' is commonly used and accepted, however, has drawbacks: the unpaid worker must be paid. It may not initially be clear who must pay for the work

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Parboteeah, Paik, Cullen, 2009, 57

¹³ Weber. 2005.

¹⁴ Eicher, Albanese, 2007, 227-258

done by the woman, since the one who consumes the products and goods is part of the same household as the worker, consumption and income are identical. Unlike in the capitalist society where the product is not owned by the worker who is exploited because his salary is worth less than what he produces¹⁵.

The obvious correlation of exploitation may be missing here, as theoretically the woman continues to own what she produces. Furthermore, who is exploited in a one-person household if no one claims part of what they produce at home? Quick however argues that in real society exploitation exists and consists of the double responsibilities of a woman who never finishes working and is worse off than men: the “problem lies in the class-gender system of production and distribution¹⁶”.

Furthermore, the political and historical appeal of the term is not to be ignored: on a European if not global scale, there were many feminist activists who demanded 'wages for housework' in the 1970s, as will be illustrated below, to improve conditions for women and children.

As already mentioned, the term reproductive labor is also widely used, and it distinguishes women's role in childbirth and childrearing from the economic production that economists typically focus on. However, integrating this term in economics is challenging. Sustainable production requires maintaining natural, material, and human resources, replacing them as needed. Therefore, applying "reproduction" to the biological creation of human beings is a theoretical stretch.

In economic terms, the part of wage labor contributing to household income is seen as a type of "reproductive labor," for instance household tasks.

It is vital to note the term's rhetorical significance and in fighting against capitalistic oppression of women the weight of their terminology should be acknowledged.

Nevertheless, it remains crucial to emphasize how one term cannot fully capture the complex relationship between class and gender and cannot summarize the experiences of one gender. Exploitation, the usurpation of labor products, is not the same as sexual abuse,

¹⁵ Quick, 2008, 310

¹⁶ Ivi, 311

though they are close connection. Coining these first terms has been fundamental for their initial recognition and it still is vital to discuss their definition.

1.2 Reproductive work, a continuum of service and caring labor

Although care work is more universally known, it could also be possibly defined as reproductive work, and it has been only quite recently pursued again by scholars and institutions.

For instance, the European Union is soliciting its members to pay attention to care work, not only from a perspective of equality rights for women, but also for economic reasons: humans are living longer and longer and the elderly represents an increasing share of the population; life expectancy is getting higher and higher (in 2016 the elderly 65 or over represented 22% of the total population in Italy, compared to the European average of 19.2%¹⁷) and an increasing number of older people is living alone due to distant family members, and therefore will need care and assistance as the years go by.

These are just some of the data and projections that will surely have consequences on various areas and will entail challenges on both the economic and social level, such as on the health care side and its adaptation to take care of an increasing number of elderly people, also from the point of view of labor markets, pension systems, government finances and social security¹⁸.

1.2.1 Different definitions of Gender Work

For the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) care work is fundamentally composed of “two overlapping activities: direct, personal and relational care activities, such as

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/elderly/index.html>, Retrieved October 9, 2023.

¹⁸ Eurostat Statistical books, 2015, 158- 173.

feeding a baby or nursing an ill partner; and indirect care activities, such as cooking and cleaning¹⁹”.

The use of intimate offers this type of definition: it concerns the “the physical, intellectual, affective, and other emotional needs of strangers, friends, family, sex partners, children, and elderly, ill, or disabled people. They comprise tasks for daily life (...) They involve bodily and psychic intimacy: manipulating genitalia, wiping noses, lifting torsos, and feeding mouths, but also listening, talking, holding, and just being there. The presence of dirt, bodies, and intimacy, however, helps to stigmatize such work and those who perform it²⁰.”

Intimate labor is performed in houses, hotels, street, hospitals; it could be carried out daily or for just brief periods, it may concern the physical space, the household maintenance, it can involve the body, in a more face to face contact.

It is fundamental to clarify that these types of actions that provide care and comfort for the receivers can in some cases be carried out when they are not present, in the case of hotel housekeepers. The jobs that act these intimate tasks are quite different, they go from bill collectors, beauty estheticians, street prostitutes, waiters, sperm donators, medical staff and much more: they all share the need for a precise social relation between the parties involved²¹.

It is the norm for a profession involving one of the three types of labor described to include the other: sex workers very often also perform care work; domestic work very often requires a certain intimacy with the bodies they handle and it is usually performed by cleaners, maids in the case of a earning of an income, and historically has been usually performed with no compensation by women in every phase of their life: as daughters, sisters, mothers and even as slaves²².

A further definition helps defining what types of jobs can be categorized under the intimate labor: they are characterized by “such elements as shared secrets, interpersonal

¹⁹ International Labour Organization, 2018, 28

²⁰ Boris & Salazar, 2010, 19

²¹ Zelizer, 2010, 165-210

²² Boris & Salazar, 2010, 20

rituals, bodily information, awareness of personal vulnerability and shared memory of embarrassing situations²³”.

1.2.2 Reproductive and intimate labor

“Reproductive labor is like electricity, invisible yet everywhere, and it powers everything²⁴”.

The concept of social reproduction is key in discussing gender, reproductive labor and their various components: originally formulated by Karl Marx²⁵, it could be defined as the reproduction of social structures, institutions and forces throughout generations and change of governments; it has as its final goal the maintenance and continuation of existing social relations²⁶. The capital plays a significant role in ensuring the social maintenance of status of family.

It is directly linked to biological reproduction and binds individuals to the needs for the survival of society even across generations.

According to E.N. Glenn, it is expressed in "activities such as purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, laundering and repairing clothing, maintaining furnishings and appliances, socializing children, providing care and emotional support for adults, and maintaining kin and community ties²⁷”, including, of course, motherhood.

Intimate labor could also be defined as work directly at the service of social reproduction. Naturally, sex work is included, as it satisfies and sustains the overworked and stressed productive forces, attending not only to their physical but also their emotional needs²⁸.

²³ Ivi, 21

²⁴ Callaci, 2018

²⁵ Marx, 1887

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, 2003, 63

²⁷ Boris & Salazar, 2010, 20

²⁸ Andrejek, Fetner, Heath, 2002

It is not the aim of this work to debate whether sex work is moral or not, but the intention is to discuss it as part of our reality both contemporary and past. Sex and reproductive work include prostitution, adoption, surrogacy, in vitro Fertilization, egg, and sperm donation.

It is undeniable that sex work is a kind of care work that is criminalized and socially opprobrious, and yet in various cases it directly affects the family structure and procreation of various societies that are gradually becoming less and less fertile²⁹.

Briggs differentiates between two types of infertility in the US context specifically, but one of them could easily be applied globally: the economic cause of infertility due to the reason that many women postpone their first pregnancy in order to pursue careers³⁰ and be able to succeed despite the persistence of gender discriminations, also being aware of the fact that after conceiving a child, the family will experience impoverishment due to the high costs in terms of money and time, the latter still especially on mothers, of child support³¹.

Hence, this is not a choice made only by ambitious women, but quite often economically precarious women also must do the same³².

The substantive difference here consists in the wealth of the woman and of the infertile heterosexual couple in general, or whether they live in liberal Countries, which in case will allow them to rely on various types of technologies that can support a pregnancy even in more advanced states of age for example, as already mentioned, with artificial insemination, surrogacy, adoption, embryo and or egg freezing.

Ignoring this aspect of intimate labor further marginalizes the new and old workers in this sector and their rights. Furthermore, intersectionality is fundamental to interpret and discuss this topic, given that very often the weight of differences on women's social and economic background regarding these rights is not indifferent: it is impossible and unethical to discuss the commodification of reproductive and intimate labor without dealing with immigration; it is unacceptable to discuss the access to services such as

²⁹ Briggs Laura, 2018

³⁰ Caltabiano, Marcantonio, Comolli and Rosina, 2017, 640-642.

³¹ Pailhé, Solaz & Tanturri, 2019, 234-241

³² Bratti, Cavalli, 2013, 25-27

adoption and IVF and ignore the scarce quality of maternity support in poorer countries or generically in the case of women in precarious working conditions, and/or in the case of nonwhite women.

1.3 Emotion as currency

The lack of attention to emotions and the body from the academic world may be partially due to the hitherto dominance of the mind-body dualism theorized by Descartes, which has led to the marginalization and ignoring of all those parts of the dualisms in binary opposition deemed inferior.

The body and emotions, associated with the female sphere, were separated and divided from the rational mind associated with the male counterpart in antinomies such as: objective/subjective, reason/emotion, rationality/irrationality, masculine/feminine³³.

This way of thinking and associating the mind and the reason with the masculine is still intrinsic and seemingly unshakable in Western societies heavily influenced by Cartesian and Enlightenment theories.

In summary, emotional labor could be defined as editing the expression of one's emotions, mostly of women and girls, to prioritize and care for the emotions of others³⁴. It happens when "someone first seeks to cater to the emotional experience of someone else and then puts their own emotions to work for that other person.

Under the distribution of this form of work, in which women are expected to provide emotional labor and men are not, there is a basic acceptance that a man's existence is to be protected as a priority over a woman's"³⁵, as Hackman directly states.

It happens in the context of a family when women directly act so that partners and children are happy and emotionally cared for, as for example remembering and reminding other

³³ Akomolafe Akinola, 2012, 97-101

³⁴ Hackman, 2023, 13-21

³⁵ Ivi, 9

about their appointments. Hartley consequentially expands the definition of emotional labor defining it as not only emotion management but also life management.³⁶

Furthermore, managing the household chores and family responsibilities, women must also anticipate, interpretate, and reassure the other family members' and partners' ego and feelings, use a certain tone and kind words³⁷, not to appear a "nag".

At work, it is the reminder of constantly working with a smile, to always be friendly with customers, even when they are rude. It happens in different kinds of workplace settings, not only in service, but also in the healthcare sector, where workers need to show empathy towards the patient and their family.

As already mentioned, in a historical time in which everything is used for the purpose of profit, emotions could not be omitted from the list. In the very act of selling, states C. Wright Mills, is included the selling of the salesperson's personality, which involves an estrangement from oneself in a process of control and suppression of one's feelings³⁸.

It shares with physical labor that sense of alienation and sale of a part of the body, for example the arm, which becomes someone else's propriety: it becomes a tool for economic gain.

Therefore, in emotionally intense and demanding jobs, the worker is required to only exhibit feelings aligned with the expectations of the client, the company and society. The employee is asked to truly believe in the values of the company. When faced with critical moments, the worker is called upon to decentralize from what they feel inside so as not to get too involved. This emotional labor is often lead by employers rather than by professional norms, who intervene and supervise the behavior and attitude of the frontline service workers towards customers³⁹.

Hochschild uses the distinction between surface and deep acting, conceptualized by Konstantin Stanislavski and supported by Goffman, who identifies three basic

³⁶ Hartley Gemma, 2020, 19

³⁷ Anderson, 2023, 180

³⁸ Wright, 2002

³⁹ Leidner Robin, 1999, 87-93

characteristics of acting: appearance and setting, which can fall under the category of surface and manner, which requires no small amount of effort.

Particularly central to the discussion of emotional labor is acting at the deepest level, in which a person self-induces an emotional response or feeling, through exhortation, imagination, and indirect approach to the emotions themselves, binding to something relegated in memory to best communicate those required responses in the most genuine way possible⁴⁰.

Defining the required emotions are "feeling rules"⁴¹, distributed by class (and the middle class is usually the one mostly employed in service and management jobs where emotional labor is heavily required), religion and gender.

Gender is the biggest marker in the demand for emotional labor: women, who are considered to be more in touch with their emotions, are expected to do more emotional labor, both paid and unpaid. Simultaneously men have much stricter rules regarding emotions, such that excessive emotional externalizing draws attention and questions about his sexuality.

The long relationship and immediate association between women and emotional labor as currency for sustainment, is due to their economic dependency on men, which has led emotions to become a good that is exchanged in significant relationships due to the lack of other resources and financial independence⁴².

A direct consequence of the women-emotion association is the high frequency for women to do jobs where emotional labor is valued and required, such as flight attendants, nurses, elementary school teachers.

It is the commercialization of feeling: only those abilities such as understanding and listening, which are considered intrinsic in women, are valued.

⁴⁰ Hochschild, 2002, 35-55

⁴¹ Ivi, 56

⁴² Ivi, 163

Women are endlessly tasked with the responsibility of “not only for the expression of their own feelings but also for the feelings of others⁴³”. To always smile and to make others smile.

1.3.1 Emotional labor of women at the service of women

In further arguing the amount of emotional labor carried out by women, it was deemed useful to mention the work of Amy Passwore in interviewing and analyzing the figure of the domestic violence worker, in particular the figure of the front-line domestic violence service worker, as an active figure who is aware of her role and the work performed, and as an example of the case where the worker shares the same values of the association for which she performs a service, in divergence with the remaining cases of jobs requiring emotional labor⁴⁴.

The work of the volunteers is not to align themselves with the feelings of the victims, but to detach from them and obviously help them in making the decision they think is best. The author's ultimate intent of the paper is to discover "how their feminist emotions manifest within the emotional labor they undertake in the work they do⁴⁵".

As already mentioned, the emotions felt by feminist women collide with what is established and accepted by the patriarchal society that disavows negative and intense feelings in women such as the anger felt against discrimination, which motivates and fuels the work volunteers partake in.

Indeed, feminists denouncing the forms of oppression are perceived as an unpleasant presence, “affect aliens⁴⁶”; their sentiments are termed "outlaw" in that they do not coincide with those predetermined by the status quo. Precisely because they are rejected by society, feminist activists incite comrades not to hide or bury these feminist emotions long termed irrational, but to use them as fuel to fight against discrimination.

⁴³ Hartley, 2020, 7

⁴⁴ Passwore, 2020

⁴⁵ Ivi, 8

⁴⁶ Ahmed, 2010, 2

Slightly easing the burden of emotional labor and displacement of women working for these feminist organizations, in line with the thoughts and values of their employees, is the support that can be counted on within them.

Through their work DV⁴⁷ helpline workers directly act against the general view and stereotypes of relationships and gender violence and help the woman define and realize the state of abuse she is experiencing: her role “lies in speaking out against the idea that a child needs two parents, and in contradicting the idea that marriage should be for better or for worse⁴⁸”.

Thus, the domestic violence line worker acts against the institutions of church, police and state that accept, culturally justify, and ignore the abuse and violence, reporting them as isolated cases. Although the author cites pieces of media and news in the contest of UK as evidence, it can be affirmed/ argued that the same situation happens in Italy too⁴⁹.

The abuser is often described as a kind man, who was just suffering too deeply or caught in a moment of extreme rage, that needs be understood while the women who lost their lives are forgotten in the best case, or partially blamed. Economic causes are often mentioned to explain the reason behind violent gestures, along with some of the victim’s actions⁵⁰.

The author points out how little attention is paid to DV workers, how little is known about the consequences of their constant proximity with stories of abuse, the introspection and identification with the victims themselves, the especially initial difficulty of establishing boundaries, the constant need for empathy in order to offer the best possible service and help. Notably, previous works do not mention at all the feminist matrix that drives women to work in this field, the intersectional approach, and how feminist sentiments can affect emotional labor.

The emotional labor of women workers in this sector, is different from that perpetuated by women in general, to keep the social wheel in motion: they do not have to be kind, "nice". They must play the role of "killjoys", expose the dirt hidden under the rug: they

⁴⁷ Domestic violence.

⁴⁸ Passwore, 2020, 8

⁴⁹ Orrù & Abis, 2016, 6-10

⁵⁰ Pischedda, 2013, 40-59

must not simply control emotions and reassure the callers like a customer care service would do, but are authorized “to stoke a fire, to encourage the use of anger, and the energy it creates, and turn it into a fight for justice, no matter how many hurdles a survivor may face⁵¹”.

They allow victims to express the emotions they feel, without diminishing them as it happens daily in their abusive situations.

Using Hochschild's theories, Passwore recognizes a fundamental difference in the work of DV helpline workers compared to other workers: the latter must override and align their emotions with the values of the companies they work for; volunteers espouse the same causes to such an extent that the separation of public and private becomes very difficult and often has mental health consequences.

The author states how Hochschild's analysis goes to the extent of downplaying workers' individual motivations, relegating them simply to financial reasons. Of course, this is not the case for all workers.

Volunteers for instance hope to make a difference with their work, thus they receive gratification that is for them more valuable than monetary compensation. This emotional compensation is reported quite frequently in care jobs⁵². The volunteering is closely related to their own identity and clearly does not have capitalist profit as its goal.

Furthermore, the author points out that indeed "emotional labor is a large part of the job, but what motivates these workers to partake in this type of work is an additional sense of emotional obligation - politically motivated care⁵³- that is very personal, in discordance with what Hochschild states.

Therefore, these associations were founded precisely out of the persistence of anger and sense of justice in the face of gender-based violence and discrimination experienced as a woman and to shelter those who experience these feminist feelings. It is safe to assume that there is emotional labor in feminist activism as well, as women are often called upon

⁵¹ Passwore, 2020, 14

⁵² Grünwald, Damman, & Henkens, 2021, 2280-2298

⁵³ Passwore, 2020, 18

to control these emotions to avoid constant confrontation with friends, family, etc. and to continue their societally defined role.

Participating in feminist associations and meetings allows one to alleviate loneliness and this emotional labor and to recharge, as everyone present shares the same outlaw emotions.

The author, following J. Radford's pioneering work, collected the direct testimonies of female workers through interviews, employing open-ended questions to report the unfiltered experience as truthfully as possible. After collecting the testimonies, the author analyzes the research by dividing it into three themes: “recognition of agency that compels employees to choose a type of work that is in line with their beliefs⁵⁴”, the impossibility of a definite division between the public and private life of workers and feminist emotions.

As the experiences of colleagues and the author herself testify, this type of work involves a considerable emotional burden that requires to manage the extreme emotions felt, since one's response can determine the success of the intervention, and often save the victims' lives. Workers must not cry, or show shock, must keep the focus on the victim, not on how what they are hearing makes them feel. She must allow the victim to make her own choices and not influence her, although this can be very frustrating for the volunteer.

Although she is informed as early as in the training of the emotional labor she will be engaging in, the experiences of the interviewees show how much more intense the reality of emotional labor is than anticipated, how some even at home some could stop thinking about the victims they have listened to during the day. The more experienced volunteers apply strategies to emotionally remove themselves from cases and very often instruct the younger ones.

They do not have to fake emotions for instance empathy as in the case of flight attendants who imagine that clients respond in a certain way because of their assumed traumatic past, the DV survivors with whom the volunteers talk have experienced it and thus this makes the interactions genuine.

⁵⁴ Ivi, 33

Reported emotions range from anger, to anxiety, to sorrow, to gratitude. For one participant, it is the need to control emotions that is the most difficult part, as the author herself reports, and the sense of isolation from other people given by the emotional labor required is frequently reported. Yet, when asked about the motivations behind their choice to work in this specific field, the female workers responded that they much prefer to work for a company with which they share values, differing from their previous work experiences.

This experience, while challenging, is different from the other since there is “less “role strain” because of the individual sense of agency that has moved these employees towards work where they fit⁵⁵”.

Although not all the workers in the association identify themselves as feminists, the emotions felt by them in the face of injustice and abuse were the main reason in choosing the work, which, as already stated, are those definable alien or feminist feelings.

These emotions are not discarded or hidden, are what made them choose the job, the workers support and vent with each other. Their work directly helps women in need, and they recognize its positive effects not only in other people’s lives but also their own: it feels as a shelter for their own values, it supports the emotional deviance of the workers themselves.

1.4 Devaluation of care work

In order to survive, human beings must act and take care of themselves and others: “existence in its essence is care to exist⁵⁶”. Care is the necessary condition for the child, not yet autonomous, to grow and realize fully and become an adult: the human being therefore needs to receive care initially passively and then reciprocate the same care towards others in need. At the beginning of life and at the end, human beings need care.

⁵⁵ Ivi, 38

⁵⁶ Mortari, 2006, 7

Although care also occupies a large part of life itself, it is underestimated and belittled by society, relegating it to something taken for granted and delegated only to certain categories.

The scientific and academic community itself has for a long time ignored this dimension, and according to various scholars it is because has always been responsibility of invisible social members like women. Caring actions have been perceived as taken for granted and natural, not worthy of attention and reflection⁵⁷.

In her work “*The Practice of Caring*”, the author Luigina Mortari reports how, according to Joan C. Tronto, caring is devalued when it is practiced by lower social classes, by ethnic minorities in precarious conditions who are forced to do it to earn a living. Thus, it is not just a matter of gender, but it could be "a phenomenon linked to the socio-economic structure of society"⁵⁸.

However, this reflection does not answer "whether those at the lowest levels of the social hierarchies are such because they care and care is devalued, or because in order to devalue people they are placed in a position to perform care work"⁵⁹.

In contemporary society, being dependent on someone else's care is considered deplorable as the dominant mentality tends to associate success as something earned through one's own unique strengths. In reality, to succeed, the person must have received care and support, consciously and unconsciously.

Heavily influenced by the general opinion that sees men's work as more valuable, important, and better paid than women's, when there are children or elderly people to care for, it is still women in many cases who usually downsize or renounce to work altogether⁶⁰.

This phenomenon was particularly evident during the first two years of the global Covid-19 pandemic: it forced many women to stay at home and "voluntarily" quit their jobs for logistical reasons, since, with schools and nurseries closed, there was a need for one of the parents to stay home and look after the children. The decision to renounce work was

⁵⁷ Selvaraja and Baskaran, 2023, 23–28

⁵⁸ Mortari, 2006, 18

⁵⁹ Ibidem

⁶⁰ Ispettorato Nazionale del Lavoro, 2020, 5-12.

often also involuntarily due to economic reasons, as the sectors most affected were precisely the predominantly female ones⁶¹.

More than ever before, the pandemic also showed society's need and reliance on unpaid and paid care work⁶². Nevertheless, care providers see their work being devaluated while experiencing poor working condition, exploitation, and high injury rates.

A clear example of the devaluation of care work is shown in the example brought forward by Mortari, but well known by all, of the different recognition, prestige, and remuneration of doctors and nurses (who are predominantly women).

The cure, which doctors provide, is considered as more valuable than the care, which is the responsibility of the latter⁶³. Even in its own field, care is differentiated and discriminated against.

As already mentioned, care and reproductive work, although are a prerequisite for the productive work valued by neoliberal capitalism, is gendered and devalued so that it remains free and endlessly exploitable⁶⁴ for governments that do not wish to invest in it to the expense of women and carers acting in its place: as shown in the case of the 2008-2009 economic crisis, austerity measures saved money by reducing funds from the healthcare system and the social sphere of family especially⁶⁵.

It must be noted that, as Kováts reports in her speech, S. Federici recognized that the chain in the emancipation of women in the countries of the core, was enabled by the release of "their double burden by relegating domestic work to women emigrating from the semi peripheries and peripheries⁶⁶".

This condition is also observable within the same Country between women of different social classes. In summary, the care work that used to be responsibility of housewives and halted their empowerment and career advancement was passed directly to other women, usually poor and immigrant.

⁶¹ Gruppo di lavoro tecnico e del Comitato d'Indirizzo dell'Accordo tra Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Istat, Inps, Inail e Anpal, 2020, 25-28

⁶² Pupo and Duffy, 2012, 27-47

⁶³ Mortari, 2006, 19

⁶⁴ Antony. 2016

⁶⁵ Karamessini & Rubery, 2013

⁶⁶ Barna, 2017, 168-169

The devaluation of care and the absence of individual and collective care for care workers has direct consequences, expressed in a “mutual misrecognition⁶⁷” between the worker and the client, resulting in interactions full of disdain, distrust, and resistance because both of them are forced to play stigmatized and marginalized roles⁶⁸.

Older people for instance, are perceived and viewed as passive recipients needing of care and support, not in control of their own life anymore, stripped away of the individuality that contemporary western society otherwise values⁶⁹. It is not infrequent to compare the older and increasing share of the population as a mere economic burden for the other member of society.

Because they are associated with the decay of the body and with death, doing the “dirty work” of degrading tasks and manipulating naked and unattractive bodies and genitalia, aged care workers and nurses are often marginalized in society. These gendered jobs are undervalued and devalued exactly because care is perceived as a selfless act, that must consider love and gratification as more valuable than mere financial compensation.

The work done by these types of workers is deprived of its uniqueness and considered low skilled. They are also often perceived as active perpetrators in taking away the freedoms of the elderly. To reevaluate and give recognition to (aged) care work, not only for the workers themselves, but for the elderly as well, reshaping the language and discourses employed is fundamental⁷⁰.

1.5 The shared gender responsibility of women

In the European context, women on average are more likely to be economically inactive than men: having to deal with care work inside and outside the home, such as caring for children and/or disabled and/or elderly dependent family members proves to be the most frequent cause behind the inability to seek paid work.

⁶⁷ Banks, 2018, 167-177

⁶⁸ Ibidem

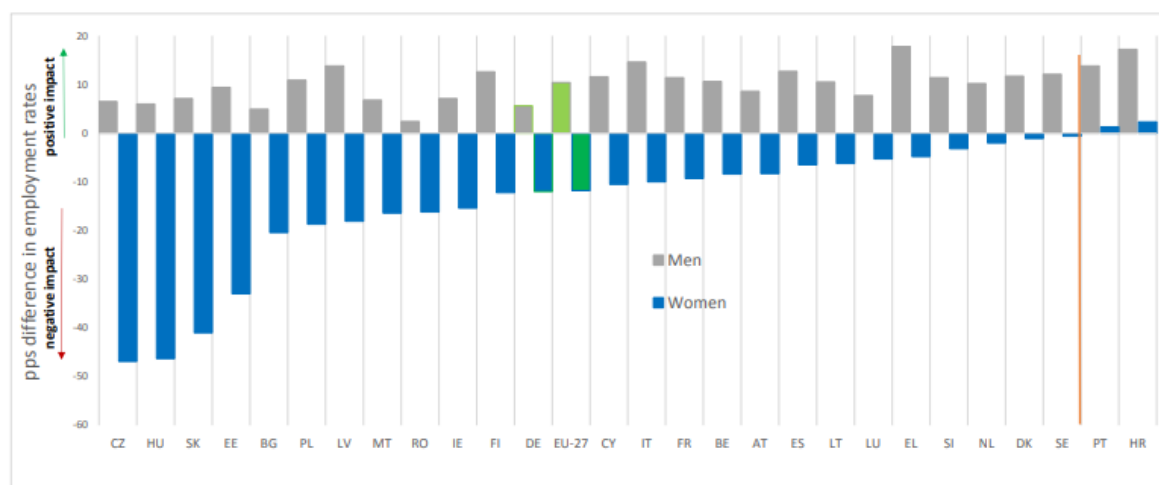
⁶⁹ Warmoth, Lang, Phoenix, Abraham, Andrew, Hubbard & Tarrant, 2016, 1483-1500

⁷⁰ Banks Susan, 2018, 168-170

The gender gap in unpaid labor assignments has direct consequences on access to employment⁷¹. The divergence is also accentuated by the "employment penalty of motherhood"⁷² experienced by women working full time jobs: at the advent of motherhood and subsequent birth of a child, there are increasing disadvantages such as less benefits, (de)valuation of their work and remuneration compared to the same women who have none. Furthermore, families with multiple children see a significant difference in parental employment, in favor of that of the father: Italy is among the countries where this kind of parental employment gap is at the highest⁷³ and for new mothers, exit rates are still too frequent in comparison to other European Countries.

Figura 2.2.14: solo in due paesi dell'UE le donne con figli piccoli hanno tassi di occupazione più alti delle donne senza figli

Effetto della genitorialità sull'occupazione per gli uomini e per le donne (fascia di età 25-49 anni) nel 2020



Nota: per "effetto della genitorialità sull'occupazione" si intende la differenza in punti percentuali tra il tasso di occupazione delle madri (padri) con almeno un figlio di età inferiore ai sei anni e quello delle donne (uomini) senza figli.

74

⁷¹ Esposito Monica, 2023, 15

⁷² Casarico, Lattanzio, 2023, 1489–1511

⁷³ Relazione comune sull'occupazione della Commissione Europea e del Consiglio, 2022, 135.

⁷⁴ Table 1: *The effect of parenthood on employment for men and women (age group 25-49) in 2020*. Only in two of the EU countries do women with younger children have higher employment rates than women without children. Istat http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hheredch

Motherhood effects women's work in two ways: it may happen that the mother might decide to stop working temporarily or permanently (and this phenomenon is referred to as career break job penalty)⁷⁵, or in the case of women remaining at the same job, they might be financially penalized (motherhood wage penalty)⁷⁶.

Especially at risk of these penalties are women during the first years of motherhood, but it is not excluded that the situation might persist or even worsen. Part time jobs help prevent the permanent exit from employment of new mothers and for women with this kind of contracts, no wage penalty is experienced⁷⁷.

This type of employment is observed to be rather frequent in Italy for mothers, and although it might partially protect them from unemployment, it does not guarantee total financial independence from their partners.

The low involvement of women in the labour market is also due the poor welfare system and the inadequate family policies that Italy offers to the citizens: to be more precise, although the high level of public expenditure, "the number of resources addressed to families is rather small, not only in comparison with the Nordic countries but also with respect to the European average⁷⁸".

A significant difference between Nordic Countries and Italy, is that support to families and children is given through tax breaks, rather than the needed services. Funding public facilities as opposed to simply delegating funds to be allocated to families pushes families to take advantage of them and could help get rid of the prejudices that relegate women to certain and asphyxiating gender roles that see them as primary caregivers of the family and children, which are unfortunately still well entrenched in the peninsula⁷⁹.

Finally, evidence of the societal expectations and obligations of the parents is observed in the different parental leaves. Maternity leave is applied during the first three months after the child's birth (or adoption) and consists in a "period of obligatory absence from work is prescribed for employed working mothers. For independent workers or self-employed professionals, there is no link between the benefit and any obligatory absence

⁷⁵ Pacelli, Pasqua & Villosi, 2013, 410

⁷⁶ Ivi, 411.

⁷⁷ Ivi, 410

⁷⁸ Carta, 2019, 9

⁷⁹ Ivi, 8

from work⁸⁰”. Italy provides more weeks (17 to be precise) compared to other European countries, with an average of 13.2 weeks⁸¹.

Quite different from the one reserved to the mothers, paternity leave consists in a “ten-day compulsory paid leave which can be taken separately and can be claimed within five months of the child’s birth, granted at the same time as the maternity paid leave. In the presence of serious conditions that prevent the mother from taking care of the baby, the right to absence from work and the relative allowance is granted to the father. In the five months after the child’s birth, the father can be entitled to one more day of unpaid leave⁸²”.

Parental leave, available for both parents, is voluntary, individual, less paid but it can be benefited for a longer period compared to the maternity one. The length of the absence is prolonged when both parents are claiming it, to ensure and encourage fathers to take on more responsibilities regarding household chores⁸³.

1.5.1 Two full time jobs

As already mentioned, for generations, the work of caring for the neediest segments of the population has fallen on women due to various cultural and religious expectations and has resulted in labor market policies and structures that expect the women to be the main care givers in the family in favor of men, whose needs are usually cared for and therefore able to dedicate themselves totally towards a career.

This “specialization” forces women to spend different hours every day in care work, may them stay at home moms be or workers, often forcing many of the latter to "voluntarily"

⁸⁰Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, Italy - Maternity and paternity leave allowance. European Commission, an official EU website.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1116&langId=en&intPageId=4618>

⁸¹ Addabbo, Cardinali, Giovannini and Mazzucchelli, 2021

⁸² Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, Italy - Maternity and paternity leave allowance. European Commission, an official EU website.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1116&langId=en&intPageId=4618>

⁸³ Carta, 2019

decrease their hours of work, to seek only part time or not to work at all either because the time cost of caring for children and/or elderly parents were too high⁸⁴.

The increasing share of women in the workforce, although it has suffered a serious setback in the years when Covid has been most intense, has had little effect on men's involvement in the care work at the family level and their attitudes towards these type of responsibilities: especially in Italy, it is still a shared belief that the most vital and fulfilling responsibility for a woman is to care for her family⁸⁵.

Hence, being employed does not shelter women from being responsible for the household chores and for the care of its members: as it is observed/highlighted by the table below, the gap in daily time spent on various chores between men and women is wide.

This unpaid labor includes activities such as cleaning the house, preparing meal, caring for the emotional needs of the family members and does not include the mental load for organizing activities, reminding appointments and forethought in compiling the shopping list, all of this while remembering the various preferences and needs.

Hochschild introduced the term "Second Shift⁸⁶" in the late 1980s precisely to describe this phenomenon of the double burden borne by working women in heterosexual marriages with a partner who is also a worker. This double responsibility is, as described "'ubiquitous" and "undervalued" by spouses and the broader society⁸⁷" and halts women's progress towards gender equality.

Women juggling the responsibilities of the home and of their job, very often sacrificed in favour of the former, has psychological consequences and results in women experiencing a constant high level of stress and burnout, aggravated by the expectations of society, family members and partners who are not eager to change their privileged situation or take on more tedious, day-to-day tasks, perhaps even sometimes unable to realize that the divisions of responsibility within the couple are not equal⁸⁸.

⁸⁴ Pailhé, Solaz & Tanturri, 2019, 223–261

⁸⁵ Presidenza del consiglio dei Ministri- Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità. 2018. Stereotypes about gender roles and the social image of sexual violence. ISTAT

⁸⁶ Hochschild, 1940-. (2003)

⁸⁷ Brailey, Slatton, 2019, 29

⁸⁸ MacDonald, Phipps Lethbridge, 2005, 63-94

Tabella 2.1 Indicatori Unece¹⁰ sul lavoro non retribuito svolto come attività principale nel giorno medio settimanale dalla popolazione di 15 anni e più per sesso. Anni 2013-2014

Funzioni produttive	Uomini	Donne	Totale	
Tempo dedicato al lavoro non retribuito	02:16	05:09	03:46	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo al lavoro non retribuito	74,60	92,30	83,80	(%)
Tempo dedicato alla preparazione dei pasti e alla pulizia della casa	00:43	03:03	01:56	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo alla preparazione dei pasti e alla pulizia della casa	54,90	89,80	73,00	(%)
Tempo dedicato alla cura di bambini conviventi	01:24	02:01	01:47	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo alla cura di bambini conviventi	13,00	20,20	16,70	(%)
Tempo dedicato a giocare, leggere e parlare con bambini conviventi	01:03	00:58	01:00	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo a giocare, leggere e parlare con bambini conviventi	8,60	10,40	9,50	(%)
Tempo dedicato alla cura di adulti conviventi	01:21	00:56	01:04	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo alla cura di adulti conviventi	2,80	5,10	4,00	(%)
Tempo dedicato al volontariato organizzato	02:54	02:52	02:53	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo al volontariato organizzato	1,90	1,20	1,50	(%)
Tempo dedicato agli aiuti rivolti ad altre famiglie	01:46	01:47	01:46	(hh:mm)
Persone che hanno dedicato tempo agli aiuti rivolti ad altre famiglie	6,60	9,30	8,00	(%)

Fonte: dati Istat, Indagine *Uso del tempo*

89

As Carla D. Brailey and Brittany C. Slatton report, Hochschild noted that even in childless situations, a “leisure gap”⁹⁰ exists between spouses. The gender inequality of women and mothers in heterosexual relationships is obviously related to the lack of remuneration for

⁸⁹ Table 2: Unece indicators on unpaid work performed as the main activity on the average weekday by the population aged 15 and over by gender. Years 2013-2014. Esposito Monica. 2023. Tra produzione e riproduzione: l’onere del lavoro non retribuito sulle disparità di genere. INAPP.

⁹⁰ Barigozzi, Di Timoteo & Monfardini, 2022, 8-15.

care work as it has direct negative consequences on the division of power in in both the public and private spheres⁹¹.

Remuneration is not enough, it is necessary to “address structural inequality grounded in race, class and gender that often dictate the type of work accessed by labour participants and the wage gaps that historically impact women, particularly women of colour who are most likely to do care work⁹²” in contemporary societies, where care work previously performed by white women has been shifted mainly to immigrant women who work as “*badanti*”, for example.

As explained, although pioneering, the concept of the “Second Shift” is criticized for its exclusion from consideration of centuries and centuries of unpaid, devalued, and involuntary work that women did, long before white American women (and European women) joined the paid labor force, on which Hochschild focuses instead.

1.5.2 What remains of care after digitalization and the persistence of gender labour

When the site of male labor exited from the home to the stores, offices, and factories, the house became solely “the place for another kind of work- specialized domestic work-women’s work⁹³”. The household became indeed a factory with never ending work and needed to sustain the workers’ life in every aspect.

Of course, from the birth of gendered labour, care work has been significantly changed and many tasks subsided thanks to its partial digitalization and commodification due to technological advancement. It has surely helped women in lessening the time spent in daily and heavy tasks such as through the invention of the washing machine: many women having to wash by hand clothes, sheets etc recall this task as the most tedious, hard, and time-consuming one.

⁹¹ Bay-Cheng, Maguin & Bruns, 2018, 2

⁹² Brailey, Slatton, 2019, 29-35.

⁹³Green, 2016, 1

For housewives, inventions such as the afore mentioned washing machine were truly life changing. In Italy, like in many other Countries, it represents the household appliance par excellence. It started spreading and gaining more and more popularity in the 1960s, becoming a symbol of progress for the emancipation of women⁹⁴.

The advancement of technology did not stop there, it still continues nowadays to dictate massive changes in everyday life and could help lift the burden brought on by many women, for instance “smart washing systems would enable remote laundry management⁹⁵” and render the whole process, from washing to drying completely autonomous, and this could also be applied to the cleaning of the home, as it is happening through hands-free vacuum and mop robots.

Although, simple technology advancement does not end gender inequality and the mental load that these tasks still expect. Digital housekeeping is designed with male users in mind, as it also easily intuited from the advertisements of the smart home catered to men⁹⁶, differently as it had been so far.

It is mostly men benefiting from this digitalization, since it still does not entail cooking, cleaning, and washing up, chores traditionally considered women’s work. There is still work to do after the notification of a fridge with a shopping list and after the cycle of the washing machine is done.

Technology and the smart home promises to shift the responsibility of parenting and household chores from human to smart technology: men are not asked to change and socially evolve, to take on more responsibilities.

To tackle this problem and to ensure that more and more women benefit from these new technologies, the absence of women in these sectors must be addressed and the values of women’s skills in housework must be considered in the design process. Technologies should support the parenting roles and support a fairer redistribution of reproductive work between men and women, not erase them.

The digital revolution cannot advance without cultural revolution.

⁹⁴ Asquer, 2006, 1-2

⁹⁵ Güney-Frahm, 2023

⁹⁶ Huws, 2019, 8-23

Another aspect that contemporary feminist theory is failing to address adequately is the marketisation and commodification of care work that is expanding more and more in the recent years and will become even more prevalent in the future. Indeed, housework is undergoing a process of externalization and more and more family use or will use paid workers to complete tasks that used to be the wife and mother's responsibilities⁹⁷.

The topic of gender labour in its countless facets, different denominations, and consequent implications, such as care work, emotional labour, intimate labour and unpaid work has gained importance and relevance in the current careless society that increasingly cuts funds to the public and care sectors, postponing the discussion of these issues to an indefinite future.

Care work is globally becoming paid work but not under the prerequisites and conditions requested by Feminists of the Second Wave, it is performed and changed under capitalist control, as this will be discussed later.

⁹⁷ Pasquinelli, Pozzoli, 2021

CHAPTER 2 – THE CAMPAIGN FOR A DOMESTIC WAGE

THEY SAY IT IS LOVE. WE SAY IT IS UNWAGED WORK.

THEY CALL IT FRIGIDITY. WE CALL IT ABSENTEEISM.

EVERY MISCARRIAGE IS A WORK ACCIDENT.

*HOMOSEXUALITY AND HETEROSEXUALITY ARE BOTH WORK
CONDITIONS... BUT HOMOSEXUALITY IS WORKERS' CONTROL OF
PRODUCTION, NOT THE END OF WORK*

*MORE SMILES? MORE MONEY. NOTHING WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN
DESTROYING THE HEALING VIRTUES OF A SMILE*

*NEUROSIS, SUICIDE, DESEXUALISATION: OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES OF
HOUSEWIVES⁹⁸.*

The year 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the Wages for Housework campaign, which as an intersectional, feminist, and anti-capitalist movement demands recognition for domestic, intimate and care work performed by all women as such.

This campaign also arose in response to the 'traditional' class struggle waged by men, who excluded and belittled women, considered to be outside of the capitalist world: what they do cannot really be defined as productive work, their experience might be defined as oppression, not exploitation, as their argumentation will be explained later.

⁹⁸ Federici, 2012, 15

This battle is often pushed aside and replaced when examining the issues and rights second wave feminist activists fought for, such as abortion, labor rights, freer sexuality. Unpaid labor should be considered as a fundamental part of the discourse, since all oppressions women endured in the past and still do in the present are closely intertwined. Furthermore, in the case of Italy for instance, the majority of women were full time housewives⁹⁹ and those who managed to work were relegated to “job ghettos¹⁰⁰” and ended up working for at least eleven hours a day, when the same situation was not permitted in the case of industries.

Women joined together, to discuss their situation, to organize and to fight for a better condition against the State, the institutions, religions, and cultural traditions that had reserved only a specific submissive role for them.

2.1 A brief introduction

The displacement of work from the nucleus of the family and from the countryside to the factories, has brought many social changes among the family members themselves: the patriarch becomes a wage earner who assumes a new responsibility not only of decision-making, which he had hitherto possessed, but also of finances¹⁰¹; it is the husband who bears on his shoulders the financial responsibility for those family members who are now no longer theoretically considered fit for work, such as women, children, the elderly.

A direct consequence of this labor exclusion is also the lack of socialization that has always taken place in the workplace and sees them now more than ever on the margins of capitalist society, which places the wage one earns as related to one's value. Domestic labor is contemporarily devalued so that it remains free and taken for granted.

Women workers, students and activists became disillusioned with Marx, with Lenin, with Freud, with the left-wing parties and assembled in unions such as the International

⁹⁹ Pescarolo, 2019, 251

¹⁰⁰ Vicarelli, 2007, 35

¹⁰¹ Pompei, 1975, 2

Feminist Collective. Other groups in the Wages for Housework campaign formed and met in other cities in America, in the UK, in Europe.

During these years, many women felt it necessary to revisit and renegotiate their condition, that men mostly ignored, to recognize that care work is unpaid work, that it is the basis of patriarchal society and has been inherited by capitalism, not invented by it, and it is necessary for the existence of wage labor¹⁰². Feminist theoreticians noticed how the underpaid jobs mostly performed by women could be defined as an “extension” of tasks that they performed at home for free¹⁰³. Their work is undervalued because it is contemporarily performed for free.

It is not the biological and inevitable destiny of women, this invisible shared labor must be recognized, revalued, and paid: this is the statement brought forth by the activists.

¹⁰² Pupo, Duff, 2012, 30-35

¹⁰³ Swinth, 2018, 76



104

Women workers, housewives: thousands of them were in Piazza Ferretto in Mestre on the 8th of March 1974 for the first time in Italy to demonstrate in favor of a wage for domestic work¹⁰⁵. Women are no longer willing to wait for the revolution to happen tomorrow, or at the hands of men: they are ready to discuss the present without relying on an ideal future for humanity.

There is no distinction between demands: the demand for free and guaranteed abortion, for contraceptives, for the end of night shifts, for fair wages and for women workers to not being subordinated to a male boss; they are all part of the struggle for the domestic wage, as sexuality itself is defined as part of work. Additionally, they argue that the three

¹⁰⁴ Image: Manifesto for the of 8th March of the Veneto Committee for the Wage for Domestic Work, Lotta Femminista of Padua, 1974. Source: Biblioteca Civica di Padova (BCP), Maria Rosa Dalla Costa Donation (MRDC), Busta 12, 297.

¹⁰⁵ Lotta Femminista, Comitato Femminile, Movimento Femminista Triestino, 2014

million of abortions per year¹⁰⁶ are accidents at work and they must be treated as such for compensation and damages.

Theory must become action and Mariarosa Dalla Costa along with other intellectuals, scholars, and activists all over the world, with their work, present Wages for Housework as political strategy.

Women's demonstrations in the 1970s are numerous, although neglected by the media, and they are not only in Italy: squares animated by these slogans are all over Europe.

As Silvia Federici recalls in *Wage against Domestic Work*, the uprisings and preparation for these demonstrations began years earlier and took inspiration from the struggles of the welfare rights movement began in the 1960s in England and the United States of America, mostly by African American women¹⁰⁷.

Additionally, these events inspired many other publications and more attention towards the topic, for instance, in 1977 of a fundamental essay by Gisela Bock and Barbara Duden demanding domestic and childcare work was published¹⁰⁸. Women reintroduce themselves as history and revolutionary subjects.

2.2 The international context

Women's liberation movements of the second wave were characterized by the diversity of the groups, which shared many features such as the mode of struggle, such as demonstrations, occupations, and the wide range of rights in which they were interested.

Furthermore, the student movement had an impressive influence on feminist movements¹⁰⁹ and the feminist collectives that formed during those years appealed directly to the female students as workers, questioning and accusing for instance the magisterium of the university of Padua as an institution that perpetuates the discrimination of women through methods such as the approval of a motion that excludes

¹⁰⁶ Perini, 2010, 29

¹⁰⁷ Toupin, 2018, 55

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem

¹⁰⁹ Bracke, 2019, 55-60

female students from the “presalary”, directly acting on the workload of female students, causing them economic harm and discriminating against them in their professional outlet¹¹⁰.

The various 'waves' of feminist movements, whose use of the plural is no coincidence, were understood as separate and well-defined, but related to each other so much that there are many scholars who believe that the use of the word 'wave' is not the most accurate definition¹¹¹. In addition, scholars provided radio waves as the most fitting example, that best symbolizes the plurality that characterizes these movements.

Indeed, it is worth remembering that there were collisions between the various 'waves', most notably between the first and the second, which sought to distance themselves from the first movements considered moderate and bourgeois and attempted to model themselves on the example of the men's organizations¹¹² from which the second wanted to break away completely and become autonomous.

Of course, there are many differences between countries: in the Swiss case, in contrast to the remaining European countries, the collaboration between the new and old feminists was more solid¹¹³. A further definition of the succession of the various feminist movements is the term coined by Luce Bereni, “*espace de la cause de femmes*”¹¹⁴, also explainable as “the configuration of mobilization sites for the women’s issue in a plurality of social spheres¹¹⁵”.

The various Western feminist movements have had different focuses, different origins, different outcomes, and consequences on the societies they acted in, and it would not be fair to see them as separate and divided from each other since the inspirations and discussions that have sprung from one Country to another are multiple and obvious, as the many translations and collaborations between them can prove.

¹¹⁰ "The student workers of the Women's Struggle Movement of Padua", 1972, BCP, Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation, Busta 1, n34

¹¹¹ Nicholson, 2015, 2-7

¹¹² Swinth, 2018, 9

¹¹³ Schulz, 2017, 52-60

¹¹⁴ Sarah Kiani, 2017, 22

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 21-23



116

The interest on discourse on unpaid housework had already been preceded by the social unrest of those years and three major essays that lead the way for other publications and writing regarding it, such as the “*Political Economy of Women’s Liberation*” by Margaret Benston, “*L’ennemi principal*” by Christine Delphy and “*Donne e sovversione sociale*” by Mariarosa Dalla Costa.

Regarding actual changes that arose from specific movements in some countries that were then adopted and implemented by others as well, the feminist movements in the United States of America and Germany have been leading actors in consolidating their own

¹¹⁶ Picture: Illustration for 16 pages booklet. The Power of Women Collective - Translations by the Feminist Centre of documents from The Power of Women Collective. Document of 28 October 1974. Source: BCP, Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation Busta 1, n7.

rightful place in the academy, which is nevertheless an ambivalent success, at the risk for this human right movement to become only abstract theory, planting itself alongside other institutions without changing them for positive change, but rather being changed by them¹¹⁷.

In particular, the thesis intends to focus on the very first transnational instance that the Wages For Housework campaign represented for second wave feminism, for which countries such as Italy, England, Canada, the United States of America and Germany greatly participated and collaborated.

If there is a faction on which many women and activists have worked together and collaborated, is precisely on the issue of housework. For instance, testimonies, photos, documents show how in the summer of 1970 in America women gathered in demonstrations second only to those of the suffrage to ask their sisters to boycott their homes and families, striking against the amount of unpaid and taken for granted tasks and jobs as the task of the “housewife”¹¹⁸.

Activists from different factions, Christians, more radical, young girls, older women, all united to demand: “free twenty-four-hour community-controlled childcare centers, free abortion on demand, and equal opportunities in jobs and education¹¹⁹”. In fact, through these demonstrations the protesters, as many other women in the world did during the second half of the 20th Century, denounced their status of second-class citizens, who have access to only a few, poorly paid jobs and for whom there is a scarcity of public services to serve them and better their condition.

Although some of the demands, such as the possibility to pursuit a better education, were quite accepted by the public, the division of parental and housework responsibilities remained for many people, men, and women, “abhorrent” and unconsolidated¹²⁰.

The Wages for Housework campaign especially insisted on the economic weight of unpaid labor at home and its relevance for social reproduction, defining it as the invisible

¹¹⁷ Ehmsen, 2017, 36-47

¹¹⁸ Bradley, 2016, 223-247

¹¹⁹ Swinth, 2018, 99

¹²⁰ Ibid, 97-133

expression of male privilege and unrecognized work: these two characteristics rendered the fight against it a thorny issue.

This unique movement encompassed a wide range of participants, as mentioned, such as heterosexual women, housewives, lesbians, racialized women, and workers such as waitresses, prostitutes, and nurses, to discuss and acknowledge all the gendered work that oppressed and restricted women's path towards emancipation and independence.

Unpaid work can therefore be defined as the “lowest common denominator¹²¹” of all women in capitalist societies. However, the struggle of these women for the recognition and remuneration of unpaid gender work was not universally shared by other feminist movements, which preferred to focus on the outsourcing of care work through community services, day care centers, to free women's path to a career hindered by the ballast of these responsibilities.

Women from different backgrounds, different Countries, as already stated, confronted with each other: for instance, Selma James and Maria Dalla Costa did in 1973 when they traveled to Montreal to share the ideas expressed in their book, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Many women recognized themselves in the discourse expressed by the authors, according to which “all women are houseworkers¹²²”.

This type of discussion had already initiated in many Countries: Canada was discussing the creation of a new type of workers, defined home educators, and provided full time wages for parents of young kids beside with the *Association féminine d'éducation et d'action* or *AFEAS* that fought for an allowance for mothers¹²³.

Lastly, indelibly documenting the continuous exchange of ideas and opinions are the reciprocal exchanges of materials, the requests for them from activists in the countries, the requests, and announcements of translations into various languages of the materials, the most important books, and the clippings from newspapers such as the *New York Times*

¹²¹ Toupin, 2018, 4

¹²² Dalla Costa, Jones, 1972, 33-37. BCP, *Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle)* for wages for housework MRDC Donation Busta 6, n105

¹²³ Toupin, 2018, 45

and *Corriere della Sera*. Scholars influence and are influenced by each other, as seen in Angela Davis's writings in which she addresses the events of Mestre¹²⁴.

Especially, a document named "*Who are the international feminist translators?*"¹²⁵ shades light on the intent of linguistic scholars to facilitate the circulation of ideas, of the philosophy of Feminism, considering the fruitful literature that was blossoming in those years, and intends to intensify relations and contacts between feminist groups in all countries. In addition, the translators state that they are translating from English into other languages and vice versa¹²⁶.

Translators ask for assistance in selecting the most suitable articles to ensure that an increasing number of people could read and understand feminist materials and theory without the obstacle and barrier that an unfamiliar language can sometimes represent.

Other documents preserved demonstrate how translations were necessary and how there was direct and frequent contact with the authors as well, as for instance a French document for M. Dalla Costa named: "*Requests for clarification of the Italian text of Feminine Power and Social Subversion for optimization of French translation and various political considerations*"¹²⁷ demonstrates.

Summarizing, western countries were living an unprecedented social unrest as workers, students, women, racialized people, gays and lesbians, Indigenous people, and other groups rose up. Women recognized themselves and the same situation and conditions they lived under all over the world.

¹²⁴ Davis, 1981

¹²⁵ Typewritten sheet of 2 pages signed by International Feminist Translators, Washington, 1972-1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 3

¹²⁶ P. Piagentini to M. Dalla Costa, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 3

¹²⁷ Typewritten letter of 4 pages from Brigitte, Paris, to M. Dalla Costa, from 16/2/1973 till 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 3.

FA, cartella 3, 144

CHI SONO I TRADUTTORI FEMMINISTI INTERNAZIONALI?

I Traduttori Femministi Internazionali (T.F.I.) hanno interesse nel disseminare le idee, la filosofia, i complimenti e gli oggetti (cioè, lo scopo) del Femminismo. T.F.I. crede che femministi in tutto il mondo stanno producendo una grande quantità di letteratura che ha bisogno d'essere saputa in una maniera più ampia. Noi crediamo anche che non c'è abbastanza contatto fra gruppi femministi. Se i gruppi in un paese sapessero i complimenti ed i piani di gruppi all'estero, sarebbero stimolati a fare anche più idee ed azioni femministi. Per di più, se dipingessimo un quadro del Femminismo più completo e preciso di quello nei giornali, ecc., potremmo attirare più gente nel Movimento Femminista.

Stiamo traducendo articoli da Inglese in altre lingue, e viceversa. La vostra assistenza è necessaria. Abbiamo bisogno di contatti femministi in altri paesi, anche i vostri suggerimenti, ecc., del tipo d'articoli più pertinente alle donne in tutti i paesi del mondo. Desideriamo anche ricevere articoli da voi allo scopo per tradurli in Inglese; articoli scritti in altre lingue e, più di tutto, fare la conoscenza di persone che possono aiutarci nel distribuire la nostra letteratura.

La nostra interessa più importante per ora è di mettere queste materiali nelle mani di moltissime persone. È per questo che i nostri articoli son gratis, però il vostro contributo qualsiasi sarebbe un dono gradito.

Affinché potessimo riprodurre questi articoli commercialmente, bisognerebbe ricevere il permesso tutelato da diritto d'autore dalle case editrici. Saremmo disposti a richiedere tale permesso se voleste vendere gli articoli.

Saremmo felici anche di ricevere da voi le recentissime femministe affinché la gente negli Stati Uniti possa sapere gli avvenimenti d'altrove. Abbiamo dei piani per cominciare a fare una "stanza di compensazione" per notizie femministe internazionali. Speriamo di ricevere presto informazioni da voi!

International Feminist Translators
1736 "R" Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20009, U.S.A.

dicembre, 1973

128

2.3 A workers' movement created by women for women

The 4th Conference of the British Feminist Movement held in London on 4-5 November 1972 meant the departure for the group of Italian women activists who detached themselves, ahead of other countries, from the left-wing male collectives.

¹²⁸ Image: Typewritten sheet of 2 pages signed by International Feminist Translators, Washington, 1972-1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 3

The conference brought together various countries: from the whole of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, numerous countries of the Old Continent, New Zealand and, of course, Italy, which participated with the nuclei of *Lotta Femminista* of Padua, Venice, Ferrara, Florence, Milan, Demau, *Rivolta* and *Collettivo Milanese*) and discussed topics that had already been discussed at length before: family, abortion and contraceptives, work, sex, media, maternity support services.

The discussion on wages proposed by Selma Jones receives not entirely positive feedback, it is still a rather recent and complex discussion to understand and discuss.

The importance and necessity of creating autonomous women's organizations is stressed, precisely because the general movements discriminate against some struggles and favor others, are blind to the situation of women, and are prepared to continue exploiting women just as capital does. A year before the Convention, *Lotta Femminista* is founded in June 1971 in Padua by Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, with the collaboration of Selma Jones¹²⁹.

Exactly in 1972 in Padua, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici (in New York), Brigitte Galtier (in Paris) and Selma James (in London) founded the *International Feminist Collective*¹³⁰ for this very cause. Actively committed to changing the productive and social organization, they saw in economic independency the autonomy of women as persons. It does not demand, as opponents are convinced, double pay for doing double work inside and outside the home, but that through its pay, domestic work be recognized as such¹³¹.

Similar collectives were born and flourished in other major cities in Italy, such as Milan, Turin, Naples (*Neapolitan Feminist Collective for Wages for Housework*), Padua, Rome, Varese; Pescara also played a significant role for the campaign with the publication of the newspaper *Operaie della Casa*, which collected the writings and collaborations of various women activists and intellectuals.

¹²⁹ Lotta Femminista, 2014, 21-26. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 17, n86

¹³⁰ Fraire, Spagnoletti, Viridis, 1978, 7-10

¹³¹ Pompei, 1972, 35-48. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n5

Among the various cities, Padua was certainly the beating heart of the movement that ultimately inspired others.

Women of the Italian feminist movement have experience in the student movement, in the political world, and it is precisely the lack of these spaces for their voices and struggles that compelled them to organize among themselves. In these years, activists focused on the labor sphere and class struggle and the revaluation of the family as not only the center of consumption, but where the discipline of work begins, together with school, and as the center of production¹³².

Unemployed women work within the home, in the same way as working-class women do: "the commodity that women produce, unlike the other commodities produced under capitalism: is the human being: the 'worker'¹³³", whose production is by nature irrevocably slow and lasts a lifetime, from conception and therefore also includes the education, to ensure that the future worker behaves the way he/she is supposed to.

Refusing to produce a commodity for capital is "a fundamental lever of social power". Women's work is work for capital and the home is the 'social factory'¹³⁴. Thus states the author of the book *'Women's Power and Social subversion'* Maria Rosa Dalla Costa.

¹³² Federici, Cox, 1975, 19-30 BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 14, n85

¹³³ Del Re, 2020, 37-59

¹³⁴ Dalla Costa, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 6, n105

STATEMENT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

Apparently by chance but actually because each of us felt a need for such a contact, women from the women's liberation movements of four countries found themselves together in Padova, Italy, over a period of two days. These countries are the United States, England, France and of course Italy. All of us have had or continue to have contact with sections of the extra-parliamentary left and found that we had in common certain attitudes to that left and within the women's movement.

We identify ourselves as Marxist feminists and take this to mean a new definition of class, the old definition of which has limited the scope and effectiveness of the activity of both the traditional left and the new left. This new definition is based on the subordination of the wageless worker to the waged worker behind which is hidden the productivity, i.e. the exploitation, of the labour of women in the home and the cause of their more intense exploitation out of it. Such an analysis of class presupposes a new area of struggle, the subversion not only of the factory and office but of the community. It also presupposes the struggle in the two areas of production, the home and the factory, as interdependent to communist revolution, and the destruction once and for all of the auxiliary nature of women's struggle within the struggle of class. This assumption of the auxiliary nature of women's struggle flows directly from the misconception that women's labour in the home is auxiliary to the reproduction and development of capital, a misconception which has so long hindered us all.

Within the women's movement, therefore, we reject both class struggle as subordinate to feminism and feminism as subordinate to class struggle. Class struggle and feminism for us are one and the same thing, feminism expressing the rebellion of that section of the class without whom the class struggle cannot be generalised, broadened and deepened. We believe these two positions in the women's movement have been a response to the *masculine management of the class struggle*: either our uncritical acceptance of their fragmented political theory and practice, or our

uncritical rejection of class in response to this acceptance.

While we place ourselves unambiguously among the revolutionary forces in whatever country we find ourselves, we reaffirm the necessity for the autonomy of the women's movement. This autonomy has appeared to be limited to a negation of the left. It is in reality the positive expression of the level of female struggle. It is because only an autonomous movement is looking for women's lever of social power that it offers the only possibility of discovering the aims, forms and places of that struggle, and thus the possibility of driving it forward. Therefore our relations with the left, while we may utilise information and contacts, will always be secondary and subordinate to that autonomy.

For these reasons we wish to maintain and develop our own international contacts, our own publications in translation and our own joint discussions which aim ultimately at joint mass actions transcending national borders.

International Feminist Collective
Padova, Italy, July 1972

England: c/o James
20 Staverton Road
London NW 2

THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE
COMMUNITY by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, a
Marxist Feminist book, has been published by the Falling Wall
Press, 79 Richmond Road, Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5EP.
Price: 25p plus 4p postage.

135

On the stages in the middle of the squares, in the newspapers, in their writings, women state that they do not want jobs in the factories, behind the counters, that the men themselves wish to leave, they do not want just any occupation: they demand the reorganization of work, decent wages, free time and a new sociality after the exclusion and isolation they have experienced¹³⁶.

Traditionally, the only place women had the freedom to attend without a male chaperon was the church. In fact, it represented the only weekly time when she could break the loneliness of the home and make new social connections. It was also the place where unmarried women could meet their future husbands. It was the center of female sociality, although many associated women in church with simple bigotry and faith¹³⁷.

¹³⁵ Image: founding statement of the International Feminist Collective, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n4

¹³⁶ Feminist Struggle, 2014, 18- 20, 34-42. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 17, n86

¹³⁷ Bracke, 2019, p62-71

The participants who take part in this protest as newspapers report are heterogeneous: they are young mothers with prams, with shopping bags in hand, elderly women, students, working women returning home, even some perplexed men¹³⁸.

The three-year period from 1974 to 1976 marked the most intense and public phase of the movement, but it was also the time of most bitter conflict with the opposite sex and public opinion: it was then that the negative stereotype of the mean feminist was constructed by the mass media.

2.3.1 Acting despite the opposition and passivity of men

If women decided to organize themselves autonomously, it was not only because of a lack of space or a passivity on the part of their male comrades towards their campaigns, but also because of real attacks even from the left whenever women tried to gain more independence, because they saw, as various testimonies show, a break with their way of seeing and acting¹³⁹.

Male comrades define, for their vision of class struggle and common class interest, some issues as more important and more active factors than others, relegating others to a minor and passive role: they divide the struggle in the same way capitalism divides labor¹⁴⁰.

The traditional class struggle brought forth by men discriminates equally between the productive labor of men and the unproductive labor of women. The activists themselves comprehend the discrimination clearly and report how "from Lenin through Gramsci to Benston and Mitchell, the entire leftist tradition has agreed on the 'marginality' of housework to the reproduction of capital and, consequently, the marginality of the housewife to revolutionary struggle. According to the left, as housewives, women are not suffering from capital, but are suffering precisely from the absence of it¹⁴¹".

¹³⁸ Speeches by women members of the Padua Wage Committee at the 10 March 1974 demonstration in Mestre, From 10/3/1974 until 1974. Veneto Committee for Domestic Work Wages. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 11, n265

¹³⁹ Gamba, Geri, Monti, Zerman, 1975

¹⁴⁰ Federici, Cox, 1976, 2. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 14, n85

¹⁴¹ Ibidem

Women refuse and debate the statement, take over the same arenas of protest as men have occupied so far, they use the same squares to demand rights that the same fellow workers, their own husbands, do not conceive of.

Domestic work unites all women in all countries and determines the entire quality of life of women, the type of social relations they can have, the level of exploitation to which they are condemned, the sexual, psychological, emotional compromise to which they are forced¹⁴².



143

Exhausted by the dozens of hours of work that everyone takes for granted like ironing and feeding, beyond the actual hours of work, women did not have the time or the physical and mental energy to rebel and not accept the pitiful conditions in which they live, to

¹⁴² Dalla Costa, 1972, 37-71. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 6, n105

¹⁴³ Image: Event of the Triveneto Committee for SLD, Positive in black and white, *A moment of the musical performance*, 1974. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 11, n307, n9

which the religious and cultural propaganda that sees women as humble and silent servants is added.

Not only has the psychological and physical fatigue of the female condition prevented women from rebelling earlier, as mentioned, but the isolation further prevents women from uniting. In fact, the differences with men that can be analyzed in this regard are two: the man's work is recognized; workers in the same factory can unite because there is only one master¹⁴⁴.

If your work is unrecognized, if the compensation you receive is through another person's wages, and any expenses go to the family, your right to complain about it is less or almost nonexistent. If you are still seen as a "parasite" surviving on money not earned directly, you must accept what you are given and be content with it¹⁴⁵. The work of the housewife is not recognized as something independent of that of the spouse, on whom you are totally at the mercy because you are economically dependent.

The reason workers succeeded at least partially in rebelling against the master is because they unite to make their voices resonate as one, louder. Exploitation is the same for all and comes from one master, rights are the same, you share the same condition under the same roof. Housewives, on the other hand, have many different masters and are isolated physically and psychologically in different walls, they are alone.

They look at other women, and although they notice the same problems, the same chores, they come together initially just to timidly complain about it. The sense of inadequacy is overwhelming, housewives feel inadequate if they cannot feel satisfaction and fulfillment from their work.

The housewife's own relationship with her husband is reminiscent of that of master and worker, in that the former is in an inferior position¹⁴⁶. When one is placed above the other, when there is a "protector" and a "protected," the protected one will be designated as weak, who cannot defend herself precisely because she is not economically independent.

¹⁴⁴ Warrior, 1973, 3. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n21

¹⁴⁵ Brant, 1954. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 14, n47

¹⁴⁶ Warrior, 1973, 1-6. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n21

The same money, obtained almost through handouts, when is always spent feeling guilty, since the spouse sees that money as one's own anyway. To a man who earns through wages, no one would allow himself to judge his purchases, since they are earned through his own sweat.

Furthermore, a housewife who complains about her condition and a laborer/worker who does the same are perceived differently: the former will be blamed for her condition and in the case of an abusive husband she will be blamed because she apparently chose him; in the other case, it is recognized that the fault lies not in him, but in the master who treats him unfairly. For these very reasons, housewives should unite in the same way workers do¹⁴⁷.

It was deemed necessary, to mention a few instances of some female comrades' experiences with the general attitude and open hostility on the part of comrades, professors, teachers, colleagues towards them when the subject of women's struggle arose, and women started acting independently.

A document preserved in Maria Rosa Dalla Costa's collection, "*Adesso basta!*" of the feminist struggle collective in Gela, reports how the same female students found themselves faced with taunts and reprimands from the authorities and comrades after expressing a desire to deal with women's emancipation or in wishing to undertake studies other than the humanities¹⁴⁸.

An article published in *L'Espresso* of 23 July 1972 entitled: "Feminism/ If the male punches you with his left¹⁴⁹", denounces the violent and provocative assault by some radicals of the extra-parliamentary left against about fifty feminist militants of *Lotta Femminista* who had gathered inside a lecture hall of the Faculty of Education for a seminar on the theme of women's work. The women recognize the aforementioned left-wing 'comrades' as the attackers, who "did not tolerate the fact that women claimed to

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem

¹⁴⁸ Collettivo di Lotta Femminista Gelese, undated. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n9

¹⁴⁹ Rossetti, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 2, n4

define their own exploitation and forms of struggle¹⁵⁰” and wanted to interrupt the seminar.

According to *Manifesto* answering the first letter, as the article reports, they were adherents of *Potere Operaio*, which denies, however, its involvement, and some activists respond to the heavy accusations and indeed simply retort about the lack of seriousness of the assemblies of feminist groups forbidden to men¹⁵¹.

In response, the Turin Feminist Group, retorts on the sterility of the argument, defining male exclusion as a necessity, given the non-existent interest on the part of left-wing groups in women's rights that does not go beyond the superficial admission of their oppression, without questioning the relationship between women and the means of production. In the dialogue opened by the letter, *Potere Operaio* declare itself “guilty of a delay with regard to a theoretical elaboration and political initiative on the women's question¹⁵²”.

In a letter sent to the editors of *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio*, women belonging to the New York feminist movement accuse the latter of appropriating the theory of the matrix of female oppression and the recognition of housework as their own, without reporting the origin of this perspective: the women retort that by assiduously reading feminist material from Italy, they can easily expose *Potere Operaio*'s falsehoods and presumption in treating the topic as “the result of its own internal debate¹⁵³”.

This claim of superficiality in dealing with the topic can also be deduced from their resolution of the problem, ignoring the exact same attempts that feminist activists have been making for a long time now. The male comrades are also accused of wanting to solve the women's question for them, insisting that it is “the historical exclusion from wage bargaining that women find themselves alienated, excluded from the clash between

¹⁵⁰ Movimento Femminista, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 2, n4

¹⁵¹ Adherents of Lotta Comunista and Italian Communist Party, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 2, n4

¹⁵² Manifesto, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 2, n4

¹⁵³ Adherents of the New York Feminist Movement, undated. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 3, n108

proletarians and capital¹⁵⁴”: once again, male blindness and arrogance regarding the condition of women is disguised.

Additionally, as can be deduced from another document from 1973 sent to the Catanese Feminist Collective, the members of the Collective in Padua asked that the signatures and the group they belonged to, to be precisely written on the material requested (written on worn out and recycled sheets) by the comrades from southern Italy that constantly circulate not only between the various groups on the Italian peninsula, but also between the various countries that share the struggle for wages for domestic work, in order to prevent dissident men from pirating the said material, as has already happened several times, in an attempt to boycott the comrades and ridicule them¹⁵⁵.

Finally, several documents show how women tried and succeeded in breaking free from the attitude of the master man, which was also present in the public sector unions. In fact, the article in the volume “*Operaie della casa*” (Workers of the House) mentions how during an assembly of female workers, in this case teachers, the latter imposed themselves and opposed the trade unions that kept blaming them for misbehaviors that they could not justify.

It is evident how essential it was for women to detach themselves from the movements of their male comrades who also wanted to speak for them, precisely because of the blindness of the comrades to the possible motivations behind behavior such as absenteeism, which happens much less frequently in the male workforce.

The trade unions were not fighting for the rights that would actually benefit women and the latter, faced with reproaches at the strike held on 23 November 1973 in the civil service, rebuked “the lack of unionization of women¹⁵⁶” and denounced “how historically unproductive it has been in bargaining for women's interests” and “how unproductive it has been in bargaining for the domestic work that all women do¹⁵⁷”. No one, from trade

¹⁵⁴ Ibidem

¹⁵⁵ Brigadeci, Melfi, Dalla Costa, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, cartella 3, n48

¹⁵⁶ Editorial group of the Wage Committee for Domestic Work in Padua, 1976. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 11, 8, n271

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem

unions to Andreotti, who wished to combat the phenomenon of absenteeism, could find solutions to this specifically female problem.

Women, they argued, are forced to be absent from paid work to do another job, domestic work.

During the intervention, they denounced the lack of structures to intervene in second jobs, the theft from wages represented by price increases, the controlling attitude of the trade union and how external second jobs pay a very small part of all women's real work; how the trade union is nothing more than another stage for men¹⁵⁸.

To this response, unprepared trade unions define this lack of work-life balance as a personal problem. Amidst complaints and simultaneous approval from colleagues, the debate continued with the active participation of women.

This selection of examples provides a better understanding of the militant women's need to detach themselves in order to self-define and fight a struggle invisible to the eyes of others, if they wished to hope for success.

The founding member of *Lotta Femminista*, M. Dalla Costa, defined her and other women's choice of leaving *Potere Operaio*, one of the most active groups of the extra parliamentary left active in the first half of the 1970s, as dictated by dignity and for a need of self-authentication¹⁵⁹: to be able to establish an independent identity, far from the point of view of men as it had always been so far for women.

Indeed, the activists of this feminist faction saw the enormity of the work that needed to be done to better the woman's condition and longed to study and analyze different aspects that initially seemed separated such as repressed sexuality, homosexuality, the female body, and the desire of Institution to regulate its health and its correlated possibility to control the human production through its regulation.

¹⁵⁸ Editorial group of the Wage Committee for Domestic Work in Padua, 1975. BCP. *Lotta Femminista* (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone B, Cartella 2, n38

¹⁵⁹ Dalla Costa, 2005. BCP. *Lotta Femminista* (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 7, n169a

Their struggle started from the homes, to move then to neighborhoods, to hospitals, schools, factories. There was simply no space or energy left for collaborating or working through the already established workers¹⁶⁰ movement.

The extra-parliamentary political groups needed to understand and act upon their way of relating to women, since they are still imbued with the male power that does not allow them to relate to each other equally.

The same, few, women within the groups do not recognize the problem of the absence of their personal power, and the groups do not recognize that the mere presence of women in the executive or in general within them is not enough.

Organizations, unions are still imbued to the core with a superiority and greater power that defines and limits men's relationship with women¹⁶¹ and male comrades enjoy rights and privileges that are based on women's exploitation: the possibility of some comrades being full-time militants is guaranteed by the presence of a woman who supports them taking full responsibility for their children and domestic work as in any other situation.

In an open letter addressed to the *Potere Operaio Active*, the activists reproach the mistrustful look and the attempt to control through deadlines that is oppressive for the nascent and already overburdened group. It is not possible to ask for a dialogue with the female militant counterpart, if as men the militants do not decide to share the responsibilities borne by women in order to ensure that both have the possibility to fight. From this call for collaboration, both men and women must benefit¹⁶².

2.3.2 On earlier theorists and events/ approaches

The female activists reprimand and do not forget about the blindness of the reformists, the parliamentarians, all men as such, who push women to gain freedom and emancipation

¹⁶⁰ Casadei, Fortunati, Zancan, Santaniello, F. Busatta and S. Busatta, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 2, n4

¹⁶¹ Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 17, n86

¹⁶² Casadei, Fortunati, Zancan, Santaniello, F. Busatta and S. Busatta, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 2, n4

through working the same jobs outside the home, without realizing the work women already do. Wages are for housewives not emancipation, but a need¹⁶³.

Waged work itself includes the tasks of many different jobs: they find themselves being mothers and wives of other men at work, doing emotional labor for them. The same kindergartens that men urge women to fight for, are a privilege for women on wages, not for housewives.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, they do not free or give women more leisure time, only provide them with more time to devote to other tasks in the house that are not performed by the husband.

Uniformly, the theory and practice of class struggle carried out by men discriminates against and forgets women, who decide to actively participate and create their own space in the new society they wished to form.

Silvia Federici and Nicole Cox, in “*Counter-planning from the Kitchen*”, oppose the claim made by the literature that domestic work is outside the capitalist struggle. It would not make sense for a world in which production is fundamental to society, the existence of work that does not profit and does not produce¹⁶⁵.

Indeed, domestic work silently exists in both “developed” and “underdeveloped” countries; the domestic work of women demanded by the state and capital is not the same, it varies and also depends on the woman herself and the conditions in which she lives: a non-white woman or a woman on unemployment, will be pushed not to reproduce as much as other categories of women; the type of worker to be produced, also varies according to the needs of the market and the country¹⁶⁶.

Forced sterilization and nullified aids have been reportedly used as a inhumane tool of reproduction control by Countries such as the U.S.A. towards both women of color and of Latin America heritage or towards other regions of “Third World”¹⁶⁷; hysterectomy as

¹⁶³ Pompei, 1972, 2. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 2, n28.

¹⁶⁴ Domestic labour wage Comitee (PD), 1974, 33-34.

¹⁶⁵ Federici, Cox, 1975. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 14, n85

¹⁶⁶ Ivi, 5

¹⁶⁷ Dalla Costa, 2019, 141

a practice was rather frequent in Italy, most of all in Veneto¹⁶⁸, as will be explained later: a massive portion of literature written by the activists focused on the abuse of medicine on women regarding abortion and on overall reproductive rights.

“Women themselves accept to consider themselves second best if those who convince them seem to deserve the esteem of mankind: Marx, Lenin, Freud and all the others¹⁶⁹”.

Indeed, Marx and other theorists had dealt with the family and the condition of women, the same German theorist reviews the traditional family as the foundation for the defense of private property. Engels himself defines how the first-class antagonism is between man and woman in monogamous marriage¹⁷⁰.

Feminist scholars are aware that women's entry into the external labor market, will not liberate them. As the authors state in "The Personal is Political", Marx himself identifies that a woman behaves as a prostitute for the man, and it is thus an oppression¹⁷¹.

Regarding women and children, Marx, in his masterwork “The Capital”, limits himself to describing the inhuman working conditions of the workers, at a time in history when he had already begun to theorize and then act on limiting women's working hours, since their absence from the home was signifying the end of the family and was making them too much like men, too independent: their condition is simply described not analyzed, it is treated as a moral issue.

Nevertheless, gender remains a rather marginal factor in The Capital and domestic work is simply defined as homework, which is constituted with just the bare minimum for survival: food, clothing, fuel, and housing; the definition of domestic work performed by women is only briefly mentioned and discussed in notes.

Marx, by refraining from analysing and denouncing the condition of female exploitation by placing it at the private level of society instead of the structural level, betrays himself and reveals the bourgeois matrix of his thinking regarding relationships, considering that

¹⁶⁸ Dalla Costa, 2005, 9-13. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 7, n182

¹⁶⁹ Lonzi, 1973, 9

¹⁷⁰ Trat, 1998, 89

¹⁷¹ Quaderni di Lotta Femminista, 1973, 34. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n1

he places women at a complementary level to men. Faced with "exploitation at its most internalised level, which is that secularly exercised by men over women¹⁷²", he retreats.

The voice discordant from the chorus, the feminist voice, then analyses Marx's private sphere and experience to verify the progressive regression and distancing from the woman question. The Marxist theory of human liberation is not total, but halved, as it cares little for the female part of the population¹⁷³.

It ought to be noted that the absence in the literature and works of great theorists such as Marx is not simply just due to a lack of interest in women's conditions, but also because at the time, the nuclear family and housework as its basis did not yet exist on a massive scale: there were clear distinctions between the proletarian woman, who worked along with her husband and children in the factory, and the bourgeois woman who had people at her service and performed any task for her, including nannies and maids.

The German philosopher too is obviously biased towards the conviction that a woman's reproductive work is natural, he too is not immune to social conditioning. However, despite the limits of the German philosopher, his work was the key in analysing woman's oppression from a class perspective.

Of fundamental importance in the work and development of feminist theory was the methodology applied by Marx in deconstructing the tools of oppression used by capitalism, which were then consequently also applied to women's work.

Although recognizing limits and errors, Federici, Jones, Dalla Costa and many other activists based their theories on Marxism to recognize and analyze the matrix at the basis of the oppression women experience and expand the theory.

Feminist scholars read Marx and realized that his refusal to further acknowledge traditional housework and "domesticity" constituted the limits of his theoretical framework. It highlights that, although feminists must consider his work in the context of capitalism's dominance, there are aspects of his political theory, particularly his views on

¹⁷² D'Eramo, 1979. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone E, Cartella 4, n53

¹⁷³ Ibidem

work and the criteria for being a worker or revolutionary subject, that feminists cannot endorse¹⁷⁴.

The renewed interest and focus on the centrality of women's unpaid labour in the home "redefined not only domestic work but the nature of capitalism itself and the struggle against it¹⁷⁵".

It is not the intention of feminist scholars to totally diminish the Marxist figure and theory, or precedent theories in general, but to emphasise the need to directly incorporate the feminist contribution and prospective.

Furthermore, Engels, Zetkin, identified the family as the core of women's oppression, how marriage further enforced the gender roles and responsibilities that ensured women's subordinate position, yet they failed to recognize how the control over women's body were also an integrative and fundamental key for capitalism¹⁷⁶.

Kollantai, for instance, recognized that the liberation of women could not happen solely as workers, but there was a necessity to change the sexuality, morality, the sentimental education, and the institution of family¹⁷⁷.

It must be remembered that opinions on previous approaches are not homogeneous, Lenin as a figure, along with Marx, for example, is somewhat multifaceted in that his participation in and interest in the women's cause is praised, but his disdain for issues such as sexuality and marriage is criticized, as he considers them inferior and of lesser importance than the causes of working women.

Women seem to be the only ones within the left-wing intellectual faction who do not totally embrace Lenin's new world vision, for example. Clara Valenziano, in a letter she sent to Adele Cambria, wondered how her comrades whom she described as sharp and intelligent could be so blinded by Lenin's texts and proposals; she detested the readiness

¹⁷⁴ Federici, 2021, 34

¹⁷⁵ Ivi, 43

¹⁷⁶ Armstrong, 2020, 5

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem

for violence that her comrades shared, after all still closely linked to male chauvinism and a virile and violent conception of life and war¹⁷⁸.

Lenin is treated as a god who “protects masculine virtues¹⁷⁹”. These quasi-militaristic masculine qualities return powerfully, along with Leninism, in '68. Moreover, Valenziano considered it foolish how he was programming for another war, after one that had exhausted the country¹⁸⁰.

It is fair to point out here that opinions on Lenin were not homogeneous, as already mentioned. Yet it is feminism that in each case intervenes as an irony and as a rupture, so much so in universal history.

The author of the book “*Il Lenin delle Donne*”, in her book still preserved in the collection of M. Dalla Costa donated to the Library of Padua, further investigates the figure of Lenin in his private life and his relationship with women, may them be his wife or fellow comrades.

This research, which may seem all too meticulous, is dictated by the need to uncover the practice of his theories, and to find out whether and to what extent Lenin influenced the weakening of the revolutionary momentum regarding the women's question.

In fact, it is undeniable, for instance reading and analyzing the Russian revolutionary and politician's letters, how blind Lenin was to the feminine factor of the revolution, which started in the first place by textile women workers, in a context in which the discussion regarding the condition of women was became practical. What the author, and many other intellectuals, question is whether his blindness even in his first speech as he appeals only to men, was conscious and desired.

The problem persists to exist if giants such as Lenin and Marx are the untouchable Patriarchs of the Revolution, because patriarchs they remain.

Finally, intellectuals and activists of the feminist movement questioned and commented on past and present historical events they had witnessed, such as the Russian revolution.

¹⁷⁸ Cambria, 1981, 8. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 18, n97

¹⁷⁹ Ivi, 13

¹⁸⁰ Ivi, 10

The latter is described as a failure for women, as the progressive idealization of the mother figure implemented by the Soviet government to protect the family prevented women from emancipating themselves as citizens on the same level as men, as the revolution had initially promised¹⁸¹.

Thus, both the revolutionaries and the women involved in the process of women's liberation had recognized the role of subjugation suffered by women with the coming of the institution of private property. Indeed, they state, given the need for intensive labor and protection, men resorted to the ownership of slaves and women for their reproductive labor, to rule not only over landed property but also over their children¹⁸².

The revolutionary groups of 1917 and even Lenin recognized the status of women and initially granted them political and legal rights when the revolution happened, and the government was overthrown¹⁸³.

Reproductive rights are granted that allow women to decide and truly own their bodies such as abortion, the right to divorce. The need to overhaul the entire social organization and structure of the family is recognized to ease its burden of responsibility.

Although the role of women as active and conscious participants in the events of the 1917 revolution have long been ignored by history, it is impossible to deny the participation of women. In fact, it is no coincidence that the revolution took place precisely at the same time as International Women's Rights Day¹⁸⁴.

Women of different categories and social classes such as poor workers, students, organized and collaborated to rebel not only as citizens against the food shortage etc. but also as women.

These organized uprisings carried out by radicals such as Zetkin and Kollantai, who later served as the first female prime minister and the first female ambassador and was a great advocate of women's rights, were the culmination of a historical context in which women's rights were already being discussed and some demonstrations had already taken

¹⁸¹ Schuster, 1971, 260-267

¹⁸² Rubenstein, 19, 1970. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 19a, 138

¹⁸³ Galili, 1990, 120-125

¹⁸⁴ Ruthchild, 2017, 696-698

place. Women mobilized uniting various classes and conditions to join their brothers in the revolutionary struggle¹⁸⁵.

In pre-Revolution Russia, the position of women was subservient to that of men, and the same inequality persists in the institution of marriage.

The right to divorce, which already existed but was very difficult to obtain as it was only granted in very few established cases, was freed from all restrictions: this decision leads to an increase in the number of marriages under the new government¹⁸⁶. The opinion about marriage and the approach to relationships drastically changed in rather quickly.

However, the new government's promises in favor of women's liberation were not fulfilled; on the contrary, there was a regression and glorification of the figure of the mother and housewife, who prostrated herself and devoted herself totally to her children, the future citizens of the motherland¹⁸⁷.

In order to preserve the 'traditional socialist family', a limitation of women's possibilities is implemented, not through prohibitions or denials, but by instance restricting and obstructing the newly acquired right of divorce, which is made more difficult to obtain just as it was before the revolution, de facto promoting out-of-wedlock children in pronatalist policy favoring men, who were released of legal or financial responsibility¹⁸⁸.

The situation changed in 1968, when a new law reschedules, at least legally but not economically, the separation of spouses who do not have minor children¹⁸⁹.

The case of abortion is rather peculiar, because along with the institution of divorce, changed multiple times in attitude and legislation in the decades following the change of government: they were both defined considered immoral and as social evil, especially the latter that was initially still permitted as the government had realized that criminalizing it, would only put the woman's life even more at risk¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁵ Clements, 1982, 215- 234

¹⁸⁶ Rubenstein, 1970, 20

¹⁸⁷ Rubenstein, 1970, 23-25

¹⁸⁸ Nakachi, 2011, 439

¹⁸⁹ Moskoff, 1983, 421-423

¹⁹⁰ Avdeev, Blum, Troitskaya, 1995, 40-49

At first, the soviet government sought to try and limit and decrease the number of abortions by supporting the woman and "eliminating the social causes which made it necessary¹⁹¹". Nevertheless, by 1936, abortion was prohibited, and the number of illegal procedures increased again, at the expense of the poorer.

At the same time, working women gained rights practically on an equal footing with men, but with conditions that they could obtain the same pay only by satisfying some quotas in terms of productivity, while still suffering discrimination after the return of the soldiers and consequent unemployment when the war ended juggling the social responsibility of motherhood¹⁹².

Women bore the weight of the double burden of being expected to not only participate but also be active in the social sphere of the life such as in workplace unions, political and social organizations and to spend most of their time and efforts in reestablishing the domestic normalcy of the traditional family¹⁹³.

In a post-revolution reflection, socialist feminists and supporters of the workers' cause realized that although "a socialist revolution is an absolute prerequisite for the liberation of women - the Russian experience also makes it clear that such a revolution is no guarantee of liberation¹⁹⁴". The realization of the necessity to develop ideologies and tactics to continue and guarantee a continuity of women's rights, which is by no means to be taken for granted, is clear.

There are no guarantees in this regard, there is a constant need to always remain aware of women's oppression, as all other forms of oppressions, as it is not justified or brought forth solely by one religion or political current.

¹⁹¹ Rubenstein, 1970, 23

¹⁹² Johnson, Lazda, Fabian, 2021

¹⁹³ Kolchevska, 2005, 114-119

¹⁹⁴ Rubenstein, 1970, 26

THIRD CHAPTER – THE RELEVANCE OF THE BODY AUTONOMY FOR THE UNPAID LABOUR DISCOURSE

During the most active years of Italian second-wave feminism, namely the first half of the 1970s, the awareness and stance regarding the existence of women as citizens and their social role intensified.

The issues that women discuss and become aware of frequently concern the body, in the triad of abortion, sexuality and health, along with divorce, all of which remain very closely connected to the sphere of unpaid care work that women have been entrusted with for centuries: abortion represents the most extreme rejection of the chosen fate of motherhood, which means the intensification of the exploitation and isolation of women¹⁹⁵.

The themes and rights feminist activists campaigned for are all closely intertwined, as already mentioned: it is impossible to speak of the liberation of gendered responsibilities such as care, when sexuality itself is a duty to men and their pleasure and is destined to end in pregnancy to fulfil a woman's duty as a mother¹⁹⁶.

It becomes unfathomable to separate sexuality and focus on female pleasure if the consequence to be paid is an unwanted pregnancy.

Indeed, the issue of abortion and reveals the hypocrisy of the States, not just the Italian State, but of all governments, which do not offer services, care, and protection to at least

¹⁹⁵ Collettivo internazionale femminista, 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 9, n245

¹⁹⁶ Lonzi, 2023, 68

half of their citizens: it refuses to consider and turns its gaze on abortions, defined as a crime against morality, against the State itself.

Because of its capacity to gestate, the uterus is not treated as a private organ, but is a biopolitical space, the use of which is not outside the general discourse and does not belong to the private sphere of the citizen; its control and laws regarding its autonomy are constantly being questioned and discussed, and the hard-earned and not entirely satisfactory rights are not to be taken for granted¹⁹⁷.

In a constant tug-of-war, the womb is haggled over by religious and political powers, pharmaceutical industries. For instance, Preciado defines the uterus as the organ most regulated by the State¹⁹⁸, so that it could be described as more like a prison or a refugee camp than in the same category of the lungs or liver.

In fact, institutions, the State, the Church wish to occupy the female body as the ultimate site on which not only the national reproduction depends, as it also represents the ultimate definition of the male hegemony and supremacy¹⁹⁹.

As a consequence of the existence and potentiality of the uterus, women have long experienced a “paradoxical” citizenship: as human bodies theoretically they are citizens, as bodies with a uterus they lose their autonomy and are subject to political surveillance and protection²⁰⁰.

Italy accepts a process of modernisation of gender roles more slowly and stubbornly than other countries, partly thanks to the economic miracle, but mainly thanks to the stubbornness and obstinacy of Italian women who demand to finally be political subjects. In fact, 1960s and 1970s Italy, next to other Countries that grant more rights to women, is still anchored to an archaic and stereotyped vision of women whose full realisation is only achievable through the role of devoted wife and patient mother²⁰¹.

It is the women themselves, courageously, who discuss their bodies with a prominence and lucidity never before encountered through orality and using their own voices

¹⁹⁷ Preciado, 2019, 66

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, 2023, 80

¹⁹⁹ Preciado, 2019, 66

²⁰⁰ Lewis, 2023, 84

²⁰¹ UDI (Unione Donne Italiane), 1972, 56-60. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 16, n78

unfiltered, by simply recounting their everyday life and condition, they simultaneously denounce their situation as second-class citizens and the way their future, destiny, bodies are at the mercy of objector and non-objector doctors, employers, husbands, fathers, brothers²⁰².

Their life experience, their fate, are indeed closely intertwined with their bodies: from menarche, an unexpected pregnancy that results in their job termination, a hasty and reparative marriage, to a series of pregnancies, with an often-hidden attempt to stem them through clandestine abortions, permanently altering them and relegating them to the house and to the role of parent for many and many years²⁰³.

Through the documentaries by Judith Hellman, Luigi Comencini, Gabriella Parca, Pierpaolo Pasolini just to name a few, women show with disarming honesty the violence and brutality of their lives, resulting in a real culture shock due to the exposition of the too common, yet deeply hidden and ignored, phenomenon of clandestine abortions.

Women, usually living in total isolation this experience rendered traumatic and life-threatening, emerge into the open, and the numbers²⁰⁴ speak clearly: these are not isolated cases, although it is mainly poor women who undergo these operations, the familiarity is all too close for women from all walks of life and conditions, of all ages and regions, from North to South Italy²⁰⁵.

In order to be able to deal with the various issues and struggles for rights pursued by feminist groups in due detail, it is considered fair to begin with the topic that has most divided in the past, and continues to do so today, the various factions of the left and beyond, the whole of society, which will then lead to further discourse on sexuality, motherhood, health, divorce: abortion as a statement of autonomy of one's own body.

²⁰² Collettivo femminista napoletano, 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n22

²⁰³ Centro Donne e Salute, 1976, 2-6. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone C, Cartella 1, n53

²⁰⁴ Collettivo femminista di Milano, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n47

²⁰⁵ Veclani, 2018, 25-30

3.1. Overview of attitudes and legislation regarding abortion through the centuries

From antiquity until the 18th century, it was impossible to separate the foetus from the woman, it was considered as an appendix and it was referred to as '*portio viscerum*', although there was a lack of scientific evidence to support this theory, which took root in the morals and culture of the Peninsula²⁰⁶.

Furthermore, the foetus is considered as a fruit, a sprout, or incomplete creature that grows from the fertile soil that is the woman, long regarded as a mere passive part of procreation, which received the male seed²⁰⁷.

It was, however, unthinkable to weigh the life of the foetus and the woman in the same way and to define them of equal value, especially at a time when infant survival was very low²⁰⁸.

For many centuries, therefore, the view of the woman's primary function as mother and procreator persisted, and the entire process of gestation, from menstruation, to abortion, to childbirth, to weaning, was considered to be entirely a woman's competence.

In the Greco-Roman era, abortion was initially an offence in the case the pregnancy was terminated against the father's will, and then assumed a negative and deviant valence for many thinkers and intellectuals as they considered abortion a failure of women to fulfil their sole purpose²⁰⁹.

Although the consideration of the foetus as a person did not yet alter, in the classical Roman period abortion juridically evolved from being a private matter to being sanctioned by law²¹⁰.

The crime committed is not towards a person who is denied the possibility of life, but towards the head of the family and patriarch was not consulted regarding the fate of the

²⁰⁶ Galeotti, 2003, 10

²⁰⁷ Ibidem

²⁰⁸ Ibidem

²⁰⁹ Ibidem

²¹⁰ Flore, 2022, 40

family members; it is considered an unacceptable attempt at greater female autonomy that could change the established social order²¹¹.

Christianity, which considers the voluntary termination of pregnancy as a human desire to elevate oneself above God and far from the precepts of love, changed the morality concerning this practice.

It is a groundbreaking change of perspective, in that for the first time the foetus is considered as a being already endowed with a soul, already alive, although not yet born, and a terminated pregnancy is considered tantamount to murder: a creature of God is killed.

Regarding the care for women before, after and during childbirth it is the midwives who are tasked with this responsibility. Over the centuries they assume an almost mystical persona dealing with both life and death, dealing with both abortions and the burial procedure²¹².

The absence or limited number for much of human history of precise sources concerning methodologies of the procedure is precisely due to the fact that it was considered to belong to the mysterious female sphere, not worthy of special attention.

The figure of the midwife remained until after the mid-20th century as an active and present actress for the gestation of women, very often risking imprisonment and the persecution, treatments and condemnations that are not unfamiliar to those who practise this profession, linked in the past to witchcraft²¹³.

Prior to the period of the Fascist government and dictatorship, abortion, which constituted an offence against the person under the 1889 Zanardelli Code²¹⁴, assumed a new public dimension as in 1930 it was classified as an offence against “the integrity and health of the race” but was punished only in the case of advanced pregnancy²¹⁵.

The female body explicitly is a direct tool for the State to guarantee its purity and continuity through the generations, and the penalties for those who performed such a

²¹¹ Agostini, Ciciarello, Marsella, 2005, 340-346

²¹² Gissi, 2016, 45-48

²¹³ Pancino, 1984, 28

²¹⁴ Passalacqua, 2010, 170-178

²¹⁵ Ghigi, 2018, 10

procedure were therefore toughened, along with other laws that centred the duty of the citizen as such to procreate for the good of the State²¹⁶.

In order to obtain the necessary number of soldiers for Italy to combat, conquer and win future wars, the birth rate had to increase significantly and rapidly: Mussolini himself declared that the necessary number of children had to be twelve per household²¹⁷.

Abortions, even during a totalitarian regime, despite the Regime requirements, continued to occur frequently: it is theorised that at least 18% of pregnancies ended in abortion in the late 1920s²¹⁸, although it remains difficult to quantify the exact number, which is probably higher.

However, it has always been very problematic to convict and prosecute those who performed abortions, as it was impossible to verify the patient's gestation, impossible in almost all cases to find the foetus and also impossible to verify whether the abortion was intentional or not. Although the regime requires total transparency, rigidity, and total cooperation in dealing with this birth problem, the data confirms the initial reluctance of the judiciary to pass sentences also because of the difficulty in finding the perpetrators²¹⁹.

3.2 The secrecy around abortion: a trace of voices and rumours - a double-edged sword

In a historical and cultural context in which the female body, its characteristics and the sexual sphere remain a mystical and unknown element for most, feminist groups realise how ignorance, both deliberate and culturally and religiously inculcated, complicates the discourse of abortion not only morally, but also lexically, since silence, *omertà* and isolation of women undergoing the procedure are at the root of its persistence throughout history²²⁰.

²¹⁶ Gissi, 2006, 135

²¹⁷ Ibidem

²¹⁸ Gissi, 2006, 136

²¹⁹ Ibidem

²²⁰ Perini, 2010, 5-7

The issue of abortions remained for a long time, throughout the centuries, a women's issue, and were women themselves who were obliged to find the solution to unwanted pregnancy.

Women, at the mercy of uncontrolled male sexuality, are themselves confronted with the consequences of the sexual act and must find a solution: an unwanted pregnancy represents social death for unmarried women, it represents the end of work and further impoverishment due both to the loss of salary, should the woman work, and due to the extra mouth to feed, the extra expenses, the extra time devoted to caring for the child.

They must find themselves a solution that otherwise would not obtain from the institutions and doctors of a strongly Catholic and moralistic Country, far removed from the up-to-date needs of its own citizens.

She must emerge, albeit briefly and timidly, from the isolation of the domestic walls and ask the right people, with the fear that rumours will circulate and the reputation of her person and her parents, her spouse, will be tarnished by "the unmoral secret".

It is necessary for the pregnant woman, or girl, to be shrewd in asking for information about the person who can help her terminate her pregnancy, in return for a hefty fee and with possible heavy and permanent consequences for her own health.

Customarily, as mentioned, it is still mainly women who perform these illicit operations, handing down this trade from generation to generation from mother to daughter, midwives²²¹, and doctors.

They all perform in secrecy, in their own homes; the address is obtained through connections and acquaintances who pass through various people. Furthermore, reaching the appointed place is not easy and straightforward; the patient must usually live the experience by herself and most of the times, not only once, but several times during the fertile period of her life²²².

As mentioned, because of a cultural, religious, and moralistic factor, and because it was legally punishable, people who performed abortions acted in total secrecy and demanded silence from their patients: the procedure happened people's own homes, in dark

²²¹ Gissi, 2016

²²² Perini, 2010, 9

basements, in unsanitary situations and very often with risky and unhygienic tools, all as quickly as possible. Nobody could know, neither neighbours nor relatives (and very often not even parents and/or spouses).

It was precisely the total secrecy surrounding this procedure that made the State's task of stamping out the number of illegal abortions complicated to achieve. The only trace left were rumours, hearsay, vague words, all of which would vanish rather quickly.

It is these whispers and voices that enabled women to have abortions, there is usually no other trace of the operations, there is obviously no accounting, it must all vanish in case one is discovered.

Contemporarily, it is the voices and stories of the women themselves who self-report in order to bring light to a subject that the state would otherwise have left buried as a consequence of the same voices that the police themselves followed as the only trail to unearth the people who perpetrated this crime against the state.

The fascist government, faced with a weak judiciary on the issue of abortions, decided to use the police directly, granting them the freedom to act without restrictions; this method persisted even during the First World War²²³.

The government intended to create a state without oppressors, not only political, but also for any activity and public opinion other than that desired by the regime. It got rid of the slowness of the judiciary and favoured the rapidity of the police in order to achieve its results²²⁴.

Suspects brought to trial found themselves before a commission that was both judge and accuser and had the power to arrest without summons, without formal interrogation, without being able to defend themselves.

The procedure was quite harsh and inflexible towards the midwives, in order to stop them from causing further abortions as soon as possible, and to set an example to those who wanted to abort.

²²³ Gissi, 2006, 137

²²⁴Ivi, 138

Therefore, the midwife as professional figure works beyond the strict necessity of caring for women in childbirth and covers some of the missing figures in the State, where abortion is an integrative part of care and assistance for women. In addition to covering a professional role, midwives fulfilled a social role²²⁵.

The relationship between abortion and the absence of guilt of midwives and older women is distinctive, since at the time the harshness of the work and the lack of prevention made spontaneous abortions very frequent, as can be seen from the language of the reports and testimonies in which the procedure of voluntary abortion is associated as a liberation or “restoration of a situation of physiological normality²²⁶”.

Indeed, there is no remorse, no modesty in the words of the midwives, who desire to distance themselves from the figure of evil witch and angel maker, as they were called in the 19th century²²⁷.

The fascist regime, although in its harshness and intransigence it did not succeed in stopping the phenomenon of illegal abortions bequeathed as a legacy to Italian society a strong aversion to and rejection of abortion: although regulated, it is met with strong resistance both in the persistence of objector gynaecologists in the public health service and in the constant attempt to hinder and discourage women with a smear campaign in this regard²²⁸.

It is not only the fascist legacy that has influenced Italian society in this regard: it is impossible to deny the strong influence of the Catholic Church, which has always sternly ruled against abortion and against the use of almost all forms of birth control.

More than anything, the repressive fascist strategy reinforced the culture of silence and rumours therefore became the most important and reliable clue for the police during the fascist period.

²²⁵ Raimondo, 2020, 293-294

²²⁶ Gissi, 2016, 41

²²⁷ Ivi, 39-42

²²⁸ D’Elia, 2008, 116-136

It must be considered that due to the widespread diffusion of abortion and the close connection with female sexuality, a taboo subject and at the same time a favourite of neighbourhood gossip, meant that an ordinary citizen would hardly have reported it.

By following rumours, confidences, curses that concerned people who might have known people in direct contact with midwives or anyone else, by tailing them to the homes of people who offered such a service, by lurking and waiting, it was possible to arrive at the culprits²²⁹.

In conclusion, the oral transmission of news, the sharing of knowledge through personal experience or that of people close to one another were more instrumental in the discovery, albeit partial, of this dark world steeped in mysticism and horror, abortion, and the female body, than the criminal code and the institutions.

These are the same voices that, decades later, shock the whole of Italian society, which seems to be totally unaware of the spread of abortion and the conditions in which a woman experiences the reproductive aspect of her body.

As already introduced, the same women who finally desire to be the protagonists of their own lives are not just reminiscing the past, of sad memories that no longer represent a major concern or problem, but speak of the present, of situations that conditioned their lives, their choices, and that of their daughters, and of how clandestinity is still a firmly rooted presence²³⁰.

The clandestine abortion is a machine that swallows millions of lire and repays them with damage to the bodies and the very lives of millions of Italian women and exists embedded in a Christian, conservative Country that clashes with the harsh reality of the facts.

Feminist groups themselves are very clear about the matter: abortion is an urgent necessity in order to safeguard women's well-being and life itself.

Furthermore, the activists are clear in replying and clarifying the motivation behind the state's silence: it is a convenient system of demographic control, despite appearances, in which crime is displayed on an individual level, not as a social issue, and free of charge,

²²⁹ Gissi, 2006, 143-145

²³⁰ Perini, 2010, 10-11

in that it does not spend money on research into contraceptives already on the market since 1931, health care or facilities²³¹.

The stance that is gradually taken by the women speaking, venting, agreeing, and supporting the voices of the women beside them, allows them to open their eyes to the absurdity of the situation and the sharing of such suffering imposed by others, institutions, governments, men who live their bodies with freedom.

The increased awareness that women demand is also expressed and translated over time by an accusation against medicine: doctors, whether conscientious objectors or not, are not infrequently cited who have been given a decision-making role by the state in private and personal matters such as abortion; they are singled out for their ignorance and the haste with which they operate and proceed with invasive procedures such as hysterectomies²³².

This initial discourse, courageously pursued by women, transmuted into what is now defined gender medicine and constituted the foundation on which obstetrical violence that women still suffer today can be discussed and addressed.

Re-reading the voluntary and non-voluntary testimonies, it is possible to note a change in the register and vocabulary used by women to talk about their bodies, an obscure and mysterious element, with the use of more scientific and direct terms, but the actual change is still distant²³³.

Italy, however, remains anchored to its values and the public conscience, although strongly shaken, receives its first shock through the bare and raw testimonies. The situation and the debate will become more intense when further “catalysing elements, capable of opening up the debate to new strands of interpretation²³⁴” intervene: the Pierobon case, which was held in the city of Padua.

²³¹ Collettivo femminista napoletano, undated 197?, 2. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n22

²³² Dalla Costa, 2005. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 13, n340

²³³ Movimento di lotta femminista di- Ferrara, undated. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n44

²³⁴ Perini, 2010, 4

In fact, the Pierobon case, which can be described as a massacre of the defendant in the manner, ultimately became a medium for further condemning all women who have chosen the voluntary interruption of pregnancy or who in any case agree with its possible decriminalisation.

It represents the perfect example to show the backwardness and stubbornness of an Italian society that does not want to come to terms with advancing modernity and the related need to review gender roles and the demands of an entire gender that has been silenced until now.

3.2.1 The body on trial: the Pierobon case

Through the comparison between the Pierobon trial in Padua in 1973 with the Chevalier trial in Paris in 1972, it is possible to highlight and better comprehend the extent to which Italy, the state, political parties, and public opinion were unprepared and unwilling to address such a complex and intricate problem.

Between the two defendants there are few similarities: both are brought to trial for having clandestine abortions as minors.

Marie-Claire Chevalier faced trial as a minor, Gigliola Pierobon four years after the suspected abortion. The French woman, a young student, lives in an urban setting, in a modest situation, but better than the situation the Italian underage girl found herself in at the moment of the abortion, namely. in a small country village, fruitlessly in search of a job after having abandoned her studies²³⁵.

They share a “domesticity steeped in disadvantage, suburban decay, reluctantly attended schools that do not prepare for life²³⁶”.

Both the defendants’ lawyers decided to weaponize these trials beyond the victory of the individual defendant: they realised the potential the cases could have in steering the abortion debate towards its decriminalisation.

²³⁵ Perini, 2014, 23

²³⁶ Ibidem

In terms of modalities and intentions, the differences in the way the trial in Padua was handled compared to the French case are such that the Italian one seems to have happened decades earlier.

Specifically, differently from the Italian case, the French trial against Chevalier does not relate as with an ordinary defendant to be judged and punished, and moreover through the skills of the defendant's defence, it became a trial for abortion and an educational debate²³⁷.

In France, the cultural change is thus greatly accelerated by the trial to such an extent that the existing law on abortion is changed in 1975, one year after the conclusion of the trial²³⁸.

The trial tackled by Pierobon, who at the time was also a militant in *Lotta Femminista*, remains anchored by the “old inquisitorial logic, with the police judicial practices and secrecy that are characteristic of the trial approach in Italy at that time²³⁹”.

In fact, the feminist groups denounced the aggressive manner and the questions towards Gigliola Pierobon, who paradoxically ended up on trial only after being forced, as she herself defined it, to self-report: she was initially summoned for questioning because it was suspected that she was in possession of the address of a woman or midwife who performed abortions²⁴⁰.

²³⁷ Farahani, 2023, 21-27

²³⁸ Strebin, 2023, 13

²³⁹ Perini, 2014, 20

²⁴⁰ Ivi, 21

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241

During the interrogation, the woman felt subjected to, as stated in her own words, “a witch hunt, I had to confess that I had seen the devil²⁴²”.

Lotta Femminista considers the trial to be the norm of justice and bourgeois law that attacks and punishes those who do not have the material means to escape: a child is a luxury that Pierobon could not afford as she was poor and unmarried. "The law could easily hit her because she was vulnerable", they state, since women usually are conditioned by the absence of income autonomy²⁴³.

Indeed, they define abortion as a “classist law made against the woman without income²⁴⁴”, which is not carried out as a free choice but as a necessity imposed by society.

²⁴¹ Image: Telegram from Selma James to Lotta Femminista of Padua. Subject: Pieno appoggio per il processo [a Gigliola Pierobon] e tutte le altre lotte. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 3

²⁴² Perini, 2014

²⁴³ Lotta Femminista, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC donation. Busta 1, n48.

²⁴⁴ Ibidem.

The body, in a process conditioned by increased scientific knowledge about the body, becomes of political interest, conditioned by laws that increasingly enter into the intimate personal and everyday sphere of the citizen- particularly the female citizen²⁴⁵.

The real defendant at the centre of the Italian trial is the body; the real purpose of the trial is not to merely sentence Gigliola Pierobon, but all Italian women, to further reiterate the seriousness of their unlawful act, and to redirect the discourse towards the impossibility for women to demand total autonomy of their own bodies.

For instance, during the French trial, only indispensable details concerning Chevalier's body are provided, depicted, and referred to in respectful language, protecting the dignity of the young defendant²⁴⁶.

Differently, Gigliola's body will be subjected not only to a useless and humiliating gynaecological examination, but also to meticulous attention and interrogation to establish how this procedure was conducted²⁴⁷.

Feminist groups demanded the trial to be filmed²⁴⁸, similar to the renowned case of the lawyer Tina Lagostena Bassi in the case of a rape whose trial was published as a documentary called *Rape Trial*. Even this trial held six years following the one in Padua, is characterised by the violence of words and indiscretions about the injured party, who is turned into a morally guilty figure, even by public opinion, as a consenting accomplice.

Both Italian defendants, and their bodies, are subjected to a cruel inquisition.

The Pierobon trial, in a country where abortion trials often ended in acquittal due to insufficient evidence, in contrast to this case, was unique: similar to the French trial, the lawyers presented the judges with a testimonial petition of studies, statistics, with numerous witnesses such as university professors, doctors, psychologists. Unfortunately, the judges did not accept the defendant's lawyers' request²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁵ D'Elia, 2008, 57

²⁴⁶ Perini, 2014, 23

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 24

²⁴⁸ Dalla Costa, 1974. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone A, Cartella 4

²⁴⁹ Perini, 2014, 47

Although the Italian trial was in many ways a failure, as it ended with the conviction of Gigliola Pierobon, it nevertheless managed to become a public case and triggered protest and intense reactions from women: ordinary women and feminist groups demonstrated in large numbers not only in Padua, but in many major Italian cities²⁵⁰, clashing with extreme right-wing groups and police, who had intended to silence them. Pierobon then obtained a partial pardon because she had married after the abortion.

This is a further mockery of the woman's self-determination, as her pardon was only obtained because the defendant did not totally disavow her ultimate and final role as a mother.

COMUNICATO STAMPA PADOVA 18.1.76. ORE 16,30

Il II Celere di Padova ha caricato improvvisamente e con brutalità un gruppo di femministe che sostavano davanti al duomo, ove si svolgeva una veglia di preghiere organizzata dal vescovo contro il diritto di aborto. Le femministe avevano deciso di ribadire il diritto delle donne di decidere autonomamente se, come e quando diventare madri, quindi il diritto di usufruire subito dell'aborto libero gratuito e assistito con anestesia e il diritto di una sessualità non finalizzata alla procreazione. Sierano perciò riunite in piazza con alcuni cartelli e volantini. La polizia in forze ha strappato i cartelli e i volantini, benchè non fossero ancora nè aperti nè distribuiti, ed ha caricato senza alcun preavviso (nè squilli di trombe, nè fasce tricolori) le donne che erano ancora silenziose. La brutalità è stata tale che sono state picchiate indiscriminatamente donne e passanti, e che la vetrina di un bar è andata in pezzi colpita da un calcio di fucile.

Le femministe di Padova denunciano questo comportamento della polizia, che sempre più frequentemente impedisce alle donne di parlare e crea un clima di tensione in città. Denunciano inoltre la Chiesa italiana che usa la polizia come truppe mercenarie.

COMITATO TRIVENETO PER IL SALARIO AL LAVORO DOMESTICO
CENTRO DI CONTROINFORMAZIONE FEMMINISTA SULLA SALUTE E SULLA SESSUALITA'
CENTRO FEMMINISTA
COLLETTIVO FEMMINISTA COMUNISTA DI PADOVA
CENTRO PER LA SALUTE DELLA DONNA
CENTRO DI DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA DONNA
GRUPPO FEMMINISTA MEDIE
COLLETTIVO FEMMINISTA DI AGRARIA

MANIFESTAZIONE FEMMINISTA
C.i.p. Via VIII Febb. SABATO 24 ore 15.30
Padova 18.I.1976. P.zza Le Signori

251

²⁵⁰ Coordinamento nazionale dei Gruppi per SLD, 1973. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n23

²⁵¹ Image: press release of several feminist groups preparing to demonstrate in the streets, 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone C, Cartella 1, n59

3.2.2 Women's reproductive health and self-determination, a doctor and husband's decision

Medicine is the ancient science of serving the body, using the male body as the only standard and model. It has always had the potential to be one of the determining factors in the fight for women's rights, unhinging the unjustified theories of the inferiority of the female body. On the other hand, medicine has always reflected sexist bias, highlighting the limitations and weakness of women in order to 'scientifically' justify their condition over that of men. Furthermore, there has always been little interest in the care of the female patient, to the exclusion of sexual and reproductive aspects, and the specifics of knowledge about the female body lag far behind knowledge about the body in general²⁵².

Curiously enough, it also appears that the weakness of the female body, which is unclear as it is characterised by menstruation, has never been a determining factor in the total exclusion from physical work²⁵³.

Furthermore, it appears that the weakness of the female body was a problem for women from the wealthier classes, with the mistaken belief that they suffered physically more than working women from the lower classes.

The interest in gender as an incisive factor in women's health and the consequent attentions in the approach to diagnosis and treatment with particular attention to sexual, social, cultural, and pathological differences can be identified from the 1990s onwards²⁵⁴.

Feminist activists and theorists of the analysed period already questioned the doctor-patient relationship, the paternal and intrusive role of the doctor towards the woman and recognised the role of male supremacy even in the field of medicine. The disregard for the female body was in fact also influenced for centuries by the Church's veto to "alter" the course of nature.

²⁵² Ehrenreich, English, 1973, 11

²⁵³ Ivi, 12-14

²⁵⁴ Donofrio, Fusco, Galeone, De Feo, 2021, 2

The late entry of contraceptives onto the market was in any case conditioned by the legal status of the applicant, who could not be too young and needed marital approval in order to obtain the contraceptive, which was a double-edged sword in that it placed reproductive responsibility heavily on the woman anyway: the pill.

The fight for contraceptives represents, however, a swift re-appropriation of one's own fertility, to finally be able not only to live with one's own body at a time chosen by women themselves, but also to embark on the path towards a sexuality not aimed at reproduction or mere male pleasure.

Italian feminist groups, in a unicum that does not appear in such a way in other countries, try to distance themselves from the authority they encounter in doctors and classical medicine, proposing not only a process of self-knowledge of one's own body, but also self-managed consultancies, which will gradually be supplanted by State-run ones²⁵⁵. Through illustrated brochures, feminist groups attempt to dispel ignorance about the mysterious gynaecological examination, the anatomy of one's body and sexual apparatus, the different existing contraceptives and their indications and method of use.

Specifically, Dalla Costa, using his own direct experience in this regard, treats the subject of hysterectomy as a striking example of the lack of regard for women's bodies, of the hypocrisy of doctors who, no longer seeing the usefulness of the reproductive organ close to menopause, decide for the patients themselves to remove it, showing little knowledge of the consequences of this practice.

The case of the high number of hysterectomies also concerns women of advanced age, the same women who have struggled to regain possession of their bodies, who are told by doctors to get rid of an organ that no longer has any use, hastening the long and natural process of menopause with an operation, without actually knowing or adequately inform on the short and long-term consequences of this frequently unnecessary removal²⁵⁶.

Dalla Costa further denounces the almost aggressive, guilt-ridden tone of doctors who allow themselves to go beyond the usual patient-doctor relationship, misinforming and

²⁵⁵ Scattigno, 2022, 9-28

²⁵⁶ Dalla Costa, 1998, 21-51. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 7, n161

provoking anxiety and guilt²⁵⁷: the woman's right to choose is therefore withdrawn by the doctor.

The theme of the way in which women are treated returns frequently in Dalla Costa's writings, who returns to write several years later about this type of abuse and how the persistence of this unnecessary procedure cannot be unrelated at least to the possibility of further remuneration at the patients' dispensations. In this case as well, the woman is not the subject of her reproductive capacity and health.

3.3 Motherhood, abortion, and family in a new feminist perspective

In their writings and in the squares, women belonging to feminist groups and outside these contexts, younger, more adult women, express themselves with increasing intensity to demand from the state a reconsideration of the status of the citizen and the regulation of her body.

These are years of profound anthropological and cultural changes, alongside the battle for abortion they also campaigned for divorce, against a State that even after granting certain rights, then tries to seize them back and deny them again through abrogative referendums as in both cases of divorce and abortion²⁵⁸.

Women demand a new vindication of the experience of motherhood, as a personal and optional choice, not required by society and to which there is no alternative, without which there is no full realisation as women²⁵⁹.

Even as women and feminist groups debate abortion, it is also between the various groups a complex issue to resolve: it is not the solution to female sexuality when it encounters male sexuality²⁶⁰, but it remains an urgent necessity in a context where access to contraceptives is difficult for many women, initially in the case of the pill granted only to married women.

²⁵⁷ Ibidem

²⁵⁸ Sciré, 2011, 253-266,

²⁵⁹ Collettivo internazionale femminista, 1976, p28-31. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 9, n245.

²⁶⁰ Lonzi, 2023, 70-75

In addition, the impossibility for legal voluntary interruption of pregnancy further unmasks the hypocrisy of a state, of doctors, of the Church, who do not lift a finger and do not act to prevent all those abortions considered 'natural' that occur due to the harmfulness and heaviness of factory work to which is added for all women the existing work in the home, defining these abortions as 'white abortions', comparable precisely to white deaths²⁶¹.



²⁶¹ Collettivo autonomo femminista di Ferrara, 1975/1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n21

²⁶² Image: Mestre - Event of the Triveneto Committee for WFH. Black and white Positive. Poster: "Motherhood". BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 11, 303, n8

Abortion and its illegality at the same time grants the state control over the birth rate and the reproduction of an undesirable segment of the population: Italian feminists frequently report the case of the forced sterilisation of black and Puerto Rican women, to cite one example, imposed and performed by the Government of the United States of America²⁶³, not yet knowing of the forced sterilisation of people with disabilities that still happens nowadays in Europe²⁶⁴ a further example of the State deciding for the individual citizen.

For women, it was impossible not to be forced in many cases to resort to abortion when the Italian state completely discharges all dignity and responsibility when the foetus becomes a child to be fed and cared for and penalising them at the time of employment between dismissals and lower pay, fewer job opportunities, and contemporarily favouring men at the time of hiring.

Furthermore, feminist activists denounce that in the event the woman decides at the time of the unwanted pregnancy to carry it to term anyway for fear of the risky procedure and possible imprisonment without possessing the economic means to do so, she will have to raise her child in miserable conditions or abandon it to the misery of church-run orphanages²⁶⁵.

Further advancing the discourse were also the self-reports by more and more women, more and more doctors²⁶⁶, of having procured or undergone an abortion, followed by resounding demonstrations in the main Italian cities, in particular Florence following an arrest of 40 women and a total of 263 charged, a procedure similar to a Mafia raid²⁶⁷.

When mobilisations, protests begin to stir and bring the debate to the government, the intention of political parties to guarantee abortion only in cases decided by themselves, in the case of therapeutic abortion and the case of rape, is clear and denounced by the

²⁶³ Barengi, 1978. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone D, cartella 4, n7

²⁶⁴ Uldry, European Disability Report, 2022

²⁶⁵ Lotta femminile of Padua, 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 9, n245.

²⁶⁶ Comitato per il Salario al lavoro domestico di Padova. 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 3, n29

²⁶⁷ Centro Donne e Salute, 1976. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Faldone C, Cartella 1, n53

activists, along with the total lack of participation of women themselves in the drafting of this right, although being the first to be affected²⁶⁸.

The governments expect the procedure in these cases to be mediated and decided by professional figures of doctors who will be the ultimate holders of the right and denial of abortion; the same parties tend to disregard the impact of the possible cost of the procedure, thus turning the possibility of abortion into a class privilege.

Underneath is listed the various proposals presented by the various parties to compare them with the feminist demands of free, guaranteed, and assisted abortion for all women, included underage.

	Decision (if the woman is of legal age)	Decision (if the woman is a minor)	Payment
Italian socialist party	two authorised doctors + 1 doctor performing	+ parents or juvenile court	free
Italian communist party	2 doctors + social worker	+ parents or juvenile court	free
Christian Democracy	Illegal abortion	/	/
Italian democratic socialist party	Woman within 10 weeks otherwise doctors certifying serious danger to the life of the woman and the unborn child	parent	woman if income higher than the minimum wage
Italian republican party	Woman if under 12 weeks of pregnancy (after two doctors if health or life in danger)	1 legally responsible person	woman if health or life is not in danger
Italian liberal party	Woman	+ parents or juvenile court	free

269

²⁶⁸ Galeotti, 2003, 118-126

²⁶⁹ D'Elia, 2008, 48

The position of women is thus exposed as being constantly caught between the desires of religion and the needs of the State, which is suddenly rushing to present laws for abortion, in order to continue to control the woman's body, a machine for the procreation of the new worker, and the consequent birth rate of the country.

Indeed, the possibility that abortion can also be instrumentalised for capitalist purposes and the interests of third parties is not excluded,

Women's bodies, denied a sexuality that is not for the purpose of procreation, find themselves in the hands of a hypocritical health service that objects to abortion and then performs it clandestinely, profusely paid with blood money.

It appears necessary, therefore, a sex education leading to awareness and knowledge of one's own body, which has been mistreated and at the same time ignored for centuries, in order to be able to reach a personal decision about motherhood.

Motherhood becomes a choice, not an obligation to fulfil the required role of mother and wife, and thus enclose oneself within the walls of a home.

Adequate assistance for motherhood and parenthood is therefore demanded through public services that lighten the heavy burden of responsibilities for those who decide to become parents.

3.3.1 Against a capitalistic and traditional view of the family

As discussed in the previous chapter, post-Marxist and socialist feminist theory defines the family precisely as the most glaring example of capitalist dictatorship, viewing it as the site of increased consumption and distribution of resources²⁷⁰.

The very act of procreation is not bringing a mere new human being into the world, but a new worker for capitalism to use for its economic and exploitative ends.

²⁷⁰ D'Amato, Ergas, Piccone, 1979

In a more explicit definition, mothers and wives are active actors who, in the daily gestures and generations of emotional, physical care, etc., as we have already mentioned, contribute to the fundamental reproduction of the new worker, in a new framework and with particular attention to the new requirements that the contemporary economic system demands, with attitudes and personalities moulded from the earliest days in function of the worker they will one day have to be.

The very condition in which men's oppression of women is most uniformly expressed and becomes the common denominator for all women is the family context, in the assigned reproductive functions²⁷¹.

The family thus becomes the place of private production of domestic labour, which although it has no power of exchange outside the family itself, becomes essential for its sustenance. The 1960s heralded the era of the housewife: female employment came to a halt in 1962, amidst mass expulsions of female workers at the first signs of the labour crisis²⁷².

Indeed, women are the first constant precarious workers as they are considered the most expendable, compared to the male breadwinner.

The figure of the housewife herself is assimilated into capitalism and becomes the highest expression of consumer-consumption, including not only the tasks of caring, cleaning, etcetera, that are innovatively redefined as work by feminist activists and theorists, but also certain conditioned behaviours such as women's sexual behaviour²⁷³.

Clearly, the work performed by women towards the family, the spouse, the offspring, is not presented or defined as work, but as the most significant and satisfying role for a woman.

By excluding her from the community, from society, only the intimacy of the home is identified as her place, determining her condition that has persisted over the centuries in

²⁷¹ *ibidem*

²⁷² Lussana, 2014, 60

²⁷³ Dalla Costa, 1972. BCP. *Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle)* for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 6, n105

a process in which "patriarchy is reshaped by bringing to completion the process of naturalisation of the two genders²⁷⁴".

The washing machine, presented in the *Carosello* commercials, along with other household appliances certainly simplified the life of the housewife, yet they become almost accessories of a doll, which, contrary to expectations, does not find satisfaction in consumerism as promised by a western society.

Although laws proposed start to legally protect women from for instance unfair termination for marrying, and open all careers that were prohibited to women, the cultural work to separate women from the persistent image of the housewife at home, care, and motherhood, is still insidious and difficult to achieve²⁷⁵.

Included in the figure of the housewife are women who are not wives or mothers, but are very often referred to as students whose studies are frequently interrupted and who are required to always be available for domestic work within the walls, which goes far beyond participating in daily life as a member of the family, thus detracting from her work and her time, old women are also included, who as grandmothers, must always be willing to help younger women so that the latter can work, and so on²⁷⁶. The woman, with the unpaid work imposed on her from an early age until the last years of her life, is a domestic worker.

Feminist collectives reflect on the parallelism between home and factory and are among the main elements that enable 'ordinary' women outside feminist contexts to embark on a path of awareness, to come out of the isolation of the home, to meet their sisters, to take an active part in social and public places. They ask women, whether housewives, mothers, wives, to abstain from chores and care work as a form of struggle²⁷⁷.

Wages, which is the recognition of work from a social point of view, represents a means to achieve economic independence for women outside the labour market, which would not consider them except to underpay and exploit them, is fundamental to the achievement

²⁷⁴ Adorni, Stagno, 2021, 233

²⁷⁵ Lussana, 2014, 61

²⁷⁶ Pompei, 1972. BCP. Lotta Femminista (Feminist Struggle) for wages for housework MRDC Donation. Busta 1, n5

²⁷⁷ Adorni, Stagno, 2021

of women's liberation at a time in history when they are strongly conditioned in their choices by their economic dependence on a man.

3.3.2 The difficult approval of divorce laws in Italy

Further disrupting the social order and simultaneously representing a deviant and amoral law, opening the door to dissolution, and a fundamental instrument for greater independence for women, was the divorce law.

Although the radical and feminist movements fought ardently for the right to divorce, obtaining this law cannot be described as their victory, but was a process in which traditional parties, socialists, Catholics, and communists also participated dialoguing, and clashing with the Church²⁷⁸. It is not appropriate to flatten, as Sciré directly defines, the discourse to a simple yes or no²⁷⁹.

Civil society is actively playing a leading role in Italian politics, unmasking the backwardness and hypocrisy of the ruling and political classes with regard to family issues: in fact, the wealthier classes have always had more access to matrimonial dissolution thanks to the greater economic availability that allowed them to avail themselves of the Sacra Rota or undertake the entire process in other countries, such as San Marino²⁸⁰.

Despite religious importance and influence is in a constant yet slow decline, and although many Italians themselves have advocated and did not want to forego divorce, breaking the sacred bond of marriage, Italians yet cling to religious morality in the battle against the abortion law.

Hence, it is a historical period, for the Italian scenario between the 1960s and 1970s, in which the strong Catholic influence and culture with its conservative views, reappears and disappears depending on the subject.

²⁷⁸ Chimenti, 1993, 20-38

²⁷⁹ Sciré, 2007, 234

²⁸⁰ Lussana, 2014, 22-27

The course of the Fortuna-Baslini law, which was intended to regularise marriage dissolution, was complex and decidedly not immediate for posterity to comprehend, in a game that many described as a political construct devised by parties as the elections approached²⁸¹.

Indeed, the right of divorce was a fortuitous case of a law that was granted by referendum in the hope by the Catholics to repeal it as quickly as possible through a further referendum, who then found themselves faced with the unwillingness of the people, from whom they strongly hoped for support, to repeal it.

The same parties, at a very delicate time for the Italian government, which was forming its own identity, its own form of government and correlatively its own morals and social order, fail to recognise the social changes in a country that is evolving rapidly on an economic level, but at times remains anchored to a patriarchal and traditional vision of society, though also as already defined, the great influence that the Church and the clergy exert on the country's morals²⁸².

The approach to relationships, to the family, changed drastically in the second half of the twentieth century: exactly at the time Fortuna presented the bill, legal separations increased year by year, the number doubling between 1963 and 1970, from 11 thousand to 20 thousand separation requests²⁸³.

Unlike the laws of other European countries concerning divorce, Italian law is unique in the presence of a separation period that must necessarily elapse before the marriage can be dissolved, which clearly reflects the reluctance to cede this right²⁸⁴.

Several decades after the institution of the Fortuna law, Law 55/2015 reduced this interval between separation and divorce from three years to twelve months for judicial separations and six months for consensual separations.

Indeed, there were numerous initial attempts to enshrine in the Constitution the indissolubility of marriage as a union above the law and the State²⁸⁵.

²⁸¹ Chimenti, 1993, 17-25

²⁸² Sciré, 2007, 233

²⁸³ Filippi, 2021, 14

²⁸⁴ Impacciatore, Guetto, 2021, 13-20

²⁸⁵ Lussana, 2014, 11-39

The Italian family exhibited and absorbed all the changes, generational clashes, and social struggles between the various components themselves. The traditional image of the Catholic and patriarchal family underwent considerable shocks, as evidenced by the number of civil unions increasing in those years. A dialogue and discussion arose concerning a new idea of a family form, different from the pre-existing traditional hierarchical approach.

Radical feminist groups, university and student groups welcome and seek out conflict, in an attempt to revisit and destroy the levels of power held by *pater familias* over their wives and children, institutions such as the state, education and religion.

3.4 The relevance of the discussed themes and fights in contemporary society

Although the themes discussed in these chapters might seem to belong to the past, as rights that have now been earned and are well established, the world panorama continues to provide examples of how the struggle for women's emancipation cannot be conjugated and relegated to the past but must be constantly receptive to events and legislation that can undermine its advancement.

In particular, the subject of abortion and the related right to a woman's decision-making autonomy continue to be relevant issues whose boundaries and rights granted seem to be fragile and revocable at any time. In addition, the discourse has become even more complicated with the technological and scientific advances concerning new methods of conception such as in vitro: the discussion concerning the ethics of such practices is directly linked to the legislation concerning the woman's own body.

In Italy, even though the right of voluntary termination of pregnancy granted by law, it is not easily obtainable, due to the high number of conscientious objectors²⁸⁶, which forces many women to move provinces, if not regions. Moreover, recent investigations have uncovered the existence of real cemeteries of fetuses obtained by anti-abortion groups

²⁸⁶ Mura, Perini, 2023, 259-260

directly through hospitals themselves and it is a very serious attack on women's choice and privacy²⁸⁷.

The same anti-abortion groups, which desire the revision or even total abolition of law 194, have received in the case of the Piedmont region up to one million euro in funds directly from the region for the implementation of projects with the clear intention of dissuading women from having abortions²⁸⁸. The clear attack on women's self-determination is also expressed in these ways, in a clear thought that mainly values gestational potential, particularly for a country with such a low birth rate.

Regarding the main theme of the dissertation, unpaid care work, strictly intertwined, has been defined in all the various nuances and differences and nowadays has evolved rapidly due to the global pandemic that has inevitably changed societies, and has taken on new guises and forms.

Ever present throughout the various historical periods, care work has lately gained not only a new importance and relevance in the academic field, but as a key presence in modern society, dependent on both unpaid care work and the externalized retributed care work performed by caregivers and “*badanti*”²⁸⁹.

Indeed, there is an increasing demand for family caregivers for the neediest such as elderly parents and young children. Most care workers, especially live-in workers, are particularly vulnerable to abuse and are often victims of human trafficking. They are often illegal immigrant women, without a contract, at the mercy of their employers²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁷ Carace, 2021, 1-12

²⁸⁸ Casolaro, 2024

²⁸⁹ OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs & OECD Trento Centre for Local Development, 2023

²⁹⁰ Kraler, 2016

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to address the relevance of unpaid work, still mainly the responsibility of women, which has changed and acquired new methodologies and techniques.

Indeed, although the figure of the housewife is declining, with women increasingly entering the world of work, recent social and economic shocks due to the global pandemic have had an impact on the work and fate of women and mothers, who still find themselves in jobs that are more often than not precarious, and who, faced with the closure of offices and schools, have very often had to make the choice to stop work in order to devote themselves to their families, in the case of women with small children.

Moreover, the traditional figure of the housewife is now often supplanted by figures such as carers, who take care of the elderly, cleaners, and so forth: most of these tasks are still performed by women in vulnerable situations, forced to accept the most menial and underpaid jobs. The outsourcing of care work has in fact only partially freed white women in Western countries.

Further proof of the relevance and topicality of this topic is the large amount of academic research on the subject, especially in recent years, which has also led institutions such as the European Union to acknowledge it and begin to plan strategies to address care work and an ever-increasing population of elderly people in need of it.

The first chapter aimed to explain the complexity of gender and unpaid care work in all its nuances. Of recent importance is emotional labour, which still represents a not inconsiderable responsibility of women.

Discussing the terminology concerning this topic was crucial, as it is an evolving discourse.

In order to show the need for feminist activists to distance themselves and deal with the issues that concerned them, examples were given in the second chapter such as: the

reticence and open hostility of male comrades, which resulted in sabotage and repressive attitudes and the limits of pre-existing theory and the consequent blindness regarding the condition of women, with which women themselves confronted.

The formation of new groups and new realities far removed from male authority, provided the opportunity for them to select the issues to be addressed and the rights to be fought for, such as a freer sexuality, hitherto considered unimportant, by choosing their own ways and words to be used. Dealing with feminist theory from the 1970s reveals their relevance to the present.

Finally, the third chapter aimed to illustrate how the struggle of women activists took shape, who fiercely fought for rights that are still not guaranteed today, for example, due to the high rate of conscientious objectors in the public health service.

The trial of Gigliola Pierobon, also discussed in this chapter, proves to be important in understanding the positions regarding the female body being mistreated and judged if experienced differently from what is imposed by society. Of equal relevance is the discourse concerning abuses in the female-patient relationship that women still continue to suffer, brought forward by Dalla Costa herself, who lives the experience first-hand.

To conclude, therefore, the aim of this thesis has been to further emphasise and renew the relevance of the issue of unpaid work, which is still unresolved. Responsibility for some of the unpaid work has passed from one woman to another, in a process of concatenation that includes several countries.

As the women activists themselves declared in the 1970s, economic and consequently social recognition, by a system that recognises the importance of work through its wages, is fundamental to embarking on a discourse that can enable a cultural change in this regard, of which the institutions must be the first to set an example, making it a priority.

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Particular subordinate labor relationship constituted by the provision of services of a domestic nature and governed by Art. 2240-46 of the Civil Code, l. 339/1958, Presidential Decree No. 1403/1971, and industry collective bargaining. L. No. 339/1958 defines a domestic worker as one who works for the functioning of family life, whether personnel with specific qualifications or personnel assigned to general duties. [...] A special category is formed by workers admitted to family life, who, under the Civil Code, are entitled, in addition to monetary remuneration, to board and lodging and, for short-term infirmities, to medical care and assistance. Dizionario Treccani, *Lavoro domestico*, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lavoro-domestico/>. Retrieved October 1, 2023.

Table 1: The effect of parenthood on employment for men and women (age group 25-49) in 2020. Only in two of the EU countries do women with younger children have higher employment rates than women without children. Istat http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hheredch

Abstract in Italian

La ridefinizione di tutte le mansioni domestiche, la cura dell'altro e dei suoi bisogni fisici, emotivi, sessuali in quanto lavoro è un processo che modifica e aggiorna il concetto stesso di lavoro, che nega la separazione della sfera domestica da quella lavorativa, che nella società post-industriale, era separata dalla sfera lavorativa.

La tesi affronta la ridefinizione del lavoro domestico come lavoro vero e proprio e come ciò abbia influenzato la struttura sociale. In passato, il lavoro si concentrava all'interno della famiglia, in particolare nel settore agricolo. Tuttavia, con l'industrializzazione, il lavoro si è spostato dal nucleo familiare alle fabbriche, determinando una riorganizzazione della famiglia stessa e cambiando l'intera struttura della società.

L'avvento della tecnologia ha ulteriormente trasformato l'economia, portandola dal contesto privato al contesto pubblico, estendendosi oltre la sussistenza e il semplice guadagno. In molti Paesi, tra cui l'Italia, il lavoro è direttamente collegato all'identità e alla cittadinanza; pertanto, è importante discutere di ciò che viene considerato lavoro e di cosa viene escluso dalla sua definizione. L'accettazione del lavoro intimo e domestico come lavoro a pieno titolo al pari degli altri tipi di lavoro nega la separazione tra casa e lavoro nella società attuale.

Un fenomeno che si è verificato negli ultimi anni è l'eliminazione della distanza fisica tra casa e lavoro. Questo cambiamento è influenzato dall'evoluzione del lavoro, dalla tecnologia e dalla comparsa di nuove forme di lavoro e di contratti che non richiedono la presenza fisica dei lavoratori in un determinato luogo. Inoltre, la pandemia causata dal Covid-19 che ha imposto il divieto di aggregazione sociale, ha portato a un aumento del lavoro da remoto e di conseguenza ha velocizzato questo processo.

È importante definire cosa si intende per lavoro domestico e riproduttivo per comprendere la campagna per il salario al lavoro di cura, tutt'ora essenziale per la sopravvivenza dei singoli individui e della stessa società.

Il lavoro domestico include non solo le mansioni fisiche quali la pulizia e la cucina, ma anche attività come l'attività sessuale e l'intimità, che sono parte integrante di questa

classificazione del lavoro. Il lavoro riproduttivo, emotivo e di cura, che spesso è svolto dalle donne senza essere retribuito, è strettamente interconnesso e non può essere facilmente categorizzato.

Il primo capitolo della tesi si concentra sulla definizione e spiegazione dei vari termini per identificare le varie tipologie del lavoro di cura, in quanto si è ritenuto fondamentale la comprensione e l'uso corretto di questi termini per una discussione approfondita sulla condizione delle donne nella società attuale.

Inizialmente, è stato analizzato il termine "lavoro domestico", per indicare tutte le attività sostenute dalle donne, tuttavia esso si riferisce principalmente alle faccende domestiche, escludendo altre attività.

Pertanto, l'utilizzo del termine lavoro intimo o di cura, che comprende il lavoro di cura stesso, le mansioni domestiche e gli atti sessuali, viene considerato più inclusivo. Questo termine permette di considerare un continuum di mansioni che, sebbene diverse, condividono aspetti comuni. Il termine maggiormente utilizzato dalle attiviste che hanno denunciato il lavoro non retribuito delle donne è "lavoro riproduttivo", che include la cura dei bambini, la preparazione dei pasti e altre attività che sostengono la forza lavoro attuale e futura.

Inoltre, l'analisi etimologica e linguistica delle parole che designano il lavoro in diverse lingue ovvero labor, travail, arbeit, work e labour, può essere d'aiuto per comprendere le diverse connotazioni positive e negative del lavoro nel corso della storia.

Tuttavia, resta fondamentale sottolineare come un solo termine non possa cogliere appieno la complessa relazione tra classe e genere e non possa riassumere le esperienze di un genere. Coniare questi primi termini è stato fondamentale per il loro riconoscimento iniziale e ancora oggi è fondamentale discuterne la definizione.

Il primo capitolo prosegue con la discussione del lavoro emotivo, ovvero l'adeguamento delle proprie emozioni a norme organizzative e sociali, una separazione tra emozioni espresse ed emozioni concepite soprattutto da parte delle donne, per favorire il benessere emotivo degli altri. Il lavoro emotivo avviene sia all'interno delle famiglie, quando le donne si prendono cura delle emozioni dei loro partner e figli, sia sul posto di lavoro, dove devono mantenere un atteggiamento positivo e gentile anche in situazioni difficili.

L'attenzione viene poi rivolta alla svalutazione che il lavoro di cura subisce, sebbene sia una condizione necessaria: all'inizio della sua vita l'essere umano ha dunque bisogno di ricevere cure per poi ricambiare la stessa cura verso gli altri. La stessa comunità scientifica e accademica ha ignorato per lungo tempo questa dimensione, perché è sempre stata responsabilità di membri sociali invisibili come le donne. Le azioni di cura sono state percepite come scontate e naturali, non degne di attenzione e riflessione.

Silvia Federici ha riconosciuto che la catena dell'emancipazione femminile nei Paesi centrali è stata consentita dalla liberazione del 'doppio fardello che relegava il lavoro domestico alle donne che migravano dalle semiperiferie e dalle periferie'.

Questa condizione può essere osservata anche all'interno dello stesso Paese, tra donne di classi sociali diverse. In breve, il lavoro di cura che un tempo spettava alle casalinghe e che bloccava la loro emancipazione e l'avanzamento di carriera, è passato parzialmente ad altre donne, solitamente povere e immigrate.

Nel contesto europeo, le donne hanno in media maggiori probabilità di essere economicamente inattive rispetto agli uomini: doversi occupare del lavoro di cura all'interno e all'esterno della casa, come l'assistenza ai bambini e/o ai familiari disabili e/o anziani non autosufficienti, si rivela la causa più frequente dell'impossibilità di cercare un lavoro retribuito. Il divario di genere negli incarichi di lavoro non retribuiti ha conseguenze dirette sull'accesso al lavoro, ulteriormente aumentato da fenomeni quali "penalizzazione occupazionale della maternità" sperimentata dalle donne che lavorano a tempo pieno. Lo scarso coinvolgimento delle donne nel mercato del lavoro è dovuto anche dall'inadeguato sistema di welfare e alle insufficienti politiche familiari che l'Italia offre ai cittadini. Infine, la prova delle aspettative e degli obblighi sociali dei genitori si osserva nei diversi congedi parentali.

Come già accennato, per generazioni, il lavoro di cura dei segmenti più bisognosi della popolazione è ricaduto sulle donne a causa di varie aspettative culturali e religiose, e ha portato a politiche e strutture del mercato del lavoro che prevedono che le donne siano i principali care giver della famiglia, a favore degli uomini, le cui esigenze sono solitamente soddisfatte e quindi in grado di dedicarsi totalmente alla carriera.

Questa 'specializzazione' costringe le donne a dedicare diverse ore al giorno al lavoro di cura, che siano mamme casalinghe o lavoratrici, spesso costringendo molte di queste ultime a diminuire 'volontariamente' le ore di lavoro, a cercare solo il part-time o a non lavorare affatto, perché il costo per la cura dei bambini e/o dei genitori anziani risulta troppo elevato.

Quindi, l'occupazione non mette le donne al riparo dalla responsabilità delle faccende domestiche e della cura dei suoi membri.

Il secondo capitolo pone attenzione sulla storia dei gruppi movimenti femministi italiani, in particolare della zona del triveneto, della prima metà degli anni Settanta.

In risposta alla tradizionale lotta di classe escludente delle donne, questa campagna si propone di evidenziare il lavoro non retribuito delle donne, spesso ignorato. Nell' Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta, molte donne risultano casalinghe a tempo pieno o confinate in ghetti occupazionali, con lunghe ore lavorative. Le donne decisero dunque di unirsi per discutere e lottare contro lo Stato, le istituzioni e le tradizioni culturali che le relegavano a un ruolo di sottomissione. Le esponenti ed attiviste femministe evidenziarono come i lavori sottopagati delle donne fossero un'estensione dei compiti domestici non retribuiti.

La manifestazione del 1974 a Mestre rappresenta la prima manifestazione delle donne per un salario per il lavoro domestico, sottolineando la loro volontà di non aspettare una rivoluzione futura guidata dagli uomini. Le richieste includono l'aborto gratuito, contraccettivi, fine dei turni notturni, salari equi e la non subordinazione delle lavoratrici a un capo uomo, tutte parte della lotta per il riconoscimento, rivalutazione e retribuzione del lavoro domestico. La sessualità stessa è considerata una componente essenziale di questo lavoro.

Si affronta dunque la storia dei gruppi femministi dediti alla campagna per il salario al lavoro domestico, presenti non solo in Italia, ma anche in Paesi come il Canada e gli Stati Uniti. Il movimento studentesco ha influenzato notevolmente i movimenti femministi, con collettivi femministi rivolti direttamente alle studentesse come lavoratrici.

La tesi si focalizza sull'importanza della campagna "Wages For Housework" come istanza transnazionale nella seconda ondata femminista, coinvolgendo Paesi come Italia, Inghilterra, Canada, Stati Uniti d'America e Germania. Questo movimento unico

coinvolgeva donne eterosessuali, casalinghe, lesbiche, donne razzializzate e lavoratrici, tutte unite per riconoscere il lavoro di genere oppressivo. Il lavoro non retribuito emerge come "minimo comune denominatore" delle donne nelle società capitaliste. Tuttavia, non tutti i movimenti femministi hanno universalmente sostenuto la lotta per il riconoscimento e la retribuzione del lavoro di genere non retribuito, in quanto alcuni di essi preferirono concentrarsi sull'esternalizzazione del lavoro di cura attraverso servizi comunitari. I vari movimenti occidentali hanno origini e risultati diversi, ma sono interconnessi, con ispirazioni e discussioni che si estendono tra i paesi, dimostrate da numerose traduzioni e collaborazioni.

Infine, la tesi documenta gli scambi di idee tra movimenti femministi attraverso richieste di materiali, traduzioni e annunci di libri importanti. Gli studiosi si influenzarono reciprocamente, evidenziato dagli scritti di Angela Davis che menzionano gli eventi di Mestre. Un documento, inoltre, sottolinea il ruolo degli *International Feminist Translators* nell'agevolare la circolazione delle idee femministe tra i paesi, promuovendo relazioni e contatti tra gruppi femministi di tutto il mondo.

Nel 1972 a Padova, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici (a New York), Brigitte Galtier (a Parigi) e Selma James (a Londra) fondarono il Collettivo Femminista Internazionale per promuovere l'indipendenza economica delle donne come forma di autonomia personale. La loro iniziativa non chiedeva una doppia retribuzione per il doppio lavoro, ma il riconoscimento del lavoro domestico in quanto tale.

Le donne del movimento femminista italiano provenivano da esperienze nel movimento studentesco e politico, ma la mancanza di spazi per le loro voci le spinse a organizzarsi autonomamente. Concentrandosi sulla sfera lavorativa e sulla lotta di classe, le attiviste rivendicavano la rivalutazione della famiglia come centro di disciplina del lavoro e produzione. Le donne disoccupate, affermano le attiviste, lavorano comunque all'interno della casa, allo stesso modo delle donne della classe operaia: "La merce che le donne producono, a differenza delle altre merci prodotte sotto il capitalismo, è l'essere umano stesso, il 'lavoratore'".

Le donne, trovandosi fisicamente e psicologicamente isolate, decisero dunque di organizzarsi autonomamente a causa degli attacchi, anche da parte della sinistra, che si ripetevano ogni qualvolta che cercavano maggiore indipendenza.

Si è ritenuto necessario citare nella tesi alcuni casi di esperienze di alcune compagne con l'aperta ostilità da parte di compagni, professori, insegnanti e colleghi nei loro confronti quando è emerso il tema della lotta delle donne e la possibilità per le stesse di agire in modo indipendente: un articolo su L'Espresso del 1972 denuncia l'aggressione di alcuni radicali della sinistra extraparlamentare contro le militanti di Lotta Femminista riunite per un seminario sulla tematica del lavoro femminile; un documento conservato nella collezione di Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, "Adesso basta!" del collettivo di lotta femminista di Gela, riporta come le stesse studentesse si siano trovate di fronte a scherni e rimproveri da parte delle autorità e dei compagni dopo aver espresso il desiderio di occuparsi dell'emancipazione femminile o di voler intraprendere studi diversi da quelli umanistici.

Marx e altri teorici si occuparono per certi versi della famiglia e della condizione delle donne; lo stesso teorico tedesco descrive la famiglia tradizionale come fondamento per la difesa della proprietà privata. Engels definisce come l'antagonismo tra uomo e donna nel matrimonio monogamo come primo antagonismo di classe.

D'altro canto, le studiose femministe criticarono l'approccio dei riformisti e dei parlamentari che spingevano le donne a cercare emancipazione attraverso il lavoro fuori casa, senza riconoscere il lavoro già svolto dentro le mura.

Tuttavia, il genere rimane un fattore piuttosto marginale ne *Il Capitale*; la definizione del lavoro domestico svolto dalle donne è solo brevemente menzionata e discussa nelle note. Marx, astenendosi dall'analizzare e denunciare la condizione di sfruttamento femminile, collocandola al livello privato della società anziché a quello strutturale, si tradisce e rivela la matrice borghese del suo pensiero in materia di relazioni, visto che colloca le donne a un livello complementare rispetto agli uomini.

Pur riconoscendo limiti ed errori, Federici, James, Dalla Costa e molte altre militanti hanno basato le loro teorie sul marxismo per riconoscere e analizzare la matrice alla base dell'oppressione vissuta dalle donne e per ampliarne la teoria. Le studiose e militanti del periodo non risparmiarono Lenin e la Rivoluzione russa dalla critica, definendola infine come un fallimento per l'avanzamento della lotta per i diritti delle donne.

Il terzo capitolo, infine, si concentra sulla necessità delle lotte per l'autonomia e l'autogestione del proprio corpo come condizione necessaria per la lotta al salario e riconoscimento al lavoro domestico.

L'aborto, in particolare, rappresenta un rifiuto radicale del destino imposto della maternità, che comporta l'intensificazione dello sfruttamento e dell'isolamento delle donne. I diritti per i quali le attiviste femministe lottarono sono fortemente interconnessi; è difficile discutere della liberazione dalle responsabilità di genere, come la cura, quando la sessualità è considerata un dovere verso gli uomini e la sua conclusione è destinata a una gravidanza, adempiendo così al ruolo di madre assegnato alle donne. Separare la sessualità e concentrarsi sul piacere femminile se la conseguenza da pagare è una gravidanza indesiderata sembra infatti impossibile. La questione dell'aborto rivela l'ipocrisia degli Stati, non solo dello Stato italiano, ma di tutti i governi, che non offrono servizi, cure e protezione ad almeno la metà dei loro cittadini.

L'utero, per la sua capacità di gestazione, è considerato uno spazio biopolitico, non privato ma soggetto a controllo e leggi in un contesto di costante contestazione tra poteri religiosi, politici e industriali. Le istituzioni e la Chiesa cercano di dominare il corpo femminile, poiché da esso dipende la riproduzione nazionale e la definizione ultima dell'egemonia maschile. L'esistenza dell'utero porta, di conseguenza, le donne a vivere una cittadinanza "paradossale": teoricamente cittadine in quanto corpi umani, ma prive di autonomia e soggette a sorveglianza politica come corpi con utero. In Italia, il processo di modernizzazione dei ruoli di genere è stato più lento rispetto ad altri Paesi e persiste infatti la visione arcaica della donna come moglie devota e madre paziente.

Le donne, in modo coraggioso, espressero apertamente la loro realtà corporea, narrando la propria vita e condizione quotidiana attraverso l'oralità non filtrata. Denunciarono la loro condizione di cittadine di seconda classe, evidenziando come il loro futuro e i loro corpi siano influenzati da medici obiettori e non-obiettori, datori di lavoro, mariti, padri e fratelli. La loro esperienza di vita è profondamente intrecciata con il loro corpo, affrontando sfide come gravidanze inaspettate, conseguenti licenziamenti, matrimoni affrettati, aborti clandestini. Documentari come quelli di Judith Hellman, Luigi Comencini, Gabriella Parca e Pierpaolo Pasolini mettono in luce la violenza e la brutalità

vissute dalle donne, svelando la realtà troppo comune, ma spesso nascosta e ignorata, degli aborti clandestini.

In un contesto storico e culturale in cui il corpo femminile è avvolto in un velo di mistero e ignoranza, i movimenti femministi riconoscono come l'ignoranza stessa, sia deliberata che culturalmente e religiosamente inculcata, renda più complesso il dibattito sull'aborto, non solo dal punto di vista morale, ma anche dal punto di vista lessicale. Il silenzio, l'omertà e l'isolamento delle donne che si sottopongono a questa procedura costituiscono la radice della persistenza di tale pratica nel corso della storia.

Il regime fascista, sebbene nella sua durezza e intransigenza non sia riuscito a fermare il fenomeno degli aborti clandestini, ha lasciato in eredità alla società italiana una forte avversione e rifiuto dell'aborto. Non è solo l'eredità fascista ad aver influenzato la società italiana in questo senso: è impossibile negare la forte influenza della Chiesa cattolica, che si è sempre pronunciata severamente contro l'aborto e contro l'uso di quasi tutte le forme di controllo delle nascite.

Inoltre, le attiviste sono chiare nel rispondere e nel chiarire la motivazione del silenzio dello Stato: si tratta di un comodo sistema di controllo demografico, nonostante le apparenze, in cui il crimine viene concepito a livello individuale, non come una questione sociale, e rimane gratuito, in quanto lo Stato non spende denaro per la ricerca sui contraccettivi già in commercio dal 1931 o per un'assistenza sanitaria adeguata.

La maggiore sensibilizzazione richiesta dalle donne si esprime e si traduce nel tempo anche in un'accusa contro la medicina: non di rado vengono citati i medici, obiettori di coscienza o meno, ai quali lo Stato ha affidato un ruolo decisionale in questioni private e personali come l'aborto; vengono additati per la loro ignoranza e la fretta con cui operano e procedono con procedure invasive come le isterectomie.

Mariarosa Dalla Costa, basandosi sulla propria esperienza, evidenzia l'isterectomia come esempio della mancanza di considerazione per il corpo femminile. Critica l'ipocrisia medica nell'effettuare l'operazione senza piena consapevolezza delle conseguenze, spesso consigliando la rimozione dell'organo riproduttivo senza informare adeguatamente le pazienti. L'attivista denuncia il tono aggressivo dei medici, che revocano il diritto di

scelta delle donne e sottolineando come esse continuino a essere oggetto piuttosto che soggetto della loro salute riproduttiva.

Attraverso il confronto presentato nell'ultimo capitolo tra il processo Pierobon a Padova nel 1973 e il processo Chevalier a Parigi nel 1972, emerge chiaramente l'impreparazione e la riluttanza dell'Italia, dello Stato, dei partiti politici e dell'opinione pubblica nel fronteggiare un problema così complesso come l'aborto clandestino.

A differenza della situazione francese, dove il processo Chevalier ha contribuito ad accelerare un cambiamento culturale e portare alla modifica della legge sull'aborto nel 1975, in Italia il processo di Pierobon è rimasto ancorato a una "vecchia logica inquisitoria".

Le donne, in varie età e contesti, richiedono con forza al governo una riconsiderazione del loro status di cittadine e del controllo sul proprio corpo. Oltre alla lotta per l'aborto, si impegnano anche per il divorzio, sfidando uno Stato che tenta di limitare i diritti acquisiti. Rivendicano il diritto di decidere autonomamente sulla maternità, contrastando l'idea imposta dalla società. La questione dell'aborto, sebbene complessa, è urgente, specialmente considerando le difficoltà di accesso ai contraccettivi.

La teoria femminista post-marxista vede la famiglia come esempio della dittatura capitalista. La procreazione non solo genera nuovi individui ma crea lavoratori per l'uso del capitalismo. Madri e mogli, con il loro lavoro quotidiano, contribuiscono attivamente alla riproduzione di nuovi lavoratori, modellando atteggiamenti e personalità per adattarsi alle esigenze del sistema economico contemporaneo.

Nonostante le leggi inizino a proteggere le donne da discriminazioni lavorative, il lavoro culturale per svincolarle dall'immagine tradizionale di casalinga e caregiver è complesso. I collettivi femministi evidenziano il parallelismo tra casa e fabbrica, incoraggiando le donne ad uscire dall'isolamento domestico e a rifiutarsi di svolgere compiti domestici come forma di lotta.

Il salario, che è il riconoscimento del lavoro da un punto di vista sociale, rappresenta un mezzo per raggiungere l'indipendenza economica delle donne al di fuori del mercato del lavoro, che non le considera se non per sottopagarle e sfruttarle ed è fondamentale per il

raggiungimento della liberazione delle donne in un momento storico in cui sono fortemente condizionate nelle loro scelte dalla dipendenza economica da un uomo.

Nella tumultuosa svolta sociale degli anni '60 e '70, la legge sul divorzio si pose come un importante strumento di emancipazione per le donne, benché ottenuta attraverso complessi negoziati politici e culturali. Mentre il clero e le influenze cattoliche conservatrici resistevano a questo cambiamento, la società civile, compresa la classe più abbiente, riconosceva la necessità di liberarsi da vincoli matrimoniali insostenibili. Tuttavia, il contesto italiano di forte influenza religiosa portava a oscillazioni nelle opinioni pubbliche, evidenti nella battaglia contro la legge sull'aborto. L'approccio ai rapporti e alla famiglia subì un radicale cambiamento, con un aumento delle richieste di separazione legale. Nonostante inizialmente fu discussa la possibilità di introdurre nella Costituzione italiana l'indissolubilità del matrimonio, la legge Fortuna nel 1970 introdusse il divorzio.

La lotta per l'emancipazione femminile, sebbene abbia ottenuto conquiste, rimane attuale e suscettibile a retrocessioni. Il diritto all'aborto, nonostante sia garantito dalla legge in Italia, è ostacolato dalla presenza diffusa di obiettori di coscienza, spingendo molte donne a viaggiare per accedervi. La scoperta di cimiteri di feti ottenuti illegalmente solleva gravi preoccupazioni sulla privacy delle donne. Contemporaneamente gruppi antiabortisti ricevono finanziamenti pubblici in alcune regioni per progetti che cercano di dissuadere le donne dall'aborto, evidenziando un attacco all'autodeterminazione femminile. Il lavoro di cura, ora amplificato dalla pandemia, assume nuove forme e riconoscimenti, con una crescente domanda di assistenti familiari. Tuttavia, molte di queste lavoratrici sono vulnerabili agli abusi, in particolare donne immigrate clandestine, esposte a sfruttamento e tratta di esseri umani. La lotta per i diritti delle donne resta pertanto un impegno costante in un mondo in evoluzione.