



Gender and Migration in Italy: State of the Art

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Introduction

As an already rich international literature emphasizes, international migrations are not «gender-neutral»: on the contrary, gender, as a social system, influences all migration processes, both for women and men.

However, recognition of the female component in studies on international migrations is not very old: it dates only from the end of the sixties. As regards the recognition of gender as a crucial factor to comprehend not only individual migratory trajectories, but also migratory contexts in general, we have studies only from the middle of the eighties. (Hondagneau, Sotelo, 2003)

It is also during that decade that female migrations, not a new phenomenon in any case¹, saw a worldwide increase and drew the attention of several international organizations (United Nations, ILO, UNHCR and OECD). Conferences, publications and recommendations multiplied, with the aim of analyzing the different aspects of the phenomenon and to make some suggestions with respect to new challenges.

The increase of female migrations appeared as one of the phenomena that globalization entails: the implication of more and more countries in the international migrations, which touch now the entire world; a new demand of female workforce from the northern countries or, in general, from post-industrial societies, i.e. from the rich countries; some radical social-economic transformations inside developing countries, that caused the destruction of local economies and the weakening of familial structures; some new wars that caused mass civilian diasporas, in particular of women and children².

Southern Europe, historically an “exodus region”, became a “reception region” in the time of globalization, in this new context of international migrations. In Italy, from the beginning of migrations, during the sixties and the eighties, gender separation stood out as one characteristic of immigration: some flows are composed only by men, such as those from North Africa and Pakistan; some others, e.g. those from Cape Verde Islands and Philippines, almost completely by women.

In this phase, the female component is constituted by women alone and with different origins (Eritrea, Philippines, Cape Verde Islands, Salvador, Somalia, Sri Lanka) arriving for domestic work in middle class families, in the larger Italian cities. At times, the female flows are quantitatively more important than the male ones, as the statistics on the female immigration to Italy, from the middle of sixties up to now, show: between 1965 and 1990, the number of female immigrants increased by 63%, while the male one increased by 58%. The introduction of legislation related to family reunion in 1990 reinforced the female component of immigration. Today women represent 49.9% of the total of foreign residents who, at the end of 2005, were 3.035.000 (data of the Caritas Statistic Report, 2006). The male/female demographic dynamics that we notice in Italy exist also in Spain and Greece, and, to a lesser extent, in Portugal.

Female immigration soon created a crop of problems about gender: how has the sexual division of the labour market changed by the arrival of these women? How do immigrants affect the structure of services, burdening themselves with the work of care and custody for the children and the elderly people, works before delegated to family mothers? What is the relation between native women and the newly arrived in respect to the issue of change in feminine roles?

¹ North American historians pointed out the importance of the women in the XIX century transoceanic migrations. See, for example, Schwartz-Seller M. (1981): *Immigrant Women*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia

² Within the reflection on migrations made by the movements against the neo-liberal globalisation, the issue of female migrations is fundamental. Moreover the phenomenon is seen often in a completely negative way respect to the condition of the woman: see, for example, the ATTAC publication, “When women run up against the globalisation”, Paris, “*Milles et une nuits*”, 2003

Some new questions arise as flows modify with the arrival of new components: Maghrebian or Bengali women for family reunion; refugee African women such as the Somalis; trafficked women from East Europe. With Muslim women, the debate on the veil – that excited France so much – arrives in Italy; with African_refugees – in particular Somalis – there is the debate on female genital mutilations.

During the eighties, immigrant women – coming from East Europe or Nigeria – take the place of natives in prostitution. This fact revived the debate on the way to understand prostitution: is it an expression of female slavery inside a patriarchal society or just work, sex work? The question reveals itself as more complex as the prostitution of immigrant women goes together with the aggravation of violence against women, through the phenomenon of traffic.

Therefore, female migration to Italy, complex as it is, provoked many questions “about gender”. The Italian literature on female migration reflects this complexity, presenting itself as a corpus of academic studies, “militant” publications of associations and NGOs, life stories (biographical narrations, conversation collections, testimonies) that represent the beginning of speech for the female immigrants themselves. Since the middle of the eighties, also the EU contributed to develop this literature, thanks to some research and “action-research” programs.³ Therefore, research reports multiplied⁴. In particular, the literature on trafficked women, thanks to European research projects⁵.

In this working paper, we will present an analysis of the rich and heterogeneous literature on female immigration to Italy, both Italian and international⁶, trying to clarify gender problems that migrations present today, not only to immigrant women but also to all women, not only in Italy but also in the entire world.

1. Gender and migration

As Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo points out, referring to the international literature on female migrations and gender-migration, we can distinguish three phases. We can define the first phase, corresponding to the seventies and to the beginning of the eighties, as the “women and migration” phase: « *This early phase of research sought to remedy the exclusion of women subjects from immigration research and to counter sexist as well as androcentric biases.* » (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003, p5). This already represents an important step, given the concealment of women in studies on migratory processes, but the majority of studies do not analyze how gender determines the whole spectrum of social relations that organize immigration and social institutions, in departure countries as well as in arriving countries; in other terms, how gender, as social system, shapes migratory processes for everyone, men and women. The studies of this period either add women as a variable inside migratory processes or present some ethnographic description of immigrant women in different contexts. Nevertheless, we need to remember a special number of the *International Migration Review* from 1984, dedicated to female migrations, which is in some way the threshold between first and second phase.

In the second phase, correspondent to the eighties and to the beginning of the nineties, gender is recognized as a set of social practices that shape and are shaped by migration. « *Prompted in part by the disruption of the universal category of « women » in feminist scholarship, by heightened awareness of the intersectionality of race, class and gender relations, by the observation that men*

³ Both the Social Affairs and the Justice and Home Affairs General Directions of the European Commission promoted research-action on migration, racism and discrimination.

⁴ The European Commission has become an important source of financing both for Universities and NGOs in this field.

⁵ Since the early nineties the European Commission promoted some specific programs on violence against women and trafficking, as the Daphne and the Stop, funded by the Justice and Home Affairs General Direction.

⁶ As we will see there is an important Anglo-Saxon literature concerning the female immigration in Italy, starting from the works of Jacqueline Andall (1998, 2000, 2003).

possess, display and enact a variety of masculinities, and by the recognition of the fluidity of gender relations, this research focused on two aspects: the gendering of migration patterns and how migration reconfigures new systems of gender inequality for women and men. » (Hondagneau-Sotelo, 2003, p 7).

It is in the eighties that race-gender-class became a sort of “trinity formula” to interpret migratory processes and the positions of different migrants. This approach reveals itself extremely useful within an international context, where the sexual division of work determines the demand of work and migration, where women of the entire world emigrate towards the societies of the rich world (we can call them post industrial societies, from a point of view of social-economic characteristics) to be nurses, domestic servants and « *entertainers* », euphemism for sex workers or prostitutes.

The third phase, the current one, looks at gender as a key element of immigration. « *In this current phase, research is beginning to look at the extent to which gender permeates a variety of practices, identities and institutions implicated in immigration.* » (Hondagneau-Sotelo, 2003, p 9).

Today, the way in which inclusion in work world, globalization, religious practices and values, ethnic economy, citizenship, sexuality and ethnic identity, are called into question, shows how gender is incorporated in a multiplicity of daily practices and economic and political structures. Therefore the increasing importance of gender inside research on international migrations correspond to the current migratory context: Saskia Sassen suggests that a new “counter geography” of globalization is in process, and that is in part constituted by not authorized movements of women, domestic servants, sexual workers, labourers in informal economy... « *Sassen’s provocatively work is always stimulating, and we can certainly think of a myriad of occupations in post-industrial urban societies now almost wholly dependent on the deliberate recruitment of foreign-born women. In our post-industrial service economies, work that native-born women once performed free is now purchased in the global marketplace.* » (Hondagneau-Sotelo, 2003, p 10)

These three phases, in research pertaining to women and migration as well as to gender and migration, have interested international literature in general. However, in the case of Italy, there has been a light time-lag respect to international literature on gender and migration. First phase – a literature essentially descriptive – ended at the beginning of the nineties; the attention “face to face” to articulation between migration and gender dates from the nineties, following the meeting among the movement of Italian women and the organizations of immigrant women. Last phase, that is to say the taking into account of gender as a key element of immigration, just began.

2. Female migrations towards Italy and the Mediterranean model

The first studies on immigration in Italy date from the eighties: regardless of the subject of reference (economy, sociology or anthropology) or the economic or journalistic character, they are in general of descriptive nature. Primarily it is necessary to understand what is passing. In the first collection of research papers on the issue (Sergi, 1986, Sergi Carchedi, 1991), researchers exert to present the multiple facets of the new phenomenon.

Among these multiple facets, the presence of immigrant women, arrived alone for work reasons, immediately appeared as one of the particular characters of Italian migratory model, which entail quite soon some works on this migratory component.

This female presence – concentrated in domestic work – enable to clarify economic dynamics that provoked immigration in a country where unemployment is outstanding, in particular in some regions (Venturini, 1990). The economic inclusion of new arrivals actually took place inside some “niche” of the work market, neglected by the Italians (men and women), as services, especially services to the person, agriculture, fishing and construction.

Indeed the transition of Italy and, in general, of Mediterranean countries, from emigration to immigration regions⁷, did not follow the scheme of post-colonial or temporary migrations that touched north European countries. Many researchers point out that, in the South of Europe, it appeared a “new migratory model”, different from the one that featured the North of Europe, before the introduction of restriction policies on work immigration during the seventies (Macioti and Pugliese, 1991 ; King, 2001).

In the Mediterranean model, law or policies do not manage migration, but this takes place in a spontaneous way, in an irregular form, attracted by some niche of work within informal economy. Domestic work represents a niche where the demand of immigrant female workforce is increasing. Furthermore, it represents a niche of work relatively stable, in respect to precarious works available for men in agriculture, fishing and construction. Thus the presence of flows of women that come alone, to be full time domestic servants in homes, constitute one feature of immigration towards Italy and, more in general, an element of Mediterranean model.

Moreover, work demand dynamics provoke an overlap between gender and ethnic separation: some national groups are composed entirely, or almost entirely, by women, as those from Cape Verde or the Philippines, while others national groups, as those from Senegal or Morocco, are constituted only by men. A more balanced link between men and women within each ethnic group will be achieved only after the introduction of the right to family reunion in Italian legislation, which is to say after 1990.

3. One thousand and one women: plurality of subjects, of voices, behaviours...

Besides the economic analysis on the work of immigrant females, at the end of the eighties, some studies that investigate life conditions of these women have been published. Most of these works – academic researches as well as NGOs or others institutions’ reports – are also quite descriptive. The approaches that predominate in these works refer to the triple oppression and to the passage from tradition to modernity. Gender and ethnicity as well as occupation in domestic work, deprived of social recognition, make immigrant women subdued to a triple marginality: social, economical and cultural. As Giovanna Vicarelli writes in 1994, this image had “*an outstanding emotional and conceptual impact, affecting interests and researches*”. However, these same researches: “*in their progress, ended up bringing it into question.*” (Vicarelli, 1994)

Actually, as one goes along with the increasing of studies, the image of immigrant women as victim is putted back into question. The crucial point to analyze female immigration to Italy is not the triple oppression, but taking into account a great plurality of situations – despite common inclusion in domestic work – depending on different origins, migratory trajectories and the territorial contexts of reception.

Therefore the first studies about female immigration in Italy (Favaro and Bordogna, 1991, Campani, 1991, Crisantino, 1992) were valuable because they highlighted the fact that female immigration to Italy is not at all homogeneous.

One survey of Favaro and Bordogna (1991), researchers from Milan, shows the specificities of analyzed groups (Eritrean, Egyptian, Chinese) and the differences among settlement modalities depending on origins, but also on the different Italian cities. In one of the first works on immigration in Italy, comparing immigration between the Cape Verde women and the Philippines women, I tried also to conceptualize the specificities of migratory chains managed by women (Campani, 1991). The study of Amelia Crisantino (1992) on the immigrant women in Palermo, Sicily, explains the life of different immigrant women, giving them a voice through some conversations.

⁷ This transition took place between the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, depending on the countries

The diversity of origins affects trajectories, strategies and migratory projects. The Philippines have different migratory projects compared to the Cape Verdians: the ones invest in consumer goods for the house or make some small productive investments; the others enable some big families to live. However, the diversification of origins affects also reception: a domestic woman from the Philippines is paid more than an Eritrean or Cape Verdian, that are women “di colore” (“of colour”).

Some other diversification elements have to be considered as well: besides women that come alone to work, some other typologies begin to exist. For example Chinese women – of which Favaro and Bordogna study speaks – that come to Italy as part of one family enterprise project, and Tunisian women, that come with their fisher husbands to the villages of Sicily.

The renunciation of an homologated image, immigrant women victim of triple oppression, for a much more complex vision, is the conclusion to which the researchers on this subject will arrive throughout the course of two important occasions of meeting: the seminar – pioneer in Italy – *The thousand and one woman*, organized by the city of Milan in 1990⁸ and the Conference organised in Ancona by Giovanna Vicarelli in 1993: “*Cittadine del mondo. Donne migranti tra identità e mutamento*” («*Citizens of the world. Migrant women between identity and change* »).

In the symposium of Milan, *Le Mille e una donna*, as well as in the symposium of Ancona, all researchers that began to write on the issue had been invited – practically all women – along with some social workers that had to do with this new public, some manager of NGOs, some delegates of local authorities and immigrant women, that started to raise their voice.

In the introduction of the book *Le mani invisibili, Invisible hands*, where are gathered the speeches presented in the symposium, Giovanna Vicarelli insists on “*the plurality of subjects, voices, behaviours about a variety of situations hardly homologable among them, that cannot be reduced to some biased schemes.*” (Vicarelli, 1994, p. 7)

4. From the triple oppression to the immigrant women as active subjects

It appeared clear, analyzing the works presented at the convention in Ancona, that the articulation among gender, ethnos and class is not yet the dominant methodological approach in the research on female immigration. Gender, ethnos and class appear just under the pattern of triple oppression.

Despite efforts made in order to give visibility to immigrant women and subvert stereotypes, the approaches utilized are often still inspired by the dichotomy tradition-modernity, opposing the modern and emancipated with the traditional and repressive. Even Tognetti and Favaro use, for example, the expression “*the women of ‘tradition’ observe the women of modernity*” (1991).

Several researches, accomplished in the countries of older immigration, showed how much ambiguous is this dichotomous and evolutionary approach. Thinking that to concepts of tradition and modernity would correspond some opposite behaviours of subordination and emancipation, does not take into account the large diversification of the immigrant population and the complexity of the situation in which are immigrant women (diversification and complexity that the studies about immigrant women in Italy highlighted anyway). For example the realisation of a migratory project with a social achievement, asks for the mobilisation of “traditional” resources, such as the preservation of networks based on family links or endogamic practices...Insisting on the tradition-modernity evolutionary approach means that immigrants have to pass from one stage to the other, practically confusing the notion of integration with the one of assimilation, whereas they exist different dimensions of integration: economic, social, cultural...

The studies presented in Ancone refuse, of course, to catalogue all immigrant women as women of tradition and consider that most of the immigrant women are on an emancipation process through

⁸ To the symposium participated, among others, Graziella Favaro, Mara Tognetti Bordogna, Laura Balbo, Ainom Marikos (the author of this article was a speaker as well) See the publication, today difficult to find : Comune di Milano, *Le Mille e una Donna*, 1990.

migration. Actually, they insist on their “strength”, their entrepreneurship, they focus the possibilities of empowerment, all topics that we will find again in future. Nevertheless, they do not arrive, in this stage, to leave the “tradition-modernity” opposition, since they outline an implicit opposition between Italian (or European, western) women representing the modernity and “the others”, the immigrant women.

Giovanna Vicarelli suggests how to avoid falling into the trap of ‘tradition vs. modernity’ and ‘Italian modern women vs. immigrant traditional women’. She states that immigrants women are active subjects, able to trace their own trajectories between two worlds, two cultures: *“the immigrants women themselves are autonomous and able to develop an identity, which is not the one of their past but neither the one that western women want; immigrants women themselves take a position in relation to migratory processes, to the ways of inclusion inside host societies, but above all to the collocation between their culture and the one, in transformation, of host countries”* (1994, p.9)

The propositions of Vicarelli are interesting, however the fact remains that in the symposium of Ancona, mostly Italian researchers spoke about immigrants and for immigrants. It is necessary to wait for the beginning of the speech by immigrant women in the associations, in order to arrive to a new conceptualization of female migration in Italy, and to a new articulation between migration and gender.

5. Immigrant women and Italian women: the question of emancipation

The question of the relation between immigrant women and Italian women, being they researchers, political activists or just house owners (eventually employers of immigrant domestic workers), starts to be posed, indeed, at the beginning of the eighties. In the studies above mentioned of Amelia Crisantino (1992) on the immigrant women in Palermo, Sicily, one of the interviewed women actually asks to Crisantino herself how much she will earn, selling a book that narrate the story of the women underprivileged in respect to her. The asymmetry in the relations of power among the ones and the others is thus settled.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the eighties, the feminist movement is quite silent about female migrations. The Italian feminists receive the echo of the debates that take place in the US and Canada about “Black Feminism”, but they have difficulties to confront themselves with immigrant women. Among the first feminists to query about that, Anna Picciolini addresses directly the point of emancipation and its meaning for immigrant women. She writes: *“propose to the immigrant women the western woman and her path towards the emancipation, as an absolute and positive model, means negate all the discussions about the value of difference and the multiculturalism.”* (1991, Picciolini, p. 89)

Indeed the problem goes much beyond the confrontation western women-non western women, on the question about the meaning of emancipation. The issue that it raises is even the possibility of emancipation, with respect to migration: is it possible to think about migration as an emancipation factor when immigrant women are locked in the houses and confined to domestic works? Immediately the relation between immigrant women and Italian women arise as a contradiction, in front of the feminist perspective on a common fight, of all the women, to change the world. Which common perspectives are possible, since immigrant women work mostly inside the Italian women homes, providing the domestic works that Italian women do not want make anymore, as they choose to work outside the house? If the Italian women and the immigrant women are overlapped in forms of mutual dependence, the emancipation of the ones entailing the exploitation of the others, how is it possible to find a common field of understanding, even of fight?

In an article of 1993, published in the *Oxford Encyclopédie des Migrations*, directed by Robert Cohen, I was questioning about the condition of the immigrant women working in the domestic sector, with respect to possible emancipation trajectories. In this article, I was trying to keep an optimistic view, highlighting the complexity of the women strategies for the success of their migratory project, relying

on both the investments in the origin countries, notably thanks to the important differentials of salary, and the possibilities of cultural promotion in the host countries.

However, this optimistic vision was based on a limited number of cases, in particular of Philippine women, which were gaining a guiding role in the families of origin thanks to the money earned. Moreover, in relation to the precarious situation of the immigrant man, domestic work appeared relatively stable, guaranteeing continuity about the stay in Italy. Today I have a less optimistic idea about the possibility of emancipation of the migratory experience in the Italian situation, whereas the number of immigrant women in domestic work keeps raising and the works denouncing the many forms of exploitation, and the multiple sufferings of this condition, are increasing.

Finally, at the beginning of the nineties, the problems that rise on the relation between gender and migration, in the Italian context, start to be considered. The relation between “western” women and immigrant women is not expressed only about the difference between the models of possible emancipation (western and non-western). This relation involves also a reflection on the sexual division of work and the future of the domestic work. What does it mean, in a gender perspective, the fact that qualified female work, outside the house, that represent for women a possibility of emancipation, could exist at the cost of the immigrant women relegation to the care of children and elderly people? In other terms, immigrant women are not perhaps solving a gender contradiction, reducing the potential conflict between men and women, inside the families, when the Italian women access to a career? As Giovanna Vicarelli writes in 1994 : “*The work of immigrant women seems able to solve social contradictions and imbalances typical of our western contemporary societies.*” (Vicarelli, 1994, p.9)

Even if she did not say it explicitly, the articulation among gender, ethnos and class implicate this issue.

6. The multiple forms of domestic work: from « colf »⁹ to « badanti »¹⁰

In 2004 the publishing house Feltrinelli published a book edited by two American sociologists, Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Donne globali*, the Italian translation of “Global Woman”. The book is a collection of fourteen studies prepared by experts from different world regions, about relations among global markets, female migrations and new forms of exploitation. The book denounces the effects of globalisation on the female work and in particular, on some types of occupation that western women no longer wish to do: the domestic work, the care of old people and the care of children. Those works are performed by women who left their own children at home, trying to guarantee them a better future. Women often exploited by others women. It’s not only a matter of social-professional exploitation though.

The authors of the text speak about a misuse of feelings, of the emotional sphere. The “colf” and “badanti” are forced to cross the continents, coming here to care about our elderly people and our children, causing deep emotional voids in their families. The globalisation forced these women to exchange their profound familiar links with some meagre salaries and works little known, but necessary to the western, modern and emancipated women.

The *Global woman* is published in Italy ten years after the symposium of Ancona and the reflections made, by Anna Picciolini and the same author of this article, on the immigrant women conditions and the relations between them and the Italian women. Is that possible to think about migration as an

⁹ Colf: familiar co-worker, domestic, normally used for immigrant women who work in families.

¹⁰ Badanti: from the verb ‘badare’, look after, normally used for immigrant women who are taking care of elderly people.

emancipation factor when the immigrant women are locked in the houses and confined to the domestic works and are suffering because of the separation from their own family?

During these ten years, the demand of domestic work to the immigrant women in Italy continues to rise constantly: in fact, the population ageing create a new demand. Today the immigrant women that come to Italy for the domestic work are not only the “colf”, who take charge of the families and take care for the cooking and the children, but the “badanti”, as you call them now, who care for the elderly people. The new female migratory flows, arriving, after 1989 and the Berlin wall fall, from East Europe and Balkans, are destined to this task. The women from Maghreb begin to arrive in Italy also.

The studies on the subject multiply: the researchers want to understand why there is this increasing demand for domestic work, not only in Italy but also in all South Europe and in general in all the post industrial societies. Several studies of South Europe researchers (men and women), such as the Italian sociologist Laura Balbo (1994) or the Spanish Sonia Parella Rubio (2000), but also Anglo-Saxons such as Jacqueline Andall (2000, 2002), tried to relate a complex set of economic, social and demographic factors.

Among these factors, it is necessary to consider the changes concerning the family: the entry in the work world of women belonging to generations born after the war, also consequence of the schooling increase, and the low birth rate. The protagonists of these changes have been the women, when the division of tasks in the family changed a little. As Laura Balbo (1994) says it so well, the man yet continues to maintain his exclusive participation to the labour market, whereas the woman is obligated to accomplish with a double day time, with organisation logics incompatible among them, and suffers from psychological stress that this situation provokes, known as “double presence”. Even if the new male generations are a little more conscious that they have to collaborate in the home work, their attitude is limited to give just single helps and the women are still who indicate which are the tasks to do and how they have to be accomplished. *“Therefore we can conclude that the greater participation of the woman in the productive sphere, during last years, requires a reduction of her time presence at home, without having a comparable reduction of the domestic tasks.”* (Sonia Parella Rubio, 2000, p. 282)

Among the domestic tasks that the women have to carry out, the care of old people increasingly became one of the most important, given the population ageing. In a country such as Italy, where the welfare state is always been too poor regarding the attention to the children and elderly people, the population ageing involved some new heavy responsibilities for the families and the women.

Jacqueline Andall (1998, 2000) considers that South Europe governments, so the Italian one also, were not able to adapt the welfare services to the new situation. She also reckons that women movements failed in the change of traditional gender division regarding the domestic work. As result, the worker women prefer to pay for the care of children and old people, but these tasks are still seen as exclusively female tasks. As Women’s Lobby wrote: *“In this patriarchal context, many european families consider the underpaid and undeclared work of immigrants women as a solution to have both a professional and a familiar life.”* (Women’s Lobby, 2004).

In her work, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The politics of Black Women in Italy*, published in 2000, Jacqueline Andall raise an issue on the “solution” found by the Italian women to conciliate the work outside home and the family, through the work of immigrant women. She actually examines the relations among immigrant women and domestic trade union, API-COLF, along with the activities of the joint association, with Italian and immigrants women, Libere Insieme (Free Together).

This “solution” seems contradictory, with a women emancipation perspective in general, as the conditions in all kind of domestic works are precarious and uneasy. The associations and trade unions researches and reports emphasize the fact that the work contracts, when they exist, are rarely

respected. A Filipino Women's Council and No.di (Nostrì Diritti-Our Rights) study¹¹ shows that the condition of irregular immigrant women – i.e. without work permit – makes work conditions even harder. The irregular immigrant women situation appear more and more the central point, given that currently, in Italy, only one every four “badanti” has a regular contract, the others three working illegally (Italian minister Rosi Bindi declaration, march 2007)

7. Between analytical approach and denunciation of exploitation

About « badanti », there is by now a plentiful literature. Without renouncing to the criticism on the situation, one part of this literature is analytical while another part denounces the exploitation, in the wake of the Global Women book, above mentioned.

The analytical literature queries about the women life conditions as well as the changes happened inside the Italian families and in the welfare system. Mara Tognetti (2004) tries exactly to look at both the immigrant women life condition and the modifications in the social services system. She reminds that “badanti”, coming today in particular from East Europe, have in general a high level of studies and some professional experiences highly qualified (teachers, engineers, even doctors). Tognetti shows the “de-qualification process” the immigrant women undergo arriving in Italy, since their professional experience and their diplomas are not recognized.

In spite of their often high qualifications, the “badanti”, as well as the “colf”, rarely manage to get away from domestic work segregation, given the Italian labour market and the network through which the inclusion in this market is made. The concept of inclusion is very important to understand the different migratory components in the Italian labour market: in the case of “badanti” is a matter of women friends' network, which works as a place of information exchange and mediation with the Italian families needing their work.

One part of “badanti” has a migratory project limited in the time: earn a certain amount of money and come back, paying the studies of the children etc...Others on the contrary develop some integration strategies in Italy, solicited by meeting with Italian men, engagements or marriages. In this case, they quickly learn the Italian language and follow some professional courses. Tognetti also analyse the question of the relation among the “badanti” work, the Italian family and welfare system transformation, considering all the process an “innovation” in relation to the traditional welfare system.

Some others works aim to denounce the exploitation of “colf” and “badanti” on the part of the Italian families, composed by “women home-obsessive” and “spoiled children” (Morini, C. 2003).

These “committed” works, referring to the anti-globalisation and anti-racist movements, have the merit of highlight the execrable aspects of exploitation, concerning the migrants, but they are affected by an ideology often considered let off by the sociological, anthropological and economical analysis. So in the foreword of the book “La serva serve. Le nuove forzate del lavoro domestico”, of Cristina Morini (2001), we read: *“Who are the new forced by the domestic work? Who take care about the old people abandoned by their families? Who wash the dirty clothes of the women home-obsessive? Who take care about the spoilt children that have already everything? They are the “colf”, the nurses, the baby sitters immigrated from far away countries, and arrived in Italy, to enter inside the golden world of the western work.”* It is quite important to denounce an exploitation system, and to show the contradiction between the immigrant and the Italian women about the domestic work. Nevertheless, Morini gives a quite partial representation of the complex changing processes that happened in the Italian families¹², and accusing more the individuals than the lacks of welfare system.

¹¹ It is an immigrant and Italian women association.

¹² Even more pitiful the foreword of Salvatore Palidda, that seems to ignore all the Italian (and international) literature about female migrations or confuse a certain type of xenophobic newspapers and the sociologic production : « Almost all the journalistic, and also sociologic, descriptions of immigration in Italy gave credit to

8. The family reunion and the appearance of the immigrant women from the Maghreb and Muslim women in the Italian context. “I do not bite”

Between 1994 and today, with the growth of the domestic work demand, the diversification among the female immigration components increases too. We said that at the beginning of the migration, a marked sexual division crossed the groups, women representing up to 70-90% of some national groups (Philippines, Cape Verdeans) and men some others (Senegalese and Moroccan). With the introduction of a new legislation, from 1990 the family reunion become possible, and this allow some immigrant groups, in which the men arrived first, to let come their wives. Among the groups using more the family reunion, there are the Moroccan immigrants. Therefore, the women from Maghreb begin to appear in the Italian literature on the migrations.

The women from Maghreb are at the beginning classified as “le mogli” (the wives), who follow the husband and rarely enter the labour market (de Filippo, 1994); we speak of a migratory “traditional” model, which repeat some schemes experimented in North Europe. The woman from Maghreb is also the Muslim woman, towards which appears, more or less explicitly, the prejudice of a subordination condition.

However, the stereotyped image of the woman from Maghreb – the “migrant partner” who remains confined to the urban peripheries – break in the complexity of the situation that researchers find in the Italian context. In her first works about this public, Maria Immacolata Maciotti (1999) argues that Muslim women go out rarely alone without husband, following the diktat of the tradition, but she recognizes them also a reach associative life among women. The forms of the associative life are, on the other hand, very different.

Some associations have, at their origin, some mosque prayer groups, as Ruba Salih (2001, 2003), a Palestinian who grew up in Italy and prepared his Ph.D. in England with a thesis on the Moroccan women in Italy, shows. Salih remarks how the immigrant women who get together in the mosques, manage to establish some networks of transnational solidarity focusing on the Muslim identity. Some others researchers emphasize the fact that the Muslim women approach to the religion can be strong but it is less dogmatic than the one of the men. The Islam of the women would be a spiritual and inner Islam (Russo-Krauss, 2002).

The Muslim women participate to another type of association also, the mixed and non-religious associations. Actually, some women from Maghreb created one of the most interesting joint associations in Italy, with immigrant and Italian women together, the ALMA TERRA/ALMA MATER of Turin. “*Born with the idea to give visibility to the immigrant women, the centre tried to offer them some aggregation points and some opportunities to give value to their experiences.*” (Russo-Kraus, 2002) However, the typologies of women from Maghreb, and Muslim women in general, who participate to this type of association could be defined as “less traditional”. While at the start the majority of women from Maghreb arrived in Italy with the family reunion, since the end of the eighties, however, the researchers noted the presence of women arrived on their own, widows, divorced, unmarried, often breaking up with the family environment in the country of origin. These women had little access to the traditional relatives’ network or to an associative life with the male compatriots. Therefore, they participated to the mixed association, looking for a relation with the Italian women.

the idea that one important part of this ‘phenomenon’ for the first time in the history would be constituted by women. Philippines in particular, but now also Nigerians, Albanians or women from the East countries, that would come here with the ‘vocation’ to do the ‘colf’ or with the one to do... ‘prostitutes’ (for this we admit even that they have been forced). In other terms, even more than for the men, the dominant idea in the migrant description would be that one of a ‘poor unfortunate’, that cannot do anything more than these two works, almost a sort of an ‘under-human’ coming from the barbarian worlds and so not able to understand the modernity and all the more the post-modernity.” We would like to know to which sociological works Pallidda refers.

Thus, the immigration of women from Maghreb towards Italy is not at all homogeneous. Moreover, the literature insists a lot on the typology of the women alone, which come to Italy at the same time because of the work and because of their difficult position in the society of origin. This typology contradicts the passive image of the woman from Maghreb and the Muslim woman. Several books gather their life histories; we choose a small selection about those: the Franca Balsamo book, « *Da una sponda all'altra del Mediterraneo: donne immigrate e maternità* », (From one shore of the Mediterranean to the other) published in 1997 in Turin¹³ by the publishing house L'Harmattan; the book of Maria Immacolata Maciotti, « *La solitudine e il coraggio* », which title is quite explicite: "The solitude and the courage"; my book, « *Perché siamo musulmane* » (Because we are Muslim women), published by Guerini, Milan, in 2003 and finally « *Io non mordo* » (I do not bite), Finucci Gallo, published by Alberto Perdisa, Bologna (2005).

In all these books, the method used is the life histories one, with the declared purpose to make of migrants the protagonists of the process. In the last mentioned book, *Io non mordo*, the women tell about themselves and their histories. This book is on the crossroad of an academic and a testimonial literature, spread over in Italy since the middle of the nineties. Actually, several publishers begin to publish the life narrations of the immigrant women, a kind of "memoirs" between the literary and the sociologic.

Among the most known texts, we remind « *So de uma ila de Cabo Verde* » (I am of a Cape Verde island), of Maria Lourdes Jesus, an old Cape Verdian domestic became later a journalist in RAI, published by the publisher house Sinnos.

This beginning of speech, this claim of memory, this critic glance on the experience about the interaction with the Italian society, correspond also to a stronger commitment of the immigrant women to the associative life and to the social movements, in the confrontation, sometimes hard, with the Italian women.

Finally, to conclude the work regarding the women from Maghreb and Muslim women in general, we can say that the debate about the veil has not raised in Italy the same emotional impact as in France. It has, however, become part of the debate about the contrast Western Woman vs. Muslim Woman, especially after the 11th of September. Recently, the fight against the veil has become the flag of an activist woman of the right-wing party, Alleanza Nazionale (post-fascists), Daniela Santanché, who has also written a book on the topic. However, the superficiality of the way in which the issue is dealt is so evident that the book this lady has written doesn't have its place in a State of the art –being nothing else than a political pamphlet.

9. The associative life and the relation with Italian women. Immigrant women and the movement of Italian women.

We saw several studies consider as problematic the relation between Italian women and immigrant women, seen the position in the labour market of the latter. To elaborate on the matter some works consider the relation between the Italian women movement and the immigrant women, actually their associative structures. A researcher with an external view on the situation (as she is not Italian), the English Jacqueline Andall, in her work, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The politics of Black Women in Italy*, published in 2000, already mentioned, defies the Italian women movement to consider finally the impact of the immigrant women work on the fight for the woman's liberation.

In the same wake, Heater Merrill (2001, 2004) studies the relation between Italian feminists and immigrant women, inside one of the first joint association, the Alma Mater of Turin, which Merrill reckons as one pioneering and successful example of the antiracist militancy.

¹³ Turin is moreover the town with one of the greater concentration of immigrants from Maghreb in Italy.

The most complete study on this subject is however, the recent work of Wendy Pojman, *Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy*, (2006) the most comprehensive research on the relation between Italian feminism and the migration, the Italian feminists and the immigrant women. This analysis gives the speech to the immigrant women who are associations' leaders, taking into account, in their discussions, the complex relation with the Italian women movements. It suggests the possible development of a multicultural feminism, through the interaction with the Italian women associations and the immigrant women ones.

The lucidity Wendy Pojman demonstrates, is made possible probably thanks to her external point of view: she is not too much involved in the Italian feminist movement, that is deeply torn between a feminism of socialist and communist tradition, relying on the emancipation through the work and the equal opportunities, and a feminism of difference, with philosophic and psychoanalytic inspiration. Wendy Pojman ascribe exactly to this division the difficulty that Italian feminists, but also the researchers often influenced by feminism, had to recognize the importance of the immigrant women in Italy, with regard to the gender relations in the Italian society.

Split among them, the feminists have difficulties to find common positions in the face of Islam, the veil, the prostitution, the traffic and the strategies about female genital mutilations, the topics that female immigration carried to Italy.

Pojman is also one of the first women researchers who offer a general vision, based on an important work on field, about the formation and growth of autonomous immigrant women associations as well as about the birth of multicultural associations, with Italian and immigrant women, such as *Alma Mater*, *NoDi*, *Trame di terra*, *Nosotras*. She shows also the conflict points and the affinities between immigrant and Italian women.

Wendy Pojman raises an extremely interesting question: what is the impact of migration to feminism in the perspective of globalization and the construction of theories and practices for a multicultural feminism? "*For multicultural feminism to succeed, native feminists will have to turn to migrant women. They will have to confront the meanings and implications of women on the move to the merging of first and third world feminism.*" (p. 162)

The Wendy Pojman book represents an important contribution towards the direction of thinking a multicultural feminism.

10. The trafficking and the prostitution

We dedicate last paragraph of our work to the literature regarding the issue of "trafficking in human beings", focusing especially trafficking in women", and prostitution of immigrant women.

The connection between female immigration and prostitution dates from the nineties. In this period, in Italy, a specific form of irregular migration appears: the women traffic for sexual exploitation. Transnational criminal networks – from Nigeria, Latin America, South East Asia, control this phenomenon, linked also to the socio-economic transformations that take place in the East Europe and in the Balkans, of which one of the consequences, is the feminization of the emigration.

The international organizations fighting against trafficking, such as IOM, the International Organization for Migration, published the first works dedicated to the phenomenon. On its side, the European Commission funds some researches in the framework of a specific program, the Daphne program, committed to fight violence and exploitation against women and children. Actually, the first book dedicated to the question of traffic, *I colori della notte*, written by Francesco Carchedi, Giovanni Mottura, Anna Picciolini and Giovanna Campani, and published by Franco Angeli in 1998, is made to present to the public the results of a Daphne project. The book, that claims to be above all descriptive, cannot avoid however to take into account the debate about prostitution, divided between abolitionists

and who is in favour of the regulation (that is to say between who, in reality, would like a penalization for the clients and who would like the prostitution as a work).

The issue of trafficking and foreign prostitution makes the headlines of newspapers and reviews, which find an interesting occasion to sell more showing photos of naked or half-naked women on the covers. The result is that, in the public opinion perception, the immigrant woman image passes from the domestic (*la serva*) to the prostitute. The immigrant women are also accused to multiply the offer on the sex market.

We cannot avoid to think that the reach literature existing today in Italy on trafficking and prostitution, answered also to a seeking of visibility on a “fashion subject”, more in fashion for example than the old immigrant women without retirement pensions (which represent the same number of the prostitutes but without one study on it...). We have to notice also that, while for the immigrant women literature in general almost only women are interested, on this issue the works of men experts are numerous.

We cannot either stop us from observing the inefficacy of all the literature – of which one part claim to be militant – in the face of a phenomenon that continues to rage as before. The NGOs of course have an instrument to help the victims of trafficking to leave the prostitution, the article 18, which gives a permit of stay to the women who want to come out and address the police or the NGOs. Who rescues a life rescues the entire world: the article 18 is a conquest. It is necessary anyway recognize that the number of women who benefit of this is quite limited.

Therefore, here is a not exhaustive list of works on the topic of trafficking and prostitution slavery. Emanuela Abbatecola is authour of a book on the issue, *Donne al margine. La prostituzione straniera a Genova* (2003). She critics in one article the experiences of work of ex-prostitutes immigrant women who, using the article 18, entered in some programs of social protection. According to Abbatecola, the programs, which offer to the women works such as domestic work or assistance to old or sick people, cannot answer to the necessities of ex-prostitutes women who, broken down in their personal identity, would need build up them again in some work with strong social identity.

There are many works describing the supporting measures to ex prostitutes carried out by NGOs, such as for example those of Da Pra Pocchiesa M., Grosso L. (A cura di), *Prostitute, prostitute, clienti. Che fare? Fenomeno della prostituzione e della tratta degli esseri umani* (II) Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Torino 2001, and Mirta Da Pra Pocchiesa, Maria Teresa Tavassi, *Prostituzione e tratta delle persone. Italia delle opportunità. 2/A* (L') Valle d'Aosta Piemonte Liguria in *Pagine: il sociale da fare e pensare*, n. 1 (2002), pp. 1-80.

Others works, on the contrary, describe the phenomenon of the prostitution and the articulation between prostitution and immigration in an Italian perspective, such as Norzi E. Vergano C. *Corpi a tratta. Mercato della nuova prostituzione in Italia* (II) Edizioni La Meridiana, 2003, Molfetta (BA) or A cura di Claudio Donadel, E. Raffaello Martini *La prostituzione invisibile* Regione Emilia Romagna, 2005, [s.l.], 1a ed., pp. 202. The European and global perspective is developed by Manzini P. *Mercato delle donne* (II) *Prostituzione, tratta e sfruttamento* Donzelli, Roma 2002, pp. 128

Some specific studies try to analyse some parts of the phenomenon, such as Carchedi F,(2004) that shows the trajectories diversification of prostitutes, Albanian, Romanian and Moldovan in *Prostituzione migrante e donne trafficate. Caso delle donne albanesi, moldave e rumene* (II) Franco Angeli 2004, Milano (I edizione), pp. 217.

There are also some authors interested in the prostitutes' social representation and in the ambiguous play between the representation and the identity, speaking of the African sexuality such as the ethnopsychiatrist Beneduce R. (2003), who studies the immigrants' psychological problems. Adarabioyo I., cultural mediator, gathers some life histories of Nigerian prostitutes in *Coraggio di Grace* (II). *Donne nigeriane dalla prostituzione alla libertà* Prospettiva, 2003, Roma (I edizione), pp. 243

From this abundant literature, we can deduce the interest that the phenomenon aroused in Italy. Actually, the question of the foreign women prostitution refers once again to the role of immigrant women in Italian society, the one of “fills the voids” created because of the social transformations of which the Italian women had been protagonists. As Maurizio Ambrosini writes in the foreword of the Emanuela Abatecola’s book *“Something analogous to what happens in the daylight, with the domestic work of “colf” and the immigrant familiar assistants, it happens also in the black of streets with the buying of paid sexual services. Also in this case, the reach western demand seems in need to search elsewhere some performances that hide social relations, which cannot be proposed anymore to the native women”*.

Nevertheless, Ambrosini admits that the analogy between domestic work and prostitution is not completely evident. In fact ethnic specialisation in the prostitution market shows that there is not a dichotomy western women-non western women, as the prostitutes come mostly from East Europe, while the Muslim women are not affected or little affected by the trafficking. This would deserve a deeper study, in which the literature on the subject, even if quite reach, is not yet involved.

Conclusions

From the analysis on the literature concerning the female immigration in Italy, comes out a very complex framework: beside the confinement in a type of work, the domestic one, deprived of social recognition, there are some diversified trajectories, with spaces of subjectivity that claim for a presence and a point of view on the gender relations. It is at least what appears from some works, such as those that gather the life histories of women from Maghreb and Muslim women, or the Wendy Pojman’s research, who gives also the speech to the immigrant women.

The fact remains that the arriving of immigrant women raised some questions about the gender roles, which remained without answer, from the viewpoint of politics and movement’s action as well as from the scientific analysis one. The fact remains that there is a social acceptance about the reality that one part of domestic occupations, made by Italian women for free in the past, is today assigned to others women, exploited in their salaries and deprived of their family affection; that this process is not seen as a menace to the woman condition in general, for which anyway presents some stains; that the fight for a more equitable domestic tasks sharing between men and women marks time in a country where the transformations in the femininity and masculinity have been already enormous; the fact remains that the socio-educative services decrease, with the ideological acceptance of privatization and better functioning of the free market, hardly opposed by a social discourse, that has no appropriate financial means.

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