

Italian Feminisms

In a coffee break taken at Foyles bookshop in London, during the 'Fortress Europe and its "Others"' conference at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, three of us (two from Italy and one from the UK) decided we ought to seek out a publication that would highlight current debates and creative feminist political formations in Italy. To think through how we might initiate this, we held a meeting in Florence in 2005 in Enrica Capussotti's garden, where we met initially with members of the Milan-based feminist group *Sconvegno* and *Sexyshock* from Bologna. (Subsequently a member of the Prec@s network in Naples would become involved.) Here we discussed the possibility of co-editing a Special Issue of *Feminist Review* dedicated to the theme of contemporary Italian feminisms. *Sconvegno* had recently published a book that explored feminist issues from the perspective of a younger generation of Italian women and this discussion had the potential to feed into broader academic debates about the emergence of third-wave feminisms globally. We wanted to conduct this discussion in an environment that would facilitate a space for a new generation of Italian feminists to present their ideas and current forms of activism to an international audience. This was not to imply that the huge political legacy and current activities of second-wave Italian feminisms had run their course. Indeed, the legacy of that feminism for the contemporary period continues to be debated among both older and younger Italian feminists. Moreover it has shaped the contents of this issue as well as the organizational bridges that were forged during the course of the workshops that fed into the journal.

While *Feminist Review* has a policy of seeking international editors to produce special issues, a different editorial approach was utilized in this instance. Instead of handing complete editorial control over to international editors, as is the usual practice, we edited the issue together with the Italian group. This allowed all participants to mutually influence and define the final format of the issue, drawing on their respective personal, political and academic perspectives. Having worked on migration and with activist groups in Italy who centred questions of anti-racism and gender in their work, we were keen to ensure that issues of 'race' and ethnicity did not get marginalized or that 'migrants' did not get objectified in the name of the 'struggle', while recognizing that the Italian situation is markedly different from the British context. Our editorial process facilitated a valuable sharing of knowledge and perspectives within the editorial group. The Italian partners

determined that *precarietà* (precariousness/precarity) would be the principal theme of the special issue as this reflected their current activism and practice. Four sub-themes were selected for exploration: Sexuality, Work, Politics and Migration.

The notion of *precarietà* is utilized here in a wider sense than its more straightforward usage denoting employment insecurity. Nonetheless, readers unfamiliar with the Italian political context should be aware that attempts to de-regulate the Italian labour market have been deeply contentious and have met with widespread political resistance. As a consequence, Italy has played a key role in stimulating debate and activism around this concept in Europe and this also explains its relevance for a range of social movements within Italy.

The Special Issue does not make any claims to be representative of contemporary Italian feminisms or of all debates on precarity in Europe. Italian feminisms have historically been quite diverse and a national characterization of feminism as a movement would be impossible. Instead, the feminisms that have emerged in Italy are strongly influenced by local and regional political contexts. This issue thus in part reflects the networks and local realities of the Italian core group members. However, a call for papers/contributions was utilized to seek out a broad range of perspectives in relation to the central theme. That many of the contributions are to be found in the Open Space section partly reflects the fact that Italian feminists have traditionally been reluctant to be co-opted into mainstream political and academic structures. The writing styles of some of the contributions also reflect different academic and political writing styles not easily rendered in English translation. The work presented here demonstrates that younger (and older) Italian feminists are active and are experimenting with new ideas and new forms of creative practice. Today, issues linked to globalization and immigration, which did not feature in the Italian feminisms of the 1970s, have begun to give a new and different shape to the emergence of third-wave feminisms in Italy.

As the two *Feminist Review* editors from the UK, we have to say that it has been an honour to share the energy of friends, comrades and colleagues in Italy who have put an enormous amount of work, effort and love into the making of this issue.

Jacqueline Andall and Nirmal Puwar

doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400358