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**Abstract:** Armanda Guiducci's *La donna non è gente* (1977) is a volume collecting related autobiographical narratives in which collaboration is the result of the dialogic, polyphonic, and heteroglot relationship between Guiducci and the women narrators she interviews. Guiducci's work proves how the notion of singular authorship and language of *noi* is inadequate to capture the diversity of women's struggles across Italy. In *La donna non è gente*, the narrators—women from rural areas of north and of south Italy—embody through the alternance of Standard Italian and regional and local dialects the dialectics between urban and rural spaces. I argue that the power dynamic between urban and rural areas works as a more comprehensive marker that better describes the diversity of women's conditions within the feminist movement than the mere Marxist concept of social class.

**Keywords:** Armanda Guiducci, feminism, rural Italy, polyphony, subaltern

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## Rural Italy in Feminist Writing: Dialogism, Polyphony, and Heteroglossia in Armanda Guiducci's *La donna non è gente*

VIVIANA PEZZULLO

During the years after 1968, the use of the first-person plural was pivotal in feminist writing. Activists saw collectivity and collaborative writing as a way to dismantle the male “I,” consolidate a sense of female solidarity, and foster political engagement among women, coming together to occupy a shared authorial space through the practice of *autocoscienza* (self-awareness). However, as philosopher Adriana Cavarero convincingly argues in *Tu che mi guardi tu che mi racconti / Relating narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, the use of the *noi* (we)—central in the rhetoric of 1970s’ feminist collectives—presents some danger as it initiates an emphatic practice in which singular identities blur into one another, thereby running the risk of losing any trace of their uniqueness. For this reason, in *La donna non è gente* (Women are not People), Armanda Guiducci moves away from the *noi* as marker of feminist collectivity and instead promotes a feminist discourse rooted in the Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and heteroglossia. In Guiducci’s work such concepts inform a new theoretical framework within feminist literary practice that better capture the diversity of women’s struggle across Italy.

In *La donna non è gente*, Guiducci uses this dialogic, polyphonic and heteroglot discourse—involving nine women from rural areas of northern and southern Italy—to analyze the power dynamics between urban and rural spaces. I argue that these geographical power dynamics are stronger determining markers than the traditional Marxist concept of social class alone to capture the diversity within the Italian feminist movement. Along with the social class, the provenance from urban or rural areas foregrounds specific differences in the cultural and sociolinguistic conditions of speaking, therefore requiring a dialogic, polyphonic and heteroglot narrative. By the 1970s, Italy was still very much divided in terms of employment, urbanization, industrialization, and education, creating a striking gap not only between the northern and the southern parts of the country, but more specifically between urban and rural areas. Women from rural areas were thus situationally excluded from feminist collectives and protests, which mostly took place in the city. Due to the scarcity of educational resources and infrastructures, many of them were also formally illiterate and therefore unable to be full participants in the (for the most part highly theoretical) national conversation on women’s struggles.

Compared to other feminist writers of the era, Guiducci shed light on these underrepresented groups and exported feminist ideals to more remote parts of the country. In her works—in particular *La donna non è gente*—the dialogue between “urban” and “rural” originates in a shared authorial space, equally occupied by the *source* and the *scriptor*, whose personalities remain distinct and do not overlap.<sup>1</sup> *La donna non è gente* depicts a slice of life in the Italian countryside during the 1970s merging ethnographic practice with literature, thus renegotiating feminist ideals in a different socioeconomical context. To give voice to these women from the countryside, silenced and located at the margin of society, Guiducci adopts an approach that goes beyond traditional feminist *autocoscienza* as theorized by Carla Lonzi in *Sputiamo su Hegel* and instead is rooted in ethnographic research. Such high reliance on direct ethnographic interviewing determines a shift at the very core of feminist writing practice. Indeed, to the *noi*, typical of many feminist *riviste* (journals), such as *Effe*, *Sottosopra*, and *Differenze*, and pamphlets, Guiducci counterposes the *io* and the *tu*.

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<sup>1</sup> Using the term “source” allows me to evoke not only the origin of discourse but also the very idea of the source text, which in Translation Studies is always the object of asymptotic interpretation. In a similar way, the voice of the source will never come through completely unaltered. The term “scriptor” allows me to foreground both the poststructuralist dismantling of the notion of authorship (pace Roland Barthes) and the historical function of the scribe (*scribere*).

Dialogism, as Mikhail Bakhtin theorized it in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, enhances all perspectives and voices, and so in Guiducci's *La donna non è gente* allows theoretical grounding of an active collaboration between *sources* and *scriptor*. The result of such a writing practice is a polyphonic text in which voices, differently from collectives' feminist writing, do not merge into a single point of view and collective experience. In *La donna non è gente*, collaboration is heavily informed by the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia, as it reveals the multiple voices and perspectives in the text. Describing heteroglossia, Bakhtin affirms that

all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically.<sup>2</sup>

This heteroglot and double-voiced relationship captures the sociolinguistic diversity of women involved in the narrative act, as well as the dialogic essence of the self-knowledge process (as opposed to traditional *autocoscienza*), anticipating issues of intersectionality by ten years. The organization of the book centers around the collected testimonies of rural women for good reason. Guiducci, as an educated woman living in Milan (one of Italy's most highly industrialized metropolises), cannot be the spokesperson for this agrarian world of the poor. The nine narrators—Francesca's mother, Zita, Adele, Felicina, Gerarda, Antonia, Marta, Onesta, and Rosa—present an autobiographical experience that is at one both individual and collective. Each story thus becomes an exemplar in its ability to address certain shared experiences in everyday life, experiences that are all but excluded from any truthful literary representation. Moreover, with this book, Guiducci aims to give agency to those women who have been deprived of all voice by both patriarchal society and the feminist movement itself, allowing them to “speak themselves” into literary existence.

In *La donna non è gente*, the dialogic power dynamics between *source* and *scriptor* are expressed in sociolinguistic and heteroglot terms through the co-presence of Standard Italian and regional dialects from across the country, including Sicilian, Neapolitan, and Piemontese. While Guiducci relies exclusively on standard Italian, the women she interviews speak their native dialects, which are thus tangibly present throughout the narrative in the form of reported speech, direct speech, and epigraphs (for instance, each chapter opens with a quote in dialect of a local song or motto that Guiducci translates into standard Italian). Dialect becomes even more relevant in the last chapter, “Rosa.” Indeed, in the Afterword, Guiducci claims to disappear from the page as she purports to simply transcribe what Rosa recounts. Yet even in this case, when Guiducci works to ensure that readers see this last chapter as a *monologue*, the text still bears witness to a dialogic writing process that actively involves both Rosa and Guiducci, whose identities nevertheless remain distinct as they embody different life experiences.

Such differences are not always evident in feminist literature, which in the 1970s was still very much oriented towards the traditional Marxist concept of social class. Scholar Anna Nozzoli reflects on social class within feminist writing, noticing an inclination towards women narrators from a specific middle-class background. Indeed, despite the existing ties between feminist literary works and the ideology of the movement itself, the sociocultural values that these texts embody seem to suggest the existence of an archetype based on social class. Nozzoli links this literary phenomenon to the fact that the movement itself was very much oriented solely towards social class discrimination. Women characters from books such as *Un quarto di donna* (1973) by Giuliana Ferri, *Lunga giovinezza* by Gabriella

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<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 291-292.

Magrini (1976), and *Condizione sentimentale* (1976) by Carla Cerati find themselves stuck between the irreconcilable roles of family caretakers and professionals striving to enter the world of work. To free women from such a burden and legitimize their professional ambition, feminist novels often focused on women's professional development and fulfillment outside of the domestic space as the symbol of female emancipation. However, the trope of the *career woman* chasing highly professional or creative jobs spoke only to a specific middle-class readership, and therefore offered only a partial depiction of women's struggles at the time. For this reason, a more appropriate marker to capture the diversity of women's living conditions is not that of social class, but instead whether one belongs to an urban or a rural space.

During the 1970s, Italy was still deeply rural. Starting from the after-war years, the few areas that underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization—mostly located in the northern part of the country—represented a geographical minority. Yet, it is in these geographically bound, regionally distinct urban areas that the most collective forms of political and cultural life take shape. Judith Adler Hellman, discussing the methodology and scope of her book, *Journeys Among Women*, cites this as a key factor for why the women's movement in Italy was deeply rooted in urban settings. The urban origin of collectives does not automatically exclude forms of activism in smaller rural towns, but it nevertheless draws our attention to the links between these local initiatives and the closest major urban centers. In defining feminism in Italy as an urban phenomenon, Hellman notes that feminist collectives developed within the trade unions, which themselves sprang up in more industrialized areas; for feminist union activity to be attempted, the workforce of the region needed a preexisting baseline level of unionization. As a result, women living in the city were more aware of keenly debated workforce issues and had more opportunities to be active in labor movements through meeting attendance; this was not the case for women in rural areas, especially those in the south.

While at the beginning of the century, rural space is present in the work of Sibilla Aleramo, it slowly disappears in feminist writing of the 1960s and 1970s, and more generally from the demands of the Left during the post-68 years.<sup>3</sup> Countryside, because of the state of subalternity that characterized it, did not have the opportunity to narrate itself and give to its stories national visibility. In fact, as compared to women in the city, in Italy in the 1970s-1980s women in the rural areas were oftentimes excluded from formal education. The lack of access to education contributed to the localizing or isolating effects of having access only to spoken local and regional dialects (as opposed to formal standardized language) and being trapped in a patriarchal environment that forced them into a self-imposed silence. Because of this imbalance of representational agency between women from rural areas and those in cities, it becomes even more urgent to address collaboration between these two groups as a way for the countryside to find its authorial and narrative existence during the 1970s. Nevertheless, the use of anonymity and the general “we” to foster identification blur single individualities and no longer describe a relationship based on mutual curiosity and (impossible) identification. The “we,” so recurrent in Marxist theory and Leftist discourse, splits into a distinct “I” and “you” who establish a dialogic relationship based on a continuous discovery of the Other.

Guiducci's background as a Marxist gives shape to her work. Guiducci graduated from the University of Milan, where she obtained a degree in Philosophy under the direction of the scholar Antonio Banfi, who was a member of the Italian Communist Party's central committee and a senator on the Communist ticket. In September 1955, along with Franco Fortini, Franco Momigliano, Alessandro

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<sup>3</sup> Sibilla Aleramo, as promotor of the Roman section of the *Unione femminile nazionale* (National Union of Women), dedicated herself to the enhancement of the *Ager Romanus*, rural area surrounding Rome. She collects her thoughts in a 1909 conference at the *Università popolare di Milano*, published in 1931 in the form of an essay “La vita nella campagna romana.” Sibilla Aleramo. “La vita nella campagna romana.” 1909. *La donna e il femminismo: Scritti 1897-1910*. Edited by Bruna Conti (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1978): 107-125.

Pizzorno, and her husband Roberto, Guiducci co-founded the journal *Ragionamenti*, in which they investigated the relationship between contemporary culture and Marxism. As her involvement in the periodical proves, Guiducci had been interested in the relationship between literature and Marxism since the earliest stages of her literary career. In this regard, her work is highly informed by György Lukács and Gramsci. These two thinkers are at the center of Guiducci's *Dallo zhdanovismo allo strutturalismo* (From Zhdanovism to Structuralism), a collection of essays on Zhdanovism that investigate the relationship between literature and Marxism, dialectical materialism in writing, and the subaltern as a literary subject. The subaltern, in particular, becomes the starting point of a wider discourse that aims to denounce women's historical oppressions and the marginality of their role in society. In fact, Guiducci internalizes Gramsci's theory of the subaltern and makes it a cornerstone of her wider feminist literary activity. In other words, Guiducci inscribes the history of feminist discourse in Italy within her understanding of Gramsci's theory of the subaltern, giving voice to those voiceless masses otherwise excluded from the feminist movement and anticipating many of the ideas articulated more recently by Spivak about the role of the subaltern.

Right from the introduction of *La donna non è gente*, Guiducci refers directly to Gramsci's *cultura subalterna* (subaltern culture), and indirectly to his southern question: "nel sud e nelle isole si concentra infatti la massa di esistenza umana esclusa dal ritmo febbrile della crescita moderna" (the mass of human existence that is excluded from the feverish rhythm of modern development gathers in the south and in the islands)<sup>4</sup>. The southern question is grounded, according to Gramsci, in a deeply and historically rooted split between the industrial north and the agricultural south. The overall result, he posits, is not only economic (the highly unequal distribution of wealth and resources between the two regions), but also ideological: economic injustice is accompanied by (and perpetuated through) propagandistic rhetoric that paints people from the South as lazy, barbarian, and biologically underdeveloped.

In Guiducci's work, the south becomes a cultural category and mark of marginalization whose scope extends well beyond Italy's geographical boundaries. Indeed, only two years after the publication of *La donna non è gente*, Guiducci will collaborate with Lina Angioletti to publish *La letteratura della nuova Africa* (Literature of New Africa), a survey on African literature, with the intent of giving voice to part of the Global South. The volume gathers together Italian translations of essays and narratives by African authors, a unique project for the Italian literary landscape of those years. With this anthology, Guiducci returns to the idea of subalternity, which she frames here within a wider discourse of world literature. The purpose of this work, as explained in the introduction, is to give literary voice to a continent that, according to Guiducci, resides in the Italian imagination only as a tourist destination:

In Italia invece un libro come questo rappresenta un tentativo di apertura nel qualunque turistico per il quale l'Africa, questo stravolto e straziato continente in marcia è più una nozione folclorica da partenza in gruppo che una vivente, e ricchissima, dimensione culturale.<sup>5</sup>

By using words such as "stravolto" and "straziato," Guiducci is denouncing the colonial past that forced Africa into a state of subjugation. Their project, which she defines as "un manoscritto

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<sup>4</sup> Guiducci, *La donna non è gente*, 10. All translations of Guiducci's work are mine, as none of his texts have been translated. Guiducci ascribes Sardinia to the south for its location, but it is important to underscore how already Gramsci in *Quaderni dal carcere* pointed out how the historical and sociocultural backgrounds of this region make it a different case from the rest of the Mezzogiorno. For further information, see also: Salvatore Lupo. "Storia Del Mezzogiorno, Questione Meridionale, Meridionalismo." *Meridiana*, no. 32, 1998: 17-52.

<sup>5</sup> Guiducci and Angioletti, *La letteratura della nuova Africa*, 10. "Yet, in Italy a book like this is an attempt to overcome touristic apathy, according to which Africa—a continent twisted and torn apart—is a folkloristic group trip destination, rather than a rich and profound cultural dimension."

disperatamente lanciato dentro una bottiglia” (a manuscript desperately sent in a bottle) is an invitation to the reader to finally listen to these voices that years of exploitation and estrangement from the literary world scene had silenced.

For Guiducci, giving voice to voiceless and marginalized groups goes beyond both Marxist collectivism and feminist *autocoscienza*. *Autocoscienza* was a practice of achieving new awareness based on the discovery and reconstruction of the self, both individually and collectively, with conversations with other women. The scholar Fiora Bassanese identifies Guiducci’s controversial novel, *La mela e il serpente* (The Apple and the Snake), as a key turning point in Guiducci’s theoretical stance. This book received considerable attention in the press because of the polemical tone that Guiducci used to describe the limits of Marxism in relation to their understanding of the “woman question.” In relation to style and composition, *La mela e il serpente* is a typical example of *autocoscienza* applied literature, transforming personal events into a universal experience through the confessional form. The first-person narrator, whose name is never revealed, goes through a cognitive process of investigation of the self, which allows her to debunk common tropes about women. In line with the collectives’ language of the *noi*, Guiducci chooses anonymity to foster readers’ identification with the text, thus inviting reflection on women’s everyday lives in a larger framework of historical marginalization:

La silenziosa, lenta e splendida maturazione della bambina in donna, irrimediabilmente sciupata dall’ignoranza, fu vissuta da me non come la felicità serena di un integrarsi al ciclo vitale dell’umanità, di un accordarsi ai disegni dell’esistenza, ma come infelicità, un tradimento una sopraffazione.<sup>6</sup>

For the narrator, this supposedly “splendida maturazione” as marked by menstruation is not merely an “infelicità” but a “sopraffazione” threatening to force her into a role of eternal inferiority. The narrator goes on to tell us that from a very early age she grappled with questions of gender definition starting from biological differences and its social implications in western patriarchal society. The woman’s very body is described as a source of pain and segregation, which (as Guiducci’s title itself suggests) is linked in western culture to the symbolism of menstrual blood as the literal stain of original sin passing through Eve to taint all women. The fundamentally misogynist underpinnings of western philosophical frameworks lead women to a sense of profound alienation from the corporeal self.

Women’s physiology is only the starting point, in Guiducci’s corpus for a broader discourse that challenges patriarchal standards, tradition, middle-class morality, social institutions, male egotism, and capitalism. As Guiducci moves away from traditional *autocoscienza* to embrace history and anthropology as ways to trace an unsentimental history of feminine degradation, her work calls into question the wider validity of the philosophical models of knowledge through which *autocoscienza* itself developed. The confluence of fiction and historical data, cultural anthropology, sociology, and confessional literature proves to be fertile ground for a new methodological framework for knowledge-building and will become a distinctive characteristic of her writing. This mixing of genres produces stylistic developments that have profound “positional” implications and that inform Guiducci’s dialogic authorship. She decides to abandon the anonymous first-person voice of *La mela e il serpente*, and experiments with a polyphonic narration grounded on a collaborative creative effort that combines multiple first-person voices, all named and recognizable, who present unique perspectives rather than foster identification. For this reason, she decides to choose women from marginalized rural areas to describe with their own words their lives and bring to national attention

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<sup>6</sup> Guiducci, *La mela e il serpente*, 10. “The quiet, slow, wonderful ripening of the girl into a woman, inevitably spoiled by ignorance, was for me not peaceful moment of happiness of joining the vital cycle of humanity, aligning myself to the designs of existence, but as an unhappiness, a betrayal, a subjugation.”

previously unheard issues of women's discrimination. Such a close focus on the language generates a polyphonic text in which narrative voices marked by distinct native dialects follow one another.

Indeed, Bassanese explains Guiducci's intention to bring attention to rural areas by illustrating how "the peasantry constitutes a separate caste in Italy's hegemonic urban culture, outside the boundaries of modern development and the interest of the political Left."<sup>7</sup> Because of this inherent separation among women themselves, a first-person narrator alone is not enough to speak to this specific type of subalternity that goes largely uncharted even during years of overt and formally documented political struggles. Female speech is, therefore, central to the book, and articulates itself through distinct voices, belonging to the *sources* and *scriptor*. In *La donna non è gente*, Guiducci gives voice to rural women and preserves the verbal spontaneity of their popular speech, including regionalisms and grammatical errors.

The polyphony of narrative voices and the scientific approach of the ethnographer are device through which Guiducci ventures into the Italian countryside and find those voices that can illustrate women's living conditions in rural areas. Guiducci precedes the polyphonic narrative with an introduction in which she explains not only her methodological approach, but also the purpose and inherent challenges of such a project:

Al fondo di ogni altra intenzione, questo libro è stato scritto per un solo e molto semplice scopo. Il circolo vizioso della povertà economica e della sua subalternità femminile esclude ancora le escluse dalle stesse potenzialità di liberazione che si vanno manifestando nel mondo attuale. Queste lotte sono già un privilegio sociale, quasi un lusso da "dominanti." Rompere quel cerchio sarebbe il primo compito del femminismo, tagliando le radici prima dove la miseria e l'esclusione si confermano attraverso la miseria e l'esclusione stesse, lasciando intatti i poteri dominanti.<sup>8</sup>

Guiducci wants to cast light on women's lives in the countryside, because the state of poverty that they experience is also the condition that prevents them from being part of that cultural revolution that was changing women's lives all across Italy. Already left behind in the process of modernization that Italy undergoes during the 1950s and 1960s, rural areas were also in danger of being excluded from the feminist struggles for women's rights. In 1970s Italy, women in these areas were still living in strongly patriarchal communities, trapped in cultural and geographical isolation that was both gender and class based. For Guiducci, these women are the ideal interlocutors of feminist activists, with the common goal being to break the vicious circle of "subalternity" constraining rural women in a cycle of never-ending submission.

Guiducci's aim here is twofold. She investigates rural habits and traditions and brings up themes at the center of feminist concerns: abortion, domestic violence, access to rigorous education, and women's larger place in society. She does so to demonstrate how these same topics, highly discussed within feminist collectives all across Italy, assume different characteristics when the socioeconomic context in which these are observed shifts. This is concrete proof that feminists' demands in favor of a generic "Woman" do not depict the complexity of the Italian rural fabric and the endemic division between the more "advanced" and more "underdeveloped" parts of the country:

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<sup>7</sup> Bassanese, "Armanda Guiducci's Disposable Women," 183.

<sup>8</sup> Guiducci, *La donna non è gente*, 18. "Above all else, this book has been written with a unique and simple goal. The vicious circle of economic poverty and women's subalternity still excludes the excluded women from the potentialities of liberation happening in today's society. These struggles are already a social privilege, almost a "dominating" luxury. Breaking that vicious circle should be the first responsibility of feminism, cutting off those first roots where misery and exclusion confirm themselves through misery and exclusion, leaving intact the dominating powers."

Il femminismo, di cui si fa protagonista generica la Donna, entità astratta, non è, ai giorni nostri, che l'espressione della presa di coscienza delle partecipi della cultura egemone. La cultura egemone non è la cultura delle classi dominanti nel senso della ricchezza o del potere: per lo meno, non coincide esclusivamente con queste. Comprende tutte le classi che hanno collaborato alla fisionomia urbana e industriale della nostra civiltà o cultura attuale: quindi, non solo la borghesia; anche la classe operaia o la rurale evoluta e, quindi, industrializzata.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, Guiducci does not limit hegemonic culture to the bourgeoisie and the dominating classes but also includes those working classes that participate in the development of an “urban physiology” coinciding with the more industrialized and developed regions of the Italian territory. Guiducci, in other words, replaces the dichotomy between middle and working class with “urban” and “rural.” Through her text, in fact, she aims to demonstrate how women from the countryside have been estranged from the cultural revolution of the 1960s, trapped in an ahistorical dimension:

Queste creature “diverse” nel senso che condividono ben poco delle forme mentali, credenze, comportamenti e vantaggi concessi alle donne, ricche o no, borghesi o proletarie, partecipi, fra grattacieli, aeroporti e fabbriche, della cultura urbana dominante, sono cresciute alla femminilità in un mondo vicino ma lontano, all'interno sì della nostra stessa società ma relegato ai suoi margini.<sup>10</sup>

Through its theoretical framework and polyphonic narrative structure, *La donna non è gente* demonstrates how historical and sociocultural conditions intersect to make the lives of these women protagonists so “different.” The countryside is presented as the threshold to a presumed ahistorical (even “mythical”) world; because this world does not share the same characteristics of the “cultura urbana dominante,” it is coded as eternally inaccessible and relegated to the margins of society. Guiducci, an urbanite woman educated in the north, cannot take the narrative lead; only the rural women themselves can speak of their reality, far removed from skyscrapers and factories.

The urban/rural disparity affects the ways in which women embrace the feminist movement and its priorities. In comparing how women detail their struggles in testimonials published in feminist journals, such as *Effe*, and how the sources of *La donna non è gente* describe the same experiences, glaring differences leap out. *Effe*—like many other feminist journals from the 1970s and 1980s—offers articles and testimonies by women from all socioeconomic backgrounds as part of their claim to inclusivity and a wider editorial scope. In the case of the *source* author of “Sopravvivere in Borgata” (Surviving in the Suburbs) journalists Adele Cambria and Daniela Colombo describe her as “una straordinaria (per maturità ed equilibrio) donna di borgata, una madre di sette figli—una specie di Madre Coraggio” (a working-class woman, extraordinary both in maturity and balance, mother of seven, a sort of Mother Courage).<sup>11</sup> Cambria and Colombo emphasize this woman’s provenance from an underprivileged area and accentuate her humble origins to make her a symbol of successful feminist collaboration across social classes. In this article, the anonymous author recounts her story using the first-person narrative voice to describe her experience with abortion, comparing it to that of her 18-year-old daughter.

<sup>9</sup> Guiducci, 9. “Feminism, which generically involves “Woman” as an abstract entity, nowadays, is the expression of the awareness of the participants of hegemonic culture. Hegemonic culture is not the culture of the ruling classes in terms of wealth or power: at least, it does not coincide exclusively with these. It includes all the classes that have collaborated in the urban and industrial physiognomy of our civilization or present culture. Not only the middle class, but also the working class or the higher, and therefore industrialized, rural class.”

<sup>10</sup> Guiducci, 8. “These creatures are ‘different’ as they share very little of the mental forms, beliefs, behaviors and advantages that are granted to women, rich or not, bourgeois or proletarian, who participate—among skyscrapers, airports and factories—in the dominant urban culture. They experienced femininity in a world near but far, within our society, but relegated to its margins.”

<sup>11</sup> Cambria and Colombo, “Aborto non lo fo per piacer mio.”



Nevertheless, despite the journal's claim to inclusivity, the *borgata* has more in common with the city than the rural area and therefore does not represent a truly different perspective. As sociologist Henri Lefebvre states, urban peripheral areas like the *borgate* maintain close ties to the nearest large city; this invests peripheral areas with symbolic capital and also offers a conduit for providing urban services and resources. In other words, Lefebvre reinterprets urban and rural spaces in terms of semiotics of hegemonic and alienated spaces; because of the expansion of the urban fabric, the city broadens its area of influence far beyond its immediate proximity. As a matter of fact, urban peripheral areas, despite their destitute circumstances, still benefit in some way from their closeness to the city. For instance, when the author of "Sopravvivere in Borgata" needs a hospital and has no access to one in the Roman exurbs, she can travel to Rome to receive medical assistance. The closeness of the *borgata* to the city of Rome also allows for more widespread political consciousness. In fact, in the article the author describes how comrades arriving in the *borgata* to investigate and report into health conditions brought their Marxist ideals to this work: "Quando sono arrivati i compagni in borgata, per fare un'inchiesta sulla salute io ho capito che non era una vita sfortunata, la mia, ma una vita piena di ingiustizie" (when the comrades arrived here in the suburbs, to conduct an inquiry on health conditions, I understood that mine was not an unlucky life, but a life full of injustices).

Even in the case of the author of "Sopravvivere in Borgata," who lives in a disadvantaged peripheral area, abortion is still described as a medical practice, even though it is illegal. Illegal abortions take place in clandestine clinics in unsanitary conditions, and oftentimes women die as a result. The luckiest ones, like the daughter of the author of the article, are able to have an abortion in London, where the termination of pregnancy is legal, medical assistance is more readily available, and the procedure is much safer. In the countryside, on the other hand, women go to the *mammanna* (a term that originates from central-southern Italy to refer to a type of unofficial nurse who performed illegal abortions).<sup>12</sup> As the *sources* in *La donna non è gente* recount, the *mammanna* resorts to rudimentary techniques, which involve infusions of parsley or the insertion of knitting needles. In their words, abortion seems almost ritualistic, a secret practice passed down by women, and grounded in popular culture rather than in technologically advanced medical knowledge. The concoctions that women prepare in some narratives resemble archaic potions:

'Quanto ho fatto per non averla! Tutto quello che si può fare, ho fatto per non averla! Che si può fare? Beh, le solite cose. Il sale inglese, le purghe, il prezzemolo.' È lo scongiuro abortivo più usato dalle donne povere, nelle campagne, che non hanno i soldi per la mammanna e per la sonda. Si fa un decotto ben concentrato di foglie di prezzemolo—un brodino ristretto. Lo si zucchera e beve al mattino a digiuno. Si abortisce per intossicazione: ma se il brodino è troppo ristretto, anche la donna muore avvelenata. Macché decotto. I gambi del prezzemolo infilati dentro, un bel fascetto di gambi, sicuro. E che, dei gambi non lo sa?<sup>13</sup>

A woman from Abruzzo named Antonia here explains to Guiducci how women used to abort. The question "Che si può fare" reveals how the two women speak different languages, each holding to a specific idea of what abortion is in their different experience and cultural context. The familiarity with

<sup>12</sup> On the figure of the *mammanna*, see: Giovanni Greco, *Peccato, crimine e malattia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Bari: Dedalo, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Guiducci, *La donna non è gente*, 152. "What didn't I do to stop it! I did everything I could to stop it from happening.' 'What do people do in these cases? 'Well, the same old things: English salt, laxative, parsley.' This is the most used abortive remedy among poor women in the countryside, those who do not have money to go to a *mammanna* and to use a probe. You make a concentrated infusion with parsley's leaves—a concentrated broth. You sugar it, and you drink it in the morning on an empty stomach. You get an abortion by poisoning: but if the broth is too concentrated, the woman also dies of poisoning. 'Forget about the infusion. Stick the parsley stems in, quite a big bunch, for sure. So, you didn't know about the stems, did you!'"

which Antonia describes the recipes of parsley infusion suggests a repeated practice that she herself probably did more than once.

Another striking difference is the way in which the verb “abortire” is employed in the testimony of “Sopravvivere in borgata.” The verb is, in fact, used in an active form; thus, women are the grammatical subjects of the verb, promoting a rhetoric that points to women taking concrete action and demonstrating agency and courage to put themselves through the process. In *La donna non è gente*, on the other hand, abortion is often the result of another form of violence inflicted on women’s bodies by a male-dominated society. This violence is reflected on a grammatical level through the use of the “abortire” in a causative structure: “Le lasciavano poi incinte, i padroni ci avevano i sordi, le facevano abortire [...]. ‘Tu non parlà nènte. Dopo, quando ti sposi, io ti faccio un po’ di dota’” (They left them pregnant; masters had money, and they made them get an abortion [...]) ‘Don’t say a word. Then, when you get married, I’ll pay some of your dowry).<sup>14</sup> The grammatical subjects here are no longer the women—actors who decide to exercise their right to interrupt their pregnancy and are the masters of the process—but instead the men, who make them have an abortion, buying their silence.

Silence is a recurring theme in *La donna non è gente*, because it defines the condition of marginality and the exclusion of women in rural areas, whose stories remain very little known. For this reason, in response to this silence that society has historically imposed on women, Guiducci creates a collaborative literary space for these women to narrate themselves and recount their experiences:

Le donne dal viso e dalle mani rugose. Cosa pensano? Noi conosciamo le menti della cultura dominante la società. Ma queste donne *nere*, come colpite dal lutto più terribile: l’esclusione, che si muovono, silenziosamente lente e somiglianti, ai margini—vastissimi—del mondo: somiglianti per le condizioni della miseria e per i ricatti, analoghi dell’esclusione: *nere* e lente sulle soglie di un villaggio dell’Etna come davanti alle case sbrecciate di fango del Nordafrica, queste donne privati di ogni voce da una serie di sottrazioni — dalla storia, dal proletariato stesso, dall’emancipazione femminile — che riduce al punto zero della femminilità, che cosa pensano nei silenzi della loro mente inespressa? (Emphasis is mine)<sup>15</sup>

Guiducci establishes a comparison between villages in Sicily and North Africa. Here, Guiducci highlights the imbalance in terms of social dynamics between these rural areas and the rest of Italy—in this case referring to a specific area from southern Italy that in a way represents a broader worldwide conception of “the South.” As she explains in *La letteratura della nuova Africa*, Africa was forced into silence by centuries of oppression and colonial exploitation. Similarly, following a Gramscian model, southern Italy represented a state of subordination due to capitalistic underdevelopment and a concomitant absence of both a valorized system of production and an identifiable working class. Moreover, by using Africa as a parallel example, Guiducci points out Sicily’s exclusion from dominant urban culture, a situation through which Sicily’s local characteristics are so uniquely tied to the territory as to make it sound like a foreign country.

Guiducci also interrogates literary antecedents to establish her new framework. The use of the adjective “nero” in regard to the countryside reminds us of Cesare Pavese’s poetic vocabulary, which

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<sup>14</sup> Guiducci, 234.

<sup>15</sup> Guiducci, 7. “Women with wrinkled faces and hands? What do they think? We know the minds of the dominant culture of society. But these *black* women, as if hit by the cruelest grief: exclusion, what do they think in the silences of their unspoken mind? They move, silently slow and similar-looking, on the margins — immense — of the world: similar-looking because of the conditions of misery and extortion of exclusion. *Black* and slow on the threshold of a village of Etna, as in front of the houses pierced and covered in the mud of North Africa, these women deprived of a voice by a series of misappropriation—from history, the proletariat itself, women’s emancipation—that reduce femininity to the degree zero.” Emphasis is mine.

Guiducci knew well, as her extensive scholarship on the subject demonstrates.<sup>16</sup> Guiducci eventually dedicated two monographs to Pavese: *Il mito Pavese* (The Pavese Myth) and *Invito alla lettura di Pavese* (Invitation to the Study of Pavese). The description of the countryside that Guiducci provides in *La donna non è gente* draws on Pavese's imagery, however, the nine *sources* of *La donna non è gente*, overturn Pavese's construction of an ancestral rural past and the myth of an idyllic country life'. Already in 1967, with regard to *Lavorare stanca / Hard Labor*, Guiducci writes that Pavese's reading of Sherwood Anderson transfigures the image of his native Piemonte into a "richiamo al grezzo, rustico mondo dei 'villani anneriti' che zappano forte" (call to the rough rustic world of blackened peasants who hoe hard)<sup>17</sup> This concept of blackness, in *Lavorare stanca* assumes different naturalistic symbolisms, ranging from the contrast between daily and nocturnal, to the richness of the soil burned under the sun: "Il nero è, com'è noto, il colore che assorbe tutti i raggi ultravioletti" (As people know, black is the color that absorbs all the ultraviolet rays).<sup>18</sup> In addition, the *nero* Piemonte, land of childhood memory, becomes the emotional cornerstone of Pavese's poetry, which roots itself in the *chiaroscuro* between the fullness of the beloved "maternal" countryside on one hand, and the stark (perhaps even sterile) emptiness of the city on the other.

Yet although Guiducci recovers this Pavesian valuation of blackness, she does not use it to refer to the fullness of rural life or to the abyss of memory. Instead, black is the color of grief, which women wear on their skin in permanent mourning for their condition of marginalization in and from society. Womanhood for Guiducci is no longer the Pavesian metaphor for a maternal and benevolent country that provides for its children, but instead quite the opposite: the metaphor for conditions of exclusion and subalternity afflicting rural areas, and the lives of women in patriarchal societies in general. In Pavese's works, although the countryside is no longer depicted in folkloristic or purely sentimental tones, it still remains an imaginary space filled with the poet's childhood memory whose real existence seems to fade over time, acquiring a metaphysical halo. Guiducci, on the other hand, wants to portray the rural space in terms of historically anchored power dynamics, foregrounding the living conditions that have constrained women into long-enduring silence.

Guiducci fights this silence not only through dialogism—expressed by the back and forth between the *scriptor* and the *sources*—but also by enhancing the heteroglot nature of language. According to Bakhtin, languages express "specific points of view on the world" and "forms for conceptualizing the world," and therefore invoke distinctive sociocultural contexts. Consequently, they can express on a sociolinguistic level the power dynamics between *sources* and *scriptor*, and urban and rural spaces, transforming sociocultural struggle into discursive struggle. As a matter of fact, in the introduction to *La donna non è gente*, Guiducci expresses the difference between dominated and dominators on a linguistic level:

Agli antipodi di Madame de Staël o delle aristocratiche e borghesi che hanno saputo partecipare ai "vertici" espressivi della mente durante gli ultimi quattro cinque secoli della civiltà europea, stanno queste reiette, spesso murate vive nel dialetto che non sanno come forare, e che cantano vecchie filastrocche, vecchie nenie, recidive del conservatorismo contadino.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, also in Aleramo's essay "La vita nella campagna romana," the contrast between whiteness and blackness returns as a chromatic demarcation between citizens and peasants: "Qualcuna vi parla, in un dialetto che ha già la cadenza meridionale, e voi capite il loro stupore di vedervi capitare lì. 'Chi sei?' chiede una donna. 'Da do' vieni?' 'Come sei bianca,' dice una vecchia a una signora." Aleramo, "La vita nella campagna romana," 109.

<sup>17</sup> Guiducci, *Il mito Pavese*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Guiducci, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Guiducci, *La donna non è gente*, 8. "Diametrically opposed to Madame De Stael, or other aristocrats and bourgeois who have participated in the expressive apex of culture over the past four, five centuries of European civilization, there are

As Guiducci emphasizes, the languages of heteroglossia are therefore Standard Italian and regional dialects. Dialect, indeed, is both described as the language of oral tradition, but also as the legacy of a rooted illiteracy creating a barrier that separates linguistic communities from one another. Out of the nine women protagonists, six are either from southern Italy (Francesca's mother is from Sardinia, Gerarda is from Campania, Onesta is from Puglia, and is Rosa from Sicily and Calabria) or central Italy (Antonia is from Abruzzo, and Marta is from Molise); while Zita and Adele are from Valtellina, and Felicina is from Piemonte. It goes without saying that, despite the fact that Guiducci does not configure this project merely as a study on southern Italy and the southern question, the great majority of the women protagonists come from this area.

The south's almost complete exclusion from the process of industrialization in the 1960s also meant that collectives were far less present in its more peripheral areas. As mentioned before, collectives arise whereas trade unions are firmly rooted in the territory. This is the case with Emilia Romagna, which is, as a matter of fact, missing from *La donna non è gente*. In Emilia Romagna, rural classes are already politicized, as demonstrated by their contribution to the Resistance during the Second World War. Moreover, the experience of Resistance, in addition to consolidating the already strong relationship between urban and rural workforces, brings into political life two groups of women who are usually excluded from it: farmers and Catholic women. Contrary to what has happened in Emilia Romagna, the underdevelopment typical of the general southern pattern results in political slippage between the urban and rural areas. Drawing again on Lefebvre's theory of alienated spaces, the south as a larger region is alienated from the industrialized north and therefore also separated from the revolutionary movements of the 1970s, much like the feminist movement itself. This may be the reason why regions such as Emilia Romagna, Lazio, and Toscana are absent from the list as in the case of these median areas of transition, there is a linguistic continuum that prevents linguists from drawing a clear line between language and dialect, as opposed to regions in northern and southern Italy.<sup>20</sup>

Since Guiducci does not belong to the same linguistic community as her interviewees, her lack of mastery of the dialect forces her to rely exclusively on Standard Italian and creates a barrier between her and the *sources*. The women's narratives themselves record the fact that Guiducci's education and consequent impeccable use of Standard Italian is for them a deterrent to sharing their stories. Indeed, they see Guiducci as a cultivated middle-class woman, prompting Guiducci herself to note in the introduction: "la povertà si difende e si vergogna di sé." (poverty defends itself and is ashamed of itself)<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in order to bridge this distance Guiducci needed to call upon local mediators to help put *sources* at ease: "Le dico: Teresina parli pure il suo dialetto. Trae un grande respiro di liberazione. Così sì, va dicendo alle altre donne, così va bene, parlare com'è abituata, se no le parole non le vengono, è una fatica troppo grossa" (I tell her: Teresina, feel free to speak your dialect. She heaves a great sigh of relief: it works this way, she says to the other women, that's ok, to speak as she is used to, otherwise words do not come, and it is too much of an effort).<sup>22</sup> The presence of another

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these outcasts. They are often walled up alive in a dialect that they don't know how to penetrate; and sing old nursery rhymes and lullabies customary of peasants' conservative tradition."

<sup>20</sup> This does not apply, however, to other missing regions, such as Veneto, Friuli, Trentino, Basilicata. The consistent absence of median regions suggests Guiducci's interest in the linguistic interplay between standard and dialect. However, the fact that Guiducci does not equally represent all the regions in her geography of rural Italy may relate to the fact that she is more interested in choosing significant examples to illustrate subalternity and linguistic habits as a writer, rather than an ethnographer. For this reason, while the text is firmly anchored in the ethnographic method, it does not have the scope (or the claim) to be an exhaustive scientific essay.

<sup>21</sup> Guiducci, *La donna non è gente*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Guiducci, 100.

group of women who act as mediators allows *sources* to speak their native language without feeling the pressure of being misinterpreted or not understood. Guiducci's choice of the word "liberazione" to describe Teresina's reaction to the invitation to speak her native language serves as an explicit antidote to the concept of captivity that Guiducci introduced earlier to address how dialect prevents communication between rural and urban areas; it conveys a sense of freedom of speaking the native dialect.

The access to such a closed linguistic community is thus predicated on the intervention of female mediators; these women enable Guiducci to enter this female rural space rooted in common language and traditions. Their importance is confirmed by the active role that they play in the narrative. Instead of being invisible figures who limit themselves to establish communication between *source* and *scriptor*, they participate and become part of a bigger conversation, enhancing the polyphonic effect: "Interviene una delle mie accompagnatrici, una donna di Bubbio, quella che riesce a destreggiarsi fra lingua e dialetto, piacente e civile—si chiama Giovanna" (One of my chaperones intervenes, a woman from Bubbio, the one who is able to navigate Italian and dialect, pleasing and civil—her name is Giovanna).<sup>23</sup> Guiducci calls her by name, acknowledging her presence and later transcribing her words through direct speech.

The active presence of mediators' voices is also important because they are in charge of translating local dialect. Dialect is such an essential part of rural culture that none of the interviewees is able (or willing) to express herself in anything but her native language. Due to the dramatic diatopic variations of Italian dialects across the territory, it is not only Guiducci herself who struggles to decipher what the *sources* are saying, but sometimes even the interpreters themselves:

A volte, in una stessa regione, Piemonte o Sardegna per esempio, il dialetto di un villaggio è tanto diverso da quello parlato in un altro villaggio a soli 50 km di distanza, da creare degli ostacoli linguistici allo stesso interprete locale. Così la figlia di Francesca, da Siddi (un paese della Marmilla, a nord di Cagliari) che mi ha fatto da interprete presso le donne del suo paese, non è stata in grado di decifrarci un'intervista registrata a delle donne del Nuorese, a pochi chilometri di distanza.<sup>24</sup>

The presence of the interpreter underscores how the double-voiced and dialogical apparatus of *La donna non è gente* is the result of an additional form of mediation between the scriptor and the sources, working as a guarantor and enabler of the communicative act. Indeed, it goes without saying that in order to make this material comprehensible to her readership, Guiducci had to find a way to translate these narratives into a "common" language that readers would understand, shaping separated episodes into a narrative that contains in itself the fullness of human experience. For this reason, Guiducci frames these (self)portraits within a narrative in Standard Italian and uses both direct and indirect speech to give voice to her interviewees. Whenever she runs into expressions in dialect that do not have an exact correspondence with Italian, or are closely tied to specific regional traditional practices, she transcribes them phonetically and provides a brief description.

In the text here are two clearly distinct narrative voices: Guiducci as the *scriptor*, introduces the protagonist, contextualizes the town where the interview takes place, and provides the reader with preliminary contextual information. The tone is descriptive and informative, and the point of view is that of a third-person narrator who remains external to the events. The ratio between the *scriptor's*

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<sup>23</sup> Guiducci, 101.

<sup>24</sup> Guiducci, 13. "Sometimes, in the same region, for instance Piemonte or Sardinia, the dialect of a certain village is very different from the one spoken in another village only 50 kms away [30 miles]. This creates linguistic barriers for the local interpreter. Hence, Francesca's daughter from Siddi (a village in Marmilla north of Cagliari), who was the interpreter of the women of her village, was not able to decipher the recording of an interview with women from the Nuoro area, only a few kilometers away."

frame and the *source's* direct speech changes from chapter to chapter as well; for example, in the first chapter “La madre di Francesca” (Francesca’s Mother) the third-person narrator prevails over the first-person, while in “Antonia,” almost the entire narrative is the first-person and is introduced by direct speech quotations. In other words, in the text there are two speaking “I”s who coexist simultaneously, which are respectively the subjects of oral utterance (speech) and written expression (writing). Because the oral utterance is here formally transposed in a written form, it presents an alteration in the mode of presentation (“transmodalization”). Gérard Genette, in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, relates this to hypertextuality, the process of transformation inherent in the hypotext/hypertext bond. In this simultaneous imitation and transformation, the “I” of the *source* is still mediated and filtered through the role of the *scriptor*.

In this regard, “Rosa,” the last chapter of the book, is a prime example, as it seeks to reduce (or even eliminate) the alternance of narrative voices solely in favor of the *source*. In this chapter, Rosa recounts her life in the first person. Guiducci justifies her editorial decision in the book’s Afterword, explaining how she decided to cede “l’intero dominio del racconto e della parola” (the entire control of the narrative and the word) to Rosa. Not coincidentally, Rosa is, unlike the other women interviewed, able to express herself in Southern Regional Italian, which (in comparison to dialects) resembles Standard Italian enough to be understood in both aural and written form. In the transcription of Rosa’s narrative it is still possible to identify linguistic characteristics that belong specifically to Sicilian dialect, such as the frequent use of the vowel /u/ both in articles as in “sotto u’ letto,”<sup>25</sup> and in regular nouns, the positioning of the verb at the end of the sentence “perché in Sicilia sono nata,”<sup>26</sup> and the frequent use of the *passato remoto* (even when not used as an aoristic time) “Che cosa mi portasti?”<sup>27</sup>

The blurred linguistic boundaries between the codes of dialect and Regional Italian prompts Rosa to occasionally mix the two. In certain occurrences she seems to do so intentionally, as when she refers to local customs and celebrations, like the Carnival in Calabria when people from the village celebrate the harvest festival:

E passeggia tutto il paese, sui cavalli. Ognuno dice la sua storia. E poi fanno:  
 Giugno o’ viggiano è cavaliere  
 si cauzà si veste no sparde cazàle.  
 Viggiano vuol dire... villano va’. Si calza si veste non consuma calzari—perché è giugno, e primavera,  
 non consuma le scarpe più, non ci percia l’acqua, non ci percia niente, perché è giugno. E il villano è  
 cavaliere perché viene la raccolta del grano.<sup>28</sup>

The dialect here is essential to narrate the true essence of this popular tradition. As Guiducci herself states: “il dialetto . . . non è altro che l’espressione vivente, parlata, della tradizione” (dialect... is the living and spoken expression of tradition).<sup>29</sup> For this reason, Rosa not only switches to dialect, but also translates it for her interlocutors to make it more comprehensible for those who do not belong to her linguistic community. This linguistic habit is not unique to Rosa, all the other women *sources*

<sup>25</sup> Guiducci, 244.

<sup>26</sup> Guiducci, 231.

<sup>27</sup> Guiducci, 248.

<sup>28</sup> Guiducci, 282. “And the entire village go about on horses. Everyone tells his own story. And then, they say: June, the viggiano is a king, he puts shoes on, he gets dressed, does not wear out his footwear. Viggiano means... peasant, let’s say so. He puts shoes on, he gets dressed, does not wear out his footwear, because we are in June, in the spring. He doesn’t use up [“consume”] his shoes so much, water doesn’t leak in, nothing ruins them, because it’s June. And the peasant is a king because there is the harvest of wheat.”

<sup>29</sup> Guiducci, 13.

associate their dialect with the oral tradition, and this commonality draws them together. Guiducci gives great importance to rural oral tradition, as it is often the only format through which women pass codified knowledge through language down to each other. On other occasions, dialect reveals itself as the preferred code for expressing visceral emotions and fear. Although Rosa's Italian is, as Guiducci describes it as, "fluente quanto stentato, tramato di modi e accenti dialettali," (fluent and faltering, weaved of dialect's modes and accents), she seems to slip into dialect less consciously, especially when recounting particularly dramatic events that evoke an emotional reaction, or when she is reporting what somebody else had said to her.

Both in the introduction and the afterword, Guiducci affirms that she made Rosa the sole author of her own narrative: "ho abolito, dall'ultimo capitolo, la mia presenza, l'intermediario della mia voce che interroga" (I abolished from the last chapter my presence, the intermediary of my voice that interviews).<sup>30</sup> However, while Guiducci sought to abolish her own presence as a mediator between the *source* and the reader, her presence is still very much visible in some interstitial spaces of the text:

"Vuole che le racconto la storia della mia figlia Crocina?" (Do you want me to tell you the story of my daughter Crocina?)<sup>31</sup>

"Adesso vuol sapere delle feste? Di Natale? Sì, sì. Io racconto bene" (Now you want to know about the holidays? Christmas? Yes, yes, I narrate well)<sup>32</sup>

"E allora, *Signora*, io dissi: 'Non mi corco'" (And then, ma'am, I said: 'I won't come to bed')<sup>33</sup>

"Come la chiamate voi? La chiamate pizza, qua" (What do you call it? You call it pizza here)<sup>34</sup>

These examples show how Rosa constantly addresses the *scriptor*, asking questions or clarifications. Thus, even though Guiducci seeks to "cut herself out" of the page, eliminating her interventions from the conversational transcripts, the way the text is conceived and framed nevertheless relies heavily on a dialogic structure.

In *Problems in General Linguistics*, Émile Benveniste conveys the idea of a dialogic identity through the relation between the second- and the first-person pronouns. Here, the other is traditionally understood through the expression in linguistic terms, through the second person pronoun ("you") in relation to the self ("I"). Yet, as Benveniste points out, "you" is devised by "I" and, as he says, "cannot be thought of outside a situation set up by starting with I."<sup>35</sup> In other words, "I" and "you" are reversible, and in fact inextricably linked (both linguistically and semantically); one automatically implies the other, and anyone who speaks the pronoun "I" takes on the mantle of that linguistic presence and identity.

In regard to this idea of dialogic identity, Francesca Parmeggiani, when describing Guiducci's style, makes an interesting connection to Adriana Cavarero's theory of "altruistic ethics of relationship," elaborated on *Tu che mi guardi tu che mi racconti*. Parmeggiani grounds Guiducci's interest in the other in her Marxist theoretical and ideological backgrounds, and argues that she is able to reflect on her own position while also listening to the experiences of others: a form of *autocoscienza*.<sup>36</sup> Cavarero herself alerts the reader to the implicit danger of locating one's own self-meaning within the story of the other; such uniqueness qualifies as ethic the dynamic of recognition. This attention towards single individualities is a shared theoretical practice both in Cavarero and Guiducci's works,

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<sup>30</sup> Guiducci, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Guiducci, 257.

<sup>32</sup> Guiducci, 275.

<sup>33</sup> Guiducci, 232.

<sup>34</sup> Guiducci, 241.

<sup>35</sup> Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 199.

<sup>36</sup> Parmeggiani, "Indagare le donne, indagare se stesse: la scrittura saggistica di Armanda Guiducci," 395.

which Parmeggiani seems to overlook. The point of contact between the two lies in the use of the word “ethics” and how this regulates the relationship between counterparts.

Cavarero explains how revolutionary movements (ranging from traditional communism to the feminism of sisterhood) share a linguistic code based on the inherent morality of pronouns: “Il noi è sempre positivo, il voi è un possibile alleato, il loro ha la faccia dell’antagonista, l’io è sconveniente e il tu, appunto è superfluo.”<sup>37</sup> The ethics of the relationship finds a fundamental principle in the recognition that everybody has her own personal identity and uniqueness, which does not get lost in empathic relational practice, nor in the revolutionary use of “noi”:

Per quanto siano simili larghi tratti della nostra storia di vita, non mi riconosco *in te e*, tanto meno, nella collettività del *noi*. Non dissolvo ambedue in una comune identità né metabolizzo il tuo racconto per costruire il senso del mio. Riconosco, al contrario, che la tua unicità si espone al mio sguardo e consiste in una storia irripetibile di cui desideri il racconto.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, in Guiducci, the dialogue results in a polyphonic text involving distinct individuals. However, because Guiducci organizes, translates, and mediates the narratives of the women she talks to, it is her role and narratological responsibility to orchestrate this polyphony of voices. While the ethnographic approach itself imposes a certain hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee, Guiducci’s vocation towards an ethics of relationship, strives to make the *sources* of *La donna non è gente* maintain their own heteroglot distinctive languages as far as possible, even when translated in a more standardized Italian. The title of the book itself reflects such rhetorical practice; it alludes to the fact that women, especially in those rural areas, are not considered human beings. But because of the polysemy of the term “gente,” the title can also be read differently: “Gente” is a mass noun and contains within it a multiplicity. A woman thus cannot be reduced to a mass noun, because each one maintains her own individuality.

To conclude, the collaboration between Guiducci and the narrators in *La donna non è gente* provides a valuable insight into women’s lives in rural Italy during the 1970s. The ethics informing this collaborative project encourages dialogue based on the respect of reciprocal differences, rooted in diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia become integral parts of the rhetorical strategies that Guiducci implements in order to better describe the peculiarity of women’s conditions in rural areas as opposed to urban areas. The interplay between ethnography and literature at the very core of Guiducci’s style shows the author’s interest in experimenting with different genres. Guiducci was indeed a prolific writer and an important voice of her generation. Further research on the ethics of authorial collaboration in her work will allow us to better contextualize feminist post-68 literature and expand our understanding of women’s everyday lives across Italy, making feminist discourse more inclusive.

### *Works Cited*

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<sup>37</sup> Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi tu che mi racconti*, 118. “The we is always positive, the plural you [*voi*] is a possible ally, the they has the face of an antagonist, the I is unseemly, and the you [*tu*] is, of course, superfluous.” Cavarero, *Relating narratives*, 90-91.

<sup>38</sup> Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi tu che mi racconti*, 120. “No matter how much you are similar and consonant, says this ethic, your story is never my story. No matter how much the larger traits of our life-stories are similar, I still do not recognize myself in you and, even less in the collective we. I do not dissolve both into a common identity, nor do I digest your tale in order to construct the meaning of mine. I recognize, on the contrary, that your uniqueness is exposed to my gaze and consists in an unrepeatable story whole tale you desire.” Cavarero, *Relating Narratives*, 92.



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