

Fertility Politics and Postfordist System in Italy: Precarity, Feminization of Labour and the Biopolitical Womb

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Abstract

To grasp the meaning of fertility politics in an economic context, this research focuses on the shift from a Fordist to a postfordist mode of production through the analysis of the technologies enacted by biopower.

Foucault's notion of technologies of production, are strictly related to the technologies of sign systems, to the technologies of power and to the technologies of the self, as tools of governance and production of meanings in western societies. Analysing fertility politics in contemporary Italy, we try to connect the market, i.e., the postfordist neoliberal economy, to the biopolitical understanding of these technologies. How does the regulation of fertility changes according to the technological arrangement of production? The attempt to answer this question requires an analysis of how technologies are mutually functioning to sustain a certain biopower which, we claim, collapsed in the realm of economy, when feminization of labour became the technology to maintain the neoliberal competition, supplied by the flexibilization of labour force. Also, a certain account of biopower, localizes in the womb the space of exception in which the logic of biopower itself enacts the regulation of populations and defines women as new "neutral" subjects of politics. We claim that this primary position of the womb and of women in the realm of politics over life can be recognized in the phenomenon of feminization of labour. We conclude that the internalization of competition, at stake for the neoliberal economy, works through a form of subjectification which counts on self-regulation of the wombs. Women's position becomes the one of seeking for a successful maternity, which is discouraged by the labour system and promoted by the main discourses about birth-rate and modernization. Women, "those at risk", become also the reproducer of social classes, and this has structural implications with certain constructions of citizenship, race and migration, as of precarization of labour.

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Introduction

The inspiration for this work came to me in a peculiar space, a squat called XM24 in Bologna. I was sitting with some women of my feminist collective. We were talking about motherhood, as an experience first, and suddenly as an opportunity that we felt we did not have access to. In particular what we couldn't explain to ourselves, given our knowledge about the classical biopolitical theories, was why this chance was not available for women in our position: daughters of the middle class, white and Italian citizens. According to the theories I am going to analyse in this thesis, specifically the Foucauldian account of biopower, we should have been those people whose reproduction is at stake for the enhancement of the population of a certain nation called Italy. Our feeling wasn't obviously a bourgeois demand of attention from the state or from the social protection policies. Also, the space I named before is a political laboratory where natives and migrants organize their struggles, from a gender, class and citizenship perspective. Our chat was about a personal frustration, the one of a desire that cannot be realized due to the economic and social context, and a collective debate about the validity of the biopolitical theories on which most of our analysis relied until that precise moment. We felt that an analysis based solely on the consciousness of how the biopower works through the collapse of life into politics was not enough to explain our life condition, recognized by all of us as “precarious”. I promised to my friends and “comrades” to write about it, and to try to connect as many layers as I could in order to take into account the complexity of our condition and of the people around us in that place, in that time.

That opportunity has been this thesis, where I decided to deepen my knowledge about the links of life, politics and economy. The whole thesis is structured in a Foucauldian framework. It's indeed from Foucault's account of technologies that I decided to start my theoretical journey through the meaning of fertility for the economic system and for the biopolitical assessment of society.

In Chapter I, titled “Technologies of production-reproduction: fertility politics and postfordist system”, I immediately try to approach the link between the economic historical ground and two of

the main political interventions on fertility: abortion and Assisted Reproduction Technologies. What I noticed is the temporal correspondence between economic changes (or even reforms) and the approval of certain fertility politics. Through the analysis of the “spirit” of liberalism and neoliberalism, adding the specific postfordist shift in the mode of production, I claim that a regime of competition and risk is required in the contemporary economy, which is based on a precarization of labour and lives. Also, I end targeting fertility as the core of the technologies of production, focusing on the role of women and their wombs in the competitive system.

In the second chapter I try to describe how the biopolitical space that regulates sociality can be localized in women's wombs. Chapter II describes how the “Technologies of Sign Systems” define the techniques that “permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification”.¹ Through Barbara Duden's² and Ruth Miller's work, I try to understand how science and religion developed together a vision of the fetus aimed at displacing it from the woman's body. The pastoral powers, adding the bioethicists, seem indeed to be engaged in a debate that empty women's wombs to let them become a biopolitical space on which to apply a certain regulation. This kind of regulation is not enacted on the whole population, but mainly on women's bodies. It's indeed through the opportunity to procreate, ruled, for example, by the restriction of the access to ART, that certain reproductive spaces are allowed to be fertile.

How is this logic of allowing or discouraging motherhood to be understood through the lens of the main accounts of biopower, taking into account the economic shift to a postfordist system? This is the main topic of Chapter III, “Technologies of Power – Feminization of Labour”. I analyse in this section how the logic of exception, described by Agamben³ as the ultimate rationality of the biopower in ruling who must live and who can die, can be the framework to describe how the same power affects women. In specific, following Ruth Miller's⁴ account of the womb as the main site in which this logic acts, I define with her the womb as a biopolitical space, and woman as the new

¹ Foucault 1988, p. 18.

² Duden 1993.

³ Agamben 1998.

⁴ Miller 2007.

“neutral” subject from whom the biopolitical regulation is constructed. In the second part of the chapter I again connect the biopolitical understanding of regulation with the economic environment. A new stage is described here as a meaningful shift, within the postfordist mode of production: the phenomena of feminization of labour. Through a comparative analysis of the politics about life and the organization of labour, I claim that the neutral subject “woman” on which politics are shaped, is the same subject on which labour takes form in the contemporary market.

It's in Chapter IV about “Technologies of the Self” that the whole analysis finally develops in a multifaceted account of the relation between biopower and economy as creators of an intersected regulation, based on the individual subjectivation, of gender, class and race. Again the concepts of risk and competition become useful to understand how the general competitiveness required by the neoliberal postfordist system, is internalized by the social classes and by the individuals (women, as neutral subjects).

The whole thesis can be only a part of the complex analysis that the contemporary workings of biopower requires. At the same time its aim is to re-affirm the validity of a biopolitical account of the present, re-shaped through my personal and collective knowledge about precarity and about the struggles that in Italy claim this term, precarity, as the unifying symbol of natives and migrant exploited by the postfordist feminization of labour. Moreover, a renewed analysis of the subjects of power, is useful to raise awareness of the position we, as women, are experiencing in the contemporaneity. The hope is to leave a critique which enables empowerment, and to give a proper answer to the desires and frustration we shared sitting in XM24 that spring night.

Technical note:

Feeling like I wrote from a collective perspective and for a collective reason, I am going to use the form “we” along the writing, instead of “I”.

Chapter I: Technologies of production-reproduction, fertility politics and postfordist system

The aim of this chapter is to analyse shifting technologies of production and their consequences for Foucauldian analyses of fertility politics. The Italian context will be taken into account as an example of western economic assessment, meaning of flexibilization and precarization of labour due to the postfordist change of production. Moreover, we are going to link the technologies of production, proper of the neoliberal assessment of economy with the mode of “reproduction”, as to demonstrate the importance of a biopolitical perspective and to contextualize the construction of societies and subjectivities, through the regulation of fertility.

In *Technologies of the Self*,⁵ Foucault defines four kinds of technologies, working as creative forces of the human, or of sociality, interdependently linked: technologies of production, technologies of sign system, technologies of power and technologies of the self. This categorization is not aimed at acknowledging a universal system of power. Instead it's a genealogy of a specific mode of production and reproduction of the western European context (meaning economy, sociality and culture) in the modern age.

According to Nancy Fraser⁶ Foucault's early 1960s and 1970s theorizations⁷ were valid to understand the context of Fordist mode of production and discipline, since these decades represent a shifting in the history of the economy from modernity to a postfordist organization of capital. These decades witness the birth of neoliberalism, a complex corpus of policies for the sake of “free market”,⁸ as Harvey affirms. During the 1960s and the 1970s globalization, or neoliberal or postfordist arrangement of economy and socio-economic relations started to take shape. A meaningful event, which marks the end of the Keynesian Fordist production of technologies is represented by the abandonment of Bretton Woods and the idea of “welfare state”. Again in these same decades Foucault writes his master pieces of social analysis where he develops a biopolitical

⁵ Foucault 1988.

⁶ Fraser 2003.

⁷ See *Madness and Civilization, The Birth of the Clinic, Discipline and Punish, History of Sexuality Vol. I.*

⁸ Harvey 2007, p. 20.

account of modernity. According to Fraser, Foucault's account of modernity should be refined through an analysis of the mutated economical-social environment because of the mutated economical context.

We are going to analyse the analogies between a certain account of neoliberalism as a “conceptual apparatus”,⁹ i.e. a complex set of discursive and political power relations, and postfordism as organization of labour. In order to grasp the meaning of neoliberalism, we are going to follow Foucault, starting from the previous economic and social doctrine: liberalism.

In the *Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault finally adds the influence of the “market” to his account of the shifting from the juridical system of the Hobbesian governmentality to the modern regulation of the population. It's in fact in the classical period, the 18th Century, that the liberal economic theory was developed. Simultaneously:

there was a rapid development of various disciplines -universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the Subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of “biopower”.¹⁰

Foucault's account of *biopolitics* is itself a demonstration of the intrinsic relation between the phenomena of reproduction of the nation, and construction of the nation/population itself, in all its complexity. In a way, we could affirm, the nationalistic framework through which all the economic, social, cultural phenomena of Western Europe can be understood, is the core of the “defence” of the society enacted by the modern biopower, starting from the 18th Century, up to the 20th. As Foucault reminds us in *Society Must be Defended*, governmentality promotes power mechanisms, expressed in “two series: the body-organism-discipline-institutions-series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanism-State. An organic institutional set or the organo-discipline of the institution, and, on the other hand, a biological and Statist set, or bioregulation of the State”.¹¹

⁹ Harvey 2007, p. 5.

¹⁰ Foucault 1979, p.140.

¹¹ Foucault 1997 p 250.

In the very same period of growth of strict relations between disciplinary power over individual bodies and regulatory power over population of the nation, the specific idea of “freedom” developed by the liberal thinkers, took form from the concept of “free exchange”. In other words, that particular power “to foster life or disallow it to the point of death”¹² have been simultaneous to another foundational apparatus, the liberal market.

Across the 18th century, a specific relation between governmentality and economy appears to be contradictory: on the one hand, discipline and regulation aiming at fostering life, or better, at reproducing the population of a certain nation and, on the other hand, a struggle for spaces of free economic exchange from the power of the state. It seems, in other words, that the concept of nation and of belonging to the nation requires an economic logic of exception, from sovereignty, to be fostered - a corpus of ideals of freedom to sustain a population subjugated to the ideals of nationalism and the reproduction of the nation.

In the medieval past the market, according to Foucault, was a space of justice, that means that its factors, like prices and values, had to be justified and legitimated by the governmentality, meaning the former regime of “truth”. With liberal theories governments start to find their legitimation through the market itself at the end of the 18th Century. The validation or the falsification of a “good” government finds its values in the space of “natural” market and its “natural” development. The political economy transforms governmentality into a minimal *raison d'Etat* or frugal governments. The conceptual tool that makes the limitations of the governments a legitimate phenomenon was utilitarianism, to the point that Foucault decides to end the lecture of January 17th 1979, by defining a “phenomenical republic of interests where the utility of the government is based on its capacity to grant a free economical exchange”.¹³

According to Foucault, another important simultaneous phenomenon is represented by the shifting of the concept of Europe and its teleology, which started to be represented as a matter of common wealth through, again, free exchange. This is not to say that the nationalistic framework is retreated

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 138.

¹³ Foucault 2010.

by Foucault in his last lectures, since the phenomena are indeed described as mutually constituted. The free exchange between the states, is reinforced, by national frameworks and national processes of subjectification. Although it is known that, despite the dream of a European free market space, two World Wars took place in the same territories only a century later the raising of naturalism/liberalism. But that specific shifting from the parliamentary experiences of Europe in the inter-war period is not at stake in this research. The analysis of the origin of liberalism, as already remarked, is a conceptual and genealogical tool to understand how neoliberalism differs from it, and how “power's hold over life” changes together with the changes of technologies of production.

The concept of Fordism can help to link liberalism and neoliberalism as historical processes connected to the capitalist mode of production. Fordism, indeed, takes place, according to Fraser, during the “short twentieth century”, that means from 1915 till the end of the cold war, a period spanning the two world wars. It can be defined as a mode of accumulation, specific of the development of capitalism at that time, dependent on an economical assessment in the form of mass production and consumption, and a labour market aimed at fostering the family as the nuclear privileged subject of economy in the western, or the “first world”.¹⁴ Fraser writes that “After World War Two (...) the 'class compromise' (...) incorporated labour as a major player in national polities”¹⁵. The labour forces were organized on a national level while the exploitation of colonial and, then, postcolonial territories comprised the global context. She argues: “[T]he result was a multifaceted social formation. A historically specific phase of capitalism, yet not simply an economic category, Fordism was an international configuration that embedded mass production and mass consumption in national frames”. Moreover, we read, “[i]f fordist discipline was totalizing, it was nevertheless - and this is its second defining feature - *socially concentrated within a national frame*.”¹⁶ Another important characteristic, Fraser argues, is the self-regulatory nature of Fordism,

¹⁴ Fraser 2003, pp. 160-171.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p 162.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

which demands to citizens self-discipline and self-policies in order to reproduce citizenship.¹⁷

According to Fraser most of the characteristics of the Fordist liberal assessment of society have been completely substituted by the new postfordist, globalized capitalist mode of production. It's also true, Fraser affirms, that the shifting from liberalism to postfordist mode of production, challenges the account of biopolitics as it was theorized by Foucault in his first works: the national regulative power is weakened by global economy, and the disciplinary power is substituted by a repressive power which limits the individual autonomy and self regulation processes.¹⁸

In order to explain our vision of this shifting to a globalized, postfordist regulative power, and to understand how they are mutually functional and constructed, we will now go back to Foucault, to demonstrate that, unlike Fraser's analysis, we don't see a weakening of the self-regulative disciplinary power, in the postfordist era. On the contrary, we are going to claim, with Foucault that Western European system, the case we take into account, is more and more aimed at the production of competition, essence of neoliberalism, through specific ways of self-regulative subjectification.

Going back to the shifting from liberalism to neoliberalism, Foucault describes ordoliberalism, the Freiburg Schule, as the theoretical bases of the contemporary German-European neoliberalism. According to ordoliberals, nazism is an antiliberal mass society order, made possible by forms of protectionism and statalism.¹⁹ In other words, the irrationality of the state emerges when the market is not enough strong to rule the state itself. Therefore, as Foucault writes, “the *ordoliberals* say we should completely turn the formula around and adopt the free market as organizing and regulating principle of the state, from the start of its existence up to the last form of its interventions. In other words: a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state”.²⁰ This vision revises the former liberal theories in many ways. There's no longer a concept of natural price, nor a reference for the “true” price, in the free market, and the new economic order doesn't

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 165-166.

¹⁹ Foucault 2010, p.114.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

require freedom for its existence. Instead of “exchange” as a framework for the technologies of production, it's now competition which guarantees economic rationality. Therefore the state is required to produce competition or to be a source of policies and governmentality aimed at granting competitiveness: “competition is therefore an historical objective of governmental art and not a natural given that must be respected”²¹ and “the essence of the market can only appear if it is produced, and it is produced by an active governmentality”,²² writes Foucault. We claim that the theory of separation of domains, especially the political and the economical, is definitively challenged and the boundaries between the two starts to blur. What seems clarified, following the Foucauldian path, is how the contemporary neoliberal assessment of societies, is produced and produces a new kind of meaningful interaction between life, politics and economy.

For Foucault, neoliberalism is something apparently different from what David Harvey defines in his *Brief History of Neoliberalism*.²³ In his book, he insists from the very beginning that free exchange is what is required by global market to states. At the same time the description of the competitive kind of governmentality enacted by global market is useful to understand how competition, can be a basic tool to interpret contemporary biopolicies. According to Harvey, this political economy is rooted in a theoretical belief about the enhancement of humans well being pursued through the promotion of entrepreneurial skills of individuals and a strong accent on private property as a value. Free market and free exchange have to be created and guaranteed by a state which will deal with financial duties, and, at the same time, with repressive institutions, like police, and the promotion of a proper neoliberal legal system. Moreover, those sectors that used to be part of the public interest, like health-system, social protection, social security and cohesion, are more and more involved in processes of privatization and, consequently, are subsumed in a market logic.²⁴ This characterization is not so far from Foucault's account, if, instead of reproducing a discourse about “freedom”, we demystify it from the beginning and define it as a discourse on

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 121.

²³ Harvey 2007.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, chapter 1.

competition. It's interesting how personal freedom is described, again, by Harvey.

“While personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being. This principle extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care, and even pensions (social security has been privatized in Chile and Slovakia, and proposals exist to do the same in the US). Individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one’s own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism).”²⁵

It is interesting how processes of self-regulation are linked by Harvey to the economic assessment.

The account of how individual success and failure are involved in the process of socialization of people in the neoliberal system, can be connected with the biopolitical analysis that Nikolas Rose develops about “biological citizenship”.²⁶ The theoretical account of citizenship in the “advanced liberal countries”, as Rose defines them, is inspired again by Foucauldian works on biopower. In *The Politics of Life Itself. Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* Nikolas Rose speaks about “New Micropolitics of a Molecular Biology of Control”, describing a shifting in the categorization/subjectivation of races and criminals. The context he delimits is the Late 21st century, in the so called advanced liberal western democracies.²⁷

The example Rose brings is about molecularization of races and the process of optimization of human race, starting from the foucauldian account of racial science across 19th and 20th Century. The development of scientific research, at that time, was highly “regulatory”, it was indeed based on practices aimed at defining a “molar” level of understanding races: censuses, classifications, to define a stable molar level, a stable body-population eugenics. Rose claims that a shift in contemporary sciences can be recognized in the development of Molecular Genomic Biology of the 21st Century, where, the comprehension and regulation of the molecular level of race develops through different practices such as screenings and databases is at stake. This means that the focus of

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 65-66.

²⁶ Rose 2006.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, chapters 6, 8, Afterwords.

science and politics shifts from the population to a fragmented individuals, at the level of their molecular biological identity. The normative discourses that enable this power-knowledge system of subjectification are based on “optimization”, susceptibility to illness and treatability of complex diseases.

Rose writes: “[r]ace now signifies an unstable space of ambivalence between the molecular level of the genome and the cell, and the molar level of classifications in terms of population group, country of origin, cultural diversity, and self-perception”.²⁸ Rose then describes the specific style of thought of contemporary biomedical genetics as aimed at making the concept of race, or human race, unstable and susceptible to manipulation. The categorizations that take place within the scientific technology of knowledge production enable biopolicies aimed at “enhancing the human family”, through a shifting in the process of subjectification of the patients to a definition of pre-patients, “those at risk”. It's at this point that the concept of biosocialities becomes essential for Rose's theorization. The new medicine creates an economy of hope, a growing claim for visibility from those pre-patients, or those patients organized in groups of interests or lobbies who recognize that “in a politic of numbers being measured is to be politically noticed”.²⁹ This process should explain the raising of new biosocialities based on advocacy and claiming rights on the basis of kinship, ethnicity, race, that means claiming for an active biocitizenship. In Rose's perspective self regulative power enables a space for freedom and advocacy, we would say a liberal approach for the single individuals or their organizations, which challenges the regulatory/disciplinary power of the past and its strict functioning.

We will see in the next chapters how technologies of the self are involved in the process of “becoming postfordist”, in particular about the process of subjectification of motherhood and reproductive rights, through the precarization of labour system and the fertility politics.

For the remainder of this chapter we will show how technologies of production in the neoliberal European context changed, and how they can be linked to the shifting of technologies of

²⁸ Rose 2006, p. 161.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 166.

reproduction. We recognized, up to now, specific qualities of contemporaneity. A postfordist mode of production, a governmentality aimed at the production and repetition of competitions, a scientific specific way of targeting and defining races, through the promotion of self-regulation and rhetoric of “optimization”. How are these experiences intertwined?

All the changes we named, in different areas, took place in the last part of the twentieth century in the same territories. In specific, we are now going to analyse the territory of Italy, a nation-state which experienced postfordist regime change in the latter part of the 21st Century. That means, according to Fraser, exactly when fordist neoliberalism started to be replaced by a postfordist repressive neoliberal industrial context.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian Communist imprisoned by the fascists, was among the first to recognize the potential political and cultural significance of “an ultra-modern form of production and of working methods --- such as is offered by the most advanced American variety, the industry of Henry Ford” (...). Through intensified exploitation of labour, the system of Fordist mass production might counter capitalism's endemic tendency toward a falling rate of profit. The institutionalization of such a system of production required, Gramsci thought, a combination of force and persuasion: a political regime in which trade unions would be subdued, workers might be offered a higher real standard of living, and the ideological legitimation of this new kind of capitalism would be embodied in cultural practices and social relations extending far beyond the workplace. Gramsci called attention to the “long process” of socio-political change through which a Fordist capitalism might achieve some measure of institutional stability.³⁰

During the 1945-75 years, Western economy developed as the protagonist of a virtuous circle of production and consumption. This development was territorially limited, or promoted: the economic and political hegemony of United States was confirmed by two facts: the influence they exerted on economic growth in Europe through the Marshall Plan and the final seal on the dollar as the international rate exchange.³¹ At the same time the increase of productivity and wages grew proportionally, according to Keynesian organization of labour: the redistribution of capital increases the products demand. This dynamic growth is guaranteed by the link between growth in output and employment growth on the one hand, and productivity growth and wage growth (or income) on the

³⁰ Rupert, forthcoming.

³¹ Ginsborg 2003.

other. The Taylorist-Fordist paradigm bases its success on the dynamics of growth, on the project of full employment. The trade unions become in the decade '60s and '70s more and more influential on the labour policies and struggles for the access to civil rights and citizenship. The right to work, became a symbol of improvement of the living conditions of the workers.

If, on the one hand, Fordism needs to balance its dynamic system through strong regulatory power and standardization of behaviours, on the other hand the 1970s are a decade of social struggles and reforms in the aim of social and labour protection. The highly rigid, hierarchical social structure was supported by disciplinary institutions like patriarchal family, school system that tended to divide students according to their possible future as manager or workers, gender divide between a masculine militarization and a feminine “care work” in the houses, an absence of social mobility.³² As the Fordist organization of labour started to be challenged by international economical crisis, Italy was governed by centre-left governments and the “hot autumn” (1969) obtained in the next years, social and labour reforms. This phenomena can be read as a “delayed” Keynesian approach to labour system, or a consequence of a specific political context which sees the influence of the largest Communist Party (PCI) and communist Trade Union (CGIL) of western Europe, combined with a season of social struggles.

By the end of the 1970s Italy had established a labour market organized around great obstacles for workers dismissal, insurance protections for the unemployed, extensive pensions and health care benefits, and a strong union role. Notably, labor policies were especially strong in terms of occupational illness and disability, providing for full sick leave benefits (...). Also, by the end of the 1970s, other laws were passed to improve wage indexing, regulate youth employment, expand industrial mobility, and provide for vocational training.³³

Moreover “maternity leave” was regulated in the law 1204 of 1971, and two new laws, two of the most important for the history of women in Italy, legalized divorce (1974) and abortion (1978).

For the sake of the analysis of production and reproduction relation, we will now take into account the abortion law as an example of what Rose defines biosocial citizenship advocacy, in the frame of the blurred borders, described by the author, between freedom and regulation. We will then try to

³² *Ibidem.*

³³ Molè 2008, p.21.

understand the connection of this law with neoliberal governmentality of the economic history in which Fordism is the specific mode of technologies production.

Since the beginning of the 1970s women started to form feminist groups and collectives, practising abortion on other women. From the beginning of 1975 abortion becomes a political issue, in particular since the Radical Party started to collect signatures to promote a referendum aimed at legalizing abortion. On December of the same year, a huge demonstration in Rome was organized by feminist collectives from Rome, and other proletarian, communist, autonomous feminist groups. In the parliament the discussion started in 1977 and by 1978, Law 194 was approved. The title of the law is “Norms for the Social Protection of Motherhood and about the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy”, and it regulates the access to abortion for women in the first 90 days of pregnancy.

“The individual’s “right to health” thus likewise conflated in Italy with collective notions of “social protection” and “motherhood.” As Calloni notes, the law allows for a situation in which, a woman can be administered a voluntary interruption of pregnancy in the first 90 days of her pregnancy, when circumstances can prevent the continuation of her pregnancy, [when] birth [or] mothering/motherhood put in serious danger her physical or mental health, in relation to her health state, economical/social/family conditions, circumstances in which the conception has happened, [and when there are] expectations of anomalies or malformations by the conceived. The woman can turn to a public consulting structure, a socio-medical structure, fully licensed by the region, or to a physician in attendance.³⁴

Despite the claims of feminist groups most aimed at de-criminalizing abortion, the law became a double-edged weapon, ruling strictly and bureaucratically the medicalization of women who choose to interrupt pregnancy.

What connects abortion regulation and partial decriminalization, with the political economy of the 1970s? If we define women's organizations of the time as biosocial advocacy groups we can affirm that a claim for civil rights became a tool for the state to express a regulatory power. The censuses became easier and illegal abortions were mostly absorbed by the legal medical practice under the rhetoric of “social protection”. It seems, with this example, that the fordist mode of production allowed a sort of “liberal” (in the foucauldian sense) approach to the issue of reproduction, more

³⁴ Miller 2007, pp. 45-46.

than a neoliberal one. If neoliberalism produces competition instead of liberal free spaces, if this is the main difference between the two, we can affirm that the 1970s represents a shifting point in the regulation of the social environment. A shifting that can be recognized by taking into account the difference between a fordist and, as we will see analysing another Law n. 40/2004, a postfordist neoliberal system. The rhetoric of “optimization” or of enhancement of the public health works in the analysis of abortion law as it represents a social protection act, and, at the same time, a strict regulatory power aimed at protecting women from the threats of illegal abortions.

Ruth Miller describes the legalization of abortion in Italy as something different from a “liberal” approach to the right of “consent”. It's not, in other words, a conquer of women of a space of freedom from the power of the state, but, instead, it is intertwined with the dissolution of the life into politics, and, according to Miller, the demonstration that a biopolitical space is defined: the womb.

As I will suggest over the remainder of this section, however, given the ways in which bodily integrity has been interpreted, this decriminalization of abortion in fact inscribed political space onto reproductive space with far more success than the criminalization of abortion had done before. To the extent that abortion was linked even more explicitly, first, to contraception and, second, to sterilization, for example, the concept of reproductive space was privileged over the concept of the reproducing individual. Put another way, when contraception and sterilization are understood within the same rhetorical framework as abortion, it is not the product of reproduction (which may or may not exist)—or the person doing the reproducing (who may or may not be active)—that is at issue. Instead it is, again, the arena in which this process may or may not be happening. Likewise, to the extent that criminalizing abortion is seen as an attack on bodily integrity in this rhetoric, it reinforces the importance of first, delimiting, and then, of protecting, this same biopolitical space.³⁵

The womb, at stake for the neoliberal fordist context, has to be regulated by the state, in order to maintain a power to make live or to let die. For women, access to abortion, becomes an issue of regional governmentality of public health, social actors, present in the clinics, and in medicine.

But it's still the molar body, at the level of the population, that is regulated through this law. It's still in the aim of a macro-regulation, it's still in the style of census, more then it is, to use Rose's words,

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

in the style of thought of databases which collect genetic information. The process of decriminalization of abortion, on one side, helps to define the biopolitical space of exception called the womb, and, at the same time, it seems to happen in the spirit of the time, in the spirit of what we described as a “fixed” socio-economical assessment, i.e.. Fordist time. Moreover, power works on this issue in the way was described by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, a silent power:

it is a power that only has the force of the negative on its side, a power to say no; in no condition to produce, capable only of posting limits, it is basically anti-energy. This is the paradox of its effectiveness: it is incapable of doing anything, except to render what it dominates incapable of doing anything either, except for what this power allows it to do. And finally, it is a power whose model is essentially juridical, centred on nothing more than the statement of the law and the operation of taboos. All the modes of domination, submission, and subjugation are ultimately reduced to an effect of obedience.³⁶

Law 194, indeed, is not an “abortion law” in its title, but a law about social protection and voluntary interruption of pregnancy. It's a law that doesn't address directly, but regulates sexuality through a juridical tool, stating what is permitted and what is prohibited, reinforcing the taboo of abortion, represented by its previous criminalization, instead of breaking it. It's a law that maintains its power because it require obedience by women, based on the medicalization of their wombs.

The social and political process that lead to the approval of Law 194 cannot be ignored, and it's important to recall that the struggles of women's movements can be considered a struggle for freedom from the State's power, as it is demonstrated by the request of decriminalization.

The process that thirty years later, lead to the Law 40, for now only named in the previous paragraphs, is of opposite nature: from a space of freedom from the state's power, to a strict regulation by the state. Let us make a temporal jump to the year 2004, when regulation and discipline of reproduction took the shape of Law 40/2004 about Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). The historical economical context of this law is neoliberal postfordism, associated with social and cultural context that brings a renewed public rhetoric about natality, aimed at denouncing the threat of “extinction” of Italian population.

³⁶ Foucault 1990, p. 85.

Neoliberal postfordism in Italy witnessed a fast and radical shift in the organization of labour, due to different causes, two of them represented by the fragmentation and flexibility of a technologized work and the institution of the European Union. I will demonstrate that flexibility, or *precariousness*, and “risk”, as theorized by Nikolas Rose are two key concept to understand the link between a repressive law about reproductive rights and postfordist neoliberal bio-economy.

Let's briefly summarize, following Molé,³⁷ the development of labour regulation from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. By the beginning of the decades important privatizations and decentralization of powers were required by the European Union: “[a]djustments were made according to various features of Italy's demographics, such as the problem of pension spending, given the high ratio of elderly to working people”.³⁸ The issue of the “social cohesion”, that is the “rallying point around which to forge policies for addressing economic and demographic trends related to ageing, birthing and immigration”,³⁹ became one of the main discourses about regulation of life and economy. That means that an overpopulation of elderlies in the labour market, and, in general, in the demography of Italy, was one of the bases to approach problems connected to unemployment and productivity, or, better, competitiveness of Italy in the global economy.

In 1992 the *scala mobile*, a tool to balance wages and the cost of life, was abolished. In 1997 Treu Law promoted forms of labour contract different from the fixed-term contract (*Contratto a tempo indeterminato*), opening the space for the flexibilization of labour. After different requirements from E.U. to Italian governments, aimed at solving the problem of unemployment, in 2003 Berlusconi's right wing government, approved the “White Book (Libro Bianco), also known as the Biagi Laws or Law 30, which was a series of policies to regulate Italy's labour market, encouraging corporatist agreements and increasing flexibility in the labour market through the creation of an array of new atypical and short-term employment contracts from consulting to leasing to internship”,⁴⁰ writes Molé. What is important for our understanding of the new organization of labour as linked to

³⁷ Molé 2003.

³⁸ Molé 2003, p. 22.

³⁹ Krause 2007, p. 352.

⁴⁰ Molé 2003, p. 23.

fertility politics, is that maternity rights disappeared or became very difficult to obtain in the neoliberal, flexible renovation of labour rights based on contracts. It's true that maternity leave remains a right for the employee with fixed-term contract. It's instead a consequence for the new generations the very fact of precariousness, as a term that describes flexibility from the perspective of the workers.⁴¹

This entrapment atypically affects the process of family formation, which tends to be postponed or reduced (...). It also affects women's movements in and out of paid work over family formation. Indeed, (...) strong maternity and parental leave provisions only apply to employees in Italy. Self-employed women and those with pseudo-self-employment contracts are little protected in terms of both duration and income replacement. (...) They risk non-renewal of the contract.⁴²

The neoliberal needs of flexibility seem to be fulfilled by the de-regulation, or precarization, of labour, with specific consequences on reproductive rights. That means that the influence of postfordist neoliberal system is involved in the regulation of reproduction, therefore, reproduction itself becomes an issue crossed by the technologies of production, and how they influence the biopolitical governmentality of the social environment.

At the same time appeals for reproduction addressed to Italian women, start to appear in the public sphere. It seems an anachronistic appeal, according to the molecularization of the biopower and the shifting from the national to the global context we previously described. Addressing this issue through the perspective of the “risk” and the over-pathologization of the population it will be maybe clarify how Italian population is affected nowadays by apparently contradictory technologies of reproduction.

In the second half of the 20th century, a new alliance formed between political aspirations for a healthy population and personal aspirations to be well: health was to be ensured by instrumentalizing anxiety and shaping the hopes and fears of individuals and families for their own biological destiny. The very idea of health was re-figured – the will to health would not merely seek the avoidance of sickness or premature death, but would encode an optimization of one's corporeality to embrace a kind of overall ‘well-being’ – beauty, success, happiness, sexuality and much more. It was this enlarged will to health that was amplified and instrumentalized by new strategies of advertising and marketing in the rapidly

⁴¹ *Ibidem.*

⁴² Solera 2009, p.79.

developing consumer market for health – non-prescription medicines, health insurance, private health care, healthy food, vitamins and dietary supplements and the whole range of complementary, alternative and ‘self-health’ practices. By the start of the 21st century, hopes, fears, decisions and life-routines shaped in terms of the risks and possibilities in corporeal and biological existence had come to supplant almost all others as organizing principles of a life of prudence, responsibility and choice.⁴³

In the upcoming chapters, we will explore how self-regulation and self-health discourses shape subjectivity. For now, we'll underline that a discourse about “risk of extinction”, in the case of Italy, appears at a first sight an old biopolitical discursive practice, easily linked to a racist propaganda. It is, in fact, part of it, as the appeals for an increase of the birth-rate are mostly directed to the southern borders of European Union, i.e. Italy and Spain. The same countries whose anti-immigration laws can be easily compared with the racial order promoted by the fascist regimes of the twentieth centuries.

But, if we take into account the whole context, there's another factor which seems important: appeals for a renewed natality are not consequently followed by natality politics. On the contrary, as we described, the rights for maternity are precarious and Law 40/2004 will help to reveal how different the postfordist regime of making lives and letting die is from the Fordist one. This will also demonstrate that the propaganda about risk seeks to establish a rational system which aspires to eliminate the space of comprehending contradictions.

Precarity and risk seem to be intrinsically linked in the consequences of the first law about ART. The necessity of regulation of ART was claimed by different parts, denouncing a “wild west” scientific and genetic medical environment.⁴⁴ Actually, the appeal to “civilization” or to overcome the backwardness of Italy have been used from both sides: by those who supported the law and by those who struggle against it. The law, instead of regulating access to ART, made it strict and inaccessible for many women and couples, forced to look for clinics in foreign countries. In fact:

The law prohibits cryopreservation of embryos, limiting to three the number of embryos that can be implanted in each single cycle; it forbids assisted

⁴³ Rose 2006, pp 17-18.

⁴⁴ Krause 2007, p. 356.

reproduction using a third party in any way, as well as access to reproductive technology for couples who carry genetic diseases with risk of transmission. Moreover, the law prohibits scientific research on embryos. Therefore what we now have in Italy is a set of regulations that places strict and remarkable limits on the use of assisted reproduction techniques.⁴⁵

As we affirmed before, it's not the nature of the embryo at stake, but the womb as a biopolitical space, and the regulation of life in the postfordist era, through a self-disciplinary regime.

The law begins with the statement that recourse to ART is allowed only in order to assist the solution of reproductive problems arising as a result of human sterility or infertility, so as to guarantee the rights of all the involved subjects, including the conceptus (art 1). After this initial statement, the law lists a long series of prohibitions. In particular, recourse to assistance from a third party is expressly forbidden. The law confirms that couples who carry genetic diseases with risk of transmission, may not access ART. In any case such couples would not be able to seek such help because the law makes it mandatory to implant all embryos at the same time without preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD).⁴⁶

In the age of screenings and databases, during the rising of Italian neoliberal system, one year later from the reform of labour through the Biagi Law, Law 40 in facts discourages access to ART and determines the destiny of couples as “infertile”. Whenever a couple needs a preimplantation test because parents are carrying genetic diseases, the Law states that ART is not permitted for them. The Law has been named “religious” and accused of being the product of a catholic mentality, anachronistic and not civilized.⁴⁷ It's true that a sort of morality promoted by the Vatican is visible in this Law, but it's also true that the same government which approved Biagi Law, promoting appeals and laws to increase natality, like the “baby bonus”,⁴⁸ and defined as close to the neoliberal spirit of the time, made clear that there is no clarity about which pregnancies they want to promote, and which to discourage.

Going back to the Foucauldian intuition about the governmental production and promotion of competition, the interplay between risk and precarity seems to be functionally strategic. The womb is a biopolitical space, as we will describe deeper in the chapter about the technologies of power, through which a sort of competition is projected on the lives of people, of women. The technologies

⁴⁵ Fineschi 2005, p. 536.

⁴⁶ Fineschi 2005, p. 537

⁴⁷ Krause 2007, p. 358.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

of production and reproduction seem to be very interrelated and useful to understand how the same government, as we described, produced appeals for maternity and *de facto* discouraged motherhood. What we tried to demonstrate along this *excursus* and temporal jump is that the different approach of governmentality seems to represent a profound change in biopolicies, very much related to the technologies of production promoted by the postfordist neoliberal system. We although accepted the Foucauldian theory about the specific quality of neoliberal governmentality as a producer of competition or guarantor of a competitive environment. Instead of producing spaces of freedom, the juridical and political power seems to be much more engaged in giving shape to new forms of regulations and disciplines. We also affirmed that the shifting from a neoliberal discourse to neoliberalism as described by Foucault, can be traced through the economical assessment of society from a Fordist-Keynesian to a postfordist organization of the labour. Law 40 demonstrate that the power regulates reproduction in a way in which the access to it is narrower and competitive, at the same time the dismantle of welfare system puts women and their wombs in a new specific position. Even if self-management can be seen as an optimistic tool to promote a collective responsibility, for example “biosocialities” in “the service of health and life”,⁴⁹ it can also represent a promotion of competition between human beings in the name of survivor. But the importance of the individual capacity to survive is the aspect that connects an individualistic ethics to the competition of survival: a self-definition of self-surviving in a bioeconomy that strictly localizes this chance, this dream, in the land where this has to be thought as possible: the postfordist west, the postfordist economic system.

⁴⁹ Rose 2006, p.258.

Chapter II: Technologies of Sign Systems

Foucault's notion of "technologies of sign systems", as we said, are strictly related to the technologies of production, to the technologies of power and the technologies of the self, as tools of governance and production of meanings in western societies. They define the techniques that "permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification".⁵⁰ As a "matrix of practical reason",⁵¹ they represent the "truth games related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves".⁵² Barbara Duden describes, in a brief pamphlet titled "Disembodying Women, Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn"⁵³, the historical development of the representation of maternity through the technological shifting of science. We would claim that her analysis is very much related with the Foucauldian framework, once we recollect her thoughts about the history of scientific research and her definition of "thought collective". Specifically, Duden refers to Fleck's ideas about scientific observation:

A truly isolated investigator is impossible (...). An isolated investigator without bias and tradition, without forces of mental society acting upon him, and without the effect of the evolution of that society, would be blind and senseless. Thinking is a collective activity (...). Its product is a certain picture, which is visible only to anybody who takes part in this social activity, or a thought which is also clear to the members of the collective only. What we do think and how we do see depends on the thought-collective to which we belong. (...) "To see" means: to re-create a picture, a suitable moment created by the mental collective to which one belongs.⁵⁴

It is indeed in the aim of Duden to re-consider the history of scientific technologies involved in the knowledge production about pregnancy, from the perspective of its social framework. Moreover, the importance of rendering visible the invisible matter, for instance the fetus in the womb of the mother, is recognized as one of the most important shifts of scientific research. We find it more useful to connect Duden's analysis with the Foucauldian concept of *episteme*, which represents a broader perception of the links between scientific production and society, than Fleck's analysis of

⁵⁰ Foucault 1988, p. 18.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ Duden 1993.

⁵⁴ Fleck 1986, pp. 77-78.

thought collectives within the solely scientific context. By *episteme* Foucault means “the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practice that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems”.⁵⁵ The shifting registered by Foucault in the western scientific episteme is about the birth of “taxonomy” as the leading scientific method from the 17th Century. Taxonomy as a science and linguistic/symbolic order of reality, becomes “a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse”,⁵⁶ it is, indeed, a way to classify the visible characteristics of the species, as in Carl Linnaeus *Sistema Naturae*. It is interesting for our research how the “visual” scientific approach demonstrates, since its early research on “human” bodies, a specific gendered perspective, and how this process of “unveiling” the hidden matter is intrinsically intertwined with the creation of knowledge on pregnancy and the womb. Duden's assertion, that “‘reality’ corresponding to the image is 1) scientifically created as a fact; 2) played up by the media; 3) literally swallowed by women”,⁵⁷ is explicative of the approach we will delineate on the scientific creation of knowledge about the womb.

The links between the thinkers, Duden and Foucault, are the focus of the first part of this chapter, in which the technologies of sign systems will be the starting point for the analysis of broader signifiers like “life”, “modernity/postmodernity”, “hope” and “risk”. For “technologies of sign systems” we mean, in the beginning, those scientific tools aimed at uncovering hidden matter, while constructing a representation they give form to the matter itself. Also, from a biopolitical perspective, we aim at contextualizing the scientific technological signification of reality into the broader concept of technologies as, in Nikolas Rose's words, “any assembly structured by a practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal (...) hybrid assemblages of knowledge, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions and assumptions about human beings”.⁵⁸ In our context, the broader approach to technologies will show how fertility politics in contemporary Italy,

⁵⁵ Foucault 1972, p.211.

⁵⁶ Foucault 1972, p. 131.

⁵⁷ Duden 1993, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Rose 2006, pp. 16-17.

from the medical management of maternity to the laws that regulate assisted reproduction, are mutually functional to support the social and economical needs of the biopower. That means that the sign systems of “life” or “modernity” will be linked, in this dissertation, to the postfordist regulation of fertility itself.

We find a large production of knowledge related to the technologies of sign systems, in the first Foucauldian theorization, for instance in the *Birth of the Clinic*, which is a book about “space, about language, and about death; it is about the act of seeing, the gaze”.⁵⁹ The sign systems can be considered the outcome, or the reason for the existence, of the scientific and medical objective knowledge which permits the doctors to “use the symptom as a map towards Truth”.⁶⁰ As we know from *The Archeology of Knowledge*, “life” itself became a subject of objective knowledge. That is the starting point for Foucault,⁶¹ drawing a line between taxonomy as a science and the linguistic/symbolic order of reality: “words applied to things themselves”, or “a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse”⁶² are two significant expressions to represent the ontological process, created within science, of naming and making live. In the “Classical” period of the 17th and 18th centuries, the new method to acknowledge and understand reality was taxonomy, and its methodology was focused on the description of the “visual”, that is to say a classification of phenomena or matter according to visual characteristics. In the *Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault locates the emergence of visual, gaze centred medicine in “the last years of the eighteenth century,” the Enlightenment,⁶³ which is the same time period that is described by Foucault as the birth of liberalism. The value of liberty, the rhetoric about freedom of scientists in defining “truths” about human bodies, is historically embedded in broader political, economical and social changes. The market as a “natural” regime of truth”⁶⁴ seems to be the environment in which scientific truths about human nature and human body become systemically organized in the clinics held by specialists.

⁵⁹ Foucault 1963, p. IX.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. XI.

⁶¹ Foucault 1973, pp.125-165.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 131.

⁶³ Foucault 1963, p. XII.

⁶⁴ Foucault 2010, lesson of 17th January 1979.

“The clinic figures, then, as a structure that is essential to scientific coherence and also to the social utility and political purity of the new medical organization. It represents the truth of that organization in guaranteed liberty”.⁶⁵ We will see later, how this territorialization of medicine has been theorized through the acknowledgment of the postmodern reterritorialization of the medical discipline, through its technological revisions.⁶⁶

In order to clarify how the “game of truth” affected the representation and the conceptualization of human bodies, through a gender perspective, we can follow the Foucauldian theories about the clinic together with Duden's description of scientific process of signification of the fetus. As we said, the Classical period represents the paradigmatic shifting in scientific methodology: “the eye becomes the depository and source of clarity; it has the power to bring a truth to light that it receives only to the extent that it has brought it to light”.⁶⁷

Barbara Duden describes the shifting of the role of images, for example, as a paradigmatic change of the scientific approach to the body itself. Studying primarily the medical production of knowledge about pregnancy across the centuries, she claims that since the 18th century scientific images have shifted from the role of *illuminatio*, to the role of *illustratio*. That means that the reproduction of images of the internal womb of women starts to be further from the previous ideogrammatic approach, in which the representation was a supplement of the written part. She takes the example of anatomy, and its inquiry about the womb. Back to the 12th Century Hildegard von Bingen wrote an anatomic description of reproduction which included miniatures of his ideas. The role of miniatures was to support his thesis about reproduction, and give to it a “spiritual” meaning.⁶⁸ Foucault would claim in this case, according to the *Order of The Things*, that *episteme* of ancient science is as far from the sign systems itself as any specific quality of the Classical Age. In the text we find a description of the shifting of the sign systems in these terms:

‘The sign encloses two ideas, one of the thing representing, the other of the thing

⁶⁵ Foucault 1963, p. 70.

⁶⁶ Rose 2006.

⁶⁷ Foucault 1963, p. XIII.

⁶⁸ Duden p. 41.

represented; and its nature consists in exciting the first by means of the second'. This dual theory of the sign is in unequivocal opposition to the more complex organization of the Renaissance; at that time, the theory of the sign implied three quite distinct elements: that which was marked, that which did the marking, and that which made it possible to see in the first the mark of the second; and this last element was, of course, resemblance: the sign provided a mark exactly in so far as it was 'almost the same thing' as that which it designated. It is this unitary and triple system that disappears at the same time as 'thought by resemblance', and is replaced by a strictly binary organization.⁶⁹

Far from opening a question about whether or not the raw material of the visual representation is a sign itself, what is useful to understand from this description is the shifting of the role of representation itself. The representation in the Classical Age changes from being signifier of "resemblance", or in Duden's words, an *illuminatio*, and starts to be a modern signifier, or *illustratio*. That means that is no longer a tool of representation of a fixed natural or spiritual truth, but it becomes part of scientific language, it becomes a meaningful part of the sign system, which Foucault describes as a binary organization of knowledge committed to creating the proper language to connect the things and the words, to construct the truth itself.

Going back to the techniques used by scientists for anatomical purposes, Duden reminds us of the appearance of the first encyclopedia, written by William Hunter in 1774, titled *Anatomia Uteri Gravidæ*. The novelty that this book represents resides in the technique of copperplate engraving, previously supported by another scientist, William Ivens. The technique of producing images imprinted on material matrixes serves to represent the anatomy of the body in a more realistic manner. In the introduction of the encyclopedia, Hunter describes the technique as a "universal language. (...) It conveys clearer ideas of the most natural objects than words can express".⁷⁰ For Foucault a "representation in its peculiar essence is always perpendicular to itself: it is at the same time *indication* and *appearance*; a relation to an object and a manifestation of itself. From the Classical age, the sign is the *representativity* of the representation in so far as it is *representable*."⁷¹

In the laboratories of clinics, what is at stake is the invention of "a language without words,

⁶⁹ Foucault 2012, p. 70.

⁷⁰ Duden 1993, p.39.

⁷¹ Foucault 2012, p.72.

possessing an entirely new syntax, to be formed: a language that did not owe its truth to speech but to the gaze alone”⁷² According to Duden, it is a technique for the construction of the gaze, for the observation which makes the body a “showcase”.⁷³

The womb underwent another paradigmatic moment of shifting in representation, during the Classical time: marked by the 1799 publication of *Icones Embryonum Humanorum* by Samuel Thomas von Sömmerring which includes two tables representing the fetus, yet unnamed fetus, in 20 figures. It is the first representation of the development of the fetus, the very first attempt to reveal the content of the woman's womb in its becoming. Like Foucault, Duden recognizes that the history of the “fetus” is the history of a visualization. In her book she tries to compare the experience of pregnancy for women through medical interference and also, how the fetus became a public fetus, through a process of disembodiment from the womb.

Across the 19th and 20th centuries several technologies were implemented in order to penetrate the woman's womb and make the embryo visible.

The invisibility of the unborn seems to be protected by a widespread taboo. In the nineteenth century, however, physicians endeavored to break it. The first expression of the attempt was the stethoscope. (...) By 1880 (...) the instrument was baptized in analogy to the micro- and telescope and named a “stethoscope”, a device for looking into the breast. (...) Toward the end of the nineteenth century, X rays reached for the fetus.(...) The six-months embryo was seen as a tentative skeleton. In the 1930s, biomedical methods certified its presence even before the midpoint of pregnancy. (...) But only in the 1960s was there a break- through the embryonic visualization. The embryo appeared as an echo outline of inaudible “sound”. Where the tissue was more dense, it reflected the sound waves with a different intensity. These differences were measured and digitally assembled, appearing at first as a very rough black and white shadow.⁷⁴

The X-Rays, the *foetoscopia in situ*, the ultrasound scans: the development of scientific technology, according to Duden, represented an attempt to make visible what was hidden or microscopic. Duden places the famous representation of the embryo which appeared in *Life* in 1965 as the last moment of this scientific paradigm. She recognizes the image of a fluctuating embryo on the cover of the journal, as the ultimate detachment of the concept of reproduction from the body of the

⁷² Foucault 1963, p. 69.

⁷³ Duden 1993, pp. 34-42.

⁷⁴ Duden 1993, p. 32.

woman. The history, from the shifting in scientific analysis of pregnancy in the 18th century, becomes a history of the technological development of a skeptical science, particularly in its etymological sense of dissection and representation of dissected bodies.

Let us now follow what Duden describes as the Nilsson's effect, the shifting in the representation of life through macro-photography. In fact, a second introduction in 1990, shows something very different from the previous focus on “the birth of human life”⁷⁵ through the images of a fetus like a small baby sucking his toe, instead using the spermatozoa photographed in their rush to reach the egg. The microscopic is rendered visible by images and the caption is as descriptive of the image as the other way round. In the 1990s, Duden reads something different when the invisible becomes represented. *Life* claim to present “...the first pictures ever seen of how *life* begins”.⁷⁶ Blastocites, infinitely small interactions between cells in the uterus are not, according to Duden, a representation, but a fictional image created by a technically specific light, which claims to be a “reproduction” of the phenomena instead of a representation. Duden thinks that we are testimonies, through these images, of a trend of “misplaced concreteness” meaning that our subjectivities are dragged to perceive as a true sign of “life”, what is invisible and detached from the experience of pregnancy itself. Because of the development of medical technologies, the mother disappears behind an artificial combination of data, which creates a picture of the embryo: created by science, managed by mass-media, then subsumed by moral doctrines and women, too.⁷⁷

Now we see what we are shown. We have gotten used to being shown no matter what, within or beyond the limited range of human sight. This habituation to the monopoly of visualization-on-command strongly suggests that only those things that can in some way be visualized, recorded, and replayed at will are part of reality. (...) the result is a strange mistrust of our own eyes, a disposition to take as real only that which is mechanically displayed in a photograph, a statistical curve, or a table.⁷⁸

In Foucauldian terms, the new techniques of representation of the biological matter, permit the discursive construction of a truth game, in which the signs become part of a system of power-

⁷⁵ Duden 1993, p. 11

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 11-24.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

knowledge: the birth of life, or life itself. We will go back later to the meaning of life in the discursive construction of fertility politics, specifically in Italy. What is at stake now, is to understand how the detachment of the fetus from the woman happens through technological signification, or even creation, of the matter.

After the recollection of the technological development of the scientific gaze toward pregnancy, what remains in the main discursive construction of fertility is a “public fetus”,⁷⁹ and the public space of the womb.⁸⁰ The destiny of the “public fetus”, Duden suggests, was to become, through the scientific development, a sign of life. In particular for one of most relevant pastoral power in Western Europe, the Vatican Church, the embryo, and its development into a fetus,⁸¹ became during the 21st century the core of religious and ethical concept of “life”.

In Italy, in particular, the Catholic Church has always been the main pastoral power, and also through its political presence inside the governmental history of the country and its role as a State, the Vatican has been granted of hegemonic cultural role in public institutions like schools, universities, hospitals and social services, economy, etc. Far from recollecting the entire history of the official position of the Church about the beginning of life, which would only outline a substantial debate about when and how the embryo gets a soul, our focus is now on the interplay between religion and science in the construction or interpretation of the sign systems. Also, as we read in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a Vatican organ, titled “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation”:

The terms “zygote”, “pre-embryo”, “embryo” and “foetus” can indicate in the vocabulary of biology successive stages of the development of a human being. The present Instruction makes free use of these terms, attributing to them an identical ethical relevance, in order to designate the result (whether visible or not)

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁸⁰ The woman's body seems to become a paradox in itself, detached from pregnancy as an experience, mere container of a “life” which does not belongs to her, and, at the same time, liable for the fetus realization. Ruth Miller describes this process from a political perspective in a very dense and interesting work called *The Limits of Bodily Integrity*. Through the analysis of the biopolitical governance of abortion, adultery and rape, as the title indicates, the author localizes a paradigmatic and logic “space” of power relations, the womb. We will explore in detail her theories about biopolitical logic that lead to the collapse of sexuality in the realm of reproduction through governance and biopower in the next chapter.

⁸¹ The embryo's development into a fetus is relevant, for sure, in every bioethics treaty about abortion, for instance, or in vitro fertilization. For our purposes, instead, the terms can be interchangeable, because the discursive construction of “life”, as we will see, functionally overlaps the two terms for rhetorical moral and normative reasons.

of human generation, from the first moment of its existence until birth.⁸²

In 1987, the Bishop Ratzinger, who recently became Pope Benedetto XVI, clarifies in his “Instructions” that the church makes no distinctions between the stages of development of the fetus, since life begins with the “conception”; going back to Thomas Aquinas, it seems that Catholics have not significantly changed their approach toward this issue over the past centuries.⁸³ Duden underlines specific parts of Ratzinger's writing in which the arguments of contemporary embryology and biology are not only recognized by the Church, undermining the scientific bias of “freedom” from the religious truth claimed by the modern clinics,⁸⁴ but pulled to the side of the Catholic interests. Indeed the matter represented through the technologies of science becomes the justification of the Catholic belief and moral appeals against abortion, for instance, and against certain kinds of assisted reproduction.

Going back to the embryo, it is again, like for science, the “gaze” that becomes a sign of human life, the gaze through technologies. Again we read from Ratzinger's document:

The Congregation recalls the teachings found in the Declaration on Procured Abortion: “From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a new life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already. To this perpetual evidence ... modern genetic science brings valuable confirmation. It has demonstrated that, from the first instant, the programme is fixed as to what this living being will be: a man, this individual-man with his characteristic aspects already well determined. Right from fertilization is begun the adventure of a human life, and each of its great capacities requires time ... to find its place and to be in a position to act”. (...) This teaching remains valid and is further confirmed, if confirmation were needed, by recent findings of human biological science which recognize that in the zygote* resulting from fertilization the biological identity of a new human individual is already constituted. Certainly no experimental datum can be in itself sufficient to bring us to the recognition of a spiritual soul; nevertheless, the conclusions of science regarding the human embryo provide a valuable indication for discerning by the use of reason a personal presence at the moment of this first appearance of a human life: how could a human individual not be a human person?⁸⁵

⁸² http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html

⁸³ Actually the debate about the relation between the process of “infusion” of the soul and abortion is still open, see for example *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a* ...

⁸⁴ Foucault 1963.

⁸⁵ Donum Vitae, 1987.

The form of the “Instruction” represents a guideline for the moral and pastoral teachings of the Catholic church. At the same time it is part of the main material that one specific discipline, particularly meaningful in Italy, takes into account in its research: bioethics.

Maurizio Mori, member of the Bioethical Consult, professor in the University of Turin, and collaborator of an organization called UAAR (Union of the Atheists Agnostics and Rationalists), starts his dissertation about bioethics in contemporary Italy with certain recommendations that we find worthy to quote:

There are at least two general features of Italian culture that a foreigner should keep in mind in order to understand Italian bioethics. The *first* is that until the late '60s Italy really was a “Roman Catholic country” in the sense that on issues concerning family life and medicine there was a widely “shared morality” roughly corresponding to the Catholic perspective, which was enforced by legislation and built into major social institutions. (...) Beginning in the late '60s, a joint movement involving the judiciary (...), the parliament and civil society succeeded in introducing reforms aimed at adjusting (or updating) social institutions to the new life-style of Italian society, which was becoming industrial and secularized. (...) [T]his reformatory season ended in the early 1980s.⁸⁶

The *second* general feature (...) concerns the close relationship between the 'intellectual work' and 'political involvement' (or 'affiliation') of a scholar. (...) An 'intellectual contribution' is often valued (...) on other criteria, such as possible social or political consequences, etc. In bioethics (...) the major opposition remains between Roman Catholics and non-Catholics. (...) A straight consequence of such polarization distinguish between *bioethics as a cultural movement* (...) and *bioethics as an institutional settings* aimed at influencing public opinion or controlling social change in the field of health care and issues concerning living stuff.⁸⁷

Mori's report is evidently embedded into a framework that justifies bioethics as a cultural secular (laico) movement. In his analysis of the three stages of bioethics in Italy, that he collocates in three different decades, 1970s-1980s, the 1990s and the contemporary period,⁸⁸ he affirms:

[In this] historical overview of Italian bioethics I distinguished three different stages: the first characterized by efforts to gain intellectual respectability; the second devoted to creation of institutions devoted to promote bioethical thinking, which was dominated by Catholic bioethics; and the incoming third, in which bioethical institutions are used to justify conservative perspectives and legislation.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ See first chapter of the thesis.

⁸⁷ Engelhardt, Hoshino, Rasmussen 2003, pp.97-98.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 97-120.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

His pessimistic overview is intrinsically related to the approval of a specific Law, which was analysed in the first chapter of this thesis: Law 40/2004 about ART. We talked in that chapter about the link between the postfordist ethics and the precarization of motherhood as a choice, regulated through Law 40. We claimed in the previous chapter that the postfordist assessment promotes “competition” as the main regulatory power over life. It is now time to question the same law from the perspective of the struggle between pastoral powers, such as the Roman Catholic Church and science, and the biosocialities involved in the debate about what we called the sign system of “life”. A certain alliance between the church, science and institutions has been called here “bioethics”, according to the history of the development of such a discipline in Italy. What Mori calls *bioethics as cultural movement*, we prefer to spot in the secular advocacy groups of biosocial identities such as women, in this case, who have been committed in the public arena for the sake of secularity, not without contradictions. “The new law on medically assisted reproduction, approved on February 2004, limits treatment to heterosexual couples genetically related to the offspring they seek to conceive. Prospective patients must prove cohabitation with a partner of the opposite sex”,⁹⁰ writes Krause. Apparently, the concept of a human life starting from its conception, is embedded in a broader idea of society based on heterosexual couples forming families. The link between the micro and the macro, in this case from the zygote to the social assessment, is easy to trace for the supporters of the Law 40:

Critics of the law both inside and outside of Parliament identified the right to scientific research and reproductive choice as central tenants of a civil, modern, and Western society. In contrast, its supporters warned of the eugenic potential of assisted reproductive technologies and appealed to the state’s responsibility to recognize and thus protect human life from its inception at fertilization. They argued that unregulated assisted reproduction makes possible “unnatural” forms of reproduction that hurt the embryo, the future child, the family, and ultimately society by tearing at its “ethical fabric” (...). These lawmakers offered an alternative vision of European modernity, one rooted in Europe’s Christian roots.⁹¹

The level of the public debate about the law described by Elizabeth Krause in this quote, immediately projects the issues into a broader context of significations and, moreover, power

⁹⁰ Krause 2007, p. 356.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 357.

relations. On one side we find a right-wing government which, through the influences of the Catholic ethics, poses the boundaries of the possibility for science to interfere with certain kinds of maternity, in particular outside the genetic and social structure of the family. The consequences of these limits, it is worth while to remind, are not only related to fertility itself, but also to whatever kind of research is conducted on human zygotes. Moreover undermining the health of women with strict rules about the numbers of implants and the choices of the therapies. On the other side, we find the secular biosocial response and critique of the law, which bases its claims on a supposed “modernity” or “civilization” to be achieved. These two views of modernity, at a first sight, seem very different. We will claim that with a closer analysis the whole discourse about modernity is engaged in seeking to find its signs in the wrong place. On one hand, in a familistic rhetoric aimed at promoting certain classes regulation and race within the Italian, and European, territory; on the other hand, instead of revealing this dramatic context, we find an insistence in a civilization program, that roots its values in the same biopolitical statements: who can live, who is let to die. The sign systems called “life” and “fertility” become now the signs of a precarious “modernity”, based on rationality, aimed at reproducing precarious lives. The secular technologies that claim to render “visible” the true matter, are, together with the pastoral power of the church, creating a discourse about fertility which positions the chances of maternity in a battleground where gender, economy, class and race are at the core of the battle itself.⁹²

Analyzing the informational campaign of 2005, when 700,000 citizens' signatures enabled the referendum to abrogate parts of the Law 40, by appealing to rationalism, secularism and the debate about the status of the embryo, we claim that the level of understanding of the practice of ART is very much more linked to metaphysical, ethical abstract argumentation. The displacement of the embryo, for eminent philosophers like Eco, Severino, Sartori or Agazzi is not even a topic, instead it is the truth from which the debate starts. We can bring some examples from the website of the main association committed to the struggle against the Law and, in general, for secularism and

⁹² See Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

freedom of scientific research. The name of the organization is “Luca Coscioni”⁹³ and the website provides useful quotes from articles appeared during the referendum campaign. Umberto Eco, for example, published an article titled “Embrioni alla porta del paradiso”⁹⁴ where he demonstrates how the Roman Catholic Church contradicts itself by not respecting Thomas Aquinas theories about the rational soul that places a soul in the embryo after 40 days. Emanuele Severino titles his argumentative piece “Perchè l'embrione-persona è la negazione dell'uomo”⁹⁵ and reminds the public that the debate about the embryo within the Catholic Church, again it is contradictory because is not able to demonstrate how the embryo can be a *man* in “potentiality”. While Giovanni Sartori remains in the debate with Catholics by deconstructing again their terms (“Embrioni, anima e fede: non si emargini la ragione”⁹⁶), Evandro Agazzi affirms a philosophical sense of the “individual” in opposition with the religious view, titling his piece “Quando si nasce davvero”.⁹⁷ We can conclude from this brief summary that the terms of the debate, the discursive power enacted by the concepts involved in the debate, are reinforcing each other. The aforementioned philosophers tried to become bioethicists, ending up in a conceptual trap marked by the reinforcement of the embryo, or the fetus, as the core of fertility. We can affirm, with Nicolas Rose, that bioethicists become mainly involved in negotiations about technologies among the other “pastoral” parts of the debate.⁹⁸

What leads Krause to the heavy statement that “[t]he pronatalist and 'antinatalist' laws (...) are not so paradoxical as they might at first appear” and that “[t]ogether, these policies reveal a project of national rejuvenation that delimits desirable and nondesirable populations”⁹⁹, is an anthropological research in the Italian territory, conducted over several years of fieldwork. Her sources are newspapers, legislation, forums, interviews with politicians and interviews. The authors claims:

⁹³ Luca Coscioni was an important researcher and professor, activist for the freedom to practice euthanasia. He died in 2006 of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

⁹⁴ Translation: “Embryos at heaven's door”. <http://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/umberto-eco-sullespresso-embrioni-alla-porta-del-paradiso>

⁹⁵ Translation: “Why the embryo-person is the negation of the *man*”. <http://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/perch-l-embrione-persona-la-negazione-dell-uomo>

⁹⁶ Translation: “Embryos, soul and faith: let's not forget the reason”. <http://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/sartori-sul-corriere-della-sera-embrione-anima-e-fede-non-si-emargini-la-ragione>

⁹⁷ Translation: “When we are really born”. <http://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/quando-si-nasce-davvero>

⁹⁸ Rose 2006, p. 73.

⁹⁹ Krause 2007, p. 351.

From public critiques to personal conversations, a common organizing principle emerged: the trope of oppressive Islamic regimes as the antithesis of Western modernity. Politicians, scholars, and journalists opposed to the law referred to it as a “burqua law” (...), a “Taliban law,” a “monster law” (...), “a battle of civilizations,” a “law that takes Italy out of Europe” (...), a “barbaric law” (...), and, finally, a law that “could have been conceived in one of the many states ruled by Sharia law which seeks control over women’s bodies” (...). The implication was that the Vatican’s influence on Italian politics made Italy little better than an Islamic fundamentalist theocracy— and certainly not a modern, European liberal democracy.¹⁰⁰

It’s true that Krause forgets to report the feminist campaign for the referendum, which is probably the one that recognized, by not participating in the bioethical debate, the tricks and traps of the mainstream discourses, left wing included. Reporting here the statements from one example of feminist activism of the time, *Contrazione* in Bologna, we can trace a line between our understanding of the neoliberal postfordist regulatory power and the concerns expressed by the movement. *Contrazione* (translated: Counteraction) has been a network of feminist groups in Bologna, formed for the sake of the abrogation of the Law 40, since it was approved in 2004. The following is the translation of the message brought by the movement to several actions, like workshops, demonstrations, a pink bus through the city and web campaign:

Why to vote yes to all of the four questions.¹⁰¹ The techniques of Assisted Reproduction Technologies are those biotechnological instruments that (...) give a chance:

- to the couples where one of the partner is sterile, to have a child;
- to the couples where one of the partner is a carrier of serious genetic disease to have a healthy child;
- to the couples where one partner is HIV positive not to have a child affected by HIV;
- to a single woman or to lesbians who want to be mothers to have a child.

Why we are against the Law 40. The law passed in February in Italy is certainly the most illiberal and obscurantist, in contradiction with how it should ensure and facilitate access to techniques. Recognizing the legal status of the embryo, it calls into question the fundamental rights obtained by women, first and foremost the right to abortion. It attacks the freedom of procreation of men and women sterile or infertile, or the freedom to bear healthy children for people with serious genetic diseases or HIV positive. It attacks the principle of secular state that with this law intervenes heavily in the private sphere of emotions and life choices through principles of clear Catholic framework. It limits the possibilities of medical

¹⁰⁰ Krause 2007, p.357.

¹⁰¹ The institution of the referendum in Italy only permits the abrogation of a law or a part of it. Voting “yes” means to obtain the erasure of certain parts of the law.

research and interferes with scientific freedom by preventing the research on stem cells. It divides the people into healthy/sick, fertile/infertile heterosexual/homosexual, rich/poor, married/single effectively creating privileged and underprivileged citizens. It discriminates against citizens with respect to their incomes: the techniques are in fact very expensive and not covered by public health, moreover, among those who do not correspond to the criteria established by law, who will obtain the chance to have a child, will be those who can afford the necessary costs to deploy other techniques in other countries where the regulations in force are better. For these and many other reasons why this law is inherently discriminatory and harmful. It violates the freedom of all people, regardless of health or of the desire for motherhood.¹⁰²

The arguments seem very different from those that Krause takes into account in her brilliant article, where she claims that fertility politics are a “social Viagra” for Italian and European regulation of citizenship.¹⁰³ At the same time members of the movement were especially active on two fronts: women's rights and the precarious (labour) movement. One example is the association Sexy Shock, which was at the same time part of Contrazione and Precaria, a network of feminists which, in the first half of the '2000s, conducted analysis, research and campaigns about precarization of labour and its consequences in women's and LGBTQ people's lives.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Italian contemporary feminists, tried to challenge the neo-liberal system by recognizing a new social subject, the “precarious”,¹⁰⁵ which includes symbolically the “flexible contracts” workers and migrants, sexual and gender identities and the fluid varieties of lives. They point out that “family values” are connected with women, natives and migrants who are kept in a state of minority and as the privileged institutional form of discrimination for different sexual identities. In “The body, sexuality and precarity”, by Gaia Giuliani, we read:

precarity becomes a synonym for a common condition, the horizon in which people's lives are continually defined and redrawn: a horizon, however, very rarely becomes ‘an enlightening experience’ and ‘project’ because it is, in the words of Porpora Marcasciano: ‘like the eyelash which are so close to the eyes that we can't see them. They've been with us forever, which is why we don't experience them as an objective condition.’¹⁰⁶

Groups involved in the discussion about Italian feminism in *Feminist Review* n.87 about *Italian*

¹⁰² http://www.ecn.org/contrazione/quesiti_referendari.htm

¹⁰³ Krause 2007.

¹⁰⁴ See <http://www.ecn.org/contrazione/index.htm> and <http://www.precaria.org/>. The organizations are informal.

¹⁰⁵ Fantone 2007, p.9.

¹⁰⁶ Giuliani 2007, p. 115.

Feminisms, such as Sexyshock, A/Matrix, Sconvegno and Precaria, were involved before, together with “second wave” feminists, in struggles and campaigns against Law 40. During the mobilizations, reproductive rights were defended by an intergenerational “net” of feminists. The years 2003 and 2004 represent a period of several attacks to Law 194 from parliamentarians and pro-life movements in order to revisit the law because of the indirect new rights of the embryo defined in Law 40. Thousands hundreds of women and the labour left-wing organization (CGIL) marched in Milan on 14th January 2006, and thousands organized a big demonstration against gender based violence and self-determination on November 25th 2006.¹⁰⁷

Following the arguments of contemporary Italian feminism, we can conclude the chapter linking the previous analysis about the postfordist ethics of competition with the next chapter, in which, the technologies of power will reveal the specific logic of sovereignty and exceptions aimed at forming a postfordist citizenship based on biological assumptions.

The technologies of the sign systems we briefly recollected show how the visibility of the detached embryo brought a scientific and moral construction of the sign system of “life”. The life that has to be promoted, indeed, in biopolitical terms, enhanced, is the life of the fetus through the reinforcement of certain families: heterosexual, basically healthy, monogamous, white and middle-upper class. The bioethical debate between Catholics and non-Catholics, does not bring us far from the same terms of the discourses about life and fertility. Moreover, it bases its claims on ideas of modernity, which lead to see in the Western values of liberalism, the last stage of progress in the world, thus orienting other contexts. Ruth Miller, analyzing the history of laws about abortion, affirms:

The purpose of the various laws has been to define a collective, to delimit civilizational boundaries, and to posit basic friend/enemy distinctions—whether these distinctions are based on an East/West divide, a Europe/not-Europe divide, or smaller national units. Political ideology *per se* is largely irrelevant. What is important instead is the biopolitical nature of collective belonging, the populations that are formed, purified, protected, and maintained(...). The criminalization of abortion, for example, indicates the civilizational (and biological) superiority of Europe in the late nineteenth century, whereas its legalization indicates precisely

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.usciamodalsilenzio.org>

the same European superiority in the late twentieth century. When the womb is occupied by a Bosnian fetus, having an abortion is unethical. When it is occupied by a Serbian fetus, not having an abortion is unethical. It is not what the laws say, it is simply their existence that is important. Political and civilizational legitimacy has nothing to do with legality, that is, and everything to do with the rhetoric of law.¹⁰⁸

Leaving aside the complex example about the “occupied” womb by a national identity, which will be a topic of the next chapter, what is important to underline here is the logic in which the technologies of sign system operates, from the medical tools of representation, to the pastoral tools of signification of the same technologies. The logic is the one of creation of a space, detached from the woman, called womb, on which, from the molecular level to the molar level of population regulation, the biopower establishes its decisional sovereignty.

Recollecting the complex debate about the Law 40 we aimed at demonstrating that the actors involved are engaged in a war between pastoral powers. An aware sense of the racist-classist and sexist roots of the law comes from the women of Contrazione, who register the discriminatory structure of the Law itself: non heterosexuals, non white, non bourgeois, HIV positive people are those who cannot reproduce. The intersections between the regulation of sexuality, class, race and health, in Contrazione's statements, are already aware of the link between the discipline of the womb as a tool to create a biopolitical space on which the regulation of the population in its complexity, is held. The desire of “motherhood” and the mother as a subject are, instead, forgotten by the legislative powers, either by science or religion. In other words, whatever position of the mother, of science, of religion, or in general of all the pastoral powers involved in the decision making process about the womb, it is now clear how pregnancy itself is embedded in a logic or a discursive power which overcomes them for the purposes of regulation. It is a logic of biopower, and, as we are trying to demonstrate, a logic that is not only committed to the creation of biopolitical subjects, but also economical, since, as we argue, the neoliberal post-fordist assessment, has been making the labor system collapse in the politics of life.

¹⁰⁸ Miller 2007, p. 176.

Chapter III: Technologies of Power – Feminization of labour

The concept of biopolitics refers to a particular and “basic phenomena of the nineteenth century (...) called power's hold over life”,¹⁰⁹ tells Foucault. A process of absorption of life into politics, has started from the complex interweaving development of a new bourgeois public space, economy, government and scientific research and definitions of human life. While characteristics of humanity were described as essentially different from “non-humans” qualities in the 17th and 18th centuries, sets of anatomo-policies started to appear as a form of regulation of the population and in order to create a new subject, the citizen, defined by nationality and race.¹¹⁰ As Foucault reminds us in *Society Must be Defended* the governments started to promote power mechanisms, expressed in “two series: the body-organism-discipline-institutions-series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanism-State. An organic institutional set or the organo-discipline of the institution, (...) and, on the other hand, a biological and Statist set, or bioregulation of the State”.¹¹¹

The ancient sovereignty, as described by Hobbes in *Leviathan*, was able to express its power to make live as the power to kill was used, punishing and condemning to death:

The right which was formulated as the “power of life and death” was in reality the right to take life or let live. Its symbol, after all, was the sword. Perhaps this juridical form must be referred to a historical type of society in which power was exercised mainly as a means of deduction (prelevement), a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labor and blood, levied on the subjects. Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it.¹¹²

The modern society is no more in the hands of an arbitrary individual power who discipline single bodies, but sovereignty changed its logic in the direction of promoting life/medical/enhancing policies for some humans, while letting others die. Because the power over citizens becomes regulatory and “massifying”, in order to promote life and medicalized populations, we see a radical

¹⁰⁹ Foucault 1997, p. 239.

¹¹⁰ Foucault 1997, p. 243.

¹¹¹ Foucault 1997, p. 250.

¹¹² Foucault 1979, p. 136.

change from the technologies of power described as parts of the ancient, Hobbesian, social contract. The process Foucault describes starts from the formation of the bourgeois society, which roots itself in the enlightenment of the “social contract”. Starting from drawing boundaries between the state of nature and civilization, the end of the process sees human as a concept entirely disciplined and regulated to be, in order, an appropriated “citizen-maker” and a “population-maker”. The bourgeois “revolution” enabled, according to Foucault, since the 18th century, a biopower:

This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not, have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern. If the development of the great instruments of the state, as institutions of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as techniques of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable.¹¹³

In this process, the regulation of the human, starts to be founded on a biological identity and health of the social-body. What then becomes for Foucault, the “break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die”?¹¹⁴ Between the answers we find different types of regulations. One of the most important phenomena for Foucault, of the 20th century, which represents a shifting from the Classical times to the modern time, is racism as a regulative factor of modern institutions: i.e., the hierarchisation of human subspecies known as races. The health and pureness of a race, of a population of citizens, is constituted by the death of

¹¹³ Foucault 1979, pp. 137-138.

¹¹⁴ Foucault 1997, p. 254.

inferiors, abnormal, degenerate individuals.¹¹⁵ We will describe how another shifting came to exist in the 21st century, due to processes of globalization, financialization of the capital, mobilization and flexibilization of labour. We will then describe this process in relation with class and gender, following the contemporary debate about biopolitics and technologies of power. There is now, instead, another step that has to be done, in order to understand how the concept of population belongs to a logical process named “sovereignty”, which becomes, across the centuries, detached from the concept of the Law, or, better, becomes its “exception”.

At the very beginning of *Homo Sacer*, Agamben defines the concept of “bare life” as the effect, the result, of a shifting in the contemporary definition of a political subject from the ancient gesture of “stabilization” of the *polis* or of citizenship, to the state's realm of decision over “life”: “the Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word 'life'. They used two terms (...): *zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animal, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group”.¹¹⁶ For Agamben, in the modern age, as a matter of fact, a “new” logic of the political is defined through the permanent instability of the threshold between *zoē* and *bios*, or, better, through the indistinct space occupied by, and foundational of, *bare life*.

Along with the emergence of biopolitics, we can observe a displacement and gradual expansion beyond the limits of the decision on bare life, in the state of exception, in which sovereignty consisted. If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones.¹¹⁷

It seems that a kind of instability is involved in the description of the emergence of bare life as the subject of politics: the limit between biopolitics and thanatopolitics. Which means, that the line which virtually separates who has the right to live and who, on the contrary, must die, ends up to be the ground of a political, sovereign logic. As Agamben argues, the body of the sacred man is the

¹¹⁵ Foucault 1997, p. 255.

¹¹⁶ Agamben 1998, p.1.

¹¹⁷ Agamben 1998, p.122.

biopolitical body *par excellence*, that life that may be killed without the commission of homicide, as we read: “[i]t can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power”.¹¹⁸

The “Paradox of Sovereignty” is not only a metaphor to describe a political assessment or the establishment of an institution. “Paradox” indicates a logic, or a counter-logic which is the foundation of the political decision: that of the law outside the law, that the sovereign is who decides on the state of exception, so that sovereignty is the power that exclusively decides if the “constitution” is valid.¹¹⁹ What is the state of exception? An empty logical space of law, an area in which all legal determinations are destituted. Giorgio Agamben in a small but dense volume, *A state of emergency*, employs an architecture typical of the institutions of Roman law: the “iustitium”. The term, built as a “sol-stitium”, literally means “to stop, to suspend the right”. Proclaimed by the Senate in case of tumult, this measure establishes a paradoxical legal institution which function to produce a legal vacuum. The paradox of the situation that promotes legal measures, while unintelligible in terms of law, seems to be the subject of the hybrid state of exception. A reality that continued to operate almost without interruption since the First World War, through fascism and Nazism, to this day, says Agamben after having reviewed the many difficulties faced by the legal tradition in the face of attempts to provide a conceptual definition and terminology. The state of exception is not a return to absolute power, nor a dictatorial model. It is a not fully empty, though empty of law which is as an example of the “iustitium” sign. The state of exception has indeed taken its greatest global reach. The regulatory aspect of the right may well be obliterated and contradicted with impunity by a governmental violence that, producing a state of permanent exception, however, claims the legitimacy of its decision. The conclusion is no appeal because the actual state of exception in which we live makes it impossible to return to the rule of law, since it exacts the collapse of law into politics¹²⁰ and into war.¹²¹ Agamben points out that the new

¹¹⁸ Agamben, 1998, p.6.

¹¹⁹ Agamben 1998, p. 15.

¹²⁰ Agamben 2005.

¹²¹ Miller 2007.

“nomos”, the new paradigmatic logic is not necessarily connected with the logic of a state's territoriality, but, more, to a logic of de-humanization. The focus on the exceptional logic of inclusion and exclusion trained by the political decision points to identify another *nomos*, i.e., a paradigmatic “law”, a paradigmatic de-localized localization of the exception, a “space” of exception: the *camp*.

The state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the juridico-political order, now becomes a new and stable spacial arrangement inhabited by the bare life that more and more can no longer be inscribed in that order. The growing dissociation of birth (bare life) and the nation-state is the new fact of politics in our day, and what we call *camp* is this disjunction. To an order without a localization (the state of exception, in which law is suspended) there now corresponds a localization without order (the camp as a permanent space of exception). The political system no longer forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space, but instead contains in its very centre a *dislocating localization* that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken. The camp is a dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living (...). The camp is the fourth, inseparable element, that as now added itself to –and so broken – the old trinity composed of the state, the nation (birth), and the land.¹²²

By accepting an inherent violent logic in the political decisions over life, we find an unstable subject of decision, an indifferent decision on an undifferentiated “sacred man” which inhabits a juridico-political order, a space of exception, inhabited by “bare life”. Unmarked and unstable sources of political decision seem to arbitrarily mark masses of people. The question is about the space in which the exception rules, the source of the exception and the mass of subjects, who seem, in Agamben theory, stripped of their subjectivities, masses of lonely sacred men, whose life depends, primarily, on a violent logic, the law, the *nomos*. Is the camp the space that substitutes the *polis* as the territory of sovereignty? And what is at stake for biopower in defining an unstable population?

Ruth Miller, as we anticipated in the previous chapters, localizes the paradigmatic space of biopolitical decisions over life in the woman's womb. In other words, she claims, the space of exception is not unmarked, it is indeed gendered, and this phenomenon is, not without shifting in

¹²² Agamben 1998, pp. 175-176.

time, exactly the essence of the biopolitical order established since the 19th century, up to the present day. Miller's argument starts exactly from Agamben's intuition about the logic implied by the biopower to regulate and construct populations. We already described how through the regulation of abortion and of ART the womb becomes a space opened to the interferences of legislation and pastoral powers. In Miller's words we could say that “[b]y turning pregnancy into something that *could* be regulated, (...) the womb became (...) an explicitly relevant place, open to and in need of intervention”.¹²³ That reproduction, or, better, “sexuality” is the core of the construction of race, nation and citizenship is, according to Foucault, the basis for the existence of biopower itself, as we previously described. In Miller's argument the role of sexuality is an effect, of a process that starts from a modern collapse of law into politics into war, and ends in a postmodern collapse of consent into integrity into autonomy, analysed through the legislation about abortion, adultery and rape.¹²⁴

Let us seek to follow and summarize the argument, despite its complexity. A fear of “race suicide” in the late nineteenth century was spread among Western Europeans. From the moment in which the nature of this threat was defined, the main policies enabled by the state, where centred on reproduction of the population, in Foucauldian terms. Miller argues:

“The notion of a politically and biologically defined collective depriving itself of life— with all of the hints of voluntarism, consent, and irrationality that this act implies—immediately raises the further question of where exactly such an event could occur. Against what backdrop, or within the confines of what boundaries, does a race kill itself? Legislators in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century seem to have developed a relatively confident answer to this question: races kill themselves in reproductive space”. Thus, abortion became explicitly linked to citizenship over the final decades of the nineteenth century, and reproduction became a central concern of parliaments and politicians in the early twentieth. (...) Indeed, the moment that reproduction—or more specifically, abortion—became the link between the biological and the political, first, *space* began to replace *behavior* as the politically relevant issue, and second, all other political categories began to collapse into one another.

(...) The issue at stake is the conflation of reproductive, biological, and political boundaries, and whether or when these boundaries might be transgressed. In the meantime, behavior—like withdrawal as a form of contraception—is relegated to

¹²³ Miller 2007, p.26.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*.

the realm of the traditional.

Race suicide thus becomes central to the redefinition of sovereign right—especially to the extent that this sovereign right has been articulated through a vocabulary of appropriate, politically responsible reproductive behavior.¹²⁵

Not far from the analysis we proposed through the previous chapters, again the definition of a race or of a population, seems to be intrinsically related to the definition of a biopolitical space, the womb. We delineated the trajectory of this relation starting in the first chapter of this thesis, with the debate about fertility politics in Italy in the last two decades. What lies behind the appeals from both left wing and right wing, for a renewed “social cohesion”? How do they represent a race bordering of the European biopolitical identity and, at the same time, a bioeconomical post-fordist assessment of labor?

The first question leads us to Miller again and to how her dense analysis ends up challenging an assumption of feminist political analysis in the “neutral” subject of the ruled society. Miller stands for a biopolitical understanding of power, and this marks an important shift away from the more traditionally accepted binary of feminized private space alongside male (neutral) public space. She, instead, affirms that the core of biopower, the subject from which the whole construction of society is the neutral-woman. Miller writes:

If, however, we assume that the predominant model of sovereignty has been biopolitical, that the fundamental sovereign right has been the right to make live and let die—if we place sexual and reproductive legislation at the center of citizenship formation, and understand political activity as biological passivity—then we need to re-think this analysis. Rather than understanding men as the norm and women as artificial facsimiles of men, it makes far more sense in a biopolitical framework to understand women as the norm and men as their copies. It is the womb that has become the predominant biopolitical space, it is women’s bodily borders that have been displaced onto national ones, and it is women who have taken the concept of consent to its logical conclusion. It is thus the citizen with the womb who has become the political neutral—and rather than grudgingly granting women the artificial phalluses assumed by liberal theory, one can in fact advance an argument that men instead have been granted the artificial wombs assumed by its biopolitical counterpart.¹²⁶

Part of the argument links the contemporary status of rape legislation to the rights of consent and

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

¹²⁶ Miller 2007, p. 149.

bodily integrity. With the example of how women's bodies represent the “trespassed” bodies in case of rape and of the consequent intrusive, gynecological medical tests, she demonstrates that the violation of bodily integrity as a right is not based on a “male” neutral body, violated by torture, for instance. It is not the “habeas corpus” law, which bases the violation of the bodily integrity on a public power inflicting pain on a free man, which is at stake in post-modernity. But the solely construction of meanings on the body, demonstrates that the violation itself, can be considered a crime, in the case of rape, or an experience legitimated by medical or legislative powers.

Trespass is a violation of biopolitical rights—about the right to health and dignity, about the population’s capacity to continue reproducing. And it is here that the shift from the male neutral to the female neutral makes sense. It is women’s bodies that are and have been mobilized in the delimitation of biopolitical space. It is women who represent the vulnerable, biologically passive political ideal. It is thus women who have taken center stage, playing the neutral citizen, as biopolitics has displaced politics, as bodily integrity has displaced pain, and as the sovereign right to make live has, in all spheres, displaced the sovereign right to make die.¹²⁷

We are far here from defining “fertility politics” as “social Viagra”,¹²⁸ like Krause does in her analysis of the renewed Italian and European preoccupations about the birth-rate in Italy. Viagra is used by Krause as a metaphor to indicate “the presence of a dysfunction or even a pathology, complete with a patient and a prescription[;](...)the importance of virility. Extending the metaphor (...) to the broader context of reproductive relations, we aim to convey policymakers’ view of women’s fertility as something that can threaten or reinvigorate not only the family but also the nation”.¹²⁹ We do not consider virility as much important to the contemporary debate about a “race suicide”. We are, instead, trying to find a link between the female biopolitical neutral and the problem of “social cohesion”, through the understanding of the specific primary role projected on women's wombs.

The second question is intrinsically related to the first, through, exactly, the idea of social cohesion, which, according to Krause, is addressed in Italy in open contradiction with European Union

¹²⁷ Miller 2007, p. 151.

¹²⁸ Krause 2007.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 351.

guidelines. Krause's visions of the relation between social cohesion and fertility start to recollecting the concept through the history of philosophical sociology. She states that sociology itself became a recognized discipline when society became targeted as potentially harmful for peace in the nineteenth century. Society was read as fragmented because of the “twin impact of capitalism and industrialization”.¹³⁰ Theories engaged in attempts to understand society as a whole, on one hand, and as a complex relation between individuals and the whole.

Ferdinand Tonnies's *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) became the essential negatively and positively charged poles that many other scholars' models echoed, including Emile Durkheim's concept of “social solidarity,” which ended with modern society's complementarity descending into anomie. Max Weber's elaborate formulation of modern society, with its bureaucratic techniques of governance, retained a certain mistrust for the rational state. The postwar modernization paradigm, however, had the power to sweep away all of those negative associations of the capitalist state. (...) Indeed, “modernization theory” became an instrument for bestowing praise on societies deemed to be modern and casting a critical eye on those that had yet to attain that achievement”. (...) In the case of family making and state intervention, fertility rates have long been a marker of modern status; (...) overpopulation is frequently blamed for underdevelopment. (...) Our ethnographic research reveals a nuanced flip-flopping in poles. Representations in Italy of the demographic situation as producing “tensions that give rise to downright perverse effects” and as being “unsustainable for society at large” (...) point to the family as a site where the terms of modernity are struggled over as the state attempts to exercise control over reproduction and to attain “social cohesion”.¹³¹

Fertility becomes, indeed, a sign of modernity, as we already tried to demonstrate in the second chapter. Krause speaks about “family making” because it is central to the main rhetoric involved in the fertility and modernization debates in contemporary Italy. At the same time, as we claimed before, from a biopolitical perspective we can affirm that the same rhetoric is misleading. We should, instead, talk about the making of the womb as a biopolitical space. Women are those on whom the complexity of modernization seems to rely. And not only from the perspective of fertility in its narrowness, as we will see analysing the phenomenon of “feminization of labor” registered by much literature as the main shifting in the contemporary capitalistic order of economy. But before facing this topic another passage must be drawn out. In fact, Krause insists that there is something

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

¹³¹ Krause 2007, p. 356.

peculiar about Italy compared to other EU policies dealing with “social cohesion”. She claims that there are basic contradictions:

A comparison of the EU and Italian texts reveals striking differences between the two entities’ framing of social cohesion, demographic concerns, and economic development. Whereas the EU text emphasized immigration over fertility as a solution, the comparable Italian document tipped the balance so far toward the fertility field that any potential for an immigrant solution all but disappeared. In its place arose a political terrain readymade for pronatalist policy. The EU concept of “social cohesion” centered on ensuring “the welfare of all its members,” protecting vulnerable groups through employment and workers’ rights, and combating discrimination and cooperating on migration (...). In light of concerns about population dynamics in Europe, the councilors anticipated a need for immigration to encourage non-European newcomers over newborns (...). (...)Unlike the EU document, *The Italian White Paper* claimed that Italy faces a “demographic abyss” and that social cohesion hinges on fertility issues (...). *The Italian White Paper* described its central policy contribution as “the fact that, finally, the family founded on marriage is placed front and center in the system of social protection” [and] (...) omitted immigration as an alternative to increase population. As a result, immigration hangs like a threat to social cohesion and thus to the future of the country, whereas fertility emerges as a national priority. The silence reverberates, especially because *The Italian White Paper* refers to the European document.(...) [N]ow in the 21st century raising the low fertility has become essential to Italy’s viability in the global marketplace. The document delineated the relationship between the birthrate and economic competitiveness in the global economy, singling out “raising the birthrate” as “a necessary condition for reestablishing in our country a framework of generational renewal consistent with the preservation of social cohesion and economic development”.¹³²

It seems, in Krause's words, that instead of following the European ideas of civilization through the harmony among migrating cultures of Europe, the Italian government has interpreted them in a racist and heteronormative-familistic way. Maybe a brief comparison between European policies about migration, and guidelines to the borderlands of EU, like Italy, would be helpful to understand how that social cohesion is, unfortunately, interpreted in Italy in accordance with European requirements. If there is an issue about contradictory policies, we can easily localize it in the European context itself. A part from “welcoming” immigration, we should not forget, that Migration Laws in Italy were explicitly required by the unifying institution of the Schengen Convention, approved in 1990. Since the Schengen agreement, in which free movement within the borders of Europe was established, the “borders” became more and more important to define the

¹³² Krause 2007, p. 355.

European community and its corresponding citizenship. “The later Schengen Convention (1990) [was connected] (...) with securitization and the image of the Fortress Europe. (...) Measures taken in the post Amsterdam period includ[ing] strengthening of the borders and carrier sanction (...)”¹³³. The legal status of migrants is strictly connected with the labor force needed, thus it is temporary and pushes migrants lives into a precarious state. “The precariousness of *legal status* that is doled out in small increments – and hence immigrants’ inevitable stints of illegality – is the mirror image of their contingent and begrudging welcome as the uninvited guests whose job it is to clean up”.¹³⁴ A climax of restrictions of access for “third country” people, often from geographically neighbouring states, was formulated through different laws, culminated, in Italy, under the guidelines of the Amsterdam Treaty, in the Bossi-Fini Law in 2002 and “Pacchetto Sicurezza”¹³⁵ in 2009, which was approved by the right wing Berlusconi Government, not without reactions from the feminist movement.¹³⁶ About the latter “Security Package”, D’Orsi affirms: “The political intention is to give the image of a strong government that is able to defend the interests and security of Italian citizens. Immigrants are now included in the undefined category of ‘the Others’, that is ‘all people who are not like us’: marginalized people, prostitutes, homosexuals, etc. We are facing a process of *criminalization* of immigrants that are now considered a threat: carriers of criminality and attackers of Italian cultural purity”.¹³⁷ The southern borders of Europe have also other meanings: to protect, or to promote, the European race, that is to say a rebordering of the Mediterranean area.¹³⁸ The rhetoric of a white European race and about religious differences are used to support restrictions and oppressive policies in the borderlands of Italy and Spain. The process of racialization is a sad reality for different populations, particularly people from the African Continent, from the Middle East, Roma people, more recently Albanians and in the past decade, Eastern Europeans. But also a renewal of old colonial, fascist discourses in the neoliberal

¹³³ Fassman 2009, p. 254.

¹³⁴ Calavita 2005, p.119.

¹³⁵ Law no. 125 of 2008 and law no. 94 of 2009, “security pack” represented by a set of dispositions about migration, mafia and rapes.

¹³⁶ See Chapter 4.

¹³⁷ D’Orsi 2010.

¹³⁸ Suárez-Navaz 2005.

Italy are nevertheless involved in the re-establishment of racial borders, linked with class, of course, and with gender.

Women can reach a legal residence permit through work or through marriage, family reunion, or, according to Article 18, charging their exploiters when they are working as prostitutes. The “need” of female migrants is shaped by the neoliberal need of care-work,¹³⁹ the rhetoric of the “demographic emergency”¹⁴⁰ and the hidden demand for prostitution. The general policy of “quotas”, as a neoliberal management of the need of workers, and the introduction of the crime of illegal immigration, has reinforced, law by law, the gender norms of Italian patriarchal society, marking migrant women's bodies as liable to be blackmailed in several ways.

The settlement of the European idea of social cohesion can be easily identified in official EU documents. The first quote of the “social cohesion” page in the website of the Council of Europe is: *“Social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization. (Report of the High Level Task Force on Social Cohesion in the 21st century)”*.¹⁴¹ These declaration of intents, indeed, is organized around classical liberal concepts of social cohesion. It is in fact the harmony between the micro level of the individuals and the macro level of society that has to be regulated by the European Union policies among the 27 member states. The issues about “territorial cohesion” are intrinsically connected with an idea of social cohesion in the individual states.¹⁴² But exploring the website, we find the “Report on economic and social cohesion” by the European Commission, published in 2007 where we can read:

Growth and development in a market economy inevitably mean that restructuring takes place, often associated with job losses and creation of new jobs which are unevenly distributed and can give rise to a territorial concentration of social and economic problems. Reinforcing the Union’s capacity to adapt to change and to create new sustainable employment is one of the roles of European cohesion

¹³⁹ Van Hooren 2010.

¹⁴⁰ Krause 2007.

¹⁴¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/default_en.asp

¹⁴² http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Programme/ESPON2006Programme/AnnualReports/Final_Annual_Report_2005_30-06-2006.pdf

policy, also in the Union's more prosperous Member States.¹⁴³

The link between labor, economy and social cohesion illustrates, indeed, typical neoliberal post-fordist relations. From the first line we understand that there is a market that inevitably affects life, and a Union with some sort of “capacity” to adapt to the market change. We affirmed in the first chapter, that this liberal rhetoric about a naturalized market conceals, instead, a demand on the governments to enact as many policies as possible for competition. It is not the case that the incidence of low fertility on the Italian territory is named in the same *Libro Bianco*, that in 2003 reformed the entire labour system. Concerns about fertility, flexibilization and migration fluxes, apparently emerged in the last decades as three themes intrinsically connected, which we are now trying to demonstrate.

Let us now recollect our thoughts about the neutral subject of biopolitics and try to analyze the transformation of labor in the same sense. “There is little question that one of the primordial forms of class consciousness is the affirmation of the body; at least, this was the case for the bourgeoisie during the eighteenth century. It converted the blue blood of the nobles into a sound organism and a healthy sexuality”,¹⁴⁴ Foucault affirms, analysing the birth of the shifting from the political order of sovereignty to the biopolitical regulation in the 18th century. If nowadays, a class dimension is taking shape as a “conscious” identity in Italy, it is the one of women and migrants, in other words of those workers who call themselves “precarious”. But the class consciousness of the precarious workers is far from being a consciousness of sovereignty. On the contrary, the precarious are, in some way, “bare life” in the hands of a logic of exception that keeps them in a position of availability and exploitability: it is indeed the flexibilization of labor, or, as some literature defines it, the “feminization” of the labor.

As “'Womanhood' and national health are linked (...), the nation is politically displaced onto women, but this is not a result of women's place in something called 'traditional' interpretations of

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault 1979. p. 126.

honor or civilization. Nor is it a result of their role in preparing children for a liberal education. It is instead that women are biologically and medically linked to the nation, and that in this emergent *biopolitical* framework, women are the political actors”,¹⁴⁵ writes Miller. Our argument is that “womanhood” is also the economical actor of contemporaneity.

If a shifting in society has taken place from the 1970s through globalization and the post-fordist era, a new gendered class transformation has happened too. Those wombs that we defined as biopolitical spaces of exception, become now the subject of the precarious labor that is required by the renovated economical logic of “exception” to grant neoliberal competition: the precarization, flexibilization, feminization of labor. There is an immense amount of literature about this complex phenomenon. We will now analyse three main concepts in order to understand how we understand feminization of labor as an essential logic of the contemporary biopolitical economy:

2. Toni Negri's definition of “*operaio sociale*” and “immaterial work”
3. Cognitive Capitalism
4. Precarity as a logic of exceptionality and competition

“Like Hardt says: in 1800 philosophy was made in Germany and the struggles in France, in the second half of 1900 the struggles were in Italy and philosophy was in France”.¹⁴⁶ This is how Negri describes in an interview the state of Western Europe art in the '1970s, and, in particular, the civil war that was taking place in Italy. Negri was condemned to 30 years of prison in 1981 for subversive association and armed insurrection against the State's powers. As a refugee in France, the Mitterand government replied negatively to the “extradition” requests of the Italian governments for decades, giving Negri the chance to collaborate with philosophers like Guattari and Hardt and to teach in different universities, for instance Paris VIII.

Negri struggled in Italy and produced his philosophical view in the aim of creating a framework to

¹⁴⁵ Miller 2007, p.152.

¹⁴⁶ Interview to Toni Negri in the documentary “Toni Negri-l'eterna rivolta”, trad. “Toni Negri-the eternal revolt”, written and directed by Alexandra Welz and Andrea Pichler, presented in the international section of the V RomaDocFest

legitimize a renewed class consciousness and struggle. Primary importance is allocated to, for our arguments, the conceptualization of the shifting from the *operaio massa* (mass worker) to the *operaio sociale* (social worker). The former is the worker of the Fordist time, engaged in high stakes struggles against the capital through the trade unions and a communist-marxist analysis of the capital itself.¹⁴⁷ The shifting to the post-fordist mode of production, is described by Negri also as an attempt of the capital to marginalize and fragment the unity of the mass workers.

The capitalist response during this shifting period developed along two complementary lines – social diffusion, or decentralization of production, and the political isolation of the mass worker in the factory.

The only possible answer to this, from the working-class viewpoint, was to insist on and fight for the broadest definition of class unity, to modify and extend the concept of working class productive labor and to eliminate the theoretical isolation (insofar as this concept had inevitably become tied to an empirical notion of the factory – a simplified factoryism – due to the impact of the bosses' counter-offensive, the corporation of the unions, and the historical and theoretical limitations of the concept itself). On the other hand, the emergence & growth of diffused forms of production (the "diffuse factory"), while it enlarged the labor market enormously, also redefined as directly productive and "working class" a whole series of functions within social labor that would otherwise be seen as marginally latent. Finally, there was a growing awareness of the interconnection between reductive labor and the labor of reproduction, which was expressed in a wide range of behaviours in social struggles, above all in the mass movements of women and youth, affirming all these activities collectively as labor. This development made necessary an innovation in the vocabulary of class concepts, As we used to put it: 'from the mass worker to the social worker'. But it would be more correct to say: from the working class, i.e. that working class massified in direct production in the factory, to social labor-power, representing the potentiality of a new working class, now extended throughout the entire span of production and reproduction – a conception more adequate to the wider and more searching dimensions of capitalist control over society and social labor as a whole.¹⁴⁸

Negri registers, as we read, among the novelties of the new mode of production two important things, for our argument: first the shifting of the quality of the work itself, from the fixed factory to the spread flexible labor; second he sees in the figure of *social* worker, the new unified class consciousness, in the youth and women struggles the sign of a new alliance between the biosocial

¹⁴⁷ Negri <http://www.elkilombo.org/archaeology-and-project-the-mass-worker-and-the-social-worker/>

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

actors and the anticapitalist critique of the cycle of production and reproduction. The feminist and the student movements, indeed, unveiled the exploitation of their bodies by the productive power, reclaiming their bodies back from the power-economical-reproductive relations.

The former conceptualization of the impact of immaterial work on the organization of labor, leads us to the point n.2: the idea of cognitive capitalism as the site for a new paradigmatic order of the capital.

Thanks to the level of generalized precariousness, which has been transformed into a structural element of contemporary capitalism, 'work which becomes a woman', is tantamount to saying that the fragmentation of the service provided and the complexity of the dependence/absorption which women have experienced at various times in the labor market, ends up becoming a general paradigm irrespective of gender. In this sense, it can be maintained that the figure of social precariousness today is woman: in cognitive capitalism precariousness, mobility and fragmentation become constituent elements of the work of all persons irrespective of gender. The model advanced is pliable, hyper-flexible and in this sense it draws on the baggage of female experience.¹⁴⁹

In other words, the Negrian social worker, is described by Cristina Morini and the feminist participants of Sconvegno meeting in 2002¹⁵⁰ in Milan, within the context of feminization of labor as a new paradigm of the cognitive capitalistic organization of economy. Cognitive capitalism intends to promote the technologization of the economy and the fragmentation of the needs of labor in differentiated multiple roles. At the same time the boundaries between the work-time and the life-time becomes blurred, as we will analyse in the next chapter. Guy Standing in an article about feminization of labor writes:

Among the changes have been rising divorce rates, declining fertility rates and the passage in many countries of anti-discrimination legislation. The main factor, however has been the changing nature of the labor market. The concept of regular, full-time wage labor as the growing type of employment has been giving way to a more diverse pattern, characterized by "informalization" of employment, through more outworking, contract labor, casual labor, part-time labor, homework and other forms of labor unprotected by labor regulations.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Power 2009, p. 22.

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.universitadelledonne.it/sconvegno.htm>

¹⁵¹ Standing 1999, p. 587.

Again we find fertility and labor connected, in this case, by a causal relation: fertility declines where women have access to work. This is not exactly what we want to point out here. We are, instead, collecting information about the shifting of the post-fordist “spirit of the time” and the new position held by women in a paradigmatic logic of exceptional spatiality.

According to our analysis, indeed, wombs represent a paradigmatic biopolitical space of exception, where, for “space of exception” we mean a logic of lawless law expressed by the biopower and, now, economical assessment. We find in the fragmentation, flexibilization or feminization of labor the affirmation, through Morini's article, of women as the new paradigm of labor, the subject of a social precariousness spread among migrants and natives, men and women.

How then do we relate the concept of precariousness to Agamben's theories of bare life and exceptionality? In our opinion precarity is intrinsically related to exceptionality because it represents a zone of indistinction between life and labor, as we are going to demonstrate by addressing “technologies of the self”. The fact that this logic has been recognized as a process of feminization, reinforces our understanding of women's wombs as biopolitical paradigmatic spaces of exception on which “sovereign” decisions are constantly taken by bio-economical powers to support the system itself. Is the health of the social body at stake? We think that the concept “competition” as it is described by Foucault in his analysis of neoliberalism will help to more clearly convey how the global shifting of the biopower in the post-fordist era, in other words, leads to a system based on a new neutrality, a new centrality. The woman's body as a public space and the logic of biopower and the labor system played on it, are now going to be analysed from the perspective of the technologies of the self, in order to better understand the configuration of the post fordist biopolitical subjectification.

Chapter IV: Technologies of the self

Fertility is a sign of the modern management of population. Maternity, in the precarious organization of labour in Italy is often considered an illness. An article published in June 2012 concerning the job contract of the Italian public television RAI, says: “in the precarious job contract of RAI, maternity [is] equalized to an 'illness, injury or circumstances beyond one's control', during the regular execution of work”.¹⁵² This is one of the multiple examples of how maternity is regulated through the labour contracts within the contemporary postfordist system.

In a blog called *Alfemminile.it*, where women share their experiences we easily find testimonies of precarious women fired because of pregnancy. One example comes from a woman who titles the thread of the on line discussion “ordinario licenziamento per gravidanza”, meaning “ordinary dismissal for pregnancy”:

In the eighth month of pregnancy, I was informed of the imminent dismissal because of cessation of the business. Apparently everything was in order, since one of the circumstances in which the law allows the dismissal of a pregnant woman is the cessation of the activity. Too bad that the activity continues, under another name, and that for me, as confirmed by the employers, they hired another person with a more flexible and, above all, cheaper, contract.

Since I got the news my life is no longer the same. My pregnancy is no longer the same. I do not have the necessary serenity to take the big step and become a mother. I feel only a great sadness and great anger.¹⁵³

In Krause's article¹⁵⁴ about fertility politics, we find a statement about the cultural factors involved in the low-rate of births in Italy. The author claims that the experience of motherhood and the patriarchal organization of the family are two important causes of the decline of fertility. The

¹⁵² <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/02/21/precarie-licenziate-sindacato-dorme/192719/> mine translation from “contratto dei precari Rai la maternità venga equiparata a una 'malattia, infortunio o causa di forza maggiore' nel regolare svolgimento delle prestazioni lavorative”.

¹⁵³ Translation from http://blog.alfemminile.com/blog/seeone_420864_8075802/LICENZIAMENTO-E-DISCRIMINAZIONI-PER-GRAVIDANZA/La-mia-storia-quella-di-un-ordinario-licenziamento-per-gravidanza. “All'ottavo mese di gravidanza mi viene comunicato l'imminente licenziamento per cessazione dell'attività. Apparentemente tutto in regola, dato che una delle circostanze in cui la legge prevede il licenziamento di una donna in gravidanza è proprio la cessazione dell'attività. Peccato che l'attività continui eccome, sotto altro nome, e che al posto mio, come confermatomi dagli stessi datori di lavoro, assumeranno un'altra persona con un contratto più flessibile e, soprattutto, più conveniente. Da quando ho avuto la notizia la mia vita non è più la stessa. La mia gravidanza non è più la stessa. Non ho più la serenità necessaria per compiere il grande passo e diventare madre. Provo solo una grande tristezza e una grande rabbia.”

¹⁵⁴ Krause 2007.

anthropologist affirms:

A culture of responsibility dictates an intense set of expectations for Italian parents, particularly mothers, in terms of attaining and displaying middle-class respectability (...). Italian demographer Livi-Bacci (2001) suggests that Italy's lowest-low fertility results from "too much family": that is, Italians retain excessively strong family ties and care deeply about providing for their children. Young adults tend to wait to attain desirable personal, economic, and educational status before becoming parents themselves (...). Krause's ethnographic research confirmed the view of a society that continues to value strong families, while also emphasizing historical adjustments, at times traumatic, to the rigid pecking order of a patriarchal family (...). The unraveling of a family hierarchy is deeply linked to economic shifts, and it necessitated a subsequent reworking of gendered subjects located in new socioeconomic consumption contexts, which weigh heavily on mothers (...). Italian parenting is anything but *disinvolto*, or laid back. Parents, especially mothers, devote substantial time, attention, and discipline to the cleanliness of the houses, the precision of well-laundered and ironed clothes, the selection and preparation of food, and the measured attention to children's health and educations—all reflections of a serious attitude toward parenting.¹⁵⁵

The cultural approach to the phenomenon is not sufficient, to explain the complex intersection of fertility politics and the social, economical context of contemporary Italy. We easily reject the analysis of the low- rate of fertility, which describes the experience of maternity in Italy, as a peculiar performance of "too much patriarchal family", given the fact that patriarchy is not solely an Italian experience, nor the inequality of wages, or the women-centered care work, performed by mothers themselves or by care-workers, who are mostly migrants in the territory of western Europe. In a way, it seems that the quotation above doesn't move far from what Krause recognizes, in the same article, as conservative pro-natalist discourses about modernity, promoted by institutions or mainstream mass media. Krause speaks about middle class expectations as a source of socialization of motherhood and fertility, without taking into account the real class divide. Moreover, the assertion itself can be interpreted as very similar to the same argument Krause criticizes in her text, for which the "traditional" or "conservative" Italian society has to strive for a recognition as a modern society through the rationalization of fertility.¹⁵⁶ This idea misleads the understanding of the real conditions of women in the precarious and competitive assessment of labor. Also, the first statement about "young adults" who do not leave the family is clearly unaware of the condition of

¹⁵⁵ Krause 2007, p. 354.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 352.

labour in the contemporary Italy, as much as the dismantle of welfare and social protection represented by the precarious job contract regime. Women, as we will demonstrate, are the main subjects on which both the labour system, named as postfordist, and the fertility politics are mutually, interdependently constructed. The analysis of the technologies of the self will show how concepts such as competition, risk and optimization are involved in the production of this new subject.

The interplay of precarization and flexibilization of work, social protection and migration policies is well documented in Eleonore Kofman's article "Welfare and gendered migration".¹⁵⁷ The access to the welfare systems in the European Union countries seems to be still deeply connected to the notion of "social citizenship".¹⁵⁸ Through the rhetorics and policies of provisions of aid and services, which means provision of welfare *tout court*, the borders of citizenship play an essential role in creating interdependent gender, ethnic and class divides.

The two most recognizable key tools of discrimination are the resident permits and the "breadwinner" model. The raising of the European political/economic community and the concept of a Europe's borderless *Schengen* Area developed through the strict creation of "external" border in order to limit, or, sometimes, to enhance migrants' fluxes to Europe. In spite of the differences between the "welfare regimes" defined by Esping Andersen¹⁵⁹ as *liberal*, *conservative* and *social democratic* systems, Kofman recognizes a general development of a neoliberal economy based on "flexible labour markets"¹⁶⁰ which influences accessibility to social protection and leads often to the privatization of welfare services as well.

Such concepts as "sexual division of labour", "unpaid domestic work" or "female dependency", and "breadwinner", though differentiated through the Andersen Model, seem to be "ever-green" for the European Union system. That means that the patriarchal model, also described by Krause, appears as the main one on which the various systems of social protection within the EU borders are based.

¹⁵⁷ Kofman 2001.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 139-40.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 145.

The relation between provisions access and earning, connected with the role of the family in the societies, still define different perspectives and different lives for men and women. Kofman describes the impact that the migration to Europe has on the gender gap, focusing mostly on two aspects such as: a flood of migrants work used in order to keep women outside of the labour market¹⁶¹ and the role of women migrants as “providers of welfare”.¹⁶² The status of European women remains blurred between the “non-paid care-workers” and the “flexible, vulnerable workers” with accessibility to welfare public policies and a welfare care-work provided by migrants. Migrants women experience, as migrants in general, discriminations based on citizenship, and through the “family reunion” policies of citizenship, while they often work temporally, flexibly in private households, far from reaching an employment status considered sufficient to be entitled of social aids.

As far as the neo-liberal postfordist assessment of economy and life develops, the intersections of discrimination in accessing social protection and services and the gender divide in labor, are sometimes reinforced through the immigration policies around Europe. The performativity of maternity appears as a way of linking bodies, spaces, borders and labour through the way national political imaginaries are staged through and on women’s bodies.

Through this analysis we learn two important factors of the possibility to perform maternity. As precarious, women workers, natives and migrants, seem to synthesize the social cohesion role, the productive and reproductive force. At the same time, they represent the borders of the European space of citizens reproduction and, also, the logic of functional blurring of those very borders. In other words, it seems now clear that it is women's bodies, being the core of fertility, labor and citizenship assessment, on which the post-fordist neoliberal biopower is shaping its governances and biopower.

It seems that instead of contributing to “equality”, the feminization of labour contributes to gender divide and gender discriminations. As we affirmed before, the process of feminization of labor is

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 149.

not solely related to the economic structures, but to the technologies of production, the technologies of the sign system, the technologies of biopower and the realm of politics, which are all intrinsically intertwined with the regulation of life itself. We will now focus on the issue of the meaning of life as the regulation of competition between lives of women.

Having looked at the statistics about Italian fertility rate, the first impact is that it is impossible to know how many children were born in the Italian territory, due to the fact that the data are very well differentiated between Italian newborn citizens and non citizens. We claim, because of our political position toward borders, that the data are basically biased because of the citizenship regulation. That means also that institutional analysis of fertility appear to be related only to the citizen status.

“Repubblica”, the most popular newspaper in Italy, reports:

The most recent statistics place our country among the last concerning its fertility rate, with a value for 2007 amounted to 1.29 children per woman. A phenomenon common to almost all industrialized countries, but nowhere it has evolved so greatly as it has in Italy. The fertility rate in the 15 EU countries between 1960 and 2007 fell from 2.59 to 1.50 children per woman, while in Italy it is almost halved (from 2.41 to 1, 29).

The decline of births in Italy is an obvious fact - says Alessandro Di Gregorio, Director of the Arts Centre in Turin - accomplice also an evolution of the society that has moved forward, about 35 years, the average age of women who choose to become mothers. Difficulties to get pregnant, therefore, increased and the introduction of Law 40 (...), did not improve the situation. In only 4 years after coming into force, the number of births decreased by 2, 78%. Not to mention other serious consequences, it has quadrupled the number of couples who, with the hope of conceiving a child, are traveling overseas (+200) and multiple pregnancies have increased from 16% to 23 %, with consequent risks to the health of fetuses which can lead to neonatal death for prematurity.

Therefore, the number of births in Italy (519,731 in 2004 and 505,202 in 2007, 14,528 births in less well) decreases, while that of foreign born registered a sharp increase (from 48,925 in 2004 to 57,925 in 2007 with a balance of +8,840 born). Moreover, the average annual growth rate of foreign Migrants Caritas estimations, is approximately 325 000, which leads to the hypothesis that there will be more than a doubling of the immigrant population in 10 years: given that the rate of growth of foreign population does not seem to tend to decline in 2050, immigrants will account for 17 to 20% of the population.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Translation from <http://www.repubblica.it/2008/04/sezioni/cronaca/bimbi-immigrati/bimbi-immigrati/bimbi-immigrati.html>: “Le più recenti statistiche collocano il nostro Paese agli ultimi posti per tasso di fertilità, con un valore per il 2007 pari a 1,29 figli per donna. Un fenomeno comune a quasi tutti i paesi industrializzati, ma nessuno ha avuto un'evoluzione così marcata come in Italia. Il tasso di fertilità nei 15 paesi dell'Unione Europea fra il 1960 e il 2007 è sceso da 2,59 a 1,50 figli per donna, mentre in Italia si è quasi dimezzato (dal 2,41 all'1,29).

“Il calo delle nascite in Italia è un dato evidente - spiega Alessandro Di Gregorio, Direttore del Centro Artes di

Ius Sanguinis, instead of *Ius Solis*, is nowadays a spread legislative framework in European Union, even if sometimes in hybrid forms. The problem of the social cohesion of territory, unmasked in the previous chapter as double faced due to the “territorial cohesion” issue of the European process of opening the internal borders, seems now to be leading to another level: the need of maintaining not only the European white identity but also of keeping certain national borders within the same territory. Again, fertility and citizenship seem to be regulated within a modern Foucauldian framework of racism and bordering but, as we tried to demonstrate along this thesis, the economical assessment of western Europe, as developed in the neoliberal postfordist direction, is pushing fertility to the role of regulation of gender, race and class.

In which sense we can talk about race in the context of precarization of labour? “Immigration’ has become *par excellence* the name of race, (...) functionally equivalent to the old appellation, cause it serves the classification in racist typologies, just as the term ‘immigrant’ is the chief characteristic which enables individuals to be classified in a racist typology”,¹⁶⁴ states Balibar in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. Wallerstein adds his idea of racism as a system of ethnicization of the labour force, for it controls the number of the lower classes, creates and socializes communities of workers who recognize themselves around ethnic identities, and provides a non-meritocratic basis to justify inequalities.¹⁶⁵ A part from the discussion about meritocracy, which is now misleading for our research, what Wallerstein describes as the system of ethnicization is also intrinsically linked to sexism, because of the role of women, young people and the elderlies being the creation of plus-

Torino - Complice anche un'evoluzione della società che ha spostato in avanti, circa 35 anni, l'età media delle donne che scelgono di diventare madri. Le difficoltà a rimanere incinta, quindi, aumentano e l'introduzione della Legge 40 (sulla procreazione assistita ndr), non ha migliorato la situazione. In soli 4 anni, dall'entrata in vigore, le nascite sono diminuite del 2,78%. Per non parlare delle altre gravi conseguenze: è quadruplicato il numero delle coppie che, con la speranza di concepire un figlio, si sono recate all'estero (+200) e le gravidanze multiple sono passate da un 16% ad un 23%, con conseguenti rischi per la salute dei feti, che possono portare alla morte neonatale per prematurità". Cala, quindi, il numero di nascite in Italia (519.731 nel 2004 e 505.202 nel 2007, ben 14.528 nati in meno) mentre quello dei nati stranieri registra un fortissimo incremento (da 48.925 nel 2004 a 57.925 nel 2007 con un saldo di +8.840 nati). Inoltre, il ritmo di crescita medio annuale degli stranieri, secondo le stime Caritas-Migrantes, è pari a circa 325 mila, il che porta ad ipotizzare più che un raddoppio della popolazione immigrata da qui a 10 anni: tenuto conto che la velocità di crescita della popolazione straniera non sembra tendere a diminuire nel 2050 gli extracomunitari rappresenteranno dal 17 al 20% della popolazione residente.

¹⁶⁴ Balibar, Wallerstein 1991, p. 222.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

value that keeps capitalism alive.¹⁶⁶ As Balibar writes, “race and racism is the expression, the promoter and the consequence of the geographical concentrations associated with the axial division of labour”¹⁶⁷ - the need of cohesion inside the state is recognized by Balibar as a need to overcome the internal disintegration and the external aggression, which inevitably leads to the nationalistic sentiment.¹⁶⁸

In the same book, also, Balibar recognizes, without allowing further argumentation, that “racism always presupposes sexism”.¹⁶⁹ Our question then is, through the analysis of feminization of labour, how sexism and racism are intertwined in the post-fordist biopower, through the fertility politics recognizable in the example of Italy. We can affirm that the creation of plus-value is now spread through the feminization of the system itself and, as we will see, the bodies of women are the core on which the entire postfordist organization of society relies. According to Balibar, the sexist ethnicization of the labour has developed through the form of detachment, or alienation, of the worker's body. The sexualization and racialization of the worker's body starts together with the bourgeois industrial revolution, when the proletariat becomes targeted as exploitable and threatening to the population. This is when the race of the labourer has been analysed and created through the equivalence working class/dangerous class, created by sciences such as “sociology, psychology, imaginary biology”.¹⁷⁰ The radicalization of the manual labour has modified the status of the body-men - men with a machine body fragmented and dominated, destroyed in its integrity and fetishized atrophied and hypertrophied in its useful organs.¹⁷¹ Balibar continues his analysis moving to the contemporary intellectual labour which has been broken down into isolated operations and which caused a “somatization” of intellectual capacities. Further he states that the logic of capitalist accumulation involves the contradictory phenomena of mobilizing or permanently destabilizing the conditions of life and work to ensure the competition in the labour market and

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

maintain relative over-population. Moreover the must to form the social heredity results in the capitalistic system being concentrated on the second generation migrants and their unpredictability through paternalistic and repressive policies such as *Ius Sanguinis* regulation of citizenship.

What is interesting for our argument, is the link that Balibar makes between the control of population, race and labour. We are indeed trying to demonstrate that the fertility policies of the postfordist era are functional to the removal of the borders between biopolitics and economy. This means, as we will see, that the promoted competition of the postfordist system of production and reproduction is no more sufficiently described through the classical biopolitical analysis of the “enhancement” or promotion of health as the form of the regulation of race and national identity. Through the feminization of labour, the worker without a body, the imagination of industrial revolution, now can appear as a body without a woman. That means that the alienation induced by the intersectional biopower over the labour force seems to be based on the exceptional space of the womb, as the site of control and development of the socioeconomic and cultural system. The body of the labourer is still at disposal of the economic interests, but the same body is more fragmented and available according to more differentiated economic demands. The feminization of labour, indeed, can represent a spread creation of plus-value, in Wollenstein's terms, and the change of subject on which the biopower bases its strategies. Since women entered in a definitive way the postfordist labour realm, their bodies became the synthesis of production and reproduction, of wealth, races and labour force.

What do we mean by technologies of the self in the previously described context? How can we link the Foucauldian theorization of subjectification and the contemporary economo-bio-power? In the last, third part of his *History of Sexuality*,¹⁷² Foucault introduces the investigation of shifting from the ancient Greek experience of subjectification based on the care of one's self, or the knowledge of one's self, in contraposition with the later christian technologies of discipline, such as “confession”. We can say that he strives to find in the ancient times an alternative to his present, a different model

¹⁷² Foucault 1990.

from the disciplinary biopower. We will now explore self-regulation as a contemporary biopolitical and economical tool of subjectification of “mothers”, precarity of life and competition as technologies of self regulation, not without trying to delineate the existence of positive forms of resistances to the norms.

We start the analysis of the maternal self from the general perspective presented by Nicholas Rose's *The politics of Life Itself* where he identifies “mutations (...): molecularization, optimization, subjectification, expertise, bioeconomics”¹⁷³ within the discipline of medicine. Starting from the Foucauldian analysis of the spatialization of medicine in the human body, as we described in the first chapter of this thesis, Rose claims that a reterritorialization of the same medical discipline took place in the second half of the 20th century. He describes a shift from the scientific “gaze” on the molar body - the “body as a systemic whole”,¹⁷⁴ as a somatic matter typical of the clinical organization of medicine - to its “molecular level”¹⁷⁵ analysed in laboratories, through new techniques like DNA screenings or molecular chemistry. As a technological tool, in Rose's sense,¹⁷⁶ this phenomenon is related to the broader process of construction of knowledge and power over life. The molecular technologies are grounded on the aim of optimization of life, as Rose argues, and affect the medical and scientific social construction, defining the aim of enhancement through the screening of susceptibility. That means that the possibility for medicine to intervene at a molecular level, opens up the chance to heal before an illness is actually developed, as for instance in the case of genetic diseases, through the analysis of a zygote before the implantation. It is the birth of a “molecular biopolitics' [which] now concerns all the ways in which such molecular elements of life may be mobilized, controlled, and accorded properties and combined into processes that previously did not exist”.¹⁷⁷ The enhancement of population, though, becomes the molecular definition of susceptibility to illness in the 21st century:

Technologies of life not only seek to reveal these invisible pathologies, but

¹⁷³ Rose 2006, p. 9.

¹⁷⁴ Rose 2006, p. 11.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 12 and II Chapter of this thesis.

¹⁷⁶ Chapter II.

¹⁷⁷ Rose 2006, p. 15.

intervene upon them in order to optimize the life chances of the individual. Hence new forms of life are taking shape in the age of susceptibility, along with the new individual and collective subjectification of those “at risk”, and, of course, new extensions of the power of expertise potentially to all who are now understood as “pre-patients”.¹⁷⁸

“Expertise” and “bioeconomy” are two concepts that Rose uses to describe this process of molecularization. The pastoral powers are not, indeed, the only “expertise” asked to form the set of ethical behaviours in this new territory, and bioeconomy, which takes the meaning of the economy of genetic research, of human genes sold in biobanks. capital of bio-materials, patenting regulation, “biovalue”, which deeply connects economy and medicine.¹⁷⁹ For us, as we tried to demonstrate before, the connections between life, politics and economy are even deeper embedded in the biopower of the 21st century. Referring back to Foucault's account of the neoliberal governmentality as aimed at granting competition,¹⁸⁰ we argue that the borders between biopower and economy are going through a process of erasure. We believe that this definition of susceptibility together with the description of how the new citizen is shaped through his/her self management of health in so called “economy of hope”, connect very well with our main argument and clarify the RAI's approach to maternity, as described at the beginning of this chapter. Further, we find them also helpful in understanding how precarity of labour and precarity of life are mutually constructed together with the shaping of gender, class and racialization.

Both in the individualizing and collectivizing moments, contemporary biological citizenship operates within the field of hope. Hope plays a fundamental yet ambiguous role in the contemporary somatic ethic. Sarah Franklin introduced the idea of “hope technologies” in the context of her studies of assisted reproduction: within such technologies, professional aspirations, commercial ambitions, and personal desires, are intertwined and reshaped around a biosocial telos.¹⁸¹

In Rose's theory, there is the conceptualization of a biocitizenship based on the process of individualization and collectivization, functioning through the “self regime”¹⁸² which implies

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp.19-20.

¹⁷⁹ Gottweiss, Petersen 2008, p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ Foucault 2010, pp. 120-121.

¹⁸¹ Rose 2006, p. 135.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, p.134.

“criteria of self judgment (...), 'corporeal' and 'genetic' responsibility [and] forms of collectivization organized around the commonality of a shared somatic genetic status”.¹⁸³ In other words, according to Rose, the subjectification typical of the second half of the 21st century, is basically grounded on the idea of self-managing and self-responsibility, which is based on a discourse of “hope”. The technologies of the self, involved in those processes, are future-oriented, are meant to prevent the future risk, by placing the risk in the present. Keeping in mind the biopolitical logic based on “optimization” and “susceptibility”, we can try to understand those regulative concepts, embedding them in the environment in which they take form, such as postfordist organization of labor. We are now going to analyse how the biopolitical logic of regulating the population, the technologies of the self as forms of self-directed regime of discipline and the postfordist precarization of labour and life can be defined as mutually constitutive and interdependently constructed.

The protectionist function of the welfare system is a time management: it works by anticipating and securing the periods when someone becomes non-productive (accident and illness, unemployment, age). In post-Fordism this form of time management disappears. Not so only because future is not guaranteed, but also because the future is already appropriated in the present. From the standpoint of the labourer, work takes place in the present, which is, though, incorporated into his or her whole lifespan as a worker. And precisely this lifelong scope is destroyed in precarity: from the standpoint of capital the whole lifespan continuum of a precarious labourer is dissected into successive exploitable units of the present. Precarity is this form of exploitation which, by operating only on the present, exploits simultaneously also the future.¹⁸⁴

In the case of the Law 40 in Italy, as we registered earlier, extreme restrictions to the access of assisted reproduction. Our understanding of that Law, as demonstrated before, instead of insisting on the hope of the heterosexual couple approaching ART, or, better, of women approaching the therapy, is focused on how maternity is shaped as the competitive experience, typical of the post-fordist neoliberal biopolitical needs. The feelings of failure and success resulting from those of hope and risk do not make the “economy of hope” non-representative. On the contrary, though, we think that it is in the difference between the subjectification of “hope” or “risk”, where the

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁴ Tsianos, Papadopoulos 2006.

important quality of reproduction of labor and gender relies. In her *Pregnant Woman and the Law*, Sheena Meredith writes:

(...) Since the availability of antenatal screening and diagnostic tests for foetal abnormality, the assumption that the foetus is healthy unless shown otherwise, has been displaced by the need to prove that the foetus is normal changing the entire experience of pregnancy. First, there's an assumption about pregnancy as pathology. Second, pregnancy depends by medical judgement when a foetus is found to be abnormal. Latter pregnancy is emotionally associated with anxiety and psychological stress. Conflicts between pregnant women and medical power are mostly influenced by scientific convictions about the meaning of health and care.¹⁸⁵

Risk is a spread feeling, we could say, caused by the medical and social discourse or the visualization of the womb. Nadia Mahjouri writes in her “Techno-Maternity: Rethinking the Possibilities of Reproductive Technologies”:

As soon as pregnancy is diagnosed, an array of previously safe behaviours suddenly become ‘risky’ for the pregnant woman intending to continue with the pregnancy – from eating blue cheese, or pre-prepared sandwiches (which carry a risk of listeriosis), to drinking alcohol (foetal alcohol syndrome), changing the cat litter (risk of toxoplasmosis), lifting heavy loads, overexercising, and even walking down stairs (risk of trauma induced miscarriage or preterm labour).^[6] This terminology frames and enforces what Foucault (1977) in *Discipline and Punish* calls ‘technologies of surveillance’ – the risk of miscarriage encourages pregnant women to take extra care to conform to the techniques of disciplinary power, through both external and internal practices of surveillance.¹⁸⁶

The economy of risk shapes maternity as a precarious experience. From the very moment of pregnancy women are encouraged to delegate the health of a fetus to physicians, detached from their bodies, which are considered as an environment at risk, an “ill body”. Moreover, a fetus due to the *ius sanguinis* in force in Italy but also in other countries of the EU, is considered a “migrant”, as to say that the space of the womb, in the case of a migrant woman, is always foreigner. The post-fordist organization of labor also dismantles maternity rights through the application of “atypical”, meaning “non-permanent” job contracts. It is not surprising that the criticism of precarity as the organization of labor, coming from the institutionalized left-wing trade unions, shows the very same

¹⁸⁵ Meredith 2005, p. 30.

¹⁸⁶ Mahjouri 2004.

rhetorics we are trying to dissect. As Laura Fantone writes:

So far, the main argument against the proliferation of precarious jobs is the attendant lack of security. Research institutes and media use sociological language to underline negative aspects of precarity, dangerously relating marginality to the working poor. However, many arguments in defense of security are based on connecting precarity to low marriage rates, low birth rates, low savings and investment, social exclusion, psychological distress and deviance. (...)From a female perspective, maternity, starting a new family, or long-term financial planning to achieve home ownership are not exclusively positive events, since they also entail less time to work and learn, as well as increased housework.¹⁸⁷

What we are trying to explain is that “hope” and “risk” are two different ways of subjectification that are both related to the status of the individual facing biopower in its external pressure and as personal internalization of the responsibility demanded by a “self regime”. We call this “spirit of the time” an economy of competition, as in part we demonstrated before - the aim of governmentalities is to reproduce the competitive environment where “risk” and “hope” become the ways of the construction of new forms of subjectivities.

Precarity is called also “feminization of labor”, in particular when it comes to such phenomena as “cognitive capitalism”, or “immaterial labor”. As we claimed before, precarity is a widespread labour condition which is based on a new paradigmatic citizen: woman. The precarity of labour means the precarity of life or, in Agamben's words, “bare life” available to the biopower for the regulation of life itself.

How does this form of labour affect life? We traced a path, through pregnancy and maternity, for a global and intersectional understanding of the phenomenon of precarization. It is now the point at which the link between the logic of “exceptionality”, from Agamben and Miller, can be applied to the labor market as the technology of the self. We reject referring to the non-permanent jobs as “atypical”, since we previously defined them as being typical of the postfordist era. Moreover, we think that if the logic of exception works for defining the space of exception in the womb, it can be also helpful to describe a sort of “timing” through the same logic. The work-time, the time of production, and the lifetime, they all seem to collapse nowadays into indistinct zone of exception,

¹⁸⁷ Fantone 2006.

where bare life, the precarious workers and the migrants, together with significant differences in terms of privileges and discrimination, are thrown. Their time appears to be basically available to the competitive labour demand.

This is how Vassilis Tsianos and Dimitris Papadopoulos, two precarious scholars in Leicester University, describe the link between the precarization of labor and life in their article titled “A Savage Journey to the Heart of Embodied Capitalism”.

Thus, the new subjectivities traversing the archipelago of post-Fordist production are not identical with the conditions of immaterial production; rather, subjectivity of immaterial labour means experiencing the new order of exploitation of immaterial labour. Today’s composition of living labour is the response to the risks imposed by immaterial labour. What make the new political subjectivities happen are (...) the embodied experience of the new arrangements of exploitation in post-Fordist societies. Precarity constitutes this new arrangement of exploitation of living labour in advanced post-Fordism.

Precarity is where immaterial production meets the crisis of the social systems which were based on the national social compromise of normal employment. Because work – in order to become productive – becomes incorporated into non-labour time, the exploitation of workforce happens beyond the boundaries of work, it is distributed across the whole time and space of life (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005). Precarity means exploiting the continuum of everyday life, not simply the workforce. In this sense, precarity is a form of exploitation which operates primarily on the level of time. This because it changes the meaning of what non-productivity is.¹⁸⁸

The time that Tsianos and Papadopoulos describe as paradigmatic of the subjectification of precarity is exactly the indistinguishable time of production and reproduction. They add: “A new model of subjectivity is needed which is neither effect of production nor is it identical with the conditions of its exploitation, a concept which drifts constantly away from its social determinants. We believe that the embodied experience of precarity does precisely this”.¹⁸⁹ We are asserting that this new model of subjectivity reclaimed by the authors as needed, cannot be grasped theoretically without a deep understanding of the gendered nature of this paradigmatic shifting of the global biopower grounded on western economy in the 21st century. Pregnancy and motherhood are nowadays far from being personal experiences but instead, the raising focus on fertility and

¹⁸⁸ Tsianos, Papadopoulos 2006.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

reproduction demonstrate how they become paradigmatic sites of regulation of society and citizenship in its gendered, classed and raced discursive and practical construction.

Being a working mother has been for long time considered an issue by the feminist literature: what has been targeted in particular and usually denounced was the position of contradiction in which women were placed when they had to conciliate motherhood and the job.¹⁹⁰ The above points can be illustrated by referring to the *Newsweek* article from 2012, that reads:

In Italy more than most other countries in Europe, there's still a stigma attached to being a working mother. In rural areas especially, a working mom sending the kids off to a day-care center- if there is one- is frowned upon and seen as negligent. 'Many traditional Italians feel that mothers are the best caregivers for young children', explains University of Turin economist Daniela Del Boca, and that may translate into a situation where they are the *only* caregivers. Even when the father is unemployed, the working mother often ends up bearing the entire burden of child rearing.

Ironically, despite this idealization of the Italian mother, Italy's birthrate is the lowest in Europe, at 1.3 children. Women who must work feel they have to choose between the job and children.¹⁹¹

In her article “Italy's Woman Problem”, Barbie Nadeau is reproducing certain discourses about modernization of Italy, which we previously criticized as functional rhetoric to support the racist propaganda of the nation and of the European Union. A part from focusing on the open denouncement against Berlusconi and the promotion of sexist female stereotypes through his public discourses and politics, what the author also underlines is the fact that women feel as they have no choice. Women feel as they have to choose between work or reproduction, leaving the personal experience of planning their life as a frustration between failure or success. Unfortunately we cannot blame the former Prime Minister as the only reason of the situation that women encounter in labor and in the technological assessment of production and reproduction. If we look at the policies promoted by trade unions and the new Monti government, summarized in the deal called “Actions in support of policies for reconciling family and work”¹⁹², we notice that the strategies are not

¹⁹⁰ Hays 1998.

¹⁹¹ “Italy Woman's Problem” in <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/11/15/bunga-bunga-nation-berlusconi-s-italy-hurts-women.html>.

¹⁹² Translated from: “Azioni a sostegno delle politiche di conciliazione tra famiglia e lavoro”: http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/36066FDD-0BD8-47D2-B054-5E1F32242B25/0/Accordo_Conciliazione_07032011.pdf

changing. The deal should encourage “the growth, quantitative and qualitative, women's employment.”¹⁹³ In particular, the parties shared the aim of granting both women, hidden behind “family”, and enterprises, the necessary flexibility of work, sharing the value of the “family-friendly flexibility” as the positive organization of labor.¹⁹⁴ In the same document the implementation of such forms of labor as the part-time job or “telelavoro”, meaning those jobs which can be performed at home via internet, are considered as incentives of fertility. According to the guidelines of the government and the trade unions, it sounds clear that women and enterprises share the same “needs”: flexibilization, competitiveness. It is indeed, in the implementation of precarious work that the family seems to be placed in a safer position for the signatories. As the report about the Italian situation in 2010 presented at the “Women in the World” international meeting held in New York says, a “family” in which the amount of hours of care-work for those women who are employed in a full-time job is 21 per week, while it is 4 hours per week for the male workers. Whether post-fordism and the feminization of labor represent the raising of the new form of patriarchal power or rather its defeat,¹⁹⁵ is not relevant for this discussion, although this could be in fact an important question to be asked in the future. What we know now, and that we share with part of the feminist contemporary critique in Italy, as next paragraph will demonstrate, is that these days women represent subjects on which labor is constructed in harmony with the politics of fertility promoted by the power over life. The kind of subjectification we explored demonstrate that a constant feeling of risk, hope, failure or success is required for the precarious women to fit into the production/reproduction system. We argue that the conciliation is indeed required but in order to have time to reproduce but rather to have time to understand the position of women in the renovated system, with its new perspectives on class and on the process of racialization.

What is class in the contemporary Italy when analysed from the biopolitical perspective of fertility,

¹⁹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁹⁵ An important institutional meeting was held in 10th October 2009, organized by feminist professors and philosophers, as Maria Luisa Boccia, Ida Dominijanni, Tamar Pitch, Bianca Pomeranzi, Grazia Zuffa, about “Sex and Politics in the post-patriarchate” denouncing prime minister Berlusconi’s vision and politics about women, and affirming that male’s power is a “naked power” and post-patriarchal because of its lack of authority. See: http://www.casainternazionalelledonne.org/pdf/Sesso_epolitica.pdf

or, better, from the perspective of wombs as spaces of exception? Which labor class defines the contours of precarity and how does this process work in relation to life? An inquiry of this kind is the core of *L'emancipazione Malata*¹⁹⁶ - "the sick emancipation" - the feminist research on feminization of labor. In the introduction we find the aim of the project:

The economic crisis, which became visible in Europe in early 2008, now requires a return to the issue of work and the paradox that characterizes it. Working exhausts, consumes, leads to suicide. Not finding a job, or losing it, makes someone's life precarious to the point where one decides to abandon it. It is usually men who commit suicide because of losing the job, because it's more for men, than it is for women, that to "bring the money home" has to do with identity and self esteem. Women are still traveling between the traditional image of themselves as homekeepers on leave in search of additional salary, and wage labor as a curse and a right.

It is from the work of women we have decided to start writing after a discussion, certainly insufficient, to develop a common view (...) Despite the diversity of our locations and languages, all contributions objectively delineate feminism of a different quality, as compared to others that also dealt with the same theme. The different quality consists in acknowledging that one can not understand the labor and its mutations, (...) if one doesn't place the right angle on viewing the intersection of gender/class/nationality. There is no "female condition" equal for everyone, there is a multiplicity of women's positions in the social hierarchy. There are not only Italian working women and men, there are also (...) immigrant workers. (...). The idea of materializing a political relationship in a book was born from a collective "Women and Politics", that has been meeting for over two years at the headquarters of the Free University of Women.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Bolzani 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Bolzani 2010. Translated from "La crisi economica, divenuta visibile in Europa agli inizi del 2008, impone oggi di tornare sulla questione del lavoro e sul paradosso che lo caratterizza. Lavorare stanca, logora, toglie la vita. Non trovare lavoro o perderlo rende la vita precaria, per qualcuno fino al punto di fargli decidere di abbandonarla. Sono in genere gli uomini coloro che si suicidano per la perdita del posto di lavoro, perché per gli uomini più che per le donne "portare i soldi a casa" ha a che fare con l'identità e l'autostima. La donne sono ancora in viaggio tra la tradizionale immagine di se stesse come casalinghe in libera uscita alla ricerca di un salario complementare e il lavoro salariato come maledizione e diritto.

È del lavoro delle donne che abbiamo deciso di cominciare a scrivere dopo una discussione certo insufficiente a far maturare un punto di vista comune ma mossa dall'esigenza condivisa di costruire un nucleo di pensiero forte, capace di reggere il confronto con la realtà. Malgrado la diversità dei nostri percorsi e linguaggi, l'insieme dei contributi delinea obiettivamente un femminismo di qualità diversa rispetto ad altri che pure si sono occupati dello stesso tema.

La diversa qualità consiste soprattutto nella consapevolezza che non è possibile comprendere il lavoro e le sue mutazioni, né quello degli uomini né quello delle donne, se non si posiziona il proprio angolo di visuale nell'intersezione genere/classe/cittadinanza. Non esiste una "condizione femminile" uguale per tutte, esiste una molteplicità di posizioni femminili nella gerarchia sociale. Non esistono solo le lavoratrici e i lavoratori italiani, esistono anche le lavoratrici e i lavoratori immigrati. Inserire nella riflessione le cosiddette "badanti" non è una questione di nobiltà d'animo: è un'esigenza cognitiva, una delle condizioni sine qua non per capire il lavoro che cambia.

L'idea di materializzare una relazione politica in un libro è nata nel collettivo Donne e Politica che si è riunito per oltre due anni nella sede della Libera Università delle Donne."

The book collects 13 contributions from scholars and activists, united in a feminist collective after the protests of 2007 and the creation of the grassroots feminist network at the national level. In 2007, indeed, hundreds of “women and lesbians”¹⁹⁸ were meeting in several national “assemblies” in order to organize a national demonstration in Rome against males’ violence and against the instrumental use of racism in government’s policies justified by the mystification of gender based violence and by defining the illegal migrants as “criminals”. “Security Pack”, named before,¹⁹⁹ was the Law discussed in Parliament in 2007, in which penalties for immigrants were associated with “women security and protection”. Mass media followed the aim of this rhetorical trick. The National Demonstration against Males' Violence took place on the 24th of November 2007 - 250.000 women from different generations, involving natives and migrants, walked through the streets of Rome with antiracist slogans, fighting against domestic violence and homophobia and confirming the intersectional practical approach to the patriarchal violence.

It is from this shared analysis that *L'emancipazione malata* took shape. Three essays are particularly interesting for our analysis of the technologies of the self as the spatial and temporal tools to construct the contemporary subjects of society. We are going to summarize the arguments through the translation of some of its parts. We will focus on three chapters in particular, underlying our agreements or critiques.

In her chapter titled “Women on the edge of crisis: cases of working women between production and reproduction” Maria Grazia Campari writes a critique of women's adhesion to the postfordist shifting in the organization of labor, saying that because of the importance of domestic work women accept pejorative flexibilization of labor, and tend to refuse promotions if they require a geographical transfer. In some way this kind of subjectification, as we call it, or this technology of the self called labour, is denounced by the author as a form of women's agreement to flexibilization which is related to the power relations existing in domestic work. On one hand, indeed, the position of women in family represents a source of power for them. On the other hand though, there is an

¹⁹⁸ <http://flat.noblogs.org>

¹⁹⁹ See chapter II of this thesis.

“adaptive desire”,²⁰⁰ which means that women do not reclaim equality in the care-work in order to avoid marital conflicts in the family - “(...) even in situations of guaranteed emancipation, on a social level, women seem to have, more than individual rights, rights conditioned by their family belonging, by lending an accomplice adhesion”.²⁰¹ Campari continues denouncing the complicity of men who accept their privileged economic position, through granting women the part of their salary. Even in cases of

[the] organization of work, mainly based on the contribution of women, we saw that the delegation in the trade union was given to men, and that it did not work. (...) Male representatives were blocked by the implicit contradiction of the conflict of sexes. (...) A block that has caused others, has expanded like wildfire, blocked class conflict, made the lower classes as a whole irrelevant (...). The end of male irresponsibility with respect to the private sector can help to determine the end of the male monopoly over public affairs.²⁰²

What is interesting for us is to focus on the family duties that lead women to accept discriminatory labor conditions and remain under-represented in the modern organization of trade unions, which shaped their positions in the Fordist era and seemed to be insufficiently aware of the present day condition of labour: precarity. We pointed out before that the logic of “fertility”, masked by appeals to family values is instead at the core of the analysis of the flexibilization of labour as the form of regulation of the population as a whole.

Cristina Morini writes about another form of subjectification in the work place, typical of what we called “feminization of labor”. The author asks what about work “if the labor also conquers 'affectivity': women, carework, income”,²⁰³ and we find this analysis useful to understand how technologies of the self are used in the workplace. Morini claims that through the increase of

²⁰⁰ Bolzani 2010. Translated from: “desiderio adattivo”.

²⁰¹ Bolzani 2010. Translated from: “[A]nche nelle situazioni di emancipazione garantita, a livello sociale, le donne sembrano detenere più che non diritti individuali, diritti condizionati dalla loro appartenenza familiare, prestandovi una complice adesione.”

²⁰² Bolzani 2010. Translated from: “Anche nei casi di organizzazione del lavoro basata prevalentemente sull'apporto femminile, si è visto che la delega è stata conferita a sindacalisti uomini e non ha funzionato (...) I rappresentanti maschi erano bloccati dalla contraddizione implicita del conflitto di sesso (...). Quel blocco ne ha provocati altri, si è allargato a macchia d'olio, ha bloccato il conflitto di classe, ha reso irrilevanti le classi subalterne nel loro complesso.”

²⁰³ Ibidem. Translated from: “Se il lavoro conquista anche l' 'affetto': donne, lavoro di cura, reddito”. In

immaterial labor we live the realization of a “total appropriation of the body-mind of the workers, in particular feminine affectivity, creativity and seduction, which means a deepening of the real subsumption to the capitalist exploitation of the body-mind and of the sociability of men and women”.²⁰⁴ In other words, according to the author, through the “feminization of labor” as an exploitation of social skills defined as “feminine”, the body and the mind of workers become a part of labor. Moreover, it means disqualification of women through the essentialized concept of “feminine skills”, which is limited to the traditional role of care givers and used in order to impose a form of “docility” on workers in general. The companies demand to bring affective skills to the workplace and desire under the blackmail of precarity, is taken by the labor, and there is no mental or material space for anything else. Men and women are forced to decide to be themselves their own capital”.²⁰⁵

In her “The sick emancipation”, the chapter which titles the book, Lidia Cirillo interrogates, again, the phenomenon of “feminization of labor”, but this time through the lens of the intersectional feminist critique, which is recognized as the most qualified tool of analysis due to its recognition of the relations between class/gender, race, generation, and citizenship.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Cirillo defines sexism and racism not only as cultural phenomena, but also as a form of reaction of the privileged labour force to the new underpaid, precarious labour classes and the shifting that their exploitation brings to the entire organization of labour in the form of a “feminization”, flexibilization and precarization.²⁰⁷

To summarize, the feminist critique represented in the collective work called *The sick emancipation* reveals the tricky nature of the “feminization” of labor which becomes a form of subjectification for every worker, and in particular for the low-wage workers, such as migrants, women, and men who are now experiencing the same phenomena. Cirillo, particularly useful for our argumentation,

²⁰⁴ Translated from <http://www.womenews.net/spip3/spip.php?article7224>: “appropriazione complessiva del corpo-mente dei lavoratori, in particolare, dell’affettività, creatività seduttività femminili, che significa approfondimento della sussunzione reale alla valorizzazione capitalistica del corpo-mente e della stessa dimensione di socialità degli uomini e delle donne”.

²⁰⁵ Bolzani 2010.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

recognizes a “competition”²⁰⁸ between the renovated labour classes, and a the cultural competition spread as a form of construction of the subjectivities at work. For her, racism and sexism are mutually constructed to reproduce social conflicts.

As we claimed before, competition seems to rule the spirit of the time, hidden behind the specific phenomena of “feminization” or “precarization” typical of the post-fordist organization of production. Moreover the labor is the only and main source to guarantee competitiveness in the social environment. The repetitive and continuous discursive, - legislative and political - association of economy and fertility rates, for example in the concept of “social cohesion”, reveals that competition has to be granted also at the level of the regulation of population as gendered, classed and racialized. A deeper analysis of precariousness, of its causes and its consequences, helped us to understand how life becomes, in its temporality and spatiality, part of the labor and of politics at the same time. Competition seems, in this way, to concern multiple aspects of the construction of oneself and of his/her hopes to survive, or “fear” to become one of those who are “let die” - a sense of failure for the natives, and a real risk of losing citizenship for migrants. Adherence to the model of production and reproduction, to the level of organization of one's personal life and emotions, is demanded on the people who live in the dream of optimization of their lives, which, in the end, seems to be created through the diffusion of real risk, instability, docility and precarity. Our analysis of the technologies of the self reveals how they are symbolically constructed on women, as a corporeal synthesis of an essentializing docility, and as reproductive bodies, wombs.

We started this chapter with the description of maternity from the perspective of the precarious job contract, it was defined as “illness” or extraordinary impediment to work. The “sick emancipation” of women is perfectly represented by the image of being pushed by the system to the position in space and time of exception where the workforce is modelled to guarantee the order of economy and the order of life of the western post-fordist competitors.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem.*

Conclusions

Through the analysis of the technologies that the biopower expresses in the contemporary Italy, we described a sudden shift to a postfordist mode of production that affected the Country in the beginning of the 21st century. This economic change corresponded with two interesting phenomena: a renewed appeal for fertility, and a Law about ART that basically limits the access to assisted reproduction only to heterosexual and healthy couples. Moreover, in the same year, 2004, the Biagi Law stated the definitive precarization of labour, instituting precarious job contracts that discourage maternity. The apparent contradiction between a need to increase the birth-rate and *de facto*, the reduction of social protection policies to enhance maternity, has been one of the driving aspect of the analysis of the link between postfordism and biopolitics. What we demonstrated is that the two phenomena are not necessarily in contradiction if we analyse how market and biopower are mutually constructed. In order to describe this process we started giving an account of neoliberalism as the form of market that promotes competitiveness: unlike liberalism which required a space of freedom from the State, the regime of truth of neoliberalism, according to Foucault, is the production of competition.²⁰⁹ In the same decades in which Fordism as a mode of production gave space to a new globalized and flexible form of organization of labour, Foucault targeted neoliberalism as the economic novelty to include in the analysis of biopolitics. We tried to understand how neoliberalism functions through postfordism, which specificity is represented by a global economic arrangement in which a flexibilization of labour is required. We added another substantial shift in our analysis, maybe the most relevant: the phenomenon of feminization of labour. Not only, indeed, women are accessing more and more the labour market, but, we claimed, the labour market itself can be understood nowadays as immediately constructed on the basis of the precarious feminine experience of production and reproduction. This conclusion is not solely based on the economic analysis of the present, but primarily on the development of biopolitics in the 21st

²⁰⁹ Foucault 2010.

Century as described by Ruth Miller²¹⁰ and Nikolas Rose.²¹¹ On the one hand, the account that Miller gives about the womb as the space of exception on which the biopolitical regulation of citizenship takes place, on the other hand Rose's analysis of subjectivation, led our research to focus on how the exceptional logic of biopower enacts competition through a spread sentiment of risk and hope. That means that if the womb is the space on which the classical regulation of citizenship promotes a subjectivation based on an internalization of risk and a self-regulatory life style, women can be defined as “those at risk” *par excellence*.

Through the analysis of the labour and the social class called “precarious”, we claim that precarity is a representative concept which enable a global understanding of the collapse of economy and biopolitics into a strict governmentality focused on reproduction. The difference between our thesis and the classic account of biopolitics can be recognized in the definition of a new neutral subject, the woman, on whom the labour system is constructed. It's through the woman's body, her womb, that the reproduction of social classes is regulated according to the needs of the market. The contemporary needs of the market we recognized in this brief research, are flexibility, availability of the workers and their exploitation. This doesn't sound far from an anti-capitalistic critique, if the peculiar process of subjectification of the labour is not properly taken into account. Maternity is blackmailed, in a way, and discouraged, so to project the experience itself in a regime of personal failure or success. Again the internalization of hope and risk becomes a meaningful aspect of the whole system of regulation. The other need, of biopower and of the market, is the regulation of race. We analysed how the concept of race collapsed in the last decades, in the one of “migrant”. We claimed that this shift is intrinsically linked to the organization of labour, and of the social classes. The migrant is a labour force, kept in a precarious status: residence permits are granted to who has a job contract. Moreover, the biopolitical and economic space of the migrant's womb is regulated through the *Ius Sanguinis* law, meaning that no citizenship is given to the migrant's children, who is, instead, immediately thrown in a labour blackmailing regime. Indeed, it's at the age of 18 that they

²¹⁰ Miller 2007.

²¹¹ Rose 2006.

have to deal with their residence permits, again, mainly through participation to the labour force.

The womb becomes a space of exception where decisions about the regulation of sociality and labour are taken. On its regulation the market finds the mode of subjectification proper to maintain a regime of competition in which class consciousness has to be erased.

We tried to explain how precarity can be considered a mode of production and reproduction at the same time, due to the postfordist global interests. Also we underlined the position that women, natives and migrants, have in this picture: it's through their wombs that class, race and citizenship are regulated.

We didn't cover all the complexity of the interplay between biopower and economy. We feel that this work represents a beginning, a first step to systematize a deep analysis of these contemporary phenomena. Also, the aim of this thesis is not only of theoretical nature. Naming the contemporary social forms of struggle in Italy, the feminist, the precarious and the migrant one, this work wants to give visibility and acknowledgement to the issues that come from the social environment itself. This is why the structure of the thesis didn't follow a framework and a case study, but it tried to explain the phenomena of regulation, exploitation, and competition keeping the two layers together. In this way, the collective statements of the social movements have been taken into account within the construction of a theoretical framework that tries, in a way, to understand reality in order to change it.

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