

# Let's talk about poetry

## With Marzia D'Amico

My name is Marzia D'Amico. I'm a doctor of philosophy in medieval and modern languages. I got my PhD in Oxford and then recently, well, about four years ago moved to Lisbon, where I'm currently an FCT junior researcher in the field of Italian studies and comparative literature, focusing specifically on gender studies and resourceful skills that we can apply to investigating the counter-canon particularly when from feminist perspective.

### Can you tell us more about your field of study and what is your research about?

I specifically investigate the counter-canon as mentioned. So everything that happened experimentally speaking in poetry in Italy starting from the 1968 let's say and moreover developing towards the 70s and 80s.

I then decided to specifically focus on the results of not just female produced operas but mainly on the experimental techniques adopted by women and the people who identified as women as a structural lens of investigation.

Because it is my concern not only to not to risk to create a sort of what has been called a pink ghetto of production made by women, but rather investigate the phenomenon of feminism as a as an engine in production for these women.

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## Why it's important to use a feminist lens to study literature and especially to study poetry.?

I believe that nowadays using a feminist lens is part of the colonial process of redistribute attention towards this has been radically marginalized towards the creation of what we tend to uh consider the western canon and I can only speak uh with consciousness about the western canon because it's what I am more emerged into as a person myself but also because it's what I've been starting uh throughout the years.

Yet, I believe that this can easily be adopted as an approach towards many other fields and areas of study and discussion. A feminist lens is nowadays fundamental because it's never reductive.

A feminist lens it's what really help us subverting the the imbalance of what we have been submerged from the kind kind of information we received since a very young age, both scholarly and not scholarly speaking. So, for me it's just one of the many lens of the decolonial project that we have towards creating a more uh fair world. And we can actually do that through literature in my opinion.

So, for poetry in particular, I want to always quote the very important sentence from the essay of Audreya Lorde which she says, "Poetry is not a luxury for women." And that is fundamental because it's something that we should never relegate the margins of our education, poetry, and the arts forms our soul and our reception of the world in so many ways and we can restore well rather than restore we can create a different system of values through the education of it.

## You are also a poetry yourself. Can you tell us more about your writing?

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The two things somewhat came together at some stage of my life. I was writing poetry in Italian when I was very young and I sort of regretted in many ways because it was not my best effort.

Uh when I moved to the UK, I somewhat had access to a vocabulary that was more pertinent to what was interesting to me. And I think that also creating a detachment between myself and my native my native language, uh, help me develop the necessary detachment to put a filter in what is a creation meant to be public.

And by public, I mean political in a very Hannah Arendt way of understanding that every action that we, uh, make that we do in the world is always in correlation and relation with, uh, with, uh, with the others, with a capital O, with the alterity, let's say.

So, for me like going back to poetry was sort of like going first time to poetry through the English language and I have now returned to writing in my first language where I have had uh problems in watching expressing myself freely and uh My my latest project that was recently published by Zona Editore, Ragazz\* Laser, has in its own title a grammatical problem of rendering the experience of an unbinary person from medical in the structure of our language, which is something that I never encountered when I first came out as an binary woman in in English language.

And for me to recreate this whole understanding of the world that is that I inherited from fighting with my sisters as a as a person who tries to be maybe not an activist but as a active and outspoken as possible when it comes to the injustices of the world as being fundamental because I believe that nowadays poetry has the same responsibility it has always had which is to respond to the request of the world and to make fair the injustices to point a light to shine a light on what is meant to be said and discussed.

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## Why are you so passionate about it?

I am deeply interested into in the strong interconnection that poetry um has with gender because I also believe that nowadays it would be very silly not to recognize how poetry has changed in its experiment mental features. Also thanks to uh I hate the terms giving voice, but finally there is a restitution of platform for voices of marginalized experiences of life.

One of the many being uh people gender non-conforming. And this reflects in the form itself. I think it would be very silly of us not to recognize that there is a different interaction that people that come from a um situation of oppression and uh silencing uh can develop through poetry also as part of a style.

So, it's not merely an attempt of making propaganda as that's been said uh by some critics and some politicians. It's a matter of the looking deeper and further into the stylistic forms that adapt uh from the experience of people.

## What is the biggest challenge facing feminists today?

Um, I believe that feminism, as we know it, uh both as a legacy of the 70s, both as the trans-feminism that has developed from them from there uh is facing a major challenge that is always uh that is somewhat embraced by any gender non-conforming person.

And perhaps the most pressing challenge today is the intensification of anti-gender movements which is a coordinated and transnational black lash that frames gender studies and queer theory and feminist politics as ideological threats.

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Well, this black lash deploys both well not just both but like legal and cultural and media mechanisms to curtail bodily autonomy to restrict technical educational curriculum which is very close to my heart as an academic. uh and the legitimize scholarly and activist work. And this is both uh reactionary and highly organized system that is cutting across political context while reinforcing structural inequalities.

### **And what will be the next challenges for feminist? Maybe, I don't know, in 10 years?**

I really hope that what would facing now will be solved in 10 years from now, but I'm afraid not. And I believe that tomorrow's challenge may lie in negotiating the tension between fluidity and capture. As gender expressions and identities proliferate, both institutions and platforms, but also the states increasingly attempt to regulate and categorize and monetize from them.

So the risk is that the emancipatory practices now become normalized and commodified and also bureaucratically fixed to a certain extent and in this way they might lose the transformative charge. So sustaining the radical potential of gender as a form of critique as a form of practice as a form of world making now does and will require constant vigilance and collective experimentation.

### **Three names of women who in your opinion have made feminist history**

Only three is truly restricted But if really forced to choose, I guess I would say probably bell hooks for the way she managed to reshape thought through an ethics of care intersectionality and radical pedagogy.

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Probably Silvia Federici for her insistence on the political centrality of reproductive labour, the social reproduction and the gender dynamics of capitalism. And also importantly Judith Butler for their revolutionary understanding of gender has performative and for the capacity of destabilizing long held assumptions in philosophy, politics, and social movements.

But really one could of course name dozens of others from different genealogies I believe and we we talked about Audrey Lorde briefly. There is of course Theresa de Lauretis, Sara Ahmed, and when it comes to the Italian genealogy in our case, for example, being myself Italian, um originally uh Carla Lonzi, of course. So, it's very hard to just pick three.

### Is there anything you would like to say that we haven't asked you about?

Um, perhaps only this. So, I believe that family's work is always collective, communal. Even when it appears that there to an individual name or author, it arises from a shared struggle from activist infrastructures and intergenerational dialogues uh together with intellectual um lineage that exceed any one figure. So if there is something worth adding, uh maybe it's the reminder that feminist history is never finished. It is an ongoing situated practice of imagining and building more livable worlds. And this can only be a achieved by not idealising a single subject, but remembering that it's something that we have to fight for as sisters at all times.

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