

Rethinking The Southern Question in Italy from A Postcolonial Feminist and Queer Perspective: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Activist

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Abstract

The North-South divide in Italy, commonly referred to as the Southern Question, has been a subject of political debate since the unification of the country at the end of the Nineteenth century. Research has highlighted how the Southern population in Italy has been subjected to a process of racialization fundamental for the nation-building of the Italian state (Conelli 2022). Scholars such as Bonu (2021) and Amenta (2024) have recently begun to explore the issue through a postcolonial feminist and queer perspective, enriching the field with nuanced analyses. This paper contributes to this emerging body of research by conducting a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis on 11 selected posts from the Instagram page @la.malafimmina. My theoretical framework draws on Conelli's (2022) postcolonial approach to the Southern Question, Cassano's (2012) Southern Thought, and the feminist and queer insights of Bonu (2021) and Amenta (2024). Through my analysis, I identify four central themes: *femminismo terrone* (a reclaiming of Southern feminist identity), an intersectional perspective on the anti-mafia movement, a postcolonial critique of the Othering and exoticization of the Mezzogiorno, and the need to center the Southern population in the discussion on mass tourism. These themes not only deepen the postcolonial feminist and queer framework on the Southern Question, but also emphasize the importance of exploring the political potential of marginalized identities and recovering counter-histories that challenge dominant narratives.

By drawing from Bonu's (2021) application of decolonial feminism and Amenta's (2024) broader conception of queerness, I argue that addressing the intersections of gender and class within the Southern population is crucial to understanding both past and present forms of discrimination. This approach resists essentializing the South, instead embracing its internal diversity. In this way, the findings of this paper challenge reductive representations of the Mezzogiorno, offering a more complex and inclusive understanding of the Southern Question.




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