**The Politics and Praxis of Il Colletivo Madri, founded in Rome in 1976 by a group of feminist mothers.**

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My research interest focuses on motherhood for the reason Lisa Baraitser points out ‘motherhood brings feminist theory closest to its own blindspots’[[1]](#footnote-1) and for the reason Michelle Boulous Walker states clearly here, ‘women are silenced most effectively by their association with maternity.’[[2]](#footnote-2) Theoretically this paper will centre on Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero’s thought on relationality. Specifically I will show that what captures and holds my interest in mothers’ relationality is the possibility that it can be a ‘feminist challenge to the androcentrism of the public sphere’ (Linda Zerilli) and that mothers relationality can ease ‘the constitution of alternative spaces of freedom’. I offer a critical engagement with ‘alternative spaces of freedom’ created by mothers, by specifically looking at one case study. I will engage with the work of a mothers’ collective, Il Colletivo Madri founded in Rome in 1976 by a group of women who were mothers. I demonstrate how this was a political experience and how it informed mothers of alternative ways to engage with the law or disengage from it. I explore how they challenged the patriarchal model of motherhood as a private and solitary activity confined within the walls of the home to a collective experience. Therefore the mothers of the collective challenged prevailing views on motherhood, which existed in Italian society in the 1970s, that of the good bourgeois mother and wife which selflessly cares for home and children. Il Colletivo Madri later became The Research and Study Group on Motherhood and Women’s Condition *Il Tacchino D’Oro,* (Il Gruppo di studi e di ricerca sulla maternita’ e sulla condizione femminile). Overall, I want to show, how these women challenged the hegemonic discourse which existed in Italy at the time, which confined their bodies and their sexuality within an heteropatriarchal frame.

1. Lisa Baraitser, ‘Communality Across Time.’ *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 13: 117-122. In, 'Encountering, Theorizing and Living Maternal Subjectivities: A Panel Discussion of Lisa Baraitser's Maternal Encounters: the Ethics of Interruption', ed. Noreen Giffney, Anne Mulhall and Michael O'Rourke. Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 13:2 (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Michelle Boulous Walker, *Philosophy and the Maternal Body. Reading Silence.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)