Introduction. Small Islands? 
Solidarity as Resource, Solidarity as Challenge*

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* This introductory essay is formed by two sections: “Transnational Solidarity: Back and Forth in Time”, written by Lorenzo Mari, and “Solidarity, Interculturality and ‘Global’ Education”, written by Rita Monticelli.
Transnational Solidarity: Back and Forth in Time

In her recent book Notes toward a Theory of Performative Assembly (2015), Judith Butler combines her investigation on the performativity related to political gatherings and actions with a conception of solidarity which also refers to Bernice Johnson Reagon’s “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century” (1983). She underlines Reagon’s claim that authentic solidarity is built upon vulnerability – a key-term in Judith Butler’s own philosophical work at least since Precarious Life (2004) – by directly quoting from Reagon’s own words: “I feel as if I’m gonna keel over any minute and die. That is often what it feels like if you’re really doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don’t, you’re not really doing no coalescing” (Reagon 1983, 356).

The importance of this quotation is also due to its context: Reagon’s essay was based on a contribution which she had previously presented at the West Coast Women’s Music Festival, in the Yosemite National Forest, California, in 1981. Reagon herself stresses the role of location in this passage:

You give this weekend everything you can. Because no matter how much of a coalition space this is, it ain’t nothing like the coalescing you’ve got to do tomorrow, and Tuesday and Wednesday, when you really get out there, back into the world: that is ours too.

These festival weekends are places of crisis and you can do wonderful things in a crisis. I remember when I got to Michigan one year and they were talking about how these women during this thunderstorm held down the stage, right? And it was lightning, and they thought “We’re Big Amazons,” right? That’s crisis and it ain’t that important what you do in a crisis. You go beyond yourself anyway, and you talk about it for years. You go wishing everyday was like that. Everyday ain’t like that, and what really counts is not what you do this weekend, but take what this weekend has meant – try to digest it. And first thing, Monday, Tuesday morning at work, before twenty-four hours go around, apply it. And then do it everyday you get up and find yourself alive. (Reagon 1983, 368)

Placing her analysis of solidarity within the material context of a music festival, Reagon indirectly emphasizes the importance of cultural production in the representation and enactment of different forms of coalitional work. In addition, the exposure to risks of different kinds during the organization of a set of live performances recalls the idea of vulnerability, which is connected with solidarity, according to Reagon’s more general definition.

Time is also relevant, as Butler’s quotation appears in an essay which was published more than thirty years after Reagon’s intervention – highlighting, thus, Butler’s need to reconnect with the tradition of Black feminism of the early Eighties. A similar “backward glance” can be retraced in another recent anthology of essays, Femminismi queer postcoloniali (“Queer Postcolonial Feminisms”, 2015), edited by Paola Bacchetta and Laura Fantone. Although this anthology is originally meant to have a specific resonance within the Italian cultural debate, a strong relationship is nevertheless sought with the debate on “transnational feminism(s)”, which flourished in the US academia at the end of the Eighties and beginning of the Nineties. As a matter of fact, at least five of the nine authors – namely, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Ella Shohat, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan and Jacqui M. Alexander – had published ground-breaking essays in that period, ranging from Trinh T. Minh-ha’s Woman,

As these two recent books aptly show, “transnational solidarity” appears to be a defining feature of the cultural and political debate within and across feminist movements of the last three decades – producing, thus, the need for contemporary theorists to constantly go back to the academic production of the Eighties and the Nineties, especially when dealing with solidarity. This complex temporality is also enhanced by the analysis of the constellation of concepts that have been variously associated with coalitional theories and practices, ranging from “sisterhood” and “friendship” to “coalition” and “solidarity” themselves.

While representing the non-linear and stratified genealogy of contemporary reflections on solidarity, these concepts have been often put in conflict with each other, underlining the implicit exclusions being enforced through the choice of a peculiar category instead of others. This has led, in time, to the acknowledgment of the necessity to unpack “feminist solidarity” itself, by deconstructing its normative limits – producing, for example, ambivalent cases of transphobia within certain feminist perspectives (see, among others, Namaste 2000 and Hayes 2003) – and opening them up to the discussion of gender, queer and/or LGBTQIA solidarity. Focusing on exclusion, also the longstanding isolation of Euro-American feminisms from “other” feminisms – including racialized versions of this divide, such as “white”/“black”, or the differences among “colonial”, or “formerly colonial”, and “postcolonial” feminisms – has been contrasted through the enforcement of transnational and transcultural perspectives.

What is shared, in general terms, by these two cultural and political changes is a general attempt to overcome identity politics. As suggested by Butler, in fact, the enactment of political solidarity does not involve the obliteration of the differences between identities. It refers, instead, to the possible “synthesis of a set of conflicts”, or, “a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways, a practice of contestation that demands that these movements articulate their goals under the pressure of each other without therefore exactly becoming each other” (Butler 1998, 37).

If identity politics is to be excluded in coalitional practices, it is also eschewed in the theoretical production, mostly through intersectional theory. While acknowledging, for example, with Kimberlé Crenshaw that “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw 1989, 140), this does not mean that intersectional theory automatically avoids identity politics. Rather, it is an advice to constantly verify how those theories which focus on a single axis – be it gender, race or any other identity marker – effectively “address the particular way in which Black women” or any other subaltern group “are subordinated” (Crenshaw 1989, 40).

¹ Though not directly quoted, also Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s “Under Western Eyes” (1986) can be added to the lot, as her call for transnational feminist theories and practices was grounded on a peculiar conception of solidarity, which the revised edition of the essay, published in Feminism Without Borders (2003), would better qualify. On that occasion, in fact, Mohanty chose to quote Jodi Dean’s work, where solidarity is defined by the motto: “I ask you to stand by me over and against a third” (Dean 1996, 3).
In more general terms, using Joan Scott’s words, “we need theory that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them” (Scott 1988, 33). In this regard, Scott does not only argue that the theoretical approaches to solidarity should avoid confirming or reversing the existing hierarchies, siding, thus, with Crenshaw; differently from Naomi Wolf’s later claim that “the time for theory is pretty much over” (Wolf 2009), Scott also puts a strong emphasis on the “need of theory” for any coalitional work. This is also the position that Holly Jeanine Boux has recently held in a compelling review of contemporary feminist theories of solidarity, concluding that also theory is “a fundamentally coalitional endeavour” (Boux 2016, 6).

After all, as underlined for instance by JeeYeun Lee, “coming together and working together are by no means natural nor easy” (Lee 1995, 73). This statement echoes again Reagon’s position about solidarity and vulnerability, as quoted at the beginning of this introduction. Lee, however, does not directly focus on all the possible contexts of these coalitional practices, which Reagon, on the other hand, takes into account, as she specifically deals with the organization of the music festival she took part in, in 1981, with her intervention.

As a matter of fact, cultural production can be considered as a paradigmatic environment for the staging of a solidarity that is neither natural nor easy, due to the constructedness and complexity of the different representations that each cultural text is inevitably based on. This is also the main field of analysis chosen for this issue of de genere, focusing on “transnational solidarity in contemporary literature and arts”. The title of this issue, in particular, goes back to one specific novel, Andrea Levy’s Small Island (2004), where the “island” being scaled down includes that Great Britain which in 1948 started to lose its colonies, as well as its status of imperial metropole. In that year, the Empire Windrush ship carried 492 immigrants coming from Jamaica and the so-called “West Indies” to the United Kingdom. These passengers were among the first immigrants to take advantage of the British Nationality Act, which was passed in 1948 and gave the status of UK citizens to all the British subjects from the former British colonies. This episode was long considered as the symbolic beginning of post-war immigration to the United Kingdom, connecting, thus, the colonial history of the British Empire with the history of post-war “multicultural Britain” on a transnational level (Gilroy 2004). Furthermore, the “small islands” quoted in the title of this issue also refer to two important characters in Levy’s novel, namely British-born Queenie Bligh and Jamaican-born Hortense. Their strong solidarity bond suggests that they are not “small islands”, in John Donne’s renowned, extrapolated and clichéd terms, on their own.

This example of transnational solidarity is only one of the possible interpretations of solidarity which can be found in this issue; nevertheless, all these interpretations are a consistent reply to the fundamental question for transnational solidarity since, at least, three decades: “Who is we?” (Rich 2001, 82). This question has become particularly pressing in relation to that very sociocultural and political context of Small Island, which is related to postcolonial migrations. This scenario, affecting a growing number of national and ethnic communities, as well as other social groups, calls for a specific analysis of the nexus between solidarity and interculturality.

Solidarity, Interculturality, and ‘Global’ Education.
As discussed above, solidarity may be considered as a lens through which it is possible to recognize, value and respect diversity. Solidarity is crucial to envisage new forms of global citizenship education, through a reconsideration of issues such as human rights, gender and ethnic equity and equality, the environment, sustainable development, poverty, global justice, freedom and peace.2 As Fred Dallmayr has stated in his work *Freedom and Solidarity*, solidarity cannot be imposed by sovereign power and (totalitarian) control. The connection between freedom and solidarity implies a transit from the Western-centric perspective to a more global or cosmopolitan constellation in which the polarity between ego and external world, between freedom and social solidarity is overcome or reconciled (Dallmayr 2016, 69). As envisaged by the Spanish Indian philosopher and historian of Religions Raimon Panikkar, interculturality is an imperative in a pluralistic world, isolation is a thing of the past, mutual ignorance is unacceptable, coexistence and mutual fecundation of cultures is the horizon that we need to strive for (Panikkar, qtd in Das 2006, n.p.). This utopian impulse towards a way to rethink the global implies solidarity as a challenge. In the context of the globalized culture of the modern West that includes internationalization of its political system and globalization of the market economy, solidarity raises enormous complexities and encompasses a redefinition of interculturality as interdependence. As Kalpana Das3 warns: “We can no longer engage in any discussion about human conditions of today and our contemporary issues monoculturally, they rather need to be examined interculturally” (Das 2006, n.p.). Interdependence thus drastically re-visions the use of the notion of solidarity as benevolent practice connected to tolerance. Solidarity as intercultural practice is more connected to admiration, mutual fecundity, and equanimity and rethinks ontological pluralism as intercultural practice.

Drawing form Das,

interculturality requires the attitude of acknowledging that there are no cultural universals. It means attempting to understand the Reality, the world, human living and human condition with the categories of more than one single culture [...]. Interculturality is a philosophy of social action that defends human communities against hegemony, domination and genocide. It promotes the rights of people to their cultural identity and the sense of responsibility towards preservation of the diversity of the world. (Das 2006, n.p.)

To integrate does not mean to assimilate, global does not mean universal, solidarity does not coincide with the cult of the melting-pot culture or with tolerance: “Interculturality demands an interaction on the basis of reciprocity between equals. North-South paradigm of international relations, for instance, is the antithesis of interculturality that perpetuates unequal status between peoples and cultures of the world, as it is essentially based on a dominant-dominated model of interaction” (Das 2006, n.p.). Within this perspective, diversity must become foundational in the symbolic and social system, whereby a culture of equality highlights communal rights, accessibility to wealth, health, knowledge, education, labour, youth and ageing in a

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2 Reflections on interculturality and diversity were discussed at the round table “Valuing Diversity for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development”, for the Conference on “Education for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development”, organized by the Ministry of Education, University and Research, University of Bologna, 8 May 2017 (*Global Citizenship Education*, Bologna 8-9 May 2017).

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...protective, inclusive society. Solidarity is not a Christmas temporary feeling without engagement. And it implies an historical, material ad concrete contextualization.

Globalization must be reframed within new forms of humanisms overcoming the dichotomy between human and non-human, or human and posthuman, and must keep in cultural memory the massacres and genocides derived from the dehumanization of the so-called others both in the Western and Eastern social orders. Possible global humanisms should face the challenge of overcoming inequality in gender, ethnic and class identities, where consensus should substitute “blood” and mere biology in the definition of one’s own belonging. In the interconnection of globalization and migration, migration cannot be seen as a homogenous phenomenon: acknowledging diverse forms of migration implies redefining laws and norms that regulate nations ad states, as well as participation in the political governmental systems to the extent of re-defining what human rights are and imply. Migration should also be analysed within political and cultural systems between global and local contexts. According to Raimon Panikkar and Zygmunt Bauman, although in diverse cultural contexts, the recognition of a community is sterile, when it is not accompanied by a redistribution of the resources and the rethinking of the entire social order. The new strategy of power and dominance is based on the politics of disengagement or the politics of excess, which seduces by going against rules and norms. (Bauman 2001, 74–89).

Interculturality implies the analysis of some linguistic and cultural issues: difference, otherness, and diversity. Feminist, queer and gender studies have proposed a reshaping of these notions. According to Rosi Braidotti, the “others” are structured with distressing regularity along the axes of devalued difference:

They are the sexualized others: women and LBGT’s; the racialized others: natives, post-colonials and non-Europeans; the naturalized or earth others: animals, insects, plants and the planet; and the technological others: machines and their interactive networks. The sexualized, racialized, naturalized and technological others, while being socially marginalized, are also living metaphors, referents for alternative symbolic values and meanings, highly iconic emblems within language and culture. Being feminized, racialized or animalized are patterns of pejoration of the human subjects that tend to be coded negatively both morally and emotionally: they express decreasing degrees of being-human (Braidotti 2014, 1).

Revaluing difference also implies renaming it as diversity in a non-hierarchical position/meaning. In other words, interculturality implies a political cultural decolonization and a deeper decolonization of the imaginary and the symbolic order. The posthuman (global) condition needs not only to revisit and overcome the ideological dichotomy human/non-human, it also must reconfigure the subject positions of human differences.

The role of the intellectual in the construction of an intercultural community (based on solidarity), whether it is as an academic, a media celebrity, a government expert or otherwise, could reaffirm here a fundamental quality: courage and radicalism as his/her method. (Bauman 2001, 124). The intercultural global community model proposed by Panikkar and to a certain extent envisioned by Bauman, begins with a critical and mobile interrogation: according to what experience and form of humanity do we want to live? The recognition of cultural varieties is only the beginning, not the end of the intercultural question. It is the beginning of a difficult political route, consisting of dialogue and negotiations aimed at a shared and commonly decided goal. But we will not reach this accord if we start from unequal positions of superiority or
inferiority (Bauman 2001, 126). In other words, solidarity is a social bonding in which all participants “remains freely open to their own possibility – a bonding that some have described as a ‘community without communalism’ or a ‘community of those without [totalizing] community’” (Dallmayr 2016, 284). Hence we also need to decolonize global citizenship education. An important intervention in our efforts should be to create and sustain more inclusive and liberating platforms of knowledge and learning. Lived experiences of migration challenge the constructed borders, which derive from colonial and imperial re-structuring of the contemporary world and nation-states (Abdi et al. 2015). The construction of an alternative world, which acknowledges equality, justice and common humanity of all with the social and natural environment must take into consideration the existing wars, terrorism, poverty, imbalance of power and wealth, before being able to address the utopia of a communal, intercultural solidarity in a global dimension.

In Edward Said’s view, the public role of the intellectual is that of the outsider, “amateur”, and disturber of the status quo. (Said 1994b). According to him, one of the tasks of the intellectual is to break down the stereotypes and categories that limit and repress human thought and communication. By definition, the intellectual must challenge every absolute, every special interest, denouncing patriotic nationalism and thoughts derived from a sense of privilege based on race, class and gender, the categories that lie at the foundation of the symbolic and social order.

Accordingly, academic freedom is not impartiality or distance from the world, nor a license for entirely doing as one likes; rather, it could be considered as a form of dissident epistemological re-positioning. The metaphor of the exile, outsider, and marginal to indicate the intellectual signals the necessity of a certain freedom from ‘external’ pressure as well as the assumption of a dissident language that “would speak the truth to power.” In this view, knowledge can no longer be disengaged from the responsibility of the individual, both in the public and private spheres. Adrienne Rich and Donna Haraway called part of this responsibility the politics of location, which is the unveiling of the non-neutrality of he or she who is speaking.

The intellectual today faces concrete choices. Quoting Foucault, Said re-visions the notion of witnessing as a passive, monochromatic activity, and re-names it as “relentless erudition” which implies to exhume buried documents, submerged and repressed stories, to deconstruct the past and to add alternative sources, counter-memories, abandoned histories. From this position it is clear that the notion of academic freedom is not a universal one, but one that needs to be contextualised.

The very essence of intellectual life “is about to be critical” (Said 1994a, 11), and it concerns the formation of critical thought: criticism is intellectual life, whose essence can never be put down or dismissed by anything or anybody. Invoking this critical spirit, in his last writings, Said seems to urge both the academy and civil society to not succumb to new neo-colonialisms. It is no longer only the national identity to whom the academy should not submit to, but education should also not give consensus to the constructions of opposition between civilizations, constructions that substantially reproduce binary monolithic separations between cultures. Using a careful analysis of history and its conflicts, Said refutes the idea that world politics today revolves around clashes between polar opposites. Applying this idea is a political expedient in the style of the “War of the Worlds” that serves to reinforce a defensive pride more than promoting a critical understanding of the uncanny interdependence that characterizes our times. (Said 2004, 151). Since no culture exists in isolation (Said 1994a, 10), social
or academic/intellectual authority should not perpetuate or create cultural hostility, nor create cultural absolutism or isolation. Interdependence is neither assimilation, nor homogenization: “Once upon a time, it was said: One God, one Empire, one religion, one civilization. Today, one speaks of a unified market, a central government, one technology, one science, it might be the same syndrome” (Panikkar 1986 19, my translation). We cannot feel free intellectually if we do not defend that knowledge that goes beyond our identity, our belonging, our own invented or received “universal”. Our model, as Said suggests, has to be that of the migrant or traveller, instead of the potentate who inhabits, masters and controls the academy as his/her own fixed dominion, because we have to discover and travel amongst other identities, other cultures, other varieties of the human adventure (Said 1994a, 17). Essentially, “in this joint discovery of self and Other, it is the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contestation, or assertion, into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, and creative interaction” (Said 1994a, 17). This is a way to reconsider solidarity as mutual recognition.

Globalization does not call for homogenization, but it needs a plurality of voices amongst peers who have equal status. Critical theories have a crucial role in the understanding of a changing world. Elaborating on Said’s metaphor of the potentate and the traveller to address questions of authority, heterodoxy, and freedom, the educational space (for instance in the University) can be viewed not only as a space of institutionalized organizations and systems (albeit critical or intellectually dissident), but it can also be re-conceived as a space against anticipatory obedience (auctoritas and assumption of responsibility in close connection with other social mobilization strata), a precarious and utopian space reframed in solidarity. In this light, the humanities may assume a crucial role. As Judith Butler states in her work Notes Toward a Performativ Theory of Assembly, precarity and vulnerability may become the starting point for a rereading of the controversial relations between ethics, proximity, and distance. (Butler 2015, 99-110). Drawing from Hanna Arendt and Levinas, she interrogates otherness/alterity and the self as reciprocal interpellation, showing how we are all connected in an interdependent constitutional proximity. It is not our being similar that constitutes solidarity, but it is by virtue of our difference that we all become necessary to one another, and interdependent. Within this perspective, feminist movements provide a useful model of solidarity where differences are not only recomposed, but valued. In this light, critical thought and imaginative visions (art and literature) of our world are crucial in a globalized system in order not to be subjected by orthodoxy and homogenized thinking. The theoretical elaboration of reality enhances students’ education at any age. Feminist studies, queer theories, and interculturality as methodology can be considered as an instrument, a model and a method to unveil the deepest structures of our world, in the same way that postcolonial studies disclose the biases of our pretentious universalism. They are not an enclave, they are “global” transversal tools.

Among these theorisations, Rosi Braidotti’s politics of affirmation rethinks feminism as an intercultural tool. She believes that feminism is the real alternative to modern thought. Her figuration of the “nomadic subjects” conjures up the materiality of the subject, incarnated and situated, and difference – starting from sexual difference – as a paradigm to rethink our socio-symbolic system. The nomadic subjects overcome notions and forms of identity based on nationalism or sovereign universalism. To the universal/universalising and abstract notion of the subject, she opposes a sexuate and
multi-layered subjectivity that is intercultural, and post-identititary. In order to envisage new forms of subjectivity and subject positions Braidotti advocates a politics of affirmation against the negativity that has conditioned the notion of difference (gender, sexual preference, ethnic, local) as “other than the self”. In so doing the dichotomies such as man-woman, citizen-immigrant, are deconstructed and re-valued as symbolic force. Braidotti believes that new forms of citizenship and identity can be found by “revisiting and consuming the old up to the end” as difference is the result of many and endless repetitions (Braidotti 2002, 61; my translation.). Another step is to acknowledge the differences among women, that is to dismantle the patriarchal representations in the male imaginary of the woman as cultural mirror and to recognize the intersectionality of class, sexual orientation, ethnicity and many other variables in the definition of “woman”. Starting form the ethics of sexual difference, (as envisaged by Luce Irigaray) Braidotti has elaborated the nomadic subjectivity as a new ethics. In opposition to conservatism, liberal individualism, and techno-capitalism, this ethics and politics of affirmation has “nothing to do with the Kantian moral of reciprocity” but calls for “intrinsic forms of situated responsibility” (Braidotti 2008, 27; my translation.) and it goes against pessimism and paralysis: “ Sustainable ethics allow us to contain the risks while pursuing the original project of transformation. […] Cultivating the act of living intensely in the pursuit of change is a political act” (Braidotti 2011, 323)

The nomadic subjectivity envisages a radical reconfiguration of our being and contexts in a world that is globally and technologically mediated, ethnically changed, (Braidotti 2011, 300) and is able to keep plurality open: “Nomadic subjects require and produce nonunitary, multiple, and complex politics” (Braidotti 2011, 8). The figuration of nomadic subjects implies a cartography of the different politics of locations for the subjects-in-becoming, hence Braidotti warns that it is not a metaphor for the human, posthuman condition (Braidotti 2011, 13) as it abandons identity as a fixed entity to embraces the construction of subjectivity as mobile, transversal and collective. It seems to us that Braidotti is also redefining solidarity as a political positioning of the self and other as interdependent: an intercultural thought aimed at inspiring concrete actions.

Women’s studies, feminism and global citizenship in this “nomadic” reinterpretation are not in contradiction with Kalpana Das’ advocacy to respect the specificity of the contexts, and “differences” inside feminism. Providing an example of mainstream feminism and Andean communities, taken from a number of the journal InterCulture, Das warns against the risks of a globalization that does not take into consideration historical and geographical differences:

[The inter-cultural paradigm is] a critique of the predominance of destructive forces of contemporary structures of dominance that promote essentially a consumerist self. […] I will attempt to underscore some of the intercultural challenges that we need to face, when we engage in “women in development and/or women’s rights” programs internationally, and in the activities of integration of immigrant women in the countries of the North. This will be an invitation to reassess the colonialist nature of some of these programs and actions through which they continue to sustain the unequal relationships inherent to North-South or modern-non-modern paradigm which is an antithesis of interculturality. (Das 2006, n.p.)
Das’ assertion is not a “regressive” claim, but a warning against globalization as assimilation, while advocating interculturality as interdependence. In this light, solidarity is a complex political intercultural negotiation. Within these perspectives, the role of education in constructing a space not only for critical thought, but also as a locus of “continuum” between “speaking the truth to power”, vindication of rights, and dissident cultural formations requires learning and practicing solidarity.

In her essay “When Our Lips Speak Together”, Luce Irigaray revisits women’s solidarity as “love of the self and other” starting from the necessity to reconstruct women’s alliance against patriarchal constructions. Although the essay is a philosophical reflection in lyrical words on the need to overcome women’s indifferention within the social order (where women are functional to it) and regain their subjectivity starting from a reconsideration of sexuality and language, it seems to us that the essay is a plea for women’s solidarity and love against the patriarchal stereotypes that see women in competition with each other to support men’s power and their privileged position:

Now normally or habitually, “I love you” is said to an enigma: an “other”. An other body, an other sex. [...] when you say I love you [...] you also say I love myself [...] we find ourselves as we entrust ourselves to each other – this currency of alternatives and oppositions, choices and negotiations, has no value for us. Unless we remain in their order and reenact their systems of commerce, where “we” has no place [...] we are luminous. Beyond “one” or “two”. [...] But how can I say “I love you” differently? (Irigaray 1980, 70-1)

It’s not that we have our own territory, but that their nation, family, home, and discourse imprisons us in enclosures where we can no longer move – or live as “we”. (Irigaray 1980, 74)

Irigaray advocates a different use of language and a reconsideration of the body as a source of subjectivity, renouncing and getting rid of models, standards, without giving ourselves orders, commands, or prohibition coming from external powers: “may our demand be a call to move and be moved, together. Let’s not dictate, moralize, or war with each other. [...] The lips never opened or closed upon one single truth” (Irigaray 1980, 78). Irigaray’s poetic and philosophical demand is a way to rethink solidarity and love as political engagement within the self and among women. Her vision reshapes interculturality as solidarity starting from an alliance inside the “same” community and as a transversal tool involving a “global” reframing of social-symbolic orders. As a consequence, education implies solidarity not only amongst “differences”, respecting and valuing diversity, but also a life-long learning from the “uncanny” interdependence of local realities and global movements.

In view of this, this issue of de genere proposes diverse articulations of solidarity as answers to our contemporary crisis. While the present world produces cultural texts that are strongly dystopian (novels, tv series, movies) mirroring the concrete dystopias of our political systems, solidarity may assume a utopian connotation (Curti, Baccolini, Drage). But as argued in the essays proposed, solidarity is a political attitude as well as an ontological lens through which it is possible to deconstruct our socio-symbolic systems and reconstruct them for a more equal and sustainable society. In this light we can see this utopia as a concrete one. More than friendship, solidarity, as shown in this issue, is not only a tension and an alliance capable of overcoming gender and many other discriminations, but also a transversal political tool against new forms of totalitarian risks and neo-liberal formations (Chowdhury, Ryder). Solidarity as a form
of resistance implies in fact an alliance that negotiates between solidity and instability. In the specific context of deep instability related to civil war, gender solidarity is presented in a continuous oscillation with its “stable”, normative meaning of ethical commitment and its “unstable” living practices (Mari). The relationship human/non-human that lies at the roots of western thought does not only involve species in a hierarchical scale, but also humans at the service of a capitalistic system. Solidarity is thus a transversal tool overcoming separation and exploitation of all “species”, towards a “tentacular coexistence” (Curti). As Baccolini argues, in order to stand the “enormous rage” of the times, solidarity, as well as kindness and feminist education are the political actions needed today. Critical utopian and dystopian science fiction written by women from the late 1960s onwards, as Drage proposes, express forms of solidarity in order to productively rethink intersectional alliances of “race” and gender. Focusing on the tension between friendship and political solidarity, Chowdhury delineates friendship as the potential rather than the autochthonous existence of political solidarity, analysing how friendship based on political solidarity is developed. Thus, friendship marked by differences in “race” or sexual orientation may be a starting point for attaining political solidarity, when it becomes alliance. Mari proposes a specific type of gender solidarity, based on storytelling and performativity, which points at the ontological combination of solidity and instability within the conception of “solidarity”. Employing Black Lives Matter and the Women’s Marches that took place around the world to protest Donald Trump’s inauguration, Ryder analyses the forms of political solidarity within the US-based feminist movement. In order to foster solidarity as a political agenda, the speculative feminism of today represents a “search of a way of living together in a symbiotic chain between beings of every species and nature” (Curòti). As Curti demonstrates, opening this issue, the urgency of resistance to the devastation of the planet requires new analytical and epistemological horizons of intersectionality. In this request, feminist thought intertwines with feminist literature and speculative fiction. The role of imagination and critical thought together is crucial to reframe the world. Within this perspective, solidarity is envisaged as the responsibility to accept the challenge of “training the mind and imagination to go visiting […] to propose together something unanticipated, to take up the unasked-for obligations of having met” (Haraway 2016, 130 in Curti).

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