

## NEMLA 2025: WOMEN WRITERS AND [POLITICAL] COMMITMENT

### *La Difesa delle Lavoratrici* (1912-1925): The Epitome of (Socio)political Commitment?

*La Difesa delle Lavoratrici* [*The Defence of Women Workers*], founded in 1912, entered history as the first official women's periodical of national circulation to be approved and recognized by the Italian Socialist Party. To this day, it remains one of the most intriguing examples of committed, socio-political women's writing on Italian territory. The periodical came into being thanks to the joint effort of a broad network of socialist women writers including, among others, Anna Kuliscioff, Margherita Sarfatti, Angelica Balabanoff and Linda Malnati. They were determined not only to give a voice to working-class women, whose struggles had largely gone unheard in the past, but also to help them find their own personal voice.

By doing so, they wished to make a tangible difference in society: raising awareness about their rights as women and citizens, explaining complex political issues, exposing unequitable labor conditions, so that one day, the Italian socialist women could win not only the battle of the sexes, but also the battle of the classes.

This paper aims to shed new light on how, using the power of the periodical press, *La Difesa delle Lavoratrici* managed to join female socialist forces in their collective battle against social and political injustices. Moreover, exactly one hundred years after the periodical's final issue was published, it wants to analyze how the editors' determination and commitment still make the publication stand out among other militant Italian women's periodicals of the time.

### Bio

[Eline Batsleer](#) is a PhD Candidate in Italian Literature at the Department of Literary Studies at Ghent University, where she obtained her master's degrees in Linguistics and Literature: French-Italian (2020) and Comparative Modern Literature (2021). She has completed a research internship within the ERC project *Agents of Change: Women Editors and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Europe, 1710-1920* (acronym [WeChangEd](#)). Her current research project is funded by the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) and focuses on the construction of female identity during the Great War in Italy. Her research interests lie primarily in literary history, early-twentieth century Italian literature, periodical studies and women's studies. She is also an editor of the peer-reviewed *Journal of European Periodical Studies*.