



Dickinson

<http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com>

*g/s/i* is an annual peer-reviewed journal which publishes research on gendered identities and the ways they intersect with and produce Italian politics, culture, and society by way of a variety of cultural productions, discourses, and practices spanning historical, social, and geopolitical boundaries.

**Title:** “Invited Perspective on Gender Domination”

**Journal Issue:** [gender/sexuality/italy, 2 \(2015\)](#)

**Authors:** Paola Bonifazio

**Publication date:** July 2015

**Publication info:** gender/sexuality/italy, “Invited Perspectives. Editorial”

**Permalink:** <http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/invited-perspectives-editorial/>

**Author Bio:** Paola Bonifazio is co-founder and Associate Editor of *g/s/i*. She is Assistant Professor of Italian at the University of Texas at Austin since 2009. She received her PhD in Italian Studies from New York University (2008) and her M.A. in Italian and Film Studies from the University of Pittsburgh (2003). In 2011-12, she was National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew Mellon Rome Prize Fellow at the American Academy in Rome. Her research interests focus on Italian cinema, including documentary, film theory and history, gender studies, and feminist and postfeminist theories. She is currently working on a book manuscript on film melodrama and photo-novels from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Her book *Schooling in Modernity: The Politics of Sponsored Films in Postwar Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2014) explores short film productions sponsored by state and non-state agencies to promote modernization and industry, and to govern the Italian people’s conduct.

**Abstract:** The Invited Perspectives Editorial introduces the articles of this section by contextualizing them to the topic of the themed section, “gender domination.” It also highlights the gaps in this section that meaningfully address unsolved issues in contemporary discourses of feminism and male/female domination.

### Copyright Information

*g/s/i* is published online and is an open-access journal. All content, including multimedia files, is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution and is published according to the Creative Commons License, which does not allow commercial use of published work or its manipulation in derivative forms. Content can be downloaded and cited as specified by the author/s. **However, the Editorial Board recommends providing the link to the article (not sharing the PDF) so that the author/s can receive credit for each access to his/her work, which is only published online.**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#)



## Invited Perspectives on Gender Domination

### *Invited Perspectives Editorial*

PAOLA BONIFAZIO

Domination and submission also interpellate the relations between critical discourses on sexuality and gender. There is a heated metacritical debate on the authority and role of feminism, anti-feminism, postfeminism, and men's studies in contemporary Italy.

In 2012, at the conference that we organized as a group in collaboration with the University of Bologna, in Bologna (Italy), Italian journalist and scholar Ida Dominijanni asserted that Italians live in a "post-patriarchal" society, and her claim was met with great animosity. Many people in the room disagreed with Dominijanni, arguing chiefly that inequality between genders was still a reality in Italy as much as women's exploitation. The incident raised several questions regarding our understanding of patriarchy, its relevance today, and the split between discourses of gender and domination that are based (or not) on sexual difference. Does "domination," as a power-relation, necessarily correspond to "patriarchy," as a system, or can the former take place without the latter? Can "domination" apply to relationships of oppression and exploitation that not necessarily envision men as the dominant and women as the oppressed? Contributions to the "Invited Perspectives" section address these questions by discussing the interconnected topics of "feminism" and "femminicidio," (femicide), as discussed in the journal. The Editors' intention was to establish a dialogue between different positions regarding a dominant view of gendered domination as oppression by men over women. Our interest was raised by current phenomena such as the spread of anti-feminist groups sustained by women, anti-feminist men's associations against misandry, and men publicly declaring of being feminist. At the same time, we were also struck by the way in which the battle to eliminate violence against women was popularized transnationally, however, in ways that addressed mostly the symptoms rather than questioning the causes underlying them in the power-dynamics of gender relations.

How could feminists be attacked for being the source of oppression? How could anyone deny that violence against women was being perpetrated? In order to critically answer these queries, we needed a thorough re-evaluation of what both "feminism" and "femminicidio" meant in the linguistic, political, and cultural spheres. And especially, what these terms meant outside the academy, where they are constructed as discourses through everyday practices and the information exchanges of mass media and social networks. In this way, I thought, and on this basis, a critical discussion could begin on "post-patriarchy" in today's Italy.

Several authors from different contexts have been invited to participate in the discussion. Focusing on the apparent "feminization" of today's public space, Lea Melandri maintains that "un residuo patriarcale" (a patriarchal residual) persists in a globalized capitalist economy. According to Melandri, while qualities traditionally considered "female," such as caring and flexibility, become more relevant in the workplace, even as women's presence in the workforce increases in import, these are symptoms of a permutation rather than of a radical change in power-relations. Along the line of continuity rather than radical break, Patrizia Violi maintains that *femminicidio* is "a tragic condition of normalcy" and not today's state of "exception". While it seems that in the last few years, more than ever, we hear news about men killing women, Violi explains, these circumstances that are made exceptional are actually expressions of a fundamental dynamic at the basis of human sociality: "il dominio del maschile sul femminile" (male domination of the feminine). In agreement with Violi's conceptual analysis, but from the point of view of social work, Anna Pramstrahler claims that, understanding *femminicidio* in light of gendered domination is necessary not only in order to explain the phenomenon but also to elaborate and implement projects that aim at effectively addressing the issue in society. Pramstrahler is vicepresident of D.i.Re (Donne in Rete contro la

violenza), a national association coordinating anti-violence center in Italy, and co-founder of the association Casa delle Donne per non subire violenza in Bologna (Italy), which works both in prevention and analysis of *femminicidio* in Italy. Finally, excerpts from two creative works in this section address *femminicidio* and patriarchy, respectively: Cristina Gamberi's theatrical production *Doppio Taglio*, and an extract from Rossana Campo's *Never Felt So Good*, translated and introduced by Adria Frizzi and Traci Andrighetti. These literary texts are meant to add alternative point of views on these issues by working through artistic codes and imaginary (albeit realistic) spaces. Gamberi's introduction to *Doppio Taglio* explains how the dramatic text is the result of a combined experience of analysis of mass media's rhetoric, spreading news about violence against women, organized activities in the classroom, where students engaged in discussions about gender and identities, and the encounter with actress and author Marina Senesi. On the other hand, Frizzi's introductory notes to Campo's chapters explain how the novel can shed new light on the classic theme of patriarchal domination. Frizzi highlights the complexity of Campo's open-ended representation of female subjectivity and her emancipation, which lacks any "male scapegoats" while emphasizing "the societal pressure to conform to a submissive female model." In addition, Frizzi suggests other ways in which their translation of Campo's novel triggers reflections on today's forms of gendered domination: the hierarchical distinction between source text (male) and translation (female); and the politics of publishing. Indeed, the fact that U.S. publishers have rejected (as of today) the translated manuscript speaks of issues of domination and power in the creation of literary canons.

I admit that the section does not include as much variety of positions as we hoped. In particular, I unsuccessfully attempted to give space to anti-feminist groups such as Voice for Men-Italy. I also contacted Fabrizio Marchi, founding member of Uomini Beta (an anti-feminist group against misandry), who initially accepted my invitation but insisted that we republished a previous interview. "Un'occasione persa per tutti" (a missed opportunity for all), he wrote to her, when I rejected his idea and he refused to write "un'altra intervista di sana pianta" (another interview from scratch), which made me wonder if that was an interview at all, or a "dialogue" à la Plato. I also wished to have a male voice sympathizing with radical feminism, however, I found resistance on that front as well, on the argument that feminism is an historical phenomenon that belongs to women. The episode confirmed my perception that, in Italy, feminism and the women's movement is one and the same thing. For these reasons, I am glad and excited that Elena Dalla Torre accepted to write in response to Marchi's anti-feminist position and negationism, vis-à-vis *femminicidio*. Dalla Torre agrees with Marchi that oppression is not exclusive to gender but also relevant to class, however, she argues that feminism can illuminate, as politics and practice, both men and women in their struggles to resist and rebel against conditions of exploitation.