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Abstract: The editorial of *g/s/i* 2 contextualizes the call for papers on gender domination. The author argues that gender is a battlefield for domination and submission and focuses on institutional and social discourses that attempt to reorganize gender power relations around the heteronormative framework. Drawing examples from the contemporary social scene and media discourse, she claims that strategies and practices of gender domination have proliferated in Italy when the critical nodes of gender and sexuality are being reconfigured in many Western countries. The editorial also provides an overview of the articles published in the “Themed Section.”

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Gender Domination (and Submission) and the Current Issue of g/s/i

Journal Editorial

NICOLETTA MARINI-MAIO

Why We Should Still Talk about Gender Domination in Italy

When we published the call for papers on domination, debates on “femminicidio” (femicide) and hate crime based on sexual orientation were escalating in Italian public discourse.¹ Reports about attacks on and slayings of women filled the news and have continued into the present.² Further, homophobic and transphobic crimes were (and still are) thriving.³ In addition to the crimes’ brutality, we found compelling that the social alarm these events aroused fed awareness and proposals of new legislation, not to mention social media hate and overwhelming campaigns to defend the status quo. Social movements and media were pushing for more institutional consideration of crimes against women, which in fact received strong attention in parliament. New legislation against femicide and stalking was promulgated in October 2013 and updated in June 2014, albeit with a series of setbacks and controversies.⁴ Contrary to this, proposed legislation against hate crime based on sexual orientation has been languishing since 2011, with no result in sight. Indeed, the so-called “legge contro l’omofobia” (law against homophobia) has produced strong reactions amongst associations and conservative groups fighting in the name of “free expression” and traditional family values.⁵ One example among many is the appeal of ProVita’s to Pope Francis I with the aim to stop the bill, claiming that, “il disegno di legge è estremamente pericoloso: una volta approvato esso darebbe vita ad una legge liberticida.”⁶

At least in theory, Italian law already punishes discrimination based on race and religion. Why should freedom be endangered, we wondered, when the word “gender” is added to existing anti-discrimination policies?

In fact, the semantics of “gender” are particularly problematic in Italian society. Even timid innovation is perceived as destabilizing change. Transformations in gender roles, unconventional performances of femininity and masculinity, and dissident gender identities are claiming new positions in cultural, social, and political territories, fueling aggressive responses from social actors.

¹ The World Health Organization suggests that, “Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls. [...] Femicide is usually perpetrated by men, but sometimes female family members may be involved. Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner.” For a description of the types of femicides, risk factors, and approaches to end femicides, see the WHO’s website at http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77421/1/WHO_RHR_12.38_eng.pdf, accessed June 30, 2015.

² *La Repubblica* publishes a regularly updated dossier on *femminicidio*: <http://www.repubblica.it/argomenti/femminicidio>, accessed July 25, 2015. Among many others, I would also like to point to an interesting analysis by Adriano Sofri, “La strage delle donne e i negazionisti di buona volontà,” *La Repubblica*, May 31, 2013, available at <http://www.selpress.com/istitutotreccani/immagini/310513C/2013053128374.pdf>, accessed June 25, 2015.

³ *La Repubblica* also publishes an ongoing dossier titled “Omofobia” at <http://www.repubblica.it/argomenti/omofobia>

⁴ For a synthetic explanation of the new law on femicide and stalking see “Cosa dice la legge contro il femminicidio,” *IlPost.it*, October 11, 2013, <http://www.ilpost.it/2013/10/11/legge-contro-femminicidio-2/>, accessed June 25, 2015. For the full text of the law see http://www.leggioggi.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Decreto_Femminicidio.pdf.

⁵ The current bill unifies three different proposals (C. 245, C. 280, and C. 1071) that aim at modifying the laws currently enforced (654/1975 and the Mancino law 205/1993) in matters of violence. The full text of the proposal is available at <http://www.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/stampati/pdf/17PDL0003090.pdf>, accessed June 25, 2015.

⁶ “the legislation proposal is extremely dangerous: once approved, it would give rise to a ‘liberticidal’ law [one that would kill freedom].” My translation. The original appeal posted by ProVita is available on their website: <http://www.notizieprovita.it/appello-al-santo-padre-fermare-la-legge-anti-omofobia>, accessed July 20, 2015.

The mobility of the notion of gender per se is a threat to hegemonic gender structure and social actors such as mainstream media, politicians, and conservative and religious associations have implemented strategies of normalization. An example is the misuse of the definitions “violenza di genere” (gender violence) and “violenza contro le donne” (violence against women), often presented as interchangeable, thus excluding gender identities other than heterosexual women from institutional protection.⁷

Controversies around the discourse on gender have arisen along the entire political spectrum and between critical discourses. Feminist, postfeminist, and neo-feminist groups as well as men’s associations battle about conflicting conceptions of gender and sexuality, and their political and social ramifications. “Historical” Italian feminist voices maintain that the “differenza sessuale” (sexual difference) between women and men can lead to a radical change of cultural and political paradigms and subvert a masculinist system of power. Contrary to this, neo-feminist activists center their fight on equal opportunities in the social, political, and economic spheres (i.e., gender gap in salaries and positions of power, female quotas, etc.). Men’s association split between essentialist conservative positions and more innovative and democratic standpoints. The “Invited Perspective” of the current number of *g/s/i* presents an engaging overview of this debate.

Overall, what is at stake in the quandary on gender domination is not only the hegemonic gender structure that has been set up, and dominates, social institutions, but also the critical discourse about it. Gender is a battlefield for domination, with strings attached.

In the call for papers, we deliberately used the term domination in its etymological association with the ideas of master, owner, or sovereign (from latin *dominus, a, um*), in order to highlight the sense of over-empowerment and inequality attached to certain forms of gender domination that are prominent in contemporary Italy. First of all, we wanted to encourage a reflection on how domination is permeating Italian society and culture within the paradigm of heteronormativity, which still owns great force in shaping ideas of masculinity and femininity as linked to stereotypical performances of gender and sexuality. We also wanted to explore how the values promoted in neoliberal societies reinforce (or inaugurate new) regimes of domination and submission.

For a long time, a broad definition of domination has been used to articulate a conception of gendered power relations implicating that women are the passive and powerless victims of male power. Even Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis of male domination is rooted in the categorization of an exploited group defined exclusively by gender or gender oppression.⁸

Italian society shows distinct trends concerning this notion of gender domination, its practices, and strategies. In the Italian public discourse and media, for example, traditional conceptions of female sexuality and gender performances continue to feed aggressive attacks against

⁷ See, among many examples, Former President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano’s speech in the IX international conference of social communication titled “Il valore della diversità. Verso una nuova cultura di genere” (The value of diversity. Toward a new culture of gender). Talking about “violence on gender,” Napolitano focused exclusively on violence against women and on the images of women circulating in the media. Overall, he used the label “diversità di genere” (gender diversity) to emphasize the role of women in everyday life and their potential contribution in the economy and in all fields of Italian society. The terms “violenza di genere” and “violenza contro le donne” also overlapped in the conference and in the media. See “Violenza di genere, Napolitano: ‘I media rappresentano le donne con dignità,’” *Il fatto Quotidiano*, November 18, 2013, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/11/18/violenza-contro-le-donne-napolitano-siano-rappresentate-dai-media-con-dignita/781653/>, accessed June 25, 2015.

⁸ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford University Press, 2001).

women and stir up harsh conflicts. Processes of victimization and demonization of female's bodies ignite moral panic and anti-prostitution campaigns.⁹

Think, for example, of the media campaigns and grassroots movement against Silvio Berlusconi's sex scandals. Heated discussions went on for years on talks shows and social networks, and in print media and households. Rallies were held, the most significant of which was the national sit-in led on February 13, 2011 by the newly created women's collective *Se non ora, quando?* (If not now, when?).¹⁰ The collective organized a grassroots movement to raise awareness against the images of degraded women circulating in media and political discourse. However, the indignation about Berlusconi's *bunga bunga* and clichéd gasconades ended up demonizing female sex workers and young women's sexual practices. The stereotypical and oppressive polarization between good (maternal, monogamist, and religious) and bad (seductive, adulterous, and sinful) women battled by second wave feminism received new impetus. Those considered "real" women, that is, those not modeled on the *veline* of the Fininvest networks or the young women typical of the *bunga bunga* circles, have been presented by mainstream media, neo-feminist activists, and political leaders as the moral counterparts of the disinhibited women of Berlusconi's networks.¹¹

The neoliberal forms of sexual contract typical of *Berlusconismo* (and postmodern societies in general) that adapted sex work to the precariousness, low-pay, and self-promotion paradigms of late capitalism remained almost unnoticed and unchallenged.¹²

Following Berlusconi's collapse in 2011 and his removal from Italian parliament in 2014, the media and public discourse have continued to offer many examples of acts of sexist aggressions on female sexuality and gender performance. Besides the usual disputes over female politicians' beauty or ugliness, physical shapes, and private or past life, a strategic discourse on "sluttiness" is thriving, reaffirming archaic techniques of domination. In 2014, for example, Alessio Marini and Massimo De Rosa, a spokesperson and a congressman of the newly formed political movement *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S) led by comedian Beppe Grillo, said, respectively, that "le vere puttane stanno in parlamento" (the real whores are in parliament) and "siete arrivate qui solo perché sapete fare bene i pompini" (you got here only because you are good at giving head), the latter addressing congresswomen of the

⁹ On the moral panic elicited by the discourse on the female's bodies in Italy, see Danielle Hipkins's "'Whore-ocracy': Show Girls, the Beauty Trade-Off, and Mainstream Oppositional Discourse in Contemporary Italy," *Italian Studies* 66, no. 3 (November 2011): 414-30.

¹⁰ The *Se non ora quando* (Snoq) movement was founded by a group of women of diverse background, independent from political groups or other associations. The movement's website (surprisingly outdated) provides the names of the historical "comitato promotore" (organizing committee) and current contacts, the calendar of events and topics of interest since the rally of February 13, 2011, press review and other media material on Snoq, and an open blog. See "Se non ora quando?" Snoq. February 6, 2014. <http://www.senonoraquando.eu>, accessed June 25, 2015.

¹¹ Particularly after the publication of Lorella Zanardo's documentary *Il corpo delle donne* (accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBcLjf4tD4E>, accessed June 30, 2015) there has been a harsh debate on the polarization between the female bodies popularized by commercial television and the "real" women with "natural" bodies, who do not wear make up and do not aspire to a career based on their physical features (as *veline* in commercial TV, models, or sex workers, for example) but perform "normal" jobs and often are the primary caretakers in their families. See Alessandra Gribaldo and Giovanna Zapperi, 'Che cosa vogliono quelle immagini da me? Genere, desiderio e immaginario nell'Italia berlusconiana', *Studi culturali*, 7, no. 1 (2010): 71-78, and Danielle Hipkins, "'Whore-ocracy': (cit.) and 'Who wants to be a TV showgirl? Auditions, talent and taste in contemporary popular Italian cinema,'" *The Italianist*, 32 (2012): 154-190.

¹² For a discussion of the "new sexual contract," see Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009), 54-93. Ida Dominijanni discusses the paradigm of the new sexual contract in her recent book *Il trucco*, which is also reviewed in this number of *g/s/i*. See *Il trucco. Sessualità e biopolitica nella fine di Berlusconi* (Roma: Ediesse, 2014), 52-55, 196, 230-31.

Democratic Party (PD).¹³ Democratic congressmen reacted vociferously to these sexist statements, defending their female colleagues' morality and ability to balance politics and family.¹⁴ This paternalistic line-up of angry men in defense of traditional values incarnated by women, whose voices were barely heard, highlighted the dominance of heteronormative strategies in the political arena.

Even if women are now considered essential actors in politics, public administration, and private companies, this new sensitivity has in fact translated into an almost exclusive emphasis on *quote rosa* (female quotas), drastically reducing the subversive potential of their presence even in parliament and government.¹⁵ In other words, women can and should "count," but they must submit to patriarchal discourse, both literally and symbolically, otherwise they may undergo misogynistic attacks. Consider, for example, the symbolic weight of showing one of the most successful female congresswomen of PD, Debora Serracchiani, lifted and carried as a bride by fellow



Figure 1: Newly elected mayor of Trieste Roberto Cosolini (PD) lifts and carries Debora Serracchiani in a sort of symbolic introduction to the house's threshold.

¹³ See "Le vere puttane stanno in parlamento: è bufera sul capogruppo M5S a Roma," *Giornalettismo.it*, June 10, 2014 <http://www.giornalettismo.com/archives/1517573/le-vere-puttane-stanno-in-parlamento-e-bufera-su-capogruppo-m5s-di-roma/>, accessed June 30, 2015, and "Offesa in Aula alle donne del Pd, querela contro il deputato De Rosa del Movimento 5 stelle," in *Corriere.it*, January 30, 2014 http://www.corriere.it/politica/14_gennaio_30/offesa-aula-donne-pd-querela-contro-deputato-de-rosa-movimento-5-stelle-99cc6840-899b-11e3-be5b-d457abaa7165.shtml, accessed June 30, 2015. For more examples of this sexist misogynistic attacks against female politicians, see Ombretta Frau's and Juliet Guzzetta's article "Il blog è mio e lo gestisco io: Dominio di genere nel web italiano," in the current number of *g/s/i*, pp. 75-90.

¹⁴ For example, in response to Marini's insults, Maurizio Veloccia expressed his "appreciation ... for the women of our Municipality and of the other institutions: women who often nearly kill themselves to juggle political commitment with their jobs and the management of their families." (My translation). See "Le vere puttane stanno in parlamento" (cit.).

¹⁵ The debate on the effectiveness of *quote rosa* is ongoing. Some argue that *quote rosa* only guarantee statistical figures and do not have an impact of the candidates' quality. Others claim that *quote rosa* are the only means to ensure that women have a voice in both public and private administration. See, a few articles from those published by *Lavoce.info* over the years: Nicola Persico, "Quote rosa: un fallimento della politica," *Lavoce.info*, September 29, 2009, <http://www.lavoce.info/archives/25907/quote-rosa-un-fallimento-della-politica>; Fausto Panunzi, "Se le quote rosa diventano mimosa," *Lavoce.info*, March 8, 2011, <http://www.lavoce.info/archives/26806/se-le-quote-rosa-diventano-mimose>; and J. Ignacio Conde-Ruiz and Paola Profeta, "Quote italiane, un modello che funziona," *Lavoce.info*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.lavoce.info/archives/33482/quote-italiane-modello-funziona>. All articles accessed June 25, 2015.

party member Roberto Cosolini following their electoral wins: Cosolini was elected mayor of Trieste in 2011 and Serracchiani governor of Friuli Venezia Giulia region in 2013 (figures 1 and 2).¹⁶



Figure 2: Cosolini carries Serracchiani again after her election as governor of Friuli Venezia Giulia in April 2013. The original caption emphasizes that the “sollevamento della sposa” (lifting of the bride) received a “standing ovation” from the audience. The article’s title condescendingly calls Serracchiani by name: “L’ingresso trionfale di Debora in Consiglio regionale a Trieste” (Debora’s triumphant entrance in the regional Council in Trieste).

Back to brides and submission. In 2011, Italian journalist Costanza Miriano published *Sposati e sii sottomessa. Pratica estrema per donne senza paura* (Get Married and Be Submissive: An Extreme Practice for Fearless Women), a bestseller that earned her national and international fame—and shame.¹⁷ In *Sposati*, Miriano claims that being submissive does not require women to embrace regressive behavior. Citing St. Paul, she explains that the function of a “sottomessa” woman lies in the etymological meaning of “messa sotto” (put underneath):¹⁸

Dovrai imparare a essere sottomessa, come dice San Paolo. Cioè messa sotto, perché tu sarai la base della vostra famiglia. Tu sarai le fondamenta. Tu sosterrai tutti, tuo marito e i figli, adattandoti,

¹⁶ The first image is in Fabio Dorigo, “Il silenzio di Serracchiani sul Cosolini-bis,” *Il Piccolo*, June 20, 2015 <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2015/06/20/news/il-silenzio-di-serracchiani-sul-cosolini-bis-1.11643948>, accessed June 25, 2015; the second pic, still from *Il Piccolo*, is available at <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/foto-e-video/2013/04/23/fotogalleria/l-ingresso-trionfale-di-debora-in-consiglio-regionale-a-trieste-1.6931672#2>, accessed June 25, 2015.

¹⁷ The book was first published by Vallecchi, Florence, in 2011, and sold about 45,000 copies. A new edition from Sonzogno, Milan, in 2013, sold about 100,000. The book’s Spanish translation *Cásate y sé sumisa* was a bestseller in Spain as well, but it also outraged feminist groups, which called for it to be banned. See Fiona Govan, “Book on ‘submissive wives’ becomes hit in Spain,” *The Telegraph*, December 11, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/spain/10511139/Book-on-submissive-wives-becomes-hit-in-Spain.html>, accessed June 30, 2015.

¹⁸ Daniele Castellani Perelli wrote a harsh profile of Costanza Miriano in a sharp article in the Italian weekly *L’Espresso*: “Fenomenologia della donna Sentinella. Tutta chiesa, smalto e tacchi a spillo,” *L’Espresso*, November 24, 2014. <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2014/11/24/news/fenomenologia-della-donna-sentinella-tutta-chiesa-smalto-e-tacchi-a-spillo-1.188970>, accessed June 30, 2015.

accettando, abbozzando, indirizzando dolcemente... Basta con le femmine alfa e i maschi omega. Dovrai imparare a mollare le redini, a rinunciare alla tentazione dell'ipercontrollo. Non potrai dirigere tutto, dovrai fare questo atto estremo di umiltà e fiducia, e lasciar fare a tuo marito. Anche quando scommetteresti dieci a uno che hai ragione tu. ... L'emancipazione – che è partita da un'esigenza di giustizia – ha portato a un'idea distorta della parità. Troppe donne sono in lotta con i mariti, i compagni, e diventano insopportabili. Solo perché non hanno capito il segreto dell'accoglienza, e poi della sottomissione, dell'obbedienza come atto di generosità.¹⁹

This passage is a throwback to the 1950s, a testament to a stereotypical idea of the family as a site of structured power, where the domination/submission scheme regulates the binary hegemonic relation between sexes. Miriano's language is particularly striking. In the excerpt above—and throughout the entire book—she uses the imperative and the prescriptive future in the form of direct address, dispensing commands as dogmas to an imagined female readership (“you will have to learn,” “you will be the basis,” “you will be the foundation,” “you cannot direct,” “must make”). Her vocabulary is both reductive (“no more,” “relinquish the reins,” “give up,” “let your husband handle things,” “unbearable”) and schmaltsy (“adapting yourself, accepting, putting up with it, guiding with sweetness,” “obedience as an act of generosity”). Adopting the style of an instruction manual, this book turns the writer's personal creed into a universal paradigm for twenty-first-century women.

Is Miriano nonchalantly trying to bring back the patriarchal agenda altogether, with its thrust of power and domination? A wife and the mother of four, Miriano is also an experienced professional woman, and has been working as a journalist for about twenty years. Yet, she is ready to take a “step back” and claims that all women should do the same.²⁰ After *Sposati*, she published two more books on the same topic: *Sposala e muori per lei. Uomini veri per donne senza paura* (Marry Her and Die for Her: Real Men for Fearless Women) and *Obbedire è meglio. Le regole della compagnia dell'agnello* (Obeying is Better: The Rules of the Lamb's Company). Her books have placed her in the spotlight. She has since appeared in Italian and international news broadcasts and has participated in numerous talk shows, often leaving her interviewers aghast with her candid statements. For example, after listening to her usual definition of *sottomesa* as *messa sotto*, BBC journalist Emily Maitlis asked her, “Costanza, *do you understand* why some women might find the idea that a woman's role is to support her family... [w]hy they might find that offensive? They think that a woman's role is much more than just doing that.”²¹ In the same interview, journalist Eleanor Mills suggested that Miriano was not an isolated voice but part of a broader movement that is revisiting the submission/domination dyad from an antifeminist perspective. Mills mentioned E. L. James's *Fifty*

¹⁹ “You will have to learn to be submissive, as Saint Paul says. That is, placed beneath, because you will be the base for your family. You will be the foundation. You will sustain everyone, your husband and your children, adapting yourself, accepting, putting up with it, guiding with sweetness . . . No more Alfa females and Omega males. You will have to learn to relinquish the reins, to give up the temptation of hypercontrol. You cannot direct everything and must make this extreme act of humility and trust. Let your husband handle things. Even when you would bet ten to one that you are right . . . Emancipation—which started out of a need for justice—led to a distorted idea of equality. Too many women are fighting with their husbands, their partners, and they become unbearable. Only because they have not understood the secret of welcoming, then of submission, of obedience as an act of generosity.” My translation. From Costanza Miriano, *Sposati e sii sottomesa* (Milan: Sonzogno, 2013) Kindle Ebook.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The BBC interview of Miriano is available in YouTube. See “*Get Married & Be Submissive – An Unlikely Bestseller*,” *BBC News*, December 15, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EMf9KJs5vU> accessed July 2, 2015. Added emphasis.

Shades of Grey and Laura Doyle's *The Surrendered Woman*.²² Miriano's reply is significant:

Submission has nothing to do with being a surrender [sic]. [It] has much more to do with love, which *serve* [sic] ... because we love the way in which we breastfeed our children, we *serve* the [sic] dinner, it's something ... to give something with love ... because the *fundamental flaw of women is to control, to subjugate, to dominate*—psychologically, not physically—if we dominate our flaw, our *temptation*, we can fully open to life and we can be happy.²³

Here, Miriano's language brings to the fore the religious framework of her submission/domination ethics. The “we” she is appealing to is the indistinct mass of “fundamentally flawed” women who need to be in control of their “temptation.” From her biblical perspective—Eve comes to mind, of course—and in her strictly heteronormative idea of society, men and women are sexually and psychologically complementary, aspire to procreate, and build families. Men are the breadwinners and discipliners, while women fulfill themselves by submitting their sexuality to their husbands (“l'utero è mio e te lo regalo” [the womb is mine and my present for you], writes Miriano) and their personal aspirations to their families, that they want to “serve.”²⁴ Like Doyle's *Surrendered Wife* and James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Miriano's books have reversed the terms of the conflict between the sexes and see men as oppressed by those women who have embraced the advancements of feminism.²⁵ *Tertium non datur*. Social and economic factors such as racial and class discrimination, the precariousness of labor, and unemployment are not part of her horizon. Miriano's pursuit of happiness (“we can be happy”) through submission is a decontextualized and dehistoricized form of fulfillment that is more in line with the neoliberal economic model than with Catholic ethics.

But there is more. Miriano passionately defended Kiko Argüello's disturbing peroration on femicide at the “Family Day” sit-in held in Rome on June 20, 2015. In his speech in defense of traditional family values, Argüello mentioned the case of Irina Lucidi, whose husband kidnapped their two children with the probable intent of killing them (their bodies have never been found) and then committed suicide. Argüello used this example to claim that femicides do not depend on violent or abusive gendered relationships. Quite the opposite: in his perspective, if a woman ends a relationship, the man is left with no other choice but a violent act against her and their children. Argüello explains that,

quest'uomo può fare una scoperta inimmaginabile, perché questa moglie gli toglie il fatto di essere amato, e quando si sperimenta il fatto di non essere amato allora questo richiama l'inferno. Quest'uomo sente una morte dentro così profonda che il primo moto è ucciderla. Il secondo moto, poiché il dolore che sente è mistico, siderale e orribile, piomba in un buco nero eterno e allora pensa: “Come posso far capire a mia moglie il danno che mi ha fatto? La sofferenza che ho?”. Uccide i bambini. Perché l'inferno esiste. I sociologi non sono cristiani e non conoscono l'antropologia cristiana. Il problema è che non possiamo vivere senza essere amati prima dalla nostra famiglia, poi

²² See E. L. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (New York: Vintage, 2012) and Laura Doyle, *The Surrendered Wife: A Practical Guide to Finding Intimacy, Passion and Peace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

²³ “Get Married & Be Submissive – An Unlikely Bestseller.” Added emphasis.

²⁴ The quote is from Marta Rovagna's interview to Miriano: “Costanza Miriano: ‘Ad essere indietro oggi sono le femministe’,” *Donneuropa*, September 26, 2014. <http://www.donneuropa.it/cultura-e-spettacoli/2014/09/26/costanza-miriano-credo-che-oggi-ad-indietro-siano-le-femministe>, accessed June 25, 2015.

²⁵ Ellen Nerenberg writes on James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* and its cinematic adaptation in “The Fifty Shades of (the) Grey (Zone), or, the Absent BDSM Essay in the g/s/i Issue on Domination. Open Contribution Editorial,” *gender/sexuality/italy* 2 (2015): I-IV.

dagli amici a scuola, poi dalla fidanzata e infine da nostra moglie.²⁶

This extract from Argüello's talk illustrates how deeply problematic and oppressive public discourse on gender domination (and submission) is in Italy. Not only did the Catholic arena of the "Family Day" celebrate Argüello's sermon, but Miriano was also invited to expose her viewpoint on Argüello's speech in prime time talk show *In onda* (La7). During the course of the show, she applauded Argüello's archaic moral stance as an "anthropological and theological" explanation of femicide.²⁷ Even if the anchors questioned Miriano's standpoint, her participation in *In onda* made it quite clear that she represents the Catholic perspective, to which the majority of the population tends to conform, especially in matters of gender.

Going beyond Domination of Women

The notion that a woman's social destiny (or submission to dominant male power) is inscribed in the cultural enactments of her biological sex has become problematic, to say the least. We learned from Foucault that power is dispersed at the micro levels of everyday life and that sex and the body are the locus of social control, therefore domination and submission can be seen as disciplinary or self-containment behaviors that characterize the relationships between genders.²⁸

Theories of intersectionality have also shown that assuming that women are a homogenous category naturalizes their sexed bodies and erases relations of power based on class and race, just to mention the most taxing ones.²⁹ Colonial and postcolonial issues of race and ethnicity, and issues related to posthumanism, animal studies, and ecocriticism have further complicated the debate, subverting the binary hierarchy of domination and submission traditionally attached to heteronormativity.³⁰

Domination and submission in gender relations are still significant forces at play in contemporary societies. The notion of domination is indeed raising new questions (as it is submission) and opening novel fields of exploration, as the power relations that it entails have become more mobile and created new conflicts and spaces for confrontation, oppression, and

²⁶ "this man can make an unimaginable discovery, because this wife deprives him from of the state of being loved, and when one experiences the state of not being loved, this recalls hell. This man feels such a profound interior death that his first drive is to kill his wife. His second drive, since the pain he feels is mystical, sidereal, and horrible, precipitates [sic] [him] into a black eternal hole and then he thinks: 'How can I make her understand the damage she did to me? The suffering I'm going through?'. He kills their children. Because hell exists. Sociologists are not Christian and don't know Christian anthropology. The problem is that we can't live without first being loved by our family, then school friends, then fiancée, and finally our wife." My translation. See a brief report on Argüello's controversial speech and the full video in "Il discusso discorso sul femminicidio di Kiko Argüello [sic]," *IlPost.it*, June 23, 2015 <http://www.ilpost.it/2015/06/23/kiko-arguello-femminicidio/>, accessed 30 June 2015.

²⁷ See Francesca Barra and Gianluigi Paragone, "Unioni Civili: L'insostenibile Ritardo Dell'Italia." *In Onda*. La7, July 3, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-dn1KOZyCQ>, accessed 9 July 2015.

²⁸ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Press, 1979), 92-7 and 151-2.

²⁹ Among many other contributions, I would like here to mention bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1984); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-67; and Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

³⁰ See, for example, the seminal studies by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," *Displacement: Derrida and After*, ed. by Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

abuse. Paul B. Preciado, one of the most provocative scholarly voices in queer studies, argues that sexual practices and technologies have created arbitrary categorizations of sexes and genders, reifying binary power relations between subjects. Stating that the category of gender is artificial and organic to the body, his *Counter-Sexual Manifesto* advocates for a society of equal subjects who establish their relations by means of a non-heterocentric contract allowing multiple sexual practices by consent. He claims that sex-gender difference can and should be subverted, going beyond the heterosexual norms that shaped gender and sexual differences as opposed and complementary. In his words, sexual practices are “nothing more than machines, products, instruments, apparatuses, tricks, prostheses, networks, applications, programs, connections, energy and information flows, interruptions and switches, keys, laws of circulation, borders, constraints, plans, logics, equipment, formats, accidents, detritus, mechanisms, uses, detours.”³¹ And no, you are not a perverted reader: Preciado’s non-heterocentric contract is based on the practices of sadomasochistic communities, or BDSM (bondage-domination-submission/sadism-masochism).

With our call for papers, we intended to interrogate the sphere of gender domination not only as forms of power-relations that impose individuals’ or groups’ supremacy, but also as the more mobile and strategic power dispersed across many sectors of Italian society.

In fact, domination techniques are particularly aggressive in Italy when confronting non-heteronormative frameworks. In the last few years, the church and Catholic associations have engaged in a harsh fight against anything falling under the so-called “teoria del gender” (theory of the [sic] gender), an umbrella definition that is commonly used (with the original English word) to describe a foreign, dangerous attempt to tear down the foundations of traditional morals. The *teoria del gender* has been at the center of discourses on same-sex marriage, artificial insemination by donor, child adoption, and sexual and gender education. Public and media discussions on these themes have become ruthless, reinforcing oppressive prejudices on peripheral, unstable, and shifting gender identities.

Observance of religious beliefs reinforces the conviction that gender categories and roles and how they are valued cannot or should not change. Even light attempts to change the status quo have suffered setbacks. The synod rejected Pope Francis’s “refreshing and surprising” proposal that the church be more welcoming toward homosexuals, for example.³² And after all, the Pope himself did not miss the opportunity to ignite the polemic and reterritorialize heteronormativity by speaking of the *teoria del gender* as an attempt of “colonizzazione ideologica” (ideological colonization) aiming to erase sexual difference:

Per esempio, io mi domando, se la cosiddetta teoria del gender non sia anche espressione di una frustrazione e di una rassegnazione, che mira a cancellare la differenza sessuale perché non sa più confrontarsi con essa. Eh, rischiamo di fare un passo indietro. La rimozione della differenza, infatti, è il problema, non la soluzione.³³

³¹ The (unofficial) English translation from the French original edition of Preciado’s *Manifeste contra-sexuel* (Paris Balland, 2000) that I use here is published in Julius Gavroche’s blog *Autonomies* at <http://autonomies.org/ar/2012/11/the-rebellion-of-bodies-beatriz-preciado>. Paul M. Preciado was previously known as Beatriz Preciado.

³² See Michael Luongo, “How Pope Francis fooled us all on LGBT issues,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/13/pope-francis-lgbt-issues-rights>, accessed June 30, 2015. On the internal resistance of the Vatican to Pope Francis’s overture, see theologian Vito Mancuso’s blog <http://www.vitomancuso.it/2014/10/21/sinodo-famiglia-vito-mancuso-sulla-svolta-di-papa-francesco/>, accessed June 30, 2015.

³³ “For example, I wonder, [sic] whether the so-called theory of gender might be also the expression of frustration and resignation, which aims [sic] at erasing the sexual difference because it [sic] cannot deal with it anymore. Eh, we are risking to do a step back. The denial of difference, in fact, is the problem, not the solution.” My translation. “Papa: teoria

While Catholic leadership plays a strong role in the fight for domination on the discourse on gender, a backlash against change in matters of gender has also come from parents' associations and grassroots movements created by middle class citizens in defense of traditional family values. Conservative groups self-nominated “sentinelle in piedi” (standing sentries) organized silent rallies against proposed new legislation regulating homophobic and transphobic hate-crimes, equal rights for civil unions, and child adoption for same-sex couples. The sepulchral aura emanating from the rallies, that the *sentinelle* labeled “veglie” (wakes), and the grave lights that they often use are in sharp contrast with the martial label of *sentinelle in piedi*. Even if the *sentinelle* claim that their protests are peaceful and non-violent, they symbolically marshal in lines and squares as soldiers (figures 3 and 4) and their programmatic statements sound quite bellicose: “Questa è una battaglia” (this is a battle), they claim in the promotional video created for the *veglia* of May 20, 2015, held simultaneously in one hundred Italian cities against new legislation permitting child adoption for same-sex couples.³⁴ The *sentinelle*’s slogans “Se non ora, quando? Se non qui, dove? Se non tu, chi?” (If not now, when? If not here, where? If not you, who?), echoing the name of the anti-Berlusconi 2011 women’s movement, also evoke Primo Levi’s novel *Se non ora quando?* and his gesture of moral defiance against the holocaust.³⁵



Figure 3: A snapshot from the promotional video of *sentinelle in piedi*, showing their military arrangement in one of the *veglie*.

del gender, un passo indietro,” *Avvenire.it*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.avvenire.it/Chiesa/Pagine/udiensa-papa-famiglia-matrimonio.aspx>, accessed June 25, 2015. The quote about the “ideological colonization” that the *teoria del gender* is allegedly performing on children is an extract from a speech that the Pope gave on January 19, 2015. For the full transcript, see http://it.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/01/19/papa_aereo_trascrizione_integrale_del_testo/1119009, accessed June 25, 2015. For a quick overview of how the “teoria del gender” is currently discussed in Italy, see Giulia Siviero, “Che cos’è la ‘teoria del gender,’” April 16, 2015, *Ilpost.it*, available at <http://www.ilpost.it/2015/04/16/teoria-del-genero-gender-theory>, accessed June 25, 2015.

³⁴ The video is available in the *sentinelle in piedi* website: <http://sentinelleinpiedi.it>.

³⁵ See Primo Levi, *Se non ora quando* (Turin: Einaudi, 9182).

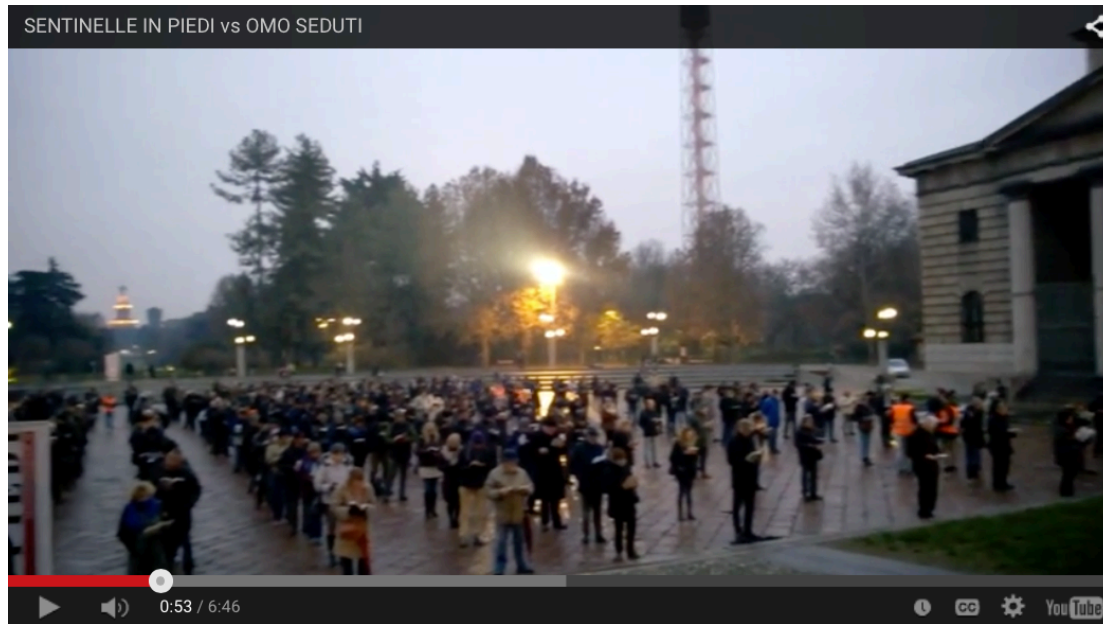


Figure 4: Another city, another rally, same military line-up. Snapshot from the promotional video.

It is significant, in a discussion of domination within an Italian context, that Levi returns, as we see in Ellen Nerenberg's editorial to the "Open Contributions" section of *g/s/i*. The use of military language and references to traumatic historical experiences (as noted above, even the Pope has been talking of "colonization," for example) are quite common in the discourse on gender and sexuality and contribute to the construction of a symbolic fight for domination against a dangerous (almost mythological) enemy.

It is against this enemy, for example, that the national parents' association ("Movimento italiano genitori," or *Moige*), often supported by Catholic organizations and media such as the Vatican weekly *Famiglia Cristiana* (Christian Family), has demonstrated vehemently, following timid attempts to impart sexual education based on non-heteronormative notions of gender. One notorious case is the protest of 2014 against the reading of Melania Mazzucco's novel *Sei come sei* in the *liceo* Giulio Cesare in Rome. The novel narrates the story of Eva, whose parents, Giose and Christian, are a same-sex couple. In a flashback, Giose discovers his homosexuality at the age of 16, when he has his first sexual intercourse with a fellow soccer player. The *Moige*, right-winged students' groups, and both secular and religious pro-life associations (*Giuristi per la vita* and *Pro Vita Onlus*) had a strong homophobic reaction. The passage was labeled as "pornographic" and the teachers were sued for "divulging obscene material."³⁶ In fact, the ultimate target of the plaintiffs was the national anti-discrimination office, which was harshly criticized for releasing a document titled "Strategia nazionale per la prevenzione e il contrasto delle discriminazioni basate sull'orientamento sessuale e sull'identità di genere (2013-2015)."³⁷ The accusers argued that the Office's overarching plan aimed at reinforcing the "gruppi Lgbt (Lesbiche, gay, bisessuali e transgender) all'interno del

³⁶ In their interesting report, Viola Giannoli and Sara Grattoggi detail the positions of groups and institutions: "Giulio Cesare, protesta omofoba nel liceo romano contro un libro sull'amore gay," *La Repubblica*, April 28, 2014 http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/04/28/news/giulio_cesare_protesta_omofoba_nel_liceo_romano-84689517/, accessed June 30, 2015. My translation.

³⁷ "National strategy for the prevention and contrast of discriminations based on sexual orientation and gender identity (2013-2015)." My translation.

vivere sociale ed alla diffusione delle pratiche omosessuali in ogni ambiente.”³⁸

At this writing, the *teoria del gender* controversy is increasing rapidly in the media and public discourse and practices. The education reform, or “Buona scuola” (Good school), recently proposed by Matteo Renzi’s office and approved in parliament, is in the crosshairs because of its openness to gender and sexual education. The principal of a public school in Rome, Anna Maria Altieri, sent an official communication to parents warning them about the dangers of imparting the *teoria del gender* on pupils should the bill pass. Using the awkward capitalized form of address “Your Children,” Altieri encourages parents’ mobilization against a de facto inexistent “emendamento gender” (gender amendment). She claims that education reform will introduce the *teoria del gender* following the guidelines of the World Health Organization, including:

- da 0 a 4 anni: masturbazione infantile precoce;
- da 4 a 6 anni: masturbazione, significato della sessualità: il mio corpo mi appartiene. Amore fra le persone dello stesso sesso, scoperta del proprio corpo e dei propri genitali;
- da 6 a 9 anni: masturbazione, autostimolazione, relazione sessuale, amore verso il proprio sesso, metodi contraccettivi;
- da 9 a 12 anni: masturbazione, eiaculazione, uso dei preservativi. La prima esperienza sessuale. Amicizia e amore con il partner dello stesso sesso;
- da 12 a 15 anni, riconoscere i segni della gravidanza, procurarsi i contraccettivi dal personale sanitario, come fare coming out;
- da 15 anni in poi: diritto all’aborto, pornografia, omosessualità, bisessualità, asessualità. ³⁹

This list ambiguously presents the child’s psychological evolution as a series of educational practices, eliciting moral panic about age appropriate exposition to gender and sexual education. As McClelland and Hunter remind us, “Moral panics draw a line in the sand: between threatening and non-threatening, normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable.”⁴⁰ Framing the *teoria del gender* as a troublesome social and educational problem has had the effect to organize and contextualize the deployment of strategic measures of oppression and control.

For example, mayor of Venice Luigi Brugnaro recently decided to ban forty-nine books from local schools, claiming that they are to be blamed for “diffondere la teoria gender” (diffusing the

³⁸ “Lgbt groups (Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders) within social life and at diffusing homosexual practices in all environments.” My translation.

³⁹ In the letter, Altieri writes that she is “mossa dal senso di responsabilità verso i Vostri Figli” (motivated by the sense of responsibility toward Your Children. Here is the translated list that should allegedly be taught under the education reform:

- from 0 to 4: early infantile masturbation;
- from 4 to 6: masturbation, meaning of sexuality: my body belongs to me. Love among same-sex people, discovery of one’s body and genitals;
- from 6 to 9: masturbation, self-stimulation, sexual intercourse, love for one’s sex, contraceptive methods;
- from 9 to 12: masturbation, ejaculation, use of condoms. First sexual experience. Friendship and love with same-sex partners;
- from 12 to 15: recognize the signs of pregnancy, getting contraceptives from health staff, how to do coming out;
- from 15 on: right to abortion, pornography, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality. (My translation)

A copy of the original letter is fully available in “La lettera di una preside di Roma contro la ‘teoria gender’ e la risposta del governo,” *IIPost.it*, June 19, 2015, <http://www.ilpost.it/2015/06/19/lettera-preside-teoria-gender/>, accessed June 25, 2015.

⁴⁰ Sara I. McClelland and L.E. Hunter, “Bodies That Are Always Out of Line: A Closer Look at ‘Age Appropriate Sexuality,’” in Breanne Fahs, Mary L. Dudy and Sarah Stage, *The Moral Panics of Sexuality* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 59.

theory of gender).⁴¹ Religious groups (including Catholics, Muslims and Jewish), the *sentinelle in piedi*, and parents' associations also continue to organize rallies with the aim to "defend" their children from the *teoria del gender*.⁴² During the most recent of such rallies, which took place in Rome on June 20, 2015 and counted about one million participants, Catholic leader Mario Adinolfi talked vehemently against the "ideologia gender" (ideology of gender) and defined Elton John's approach to artificial insemination by donor as "infernal."⁴³ The imam of the local mosque of Centocelle (Rome), who also gave a speech, described gender as an enemy, which is "dangerous" and "bad for humanity," and can be defeated only by Christians and Muslims fighting together.⁴⁴

There are many other examples of such strategies, and these would require deeper analysis and more space than that I have for this (long) editorial. Let me only add one last thought. It is significant that the strategies and practices of gender domination have proliferated in Italy while the critical nodes of gender and sexuality are being reconfigured in many Western countries. In most of the European countries and in the United States, in addition to the introduction of advanced marriage legislation and expanded welfare for same-sex couples, the conventional symbols, trends, attitudes, and behaviors concerning gender are questioned and challenged at many levels, including popular perceptions, cultural productions, intellectual reflections, and academic studies. The radical reaction to the destabilizing force of such changes in Italian politics, society, and culture is rooted in what Eve Sedgwick has defined an "entire cultural network of normative definitions, definitions themselves equally unstable but responding to different sets of contiguities and often at a different rate."⁴⁵ Institutionalized discourses (political, religious, legal, bureaucratic, medical) in Italy are constructed through these "normative definitions" and chains of "contiguities." It should not be a surprise, then, that gender domination and submission continue to thrive.

On This issue of g/s/i: Themed Section

The "Themed Section" of the current issue of *g/s/i* explores gender domination from a variety of perspectives. We found the readings illuminating because of their diversity, and often unexpected, lines of research. The articles of the "Themed Section" are heterogeneous by object of inquiry, methods, and theoretical frameworks. They are critical (and historical) examinations of literary texts, films, online exchanges, practices of gendered and racially discriminating forms of address, and linguistic corpora. They explore hegemonic gender structure, empowered gendered characters, the posthuman and the gendered 'other' by deploying different theoretical frameworks, including literary studies, gender and queer studies, film studies, ontology, linguistics, and lexicography. They are mostly hermeneutical, but a few of them also ground their inquiry on both quantitative and qualitative research.

⁴¹ See "Venezia, petizione per i libri proibiti. 'Salviamo i capolavori per bambini,'" *Corriere.it*, July 8, 2015, http://www.corriere.it/scuola/medie/15_luglio_08/venezia-petizione-libri-proibiti-sindaco-speculazione-culturale-284648f2-2568-11e5-85c7-ee55c78b3bf9.shtml, accessed July 25, 2015. The long list of readers' comments in support of the mayor and criticizing the books is also impressive.

⁴² See the article and clips in "La piazza del Family Day: 'No gender siamo un milione' Ma è polemica," *Corriere.it*, June 20, 2015, http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_giugno_20/family-day-roma-difendiamo-nostri-figli-no-gender-polemica-b2b6d23c-172f-11e5-86ef-d7e3d30aa75b.shtml, accessed June 25, 2015.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ "gender ... è pericoloso, cattivo per l'umanità. Con la vostra forza possiamo sconfiggerlo ... Siamo qui tutti insieme, musulmani e cristiani, per difendere la famiglia" (gender is dangerous, bad for humanity. With your strength we can defeat it ... We are here all together, Muslims and Christians, to defend the family). Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Eve K. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 11.

In “Desire and Resistance in Two Poems by Aldo Palazzeschi,” Kristin Szostek Chertoff examines Palazzeschi’s “Habel Nassab” and “I fiori” (The flowers). She places the two poems in perspective within the context of Palazzeschi’s works and contemporary ideas and categorizations of homosexuality and masculinity. Her analysis investigates how masculinity engages with different meanings and takes different forms—such as effeminacy and virility. She discusses the categorization of homosexual men as pederast and effeminate, thus contributing to the cutting-edge debate on notions and representation of masculinity in Italy.

Marta Riccobono’s article “Contro il dominio del canone eterosessista. Una rilettura queer del personaggio di Turandot” focuses on the delineation of the character of Turandot from Gozzi to Puccini. She shows how the elaborations of the *cruel princess*, who refuses marriage and motherhood showing elements of monstrosity and otherness, are done to adapt this elusive female literary character to a dominant heterosexist code. Riccobono argues that the contaminations shaping Turandot’s femininity can be seen as a prefiguration of the cyborg theorized by Donna Haraway.

The feminine cyborg is also at the center of Roberta Tabanelli’s analysis of Gabriele Salvatores’s sci-fi film *Nirvana*. Tabanelli focuses on subversive feminine presences of the film, particularly on Naima, who, in her words, is a sort of “female director/player who intrinsically controls the (male) narrative” and can therefore be seen as “an evolutionary enhancement of Mulvey’s suggestions.”⁴⁶ Naima is a cyborg, whose body includes and controls both reality and fiction, technology and “soft” feminine features, thus challenging the idea of scopic pleasure of cinema and masculine “posthuman morphing visions” typical of the genre.⁴⁷

One more film, this time an unusual documentary, Pietro Marcello’s *La bocca del lupo*, is explored by Oliver Brett from a queer perspective within an ontological framework. Brett identifies a tension between “dominant constructions of heteronormativity” and the gendered performances of Mary, a transgender character, and Enzo, her lover.⁴⁸ This tension also informs the meta-dimension, insofar as queerness requires a “change in perspective on the spectator’s part and encourages the intermittent and momentary loss of perspective” of the object represented in the film.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the relationship between object and its perception becomes a meta-discourse on the documentary and its modes of representation.

The other four articles of the themed section explore how language relates to domination in a variety of forms and perspectives: language as a racial and hegemonic construct, as a sociolinguistic tool in the computer-mediated world, and as linguistic corpora. Sole Anatrone’s “‘Almeno non hai un nome da negra.’ Race, Gender and National Belonging in Laila Wadia’s *Amiche per la pelle*” examines Wadia’s novel, interrogating the idea of domination through language learning. The author contends that *Amiche* can be read as a new way to look at language acquisition in postcolonial cultures, namely, as a “mode of *bridging* and integrating difference, rather than a path toward assimilation.”⁵⁰ This means that Wadia offers a vision of “inclusive difference” rather than one of subordination to a dominant culture.⁵¹ Through the analysis of Wadia’s novel, Anatrone also dissects the idea of Italian historical identity as a homogeneous community and calls attention on Italy’s history of multiculturalism and polylingualism.

In “‘Il blog è mio e lo gestisco io.’ Dominio di genere nel web italiano,” Ombretta Frau and Juliet Guzzetta propose an original interpretation of contemporary virtual environments of blogs

⁴⁶ See Tabanelli’s article in this number of *g/s/i*, 43.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Brett, *ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁰ Anatrone, *ibid.*, 65.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

and forums. They discuss how online communities can be places in which women experience verbal abuse and violence, can reinforce misogynistic attitude, and even encourage violent behaviors against women. They historicize and compare the contemporary experiences of female bloggers with those of the late 1900th century women writers, who attracted misogynistic comments and mistreatment. On the other hand, they also show that women's online communities may replicate the positive experience of sharing, safety, and self-awareness that women experienced in the "autocoscienza" (self-awareness) meetings of the 1970s.⁵²

Rita Fresu's article "Il linguaggio femminile e maschile: uno scenario (stereotipico) in movimento" focuses on the social and cultural expectations and linguistic performance perceived as stereotypical in feminine and masculine languages. She presents data showing that stereotypical expectations and performances have changed since the first analyses of such type in the 1970s, turning the masculine traits into slightly negative assumptions and the feminine traits (that are still connoted as subjective and emotional) into positive affirmations of emotions. On the other hand, the objectivity conventionally attributed to masculine language is now perceived as manifestation of oversimplification and superficiality. Fresu argues that linguistic variations in what is perceived as feminine or masculine are social constructs and, as such, are subjected to hegemonic processes.

The last article, "Potere e autorità nei dizionari," by Eva Nossem, explores how heteronormativity informs lexicography and structure and content of dictionaries. From a queer perspective, Nossem asserts that there is no such thing as objectivity in dictionary and challenges lexicography as an exact science regulated by norms, standards, and models that are considered scientific and objective. Nossem deconstructs the idea of canon, showing that the corpora used by lexicographers are created on the basis of the needs and expectations of the dominant groups, marginalizing some texts as non-authoritative. In Nossem's view, the lexicographer is endowed with personal power and is influenced by the socio-cultural elements of dominant culture. Nossem also discusses definitions, pointing out that words such as homosexual or lesbian are presented as pathological, thus conveying the lexicographer's values.

It is impossible to predict response to the theme established by a call for papers. Calls are necessarily limited to the time period under consideration (corresponding to the date of a conference, a publication, the time scholars may have at their disposal to produce an essay by a defined deadline, and so forth). Consequently, understanding the scope and range of the essays submitted to *g/s/i*'s call must take stock of those pragmatics. In response to the call for essays concerning domination in Italian culture and society, we were surprised by some of the absences that we would like to here note. With the exception of the article concerning online hate speech against women, the submissions (curious term in the context of a conversation about domination) were mostly literary, cinematic, and historical in nature or they concerned language structures and practices. To what extent should we find the absence of essays about domination on *bona fides* political (science) subjects significant? Are we done with domination? Has the phenomenon passed on and taken with it power?

We are not convinced this is the case.

In her introduction to *g/s/i*'s "Invited Perspectives," Paola Bonifazio explains how the conflict for domination between theoretical discourses on feminism, anti-feminism, postfeminism, and men's studies shaped the "Invited Perspectives" of this number of *g/s/i*. Ellen Nerenberg, editor of *g/s/i*'s "Open Contributions," responds to our collective query by introducing this section with her own contribution on BDSM, which discusses E.L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey* and Sam Taylor-Jones's cinematic adaptation within the Italian context.

⁵² Frau and Guzzetta, *ibid.*, 76, 83-86.

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