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**Title:** Book Review: *Fai l'uomo! Come l'eterosessualità produce le maschilità* by Vulca Fidolini

**Journal Issue:** gender/sexuality/italy, 7 (2020)

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**Publication date:** February 2021

**Publication info:** gender/sexuality/italy, "Reviews"

**Permalink:** <https://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/17-fai-luomo-eterosessualita-produce-maschilita>

**Keywords:** Book Review

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Fidolini, Vulca. *Fai l'uomo! Come l'eterosessualità produce le maschilità*. Milan: Meltemi, 2019. Pp. 178. ISBN 9788883539640. € 15.20 (paperback). € 15.20 (Kindle). € 15.20 (ePub).

The title of Vulca Fidolini's fascinating ethnography and study of masculinities suggests a general and abstract work of gender theory, an impression amplified by the publisher's description, which refers to the apparently universal power of heteronormativity to shape and create diverse forms of masculinity. And Fidolini proposes (most clearly in his conclusions) that not only the originary power of heteronormativity to produce hegemonic forms of masculinity, but even the specific forms of masculinity that his ethnography reveals, might be broadly the same from one culture to another. I have my doubts, and you may as well, once it becomes clear that Fidolini's ethnography consists exclusively of fifty-two Moroccan men, all between the age of 20 and 30, who were residing in France or Italy during Fidolini's ethnographic research, and who all immigrated to Europe between the ages of 14 and 20. The title is slightly deceptive in a different way, as well: I remained somewhat unclear how heterosexuality—or more compellingly, compulsory heteronormativity—*produces* masculinities, and even Fidolini goes back and forth on this, at times ascribing heterosexuality a generative and central role, and other times suggesting it is one factor among many in the complex formation of gender roles. Lastly, some might wonder about the centrality, or rather exclusivity, of *heterosexuality* in the production of masculinity, given that only two of Fidolini's subjects identified as homosexual, and only one is quoted in the text; would a larger or more varied sample size have shown that there were other discourses of Moroccan masculinity, and not only those produced by and within a heteronormative matrix? This is not to say that there isn't much that's worthy in the book — there is — but rather that readers should approach this volume knowing what's at stake and the limits of the ethnographic archive, which makes up in density and rich specificities what it might lack in grand, sweeping and universalizing conclusions.

The book opens with a short preface by Emanuela Abbatecola and Cirus Rinaldi, who argue that Fidolini's book represents an important generational shift for scholars of gender in Europe, and Fidolini's introductory and first chapters bear that assessment out, offering an overview of his methodology (ethnographic, consisting of both interviews with and living alongside his subjects, often become close friends); the previous scholarship on masculinity, particularly in the Mediterranean context, particularly of the Islamic world; and a strong introduction to contemporary gender studies and gender theory, especially studies of masculinity. Readers from the American academy will probably be familiar with much or all of this material (the distinction between biological sex and social gender; Butler and gender as performance, Sedgwick and homosociality, and others in the 1990s; intersectionality theory in the new millennium; and so on), but it is relatively uncommon to see it in work by an Italian scholar, especially in regard to masculinity. Fidolini notes (pp. 16-17) that much of the previous work on masculinity focused on male domination, which had the advantage of calling attention to gendered access to power and agency, but had the double disadvantage of eliciting Orientalist thinking when applied to Islamic groups and maintaining the notion of masculinity as singular and universal essence—Fidolini, by contrast, is fully on board with masculinities as socially constructed, multiple and frequently contradictory, and constantly in need of staging and re-staging. Moreover, his analysis is aware that masculinity is also intersectional: the same discourses mean different things in different social classes, ages, ethnicities, educational levels, and so on, and indeed, different discourses about masculinity may emerge from such differences.

What follows are three chapters that form the heart of the work. In each, drawing on his rich and at times emotionally compelling ethnographic work, Fidolini identifies a dominant hegemonic discourse of masculinity for his subjects and then explores it at some length—who successfully deploys the rhetoric, who occupies a partial or even a failed version of the discourse, and in a few

cases, who makes use of the discourse for other ends. The discourses are, unsurprisingly, not only multiple but often at cross purposes with each other. The first discourse (elaborated in chapter two) that he identifies surprised me: masculinity through marriage. He argues that this is the most common and dominant of the three—a real man is married and has a family, with real responsibilities; he is someone the community takes seriously. The second discourse (elaborated in chapter three) is one that is perhaps more familiar: masculinity as an aggressive display of sexuality, the hunter in pursuit of prey. Fidolini's central point is one that will also perhaps be familiar: this predatory masculinity is entirely for the benefit of other men in a homosocial peer group. Fidolini notes that the discourse was often deployed by his subjects almost as a greeting, a token of recognition that “we are all men here.” Its efficacy and power — like all discourses — has almost no relationship to truth or reality, a fact that becomes particularly evident in the stories of Karim (pp. 93-95), whose tales of sexual prowess and bravado start off implausible and grow exponentially and comically more exaggerated in short order. Finally, Fidolini turns to a discourse of “reputation,” in which masculinity is perceived as belonging to he who preserves his own reputation, and safeguards (and surveils) the reputation of others—especially younger men and women.

This material is rich, and Fidolini's evident capacity to elicit authentic behavior and intimate knowledge are appealing. Two figures stand out in particular. The first is Yanis (pp. 79-83), an undergraduate in Strasbourg, who successfully uses the “masculinity through marriage” discourse. He does so, however, in order to conceal his sexual orientation; his apparent lack of interest in a girlfriend is ostensibly explained by his desire to be a pious Muslim and a “real man” only when he finds the ideal woman (a date that can be postponed indefinitely). Yanis seems to be the only character in this ethnography who self-consciously manipulates discourses of masculinity, exploits their performative character; for the most part, Fidolini extolls Mahmood's notion of “embodied habitation” rather than looking for signs of recognizable “agency”; but while I appreciate the critique of applying Western liberal models of autonomy to other societies, the habitation of Fidolini's subjects can look a lot like suffering at times. Take Amir (pp. 107-113), a shy and sweet-seeming young man who would like to meet a nice girl, but who remains trapped in the “predatory masculinity” discourse of his peer group—a form of masculinity that Amir is appealingly terrible at, constantly comparing himself to Hakan, the “successful” *tombreur de femmes* in the group. One wishes that there was a little more play and possibility here.

Despite the narrowness of Fidolini's ethnography, *Fai l'uomo!* should be of interest and of use to those working in gender studies generally and masculinity studies more specifically; for Italianists I think its principal importance lies in its ethnographic approach to a significant Italian minority (many of Fidolini's subject structure their thinking about masculinity around the opposition Morocco-Europe), for its capacity to help expand thinking about masculinity in a Mediterranean context, and for a succinct but comprehensive review of gender studies written in Italian. It is not without flaws, but it is productive: I had both greater clarity and more questions when I was done.

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