THE TOPIC

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Gender violence and sexism in Italy. Norms, control and sexuality[1]

Abstract

Gender-based violence and prostitution are social facts that historically in the way they are represented and socially constructed processes produce ethnicization, essentialism, culturalization of female bodies and deviant than the heterosexual norm. In this paper we compare two different waves discourse, on the one hand that securitarian (2007-2009) that has seen violence and prostitution both devices to agitate social alarms, justify repressive measures, reproduce rhetorical securitarian and at the same time reaffirm social gender roles essentialized, on the other the next (2010-2012), in which violence against women, in part thanks to the power of word of Italian feminists, yes is given in the home, but how did outstanding and without questioning the state of relations gender in our society, while the sex scandals linked to Berlusconi and the spread of a discursive order distorts neo-moralistic terms such as prostitution, violence, self-determination and freedom. These two cases are epiphenomena of a trend that sees women's bodies and their sexuality object of devices and discursive orders useful to reaffirm the heterosexual norm, asymmetrical gender relations, and more generally a given social order based on the control of body

Keywords: gender violence, prostitution, criminalization and victimization, eteronormativity.

Introduction

In this paper I try to highlight how and why the feminine body still represents, within the public sphere, the center of the definition of social order and its social and legal norms. Around the female sexuality much of the discursive orders develop, in order to affirm the heterosexual norm and, at the same time, to expropriate the self-determination and the voice of women.

Here, I compare two different discursive waves: on the one hand, the "securitarian" one (2007-2009), started with the murder of Giovanna Reggiani, during which violence

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[1] This article is the update of a previuos study appeared in Simone 2012, pp.111-130.

and prostitution were utilized as ways to produce social panic, justify repressive acts, and re-affirm gendered social roles; on the other hand, a period during which gender violence "goes back home" (where it has always been) – whilst the public space is filled with the sexual scandals of the prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and the subsequent moralistic response. From leftwing to rightwing parties violence and prostitution were distorted and exploited in order to set up the gender relationships order and to vanish the voice of women in the public sphere.

The analysis of sexuality made by Foucault is still a suitable tool to understand the apparent contradictions present in the public discourse on sexuality, prostitution and self-determination. Instead of being a monolithic, grounded theorization about straight or wrong sexualities, the public representation of these phenomena moves through a power-knowledge network:

rather than referring to all the infinitesimal violences that are exerted on sex, all the anxious gazes that are directed at it, and all the hiding places whose discovery is made into an impossible task, to the unique form of a great Power, we must immerse the expanding production of discourses on sex in the field of multiple and mobile power relations (Foucault 1978, pp.97-98).

The "Reggiani affaire". Genealogy of the good victim

The murder of Giovanna Reggiani, which occurred in October 2007, marked a paradigm shift for what concerns the normative and media representation of gender violence in Italy. As Shannon Woodcock outlines (Woodcock, 2010), the episode strongly highlighted the centrality of gender in the ethnicisation of the public enemy as a sexual offender. As the wife of a retired admiral (as the mainstream media reported repeatedly), Giovanna Reggiani symbolised a well-respected middle class woman, middle aged, who, nevertheless, had been a victim of a brutal rubbery, homicide and rape.

The institutional reaction was strongly repressive and alarming: in few days the bill 181/2007 "Urgent norms in matter of expulsion from national territory due to public security" was approved, including the so-called "*anti-Roma*" norm, that allowed the expulsion from the national territory not only of overseas people, but also of European citizens to preserve national security in extreme circumstances.

Hence, the bill started the informal legitimisation of pogroms in several cities, whilst police evicted many gypsy camps with violence. The bill remained active only temporarily, but the institutional debate, and social alarm fueled by the mass media cemented the process of criminalisation of immigrant people, implying the relationship between foreigners and sexual abuse of native women, causing increasing fear and the perception of migrants as criminals.

In May 2008 Berlusconi won the Italian elections. He exploited the increasing fear of migrants amongst Italians, making "safety" a keyword during his campaign. The government who came into power approved the so-called "*Pacchetto sicurezza,*" which consisted of a series of norms and laws concerning social control and security which made possible the military control of territory and Italian cities, and the management of operations against gypsy settlements in the Campania, Lazio, and Lombardia regions, within the jurisdiction of the Army.

Less than one year after, in February 2009, following new episodes of sexual violence for which foreigners were blamed, a new legislative decree on sexual violence and harassment was discussed in Parliament. This decree was called "*Misure urgenti in materia di sicurezza pubblica e di contrasto alla violenza sessuale, nonché in tema di atti persecutori*" ("*Urgent measures regarding public safety, contrast to sexual violence, and harassment*"). This decree linked together immigration and gender violence, along the paradigm of security policies. In fact, it aimed to introduce norms against sexual harassment, and deportation measures against illegal migrants at the same time. Furthermore it allowed the organisation of the so called "*ronde*" (Simone, 2010), which consist in groups of people with explicit xenophobic tendencies organised in defense of their local territory in response to the presence of immigrant people. These norms were then expunged but still they influenced public opinion intensively marking a link between gender violence and immigration.

Throughout all this, mass media played a decisive role. It is important to analyse how significant the relation between offences, the media representation of these crimes (both in qualitative and quantitative terms), and the perception of safety. Combined data from the second report on the perception of security in Italy published by *Demos & Pi* in collaboration with the observatory of Pavia *Media Research* on behalf of Fondazione Unipolis, *La sicurezza in Italia. Significati, immagine e realtà. Seconda indagine sulla rappresentazione sociale e mediatica della sicurezza* (Demos & pi, 2008), show a clear trend: whilst crimes decreased in 2007, it's representation in the media increases. It is important to note that this was during the political election campaign. 47% of the pool declared to perceive immigration as threat to safety (it is also funny to note that interviews took place a few days before the homicide of Giovanna Reggiani, therefore when the feeling of fear towards migrants was already spreading wild). As I said earlier we have to remember that this was happening during the electoral campaign, exactly when the topic of safety and security was utilized as a media catalyst both by central-left wing parties and the right wing opposition (Woodcock, 2010).

The public debate about violence towards women was not mentioning anymore the data of research run by Istat (Italian Institute of Statistic) in 2007 called "*Violence and abuses towards women inside and outside domestic environments*", "*La violenza e i maltrattamenti contro le donne fuori e dentro la famiglia*", that shown an unforgiving snapshot of the reality of violence towards women in Italy, calculating that almost 70% of abuses happen in domestic environments, and are committed by people known by the victim, such as ex-partners, and relatives.

The stereotype of the foreign offender made once again explicit the intrinsic link between sexuality and the ethnicisation of the public enemy, through the media construction of a *moral panic* (Maneri, 2001; Bonfiglioli, 2010; Giomi, 2010). This portrait is perfect for the public representation of Roma people (it is not important to specify ethnicity, nationality, etc). This is enough to trigger public opinion towards fear and ethnic hate, and to produce waves of violent racism). In this sense:

The creation of a racial stereotype of Roma people is based on sexualized characteristics: Roma men are seen like primitive abusers and as a threat for Italian women; Roma women are seen as

kidnapped children. Both of them result from a wider stereotype that describes Roma people being ethnically uncivilised and incapable of controlling his/her innate biological characteristics: sex (male), and maternity (female).

However it is evident how powerful rape can be to mobilize and focus the attention of 'public opinion' on social constructed alarms which are useful to shape the character of a *folk devil* against which we can project social anxieties and concern. This is not new news though: scapegoats have always been used to build public debate around an imminent threat, such as a public enemy which make our cities dangerous, degraded, and unsafe. In this scenario the enemy is the migrant, the other from us, who puts our identity in danger (which is thought as unique and monolithic), simply with his/her simple presence. And this leads us to the core issue. In the case of rape, what is important is that who abuses is someone who is not "us," someone different, and this defines an insurmountable border between "us" and "them:" this border is then, between others, a cultural, civil, religious border. In other terms violence against women is a social fact that classifies an identity before defining the difference between victim and abuser. The emotional mobilization that arises from the abuse or the homicide of one of "our" women defines what women represent: an ethnic, national, religious community opposed to foreigners, enemies, and sexual offenders.

This process of victimization of women (in this case Italian and respectable women) has also another substantial function to perform. It pushes social actors into predefined roles (in this case the role of the offender and of the victim), that are neutralized and detached by the materiality of social and human relationships. These roles do not take into account ambivalence and contradictions within relationships and conflicts, so that the cultural and social aspects of violence against women do not emerge, and women have no voice. But there is more.

The distinction between a good and a bad victim (accused), beyond identifying communities to which the victim belongs, is also used to define what being one of "our" women means, and to say how a legitimate victim must behave to be qualified as a woman to defend. The respectable victim, as in the Reggiani affair, is used to define the behaviors which a decent women has to stick to in order to be recognized by society as a victim, and not guilty (or accused) (Simone 2010, pp.46-49).

Thus gender violence is a powerful bio-political tool through which we can define ethnic identities and public enemies, normal or aberrant sexual behaviors, gender roles, and so on. This is how women are treated by Italian laws concerning violence and abuse, which reduce the complexity and stigmatise and divide women into two groups: victim and accused. We have a "good" victim, who is the one to defend, when a woman is not raising requests of emancipation and autonomy, and when she can be used to confirm a symbolic subordinated female role. The "bad" victim is somehow also guilty since her behavior does not correspond to the definition of the female role supported by the penal and social norms. Paradoxically, consent is the fundamental condition to distinguish sexual abuse from sexual love, but it is also a concept that can lay down the concept of freedom.

The other side of the coin: criminalised bodies

Through the victimisation of the *native* female, ethnic identities, hetero-driven social roles, and a specific social order are defined by society. In this way feminine sexuality is exploited to mobilise society against deviant sexual behaviors that exceed what is considered as normal and acceptable. Particularly, it is interesting to analyse how prostitution is socially and juridically ruled to reinforce and maintain the boundaries of the standard heterosexuality, and to affirm when a woman is sexually deviant. However this also introduces several political ambivalence within the public debate in Italy which is important to investigate.

During the peak of the media's attention on safety and security, when abuse of women committed by immigrants were over-reported, and the consequent victimisation of the "*good*" Italian women, a new problem was found in street prostitution. Also in this case, the role of media and it's moral commentary were extremely influential.

The issue of prostitution began to be the focus of the political debate when several restrictive laws were approved by some local governments, and with the Carfagna-Maroni-Alfano[2] bill proposed on September 2008. It is significant that the bill was enacted by the Equal Opportunities, Interior and Justice Ministers, meaning that prostitution was considered as a matter of police and criminal justice, and public order.

Even though the bill was never approved by the Parliament, the public debate was utterly influenced by this way of interpreting the matter. In fact, the mass media paid much more attention to the press conference and to the rhetoric words used by the Ministers introducing the new proposal, rather than to the content of the bill. Media reported the press conference highlighting the state of emergency tone used to talk about this new and urgent safety need, which was exactly the same used by the same mass media when referring to the social perception of safety and danger. Thus, this security framework created a tautological circle, as we can read in the press release:

The conditions of moral and social destitution in which prostitution mainly takes place require the State to intervene with measures to preserve the dignity and values of human beings and their freedom in the first place, and furthermore to prevent the causes of a spread of social panic due to a lack of public order and safety (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2012).

Thus, "the spread of social panic" caused by prostitution produced a higher level of social alarm, looking like there was no way to escape the problem and to reach safety without introducing more restrictive laws.

On the other hand, the repressive approach at the base of the bill was completely embedded in the contest of "war on urban blight" and fear of diversity spread by the mass media, and by the local and national governments. In fact, the target was the presence of sex workers in the streets, which is the most evident and problematic form of prostitution, since the bill aimed to punish what could be visible, so both clients and sex workers if caught in the act (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2012).

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[2] Respectively the Equal Opportunities, Interior and Justice Minister.

Sex workers were highly stigmatized, but there was no mention in the implementation of any action against trafficking of prostitutes, or of any more substantial safety policy. The mere intention was to "clean the streets" to the eyes of respectable citizens by moving the sex workers to more marginalized areas, thus feeding the social perception of fear and a lack of safety.

Besides the contradictions and the social conflicts produced by the thorny problem of urban safety, the representation of prostitution produced by the media also highlighted a deeper and broader aspect of Italian society, related to the relationship between genders and self-determination, and the definition of it.

These policies also have an ethical connotation and concern social order *tout-court*, social order, and safety ("Prostitution has always been a matter of dispute for its ethical, cultural, and social order implications") (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2012). The criminalization of prostitution is deeply connected to the size of the political space of sexual freedom in a society, for its defining the basic characteristics of legitimate heterosexual relationships.

The public debate was merely about the fact that a prostitute is a deviant, also in sexual terms, and that this is an objective fact:

every form of prostitution, or better, female prostitution, is categorized in the frame of guilty. It is assumed that women's sexuality is naturally non-violent and tender, as much as the male sexuality is aggressive and unbridled. When this relationship is overturned, it opens a wide breach in the social and symbolic order which is not acceptable and that creates chaos (Pitch 1998, 189).

Therefore if prostitution, as gender violence, includes the definition of roles and relationship patterns in it's symbolic representation, hence allowing the discrimination and criminalisation of whatever diverts from what is sexually "normal", this also means that we are facing a deep ambivalence regarding what is natural for a woman: are prostitutes victims or culpable? Does it depend on other factors? If so what does it depend on? The point is that for women subjectivity, self-determination is not recognized at all, so that their criminalisation –or safeguard– contributes as well to the construction and enhancement of the paradigm of security policies.

Bodies at risk, beyond the security wave

Bodies, sexuality, safety, deviance, control. According to Tamar Pitch violence towards women is a comprehensive social factor as it involves multiple social spheres. It affects symbolism, social and juridical norms, sexual identities, the definition of who we are through what we do not want to be, and so on. It is a criterion to classify the entire of society which limits freedom and capacity of self-determination for human beings, in particular women, and has effects on the use of public spaces, and on power. The link between violence and prostitution, the way they are described, and the way we perceive them, makes evident how sexuality pervades the governance of society.

This control tool is still very powerful, despite the fact that the media rhetoric on immigration as main menace to social safety, and fear of crime have decreased after 2007.

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According to a report published by the European Observatory on Social Safety "*Safety in Italy and in Europe. Meanings, images and realities*", in the first trimester of 2011:

Compared to few years ago, social fear due to the presence of foreigners seems to have reduced. As for delinquency, immigration was valued at its higher level of risk in 2007, during the "criminal syndrome" period: this two topics have always shown a close correlation in the public opinion. Nowadays only 6% of the pool mention immigration as a main concern, while in precedent years it went above 10% (with a peak of 13% in 2007). The matter is now in the 6th position, after inflation (9%), and environmental issues (8%) (European Observatory for security, 2011).

Many things have changed since 2007. The global economic crisis, environmental issues, and unemployment are now on the agenda of media and politicians, who are no longer pointing to immigration as the main social problem.

However criminal offences still make the "news." They are significan in the media, and this way of reporting does not reflect the real trend of crimes. Once again the most reported and visible episodes are regarding homicides of women: Yara Gambirasio, Sarah Scazzi e Melania Rea.

In Spain every time that there is the suspicion of an abuse of a woman, the mainstream media update the list of the victims, so that it is contextualised, for instance: "*This is the 40th victim of male violence this year*" (European Observatory for security, 2011). Our media report the news without a proper contextualisation, so that these facts seems far and unlinked from the real state of things. On the contrary, violence towards women in Italy is a fixed constant inherently due to the asymmetric gender relationships that we find both within and outside the family. Thus the Italian men who kill their wives, girlfriends, and lovers become:

different from foreigners," "different from "others." The issues related to male sexuality and identity are justified by uncontrollable jealousy. Gender violence is consigned to marginal zones and its cultural and social aspects are masked. These facts are described as products of an individual deviance or madness. The fact that violence is not an exceptional fact but an ordinary phenomenon is hidden and described only as a monstrous accident so that the dominant symbolic order is untarnished (Giomi, 2010).

At the same time victims find their place in this binary frame. As we said, only certain women deserve the attention of the media and to have their status of victims recognised. Even here their subjectivity disappears behind the urgency of representing women as weak and devoted to their husband, children, and relatives.

Who killed Melania Rea?

Too many facts still are not clear. In San Marco park, or at the kiosk, Melania, once she had found out that she had been misled, would have reacted, shouted, cried. Or, maybe, she would not have got on that car […]. For what concerns the motif of the murder, it might be that Melania had a secret lover? Was she a woman of easy virtue, which would have quickly jumped on the first car and hurriedly made love in the forest, leaving the little daughter to the father? The officers investigating on this crime have sifted out her entire life, which resulted clean and transparent. Me-

lania Rea was absolutely devoted to her husband, and, most of all, she had high principles. She was the wife of Gabriele and the mother of a beautiful girl, that's it. So, why was she murdered?

The off-screen voice follows the images of *Ripe di Civitella* wood, where Melania's disfigured body was found. It's a disturbing, broken, destabilizing sequence of frames, which spreads a deep feeling of solitude, anxiety, fear amongs the audience. The crime scene's reconstruction, drawn as a cartoon, shows a naked body that has been outraged and wounded by a syringe on the chest. The effect of dramatization (Gili, 2006) is immediate.

Chi l'ha visto?, a prime time tv programme about missing persons and murders, episode of September 29, 2011.

The case is a well-known one. It's about the murder of Melania Rea, the 29 years wife of a non-commissioned officer of the Army, Salvatore Parolisi. The woman was found atrociously murdered in April 2011 in the *Ripe di Civitella* wood, close to Teramo, Italy. It was a ferocious and violent homicide, and a big mystery at the same time. Police could not find a clue for weeks, until investigation led to the arrest of Melania's husband who was accused of "voluntary homicide, aggravated by the intimate relationship and by the cruelty and the contempt to the body, probably in league with others."

For the Media Observatory of Pavia (European Observatory for security, 2011), this is the second most reported criminal case in the national prime time news (21 times) during the first months of 2011. A media case, as Aldo Grasso wrote (Grasso, 2011), which catalyzed mass media's attention so much so that in May 2011 it was presented via all the national TV channels throughout all day schedule, becoming one of the most important episodes of media communication about gender violence and its construction of symbolic and discursive meanings. The importance of this case is linked to several aspects which show some ambivalences and reversals from the recent public debate on gender violence and its public representation.

Firstly, the case of Melania Rea is precisely a "case": it is selected and reported on every crime news channels, during talk shows and news programs, and it contributes to shape public opinion and social perception on the phenomenon of gender violence in Italy. Immediately mass media made an analogy with another well-known crime case, even though the most significant aspect of this analogy is indeed its partiality: in fact, the homicide of Melania Rea calls back to mind another "excellent" murder, Giovanna Reggiani's, which occurred in October 2007.

As Mrs Reggiani, Melania Rea was the middle-class, Italian, and well respected wife of an officer of the Italian Army, and in this sense, she appears as the perfect suitable female victim. In this sense, each of us could have been in her place. Then why, *Chi l'ha visto* wonders, Melania has been killed?

This question is rather ambiguous, as it supposes that someone else deserves to be killed: probably, those women who do not have a transparent life, get rides with strangers, and by doing so show to be available, easy and, therefore, guilty and less defensible, as they do not conform to what a good woman should be.

But Melania was a "good victim" for the prime times on tv, as she embodied the exception that confirms the rule. Within the heterosexual family, in fact, these kind of vi-

olence do not take place; then, we must consider it as an extraordinary, shocking event for the social order.

The other face of the coin: the Berlusconi sexgate

The other face of the coin, now, is actually less "other" than one would expect.

After the "securitarian" wave, the public debate has shifted towards the victimization processes of women in the public sphere, focusing on the symbolic construction of female body within the national borders. What is at stake is sexuality, power, freedom, and self-determination of Italian women in Italy. Another way to speak about prostitution. This issue began with the public scandal on the so-called "Berlusconi sexgate."

In the April 2009 Veronica Lario, wife of Silvio Berlusconi, wrote an article on a national newspaper about the sexual scandals linked to her husband. In the article she criticized the way of recruiting candidates for the European elections as a practice of co-opting young and beautiful women lacking any political experience. Veronica Lario denounced the dissolute life of her husband, opening the public debate on the affaire that caused gossips, critics and scandals for months (Tonelli, 2009). The matter was associated to the "thorny question" of the relation between power and sex, which had two kinds of consequences: a judiciary one (due to the exploitation of juvenile prostitution and the political corruption) and a political-ethic one (about the status of freedom, emancipation and self-determination of Italian women). The media debate was saturated with scoops about private parties crowded with young women, in which sex, money and political favors were the main ingredients (Sonnino, 2010).

In 2009, a new scandal exploded. Patrizia D'Addario, a sex worker who had a relationship with the Prime Minister, released the recordings of their sexual encounters. After that, Berlusconi got involved in another scandal, the Ruby-gate: dozens of young women, even minors, resulted implicated in orgiastic fests, called "Bunga-Bunga", with Berlusconi and his flunkeys.

The media –especially the leftwing political parties and newspapers as «la Repubblica», «l'Unità», «il Fatto Quotidiano»– represented such scandals voyeuristically, mobilizing the public opinion in a debate about sexuality and prostitution.

Even though the main issue was the corruption of the political power, this ethical mobilization shifted to an ambiguous moral sphere, which involved and challenged the feminist groups on their own ground. The debate on these sexual scandals developed *on* and *between* women covered any aspect of the "escort-gate": the connection between power and sex, the meaning of freedom and self-determination, and the relation between gender roles and models.

Synthetically, we can focus on three main arguments: the "anti-Berlusconi" front, the radical feminism (sex-workers and GLBTIQ movements), and the comments published by the national newspaper «Corriere della Sera». Here I will analyze the first one, for it shows interesting ambivalences and contradictions about the issue of sexuality and freedom.

The main aspect is the moral one. Prostitution has been represented as a moral crime, in which the labels "victim" and "guilty" have been utilized to judge the girls who have participated to the sexual parties in the house of Berlusconi. What was criticized is how

these young girls behaved, who were disapproved for having complied with a corrupted and perverse model of power, but, at the same time, were considered victims of the wicked intentions of Silvio Berlusconi. The point, in sum, was about the dignity of women in Italy –dignity being the moralistic obligation to be modest and not promiscuous.

The first step was moved by the director Concita De Gregorio on the newspaper «l'**Unità**» (De Gregorio, 2011). Her point was how the "cultural disease" and the lack of dignity, education, consciousness have damaged the young generations of women in Italy. Obviously the fault of this decadence is due to fifteen years of Berlusconism. But, as De Gregorio put it, there are still good and well-to-do women: they are mothers, daughters, nieces of some men, thus separating the "good" girls from the "bad" ones. The "others," the bad girls, are prostitutes, we, the good ones, are mothers, daughters and so on. Such "familistic" and heterosexual terminology leads to a normative collective imagery, which has been deconstructed by the feminist movements since the beginning. Good women are represented as an essentialized entity, without voice, but exclusively under control of their family, their men, their sons. The "others", the prostitutes, have no voice as well, for it will always be a man choosing for them; but, at the same time, they are considered "bad", victims of a corrupted ideal of success in life.

After the analysis made by De Gregorio, a second call was published by "Se non ora quando?" a women's network created to criticize the moral decay and the machist tendency of Italian society in the Berlusconian age. Here the issue of dignity is even stronger, and it is directly linked to the self-sacrifice of Italian mothers, workers, students. The motherhood is symbolically utilized to enforce the ideal role of Italian (not stranger) women, being referred not only to the family, but even to the creation of the nation itself.

Otherwise, terms like "indecent", "public morality", "social pollution" are utilized in order to outline a ethical and conservative framework within which prostitution appears as the least and the worst of the activities a woman must undertake in order to be considered a well-to-do person.

Many critics were struck by such discourse –mainly for its normative ideal of woman, strongly linked to an heteronormative, patriarchal model. In fact, it is referred only to Italian, middle class, heterosexual women lacking subjectivity and voice. The de-subjectivation process of women and the criminalization of deviant sexual behavior is contextualized within a broader contradictory discourse, which, on the one hand, aims at defending the self-determination of women; whilst, on the other hand, imposes a conservative model of gender relationships and roles in the society.

Conclusions

Returning to the television show *Chi l'ha visto?*, inquiring the murder of Melania Rea, we can find in the vocabulary used to describe the feminine characteristics of Melania stunning analogies with the public debate on the "Berlusconi sexgate", and the relative gender models imposed to the public opinion. Respected women are those who correspond to the heterosexual feminine roles: motherhood, care, love, devotion. The "good" victim must fit her gender role and expectations –thus helping us in placing ourselves within a hetero-social order where conflict is depicted. Otherwise, our social identity could be put under discussion, and our cognitive world might be subverted: what is

wrong what is not? Victimizing and criminalizing processes work through the construction of stereotypes, essentialized roles, culturalized bodies.

Indeed, as noticed by Foucault, the rhetoric of securitarianism exploits the female bodies both in the cases of violence and prostitution, in order to justify repressive and racist acts, performing blood-and-flesh bodies (sexualized, different, mixed and exceeding). In this sense, gender violence and prostitution are situated deeply inside the cultural processes of sexual construction, of naturalization and culturalization of bodies and genders.

After the decreasing of the security emergency, gender violence as an alarmist event remains at the center of the media representation, and confirms the set of ideas on the victimization of women on which the structural asymmetry of gender relationship in our society is posed. These two tendencies are different but coherent: in fact, the public debate around the sexual scandals of Berlusconi has obsessively attracted the media attention on his perverse sexuality, demonstrating the deep connection between sex, power and freedom, gender stereotypes and morals. Both the arguments enforced ideas about a "normal" sexuality to be protected as a public goods against deviance and degeneration. Once again, the point is that issues concerning prostitution and female bodies' exploitation have imposed to the political debate the necessity of a new reflection on sexuality, emancipation and social transformations.

At the same time, the leftwing opposition, by condemning the sexual behavior of Berlusconi, defended the "healthy" and "normal" forms of gender and sexual relationships, by stigmatizing the behavior of the young escorts invited at Berlusconi's home, and labeling them as not adequate to the moralistic perception of sexuality.

Gender violence and prostitution are social facts which produce ethnical, sexual and cultural processes of control and discipline of bodies, starting from bodies and sexuality, which are the core of the governamental strategies of power. But this power is not univocal or monolithic; on the contrary, it spreads along the power relationships that run through the entire society. As Foucault wrote:

Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. We must not expect the discourses on sex to tell us, above all, what strategy they derive from, or what moral divisions they accompany, or what ideology-dominant or dominated-they represent; rather we must question them on the two levels of their tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure) and their strategical integration (what conj unction and what force relationship make their utilization necessary in a given episode of the various confrontations that occur). (Faucault 1978, p.102)

This discursive order is indeed crossed by ambivalences and contradictions, but all of them contribute to the construction of the deployment of sexuality as Foucault has outlined:

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be

given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power (Faucault 1978, pp.105-106).

That's the point of the real scandal of the Berlusconi sexgate: as claimed by Lidia di Cirillo over the course of a talk held at a public meeting organized by the historical feminist group Libreria delle donne, the unsaid and paradoxical problem was that:

A misbehavior man like Berlusconi defends the most conservative catholic morality, pledges the promulgation of an anti-protitution act, implements a law forbidding the medical analysis of embryos in the in vitro fertilization, denies the civil rights to lesbian, gay, trans couples in order to defend the heterosexual family (Cirillo, 2011).

Anyway, if the female body has always been exploited in order to justify and enforce the control of society, the cultural representation of bodies is useful to affirm a gendered social order, in which women are definitely expropriated of their subjectivity and voice. As a victim or as a culprit, there will always be someone else speaking for them – thus depicting a structural conflict and freedom process which is steadily going through our society.

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