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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND  
MASCULINITY: DEMISTIFYING A COMMON PLACE**

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY: DEMISTIFYING A COMMOL PLACE

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## RESUMEN

El presente trabajo aborda la cuestión de la relación entre violencia y masculinidad, enmarcándola en el contexto de la violencia contra las mujeres. El objetivo es generar una duda razonable que permita desarticular la supuesta relación exclusiva entre violencia y masculinidad. La aptitud para actuar de modo violento es una característica de los seres humanos, tanto hombres como mujeres; sin embargo, la diferencia destacable radica en la diferente fuerza física que tienen unos y otras. La cultura y la sociedad han incentivado que los hombres recurran a la fuerza y, al mismo tiempo, han desalentado a las mujeres, con el resultado de que los primeros se han convertido en más temibles y las segundas en más indefensas. Estos condicionamientos han ayudado, en consecuencia, a crear estereotipos de género. En este contexto se puede explicar el origen de las relaciones desiguales de poder entre los sexos. El punto de partida del trabajo es el análisis conceptual de la violencia. A continuación, acudiendo al preámbulo del Convenio de Estambul, se profundiza en los rasgos constitutivos de la violencia contra las mujeres. El análisis requiere una aproximación multidisciplinar, particularmente desde las ciencias sociales, la historiografía y las teorías feministas. Los resultados del análisis se resumen en las conclusiones junto con propuestas para desactivar la violencia entre sexos.

**Palabras clave:** violencia, masculinidad, estereotipos de género, fuerza

**Indicadores JEL:** D63, J12, J71, K33, K38

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## ABSTRACT

This work addresses the issue of the relationship between violence and masculinity, framing it in the context of violence against women. The goal is to insinuate a reasonable doubt that leads to disarticulate the alleged exclusive relationship between violence and masculinity. The ability to act violently is a constitutive feature of human beings, both male and female, however, a notable difference lies in the different physical force they have. Culture and society have encouraged men to resort to force, and at the same time have discouraged women, with the result that the former have become more fearsome, the latter more defenseless. Such conditioning has therefore helped to create gender stereotypes. In this context one could explain the origin of the unequal power relations between the sexes. The starting point has been the conceptual analysis of violence. Then passing through the preamble of the Istanbul Convention, the constitutive traits of violence against women have been deepened. The insight required a multidisciplinary approach, with particular recourse to social sciences, historiography and feminist theories. The results were resumed in the conclusions along with proposals to defuse violence between sexes.

**Key words:** violence, masculinity, gender stereotypes, force

**JEL codes:** D63, J12, J71, K33, K38

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This work aims to deepen the relationship between violence and masculinity by placing the analysis within the broader problem of violence against women. The aim is to understand whether violence is a natural trait, i.e. a part of the life process, or a social construct, i.e. a learned behavior, whether it concerns only men or also women. The answer to these questions could lead to diametrically opposed solutions to gender-based violence.

## **2. THE EVOLUTION OF MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. A CONCEPTUAL POINT OF VIEW**

In international law the expression "violence against women" doesn't identify a specific crime, it must be interpreted as a social-legal definition, a container that includes within it a plurality of conducts (De Vido, 2016, p.25), some of which can be configured as crimes others are not, although similarly deplorable, such as the gender pay gap.

Regarding the characteristics, the nature, the constitutive features, so much has been said and written; the public debates and the official texts of International Institutions and agencies have not been spared; but despite the remedies and measures adopted, the phenomenon has not stopped. Violence against women has distinctive features that make its eradication complicated; it is multifaceted and can manifest itself in different aspects and for this reason it is identified with many terms. The law and the news tell us that violence can be physical, psychological, sexual or economic, but looking in more detail, within the macro-areas that we have listed, we can identify a large number of harmful behaviors such as sexual harassment, persecutory acts, forced marriages, which involve both adult women and girls, often victims of genital mutilation and harmful traditional practices. Some harmful behaviors mainly concern the typically female reproductive function, such as forced or sex-selective abortions, forced pregnancies, denied contraception, imposed sterilizations. Women can be forced into sexual slavery for the purpose of prostitution or trafficking; moreover they are more exposed during armed or latent conflicts to war and/or ethnic rape (Zupi, 2013, pp.2-3).

Violence is a singular word with a plural meaning. In the philosophical field, there are numerous theoretical dissertations on the meaning to be attributed to the word violence and which once again attribute to it the connotation of plurality. Carlo Cappa, in his essay on violence (2013) well explained that the structural ambiguity of the term violence is already evident from the etymology of the word itself whose root has a double meaning; on one hand it indicates strength understood positively as command, conduction, capacity to resolve uncertain situations and on the other hand it indicates with a negative meaning what oppresses, destroys, excess and disproportion. The aforementioned ambiguity has led to the elaboration of numerous theories; in fact, there are different interpretations attributed to the word violence, from which the ambiguities of meaning that the term has taken on, in addition to the numerous conceptual categories elaborated.

We can speak of violence in many and different ways; the discourse can concern its dimension, the forms it takes, the places where it occurs. In this sense it is useful to use the triangular model proposed by Norwegian researcher Johan Galtung (2003), an expert in peace-building, conflict resolution and non-violence studies who conceptualized and related to each other three types of violence, which in turn represent the three elements that interact in situations of conflict: direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. Direct violence is linked to behaviour, i.e. to action, it can be physical or psychological, it manifests itself in an immediate and evident way and for this reason it is easier to identify. Cultural violence is linked to attitudes that are an expression of socialization and education, reflects the cultural context of belonging and is therefore the most difficult to eradicate; it has a symbolic power, persists over time and characterizes every aspect of human life, such as religion, ideology, language, art, ecc. its function is to legitimize other types of violence. Structural violence is of a macro-social type, it is generated by a system of oppression in which the objectives are in contradiction with each other, therefore it cannot be traced back to a single person or a group. According to Galtung, violence is an avoidable insult to the four basic human needs that are survival, well-being, identity and representation, freedom; it reduces their satisfaction below what is potentially possible.

The interesting analysis conducted by Carmen Magallón (2005, p.36) leads her to carry out a transposition of Galtung's triangular model, superimposing it on the system of domination and subordination suffered by women. She identifies and

recognizes the materialization of the three types of violence conceptualized by Galtung in events that go against the basic needs of women: the symbolic devaluation of women (cultural violence) which produced a state of institutional subordination and exclusion (structural violence) and the marginalization and lack of power which favored their conversion into an object of physical abuse (direct violence) (2005, p.37).

A relevant contribution is provided by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2020, pp.7-8) who developed the concept of symbolic violence. It is a violence that he defines as sweet, insensitive, invisible in the eyes of the victims, which is exercised through the symbolic level of communication, of knowledge (which he specifies as mis-knowledge) of recognition and gratitude, even through feeling. The effect of this violence is the submissiveness that represents the product of male domination, that perpetuate itself quite easily within the established order, to the point that even the most intolerable conditions of existence are often acceptable and even natural. The author, who identifies a paradox within social relationships, recognizes the need to dismantle the processes that transform history in nature and the cultural arbitrariness into something natural. Pierre Bourdieu writes:

*Questo rapporto sociale straordinariamente ordinario offre così un'occasione privilegiata per cogliere la logica del dominio esercitato in nome di un principio simbolico conosciuto e riconosciuto dal dominante come dal dominato – una lingua (o una pronuncia), uno stile di vita (o un modo di pensare, di parlare e agire) (Bourdieu,2020, p.8).*

The author highlights the existence of a society wholly organized according to an androcentric principle based on the division of the sexes, in which biological appearances produces concrete effects in bodies and brains, transforming social constructions – product of the socialization of biological and biologization of the social - in the natural foundation of the aforementioned division (2020, pp.9-10) recognizes that the relations of domination between the sexes find their maximum expression in the domestic domain, but believes that the analysis must focus on the places where the culture of male domination is perpetuated, which do not correspond to the private sphere as part of feminist thought he focused on, but to the public sphere such as institutions or schools (2020, pp.10-11).

As can be seen, symbolic violence is subtle because it acts against women indirectly, through the imposition of a certain vision of the established order which is an expression of androcentric domination, as well as of the social roles and cognitive categories that characterize it. Social conditioning and internalization are the processes through which women themselves become parts of the male domination mechanism, which reproduces and consolidates itself, as well as the structural and systemic nature of violence, expressing the different power relationships that exist between men and women. In this sense, violence is not only invisible, but also normal.

Violence against women is a constant presence in every environment and aspect of social life and this is a fact that has to do both with the (large) dimensions of the phenomenon and with the (numerous) forms that it assumes. This impact on the large number of women who can be affected. This awareness contributed to María José Añón Roig and Victor Merino's elaboration of the concept of holistic violence (2019, pp.67-95). They argue that violence against women is the most glaring manifestation of systemic and widespread discrimination and inequality that women and girls around the world continue to suffer. In their analysis, the concept of gender-based violence that is included in the Spanish Organic Act 1/2004 needs to be modified in an expansive sense, at least corresponding to that assumed by international and regional standards, with particular reference to international law on human rights; these are sources in which the concept of violence includes broader definitions than the Spanish Act. The conceptual proposal of the two authors lends itself to being considered holistic, comprehensive and universal. Holistic means that it must be understood as an integrator of perspectives on the concept of violence, on the causes and consequences of the phenomenon and which allows to expand the different types and levels from which to respond to violence; in this way, it could be possible to intervene more effectively in favor of all victims to obtain prevention, protection, support and prosecution of the perpetrators, as well as care in the various areas: social, education, health, work, etc. Comprehensive means that it takes into account all the forms that violence takes or can take. Finally, universal is suggested in the sense that the system of domination originating violence against women is not dependent on political, economic and cultural "systems" (Añón Roig, Merino-Sancho, 2019, pp.68-70).

Therefore violence does not manifest itself exclusively with the exercise of physical force, as it can also be verbal, psychological or economic, as widely indicated



by the most recent international and regional legislation. It can affect women in various environments, both in the public and private spheres, the workplace, public places where strangers can certainly act, even if the prevalent sphere of this phenomenon remains the family, domestic violence in fact, represents a large slice of this problem. International instruments have recently identified a fourth area in the transnational and digital sphere that represents a threat to women of a global type. This violence occurs outside the traditional boundaries of a state and is insidious because it acts with relatively new systems, which however lead to ancient consequences, such as the trafficking of human beings for prostitution purposes or the exploitation of displaced women and refugees.

The concept of male violence against women has undergone an evolution over time, that has gone hand in hand with the descriptive dimension reported in the legal cases that have alternated in the penal codes. The analysis of this progressive development shows that over time male violence against women has been perceived differently, both by politics and by society. In this sense, there is a gradual transition from a dimension of tolerance, acceptance and devaluation towards it by the social community, typical of the past, to a dimension of intolerance, rejection and contempt that characterizes the most recent era. As a demonstration of what has been said, we can observe, for example, the evolution of the concept of sexual violence within the legislative texts, where we start from the eighteenth-century case of "rape", to move on to "carnal violence and acts of violent libido", to "sexual violence", to "male violence against women" to "gender violence" that characterizes the present day. For example, in the nineteenth century a significant prevalence was attributed to male violence in the sexual sphere, with particular reference to violent penetration, in today's society, on the other hand, sexuality is only a part of a wider series of violations based on inequalities between men and women.

These conceptual shifts are a reflection of the changing historical and cultural context: in the past, sexual activity had the sole purpose of procreation within the marriage relationship, it was certainly not an expression of individual freedom and all relationships consumed outside marriage were illegal. State, as a bearer of public interests, invoked the task of controlling also the sexual activity of the citizen (Di Pinto, 2014, p.1). It is interesting to note that in the Italian Penal Code of 1889 - commonly called the Zanardelli Code by the then Minister of Grace and Justice – carnal violence

and acts of lust were placed among the crimes against morality and the order of families. The offense was not considered to be against women, but a public interest. Thanks to feminist movements, the sexual sphere was recognized as part of personal identity. The struggles waged in the seventies for the conquest of exclusive control of one's own sexual sphere are well known which becomes synonymous with women's self-determination, recognizing that the motive for patriarchy was precisely the control of female bodies and reproductive capacity (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos. 181). In such perspective, rape represents the highest point of male oppression against women. In the nineties sexual violence was recognized as a crime against the person and no longer against morality.

### **3. VIOLENCE: NATURAL NECESSITY OR SOCIAL CONSTRUCT?**

The conceptual analysis on male violence against women requires a recall to the Istanbul Convention, in whose preamble there is the following statement:

*Recognizing that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women(§9).*

Preliminarily it can be observed that what has been mentioned in the preamble is not original, since it substantially takes up the same concepts and the same premises of the preamble of the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, outlining a sort of continuity of the contrasting action. In fact, as evidenced by the *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, the Convention also arises from the need to have harmonized legal rules that guarantee all the victims of Europe the same level of protection and support (§ 14). The above paragraph is of crucial importance because it provides the opportunity to analyze some fundamental concepts contained therein and found in the term "inequal power relations" and in the adverb "historically". An in-depth study of these passages can help to shed a light on the nature and constitutive features of male violence against women.

What we intend to understand is if violence is a purely male trait, if it is a learned behavior or an anthropological characteristic and in the latter case if it is a natural fact.

The "inequal power relations" represent the *humus* on which the male domination has been able to assert itself and reproduce itself infinitely, in time and space, at different intensities, generating the inferiorization of the woman trapped in a dimension of subordination and oppression in which we can recognize the structural nature of violence. Structural violence presents the character of pervasiveness, being a phenomenon that reappears perfectly modeled on the time that advances, nestles in the structures of society, camouflaging itself and disappearing in the common perception of absolute normality. It adapts to the identity evolution of women and men and extends both in the public and private spheres, without distinctions of social classes and for this reason violence against women is defined as transversal. It is an expression of an unequal social order in which attitudes and behaviors are reproduced that have acted and interacted in every environment, that is why we prefer to speak here of a "system of unequal power relations", since it is a matter of multiple conducts that are intimately connected.

The use of the adverb *historically* is a key point: it indicates that the *system of unequal power relationships* has its roots in the past, has replicated over time, creating stereotypes - that is social models - commonly accepted and automatically recognized. There were two main consequences of this state of art: on one hand these attitudes and behaviors became chronic, on the other, the social community began to perceive them as "normal", "natural", giving them a sort of social legitimacy.

The concept of normality associated with violence is particularly insidious because it camouflages the problem and transforms it into a condition that is not capable of arousing repulsion, annoyance, intervention; on the contrary, it guarantees the static nature of the system, the impunity of the guilty, the submission of the victims and the repetition of discriminatory practices, *sine die*. About the concept of normality, Carmen Magallón Portolés (2005, pp.33-34) explains very clearly that one of the most pernicious aspects of violence is its invisibility which is due to being considered normal within a culture. She points out that the word "normal" can be applied because of the statistical breadth of a certain phenomenon, but the normality that makes violence

invisible cannot be classified as healthy, but as pathological. The behaviour of many people builds up a norm - which is understood here as an established social practice - but it must be considered pathological if the result is death or daily abuse. It follows that pathological normality is a contradiction in terms that cannot be accepted. To make the invisible visible - the author specifies - it is necessary to observe without the filter of our convictions that condition the perception of what we are looking at. In other words, it is necessary to remove the paradigms, i.e. the models that return a pre-constituted vision of the world, because it contains the convictions that everyone has about what reality is, albeit in the form of basic elements; the gaze appears already structured and returns a general picture that allows us to see some things and not others. Feminist social movements have moved in this very direction, that is, they have questioned the paradigm of female subordination and in this way they have made the existence and dimensions of violence against women visible.

The point of view of Catharine MacKinnon is very interesting. In her essay "*War crimes, peace crimes*", she analyzes the condition of women and the hierarchical relationships that surround them, using the filter of Marxist theory (it should be considered that the author constructs her feminism in analogy with Marxism, shifting the focus of exploitation from work to sexuality, since both theories deal with the unequal distribution of power). She claims that the maintenance of the position of male domination is in turn made possible by the ability to make it appear as this expropriation belongs to the kingdom of nature (MacKinnon, 1994, pp.98-127).

It is intuitive how the adjective *natural* refers to something that is or that happens according to nature, independently of the human will. It is something that works perfectly and could not work better otherwise.

The question at this point is whether violence is a natural phenomenon, that is, inherent in the human being, or whether it responds to learned behavior. The answer to this question leads to diametrically opposite consequences. If violence were a "natural" prerogative, then its eradication would be impossible, as it is impossible to eliminate the instinct for survival, hunger or thirst. Conversely, where violence, in this case between men and women, was a construction, an artifact, an expedient to impose the will of one individual on another - or more individuals on others - the consequence would be the possibility of eliminating it, thus realizing the objective of the Convention of protecting

the right of all individuals to live free from violence (Art. 4.1). Furthermore, in the second case it would be necessary to distinguish between that which is intentionally constructed and that which is the product of a collective and diffuse structure. The subordination of women would then fall in this second case.

Anyway, violence appears as a means, an instrument through which to exercise power, a domain to obtain submission and obedience thus outlining asymmetrical relationships. Psychologist and psychotherapist Monica Bonsangue (2015, p.12) writes that power has a close link with control and possession and therefore is directly connected with command. Domination over the partner is the effect of an imbalance of power of only one individual in the couple and can be achieved in different ways, from the most direct to the most subtle.

Regarding the relationship violence/power, Hannah Arendt's point of view is interesting. She affirms that violence is not an intrinsic quality of human beings and that violence and power are not natural phenomena, they are not manifestations of a vital process, instead they concern the field of politics which is a manifestation of human acting, but above all violence is an instrument used to perpetuate power relations rooted in society (2017).

Naturalizing violence is part of a process that involves perpetrators and victims, albeit for different reasons. The authors inscribe the violent act in the dimension of naturalness to justify it psychologically so as to legitimize and reproduce it infinitely; the victims are induced to internalize the idea that violence is natural, through conditioning, in order to obtain acceptance of their state of submission and subordination. The mechanism is subtle and devastating at the same time, because the perpetrator often does not perceive the abuse (physical, psychological, economic, sexual) he committed. The final result will be to consider male domination over women normal. The difficulty of restoring a relationship of power in a "stable" balance between men and women had already been recognized by Simone de Beauvoir (2012), who in her most famous work brought to light the complicity of the woman in her subjugated being.

Particularly interesting in this sense are the results of an ethnographic research conducted by Cristina Oddone at the „*Centro Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti*” (CAM) in

Florence - the first listening center for abusing men in Italy - contained within the publication of the Italian Delegation at the European Council (Oddone, 2016, pos.1120 e ss.). In the testimonies directly collected by the author from the abusing men, it appears that often they do not recognize violence or crime in their acts against partners or former partners; the legitimacy of their actions is reinforced by the belief that all men use violence against women. Various surveys on the social perception of violence have shown that attacks against women within intimate relationships are commonly considered insignificant or inevitable. In short, social acceptance is that structural element on which not only the idea of the legitimacy of violence rests, but also the recurrent impunity of the perpetrators (Oddone, 2016, pos.1444). To partially respond to the title of this paragraph, it is useful to underline that the programs carried out at the CAM in Florence are mainly based on the idea that violence is a learned behavior and therefore other behaviors can be learned in the same way (Oddone, 2016, pos.2837). Among the objectives of its activity: the immediate cessation of violence, the reduction of risk for women, the modification of the behavior of abusing men.

The two levels on which corrective action seems to be more effective are therefore the legal and socio-educational levels. The first certainly contributes to create reality by operating as a deterrent, the law can constitute "a privileged tool for also developing cultural habits and demystifying alleged natural characteristics" (Pozzolo, 2015, p.20). The second, however, is essential to avert the risk, far from remote, that the legal rules remain an exercise in beautiful writing detached from reality. Collective responsibility for correcting profoundly unjust and perverse social structures that favor the subordination of women cannot be delegated only to the law.

At this point it is essential to deepen the theme of collective responsibility in the case of violence against women. It is clear that the perpetrator of a violent act will personally answer for his or her actions, because criminal responsibility is always personal, according to one of the cardinal principles of the criminal systems of European countries; however, the analysis of the structural nature of the phenomenon leads us to make further considerations to understand the problem in its complexity. The aim is certainly not to rationalize violence and make it acceptable, but to identify the best strategies to defeat it by revealing its mechanisms. From the current analysis, therefore, the level of individual responsibility must certainly be complemented because it is not a question of considering the actions of individuals, nor the concept of guilt or

culpability or that of intentionality. What is relevant here is the upper level, the collective level made up of the actions of single individuals who, taken together, form the dense network of connections of a given society. The point is the existence of an unequal, collective and widespread structure, not the behavior of individuals because the central theme is that of structural injustice.

An interesting reflection on social injustice is provided by Iris Marion Young in her posthumous work *Responsability for Justice* (2011), in which the author proposes a new theory of collective or shared responsibility. She moves on a global level according to the model of social connections between individuals and asks what each one can do, in his or her capacity as a moral agent, to modify the structural processes that cause social injustice, characterized by the presence of disadvantages, inequalities and oppressions. Young believes that a responsible person tries to deliberate on options before taking action, makes choices that appear to be best for all concerned, and evaluates how the consequences of his or her actions can negatively affect others (2011, p.25). In the fifth of the seven chapters that make up her publication, Young proposes four parameters that she calls "parameters of reasoning" that agents can use to reason about their own actions and those of others in relation to collective action to redress structural injustice: power, privilege, interest and collective ability (p.144).

## **4. RELATION BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY**

### **4.1. A different point of view**

The adverb *historically* suggests yet another reflection. The reference to history underlines the long duration and persistence of the phenomenon of male violence against women, generating the impression that the violent gesture is a constitutive trait of their nature, intimately linked to the instinctual and animal dimension, ready to disrupt as soon as they give in the inhibitor brakes (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.95). Often there is a tendency to associate violence with man, in a perspective that appears essentialist, in stark contrast to what is argued by the deconstructivist feminist theory according to which it is highly misleading to take gender's "naturalness" for granted (Butler, 1999). In fact, the vast majority of violent crimes are committed by men, a fact that concerns not only the present, but also the past, as evidenced by some documents

from the late Middle Ages onwards, in which men appear in violent scenarios both perpetrators and victims (Eibach, 2016, p.229). In the collective imagination, violence is often seen as a natural trait that characterizes men, and its use is perceived as an expression of masculinity. While an aggressive attitude is expected from a man, a sign of strength and power, a gentle attitude, normally identified with femininity, is expected from a woman.

However, we are also witnessing another phenomenon that seems to go in the opposite direction and that concerns the conceptual slippages of male violence against women. We have seen that from the case of rape, through sexual violence, we arrive to is gender-based violence. As evidenced by the essay by Simona Feci and Laura Schettini (2018, pos.210), these passages highlight the gradual translation of the focus that is initially placed on the man and the woman, respectively the author and the victim, but which ultimately shifts to the social dynamics and reference contexts represented by the term *gender*. In fact, it recalls the complex of inequality relationships between men and women, bringing out the historical, social and cultural matrix of violence. The result of this evolutionary process leads on the one hand to disarticulate the connection between violence and masculinity, on the other to widen the audience of victims, who are no longer only women, but more generally all those who deviate from social models commonly accepted and recognized, therefore also referring to the LGBTQI community and beyond.

In summary, violence as an expression of normative documents is no longer proposed as a distinctive trait of masculinity, but rather is closely related to the political dimension, and it appears to be an attempt to preserve traditional social dynamics, reassured by the reproduction of models of gender and dominant sexuality, which are essential for the patriarchal family and for the societies organized around it (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.211). The current decline of the patriarchal family and the existential earthquake that also affects the social issues connected to it, could explain why male violence against women seems more brutal and pervasive today than in the past. The motive for violence therefore would not only be sexual domination, but also the maintenance of gender roles (III Eures Report). This theory could help explain the emblematic case of the "Nordic Paradox". The expression refers to the contradiction that occurs in northern European countries, especially Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark where, although the level of gender equality achieved is the highest in



comparison with countries around the world, there is also the highest level of domestic violence against women. The issue is hardly explained by the presence of gender inequalities and the unequal distribution of power between men and women that is commonly considered to be the basis of gender violence. This problem was the subject of a study published in November 2017 in the journal "Social Science & Medicine" by Enrique Gracia, professor of social psychology at the University of Valencia and Juan Merlo, professor of social epidemiology at the University by Lund (Siviero, 2018). According to this study, Portugal, Italy and Greece, which are far behind the Nordic countries in terms of gender equality, have much lower rates of domestic violence against women and this is something to think about.

As for the codification of violence in legal texts and the possible interpretation that can be given, it is good to keep in mind that the legal text expresses the point of view of those who create the law, of the one commonly called the legislator and that today on violence it tells us something different than in the past. However, if it is true that for a long time the law has been created by men, if it is true that it itself has been the instrument for perpetuating the inequalities between the sexes, supporting a fictitious neutrality and a false universality that actually concealed the point from a male point of view, how can we believe that things are exactly as the law suggests to us today? It is only a provocative question which, however, pushes us to extend the analysis of the relationship between violence and masculinity in another context which is that of the approach through social sciences, filtered by the careful lens of historiography

#### **4.2. Relation between violence and masculinity in historiography**

The historical arguments are only some among many other possible approaches to the relation between violence and masculinity, also having credibility the approaches from the social sciences, the humanities and science. For example, neuroscience has focused on the study of complex interactions involving genes, neural circuits, biology and the environment, or on the genetic variations that cause pathological aggression. Some studies seem to show that men are more prone to antisocial behaviour (Siever, 2008, pp. 429-442) or a suspected interrelation between testosterone and aggression (Nelson, Brian, 2007 pp.536-546). Although the data obtained deserve attention, the main limitation is represented by the fact that they do not explain how the change in

social environments and cultural contexts affects the construction of the gender aspect of violence in the history (Muchembled, 2012, p. 13).

Joachim Eibach's interesting essay (2016) highlights that male violence in history has taken very different forms, meanings and functions, and that the approach for such a complex study requires an interdisciplinary modality that takes into account both socio-cultural conditioning - gender - and the role of women in interpersonal conflicts.

The author (2016, pp.229-230) believes that it is impossible to elaborate a universal theory that accounts of the relationship between violence and masculinity in a general way, since it is true that the ability to act violently against other people belongs to the basic equipment of humans, but it is equally true that violence occurs in various socio-cultural contexts, presenting many facets and different meanings (2016, p.230). He considers sector micro-cultural analysis activities more useful and capable of accounting for different realities and of the deviations of behavior of men and women both in general and in interpersonal relationships. These analysys, while focusing on the differences, do not completely clarify the various aspects of the question. The author (2016, pp.229-230) claims that the violent act committed by men or women cannot be considered as a contingent individual expression, but must be interpreted more generally as a reflection of the social and cultural practices that characterise a given society at a given moment in history. These practices are supported by informal norms which are summarised in a double-edged code of honor on which society is based and in which the main notions of gender are condensed. The existence of a code of honour based on the distinction between genders meant, for example, that women could go to court to report violent behavior by their husbands, but a husband was expected to resolve conflicts in the domestic sphere using moderate forms of punishment. However, if a man had gone to court to report his wife's violent behavior, he would have exposed himself to the public mockery (Eibach, 2016, p.235). In this way, as claimed by Laura Gowing (1996, p.180), only men could be guilty of violence. Another interesting aspect regarding gender is that in predominantly *oral societies*, including Europe in the Middle Ages, verbal violence such as defamation and blasphemy was viewed more severely than in today's society and mostly women were responsible for it, while sexual crimes, which have been mostly committed by men, appear to be far less studied than murder and assault (Loetz, 2012).

An interesting fact concerns the overrepresentation of male violence in past judicial documents which would seem to demonstrate a greater propensity of men to aggression. Criminologists and historians normally use these tools to conduct research on crime and therefore on violence; they reflect the social practices of the time they refer to, so finding more frequent references to male violent behavior and few references to female ones, does not mean that violence is not also characteristic of women. Often female violence was taken less seriously than male violence, women were less likely to be brought before higher courts, and were rarely punished. Violent female behavior was recorded less frequently than similar male behavior (Eibach, 2016, p.236). According to Manon Van Der Heijden (2013), who carried out an analysis of female violence in the Netherlands between 1600 and 1838, criminologists and historians dealing with violence tend to focus on male behavior, assuming that women are less violent, and on social practices of gender construction. Following this reasoning, women would be less likely to commit crimes, especially violent crimes because they are confined to the domestic sphere, compared to men who have more freedom to engage in public life. This - according to the author - leads scholars to rarely investigate the theme of female interpersonal violence in the modern era. The quality of data on the types of violence in modern times is a function of the degree of accessibility of justice and female violence is thus revealed more in the archives of lower courts that were competent for clashes and assaults in the neighborhood.

It is highlighted how the mechanisms for reporting crimes and the distorted construction of gender, that emerge from the micro-historical analysis for the study of crime, have not always worked in favor of women. Over the centuries, physical violence has been perceived and definitively cataloged as a male prerogative while fornication, prostitution and murder of children have been seen as female dominance (Eibach, 2016, p.235) to which most studies of past female violence paid attention. Garthine Walker (2003, p.4) concluded that since historians label such crimes as typically "female", all other crimes are implicitly defined as "male", pointing out that in fact women participated in most categories of crimes and that they were much more inclined to participate in crimes that are not typically "female".

### 4.3. The role of the patriarchal family in violence

Inspired by the historical essay by Simona Feci and Laura Schettini (2018), let's make a summary of the situation of domestic violence in the past, starting from the Medieval and Modern Age. The judicial documentation available highlighted the presence of reports of female abuse demonstrating that male violence in couple and family relationships existed, although perceived differently than today and strongly characterized by the patriarchal family model. This model was almost identical throughout Europe and even in colonial domains, regardless of factors such as politics, religion, social context, etc . The *pater familias*, as known, was the exclusive holder of the *jus corrigendi*, a right that allowed to exercise a corrective and educational power also through physical coercion “[...] *L’uso della forza nei confronti della consorte è, dunque, uno degli strumenti leciti di correzione e il marito può, o addirittura deve, impiegarlo per assicurarsi l’obbedienza e la fedeltà della moglie, per educarla e imporle comportamenti di suo gusto, per somministrarle castighi e punizioni, per esercitare coercizione [...]*” (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.272). In the absence of precise rules that defined the limits in the exercise of *jus corrigendi*, the conduct was considered illegitimate when it was unmotivated or immoderate (death or threat of death) and the evaluation was left to the perception and qualification of individuals and institutions, in essence, it was forbidden to cross into abuse and therefore into violence. So in the past use of force had a positive connotation for its ordering and corrective function, so as to tolerate even rigorous or aggressive forms; violence instead was perceived negatively because it was destructive, threatening and subversive, and it was not recognized as being of any use for maintaining family and social order (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.265-266). It should also be remembered that family jurisdiction also reflected public order to some extent. In these ancient social dynamics, an archaic principle of proportionality could be identified between the intensity of the corrective tool and the error to be corrected whose evaluation was left to social perception.

The courts and tribunals to which women could apply, aimed at maintaining the marital union, considered as a direct reflection of social stability; therefore in the face of even violent mistreatment, the remedies often provided for weak measures. Impunity or immunity were recurrent, tracing that front of complicity between the institutions and the *pater familias* which, however, would have claimed the legitimacy of its conduct, albeit violent, considered an expression of a right, emphasizing its reasonableness by

virtue of the behavior of the consort. The word of the witnesses was important in the justice proceedings and the reliability of the actors' narratives was based on it. In these situations, the asymmetrical relationships between the genders were not considered violence. Although there was the perception of violence, it was experienced and perceived in a different way than today. An interesting element is the negative connotation assumed by the use of force exercised against the ancestors, since its only purpose was to subvert the existing power relations and therefore configured a crime without the uncertainties that could instead hover around the aggressive acts of the head of the family (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.432).

The historical *excursus* just outlined is useful because it allows to identify the essential elements that revolved and that revolve around the use of violence, drawing a common thread with the present day. These elements are unequal power relations, gender stereotypes and social legitimacy. Here it should be noted that the historical path that led to the affirmation of the so-called *female gender*, understood as a complex framework in which women have been placed and recognized, is supported by socio-behavioral foundations that correspond to those on which the relationships of unequal power between men and women are supported.

The historical discourse also highlights two concepts, force and violence, which deserve particular attention. In the past, as we have seen, force generated approval and in some cases even respect, but the same could not be said of violence, which was deplorable both in the exercise of the *pater familias* (when it was recognized) and in relation to descendants, with respect to who the negative connotation was constant. In other words, the social community tolerated moderate use of force. Over time, the social perception has changed and the use of force has been recognized as one of the typical aspects of the patriarchal system, as Kate Millet, one of the greatest radical feminists, explains.

Speaking of force Kate Millet (1971, pp.43-46), argues that patriarchy relies on the role of force both in an emergency and as a tool of intimidation to maintain control in society, that is otherwise difficult or impossible to guarantee, just as it happens in other ideologies such as racism or colonialism. Force, which is widespread and generalized in most patriarchates - continues the author - is limited only to males who are psychologically and technically equipped to use violence, unlike women whose

physical and emotional training makes them practically defenseless, with repercussions and effects on the social behavior of both sexes. For the author, the force of patriarchy is based on sexual violence carried out through rape. She notes the ambivalence of the emotional response of patriarchal society when confronted with violence against women; while the attack of a husband against his wife arouses laughter and some embarrassment, the mass atrocities - such as known serial killer Richard Speck- arouse scandalized indignation, perhaps hypocritical. For this reason she considers the collective response to violence against women an expression of male hostility. According to the author, moreover, the imposition of male authority follows a very precise logic which consists in considering women as inferior beings, and this mechanism has some similarities with the formulas that nations use in war to justify the atrocities committed, based on the fact that the enemy is an inferior or non-human species. According to Millet, the disqualification of women is perfectly implemented through the patriarchal mentality that has invented a series of reasonings that invade consciences and influence thinking to an extent that few would be able to admit.

#### **4.4. Force in the relation between violence and masculinity and in the difference between men and women**

In general terms, the concepts of force and violence are not synonymous, however in some cases they can lead to the same consequences. As indicated by Enrico Peyretti (2004) in his article, force and violence are intimately connected, but they are different in terms of ethics and purposes, designating different human qualities and actions. In some situations the boundaries appear blurred and have points of contact. In language there are commonly used expressions that imply the positivity of force and the negativity of violence, such as "the force of love", "the force of life", "the force of a mother", or "the violence of hate". Force can be: physical, moral and material. Physical or moral force are intrinsic to the individual, for example athletes possess them such as a sprinter or a swimming champion who are indisputably strong, but not necessarily violent. Parents also use the strength of their authority to educate their children which is not necessarily violence. Material force, on the other hand, is extrinsic to the individual and requires tools such as weapons or money and its nature is ambiguous. Force can be used to do violence, but it is not violence as the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce said "*La violenza non è forza ma debolezza, né mai può essere creatrice di cosa alcuna ma soltanto distruggitrice*" (1938, p.230). Force takes on a negative meaning when it is

used to emphasize an inequality between individuals to obtain the "power of" and "power over" But what would be the connection between force, violence and male domination? Men are physically stronger than women, they have used this potential to acquire the power to control external events in a structural and permanent way that we call domination and in some cases, to maintain this primacy, they resort to the exercise of violence. The unequal power relationships mentioned in the Istanbul Convention have been made possible by the superior physical force of males over females. Force is the foundation of unequal power relations, it is mainly used as a deterrent for intimidating purposes. In the power relations between men and women, force and violence are synonymous, this is one of those cases in which the boundaries of the two concepts overlap.

The imbalance of physical force is particularly evident in the case of sexual assaults. Through a transposition of behavioral dynamics and with the analysis of the effects it produces in women's psychology, it is possible to understand what happens in a larger context, such as the family or society. In the case of sexual assaults, the fear of very serious harm or death often leads women to accept violence without resisting, guaranteeing what they consider psychologically a *fair exchange* for women.

The *fair trade theory* can be traced back to the studies that Susan Brownmiller devoted to sexual violence by publishing "Against Our will: Men, Women and Rape" (1976). The author analyzed the conduct of women during the violent act and to do so drew on the statistics of the FBI of 1973. At the end of the study, the author found that 1 in 4 women had managed, by reacting, to put the aggressor to flee or to flee herself, while those who did not resist appeared to be inert due to a psychological mechanism induced by the so-called hope of fair trade: the belief that not resisting the aggressor, therefore yielding to his will, would translate into a possibility of having her life saved or of not suffering serious consequences, such as permanent injury (Mantioni, 2018, pos.3582).

According to Brownmiller, fair exchange is a psychological mechanism induced by the construction of gender stereotypes that tend to defuse the use of physical force by women, even in cases of defense, as they would still see them unsuccessful. In fact, women, contrary to what happens for men, are educated from an early age to other values/models in reference to the use of force, are discouraged from making use of it

and, through the reference to femininity, are indoctrinated to reject it up to an attitude of passivity in relation to physical strength. This attitude translates into a disadvantage that is not only physical but also psychological and cultural, so they are destined to succumb even before fighting in the face of an aggression, attempted or acted upon. Regarding force and its use between men and women, there is a common thread that links the position of Susan Brownmiller to that already discussed by Kate Millet; both operated in the period of the second wave of feminism, so-called radical, which sees other protagonists as Shulamit Fireston or Anne Koedt. All the authors cited were united by the idea that the origin of the historical oppression of women compared to men lay in the sexual cause.

In Susan Brownmiller's studies, the elements that revolve around sexual violence, with particular reference to rape, are: women's fear of suffering it, the intimidating power it exercises and men's awareness of using it. The intimidating power of sexual violence is therefore sufficient in itself to keep women in a perennial state of subordination to men, it represents the emblem of male power, the violent manifestation of the greater physical strength of men than women. The fear of women therefore not only for the act itself but for the threat is functional to the maintenance of male domination over them (1976, p.13).

## **5. ARE WOMEN ALSO VIOLENT?**

The analysis of the relations between violence and masculinity declined over the broader context of male violence against women cannot ignore the role of another equally important aspect concerning the relationship between violence and femininity. It is clear that gender-based violence against women does not have a corresponding gender-based violence against men; to be more precise we can affirm that there is no female form of structural or cultural violence. In this sense the studies carried out through the lens of disciplines concur in affirming and recognizing the existence of an androcentric social order. Therefore the only area that can be investigated remains that of the couple, within which the dynamics are a world unto themselves.

The first empirical investigation of symmetry in domestic violence dates back to 1975 and was presented by the *Family Research Laboratory University of New*



*Hampshire* by Murrey Straus and Richard Gelles on a sample of 2143 families. From the analysis of the data it emerged that in the last 12 months 11.6% of men and 12.1% of women had experienced a form of violence by the partner. In 1985, a similar study showed that in the reports examined, violence was exercised by men in 25.9% of the sample, by women in 25.5%, and in 48.6% of cases it was bidirectional.

*"Le donne che maltrattano gli uomini esistono, così come esistono donne che si impossessano della vita dei figli, privandoli della libertà di autodeterminazione. Anche questa è una forma di maltrattamento psicologico ed è tipicamente agita dalle donne"* (Bonsangue, 2015, p. 66). The preceding sentence is contained in the book written by the psychologist and psychotherapist Monica Bonsangue (2015) regarding the psychological violence in the couple; she argues (2015, pp.65-66) that if we were to stick to the statistics we would have to conclude that maltreatment is practiced more by men than by women; in fact if we consider only femicide the number of women killed is higher than the opposite phenomenon. However, even without wanting underestimate a very serious problem such as violence against women, two aspects must be taken into consideration. The first is that the violence of women against men is an underevaluated phenomenon since there is little research on this topic and therefore the dimensions are not well known. The second is about the different methods implemented by abusive women and men, while men use strategies that in the long run wear down the victim, creating a malaise that is often visible to people close to her, in some cases even killing her and thus jumping to the news, women use less tiring and less visible strategies, as if to say that they are smarter (p.67). For the foregoing, the author believes that it would be more correct to speak of violence in a broad sense and not of gender-based violence.

Barbara Benedettelli (2017), essayist, columnist and activist for the rights of victims of all forms of violence, while recognizing that women are the predominant category of victims, highlights the existence of the reciprocity of violence in couples. She supports her arguments through the exposition of news facts, academic and non-academic studies, surveys and statistics. From the very first pages of her book, she invites us to reflect on data concerning the numbers of abused men in couples and, at the same time, underlining their scarce disclosure. To give an example, the 2006 *ISTAT* survey on *"Violenza e maltrattamenti contro le donne dentro e fuori dalla famiglia "* shows that the share of men who are mostly violent with partners is 30% among those who have witnessed violence in the family of origin 34.8% were those who suffered

from their father while 42.4% those who suffered it from their mother; or the *3rd III Eures Report* on the " *caratteristiche, dinamiche e profili di rischio del femminicidio in Italia* " in 2015, in which, from the voluntary homicides in the family context analysis referred to the five-year period 2010-2014, derives that, by a total of 923 homicide victims, 578 were females and 345 males. According to the author, there is no doubt that women are also capable of violent behavior towards men, both physically and psychologically and denying this fact means helping to set the gender stereotypes typical of a declining patriarchy (that sees strong men, virile and executioners and inferior women, helpless and victims) in stone. Furthermore, circumscribing the use of violence by women to the self defence cases only means inexorably to classify the woman in the category of "victim" always. The facts - according to the author - show that today in the West and Civilized countries - we can no longer speak of patriarchy but, if anything, of a hard core of men and women still anchored to the customs and social practices of the past. The existence of an exchange between male and female roles is undeniable both in the public and private spheres and this symmetry, to be read as a progress for women, is negatively reflected in the couple violence that is characterized by a bidirectional movement that leads the author to consider the introduction of the "Maschicide" neologism.

By reading the practical cases presented by Barbara Benedettelli (2017, pos.1123), the existence of a prejudice, more or less common to a large part of individuals, clearly emerges, namely that women, as they are less strong than men, cannot act violently against them. This statement is true if we consider that less physical strength can lead to the failure of, for example, an attempted murder; but it is only a prejudice if we consider that physical disadvantage does not prevent women from attacking partners. The recognition of the existence of reciprocal violence in emotional relationships testifies that if patriarchy, or at least what remains of it in evolved societies, is the reason that pushes men to violence, the same cannot be true for women. For women, probably the weight of relational dysfunction is equal to the social and cultural conditionings of gender (obviously excluding psychopathological factors that apply to both sexes). It is not secondary that men are reluctant to report the mistreatment suffered by their partners for fear of being laughed at and/or not believed, with the result that this part of domestic violence remains hidden away.

As Philip Cook (2009) states in his book on men abused by women within couples, studies on the reciprocity of violence arouse much controversy, and he himself acknowledges that research of this type often triggers resistance. Nevertheless clarifying that domestic violence is acted by both men and women and that's wrong in any case is very important, but if we ignore one type of violence implicitly we argue that it must be ignored and therefore other types of violence will become more acceptable (Cook, 2009, pos.38). Cook's analysis of US police reports reveals interesting data, for example: abused men are less likely than women to prosecute once the police have been notified and the immediate need for action is diminished (2009, pos.99); they have 11% less chance of reporting any violent crime where they are victims (and all this can contribute to the underestimate of the phenomenon); in the last 10 years the rate of women arrested has increased, passing from an average rate of 6% to 20% in the considered period (2009, pos.107).

This paragraph intentionally ends with a reference to the Istanbul Convention which defines domestic violence separately from the concept of violence against women, precisely because it recognizes that it is an autonomous and very specific phenomenon. Article 3 letter b) states:

*domestic violence” shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim*

The definition can be considered open, since domestic violence is identified as violence that occurs within interpersonal relationships, concluded or ongoing, within the family, regardless of whether or not they share the same residence and the gender of the victim and that affects not only women, but also men, the elderly and children.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The point of arrival of this brief analysis on the relationship between violence and masculinity leads to believe that, potentially, violence is a manifestation within the reach of all human beings, both men and women, to the extent that the capacity for

physical aggression is an integral part of the anthropological and instinctual baggage of human beings, although not part of a vital process such as hunger or thirst, but a consequence of human relationships. The *stimuli* to which both respond through the use of violence are different and depend on time, space, culture, and social context. The variables that interact are many, so an universal thesis, explaining the dynamics of violence cannot be elaborated as widely argued by Eibach. However, over time the cult of force and violence has been fueled by cultural and social conditioning that have helped create gender stereotypes by providing standardized models of masculinity and associating it with the use of force that has been definitively cleared through customs.

Men were asked to be virile, courageous, strong, determined, and honor was recognized as a value to be defended even at the cost of one's life as it happened in duels. Men were allowed to use physical force and therefore also violence to maintain or confirm their male status. Synthesizing with the words of the philosopher James Hillman, "*le differenze tra mascolinità sociale e mascolinità sessuale rimangono confuse e le nostre idee sull'Io si sono cristallizzate in clichè dogmatici*" (Hillman, 1989 p.31).

The same standards required women to adhere to the myth of femininity which dictated delicacy, kindness and meekness. Culture, traditions, beliefs have encouraged men to resort to force, while it has discouraged women with the consequence that men have become more fearsome, women more defenseless, but not totally extraneous to the phenomenon of violence.

Both sexes have the ability to act violently, overcoming the barriers that contain aggression, a notable difference however lies in the different physical force they have which can make male aggression more lethal than female aggression can be. There is no doubt that women are less strong than men, except in rare cases that do not constitute the rule, so what over time has guaranteed and kept women in an almost perennial state of subjection under male domination, may have been the greater physical strength of men and the fear of women of not being able to respond adequately. Within this context it is possible to explain the origin of the unequal power relations between the sexes that led to the affirmation of male domination that has imposed itself through the exercise of almost absolute power over lives, body and relationships social networks of women. This thesis is corroborated by the observation that the first feminist movements began to

claim rights and freedoms around the eighteenth century, almost concurrently with the birth of the Enlightenment. This could have depended on the establishment of conditions more favorable to the demands of women which depended on two factors mainly. On the one hand, the greater awareness that men and women acquired thanks to the recognition and enhancement of science, criticism, reason, removing superstitions and ignorance, on the other hand, from the rise of a society that as a whole was softening, both because force was gradually becoming the prerogative of the state, and because violence began to disappear from the streets.

The fact that violence, the use of force and therefore aggression are considered a trait of the human being, do not give up hope to achieve the goal set by the Istanbul Convention to create an "*Europe free from violence against women and domestic violence*" (§16). The Convention is proactive in this, it does not only dispense declarations of principle, but also identifies remedies. Among these, which are not a few, art. 14 "*education*", located within Chapter III "*Prevention*", dedicates a short but significant passage to the need to promote the principle of the peaceful solution of interpersonal conflicts using the following expression: "*non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships*". Particular attention has been paid to this principle by Leela Gandhi in her *Lectio Magistralis*, in which she says "*people can be forced not to be violent, but they cannot be forced to be non-violent*" (2016, pos. 164).

The recognition of the principle of non-violence within the document is a revolutionary fact, as Gandhi herself points out. It is a matter of cultivating and amplifying the vocation of men and women to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, learning to contain all forms of manifestation of violence. It is not just a declaration of intent, in reality, as we mean it in this work, but it is a matter of retracing a path that humanity has already traced over time, when it abandoned violence as the main mean of solution of unfriendly relations, making them an exclusive instrument of the monopoly of the state. The dominant view within historiography is that in Europe, the rates of interpersonal violence have fallen significantly over the past seven centuries (Mc Mahon, Eibach, Roth, 2013, p 7). The eighteenth century is the decisive period, for some the real turning point with respect to the radical change in social and practical perceptions of private violence, including the phenomenon of violence against women, for others a historical moment of confrontation (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.454-455). The influence of the Enlightenment movement cannot be denied.

The civilization and modernization process that characterized the history of the West in general and Europe in particular, also took place through the control of induced or acquired individual violence, and it was marked by some decisive evolutionary steps. The society, as a whole, has become more refined, has acquired particular social traits which, together with the economic development and culture that was increasingly considered a value, has become incompatible with the expression of violence and aggression even towards the women who belonged to the family core. The nascent figure of the *gentleman* embodies precisely this evolution. On the one hand, a greater sense of social disapproval of physical abuse by husbands of wives has developed and, on the other, conducts perceived socially as violent have flourished. Violence as a physical and verbal manifestation slowly became a practice of expression of the less well-off social classes, especially in the nineteenth century where violent practices in interpersonal relationships represent a tool of expression typical of the lower classes (Feci, Schettini, 2018, pos.483). Other elements have allowed this evolution such as the transition from combined marriage to emotional marriage outlining new family ideals and fulfillment in the sentimental field and questioning patriarchal authoritarianism. This glimpse of historiography could be explained by the theory of the civilization process supported by Norbert Elias (Elias, 2000); however there are many other theories that attempt to clarify the decline, defined by some as apparent, of violence in social practices over the centuries. Steven Pinker, for example, attributes the phenomenon to the erosion of family, tribe, tradition, and religion by forces of individualism, cosmopolitanism, reason, and science (Pinker, 2011). The rise of individualism has eroded the primacy of the community, the importance of which in the legitimate exercise of violence once again is intended to be emphasized.

In terms of peace-building and peace-keeping, the theoretical and practical contributions provided by women are truly numerous, thanks to the close relationship that has been consolidated over time between feminism and pacifism, born mainly in the period between the two great wars and continued until nowadays, where peace studies of Canadian and US origin thrive. In that difficult historical period, women organized themselves into associations and movements and their thinking is testified by articles and letters published in newspapers and magazines, as well as by conferences. Unfortunately there are not many organic works due to their propensity for activism which mainly expressed the criticism of the dominant values of politics and

international relations and for this they also suffered forms of repression (Bianchi, 2015, pp. 9-46).

In the early twentieth century, pacifist feminism was mainly anti-militarist, it opposed the propaganda that the bourgeoisie made of war as a necessary tool to defend the homeland and the high ideals of the nation, arguing that in reality it was used to protect class privileges and imperialist ambitions (Musiani, 2015, pp. 47-60). An expression of this trend was Baroness Bertha von Suttner - Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1905 - who was critical of the exponential growth of armaments and technological advances aimed solely at war purposes. In her best known novel (2013), she points the finger at the feeling of admiration for war that is instilled in the minds of young people through the way of telling the story, in manuals and texts for school use and where the feats of arms were defined as heroic. One of the main themes of the pacifist feminists of the time was the education that should have supported the pacifist cause.

Pacifism, intended as a non-violent solution to conflicts, has gone through moments of oblivion characterized mostly by historiographical gaps. This may have been partly due to the traditional idea that considers war positively and attributes specific connotations to it, while peace negatively simply indicates the absence of war, as the philosopher Norberto Bobbio explains in his *„L'idea della pace e il pacifismo* (1975). Pacifist feminism - which has its own precise theoretical, practical and historical identity therefore does not simply correspond to the adhesion of feminism to pacifism - has mainly acted on two fronts, the sensitization of public opinion and the pressure on the representatives of the institutions, favoring the plan of international relations.

After the Second World War, the contribution of the feminism of difference to the construction of a culture of peace becomes relevant, provided through the proposal of an alternative socio-political model based on cooperation and responsibility. This approach, less interventionist and more reflective than the one seen previously, supports the differences between men and women and the idea of the identity construction of the individual placed in a collective. It aims to overcome the limits imposed by the masculine, underlining the importance of addressing the multiple reasons for dissent through dialogue, understanding and reconciliation and discussing how any kind of conflict exacerbates the diversity of the social fabric.

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