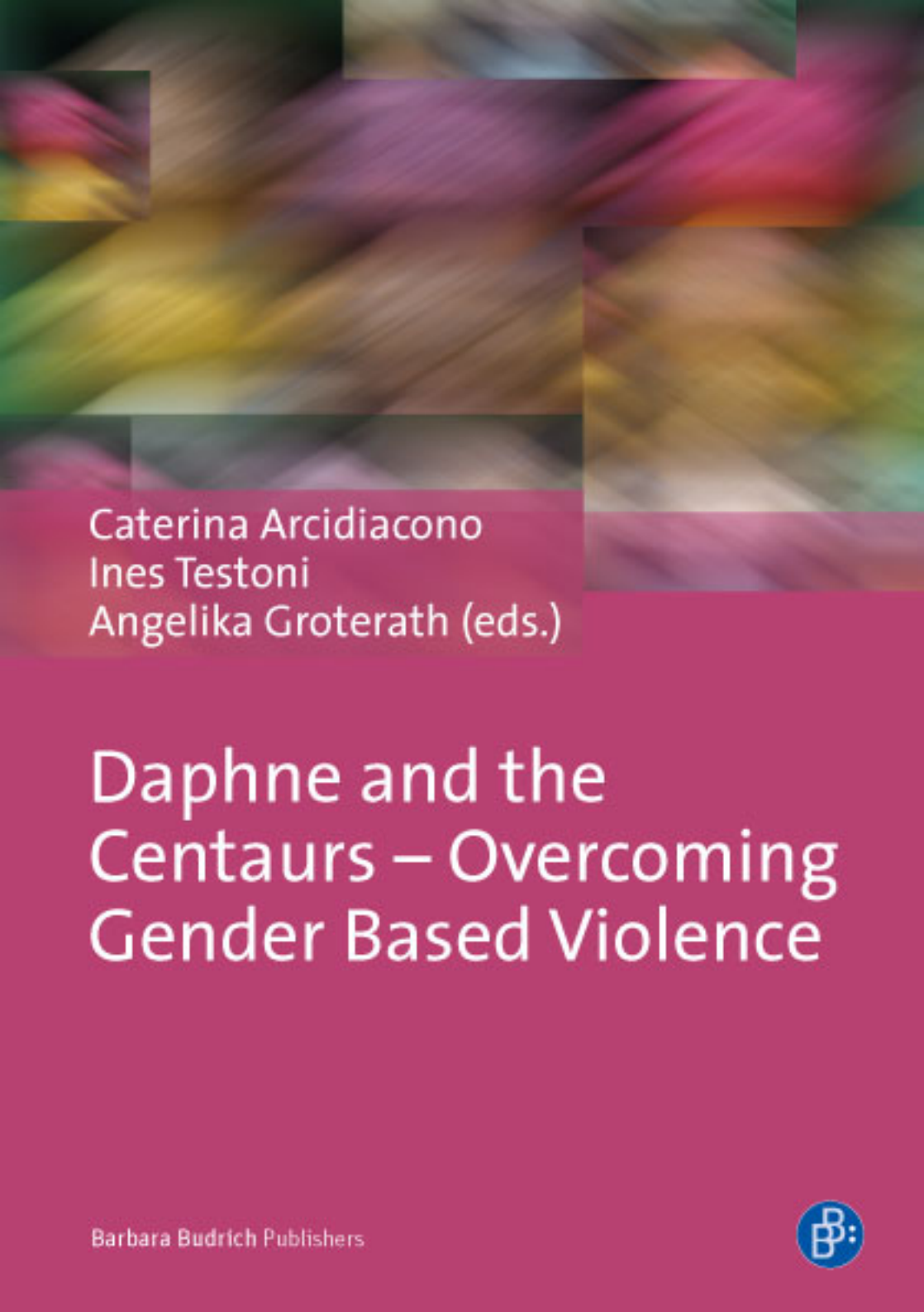




Caterina Arcidiacono
Ines Testoni
Angelika Groterath (eds.)

Daphne and the Centaur – Overcoming Gender Based Violence

Barbara Budrich Publishers



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Foreword

Ines Testoni, Caterina Arcidiacono, Angelika Groterath

“Daphne and the centaurs: Overcoming gender based violence” originated as a response to a fundamental question about the roots of gender-based violence and how to fight it. In this sense, it offers a systematic reflection on femicide’s socio-cultural roots as well as the goals and effects of concrete actions and their psychological tools they bring to practice.

The mythological and cultural anthropological key that thematizes the volume traces the history of violence against women instituted within a framework of apparent affection: brutality within the region of love. It talks about the cultural origin of gender violence and female victimization, despite the great efforts of the Western world to resolve the gender gap. In fact, the problem in many European Countries has remained unchanged for decades and, despite the significant number of European policies promoted to solve it, nothing seems to be able to reduce the persistent submission of women to traditional colonialist logics that keep them strongly subordinate to men, especially in Southern areas.

This volume considers the context of several cultural frames characterizing the multiple backgrounds of Europe, which, in some cases, have held back the emancipation of women, or at least have maintained the backlash against feminism. It is composed of three parts: the first discusses some theoretical questions inherent to the roots of male violence and the culture of victimization of women; the second presents some practical interventions in the field of treatment for the consequences of male violence and in the field of prevention; the third discusses some useful tools for research in this area. Indeed the whole volume is focused on the instruments, which may result in effectively changing this situation, considering both sociological and psycho-social aspects involved.

In the first chapter of the first section, “Why is Antigone still alive? Despite spitting on Hegel and Freud, the tragic Italian women’s contemporary situation”, Ines Testoni discusses what is happening in European Countries and especially in Italy, where the female condition is in a particularly critical situation. Testoni’s analysis of the Italian condition in this piece is useful as it

can be considered as being similar or prototypic to Latin cultures, such as Spanish, Portuguese, or Southern ones. It is important to remind the reader that, during the 20th session of the UN Human Rights Council, on 25 June 2012, the Special Rapporteur on “*Violence against women, its causes and consequences*”, Rashida Manjoo, opened the session with an important report denouncing gender violence in Italy. She stressed that weak political will and the lack of funds for activities in the area of women’s rights are causes and effects of a cultural backwardness that maintains female subjugation¹. In Italy, and we suppose also in Southern Europe, the revolutionary theories of the Second and Third Feminist Waves are not widely known, and are discussed only in selected women’s groups and within an academic gender studies environment, and this situation does not seem to develop in parallel with women’s ability to enjoy the benefits of change. The feminist culture gives the impression of being unable to involve the masses of young women and of being intrinsically powerless to indicate solutions for the serious discrimination that women experience. In this chapter, Ines Testoni indicates some key concepts which can show how the levers of female emancipation are disabled by cultural processes.

Following this cultural discussion, in the second chapter Luigi Zoja presents “*Centaurus. A violent masculine myth*”, which considers the mythological roots of the exercise of male violence against women. In modern law and custom, gang rape has always been considered a crime, whereas in past ages it was a tolerated exception. This chapter’s investigation of the mythical, historical, biological and cultural antecedents of the masculine impulse to rape goes beyond individual pathology. It aims to analyse *collective rape* and the potential model of uncritical behaviour that it embodies. One would expect gang rape to be an increasingly rare occurrence. But in fact it returned in an uncontrolled form in the Second World War, and since then seems to have become a recurrent epidemic on the margins of the former colonies of western nations. The importance of this chapter is both concrete and symbolic. Indeed we can consider violence as a cusp characterizing gender based violence, but also as a specific expression of male strategies used to victimize women in all the expression of their intimate and social life. In this sense it is important to recognize the cultural basis of this phenomenon. Just as with the centaur, where there was no difference between sexual life and sexual violence and in his eyes rape was the only true form of sexuality; to some men there is no difference between subjugation of women and practice of legitimate power. Nor is there any distinction between war and orgiastic violence against women from the perspective of centaurs or the men in question; hence today this perverse ecstasy may be termed *centaurism*.

1 See: Wideplus, 2013: <http://wideplusnetwork.wordpress.com/news/un-special-rapporteur-on-femicide-and-violence-against-women-in-italy/>

After Luigi Zoja's dramatic description, the following chapter by Claudio Tugnoli titled "*The Goddess Culture: Gylanic Model versus Androcratic Model*" resumes the discussion on the mythological construction of the victimary position of women, through the literature of famous texts from Gimbutas. Archeological findings have supported the hypothesis that a notable cultural turnover in Europe and in the Near East was caused by the invasion of hordes of pastoral nomads known under the name of "Kurgan". The Kurgan invasions caused deep-set upheavals and radical changes in what was Europe at that time: its civilization was suddenly interrupted and destroyed at the edge of the 5th and the 4th millennium B.C. The inhabitants of Old Europe were sedentary horticulturists who lived in unfortified and unarmed dwelling clusters. Their civilization was egalitarian, matrilineal and matrilocal and overall essentially peaceful. Conversely, the Kurgan were herdsmen whose society was based on a patrilineal organization. They lived in small seasonal settlements and reared their animals on a free range basis. The divide between the old Europeans and the Kurgan was evident, not only in family life and in material conditions, but also in their beliefs. While the Europeans envisaged a Creative Mother as the personification of the feminine principle that represented the agricultural cycle of birth, death and regeneration, the Kurgan on the contrary upheld heroes and warrior gods, divinities that supported lightning and thunder. Within this fulcrum Claudio Tugnoli places the beginning of gender-based violence against women.

The theme of victimization is furthermore discussed by Marco Monzani, in "*Awareness of victimization and request for help: Two moments of the same path*", where he considers the difficulties faced by female victims to recognize their condition and their rights. The author discusses the thought of Emilio Viano, teacher of criminology and victimology at the University of Washington and director of the International magazine Victimology, who defines the victim of an abuse as any subject injured or that has suffered wrongdoing on the part of others, who perceives herself to be a victim, who shares the experience with others looking for help, assistance and compensation, who is recognized as a victim and who presumably is being helped by public, private or collective agencies/structures. Marco Monzani goes on to define a further dimension, outlining the difficult requirement that victims become aware of their victimary condition, where the cultural frame prevents it, since this educates the same woman to believe that male violence is the correction expression of a man's strength.

The second part, examining some good practices, presents the analysis of clinical and legal cases in order to better explain the complexity of the variables involved in the elaboration of violence, from the individual dimension to the symbolic-cultural and political-legislative ones. Caterina Arcidiacono's chapter highlights how prescriptions and gender role representations impact on policy relating to social and juridical services facing domestic violence.

“Women as mothers, lovers, and wives” discusses the representation of role-based violence presenting a case-story of a couple gender violence and its implications for motherhood definitions. If the value attributed to parental care varies across diverse historical periods, what is the vision that must orientate a health worker? What is the best form of motherhood? Might it be the natural mother bond? Is the maternal or the paternal rule to be in force? These questions underpin the placing and replacing of children in difficulty in different contexts. These questions cannot be implicit but are matters of which we must be explicitly aware, especially when we have a mother that in her role of woman and lover is subjected to intimate violence.

In the chapter *“From the maternal to the Self: psychodrama for the promotion of female agency in overcoming the internalized victimary role”*, Ines Testoni and collaborators, through qualitative research, analyze the maternal role in an empowering project. The authors consider the problem of motherhood’s psychological role with respect to their daughters that are victims of domestic violence. In particular it shows how mothers are seen by their daughters as unable to teach them to deal with the problem and unable to give them the necessary support. The authors, assuming the gender perspective, believe that this problem is determined by cultural causes, which prevent women from creating genuine relationships of solidarity and mutual understanding.

In the following chapter *“You made your bed, now you can lie in it: the biodynamic understanding of healing the social mechanisms keeping women in abusive relationships”*, Denise Saint Arnaud and collaborators describe the female empowering processes from the Biodynamic Psychology (BP) point of view. They argue that social and cultural rules can be transmitted across generations unconsciously, in the form of an energetic and emotional charge. Their position considers that such a charge is carried within the cells and tissues of the individuals of the community, since individual cells may be bathed in these fears and constraints since before the individual’s birth, making the prospect of being freed from them seem impossible. Therefore, assuming BP point of view, which theorizes that social change, as well as individual health, occurs at the cellular level, the authors link the social change with the cellular change, and provide examples from Biodynamic intervention designed to facilitate healing from domestic and sexual abuse.

Another psychotherapeutic perspective is assumed by Leandra Perrotta who, starting from the Jungian point of view, considers the *“Transgenerational echoes of violence: Jungian Psychodrama as a path to individuation”*. Social networks can both give support, as well as create social constraints towards helping people leave abusive relationships and enable healthy autonomy. These cultural mores and expectations are unspoken, ubiquitous, and “normal” for the person within her environment. While the person may consciously recognize them as a source of pain and constraint, they are often at a loss as to *how* to challenge them. Moreover, the community continues to operate by

these fears and rules, making spontaneous free choice seem unattainable. In a community where gender based violence is unconsciously accepted and sustained by cultural frames, the victim-perpetrator relationship may often be the result of a mutual dependency that makes it difficult to break the vicious circle. In these cases Jungian Psychodrama can be a powerful psychological tool to allow women who are victims of violence to free themselves from dependence on the perpetrator, following the path toward individuation, which is a key concept of Jungian outlook. Leandra Perrotta describes this route through the analysis of some specific problems and their resolutions.

The third part showcases the results of preventive and therapeutic interventions, developed within European and international projects, aimed to establish a large European study of intervention on gender based violence against women and to evaluate the effectiveness of different methods.

Giuseppe Stanziano and Adele Nunziante Cesaro present the research "*Thinking, feeling, acting: the T.A.T. in brief psychological consultation with women victims of violence*", whose technique is specific for the study of violence further elaborating the research tool proposed by the French psychoanalyst Chaterine Chabert.,

Mihaela Bucuta and Gabriela Dima, in their chapter "*The experience of domestic violence: an interpretative-phenomenological analysis*", present the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a meaningful tool to deepening the analysis of thoughts, feelings and behaviors of women submitted to marital violence. In the last contribution "*Empowering female victims of domestic violence: the measure of effectiveness between spontaneity and wellbeing*", Ines Testoni and collaborators present the validation of the assessment of the *Empower project* and the efficacy of its psychodramatic intervention². This intervention-research means to determine whether, after the psychodramatic treatment, there has been a change in the physical and psychological well-being and in the level of spontaneity and creativity shown by the participants.

The final aim of the volume is then to widen the debate on measures and tools that psychology and psychotherapeutic knowledge can offer to victims and perpetrators of violence in fighting abusive relationships.

2 *Empower* is a project that fits within the perspective of prevention and intervention in the context of domestic violence, ending the cycle of re-victimization of women. The European Partners in the project include the following countries: Italy (leader) Austria, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania (external partner). Empower aims to establish a large European study of intervention on domestic violence against women. The objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the combined ecological and psychodrama methods.

Part 1. Theoretical aspects

Why is Antigone still alive?

Despite spitting on Hegel and Freud, the tragedy of the contemporary Italian woman's situation

Ines Testoni

Introduction

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) believes that the systematic exclusion of women from social and political power determines the phenomenon of multiple discrimination worldwide, so that within each social disadvantaged population the status of women is always the worst. Despite the great efforts of the Western world aimed at resolving this injustice, the gender gap in Italy has stood still for decades and is at unsustainable levels (ISTAT, 2011). Furthermore, even after the considerable efforts made by European policies, which Italy adheres to in order to reduce this injustice, nothing seems to be able to reduce the persistent humiliation of women by and their acquiescence to traditional logic keeping them strongly subordinate to men and therefore making incompatible the dimensions *de jure* and *de facto*.

Although women graduate from higher institutions in greater numbers than men, work in a variety of roles, and have expertise across the private and public realms, they have failed to improve their position consolidated from the 1980's to the present day (Alma Laurea, 2007). Since equal access to positions of higher status is an indicator of democracy and civilization, it is important to investigate what factors contribute in determining such an imbalance. Almost 20 years of the Berlusconi government has highlighted the absolute powerlessness of Italian women, with regard to self-preservation so that they still seem unable to reach at least the number indicated by Georg. W. F. Hegel in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of spirit*) (1977) and which Karl Marx developed to mark a point of no return in the history of mankind: the master-slave dialectic that elects self-awareness as the basic tool for liberating the individual from reification.

Italy is an industrial powerhouse that boasts a remarkable number of thinkers, artists and scientists, and is always on the verge of reaching an exemplary position in culture and development. Unfortunately the *Bel Paese's* "take off" is derailed by the logic of exploitation and slavery that belongs to outmoded models where the status of women is among the more serious failures.

But it was not always so, in the seventies Italy knew the strength of an internationally recognized radical feminism. Carla Lonzi was one of the main movers and shakers of this movement, and she is still considered one of the most important representatives of the Italian feminist second wave. She is famous for her feminist treatise "Sputiamo su hegel. La donna vaginale e donna clitoridea" ("Let's spit on Hegel. The vaginal woman and the clitoral one"). The importance of her input is still alive today and has recently been underlined in a conference (Conte, 2011) where gender studies experts studied her message, considered revolutionary in the current Italian situation. If we consider women's activism of the seventies and the successes since then achieved by women in the rest of the Western world, it seems that in the last twenty years Italy has slipped into a regressive anti-historical decline. However, since this situation is very similar to neighboring theocratic countries, it would be better to think about some basic aspects perhaps too soon taken for granted: the substantial inability of women to free themselves from ideologies that value them for maternal and familial affectivity, since this is the drift-risk in which the feminist and essentialist theory of sexual difference incurs. Our analysis of this exquisitely Italian evidence, inherent to a number of difficulties not fully overcome in feminist history, is inevitably limited but at the same time strategic. Indeed, we think that it is worthwhile to underline again the issues that democracy still has to insist on, with stronger determination both in Italy and in other countries that are in a similar situation. With this perspective, we want to define what has happened in the last few decades, when forced and/or exploitative (immigrant) prostitution has guaranteed more and more profitable gains for the national and international mafias on Italian roads, when the Italian television has celebrated women only within the categories of stupid, boring and trite sexual-things, when parliament is filled with escorts and sexy showgirls while keeping the percentage of women in politics equal to that of the seventies, where female employment is unstoppably slipping down, where motherhood is celebrated as sacred while artificial insemination and assisted reproductive technologies are prohibited, and yet no social structure exists to help mothers in their daily care of children. A country in which the number of femicides is increasing faster than any other European country, so that almost every day a woman is murdered by her husband, boyfriend or ex-lover who could not accept the changing role that his partner is experiencing after years of subordination. All of this has been happening, while on the other hand, Italian academic gender

studies have achieved increasing international success. In actual fact, third wave feminism opened wide horizons where the right to self-determination is open to everyone, but in fact this does not occur in reality, even in the Western world where these ideas were born and continue to develop. Italy is an excellent example of this, since feminist theory does not seem to provide a parallel ability for women to enjoy the benefits of historical change.

In Italy we think that the “cultural motherhood role” is crucial. Italy is a country of amoral familism (Banfield, 1958), where social relationships are developed under the matricentric law of blood ties and kinship, where the subsequent mafia style has severely contaminated the entire institutional activities, branching off into widespread lawlessness in which it is impossible to recognize any social pact and democratic foundation of a shared law (Testoni, 2007). Italy is also a country where catholic politics is tenaciously fighting against the self-determination of women, limiting the freedom of abortion, for example the “Mother” Church was able to influence the parliamentary decision to not allow the legalization of assisted reproductive technology and block any progress in granting the right to marriage for gay couples. Additionally, Italian feminism is still dominated by the sexual difference theory, which has significant collusive relationships with catholic new feminism (Testoni, 2012), founded on the essentialist perspective which emphasizes a belief in an integral complement between men and women, considering the female gender irreducibly different from the male one because of its fundamental predisposition to natural maternal procreation (Allen, 2006). Its main aim is to maintain women totally subordinate to the divine law manifested by nature and in this way to reject any imitation of a male model of social domination, acknowledging and affirming the true “genius of women” in every aspect of life in society (Benedict XVI, 2004; John Paul II, 1988, 1997).

This chapter tries to identify the possible internal strait of feminist thought, where the contraposition between catholic feminism and revolutionary feminism remains in the background, in order to recognize how the maternal dimension produces a block to an authentic emancipation of women, considering Italy not as a marginal region of Western culture but as a particularly significant place where the cusp between the two feminisms is most evident. We would first clarify that, as Italian women’s situation is still far behind that of women living in Anglophone countries, we assume the crucial perspective of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) with respect to genderism, accepting her idea of “strategic essentialism,” or the “necessary error” which has to be performed consciously whenever it becomes vital to remove discrimination. Then, we emphasize the term “woman” not in order to adopt any essentialist perspective versus the post-gender one, but because we believe that the conventional use of such a concept, critically assumed not as an ontological category but as an

existential condition, still needs to reflect on the causes of females acquiescence to subjugation.

The *fil rouge* we follow moves along a path that evidently is not yet concluded. In fact, it starts from the Hegelian master-slave dialectic to penetrate into the tragic figure of Antigone, which still represents the inability of the Italian woman to enter and pass such a dialectic.

Let's spit on Hegel: From Simone de Beauvoir to Carla Lonzi

In 1970 Carla Lonzi created, along with Carla Accardi and Elvira Banotti, a group-movement of female self-consciousness, whose first act was posting on the streets of Rome and Milan their founding “Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile” (“Manifesto of female Rebellion”) (Lonzi, 1974) where the pride of female difference versus equality with man, the radical rejection of the complementarity of women with men, the institution of marriage, the recognition of women's work as productive work, the centrality of the body, the claim of a sexual self, independent of the needs and desires of men and the alliance and solidarity among women were declared and planned into future political action. Inside these female rebellion activity groups, women used their personal experiences to analyze the oppression and gender role conformity within the family as well as in the society they were victims of, in order to provide themselves with a new concept of their individual and social identity (Ravera, 1978; Scaraffia & Isastia, 2002). Indeed, the liberation aims of the second feminist wave were immersed in the Marxist-Freudian milieu, and the concept of the unconscious was key, therefore in order to make those assumptions feasible, it was necessary to know and show the drama of life and to recognize how internalized unconscious convictions, coming from an oppressive education, were still working inside. However, in the meantime it was inevitable to amend and deconstruct both the Marxist and the Freudian theory from sexist contamination, that resulted from a patriarchal and oppressive culture. In this sense, “the personal becomes political” aimed at eliminating subordination and destroying the prison in which they had been relegated: the bourgeois family. However, beginning with Hegel, neither Marx nor Freud could be uncritically accepted.

In *Let's spit on Hegel*, Carla Lonzi defines the cause that Marxism, as a concrete historical revolution from the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, has been a story of men, unable to emancipate women from their subjugation. In her viewpoint, Hegel's theory is sexist, and incapable of liberating females from male oppression because it considers women as a fundamental element of family, representing the “divine law.”