

Education to New Forms of Masculinity. The Italian experience

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1. Introduction

Aim of this paper is to discuss the on-going Italian projects aimed at preparing the (new) generations of men to an equal distribution of family tasks; to care functions; to a different, more reflective form of fatherhood which is capable of affective, emotional contact with their children; to the plurality of sexual orientations.

The Italian context is notably marked by certain distinctive features:

- a considerable rigidity in gender models and contracts; demographic behaviours which are still somewhat “traditional” if compared with other European contexts;
- an emphasis on the quality of intra-family care; on the role of the women’s inter-generational networks considered as mainly responsible for care work; on the indefinite prolonging of financial bonds between generations. The tie binding parents and children is a peculiarity in the Italian model. This relates to the heightened importance attributed to children and the intense support given to them – continuing even after they have married – in terms of emotional (and material) support, closeness and availability of time.
- a welfare model constructed, more than others, on the rigidity of the gender system and on the moral duty of family subsidising (according to which the “family” is always obliged to protect its weaker members).

As Livi Bacci (2001) argues, Italy is characterized by “too much family”. Moreover, as it may be easily understood, the survival of this system depends on antithetical masculinity and femininity and on traditional gender relations.

Demands for change and challenges have multiplied even in a familistic¹ context like Italy. The social, economic and cultural transformations that are taking place, in particular the changes in female identities, increasingly and inevitably tend to involve male partners, workers and fathers. Women – who since the end of the Second World War had traditionally been concerned with the management of the home and care – have become increasingly less willing to deal exclusively with family matters. This decline in motivation is due to women's new competences – with growing schooling rates – and because they are increasingly present on the employment market. The latest generations of women are well aware of the need for cultural training to achieve a satisfactory life. They achieve higher performances, their school careers proceed more smoothly, and they consider study more important; at the same time, they have high expectations regarding their entry in the labour market.

While women are beginning to make their presence in society increasingly more substantial and visible, on the other hand, there is a feeling that the process of reformulating male identity, although already taking place, is still in an initial phase and has not yet taken a precise direction. The processes of social change have clashed with a lack of male self-awareness: in observing themselves, understanding their own and other people's changes, and consequently adapting to the new relational needs along lines of gender and generation (Deriu, 2005).

Some men have accepted the challenges and invitations emerging in the process of the change in female identities, but often alongside regrets, doubts and perplexity. Others have instead rejected them, reacting with fear and aggressiveness, tending towards an "attachment to models of stereotyped virility," reinforcing the model of masculinity which repudiates feminine characteristics and falls back on physical or verbal aggression, sexual harassment and homophobic attitudes (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1995; 1996; Hearn, 1998). The different reactions vary according to the different characteristics of the men involved, in terms of age and generation, level of education, ethnic culture and social class.

There is thus an emerging need to favour the dialogue between women and men, especially between the younger generations who, more than previous ones, will have to deal with the complex trends in social change (Ruspini, 2007a; 2007b). The re-composition, through dialogue and mutual knowledge, of the historical rupture between male and female may bring with it equally positive effects. Concerning women, this means deconstructing the processes of financial dependence on male income; increasing their share in the labour market; re-balancing time schedules to facilitate the conciliation between life and work demands and, at the same time, improving their health. Regarding

¹ By familism we mean a cultural value that describes a strong attachment and loyalty to one's family. This includes a strong reliance on family for material and emotional help.

men, the positive effects include the possibility of re-appropriating a part of their gender identity, historically denied: we mean the functions of nursing, care and socialisation.

2. Plural forms of masculinity: the contribution of socialisation agencies

An educational effort in this direction clearly cannot be made in isolation, but must be supported by all the agencies of socialisation. We must not forget that the re-balancing of the historical lack of balance between the male and female genders needs many closely inter-linked components: from the removal of gender stereotypes to the need to set up new, more suitable training formation processes for the new generations (we may think, for example, of the importance of the structuring of text books) including the preparation for parental and care functions, the handling of the relationship between gender and social change, and education to the plurality of gender identities.

Unfortunately, education to social change, sexuality², the plurality of sexual desire and the acceptance of “other” gender identities than the heterosexual model is still lacking in many European countries, both in the process of primary socialisation and in educational and school programmes. For example, recent empirical evidence shows that the question of sexuality continues to be a definitely taboo subject in Italian families (e.g. Ruspini, 2003). The dialogue between parents and children on subjects such as love and sex is not an easy undertaking. Adults often feel more embarrassment than their children in dealing with issues concerning sexual relations or contraception. Modesty and the need to maintain their privacy force boys and girls to seek the answers to their doubts and curiosities outside the family. People outside the family (often friends) in fact seem to be the main vehicles of information on sexuality, which is however often inexact, distorted or in any case insufficient³. Young people are therefore often unprepared and badly informed when they discover their sexuality, and find themselves having to handle the crucial knots of their life courses alone. For homosexual adolescents who, according to the World Health Organisation, account for 5% of young people, the problem of handling sexual

² By sexuality we mean not only the biological datum (being sexed and having sexual relations, but an integral aspect of individual identity which “each of us ‘has’ and cultivates, rather than a natural condition which the individual accepts as a fact. In some way, and this must still be researched, sexuality functions as a malleable trait of being, a primary nexus between body, identity of self and social rules” (Giddens, 1995, p.23).

³ A sexual educational project conducted in Italy, with the involvement of families and teachers, by the Institute “O. Romero” in Rivoli, Turin (Giommi and Perrotta, 1998) shows that parents, despite declaring themselves in favour of sexual education in schools, expressed discomfort at being interviewed (41%), and an even lower number (23%) answered questions relating to the discussion of sexual problems with their children. 50% do not know of the existence of family planning clinics and advisory centres for adolescents, 56% occasionally buy books and magazines dealing with sexual subjects from the medical point of view. In short, interest in sexual education is limited to subjects which help to protect their children from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

education becomes even more complex, and at times dramatic. The terms outlining the frames of a homosexual's adolescence are marked by their difference, but also by their rejection and fear of being discovered. The rigidity of male and female stereotypes, the lack of preparation in the school world, the social stigmatisation and lack of sympathetic listeners are causes of strong unease, and at time even of suicides or attempted suicides⁴.

The school system, furthermore, is not exempt from stereotypes linked to masculinity and femininity. If schooling seems to be based on a pedagogy which is defined as "neutral", in reality it distinguishes between "masculine" and "feminine" aptitudes and skills. In line with the models characterising the other agencies of socialisation, the institutional training system today still demands of young women demonstrations of "femininity" and compliancy, and offers young men a strong training, oriented to autonomy and the development of technical, logical and rational skills. The prevalent forms of learning in school educational and professional training systems are still essentially constructed to highlight values and behaviours linked to traditional masculine and feminine roles (see also, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1997; Boffo *et al.*, 2003).

The media may here play a crucial role. While the media for a long time have been considered and analysed as a powerful means for the transmission of stereotypes, commonplaces and obsolete images of men and women, they may, at the same time, become co-protagonists in the redefinition of gender identity and relationships, and a vehicle for the major transformations which are affecting life courses and styles of life of women and men. The media are one of the most important dimensions of everyday life for understanding and analysing social change (Grossi and Ruspini, 2007). Furthermore, the media today are a new agency for socialisation, competing with traditional agencies. The meaningful, attractive languages used by the media constitute *symbolic universes* which contribute to forming subjects, both from the point of view of spreading knowledge (through processes of self-training), and in the construction of gender identity.

On the one hand, the media display multiple types of masculinity, from the models considered as "hegemonic" (white, heterosexual, assertive maleness) to those which, starting from marginal positions, have succeeded in gaining full legitimacy at the level of imagery, to those decidedly minority ones, which in pre-media times would have been considered as "invisible", such as the forms of masculinity belonging to minorities (immigrants, homosexuals, etc.). The coming of electronic media and television in particular has given women access to a whole series of information on the sphere of masculinity which was previously (almost) completely denied (Meyrowitz, 1985). While the traditional differences between male and female, between men and women have been

⁴ <http://www.leculture.net/cioffari.htm>
<http://www.fsw.ucalgary.ca/ramsay/homosexuality-suicide/Conference>

favoured – at least in part – by the distinctions in order of access to situations and information available in them (Goffman, 1959), it is reasonable to suppose that the electronic media (especially television) have helped to bring male and female elements closer. Firstly, women “see” things that are completely new for them, and above all have easy access to a realistic and de-mystified picture of the masculine world. In the same way, men are starting to get to know better some aspects of the feminine sphere which they did not have direct access to before (Meyrowitz, 1985). In the media, therefore, male and female roles are blending. Men (and this is specularly true also for women) today have access to other ways of “being male”, to forms of and approaches to masculinity which they had never had to come to terms with, and of which they are now aware, even in if only for the quantity of images and situations which television shows us (Boni, 2004; 2007). Moreover, the male body is today the centre of media viewing and consequently seen by an audience of hundreds of millions of readers/viewers. Male bodies are displayed at the cinema, on the small screen, in advertising hoardings and magazine ads; they are shown in musical videos and advertising for diets and gyms.

Even Italian fashion has contributed to proposing an innovative model of masculinity, which is more flexible and less rigidly regulated by indisputable codes. It is a man interested in caring for his appearance and playing with it and with his body (Mora, 2007). Despite this, in both cases, the rhetoric of the new man is functional to the expansion of the consumer society and the creation of new targets of consumers.

3. *Good practices*

Starting from these observations, we will look at the current situation in Italy regarding the spread of planned educational models to enhance richer, more flexible forms of masculinity, and therefore able to adapt to the processes of social change. These are initiatives aimed at a reconsideration of masculinity (as it is traditionally defined); at a deconstruction of the violent symbolism still affecting the process of male socialisation; at education to new forms of masculinity.

1. Among the on-going projects, we may mention an interesting experience in the publishing field. This is the Polite Project (acronym: *Pari Opportunità nei libri di testo* – Equal Opportunities in Textbooks), set up in the years 1998-99, and which several publishing house have joined. Polite is a European self-regulation project for textbook publishing. It was set up to promote cultural, didactic and publishing proposals to rethink textbooks to ensure that those women and men who have led the way in culture, history, politics and science are represented in textbooks with

no discrimination based on sex. In more general terms, Polite intends to ensure that women and men are equally represented in school books, so that the contemporary world can be analysed and knowledge for the generations to come can be built up with a greater awareness of gender identity, forming new, different relationships between men and women. It is at school that recognition of differences can have real and practical possibilities, thus becoming the personal heritage of all young people in an equal opportunities perspective⁵.

The first edition of Polite (1998/99) gave rise to the following:

- a European study into how equal opportunities are taken into account in textbooks (downloadable from the website);
- a self-regulation code incorporating the gender perspective to encourage the production of textbooks representing women and men in an equal manner and which helps students of both sexes to build up their own identity;
- seminars, workshops and a European conference for discussion and raising awareness.

Polite II is the continuation of the project, which is divided into two one-year editions (1999/2000 and 2000/2001). The results achieved include:

- a census of teaching instruments and pedagogical materials on textbooks, drafted in a European context and inspired by the principles of equal opportunities (downloadable from the website).
- a Vademecum for textbook authors, to flank the Self-regulation Code as a means of ensuring works that carefully consider equal opportunities;
- experimentation of educational tools and strategies in Italian schools to raise awareness about gender issues;
- a review module with special tools (including the Polite Movie educational video) for teachers, to assist them in the use of innovative texts with a gender perspective;
- raising awareness among experts and the more general public through seminars, workshops and conferences.
- new features and activities for the web site;
- comparison between the teaching experiences in the field of equal opportunities in Italy, Spain and Portugal;
- a professional retraining seminar on gender issues and the application of Polite tools, targeting staff and editors of textbook publishing companies;
- a final conference open to the public.

⁵ <http://www.zadig.it/news2001/sci/0508-1.htm>

2. The project – financed by the Piedmont Region and developed in collaboration with Turin civic libraries – “How many women you can become. New models for young girls and boys in Turin schools”, aims to work out a reading code of the main gender stereotypes in illustrated works for childhood⁶. In detail, the project started out with the aim of helping authors and illustrators of children’s texts, teachers, librarians and parents to decode the symbolic images proposed by school programmes (but not only), so as to be able to propose cultural models free from stereotypes. The actions achieved include a guide to de-ciphering: a survey of texts in bookshops and civic libraries in Turin; several seminar-meetings with teachers, librarians, booksellers, male and female students of design schools. A code to interpret sexist stereotypes was also produced as part of the activities.

3. We may recall other initiatives aimed at fighting homophobia and preventing the development of homophobic attitudes among the younger generations:
 - One worthwhile example is the “Triangle-Transfer of Information to Combat Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians in Europe”, a transnational action with the aim of exchanging information and good practice within the framework of the “Community Action programme to Combat Discrimination” of the EU. Triangle is a network of cooperation partners within Europe who agree on a string of concrete goals in the sector of information as well as educational work in order to reduce discrimination. The transnational network includes organisations and groups whose actions address the following two grounds of discrimination: sexual orientation and ethnic origin, in order to ensure a creative, holistic exchange of ideas and approaches. This project includes a manual whose main principle is to deal with the theme of discrimination based on sexual orientation in a multi-cultural society. The manual addresses teachers, psycho-social operators, students and young people. It condenses the know-how and experiences of many specialists in the field and aims to be a useful tool to enact a more in-depth understanding of the fundamental dimensions implied in the fear of the “other”⁷.
 - The Agreement Protocol between the Ministry for Public Education (Physical Education and Sport – Coordination and management of students’ activities) *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri* (Department for Equal Opportunities) and *Agedo* (Association of Parents of Homosexuals), signed in February 2000 and

⁶ <http://www.comune.torino.it/quantedonne/>

⁷ <http://www.arcigaymilano.org0/crono/pdf/tria/it-teoria.pdf>; <http://triangle-info.de/>

valid for three years. The agreement concerns the collaboration between the various organs to: a) sensitise research institutes, provincial education offices, local governments and active area training agencies to carry out study seminars, training and updating courses for school teachers and managers, concerning education to respect of diversity; b) carry out research and planning activities and create didactic material (biographic material, audiovisuals, multimedia material, etc.) with the aim of offering schools tools to deal with the problem of young people's problems stemming from sexual identity; c) offer young people and their families sympathy, support and assistance.

4. We also mention the Italian participation in the Thematic Network "The European Research Network on Men in Europe: The Social problem and Societal Problematisation of Men and Masculinities". This brings together the work of the European Research Network on Men in Europe that has been operating since March 2000, within the EU Framework 5. The overall aim of the Thematic Network is to develop empirical, theoretical and policy outcomes on the gendering of men and masculinities in Europe. The central focus of the Research Network's effort is the investigation of the social problem and societal problematisation of men and masculinities. The reference to "social problem" relates to *both* the problems created by men, and the problems experienced by men. The notion of societal problematisation refers to the various ways in which the 'topic' of men and masculinities has become and is becoming noticed and problematised in society – in the media, in politics, in policy debates, and so on. This focus is set within a general problematic: that changing and improving gender relations and reducing gender inequality involves changing men as well as changing the position of women. The report also provides information on the other Network outputs, including the European Data Base and Documentation Centre on Men's Practices⁸ and relevant publications of Network members, arising from the Network's activities.

5. As far as the issue of sexuality and changes in gender relations is concerned, we should not forget the role played by Family guidance centres – an important agency for socialisation, although often neglected – in the prevention of inequalities linked to the transformation and pluralisation of gender identities and

⁸ www.cromenet.org

to the expression of multiple sexual orientations. Guidance centres may play a role of primary importance in accompanying young people to the transition to adulthood, in understanding the process of redefining female and male identities and in interpreting the changes in maleness and femaleness. At the same time, they may contribute to the construction and consolidation of sexual education within the Italian educational system. In some Italian cities Family Guidance Centres have been set up which particularly address younger people, girls and boys between the ages of 13 and 21. This is a service to support adolescents with free information and consultancy on a wide range of problems, such as sexuality; contraception; sexually transmitted diseases; termination of pregnancy; couple relations; conflicts in relations with parents; communication difficulties. The consultancy is provided free of charge by specialised staff, including psychologists, gynecologists, obstetricians and social assistants.

Below we list some initiatives carried out to offer room for reflection and training (for students, teachers and parents) on issues linked to sexuality and the plurality of sexual orientation (Giommi and Perrotta⁹):

- education to sexuality courses in schools carried out at Pisa and Province (L. 162/90): the Progetto Giovani for high schools and Progetto Ragazzi 2000 for middle and primary schools, in collaboration with the Pisa Education Office, teachers at the schools involved and USL Youth Guidance Centres in Pisa. The objective of the actions was to supply correct information by integrating/and/or modifying knowledge already acquired and furthering dialogue to normalise problems and doubts. The training course involved several groups of students (13-14 years; 15-18 years), a group of teachers (of four third-year classes of a high school and two groups of parents. The themes discussed with the young people were: the meaning of sexuality; the feelings linked to it and the difficulty of speaking about them; anatomical similarities and differences between boys and girls; the differences in attitude and behaviour between genders; sexuality as a part of personal growth; sex before marriage; homosexuality; the fear of sexually transmitted diseases; contraception. The teachers focused on the affective and relational aspect: each teacher acted as animator of a small group (12-15 students) within the class. The anonymous assessments revealed that the experience had enabled the teenagers to “discover unknown aspects of the sexual relationship”. Particularly striking was the lack of trust the young people had in adults and a marked tendency to live “moment by moment”. The work with their parents

⁹ <http://www.gayroma.it/culture/cu-16novembre2001DICIANNOVE.htm>

instead brought to light the main subjects considered as embarrassing: masturbation, pregnancy, homosexuality and the first sexual relation. Considerable emphasis was given to the HIV virus issue.

- the experience of the Treviso Family Guidance Centre was oriented to selecting a method for sexual education in schools: the addressees of the educational scheme were teachers and, regarding only the experiment carried out in primary schools, parents. The team operated jointly with the International Institute of Sexuology in Florence. Five teams of teachers, two from middle schools, one from high schools and two from primary schools took part in the programme. Parents also participated in three other primary school classes. The themes touched on included: 1) male and female roles and their positive complementary features; 2) the development of the male and female genital organs, puberty; 3) experiencing sexuality: bodily communication and experiences; 4) motivations and choices regarding contraception. Three meetings were also organised with outside speakers on the following subjects: a) the adolescent and his/her “systems”; b) homosexuality; c) violence. These encounters shared a common desire to make emerge and solve the problems characterising the adult-child relationship and, at the same time, to discuss the reasons for the silence reigning in school and family on everything regarding sexuality. A questionnaire was filled out at the first meeting. It confirmed the fact that reluctance to speak about sexuality to children or students stems from the fear of revealing one’s own limits and inadequacies. At the same time, the fear of arousing in young people interests in “uncomfortable” issues is linked to the awareness of one’s own limits in handling a correct sexual education. The final assessments were made by using anonymous questionnaires from which a higher level of knowledge of the themes dealt with emerged. The analysis of the data retrieved also highlighted the most delicate issues: perversions, violence, sexuality of the elderly, homosexuality and pornography.
- lastly, we mention some experiences focusing on education to diversity in sexual orientation and desire¹⁰. The first took place in the context of the Emilia-Romagna Region. This was the Guidance Centre in Reggio Emilia which – the only experience in Italy – deals with the psychological and problems of gay men and lesbians. In particular, it supports boys and girls in the delicate phase of coming out. The users of the Guidance Centre come from different social classes and ages, but most are adolescents. Married people and parents however also make use of them: forty or fifty-year olds who in their youth concealed or denied their homosexual desires as a sick part of themselves, while living, at least in

¹⁰ <http://www.ellexelle.com/print.php?sid=504>

appearance, “normal” heterosexual lives. The requests made are very different, but particularly concern the problem of how to reveal their sexual identity to their partner or children, but also and above all how to live with their diversity. The help provided comes mostly from self-help groups, who meet with the supervision of a male or female psychologist. The most used therapeutic technique is the psychodrama: the people involved act out the roles of their partner, children or male or female work colleague of those who, in turn, are the protagonists of the situation enacted. Various forms of coming out are thus experimented, Again in the municipality of Reggio Emilia, a course is being planned devoted to teachers, above all in high schools, to help boys and girls to understand and define their gender identity and sexual orientation.

6. We will also mention some interesting legislative initiatives concerning the issue of fatherhood and custody of children. The social construction of paternity in Italy is the story of an absence. Or perhaps, rather more than an absence, we may speak of a partial, incomplete paternity, which has flattened the father figure around concepts such as “virility”, “authority”, “parental authority” “maintenance”, and “transmission of social and moral norms” (Ruspini, 2006.) On the one hand, this silence has influenced scientific thought. In Italy there is a lack of interdisciplinary research on masculinity – of which fatherhood is an important dimension – and there are still few efforts for comparison with international literature on the same issues (Vedovati, 1999; Pieroni, 2001). On the other hand, this absence affects the sphere of legislation, which has dealt very little with paternity and support to the fathers’ care functions. We may think, for example, of Law no. 1204 of 30 December 1971 on the protection of working mothers. This legislation defined the policy of maternity leave – i.e. not allowing pregnant women to work in the two months before the delivery date and in the three months following – with an allowance of 80% of their last pay (the time limits could be extended in case of pregnancy at risk, heavy or harmful work, etc.). No reference was made to paternity, however, or to any kind of exemption from work for the father.

We had to wait several decades to see a significant change. This came with Law 53 of 8 March 2000 on support to maternity and paternity. The law introduced important innovations regarding, in particular, incentives to fathers taking care of their children and the extension of the possibility to stay at home up till the child’s eighth year of life. Both parents were guaranteed the right to make use of periods of abstention from work – up to a maximum of six months each and ten months together (continuative or not) – to take care of their children during the first eight

years of the child's life (entitled to an allowance of 30% of salary up to the child's third year of life). For fathers deciding to make use of leave for a period of at least three months (even if not consecutive), they were entitled to a "bonus" of one extra month. In all they could take up to 11 months of leave. For example, six for the mother and four for the father, which became five thanks to the "bonus". According to the Consolidation Act, the father had the right to paternity leave in all those cases when the mother did not make use (or made only partial use) of maternity leave (because of the mother's death or serious illness, her abandoning the family or sole custody of the father in case of separation or divorce).

It should also be recalled that Law 58 of 8 February 2006 – energetically demanded by the various associations of separated fathers to combat what was described as "inequality of treatment in lawsuits for separation and custody of minors" – has just been enforced. It modifies the existing legislation (Art. 155 of the Civil Code and Art. 708 of the Civil Code) regarding the custody of children in cases of separation or divorce of parents, in which the rule is sole custody and joint custody an exception¹¹. Shared custody has therefore become the main solution in cases of separation or divorce. With the new law, the judge normally entrusts the children to both parents without having to choose between them. For questions of ordinary administration, parental power would then appear as a shared right, with a number of duties to be attributed to both parents according to the areas of competence linked to their past experience, their aptitudes and to indications made by the children.

7. We lastly refer to several interesting collective experiences which are part of a male network of critical thought on dominating models of masculinity: men who choose to speak up about violence, on relations between the sexes, on cultures and languages generated by patriarchalism, starting from their identity and sexed experience (Vedovati, 2007). They are groups of men who are open to dialogue and critical thinking on the complexity, richness and even the contradictory aspects which mark male gender identity. We may think, for example, of groups like *Maschile plurale*, in Rome and Bologna, *Uomini in cammino* in Pinerolo, *Il Cerchio degli uomini* in Turin, the *Gruppo uomini* in Verona, Viareggio and Turin which have made a critical re-examination of the historical experience and identity

¹¹ Shared custody must not be confused with joint custody, enforced since 1975. In joint custody, decisions are taken singly by the parents: it therefore presupposes the utmost spirit of collaboration between the two parents and must thus be excluded when conflicts remain between them. Perhaps this is why it was rarely applied. In the case of shared custody, on the other hand, a shared decision is not always necessary since each parent has his or her field of competence.

models of male identity, in which comparison with women and dialogue with the thought and practice of feminism has been a decisive element (Ciccone, 2005). These, groups are rethinking the traditional male identity in an anti-sexist logic, converging with feminist thought. The movement gives particular attention to problems regarding male sexual violence. We may here recall the Web-launched appeal against violence by Italian men, bearing the signatures of men from different political, cultural, religious and sexual spheres, when they decided to react to acts of violence against women which have been brought to our attention by the media in the last few months. The appeal states:

Violence against women concerns us, and we are speaking up as men. We are witnessing a daily return of violence perpetrated by men against women. With alarming data even in the “developed” countries of the democratic West. They are acts of violence which go from the most barbaric forms of murder, rape and beatings, to coercion, the negation of freedom in family settings, and the display of scorn for the female body.... Those working in schools and social services in Italy also report a situation which is often very critical in the behaviour of male adolescents, more than their female peers tending to individual and group violent behaviour. Perhaps the decline of the old relations between the sexes based on an undisputed male supremacy is provoking a crisis and a disorientation in men, which needs a new capacity for reflection, self-awareness, an in-depth look at the dynamics of their sexuality and on the nature of their relations with women and with other men... There has been talk about the need for a greater role of public institutions, the taking of legal action by local government and the state in trials concerning violence against women. A hypothetic “silence of feminism” has even been charged with responsibility for the multiplication of cases of violence.... We think that the moment has come, first of all, for a clear public position and assumption of responsibility by men. In the last few years many single men and groups of men have sought to reflect on the crisis in the patriarchal order. But a step forward in quality is necessary today, a collective awareness¹².

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