

UNIFIED ITALY, SOUTHERN WOMEN AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: SITUATING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT TV “PRANK” AGAINST EMMA MARRONE WITHIN THE DYNAMICS OF CONTEMPORARY ITALY AS A SCOPIC REGIME

Marcello Messina¹
Teresa Di Somma²

ABSTRACT

On 22 April 2017, while rehearsing a musical performance for talent show “Amici di Maria De Filippi”, female singer Emma Marrone was repeatedly molested and groped by a male dancer as part of a prank orchestrated by the TV team. During the broadcast, cast members and guest stars laughed at Marrone’s irritated reactions to the “simulated” sexual assaults of the dancer. The episode was then normally broadcast and promoted as a hilarious prank. While totally partaking in the general indignation and outrage that this episode has brought about in international media and in national anti-abuse organisations, we want to focus on Marrone’s positionality as a diasporic Southern Italian woman, which has largely gone overlooked in the diffused reactions to the episode. In this work, we proceed to unearth the often-silenced histories of mass rapes against Southern women committed during the Italian Unification period and in the final stages of World War II, in order to expose the exploitation of female bodies as military trophies, perpetrated by occupying (Italian and international) forces. We then situate the episode involving Emma Marrone and “Amici di Maria de Filippi” within the perverse dynamics of contemporary Italy as a scopic regime that claims continuity with these histories of racialised sexual violence.

KEYWORDS: Unified Italy; Sexual violence; Scopic Regime; Southern women; Television.

RESUMO

No dia 22 de abril de 2017, enquanto ensaiava uma performance musical para o show de talentos “Amici di Maria De Filippi”, a cantora Emma Marrone foi repetidamente molestada e tocada por um dançarino, como parte de uma brincadeira orquestrada pela equipe do show. Durante a transmissão, membros do elenco do programa, assim como artistas convidados, riam das reações irritadas de Marrone às moléstias “simuladas” do dançarino. Além de participar totalmente na indignação que esse episódio gerou na mídia internacional e nas organizações nacionais anti-abuso, queremos chamar a atenção para a posição de Marrone como mulher diaspórica do Sul da Itália, uma característica que ficou geralmente negligenciada no contexto das reações ao episódio. Nesse artigo, pretendemos desenterrar histórias silenciadas de estupros de massa contra as mulheres sulistas, perpetrados durante a Unificação Italiana e no final da Segunda Guerra Mundial: faremos isso para denunciar a exploração de corpos femininos como troféus militares por parte de forças ocupantes, tanto internacionais quanto italianas. Em

¹ Doutor em Composição Musical (University of Leeds, 2013). Pós-doutor em Estudos Culturais (Macquarie University, 2016). Atualmente professor colaborador e bolsista PNPd/Capes no Programa de Pós-graduação em Letras – Linguagem e Identidade da Universidade Federal do Acre. Também professor visitante no Curso de Licenciatura em Música da UFAC.

² Mestre em Línguas e Literaturas Modernas (Università degli Studi di Torino, 2009). Mestranda em Letras: Linguagem e Identidade, Universidade Federal do Acre

seguida, situaremos o episódio que envolveu Emma Marrone e “Amici di Maria De Filippi” dentro das dinâmicas perversas da Itália contemporânea, entendida como regime escópico que reivindica a própria continuidade com essas histórias de violência militar sexualizada e racializada.

Palavras-chave: Itália Unificada; Violência sexual; Regime escópico; Mulheres sulistas, Televisão.

Introduction

On 22 April 2017, while rehearsing a musical performance for TV show “Amici di Maria De Filippi”, female singer Emma Marrone was repeatedly molested and groped by a male dancer as part of a prank orchestrated by the TV programme team (ENGLAND, 2017). Noticeably irritated, the singer repeatedly interrupted the performance in order to stop the dancer from harassing her (DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS, 2017). During the TV broadcast of the episode, cast members including guest stars Elisa and Eraldo Meta and TV host Maria De Filippi laughed repeatedly at Marrone’s irritated reactions to the “simulated” sexual assaults (DINAMOPRESS, 2017). The episode was normally transmitted on TV and social media and celebrated as a frivolous and funny prank on the part of the national mainstream media (NON UNA DI MENO, 2017).

Other Italian and international media, together with Italian feminist and anti-abuse organisations, have strongly denounced the episode (PAONE, 2017; ENGLAND, 2017). We strongly partake in the indignation and outrage that this episode has generated, and would like to join the multitude of people offended by what happened by unconditionally claiming that sexual abuse is not a joke, and that what happened clearly qualifies as sexual violence, whatever the position of Italian TV, society, and legal system is in this respect.

The purpose of this essay, however, is analysing this event by considering Marrone’s positionality as a diasporic Southern Italian woman, which has largely gone overlooked in the diffused, valid and passionate reactions to the episode. In particular, drawing on Suvendrini Perera’s analysis of political violence in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kenya and the US (2014), we attempt to situate the event within the perverse dynamics of contemporary Italy as a scopic regime that – proudly and joyously – claims continuity with its own, not-so-remote histories of racialised sexual violence against Southern Italian women. More specifically, we look at the implicit and involuntary

allegorical coding of the episode as a re-enactment of the mass rapes and abuses historically inflicted during subsequent phases in the conquest of the South during key historical nodes such as the Risorgimento (Italian Unification) and the final stages of World War II. In this context, we contend, the general laughter of the cast, crew and guests, functions as a civic legitimization of racialised sexual violence, which is instrumental to the reproduction of an asymmetric national order.

Fundamental to our analysis, as mentioned above, is the consideration that Southernness is a critical component of Emma Marrone's public persona. Born in Florence in 1984 from Apulian parents, she soon moved back to Aradeo, a town in the Apulian region of Salento, where she grew up and debuted as a local musical act – she then moved to Rome in 2009, to start her national career (MARRONE, s.d.). While Marrone is certainly a privileged worker in virtue of her career as a music star, her own life mobility and the mobility of her family replicate the condition of many Southern workers, allowed to live in the North “as a provisional source of labour, always in movement or in transit, ready to leave, back and forth between the South and the North and vice versa” (PALOMBO, 2010, p. 40). Marrone herself articulated her strong relationship with Southern identity in an interview:

I have never been ashamed and I have always flagged the fact that I grew up in Salento, although I was born in Florence. I never wanted to take elocution classes, and always wanted my Southern accent to be noticed. I am proud of my land (MARRONE apud PURICELLA, 2014).³

The very fact that Marrone needs to verbalise her pride for being a Southerner, also specifying that she has never been ashamed of her Salentinian identity, implies that shame is precisely what is expected of Southern subjects. As we will argue in the following sections of this work, the very concept of “shame” is key to fully understand the symbolic power of the prank at Amici di Maria De Filippi. Importantly, Marrone's words also refer to the fact that Southern Italians who pursue careers in the entertainment industry are often required to take courses in elocution and “standard” Italian pronunciation in order to “free” themselves of their regional accents.

³ “Non mi sono mai vergognata, ho sempre rivendicato il fatto di essere cresciuta in Salento, anche se sono nata a Firenze. Non ho mai voluto fare lezioni di dizione, ho sempre voluto che si sentisse il mio accento del Sud. La mia terra la vivo con orgoglio”

Unified Italy as a Scopic Regime of Civic Violence

In her seminal essay, titled *Dead Exposure: Trophy Bodies and Violent Visibilities of the Nonhuman*, Suwendrini Perera analyses trophy-bodies within state regimes constructed on political violence (PERERA, 2014). Perera draws upon Feldman's important definition of "scopic regimes", i.e., "the regimens that prescribe modes of seeing and object visibility and that proscribe or render untenable other modes and objects of perception" (FELDMAN, 1997, p. 30; also *apud* PERERA, 2014). What Perera suggests is that the violent visualisation of trophy bodies within scopic regimes establishes a perverse triple relationship between the perpetrators of the violence, the objects of the violence, and the public. Furthermore, the public is in turn divided between a dominant component whose members are supposed to watch the violence as entertainment and social leisure, and a subaltern, racialised component, whose members are terrorised by the violence:

A number of commentators have focused on lynching trophies in the southern United States and their role in extending lynching's terrorizing role as a form of popular theatre for instruction and pleasure. As a form of public performance, lynching operated as a powerful social practice, installed within economies of collective entertainment, everyday sociality and civic participation for those marked as white. For African-Americans, as well as for other racialized subjects, it operated to threaten and terrorize (PERERA, 2014, p.4).

Perera's article, drawing on Joseph Pugliese's *State Violence and the Execution of Law* (PUGLIESE, 2013), continues to show how, in those circumstances, the violence was consumed within citizens' domestic lives by means of "the circulation of artefacts such as lynching photographs, souvenir postcards and gramophone recordings of the victims screaming in agony" (PERERA, 2014, p. 4). Perera then suggests that the violence assumes a powerful function in creating and consolidating civic bonds between citizens, meaning that violence perversely becomes "civic violence" (PERERA, 2014, p. 3):

An additional function of the domestication and normalization of lynching through the circulation of its trophy artefacts was its ability to unify and engage populations beyond its immediate vicinity in acts of collective citizen violence, as it also gave visual and material shape to the staging of white supremacy. Through the representational, aesthetic and technological processes of its framing, mediation and circulation, the practice of trophy,

then, invests the spectacles of power it re-presents with new meanings, new properties and new collective and civic functions of violence. (PERERA, 2014, p. 4).

As it may be already clear from the above quotations, Perera maintains that these practices and dynamics are meant to trace specific borders between humans and lesser humans or non-humans. These borders are “thoroughly imbricated with racial categories and hierarchies” (PERERA, 2014, p. 2).

The Italian Unification period (1860-1870) is characterised as Northern Italy’s “violent war of colonial annexation of the South” (PUGLIESE, 2008, p. 1). After the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy (1861), the Italian/Piedmontese Army started a war against southern subalterns who were deploying “complex and contradictory modes of resistance” (PUGLIESE, 2008, p. 1) in order to counter the annexation. Southern Italian freedom fighters are commonly referred to as *briganti* (‘brigands’) (cf. DICKIE, 1992).

Here we want to reflect on a diffused practice that has accompanied the racialised military campaign of the Italian Army, namely, the shooting of various pictures of dead *briganti* during the military campaigns in the South (ROSSANO, 2011, p. 191). When reflecting on this fact, we cannot refrain from considering that, in the 1860s, photography was an exceptionally new technological resource, roughly thirty/forty years old as a consolidated practice (ROSSANO, 2011, p. 190). We thus imagine these soldiers carrying heavy and bulky equipment that was not immediately necessary for the purposes of warfare, only to immortalise the proofs of their deeds.



Figure 1 - A bersagliere (Italian soldier) posing with the corpse of brigante Capriariello (Nicola Napolitano) in 1862. (Public domain image)

The image in Figure 1 shows the corpse of *brigante* Capriariello (Nicola Napolitano), killed in Nola in 1863. The corpse is proudly exposed by a *bersagliere* (Italian soldier), who literally poses with the victim. Here Capriariello's positionality as trophy body is evident, as well as the overt intentionality of the *bersagliere* in being immortalised in his act of dominating the body of the defeated enemy. Purposely produced in order to reach a number of viewers, the photographed exposure of the killed *brigante* with his executioner "implicates and interpellates perpetrator and spectator anew in collective and civic relations of power and violence, domination and subjection" (PERERA, 2014, p.5).

The photo with Capriariello and the *bersagliere* has retained extremely powerful symbolic implications in contemporary Italy, as it provides two different human models in which Italians can identify. While proud defenders of the necessity of the Northern invasion of the South may proudly recognise themselves in the *bersagliere*, all Southerners, resident or diasporic, might secretly be aware that they might end up like Capriariello, in case they "cross the line".

Right from the beginning, then, the Italian state is extremely preoccupied with the exposure of its victims: among the various photos of killed insurgents, the naked

corpse of *brigantessa* Michelina De Cesare (Figure 2) acquired particular prominence (ROSSANO, 2011, p. 194). Here it is important to draw attention to the forced sexualisation of this defeated body, an aspect that is totally absent from the previous photo: De Cesare's dead bare body is a double trophy, both of the military power of the nation, and of its masculine supremacy. The "heroic" Italian army, after massacring its enemy, needs to offend and violate her body, and then to expose it publicly, creating shame and scorn.

Transposing this reasoning to the less dreadful setting of the TV vicissitude occurred to Marrone, we argue that shaming also operates doubly in the prank orchestrated within the *Amici di Maria De Filippi* show. In other words, we contend, Emma Marrone was not only shamed as a woman; she was also shamed as a *Southern* woman. Exactly like the photo of Michelina De Cesare dead and naked, the TV images of Marrone being repeatedly molested and publicly derided are the sign of the subjugation of a double anomaly within the Northern and patriarchal order of the Italian state.

As mentioned in the previous section, Marrone declares herself proud of her Southern identity and of her accent. We have also argued that the fact that she articulates her pride specifying that she has never been ashamed of her origins means that shame is precisely what is expected of her as a Southerner. When reacting to the shaming inflicted on her, however, she seems preoccupied to display her familiarity with Rome's slang and identity:

I can't sing if someone taps it [his penis] on me in this way [...] «A bit less», as we say in Rome, a bit less [...]. He can [do his best] even without tapping it on me [...] Now I don't know how you say [penis] tapping in French? In Rome we say that "people shovel it onto you..." (MARRONE *apud* AMICI, 2017)

Far from trying to scrutiny or judge the behaviour of the victim of a sexual assault, here we only want to argue that Marrone's (legitimate) resort to Rome accent and jargon is meant precisely to summon a part of her own regional identity that is normally less prone to be attacked than the other ones. In other words, Marrone is being already shamed as a woman, and resolves to momentarily disregard her Southernness for fear of being shamed as a Southerner as well.

In the next section, we will complement our argumentation by examining how the violent abuse of the bodies of Southern women intersects complex dynamics of

(in)visibilities that are key to the discursive consolidation of Italy. Our investigation will embrace key historical nodes such as the *Risorgimento* (Italian Unification) and the final stages of World War II.



Figure 2: the corpse of Michelina De Cesare. (Public domain image)

Italy and Civic Violence on Southern Women

Michelina De Cesare's naked, abused and scorned body is a powerful metaphor of Northern Italy's pillaging, exploitation, and domestication of the South, and the racialisation and sexualisation of her dead body is, at the time, the sign of the ongoing political and cultural elimination of the South. Femininity is deployed in a specific way here, as it symbolises territories, identities and consciences that need colonial intervention in order to conform to a patriarchal nationalist model. Not surprisingly, anthropologist Alfredo Niceforo, who embarked in the task of demonstrating the racial inferiority of Southerners, used the expression "*popolo donna*" ("womanly people") to refer to them (NICEFORO, 1898, p. 293).

Rape, perpetrated by Italian soldiers against civilians, and not only against the insurgents, was a diffused practice during the violent repression campaign that characterised the first decade post-Unification, as reported in some academic literature (DUGGAN, 2007, p. 223; PUGLIESE, 2008, p. 4; LUPO, 2011, p. 109; BONI, 2012, p. 10). Vivid and detailed descriptions of concrete practices, however, are left primarily to oral traditions and are commonly reported in what is generally known as "revisionist"

literature. Giordano Bruno Guerri mentions the rapes conducted by the troop of captain Crema in Campobasso (GUERRI, 2010, p. 86), and then reports that, during the massacre of Pontelandolfo,⁴ “women were raped” (GUERRI, 2010, p. 147). One episode described by Guerri involved “a sixteen year old girl, tied to a pole in a shed, [who] was violated in the presence of her father by ten *bersaglieri*, and then killed” (GUERRI, 2010, p. 147).⁵ Pino Aprile’s *Terroni* contains a slightly different description of the same episode:

Maria Izzo was perhaps the most beautiful woman, as many wanted her, among the brothers of Italy with the license to rape. But there was work to do in that village [...] Therefore, maybe to save time, they tied her to a tree, naked, with her spread legs in the air. Until one of them killed her, by pushing the bayonet inside her stomach (APRILE, 2010, p. 54).

This literature is generally controversial in Italy, and often accused of reporting facts that do not always correspond to reality. Engaging in this historiographic dispute is not among our purposes: we are rather interested in the contrast between the high visibility of these stories in certain types of cultural products and their total invisibility in other types of sources. This liminal condition of (in)visibility helps us assess the complexity of Italy as a scopic regime, as the preoccupation to spread visual testimonies of the violence coexists with an equally pressing urge to deny the significance of the testimony.

The image of Michelina De Cesare’s violated body, in this sense, is the proof of a tangible, barbaric violence that affixes “a stamp of total conquest” (DIKEN & LAUSTSEN, 2005, p. 118) on Southern Italy, while also being dismissible, unprovable beyond the immediate materiality of the photo, and non-adducible as a proof of a generalised phenomenon. Similarly, the recurring stories of rapes, violently imprinted as individual and collective traumas in the conscience of the local communities, preserved through oral tradition, dug out from piles of archival documents, and then reported in “revisionist” books, unearth the memory of horrors that destroyed the community

⁴ On 14 August 1861, in Pontelandolfo, “the Italian army, after having raped women, killed hundreds and burnt the village in retaliation for the killing of 45 soldiers by peasants and briganti” (BONI, 2012, p. 10).

⁵ “Le donne furono violentate. Una ragazza di sedici anni, legata ad un palo in una stalla, fu oltraggiata da dieci bersaglieri, davanti agli occhi del padre, e poi uccisa”.

physically and morally, but are eventually dismissible as simple stories, inventions, unsupported allegations.⁶

To some extent, the same coexistence of visible and invisible operates to absolve the offence inflicted on Emma Marrone: the hoaxical form in which the abuse is perpetrated permits it to be broadcast, but then the very same fact that it is a prank allows the abuse to not be recognised as abuse. During the Unification campaign, the Italian Army abundantly raped and killed Southern women, inflicting shame on their dead bodies and on their communities, only to be easily able to deny that later. In a similar way, Marrone was abused, but it was just a prank, people were laughing, so those who participated in the abuse are not accountable.⁷

Mass rapes of Southern women are more visible when World War II is concerned, thanks to the work of Gabriella Gribaudi in particular. In her precious volume *Guerra totale*, Gribaudi dedicates an entire chapter to the sexual violence inflicted on Southern women by Allied troops, mainly belonging to the French Expeditionary Corps (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 510-571). Gribaudi's investigation conducted on Southern Lazio exposes the fierce scopical protocol of the violence perpetrated by the French troops: in many cases, as during the Unification campaign, women were raped in front of their husbands, fathers, or friends, who were then often killed (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 531). Gribaudi also notes how the post-traumatic reticence of the local population, together with the silence of the Italian state, helped some French historians to develop negationist approaches on the facts (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 533). We are therefore in presence of the same liminal politics of (in)visibility identified

⁶ A good example of this practice is represented by various articles published by Giancristiano Desiderio, where Pino Aprile's report of Maria Izzo's death is deemed inaccurate (DESIDERIO, 2014). Desiderio rescued a letter from 1861, which says that only 13 civilians died in Pontelandolfo (DESIDERIO, 2016), and that, among them, there was a Maria Izzo, but she was 94 years old and was burned alive in her house (DESIDERIO, 2014). However, we would like to observe that (1) the letter rescued by Desiderio is a very important document, but a single item of personal correspondence is not sufficient to negate other testimonies; (2) naming the granddaughter after the grandmother is a very common practice in Southern Italy, so one may easily accept that there were two or more individuals named "Maria Izzo", who might have been related.

⁷ From an online article on this same episode, we came to know about the disturbing analogies between the TV incident involving Marrone and a legal case involving an entrepreneur from sexual harassment allegations, who was acquitted on the basis of the "playful atmosphere" ("clima scherzoso") in which his actions took place (THE POST INTERNAZIONALE, 2017). However, and in order to corroborate an argument that we will make at the end of this section, we would also like to note that in said article, the Sicilian identity of this defendant is the only disclosed regional/national identity, despite the fact that the article reports various other incidents. In line with the statement by Governor Serracchiani that will be discussed later on, we argue that Sicilianness (as well as other racialised identities) is (absurdly) considered an aggravating circumstance towards the judgement of sexual violence.

above in relation to the Unification: acts with a devastating symbolic power that inflict permanent trauma on entire communities, and that afterwards are violently cancelled from collective memory.

However, when these events become visible, they are generally called “*marocchinate*” (“Moroccan deeds”), in a way to suggest that the Maghrebi troops of the French army were the sole perpetrators of the sexual violations. Gribaudo attentively problematises that, primarily by criticising the stereotypical images of North Africans produced within Italian and French colonial regimes (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 530), and then by remarking that French officials contributed to “put the blame exclusively on «coloured» troops for the violence” (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 561), in order to conceal the fact that white French soldiers were also abundantly involved in the mass rapes (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 261). Furthermore, Italians occasionally participated in the rapes as well (FEDERICI, 2004). Weisbord and Honhart also documented the Vatican’s racial profiling of the French troops involved in the rapes (2002). Comparing the relatively high visibility of the so-called *marocchinate* with the much lower visibility of the rapes during the Unification campaign (shall we call them *piemontesate*?),⁸ and noting that in both cases the victims were Southern Italian women, we cannot refrain from noting how mass rape is more or less visible, depending on the (perceived) degree of whiteness of the (alleged) perpetrator.⁹

One more fundamental aspect of mass rapes conducted as part of warfare is the production of abjects:

Strategic rape attacks not only the victim but also aims to dissolve the social structure of the attacked group. It taints its ethnic stock. Rape destroys communities by transforming women into abjects (DIKEN e LAUSTEN, 2005, p. 117).

In fact, Gribaudo’s work documents well the constant blaming and shaming to which the victims of the so-called *marocchinate* were subjected within their own communities: many of these women did not marry at all, and they were called “*impestate*” (“plagued”) by their own local people (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 527-528).

Victim blaming is generally a recurrent practice whenever and wherever sexual violence is concerned (SUAREZ e GADALLA, 2010). Not surprisingly, Emma

⁸ *Piemontesate* is our own neologism from *Piemonte* (“Piedmont”), i.e., the region whose kingdom (*Regno di Sardegna* – Kingdom of Sardinia) conducted the Unification campaign.

⁹ See also Messina & Capogreco (2016).

TROPOS: COMUNICAÇÃO, SOCIEDADE E CULTURA

Marrone was harshly blamed after the episode for not reacting badly enough to the sexual abuse inflicted on her: commentators said that Emma had “passively accepted the divulgation of that squalid spectacle” (LANZINI, 2017), and that she acted as a puppet in the hands of the programme host (ZAJOTTI, 2017). Importantly, Marrone was harshly blamed and insulted by her own fans (ZAJOTTI, 2017).

The perpetrator of the violence was “a male backing dancer” (ENGLAND, 2017) named Roman (LIBERO, 2017) who only spoke French, and therefore could not communicate with Marrone. This man’s role is generally overlooked both in Italian and international media reactions to the episode, and while criticism is abundantly directed at the TV host, at the programme authors, at the invited guests and at Emma Marrone herself, his substantial invisibility spares him the attacks received by the others. With the excuse of the prank, Roman takes the liberty of disposing of Marrone’s body (Figure 3). He does not refrain from grabbing her genitals, buttocks and breasts, and this is intolerable in any situation, especially when Marrone had repeatedly voiced her non-consent.



Figure 3: The backing dancer touching, groping and harassing Emma Marrone. Source: www.dagospia.com (Public domain image as stated on the website)

The dancer’s positionality as a white French subject is (appropriately) never considered a pertinent aspect towards the evaluation of his outrageous deeds. We highlight this fact as we suspect that his national identity contributes to qualify his sexual assault as less “immoral” than if it was accomplished, for example, by a Middle

Eastern asylum seeker in Italy: here we are referring to the recent polemics generated by the declarations of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia regional governor Debora Serracchiani, who claimed that sexual violence is “even more unacceptable socially and morally when it is perpetrated by someone who seeks and obtains shelter in our country” (ADNKRONOS, 2017). Pronounced as a reaction to an attempted rape case involving an Iraqi asylum seeker in Trieste (ADNKRONOS, 2017), Serracchiani’s untenable statement should probably include the French dancer as someone whose abusive actions are “even more unacceptable”. However, and in line with Serracchiani’s perverse logic, in this case Roman’s positionality as a white European citizen makes his actions “more acceptable” than those perpetrated by a racialised Middle-Eastern subject.

This implicit double standard happens to replicate the exclusive condemnation of Moroccans for the mass rapes committed by the French Expeditionary Corps in Southern Italy during World War II. As white European subjects are absolved, the only discernible perpetrators assume the racialised features of demoniac non-humans: “devils, boors, animals” (GRIBAUDI, 2005, p. 530),¹⁰ be they the WWII Maghrebi troops or the current Middle Eastern asylum seekers.¹¹

Fundamentally, the politics of (in)visibility of the sexual violence operates with the same degree of ambiguity in Italy in the post-Unification, late World War II and contemporary period: in many situations acts of sexual violence produce tangible and discernible shame, destroy the victims and their social relationships, and leave the perpetrators invisible and unpunishable; in other situations, and depending on both the identity of the victims and that of the perpetrators, the violence becomes extremely visible. In this way, the so-called *marocchinate* are extremely more visible than what we proposed to call *piemontesate*.¹² Similarly, sexual violence perpetrated by racialised foreign subjects is, as overtly declared by Governor Serracchiani, “more unacceptable” than that perpetrated by Italians or by white European subjects. Most importantly, this scopopic regime of selective visibility silences and invisibilises myriads of histories of sexualised military violence on colonial subjects such as Southern women.¹³

¹⁰ “Diavoli, zulù, animali”. Here Gribaudi uses the term *zulù*, that refers to the Zulus, a South African Bantu population: unfortunately, and quite disgracefully, this term is widely used in Italy to mean “savage” and “barbaric”.

¹¹ See also note 7.

¹² See note 8.

¹³ We recommend Volpato (2009) on the violence inflicted on women in Italian external colonies.

Final Remarks

The abuse episode involving Emma Marrone was broadcast in a very specific way: bits of the recorded video showing the incident were alternated to images of the studio cast laughing at the video. As mentioned above, the laughing audience included guest stars such as Elisa, Ermal Meta, Ambra Angiolini, and Emma Marrone herself (Figure 4). This collective, convivial laughter has the performative function of nudging the audience to enjoy the episode as a hilarious prank: what is more, it automatically positions the audience within the group of those who are amused by the action, as opposed to being horrified by it. In other words, the overt visualisation of the in-studio spectators is meant to establish a symbolic, civic bond with the larger audience, as per the aforementioned dynamics of scopic regimes. The presence of Emma Marrone herself within the in-studio laughing lot invisibilises her role as a victim and further encourages the larger audience to participate in the collective enjoyment of the action: *“If even she is laughing at what happened, why should we be bothered?”*, people are probably expected to argue.



Figure 4: Guest stars Ambra Angiolini, Elisa, Emma Marrone, Ermal Meta, Davide Di Leo (aka Boosta) and Raz Degan laughing on TV while watching the episode of harassment (Source: <https://goo.gl/iEoodz>)

Far from blaming Marrone, as has been done extensively by TV fans (ZAJOTTI, 2017), we would like to note that her convivial enjoyment of the very violence she was subjected to, seems to be part of a social ritual that rehabilitates her from a status of “abject”. Inevitably, this abjectness is imbricated with her Southernness as much as with her womanhood. By laughing at the same violence that was inflicted on her, Marrone symbolically leaves the group of those affected by the violence, and joins those who build a collective civic bond on the very same violence.

In connecting this contemporary episode with the founding histories of sexual violence that characterise Italian Unification in the 1860s and its Liberation at the end of World War II, we have given a very limited picture of the role of violence against Southern women in the context of the formation and consolidation of Italy as a patriarchal, North-centric state. For example, a complete discussion on the subject should take account of the histories of Southern female insurgents, for instance during the Unification period (COSCO, 2016a; COSCO, 2016b), and in diasporic settings such as Australia (PALOMBO, 2015). Additionally, we have not covered more recent histories of Southern women’s marriage-related migration to the North of Italy (SINIBALDI, 2008; MARCHESANO, 2010), which raise suspicions as to the existence of human trafficking routes between the two regions.

These last considerations can help us complete the picture in terms of reading the episode as an allegorical re-enactment of the rapes and abuses historically inflicted on Southern women. Marrone’s life trajectory reproduces the paths of multitudes of diasporic subjects who were and are compelled to (repeatedly) leave the South in order to make a living in the North or abroad. As a Southern woman, she is, as shown earlier in this work, subjected to the potential shame represented by her Southern accent. Additionally, she is also subjected to the concrete shame of being repeatedly assaulted on TV, while doing her job. In this context, the general laughter of the in-studio cast and guests functions as a civic legitimization of racialised sexual violence, which is instrumental to the reproduction of an asymmetric national order. Italians are encouraged to enjoy this episode in the same way as they are obliged to uncritically glorify the Unification and the Liberation, with their histories of sexualised and racialised military violence. Finally, Marrone joins the crowd of those who are laughing at the violence that has been inflicted on her, pretty much as Southerners are required to celebrate those historical moments, and the anti-Southern violence that came with them,

as founding moments in the construction of their own identity. In conclusion, the episode occurred to Marrone tells us that contemporary Italy is a scopic regime that claims continuity with the histories of racialised sexual violence that consolidated it as a white, patriarchal, north-centric nation.

References

ADNKRONOS. Politician sparks controversy with asylum-seeker rape remarks. **Adnkronos**, 12.05.2017. <<https://goo.gl/MqMifj>> Accessed 28.05.17

AMICI. Scherzo a Emma – Il balletto a luci rosse. **WittyTV**, 22.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/voUu9W>> Accessed 28.05.17

APRILE, Pino. **Terroni**: Tutto quello che è stato fatto perchè gli italiani del sud diventassero meridionali. Milano: Piemme, 2010.

BONI, Stefano. Institutional alignment: The anniversary of Italy's 150 years of unity. **Anthropology Today**, v. 28, n. 1, 2012, p. 6-10.

COSCO, Silvio. **Femminil mostro in brigantesca spoglia**: Le donne briganti dell'Italia postunitaria tra realtà e mistificazione. Roma: Aracne, 2016a.

COSCO, Silvio. A literatura sobre o "Brigantaggio" feminino: o caso único de Maria Rosa Cutrufelli. In: RICCI, Debora; RITA, Annabela; VILELA, Ana Luísa; SEVERINO, Isa; SILVA, Fabio Maria da (orgs.) **Feminino plural**: literatura, língua e linguagem nos contextos italiano e lusófono. Lisboa: CLEPUL, 2016b, p. 367-376.

DESIDERIO, Giancristiano. L'altra verità su Pontelandolfo: I morti furono solo tredici. **Corriere del Mezzogiorno**, 11.03.2014. <<https://goo.gl/BvezOK>> Accessed 28.05.17

DESIDERIO, Giancristiano. Pontelandolfo. Una lettera inedita del 1861: "Perirono 13 persone". **Sannio Press**, 08.08.2016. <<https://goo.gl/mfrqwi>> Accessed 28.05.17

DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS. Mulher assediada em programa da televisão italiana. "Era uma partida". **Diário de Notícias**, 03.05.2017. <<https://goo.gl/JWTDdf>> Accessed 28.05.17

DICKIE, John. A Word at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage 1860–1870. **History Workshop Journal**, v. 33, n. 1, 1992, p. 1-24.

DIKEN, Bülent; LAUSTSEN, Carsten Bagge. Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War. **Body & Society**, v. 11, n. 1, 2005, p. 111-128.

DINAMOPRESS. La violenza sessuale non fa ridere. **Facebook.com**, 25.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/lxFrA8>> Accessed 28.05.17

DUGGAN, Christopher. **The force of destiny**: A history of Italy since 1796. London: Allen Lane, 2007.

ENGLAND, Charlotte. Woman groped on Italian TV in 'prank' despite repeatedly telling man to stop. **Independent**, 28.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/5rNDxz>> Accessed 28.05.17

FEDERICI, Giusy. Le marocchinate - "Stuprate le italiane". **Dal Volturmo a Cassino**, 2004 <<https://goo.gl/g3dWVm>> Accessed 28.05.17

FELDMAN, Allen. Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror. **Public Culture**, v. 10, n.1, pp. 24-60.

GRIBAUDI, Gabriella. **Guerra totale**: Tra bombe alleate e violenze naziste. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005.

GUERRI, Giordano Bruno. **Il sangue del Sud**: Antistoria del Risorgimento e del brigantaggio. Milano: Mondadori, 2010.

LANZINI, Chiara. Amici 16: grande polemica per lo scherzo ad Emma. **Fidelity House**, 26.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/Hehhvs>> Accessed 28.05.17

LIBERO, Amici, il ballerino ci "prova" con Emma durante una prova e lei si infuria. **Libero**, 24.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/JV9Jad>> Accessed 28.05.17

LUPO, Salvatore. **L'unificazione italiana**: Mezzogiorno, rivoluzione, guerra civile. Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2011.

MARCHESANO, Laura. Alla ricerca di una moglie. Celibato rurale e migrazioni matrimoniali. **Storicamente**, n. 6, 2010. <<https://goo.gl/p0vaun>> Accessed 28.05.17

MARRONE, Emma. Biografia. **Emma Marrone – sito ufficiale**, no date. <<https://goo.gl/FKMgRl>> Accessed 28.05.17

MESSINA, Marcello; CAPOGRECO, Stefania, Black Babies/White Sovereignities: Tammurriata Nera as perverse mechanism of U.S. and Italian colonialisms, paper presented at **Postcolonial Italy**, Australasian Centre for Italian Studies, Adelaide, 23.11.2016.

NICEFORO, Alfredo. **L' Italia barbara contemporanea**: Studi e appunti. Milano; Palermo: R. Sandron, 1898.

NON UNA DI MENO. Lo scherzo delle molestie sessuali non ci fa ridere. **Non una di meno**, 30.04.2017. <<https://goo.gl/IMmlNo>> Accessed 28.05.17

PALOMBO, Lara. **The Racial Camp and the Production of the Political Citizen**: A genealogy of contestation from Indigenous populations and Diasporic Women. PhD Thesis. Sydney: Macquarie University, 2015.

PALOMBO, Lara. The Drawing of the Sovereign Line. In: PUGLIESE, J. (Org.) **Transmediterranean: Diasporas, Histories, Geopolitical Spaces**, Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010, p. 39-58.

PAONE, Renato. Lo scherzo fatto a Emma ad "Amici" non è una bella pubblicità per l'Italia. E gli articoli sui siti stranieri lo dimostrano. **Huffington Post Italia**, 02.05.2017. <<https://goo.gl/M7r40u>> Accessed 28.05.17

PERERA, Suvendrini. 'Dead exposures: trophy bodies and violent visibilities of the nonhuman', **Borderlands**, v. 13, n. 1, 2014, p. 1-26.

PUGLIESE, Joseph. **State violence and the execution of law**, New York: Routledge, 2013.

PUGLIESE, Joseph. Whiteness and the blackening of Italy: La guerra cafona, extracomunitari and provisional street justice. **PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies**, v. 5, n. 2, 2008, p. 1-35.

PURICELLA, Anna. Emma: "Non mi sono mai vergognata di essere salentina. Le mie origini sono un motivo di orgoglio", **La Repubblica (Bari)**, 22.07.2014. <<https://goo.gl/PTs8On>> Accessed 28.05.17

ROSSANO, Marco. La construcción del héroe y del antagonista a través de las imágenes: Garibaldi y los bandoleros del sur de Italia 1861-2011. **Quaderns-e de l'Institut Català d'Antropologia**, n. 16, p. 189-200, 2011.

SINIBALDI, Silvia. Spose calabresi in Toscana. L'emigrazione matrimoniale in Italia nella seconda metà del Novecento, in SORI, Ercole; TREVES, Anna (orgs.), **L'Italia in movimento: due secoli di emigrazione (XIX – XX)**, Udine: Forum Editrice, 2008, p. 349-372.

SUAREZ, Eliana; GADALLA, Tahany M. Stop blaming the victim: A meta-analysis on rape myths. **Journal of Interpersonal Violence**, v. 25, n. 11, 2010, p. 2010-2035.

THE POST INTERNAZIONALE. Un programma televisivo italiano ha ridotto le molestie sessuali a uno scherzo. **The Post Internazionale**, 29/04/2017. <<https://goo.gl/wS6doF>> Accessed 28.05.17

VOLPATO, Chiara. La violenza contro le donne nelle colonie italiane. Prospettive psicosociali di analisi. **Deportate, Esuli, Profughe (DEP)**, n. 10, 2009, p. 110-131.

WEISBORD, Robert G.; HONHARTA, Michael W. Question of Race: Pope Pius XII and the "Coloured Troops" in Italy. **The Historian**, v. 65, n. 2, 2002, p. 403-417.

ZAJOTTI, Francesca. Ambra Angiolini difende Emma Marrone dopo lo scherzo ad Amici 16: la polemica continua. **Optimagazine**, 02.05.2017. <<https://goo.gl/a8ql2Y>> Accessed 28.05.17