Controlling and Freeing Women’s Bodies in Elena Ferrante’s *L’amore molesto*, *I giorni dell’abbandono* and *L’amica geniale*

Ferrante’s works display a universe that is highly patriarchal. Male dominion finds its expression in the control and possession of, and violence over, women’s bodies and space.

In detail, woman’s body is the object of a theoretical construction that generates violence. The construction of women’s image, as understood by Simone de Beauvoir for example, is particularly evident in *L’amore molesto* (1992): the protagonist has introjected a negative idea of her mother and the female in general, and therefore struggles to accept her own femininity. Furthermore, in the novel, male control over women is exercised in various ways, which also include the fetishistic possession of female clothes as substitutes for the female body. In *I giorni dell’abbandono* (2002), Ferrante elaborates patriarchal control over women in terms of bodily restraint and disruption: the protagonist’s body and house become a unified reflection of her state of abandonment after her husband’s departure. Such an identification between the female body and the house derives from the patriarchal confinement of women into private spaces, which echoes Freud’s considerations on the passive nature of women in ‘Femininity’ (1933). In addition, after the husband’s departure, the house and the protagonist share a state of abandonment and disruption that recalls the attribution to women of a hysterical nature. Finally, in *L’amica geniale* (2011-2014), Ferrante shows women’s body also as a tool for the social and genetic perpetuation of patriarchal violence and traumatic histories. In all the novels, however, the protagonists try to re-appropriate their own bodies and identities, and directly or indirectly change the society they inhabit.

In conclusion, the aim of my speech is to illustrate how such patriarchal dynamics work in Ferrante’s texts, touching on the studies of Michael Foucault, Elaine Showalter, Julia Kristeva, Simone de Beauvoir, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok.

**Biographical note**

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