

«Build Yourself A Levee Deep Inside». Perspectives On Violence In Female Songwriters Music

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Abstract. The article deals with the possibility of a connection between popular songwriter's music and pedagogical reflection and lifelong education, drawing inspiration from authors, that, starting from different branches of knowledge, have confronted the issue. The focus is on female songwriting: taking the cue from a comparison between four songwriters, a point of view on violence is investigated, in which various existential and cultural views surface, but also a possible common female perspective. It emerges from the musical expressions, in particular from the lyrics, that female, as much as male identity, has to tackle the issue of violence in order to achieve a mature perspective of oneself and of their relationship with the other. This requires a soul-searching, not as much therapeutic as authentically educational, therefore not episodic but permanent, that can be supported by the mirroring and the inspiration to their own storytelling induced by the enjoyment of songwriting.

Keywords. Education - Popular Music - Female Songwriters - Self Storytelling - Violence

1. Introduction: searching for a legitimation

«I always picture it as a car. All your selves are in it. And a new self can get in, but the old selves can't ever get out. The important thing is, who's got their hands on the wheel at any given moment?»¹. This are Bruce Springsteen's words on the depressive condition that accompanied him through his life and career since his youth. We draw inspiration from them, to reflect on the fact that songwriter's music is a «place» of identity storytelling. Not only because music – especially authorial music – in form of the «song»², is aimed to tell a complex but organic story, with a beginning and an end, but also because the sound, the melody and the rhythm, intrinsically narrate, transmitting emotions, evoking atmospheres and memories, representing cultures and identifying individuals and generations.

Nonetheless, it is never easy to introduce popular music in the humanities – as well

¹ Alessandro Portelli translates the sentence in Italian: «Ho una metafora, fa' conto che sei in macchina: i tuoi nuovi io possono salire, ma i tuoi io passati non possono scendere [...] il bambino degli anni '50 non scende. Il teenager, l'adolescente, non possono scendere. Stanno con te fino alla fine del viaggio», in A. Portelli, *Badlands. Springsteen e l'America: il lavoro e i sogni*, Roma, Donzelli, 2015, p. 9.

² A. Pusceddu, *Formazione e politica nel teatro di Giorgio Gaber*, in «Educazione Democratica», 9, 2015, pp. 142-166.

as you can't refer permanently to cinema – partly because it can be difficult to convincingly and universally remove the barriers that separate noble and popular culture³, partly because recurring to the arts, especially the popular ones, in the pedagogical reflection and in the educational intervention, may lose on effectiveness, whenever it becomes a foreordained method and it relies on a technical/scientific interpretation that doesn't fit to the subject. In this field, the term of «artistry», as Coppi defines it, seems to be more appropriate than «art» itself; from a pedagogical point of view, the arts, with their special languages, requiring specific and long-term trained competencies, are not as important as the creative process and attitude (artistry) itself, that can be exercised by everyone in every developmental step⁴.

After the youth movements season around 1968, as Madrussan⁵ discusses, some cultural paths surface, that highlight and develop the emerging of a counterculture, with its own aesthetic and own unique meanings, that has in popular music its main mediatic tool.

Nevertheless, the very notion of «popular music» remains somewhat puzzling and it suggests a wide and articulated field of traditions carrying relevant differences between commercial and more cultured expressions, especially as it comes to generational approaches: while the mid- and older generations identify popular music with rock, the young ones take more and more distance from it⁶.

For some time now, some authors engage in the effort of bringing humanistic knowledges and «pop» culture (meant as a set of musical, visual, stylistic, theatrical expressions) closer from one to another. This theorizing effort has been carried out partly by pedagogists⁷, partly by writers, that, from other theoretical points of view, tended to validate the removal of too strict fences between knowledge dimensions. Some authors have described the cultural change in the observation of popular music, debating how, in the last decades, the «song» can be confronted with the most prestigious products of the arts and culture and is even celebrated by some as the real poetry of our time⁸.

But, as Fiori himself alerts, it is not possible to equalize the popular song neither with classical music on one hand, nor with poetry on the other, unless ignoring the unique features of this different arts. But it can be claimed, that, especially in author's music – which, despite its difference from poetry, spoke with big lyrical intensity, for example

³ The theme is inspired by authors of primary relevance, Gramsci deals with it at length in his work: A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Torino; Einaudi, 2007³, pp. 1821-1822, 1859). He looks at the popular culture study as a point of departure in constructing the intellectual and political movement of the social class that will carry out the revolution and which must also conquer the higher culture.

⁴ A. Coppi, *L'arte per tutti. Artistry e creatività nella formazione per tutta la vita*, in «Studi sulla formazione», 2, 2019, *passim*.

⁵ E. Madrussan, «No one else can make you change». *Formazione, giovinezza, musica, a partire dal Sessantotto*, in «Studi sulla formazione», 2, 2019, pp. 375-378.

⁶ P. Somigli, «Weg von der Fachwissenschaft»? *Popular Music, scuola e formazione*, in «Musica Docta», VII, 2017, pp. 101-122.

⁷ Besides the forementioned authors, M. Stramaglia (a cura di), *Pop pedagogia. L'educazione postmoderna tra simboli merci e consumi*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2012 and F. Zannoni, *Sei così bella quando piangi. Lana Del Rey, voce e fenomeno della fragilità che è in noi*, in «Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica», 10 (2), 2015, pp. 163-185 can be named. Previously, the recourse on metaphor in modern songs has been considered by R. Mantegazza, *Come un ragazzo segue l'aquilone. Metafore dell'educazione*. Milano, Unicopli, 2000. Other authors also constantly resort on song lyrics, not only through a metaphoric perspective, but also with a parodistic and humorous look.

⁸ U. Fiori, *Scrivere con la voce. Canzone, rock e poesia*, Milano, Unicopli, 2003, pp. 7-8.

in Italy with Fabrizio De André – a genre developed that highlighted the *word*⁹, legitimating - in some way - even a lyrics-oriented research as the one that follows.

Rock, also - as Fiori discusses, once again - couldn't renounce words. At the beginning, as a completion of a musical message that strived to be generationally and politically new, furthermore, as expression of the «voice», which in sung music never only represents an instrument, but rather the substance.

It can be claimed, in the end, that the most influential author music (including rock) is the one whose musical parts, with all its components – the lyrical and the performative – are in good balance, which doesn't prevent us to highlight, as in the essay that follows, in particular the lyrics, in order to reflect on the «emotional resonance» in education.

Moving from this reflection, the contribution that follows, has two main starting points; the first one being the theme of violence on women, sadly often at the centre of mediatic interest nowadays, but also social, political and academic engagement issue and the second, indeed, the theme of popular art as concealed formative agent and, as such, part of what we are, in having influenced and narrated us and through which we tell ourselves and identify.

The idea of covering a path through parts of some female songwriter's work finds here its origin¹⁰. The interest is not only towards the experiencing of violence by women but first and foremost upon their *look* on it; the underlying question is whether there might be a female specificity, beneath the patent and open data, in observing and translating violence.

2. Suzanne Vega and Tracy Chapman: an involved but exterior look

Sarah McLachlan described with the expression «riding their coattails» how much she herself and many of her contemporary artists had taken advantage of the success of the female, mainly American folk songwriters emerging in the decade of the 1980's, who were in turn inspired by the rich American tradition of Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell, who represented the new prototypes of female artist in popular music.

Among the ones that represented in their songs the theme that we try to enlighten, some, as Suzanne Vega and Tracy Chapman, in their way expressions of the American «Melting Pot», appear to be particularly significant. The two artists seem to be compared by a certain will to keep in their songs something that could be described as an «involved but still exterior» look.

The musician Suzanne Vega was born in California in 1959, but she grew up in the Spanish Harlem area in New York with her mother and an adoptive father. The difficult condition of people surrounding her, the anonymity, the fragmentation of human relationships in the metropolitan milieu are components of Suzanne's biography that somehow seep through the lyrics and the vibes of her songs and that characterize her

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Berköz, investigated in depth the link between female and feminist thought and female songwriters writing, in L- D. Berköz, *A Gendered Musicological Study of the Work of Four Leading Female Singer-Songwriters: Laura Nyro, Joni Mitchell, Kate Bush, and Tori Amos*. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis City University London), 2012.

iconic piece *Luka*. Suzanne Vega explained in interviews that she had observed for a certain time a group of young teenagers playing in front of her apartment. One of them appeared to be different and particularly lonesome. Some comics were addressed per mail to the boy, but erroneously, they were delivered at the songwriter's home. Through this mistake Vega got the chance to learn the true name of the boy and was inspired to write a likely story for this young boy character:

My name is Luka
 I live on the second floor
 I live upstairs from you
 Yes I think you've seen me before
 If you hear something late at night
 Some kind of trouble some kind of fight
 Just don't ask me what it was.

Reading between the lines, it is clear that the meeting between the woman and the young boy, indeed, is not this accidental and so wrapped up in emotional indifference, but it is the spark of a mirroring and Luka's insisted prayer («Don't ask me...») is nothing other than a disguised request for help.

More than thirty years passed since the releasing of Suzanne Vega's song; the author later had the chance to reveal some of its background. She spoke about her own difficult childhood, when she felt ethnic identity issues by discovering she wasn't biologically half-Puerto Rican like she believed to be. «Demons» and obsessions are often the real meeting point of who produces and who enjoys arts expression, since they allow the true resonance.

So, what conveys Suzanne Vega's gaze towards Luka's character? A very different approach on abuse and violence than the one that will be described later, a whisper, in which the fire is always covered under the ashes, expressed through a minimalistic style that fits a certain literary American culture. But this apparently indifferent look, is, itself, a way of resilience, to survive injustice, oppression and violence.

In Tracy Chapman, Afro-American musician and folk songwriter, the city remains the scenario of the stories, but the approach becomes more partaken and more openly denouncing on the other hand. The artist, born in Cleveland in 1964, seems to be an aware portrayer of the emancipation requests of the black Americans: in her figure many aspects of her inherited culture, such as a deep soul voice as well as typical shapes of «white» folk music, come together.

In her homonym first album of 1988, Chapman depicts female characters that seem to be caught in a limbo of «double oppression», victims of men who are in their turn, economic, social and political victims¹¹ of a system in which violence is endemic.

Tracy Chapman, like Suzanne Vega, is a witness of the stories she tells, violence is carried out *Behind The Wall*, as in the title of her «a cappella» piece:

Last night I heard a screaming
 Loud voices behind the wall

¹¹ The concept of a double oppression experienced by women can be found in P. Freire, *Pedagogia da esperança. Um reencontro com a Pedagogia do oprimido*, São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 2000⁷, pp. 66 – 82.

Another sleepless night for me
 It won't do no good to call the police
 Always come late
 If they come at all
 And when they arrive
 They say they can't interfere with domestic affairs
 Between a man and his wife
 But when they walk out the door the tears well up in her eyes.

The song's character remains somehow paralyzed, doesn't call the police and doesn't show any intention to react. But the author reveals her deep empathy when she sings about «a silence that *chills* the soul» and evokes the *prayer* of being dreaming.

Domestic violence on women returns in *Why?*, a song which sees Tracy listing - among other - desperate questions about the word's injustice:

Why is a woman still not safe
 When she's in her home?

Or, more atrociously, in *Across The Lines*, that tells – reminding strongly Springsteen's *My Hometown* – about black and white teenager's fights, in which:

Little black girl gets assaulted
 There ain't no reason why.

But Tracy Chapman's female characters own also big resources;

She's got her ticket
 I think she's going to use it
 Think she's going to fly away
 No one should try and stop her
 Persuade her with their power
 She says that her mind is made up.

3. Sarah McLachlan: solving the pain as evolutionary task

Born in Halifax in 1968, the Canadian musician Sarah McLachlan¹² was adopted shortly after her birth by a family that encouraged her musical education. She has told in several occasions that she had been bullied and marginalized during her teenage years.

For McLachlan, the subject of the women-violence relationship as such is not a recurring one, but once it appears in the author's lyrics, it gets very intensely portrayed. A recent example can be seen in *In Your Shoes*, inspired by Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani woman who was awarded with the Nobel Prize for Peace. Generally, it can be

¹² May we refer to C. Secci, *La costruzione dell'identità femminile adulta nelle parole della musica popolare. Appunti e spunti*, in «Studi sulla formazione», 2, 2003, pp. 119-132.

claimed that Sarah McLachlan has dedicated all her artistic path to the promotion of the female identity, generating around her a musical culture that had a certain influence in American culture.

Fumbling Towards Ecstasy from 1993 and *Surfacing* from 1997 are the pivotal chapters of this author's itinerary: the first one, critically praised and considered McLachlan's «classic», displays from different points of view the slow transition of a young woman (the artist was then twenty-five years old) to a possible adulthood. Growing up is a painful task, fraught with obstacles; most of all, it entails the labour of continuously setting oneself free from the «burdens» that characterise the individual life.

A somewhat unidentified bewildering and familiar discomfort inhabits some songs from the *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* album, as is the case with *Good Enough*, a song followed, after release, by a Kharen Hill video, which shows a successful translation of the song-lyrics into pictures.

Hey little girl would you like some candy
 Your mama said it's okay
 The door is open come on outside
 No, I can't come out today
 It's not the wind that cracked your shoulder
 And threw you to the ground
 What's there that makes you so afraid
 Your shaking to the bones
 You know I don't understand
 You deserve so much more than this.

Good Enough, as the very evoking songs usually do, contains many different points of reflection spouting out from music, words and images or even from comments delivered by the author herself. She explained that at the time, she '*hadn't learned*' yet to focus on the subject of her narrative, and that this made her switch from '*I*' to '*you*' to '*others*'. She claimed that the song was inspired by her dear friend, but she also dedicated it to her mother in the live performances.

A mother and a father, an abusive relationship and a young girl who is its victim, a friend who shows up to save her and to allow an indissoluble alliance between mother and daughter.

Don't tell me why
 He's never been good to you
 Don't tell me why
 He's never been there for you

Just let me try
 I will be there for you
 Just let me try
 I will be there for you
 I'll show you why
 You're so much more than good enough.

The images of the emotional, friendly or intergenerational, female alliance populate Sarah McLachlan's songs and, over time, she made of this issue one of the centres of her entire artistic work. In fact, her wandering from one point of view to the other, more than a juvenile narrative fault, remains her artistic character's fundamental feature, strongly intertwined to the notions of harmony, of reconciliation and forgiveness, through the understanding of the 'other one'. The artist implements the idea trying to take on what is a radical otherness's¹³ perspective, such as the male, even in its most disturbing expressions, as in *Possession*, also in the 1993 record. Her voice is witness of a possible care and of an overcoming of the pain that is necessary to growth, an awareness that is held on and patiently offered to a daughter:

And when the bitter breeze carries a trace of fear
 We'll persevere somehow
 We're going to push on through, little girl
 Just like we always do.

4. Dolores O'Riordan's journey

The Irish musician Dolores O'Riordan, who closes this necessarily partial review, lived an artistic path that has been in some way specular to the one we just dealt with. Similar are the themes of disorientation from which their music originates and also similar seems to be the ability to harmonize full voice and head voice. The two singers have a wide Celtic music background, and the attitude to resort to this repertoire in common. Finally, the two share a narrative style focusing on the inner reality of characters, who remain merely virtual and suspended in vague scenarios and in plots without time and reality-bound elements.

O'Riordan has been singer and songwriter for The Cranberries since 1990 until the date of her untimely death in 2018. Compared to the solo artists we've written about till this point, as a band member, she expresses herself through pieces of music of which she is not the sole author, having worked frequently on them with the guitar player Noel Hogan. O'Riordan, though, has always been The Cranberries' only lyricist. Born in 1971 from a seriously disabled father and a very hard-working mother in a numerous family of Limerick's rural area, she was influenced by Sinéad O'Connor, by the traditional Irish vocal styles and the Gregorian chants, as well as by religious music¹⁴.

Since the beginnings, a haunting presence of violence and abuse allusions appeared in Dolores' lyrics, but only in 2013 she revealed in an interview a dramatic childhood experience related to this issues, which shed a light on what she had represented in her musical path and that conferred to it a stronger autobiographical and confessional sense than ever¹⁵.

¹³ R. Fadda, *Dall'identità come dato alla scoperta dell'alterità*, in R. Fadda (editor), *L'io nell'altro. Sguardi sulla formazione del soggetto*, Roma, Carocci, 2007, pp. 13-61.

¹⁴ E. Devereux, *Waltzing Back. The Cranberries 1989-1993*, supplementary booklet of the 25th Year Edition of *Everybody Else Is Doing It So Why Can't We*, 2018.

¹⁵ O'Riordan's sensitivity towards the topic women/violence, furthermore, returns in an album that was released after her death; although, seen the complex nature of all post-humous projects, we will not be considering its lyrics more specifically.

In 1994 *No Need To Argue* was released, containing the protest song *Zombie* and other interesting titles. O’Riordan, 21 at the time, wrote it impromptu, as a reaction to the killing of two young boys in Warrington, during the *Troubles*. It is correctly considered an anti-war anthem, but its highest evocativeness comes from the author’s look on the violence against children. How can an adult kill a child, wound them, hurt them? How can the others be unresponsive («zombies») to the abuse? The same images come back, word for word, in a whole different song: *The Icicle Melts*, that was also, apparently, written after a tragic episode involving a very young boy.

How could you hurt a child?
Does this make you satisfied?
I don’t know what’s happening to people today
When a child, child, child
Has been taken away.

The drama of the abuse has emerged somehow from the state of consciousness in which it had been shoved.

I should not have read the paper today,

regrets Dolores.

In the 1996 record *To The Faithful Departed*, *Zombie*’s inspiration, namely the violence acted by adults against children, concentrates in a more universal and political statement, as is the case in *War Child*. The child is here the sacrificial victim of the adult world’s power conflicts. The child who is born to the war becomes its *child* (in the meaning of «son/daughter»); he/she inherits its brand, its profound notion, that can’t be removed but through a long and articulate path, asking an individual for mental and emotional resources of an entire life.

In 1999 The Cranberries release the album *Bury The Hatchet*; its constant is the experience of maternity and parenthood, so relevant in O’Riordan’s ethical universe to coincide with salvation. The *Animal Instinct* is not as much an instinct of violence and/or of reproduction as an instinct of protection and survival. The mother must survive, since she must protect her cubs and make them survive; more than the lyrics it is the *Animal Instinct* video, by Olivier Dahan, which clearly illustrates the concept.

The rebirth of the mother, though, can’t be achieved but through the memory of having been a daughter: some of the songs of the album reveal a character that confusedly relives herself as a child and the reencounter with the violence committed by the adult is part of this evoking. Something has changed in the author’s writing, has become more clearly referred to the main character’s experience.

In *Fee Fi Fo* the lyrics are distinctly inspired by the topic of child sexual abuse. The title of the song refers to a fairy-tale verbal expression through which the monster recognizes their prey, but in this case it conveys the young girl’s repugnance in feeling the ogre close to her.

He has got so much to answer for
To answer for
To ruin a child’s mind

How could you touch something so innocent and pure?
 Obscure
 How could you get satisfaction from the body of a child
 You're vile...
 It's true what people say
 God protects the ones who help themselves in their own way
 But I keep wondering to myself
 Who protects the ones who can't protect themselves?

The author's perspective on violence and abuse seems here to venture into a territory of intimacy. The kind of violence we have addressed to, is the one that surfaces in the «marker events»¹⁶ of childhood, the abuse that not only disturbs the evolutionary path, but also defines it, supplying it with a painful structure.

A lyrical confessionalism, a sort of «gradual approaching to herself» becomes even stronger in O'Riordan's solo albums of 2007 and 2009. In the first one, two titles seem to deal with the issues we are focusing on, namely the single *Ordinary Day* and *In The Garden*. Highlighted by the first piece is the mother/daughter relationship, represented as a lasting bond and an alliance against the exterior threats. Caswell Coggins' video, that came out with the release of the single, once again adds to it some meaning directions, telling about a woman tormented with the fear of what the young daughter continuously moving away from home's going to become. The child is depicted with a red cape cloak, which shows that the fairy-tale, as the *Fee Fi Fo* lyrics allude, still remains the universal language to draw from when representing the ancestral themes of education, inter-generational relationships, love, violence and fear¹⁷.

The mother in *Ordinary Day* is finally forced to let her little girl go, whereas her child self seems to remain caught in the half-light of the house, a darker and more unsettling place than the forest itself.

House, forest, garden, fairy-tale places of the masculine and the feminine: the garden, in particular, as the quintessential female place, is also a soul's and a memories' place, that in *In The Garden*, namely, again reminds to the past in an unresolved and mysterious way.

The 2009 work, *No Baggage*, finds Dolores dealing openly with issues like insomnia, depression and mental illness, a condition (drawing back on the car-metaphor in the beginning of this writing), which doesn't let you find out who «has got the hands on the wheel». Something got frozen inside an individual's adult life, has become a condition, has taken on a defined form, that engenders discomfort and afflicts, but has, as such, to be fought and changed.

A trauma is once again evoked in different emotional keys, as this lament clearly expresses:

I can not erase this memory
 Something that is trapped inside of me
 Something that I'm holding in my hands

¹⁶ D. J. Levinson, *The Seasons Of A Man's Life*, New York, Ballantine Books, 1978, p. 54: the kind of event we're referring to can be described, in Levinson's words, as «unexpected trauma».

¹⁷ S. Barsotti, *Bambine nel bosco. Cappuccetto rosso e il lupo fra passato e presente*, Pisa, ETS, 2016.

Something I will never understand.

The same can be said for the most dramatic expressions of *Skeleton*, where the proposed imagery depicts the driving in the slower lane and the observing of others rushing by in the fast one. What slows the character's run down is a «shadow from the past», a skeleton sitting in the front seat.

Dolores O'Riordan's oeuvre, having embodied so accomplishedly a human being's journey towards its liberation and recovery, makes proof, in their own eyes, of a sense of integrity in a universal way. Every life story, indeed, represents the attempt to set free and liberate itself, getting rid of the negative and sometimes tragic facts that characterize it.

This songwriter's music has, moreover, always returned the sense of the deep significance of love, in all its forms and modalities, that no abuse can withdraw or remove.

5. Towards a conclusion

In its by now long history, modern songwriter's music has attempted to comprehend some big puzzles: one of them is the *mystery* of the violence against the weaker ones, that is as to why, in absence of a logic underlying the abuse and, therefore, of an ethic corresponding with it, the male animal would perpetrate it against the female and against his own cubs. In the well-known *Canzone di Marinella*, Fabrizio De André translated this dismay in such a «faithful» way, at the point of not being able to truly reveal the fact that inspired his narrative. A prostitute had been riddled with bullets and thrown in a creek; he read the news and, trying to get her some kind of powerless justice, made a love story out of a story of violence.

Not wanting to believe your death
He knocked *hundred years still* at your door¹⁸.

The final verse maybe reveals a condemnation desire.

More directly, Edoardo Bennato, who directs his glance in several of his songs on the female world, traces a sharp distinction between love and violence in the discreet *La fata*.

When we define a male and a female look on violence, there is certainly implied a gratuitous distinction, that overlook individual differences, that are often much more affective than the gender-related ones. Nor must we forget the cases in which women appear as perpetrators and not as victims of violence.

The plurality of the female perspective on violence and of the features of the women/violence relation is widely shown in the just depicted examples; the artists deal with a certainly ample issue, that possesses, although, some sort of common denominator. Undeniably, in fact, there seem to be some gender peculiarities in observing violence and a distinctively male attitude in not being able to speak out about it to themselves and to the others; while women are drawn to construct their identities upon the notion of a moral strength that must compensate for a minor physical power and upon the tools

¹⁸ "E lui, che non ti volle credere morta/ Bussò cent'anni ancora alla tua porta".

of their own protection and the cubs' protection. It's no coincidence that no less than the father of modern nonviolence has claimed a woman's right to stand up for herself by means that aren't permitted to men¹⁹.

When I was just a little girl, my mamma said to me:
'Beware of the devil, my child, in the dark rocky places he'll keep
... You gotta build yourself a levee deep inside.'

The levee that is mentioned in Natalie Merchant's song is a brilliant image, since it makes you think both of a barrier against an external attack, namely the violent male flow – even when it displays in the subtle and «charming ways» described by the lyrics, that foreshadow a deceiving and an abandonment – and the interior emotional female flow, which can be pretty harmful, especially when a woman has internalized a male driven relationship structure²⁰.

When we question the meaning of resorting to song lyrics in formal and informal education²¹, in school and outside school situations, addressing children or adults, we firstly have to be aware of the deep impact of metaphorical thought in our living and reasoning and the fact that languages, as instruments able to fully accept the metaphorical dimension (the musical, the filmic, generally the artistic language) are among the most suitable in comprehending education. According to Mantegazza, «education» itself is a metaphor and its epistemological basic is far from being weak because of this²².

However, the resort to musical language, in particular to modern songwriter's music, doesn't have to imply the lowering of the theoretical reflection's level or the quality of the educational intervention; rather, it has to find the connections between the elevated cultural production and the popular culture, in the awareness of the power of the music/ lyrics bind in penetrating the depth of human dilemmas.

Therefore, it might not be naive to think that rereading some artistic paths, like the ones that we mentioned, could be seen as something, which contributes to a reflection on permanent education. Lifelong learning, namely, involves first and foremost, the questioning of their own attitudes towards some great life issues. In fact, the thought on violence involves a self reflection upon our relationship with it, in order to protect ourselves from it, to neutralize it in ourselves and in the other ones, seizing the challenge of what can be described as «nonviolent education», a task that seems to be even more urgent than any political and legal fight against violence.

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¹⁹ «When a woman is assaulted, she may not stoop to think in terms of himsa and ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come to her mind in order to protect her honour», cited in K. Nandela, *Gandhi and Women's Empowerment*, in «Episteme: an online interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary & multi-cultural journal», Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2015, p. 5.

²⁰ C. Pinkola Estés, *Donne che corrono coi lupi. Il mito della Donna Selvaggia* (1992), It. tr., Piacenza, Frassinelli, 2006, pp. 60-74.

²¹ E. Madrussan, cit., p. 380.

²² R. Mantegazza, *Come un ragazzo segue l'aquilone. Metafore dell'educazione*, Milano, Unicopli, 2000, p. 98.

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