

“This Will Be the Love of the Future”:  
Italian LGBT People and Their Emotions  
in Letters from the *Fuori!* and  
Massimo Consoli Archives, 1970–1984

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“READING YOUR MAGAZINE HAS enabled me to liberate myself from every prejudice once and for all. . . . You can’t believe . . . how much joy I felt after receiving your letter. I turned it over in my hands, I read it again and again, incredibly happy about the fact that somebody was addressing me . . . as I really am and not as I pretend to be.”<sup>1</sup> This is one of many enthusiastic reactions—in this case, that of a nineteen-year-old boy from Rome—by readers of *Fuori!*, the first Italian LGBT magazine, published in Turin between 1971 and 1982. The letters analyzed in this essay are full of references to emotions. Expressions of rage, affection, joy, and affliction permeated both the debate and the rhetoric of the first LGBT publications in Italy and the private autobiographical accounts of their readers.

Scholars are increasingly paying attention to the role of emotion in LGBT activism. Sociologist Deborah B. Gould, for example, has highlighted the crucial role that feelings such as anger and affection played in the development and in the practices of the American direct-action AIDS movement ACT UP, arguing that this movement “had a profound impact on the course of the epidemic,” at the same time significantly affecting US politics and society in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> But frequent references to anger can be found much earlier. Anger, in fact, is often mentioned together

<sup>1</sup> Enrico to *Fuori!* and to Francesco Merlini, 12 February 1975, folder 195, Archivio Fuori, Fondazione Fuori, Turin (cited hereafter as AF-FF). This and the following translations from Italian into English are mine. I am grateful to Eugenio Lo Sardo, the former superintendent of the Central State Archive of Italy, who suggested to me to investigate Italian LGBT people’s emotions through the letters of the Massimo Consoli Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP’s Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4, 9–10. For a recent study of anger from a philosophical perspective, see Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

with joy in the discourse of both English and American LGBT press and movements of the early post-Stonewall era. The same applies to the rhetoric of *Fuori!*, the first Italian LGBT movement, whose magazine, also called *Fuori!*, I have cited above. I will argue that this parallelism between the rhetoric of the Anglo-American activists and their Italian counterparts is a testimony to the crucial role of emotions in the early phases of these LGBT movements. At the same time, the fact that references to emotions such as joy and anger were so prominent in different contexts of LGBT activism much earlier than the 1980s warrants further investigation of US, British, and Italian sources. I will demonstrate that both the precise structures of British and American activism and, to use Barbara Rosenwein's terminology, the relevant LGBT "emotional communities" in these countries helped foster what Benno Gammerl has called an "emotional style" whose main characteristic was an emphasis on anger and joy. This new emotional style in the United States and the UK strongly influenced, as a result of a process of cultural transfer and of what I will call a collective emotional awakening, how many Italian LGBT people felt and how they valued emotions.<sup>3</sup> The fact that some authors of the letters I will analyze in this essay do not happen to share this particular emotional style confirms Gammerl's claim that "the gay subculture is not a clearly circumscribed and homogeneous emotional community."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, my approach supports the stress previously given to the emotion of pride in descriptions of the Italian LGBT community while simultaneously problematizing some aspects of this assumption.<sup>5</sup>

The Italian LGBT movement has been particularly noteworthy on the international level because it originated as a post-Stonewall movement

<sup>3</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). For the concept of cultural transfer, see *Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand*, ed. Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988). For the definition and analysis of "emotional styles," see Benno Gammerl, "Emotional Styles—Concepts and Challenges," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 161–75; and Mark Seymour, "Emotional Arenas: From Provincial Circus to National Courtroom in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 177–97.

<sup>4</sup> Benno Gammerl, "Schwule Gefühle? Homosexualität und emotionale Männlichkeiten zwischen 1960 und 1990 in Westdeutschland," in *Die Präsenz der Gefühle: Männlichkeit und Emotion in der Moderne*, ed. Manuel Borutta and Nina Verheyen (Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2010), 259, my translation.

<sup>5</sup> Massimo Prearo, in works such as Massimo Prearo, *La fabbrica dell'orgoglio: Una genealogia dei movimenti LGBT* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2015); and Prearo, ed., *Politiche dell'orgoglio* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2015), assigns a significant role to the concept of pride in the development of the LGBT movement in Italy. However, he does not concentrate on analyzing if and how often the term "pride" was used within the Italian LGBT community. While I think Prearo is right in underlying the importance of this concept, I also think that the methodology of the history of the emotions, which I apply in the present article, can help identify equally important emotions within the discourse of the early Italian LGBT movement.

contesting heteronormative society quite early.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it produced publications of significant quality and reach, and the theoretical elaboration of some of its main personalities proved original.<sup>7</sup> However, its history and protagonists are rather underresearched.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike in other Western countries, such as the United States, France, and Germany, there were no openly LGBT media, such as “homophile” periodicals, in Italy before the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Initially, this may sound surprising if we consider that the antisodomy statutes had already been stricken from Italy’s criminal code in 1890, while in some states of the United States and in Germany homosexual acts were still considered to be criminal offenses until a few decades ago.<sup>10</sup> But despite the lack of a specific legal prohibition against homosexuality, up until at least the 1970s LGBT people in Italy

<sup>6</sup> For example, the Fuori! movement was founded, as we will see, just two months after its French counterpart, the Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire (FHAR).

<sup>7</sup> The publications investigated in the present article can be considered evidence for such a statement. An example is Mario Mieli’s book *Elementi di critica omosessuale* [Elements of homosexual criticism] (Torino: Einaudi, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> On the history of LGBT people and of the LGBT movement in Italy, see Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999); Andrea Pini, *Quando eravamo froci: Gli omosessuali nell’Italia di una volta* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011); and Giovanni Dall’Orto, *Tutta un’altra storia: L’omosessualità dall’antichità al secondo dopoguerra* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> “Homophile” periodicals were magazines founded especially before the Stonewall riots that focused on LGBT issues without in general contesting society in the name of gay “liberation.” Gianni Rossi Barilli notes in this regard that activist Maurizio Bellotti, who was a regular contributor from Italy to the French “homophile” magazine *Arcadie*, expressed his disapproval of the first Italian LGBT demonstration in Sanremo. Rossi Barilli describes the program of *Arcadie* as that of a “soft liberation” (*Il movimento gay in Italia*, 32, 57). On *Arcadie*, see Julian Jackson, “Arcadie: Sens et enjeux de ‘l’homophilie’ en France, 1954–1982,” *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, no. 53/54 (2006): 150–74. On the American magazine *One*, see Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 90–97. On the German LGBT press, see Peter Rehberg, “Männer wie Du und Ich’: Gay Magazines from the National to the Transnational,” *German History* 24, no. 3 (2016): 468–85. There was nothing that can really be called a homophile press in the UK. On the British context in the pre-Stonewall years, see Matt Cook, “Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914–1967,” in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex between Men Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Matt Cook, H. G. Cocks, Robert Mills, and Randolph Trumbach (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007), 145–77.

<sup>10</sup> Matteo M. Winkler and Gabriele Strazio, *L’abominevole diritto: Gay, lesbiche, giudici e legislatori* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011), 73–77. The 1869 Italian military criminal codes, however, were in force even after 1890 and sanctioned “offences of libido against nature” with imprisonment for up to ten years. See Marco Reglia, “Omoaffettività tra le pieghe delle fonti giudiziarie,” in *Tribadi, sodomiti, invertite e invertiti, pederasti, femminelle, ermafroditi. . . . Per una storia dell’omosessualità, della bisessualità e delle trasgressioni di genere in Italia*, ed. Umberto Grassi, Vincenzo Lagioia, and Gian Paolo Romagnoli (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2017), 204. This type of crime was removed from the 1941 Italian military criminal code. See Ministero della Guerra, *Codice penale militare di pace*, and Ministero della Guerra, *Codice penale militare di guerra*, with an explanatory memorandum by Benito Mussolini (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1941).

were arrested, tried, and detained for having committed “indecent acts in public” or for “offending public decency.”<sup>11</sup>

The Fascist regime was particularly adept at persecuting LGBT people through extrajudicial police repression, which included administrative sanctions such as warnings, admonitions, and, most seriously, internal exile (*confino*), but no new antisodomy laws were introduced in this period.<sup>12</sup> In the context of the post-Fascist and democratic Italian Republic, LGBT people, but also heterosexuals who endeavored to defend them against discrimination, faced arrest, trial, and heavy prison sentences.<sup>13</sup> Support for homosexuality could lead to the same form of administrative detention, internal exile, used by the Fascist regime against homosexuals.<sup>14</sup> Activist and scholar Giovanni Dall’Orto, drawing on a notion coined by Herbert Marcuse, has written of the “repressive tolerance” of homosexuality in the Italian context: the state abstained from criminalizing homosexuality but consciously delegated its repression to the Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup> The centuries-old practice of confession offered Catholic priests an effective tool to gain access to the most intimate thoughts of the faithful and to sanction deviations from moral norms.<sup>16</sup> During the period of the Kingdom

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Pini, “L’Italia contemporanea,” in Grassi, Lagioia, and Romagnoli, *Tribadi, sodomiti*, 211. It is noteworthy that similar provisions were commonly used in the United States and in Germany against transgender people and cross-dressers. For the United States, see, for example, Clayton Howard, *The Closet and the Cul-de-Sac: The Politics of Sexual Privacy in Northern California* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 58. Still in the present, “many States and jurisdictions retain legislation in which the ambiguity of language allows broad scope for arbitrary arrests based on police prejudice” (*Human Rights of Minority and Women’s: Transgender Human Rights*, vol. 2, ed. Indrani Sen Gupta [Delhi: Isha Books, 2005], 292).

<sup>12</sup> See Lorenzo Benadusi, *Il nemico dell’uomo nuovo: L’omosessualità nell’esperimento totalitario fascista* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2005); and Reglia, “Omoaffettività,” 195.

<sup>13</sup> In 1952 writer Gino Olivari, who always defined himself as a heterosexual person, was tried for publishing articles condemning the derogatory tone of Italian press coverage about the double suicide of two young homosexuals in Milan. He was eventually acquitted, but his publisher and the printer were convicted. See Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 24–25.

<sup>14</sup> Dario Petrosino claims that at least twenty-three thousand LGBT people were subjected to “police measures” in Italy between 1947 and 1969 (“Il comune senso del pudore: La repressione dell’omosessualità nell’Italia repubblicana (1947–1981),” in Grassi, Lagioia, and Romagnoli, *Tribadi, sodomiti*, 232).

<sup>15</sup> Giovanni Dall’Orto, “La ‘tolleranza repressiva’ dell’omosessualità: Quando un atteggiamento diventa tradizione,” in *Omosessuali e stato*, ed. Arcigay Nazionale (Bologna: Cassero, 1988). Dall’Orto does not cite Marcuse explicitly. However, the fact that he uses quotation marks in his title makes it fairly clear that the term is not his. For Marcuse’s original discussion, see Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 95–137.

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the similarities between the methodology of confession and accounts of medical interviews regarding LGBT people in Italy between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, see Lorenzo Benadusi, “Società, amore e cultura omosessuale nell’Ottocento,” *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, no. 39 (2005): 119–27. For a historical overview of the role of confession in the control of pleasure, see Pino Lucà

of Italy and the Fascist era and even in the Italian Republic, the Catholic Church played—and still plays—a crucial role in setting the boundaries of moral acceptability in Italy. Pietro Scoppola, talking about the decades following the end of the Second World War, has highlighted the “lack of understanding, from the Catholic side, of the processes of secularization experienced by Italian society.”<sup>17</sup> After its major electoral victory in 1948, the Democrazia Cristiana, the Catholic party that ruled Italy from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, instituted policies that resulted, according to Silvio Lanaro, in a “compression” of citizens’ lifestyles in comparison to the early postwar period. State-owned media were instructed to institute extensive censorship in the representation of male or female bodies and to limit the display of any affectionate effusions.<sup>18</sup> Up until the 1970s, the conservative orientation (and often Fascist past) of most of the members of the judiciary and of the police also had a significant impact on the structures of Italian democracy, particularly in regard to fundamental liberties and protections against discrimination. For example, in 1961 the Italian Constitutional Court decreed that adultery was only to be considered a crime if committed by women.<sup>19</sup> Similarly misogynist attitudes were displayed when two male students and a female student from a high school in Milan were prosecuted for publishing an article in their school newspaper that quoted female students’ views about sex. Invoking a 1933 Fascist ministerial memorandum, the prosecutor ordered the three students to undress in front of him and a medical doctor. The official justification was that the students needed to prove that they were not infected with venereal diseases.<sup>20</sup> The most significant example of this climate was the 1964 trial against writer and former partisan Aldo Braibanti, who was accused of the crime of *plagio*—which can be translated as “mental manipulation”—against two young men and was eventually sentenced to six years in prison, two of which he served. The fact that this trial was the first—and remains the only—one for this type of crime in Italy confirms that the real “crime” being prosecuted was homosexuality and its increasing visibility during those years.<sup>21</sup>

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Trombetta, *La confessione della lussuria: Definizione e controllo del piacere nel Cattolicesimo* (Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Pietro Scoppola, *La repubblica dei partiti: Evoluzione e crisi di un sistema politico 1945–1996* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 297.

<sup>18</sup> Silvio Lanaro, *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana: L'economia, la politica, la cultura, la società dal dopoguerra agli anni '90* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992), 199.

<sup>19</sup> Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano: Culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 1996), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Liliosa Azara, *I sensi e il pudore: L'Italia e la rivoluzione dei costumi (1958–68); La morale sessuale degli italiani dalla legge Merlin al Sessantotto* (Rome: Donzelli, 2018), 197–215. The female student successfully refused to get undressed.

<sup>21</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay*, 46. *Plagio* as a type of crime was eventually cancelled from the Italian criminal code by the Constitutional Court in 1981. See Gabriele Ferluga, *Il processo Braibanti* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2003), 107, 266.

A first important crisis in the traditional Catholic morality of Italian society occurred as a consequence of the 1968 movement.<sup>22</sup> However, despite the flowering of political periodicals, no LGBT publications were founded in Italy during this period. It was not until the years following the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York that significant shifts began to occur. The radical leftist LGBT movement *Fuori!* was founded in May 1971, while the magazine *Fuori!* commenced publication in December of the same year. Additional Italian LGBT movements and periodicals then followed. Leaving explanations for the lateness of these developments, I will instead focus on their intensity.<sup>23</sup> My goal is to analyze the emotional impact of early Italian LGBT periodicals on their readers and, more generally, to provide a contribution to the history of emotions in postwar Italy by investigating how LGBT people expressed their feelings in a selection of letters dating from the early 1970s to the early 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

The letters analyzed here were written by people who were somehow interested or engaged in the Italian LGBT movement. Most of them were contributors or readers to one of two magazines, *Fuori!* and *Ompo*, which was published in Rome between 1975 and 1990. Some of the other letter writers were active in the *Fuori!* movement or were friends of the founder of *Ompo*, Massimo Consoli, while others were interested in his activities in Rome, such as his involvement in the Centro Italiano per la Documentazione delle Attività delle Minoranze Sociali (Italian Center for the Documentation of the Activities of Social Minorities, or CIDAMS), which published its own magazine, or the LGBT Association and dance bar Ompo's.

The authors of the correspondence vary in terms of sex, age, geographical location, level of education, and social status. Some of the letters were written

<sup>22</sup> In another letter to the *Fuori!* magazine, a nineteen-year-old man from the province of Asti, Piedmont, who asked that his letter be published, remembers his adolescence at the end of the sixties during the so-called hot autumn, the *autunno caldo*, a series of widespread strikes in Italian factories. The man links this indirect experience with the fact that he quickly realized that he was homosexual and "was happy about it." He adds that he wants to fight to bring society back to the "the law of love and of pleasure." See Andrea G. to *Fuori!*, 28 June 1974. On the 1968 uprisings in Italy, see Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto: Due generazioni* (Rome: Laterza, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay*, 48. Some authors suggest that one of the main reasons the LGBT movement developed later in Italy than in other countries, such as Germany and Great Britain, where homosexual acts were outlawed, or France, where homosexuals were discriminated against with regard to the age of consent, lies in the fact that in post-1890 Italy there were no antisodomy laws. Massimo Prearo underlines, though without mentioning a specific author, the opinion according to which in Italy "a clearly identifiable institutional enemy to fight" was not present, and it was therefore more difficult for LGBT people to organize themselves in opposition to heteronormative society. Prearo rightly points out, however, that this view is not supported by documentary evidence (*La fabbrica dell'orgoglio*, 57). An example of this argument is Reglia, "Omoaffettività," 192–93.

<sup>24</sup> On the history of the emotions in contemporary Italy, see Penelope Morris, Francesco Ricatti, and Mark Seymour, eds., *Politica ed emozioni nella storia d'Italia dal 1848 ad oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2012).



expressly for publication in the magazines, and some of them were indeed published. Other letters were just a way for the readers to provide feedback to the magazine or to ask the editorial staff for information or advice.

The letters are collected in two archives: the Massimo Consoli Archive, which is housed in the Central State Archive in Rome, and the Fuori! Archive in the Sandro Penna Foundation in Turin.<sup>25</sup> The latter houses the archive of the Fuori! movement, which was founded by activist, writer, and journalist Angelo Pezzana, born in Santhià, Piedmont, in 1940.<sup>26</sup> Fuori! is the abbreviation for Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano (Unitary Revolutionary Homosexual Front of Italy), but in Italian it also means “out,” an obvious reference to the act of “coming out” as LGBT people. The inspiration for the name came from *ComeOut!*, the first US LGBT magazine of the post-Stonewall era, whose first issue was published in New York in November 1969.<sup>27</sup> The Fuori! movement had branch associations in several Italian cities. In 1972 it promoted the first LGBT demonstration in Italy, which took place in Sanremo against an international sexology congress that was organized by the Italian Sexology Association and included panels on alleged therapies (including electroshock treatment) for “curing” homosexuals. After interrupting the proceedings of the congress with his comrades, Angelo Pezzana used a microphone to deliver a speech, famously stating: “I am homosexual and am happy about it.” While the core of the Fuori! movement gravitated around northern Italy, the person linked with the letters collected in the second archive, Massimo Consoli (1945–2007), was a leading LGBT activist, writer, and journalist who was born and spent most of his life in Rome. In 2001 he sold to the Italian state his private archive, a collection of decades’ worth of material regarding the global history of the LGBT movement.<sup>28</sup> I will examine the private letters that Consoli sent and received between the early 1970s and the early 1980s, paying particular attention to exchanges with his close friends and partners, to the letters from the readers of and contributors to *Ompo*, and to correspondence between Consoli and other intellectuals.

*Ompo*, which stands for Organo del Movimento Politico degli Omosessuali (Organ of the Political Movement of Homosexuals), was a poorly designed

<sup>25</sup> According to its board, the foundation will soon change its name to Foundation Fuori!

<sup>26</sup> In addition to the documents produced by the movement itself, the *Fuori!* archive also includes the private archives of several LGB activists—a total of 531 boxes. Due to the large amount of material in the Fuori! Archive, the focus in this essay is on the correspondence from and to private individuals from 1971 to 1979.

<sup>27</sup> Angelo Pezzana, *Dentro & Fuori: Una autobiografia omosessuale* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1996), 54.

<sup>28</sup> The collection consists of 338 boxes. On Massimo Consoli and his archive, see Dario Pasquini, “Uscire dal ghetto”: Il ruolo di Massimo Consoli nel movimento LGBT italiano e internazionale,” and Anna De Pascale, “L’acquisizione, il riordino e l’inventariazione dell’archivio Consoli,” both in *Nuove fonti per la storia d’Italia: Per un bilancio del “secolo breve,”* ed. Mirco Modolo (Rome: De Luca, 2018). This book was published on the initiative of the Central State Archive.

and drafted cyclostyled publication. On several occasions entire issues only contained texts that Consoli had previously published elsewhere. *Fuori!* magazine, by contrast, was, despite frequent financial difficulties, graphically elegant, with an illustrated front page in color and the format of a newspaper. This contrast leads us to ask whether the emotional language expressed by the contributors and friends of Massimo Consoli and the readership of *Ompo* was similar to or different from that of the contributors, readership, and membership of *Fuori!*—both the magazine and the movement.

The first striking difference is that joy plays an important role in the articles in *Fuori!* and the letters written to the organization and magazine, while it is rare in the letters produced in Consoli's circle. Moreover, aggressive emotions such as anger about or hate toward those discriminating against homosexuals are also more evident in the language of *Fuori!* and its readership, while they are hardly found in Consoli's letters to and from his friends or in the letters from *Ompo* readers. The different frequency of the expression of joy and anger might be explained by the fact that the two magazines were founded in different periods and that their founders had a diverging political approach. When *Fuori!* was founded in the early 1970s, as we will see, it was largely influenced by the example of foreign LGBT movements that emphasized the importance of emotions such as joy and anger in the struggle for the liberation. At that time, the members of *Fuori!* practiced the first forms of LGBT mobilization in Italy, and its leaders had a radical Marxist political orientation, advocating for revolution in the country. By contrast, when *Ompo* was founded in the middle 1970s, *Fuori!* had partly abandoned its confronting rhetoric. Surprisingly, in the correspondence analyzed there are only rare references to the decision by Angelo Pezzana and the Turin *Fuori!* group to once and for all give up the Marxist-revolutionary approach and to merge with the more reformist and liberal Radical Party of Italy in 1974. This, however, must have sparked a harsh debate within the Italian LGBT movement, as well as within the *Fuori!* groups, since the *Fuori!* group of Milan did not agree with the decision and eventually declared its autonomy.<sup>29</sup> Consoli, for his part, rarely emphasized protest or activism despite calling himself an anarchist and a socialist. In the first editorial of *Ompo*, for example, "ignorance" is mentioned as the main target of the war to be fought in the name of the liberation, even before, in order of appearance, "the prejudices, the bad faith and the persecutions." This didactic approach is confirmed by another early editorial, in which the "best weapon" for a homosexual is said to be education.<sup>30</sup> Another telling example of the softer language used by Consoli and his correspondents in

<sup>29</sup> In his "genealogy" of the Italian LGBT movement, Massimo Prearo describes this event as a historical rupture (*La fabbrica dell'orgoglio*, 22). See also Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> [Massimo Consoli], "Perché 'O-MPO'?", *Ompo*, no. 1 (April 1975); and Frocic [Massimo Consoli], "Editoriale," *Ompo*, no. 3 (n.d. [1975]).



comparison to that of the *Fuori!* group is the fact that they often referred to the situation of the homosexuals as “our problem.”<sup>31</sup>

A highly different “emotional style” that included both extremely negative and extremely positive emotions is evident in Angelo Pezzana’s editorial for the first issue of *Fuori!*, entitled “Who Speaks for the Homosexuals?” Pezzana argued, “It is clear that we are not making ‘another’ magazine, but we are actually starting a completely new debate, which aims at opening a process of liberation through an explosion of joy and anger.” “For the first time,” he continued, “homosexuals were speaking to other homosexuals. Openly, with pride they come out as such.” A “great awakening,” an “immediate, contagious, wonderful” one, was starting after the example of the Jews and the blacks. This was “an exciting experience . . . full of new meanings,” because those working for the gay “liberation movement” were “changing [their] lives [and] finding again sensations that [they] thought impossible to feel.” Pezzana thus links the LGBT movement and the movements for the emancipation of other minorities, such as African Americans and Jews. He continues: “We are feeling homosexual with our heads held high, not only among ourselves—this used to happen even earlier—but [also] among others, above all among others.” The leader of *Fuori!* emphasized that liberation “starts in the very moment in which one understands that homosexuality is wonderful and must be shouted out, never more hidden.”<sup>32</sup>

Similar emotions were displayed in a 1973 editorial that recalls the foundation of the movement two years earlier. The author of the article notes that in April 1971 “the idea” of creating “a movement for homosexual liberation” had “changed their lives.” Everything that they had “‘felt’ individually ‘before’ found, in the new dimension of the group, its own way of developing,” while “feelings that previously were anger, discomfort, bewilderment, with no way out, now have assumed a political connotation.” The author adds that they were “very happy during those months.”<sup>33</sup> The reference to emotions that previously had “no way out” is interesting. The foundation of the movement is represented as a way of canalizing preexisting negative feelings toward a goal: liberation.

<sup>31</sup> See Cristina S. to Massimo Consoli, 1 January 1975, box 2, Fondo Consoli, Central State Archive, Rome (cited hereafter as FC-ACS), who writes that Consoli uses that term frequently, and Germano S. to Massimo Consoli, 2 April 1976, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>32</sup> Angelo Pezzana, “Chi parla per gli omosessuali?,” *Fuori!*, no. 1 (June 1972). For further references to joy in the language of *Fuori!*, see the letter from Emma [Allais] to Angelo Pezzana, n.d. [ca. 1974], folder 193, box F. She asks him to not interfere with the preparation of an issue for women only. See also Allais’s statement “Let’s transform joy into praxis,” placed as a comment to a letter from a reader in *Fuori!*, no. 4 (October 1972), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Collettivo Redazionale [Editorial Collective], “2° editoriale: Quale movimento?,” *Fuori!*, no. 7 (January/February 1973). See also Domenico Tallone’s reference to the “raging will and the raging revolutionary need” in describing the atmosphere at an international meeting organized by *Fuori!* in Milan (“Processo alla società maschile—Milano,” *Fuori!*, no. 5 [November 1972], 2).

The very foundation of *Fuori!* indeed depended upon the mobilization of emotions, since the movement came into its own as a reaction to an article by the neurologist Andrea Romero, "The Unhappy [Person] Who Loves His Own Image," which was published in the prestigious Turin-based newspaper *La Stampa* in April 1971. Romero claimed that homosexuals are inclined to unhappiness by their very nature, going so far as to state that "there are no happy homosexuals."<sup>34</sup> An editorial in the first issue of *Fuori!* authored by the *Fuori!* group as a whole highlights the effect this *La Stampa* article produced in the LGBT community, describing how a "group of homosexuals from Turin reacted" with the argument that "there was too much bullshit being said on the topic." *Fuori!* members then called for such social commentary "to end or at least to be neutralized by a debate that should now finally be critical and socially responsible."<sup>35</sup> Emotional mobilization in the language of *Fuori!* was, however, not only a discrete episode or the consequence of the anger that the *La Stampa* article provoked in many homosexuals in Turin and elsewhere in Italy.<sup>36</sup> My hypothesis is in fact that the political and emotional strategy of *Fuori!* was influenced, through a process of cultural transfer and through what I will call a transnational propagation of emotional styles, by the example of other LGBT movements and publications, above all the English-speaking ones.<sup>37</sup> By propagation of emotional styles I mean the process through which a subject or a group, in a more or less conscious way, reacts empathetically after experiencing, in a direct or indirect way, an emotional style external to their own community, approves of it, and, more or less gradually, appropriates it. Of course, this process implies that the subject or the group interprets others' emotions in a more or less accurate way and reproduces the relevant emotional style, adapting it to their own habits and values.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Myriam Cristallo, *Uscir fuori: Dieci anni di lotte omosessuali in Italia 1971–1981* (1996; Rome: Sandro Teti Editore, 2017), 32. The editor of *La Stampa* refused to publish protest letters from LGBT people (Cristallo, 32).

<sup>35</sup> Collettivo *Fuori!*, "L'occasione," *Fuori!*, no. 1 (June 1972).

<sup>36</sup> It is noteworthy that the French FHAR had similar origins in the reaction to a public statement about the pathological nature of homosexuals. It was in fact founded in March 1971 following the outcry caused by a radio debate that was dedicated to the topic "Homosexuality, This Distressing Problem." As soon as the issue of homosexuals' presumed suffering was raised, the debate was interrupted by cries from feminist, lesbian, and gay protesters in the studio. Previous shouts had been directed against one of the guests, the founder of *Arcadie*, André Baudry. See Jackson, "Arcadie," 160; and Cristallo, *Uscir fuori*, 41. A transcription of the debate can be found at "L'homosexualité, ce douloureux problème," Archives, Le séminaire gai, [http://semgai.free.fr/doc\\_et\\_pdf/Gregroie\\_douloureux\\_prob.pdf](http://semgai.free.fr/doc_et_pdf/Gregroie_douloureux_prob.pdf). Just a year earlier, in 1970, the first major movie depicting homosexuality in the United States, *The Boys in the Band*, showed gay men as "unremittingly sad." For an analysis of this film, see Rodger Streitmatter, *From "Perverts" to "Fab Five": The Media's Changing Depiction of Gay Men and Lesbians* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 26.

<sup>37</sup> *Fuori!* was most likely influenced by and itself influenced the French group FHAR. However, on the basis of access to the French sources, I would tend to argue that emotions such as joy and anger played a smaller role in the French context.

<sup>38</sup> In this regard, I would not define as an example of "propagation of emotional style" the establishment in British America of a new emotional style that emphasized the importance

As a consequence of this appropriation of a foreign emotional style, a significant part of the Italian LGBT community experienced what I define as a “collective emotional awakening,” that is, the gradual but durable affirmation of a new emotional style that aims at changing society.<sup>39</sup> References to anger and joy were in fact frequent in American and British LGBT publications from the period following the Stonewall riots, and the authors of articles published in *Fuori!* participated in such an emotional climate by reading these magazines and sometimes even by reporting about LGBT demonstrations and other forms of activism abroad.<sup>40</sup>

An echo, albeit an indirect one, of this emotional style can be found in an early report from Mariasilvia Spolato, often described as the first Italian woman to come out, in which she discusses her own experience at the demonstration in Sanremo as a member of the Roman branch of *Fuori!*<sup>41</sup> She expresses her relief at “managing to express completely” her “whole anger potential” against those people who for years had been acting “in a Nazi way” against people they called “sexual deviants.”<sup>42</sup> Similar feelings are expressed in a 1972 letter from a reader of *Fuori!* who comments on an article he had read in the magazine. The man from Lucca claims that every time he reads an article by Stefania Sala, pseudonym of Emma Allais, a member of the editorial collective of *Fuori!*, he remembers his thirty-four “years of anger,” making it seem as if he “has experienced a doubling of this period of anger.”<sup>43</sup> In the same year, another reader from the province of Florence who had been discharged from compulsory military service because of his homosexuality and was eventually rejected during a job interview for the same reason states that after those experiences “a lot of anger” has remained in his “body” and that he “looks forward” to “being

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of emotional freedom as a consequence of the reception of Alexander Pope’s poem *An Essay on Man*. This emotional style was in fact an original product of the British American colonies. See Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 450.

<sup>39</sup> The term “collective emotional awakening” is used by Arianna Risi Rota and Roberto Balzani in their “Discovering Politics: Action and Recollection in the First Mazzinian Generation,” in *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 85.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the references to “joy” and “aggressive[ness]” in the editorial in *ComeOut!*, 7 November 1969, 1; to “love” and “anger” in Carl Wittman, *A Gay Manifesto* (San Francisco: Red Butterfly, 1970), 3; and to “anger” in *Gay Liberation Front Manifesto* (London, 1971).

<sup>41</sup> Spolato, who taught mathematics and published handbooks in this field, was fired by the Ministry of Education after she came out in 1972. Eventually she lived for years as a homeless person and died in November 2018. See Chiara Pizzimenti, “La storia di Mariasilvia Spolato che per prima ha detto: ‘Io amo una donna,’” *Vanity Fair*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.vanityfair.it/news/storie-news/2018/11/09/storia-mariasilvia-spolato-morta-lesbica-coming-out-donna>.

<sup>42</sup> Mariasilvia Spolato, manuscript with a cover letter to Angelo Pezzana, 14 April 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>43</sup> V.L. to *Fuori!*, 20 November 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

able to shout [his] homosexuality in somebody's face." This "would be a triumph [for him], and [he] would die from happiness in reading the bewilderment in the eyes of [someone] forced to face a homosexual who does not hide himself."<sup>44</sup>

The answer to this second letter speaks for itself. *Fuori!* responded to the reader with the argument that his anger must be "comforting," because when "shame about one's own homosexuality" is "replaced by anger" it was the "beginning of the liberation." The representative of the magazine noted that its content was in fact often deliberately produced at "a pure level of anger."<sup>45</sup> Emma Allais's reply to a reader from Trento who had submitted some poems for publication in *Fuori!* similarly emphasized anger. Allais asked the poet: "Don't you think that poetry is an escape or a way of simmering by expressing one's own feelings? A consolatory activity and for this reason to be banned? Otherwise, where is the anger that will enable us to change the world going?"<sup>46</sup> Her sharp condemnation of poetry, which she saw as a petit-bourgeois distraction, is an example of *Fuori!* editors' early attempts to mobilize their readership into action by providing instructions on acceptable and unacceptable behavior. As we will see, they paid little attention to the frustration this might have caused for their readers.

Anger is often mixed with other emotions, as is clear in the letter from Monica G., from the province of Ancona. (Monica was either transgender or a drag performer, but it is impossible to say which. The letter uses the self-description *travestito*, meaning "transvestite," and deploys male grammatical forms, but it is then signed with a female stage name, followed by a male name in parentheses.) In a 1978 letter to *Fuori!* Monica expresses many diverse emotions, "joy about the presence of a magazine [that is] finally entirely ours" and "[pride] about the fact that I came out ten years ago, at a time in which mentalities were more inhibited." Monica then expresses frustration about previously having to endure "Hitlerian [*sic!*] stuff" in order to dress as a woman and again pride at having overcome "all the insults, the spitting, and the experiences in jail" to gain "freedom." Joy and anger coexist in this description. Monica claims that the liberation will be "strong" and "joyful," and the homosexual will be "strong" and "pissed off against those who are hypocritical and incoherent." The letter urges a "revenge" against all those who made LGBT people "suffer." Juxtaposing the courage of openly homosexual people with the "imbecility" of the "conventional thinkers," the letter also denounces the men whose payment for prostitution allows Monica to make a living. Monica concludes by mentioning three

<sup>44</sup> Gabriele A. to *Fuori!*, 27 June 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. The letter was published in issue no. 3 (September 1972).

<sup>45</sup> *Fuori!* to Gabriele A., 5 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. See also the letter from a thirty-year-old worker from a factory in Brescia who links his anger to his "desire to finally do something" (Roberto C. to *Fuori!*, 19 October 1972, folder 190, AF-FF).

<sup>46</sup> Stefania [Sala, pseudonym of Emma Allais] to Giosué S., 15 April 1973, folder 192, AF-FF.

other emotions—love, shame, and fear—and, in an act of faith in *Fuori!*, by pledging to make love for free with all the men who buy an issue of the magazine: “If somebody calls me faggot or queer I can reply that it is as if this person has called me ‘Queen,’ or [I can reply] that this person should throw her own homophobia away, because [homophobia] is against nature [while] (love is never).” Monica adds that “feeling ashamed or fear about how we are means to renounce to be, to live” and concludes: “I promise and have promised my clients and nonclients [that] I have made [*sic*] and will make love for free to those in possession of an issue of *Fuori!*”<sup>47</sup>

Of course, anger did not play precisely the same role in the various stages of *Fuori!*’s activity as a movement. While anger seems to have been highly valued and strategic at the very beginning of the movement, in the later period the emotion was mentioned far more rarely.<sup>48</sup> More importantly, in later letters among the editorial office some reservations emerge about the actual usefulness of the display of anger. For example, in 1974 a female member of *Fuori!* criticized the inclination of other members to publicly “attack in an aggressive and aprioristic, often irrational way” their political rivals, thus resulting in “frightening a lot of people,” including other homosexuals, in which for sure “some mechanisms of identification will go off.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Francesco Merlini, a member of *Fuori!* who from 1974 and 1976 answered the letters to the editor, assured a reader that “we are not fanatical people, we are instead serious and convinced spokespersons of a revolution that aims to attack society.”<sup>50</sup> What seems at stake here is a certain fear of some members of *Fuori!* to provoke, through their use of aggressive emotions, reactions of shame in their audience, as well as a desire to gain credit as responsible people.

A further reason for this possible gradual attenuation of anger in the discourse of *Fuori!* might rely on the fact that the initial fury that motivated the movement’s founding could not be indefinitely sustained. In 1973 Mauro Bertocchi, who was the head of the *Fuori!* group in Bologna, argued that

at the time when we were repressed, pissed off, when we did not have the chance to fuck enough, when we could not freak out as queers [*scheccare*] . . . when we were alone . . . then we were ready to do the “sexual revolution” and the political one, as if they were two separate tasks. Since we have been less repressed, less pissed off, since we have been fucking copiously . . . since we use colored nail polish . . . all the explosive and revolutionary charge has vanished. We have calmed down, we have liberated ourselves.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Monica (G.) G. to *Fuori!*, 29 August 1978, folder 199, AF-FF.

<sup>48</sup> A further example is a letter from Giordano C. to *Fuori!*, 21 September 1978, folder 199, AF-FF.

<sup>49</sup> Annapaola to Emma, 22 October 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>50</sup> Francesco Merlini to Sergio B., 27 November 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>51</sup> Mauro Bertocchi to Angelo Pezzana, 8 February 1973, folder 190, AF-FF.

This sensation is confirmed by an editorial in the magazine in the winter of the same year, according to which “the enthusiasm of the first months [had] lessened.”<sup>52</sup> Even at an earlier stage, however, there could be slight, though possibly telling, differences between the language that the *Fuori!* members used in public and that used in private. For instance, Mario Mieli, one of the most significant personalities of the Italian LGBT movement, in a 1972 report from London emphasizes the importance of anger and joy for the liberation, although in an earlier letter from the same year to Angelo Pezzana he seems to assign to a perhaps more distressing emotion than anger (i.e., despair) a driving role for the movement: “If we want to live, we must discover our human activeness through struggle. [We must] channel into the struggle all the impulses of desperation that are afflicting our inactive lives.”<sup>53</sup>

As noted above, in the correspondence between Consoli and his friends or readers, mentions of anger are few in comparison of those to be found within the environment around *Fuori!*<sup>54</sup> The few references to anger or other aggressive emotions such as hate are often coupled with mentions of passive feelings such as powerlessness and frustration. In a 1976 letter to his friend Massimo Consoli, Germano S. writes that he feels “powerless” against what he calls “the ongoing persecution among the plebs, a persecution that still conditions the daily activities of the homosexual.” To him all the efforts of the LGBT movement seem like a painful conversation within a family, and he finds it crucial to “broaden the discourse.” “Our hate,” he notes, “should become clear to all, and our rights should be imposed.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a 1981 letter by Riccardo S. (perhaps a former partner of Consoli) describes the intense anger he felt about being forced to “cruise” in order to “live one’s own life,” lamenting the fact that in that way “sexual life becomes regressive and castrating.” Riccardo juxtaposes his anger with a huge sense of “powerlessness,” because no other “options were available” besides coming “out of secrecy,” for which he finds “neither the energy nor the courage—assuming that it’s just a matter of courage.” He also links his sense of powerlessness to the fact that “if you continue a relationship you get frustrated, while if you refuse it, you feel like a loser who has to beg for sex.”<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Collettivo Redazionale [Editorial Collective], “Editoriale inverno 1973,” *Fuori!*, no. 11 (1973).

<sup>53</sup> See the article by Mario Mieli reporting from London about the demonstration against the 1971 Miss World ceremony, in which he stated: “The slogan that night was: WE ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL, WE ARE NOT UGLY, WE ARE ANGRY! . . . In the joy of the fight . . . the British homosexuals vent their anger. . . . JOY OF LIFE AND ANGER AGAINST THE SYSTEM” (“London Gay Liberation Front, Angry Brigade, Piume & Paillettes,” *Fuori!*, no. 5 [November 1972]); and the letter from Mario Mieli to Angelo Pezzana, 24 April 1972, folder 190, AF-FE.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, a 1978 letter by Consoli in which a certain irritation toward homosexuals in general emerges and in which he states: “One must deeply love homosexuals in order to be able to tolerate their envies, their apathy and their contempt” (Massimo Consoli to Germano Silva, 12 September 1978, box 1, FC-ACS).

<sup>55</sup> Germano S. to Massimo Consoli, 19 March 1976, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>56</sup> Riccardo S. to Massimo Consoli, 18 January 1981, box 2, FC-ACS.



It is interesting that in small towns, frustration resulting from others' lack of acceptance could sometimes be faced in a more optimistic way than in the city. The experience of a twenty-one-year-old lesbian Communist who moved from Milan to the province of Bergamo, Lombardy, is instructive. Describing her move to a village as a traumatic change, Antonella B. wrote to *Fuori!* to describe the "significant drama" and the "intellectual and moral heaviness" she had been experiencing. Having found her Communist comrades to be "first of all heterosexual and then revolutionary," she "had lived that situation with much drama." As an example, she describes how they would make jokes about "faggots" (*culat[t]oni*) while "demonstrating and carrying red flags." The experiences had made her wonder whether socialism would really change people's lives or whether it would prove to be an unrealizable utopia marred by deportations to "Siberia" or Chinese-style executions. She also criticizes the attitude of representatives of the older generation, whom she labels "the little red flowers of 1968." If you ask them why 1968 was "not very revolutionary toward homosexuals," she writes, they are "still not able to give an explanation, they look embarrassed." She adds that a local magazine open to all those who wish to publish articles was going to be founded by the group running the village library. She planned to write a series of articles, first about sex and then about homosexuality, in order to "enter people's houses through the magazine."<sup>57</sup>

Tensions among comrades were also present between the various factions of the Italian LGBT movement. An example is provided by a letter from Salvatore Adelfio, a close friend of Consoli. Writing to Consoli in 1973, Adelfio reported that "a kind of hate" against Consoli was becoming common, in particular because of his contributions to magazines such as *Men* and *Noi*. The first one, an erotic Italian publication, addressed mainly straight men but hosted articles directed at a homosexual public, while the second magazine was the first example of a commercial gay magazine in Italy. Adelfio himself did not like *Noi*, as it published too many naked pictures and it did not focus enough on the cause of revolution. By contrast, he appreciated the *Fuori!* magazine but at the same time distanced himself from the political attitude of the *Fuori!* members, as he described them as revolutionary on paper and bourgeois in real life.<sup>58</sup>

A year earlier, in July 1972, significant outrage arose between the *Fuori!* groups of Turin and Rome after the latter organized a press conference about the launch of the first issue of the magazine, despite the fact that it had been the Turin group that had taken the decision to publish the *Fuori!*

<sup>57</sup> Antonella B. to *Fuori!*, n.d. [1975], folder 195, AF-FF.

<sup>58</sup> Salvatore Adelfio to Massimo Consoli, 2 January 1973, box 1, FC-ACS. On the same topic, see also Salvatore Adelfio to Massimo Consoli, 28 November 1972, box 1, FC-ACS. With regard to further criticism of Consoli, see the letter from Felix Cossolo (of the *Fuori!* movement and eventually director of the LGBT magazine *Lambda*) to Consoli, in which the former harshly criticizes the organization of an event for Valentine's Day in Consoli's club, Ompo's, in Rome. Felix Cossolo to Massimo Consoli, 12 February 1977, box 279, FC-ACS.

magazine against the Rome group's opposition.<sup>59</sup> Addressing a member of the Rome group, Angelo Pezzana criticized the behavior of Bruno Fiorentino, describing him as "a hysterical queer" (*checca*).<sup>60</sup> Biases within the LGBT community about acceptable homosexual behavior could also in fact lead to contempt and insults. In a letter to *Fuori!*, Lamberto C., a twenty-two-year-old man from Perugia, insists that he is not "one of those crazy hysterical effeminate queers who unfortunately exist and discredit us." While he claims to "respect them" because they "are still human beings," he admits that he inwardly condemns those he calls "poor exhibitionists [and] stupid people" and would even like to be able "to strangle them for that inane and unfair behavior of theirs, which they show off."<sup>61</sup> The anonymous *Fuori!* editor who responded to this letter certainly did not agree with these homophobic remarks but provided a detailed response. Noting that Lamberto "[is] not right in attacking the 'queer' homosexuals," the editor nonetheless expresses sympathy for Lamberto's irritation and notes that "it is a reaction that we all have felt, but that is due to our fear of being different." This poor behavior, the editor continues, can be explained as a result of social oppression: the "queers" "have just assumed the role that was imposed on them."<sup>62</sup> Lamberto is then instructed to keep in mind that "the real enemy is only the phallocratic male and [his] institutions."<sup>63</sup> This response underlines that the founders of *Fuori!* viewed effeminate gay men as responding to social oppression rather than expressing their own personalities. Comparing this response to the one offered to the much calmer poet discussed above leads me to believe that *Fuori!*'s staff were judging readers according to their apparent usefulness to the movement: aggressive behavior, like that displayed by Lamberto, was welcomed, while correspondents who wrote less emotionally charged letters were considered introverted and therefore conformist.

Other replies from *Fuori!* to its readers include more aggressive passages in which advice, severe exhortations, and judgments alternate with more positive and affectionate expressions. These answers likely came as a shock to the recipients, who must have had high expectations of the editors of *Fuori!*, who often served as the letter writers' first and only confidants on life-decisive issues and anguishing problems.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes, especially when

<sup>59</sup> Collettivo Redazionale, "2° editoriale: Quale movimento?," *Fuori!*

<sup>60</sup> Angelo Pezzana to Gianni Chilanti, 9 Juli 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>61</sup> Lamberto C. to *Fuori!*, 8 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>62</sup> A similar point of view had become common, especially after the 1971 release of Rosa von Praunheim's influential film, *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse but the Society in Which He Lives*.

<sup>63</sup> *Fuori!* to Lamberto C., 17 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>64</sup> For a rare example of emotional pedagogy that dwells on the importance of aggression in an answer to a reader from Massimo Consoli, see Massimo Consoli to Marco B., 20 January 1975, box 1, FC-ACS. Consoli is sorry that M. B. feels so lonely and knows "what this means," because he also had "suffered in this condition." At the same time, he claims

a *Fuori!* staff member perceived the emotional style of the reader to be particularly inappropriate, the response was written with barely concealed annoyance or contempt. An exchange of letters between Francesco Merlini and Adriano M., a man from Rimini, provides a striking example. Adriano was obsessed with the conviction that he was an ugly man, he seems to have had a submissive character, and he had quite an old-fashioned and bourgeois way of writing. He often used the French word *copain* to address Francesco and other potential homosexual friends, and his language is very formal. All this irritated Merlini, who writes to him to “please avoid” using the word *copain*, as it is a “pseudointellectual and decadent term.”<sup>65</sup> In the exchange of letters that follows Adriano seems to become infatuated with Francesco even as Francesco’s words get harsher: a sort of sadomasochistic mechanism seems to be at play in their correspondence:

You call me “my adored,” you crawl at my feet, because you don’t want to offend. . . . [S]top whining! What kind of man are you? Where is your dignity? . . . You’re the clumsiest among the clumsy, you slip into feelings that the first person with whom you can possibly talk frankly [about your homosexual condition] inspires in you just to avoid using your brain in order to look for a grain of courage. . . . I don’t exclude at all the possibility that one day we might find ourselves having sex together . . . but that day can *only* come after you have mastered the conscience and the dignity of the true liberated gay man. . . . Then I will go back to being as sweet as a lump of sugar.<sup>66</sup>

A similarly fierce correspondence took place between a young male prostitute from Apulia, L.M., and an unknown member of *Fuori!* The former writes:

I prostitute myself in town with refined people, but I would love to get to know new people. I come from a good family. What’s the harm in men loving each other, to me it is normal to feel a different love, this will be the love of the future. . . . I am a firefly [prostitute] of the third sex. . . . I have had many adventures, but I have not found the right man yet, who knows if one day I will find him. To me homosexuality cannot be cured, it is a disease that remains in your blood . . . and it is better to stay as we are. If you turn up here, we could organize a gathering, a club for men only, for chic people. . . . [D]earest Editor my life is like a novel.<sup>67</sup>

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that he has been able to overcome his problems because he has devoted himself to the fight against the oppression of people like him with “an aggressiveness” that he would never have expected to feel. On the concept of “emotional pedagogy,” see Gould, *Moving Politics*, 28.

<sup>65</sup> Francesco Merlini to Adriano M., 18 November 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>66</sup> Francesco Merlini to Adriano M., 30 December 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>67</sup> L.M. to the editor of *Fuori!*, 25 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. Published in *Fuori!*, no. 4 (October 1972).

The reply from *Fuori!* has a very different tone. The author of the answer in fact blames the reader for obviously not having understood anything, because his self-proclaimed identity as a firefly of the third sex prevents him from considering “the scary devitalization that this dirty bourgeois society” has forced upon him, a society from which he nevertheless asks for support. As for the reader’s proposal for a club for “chic” men only, this correspondent fires back that he will “only find men fighting for a FREE society” in the *Fuori!* movement. The final part of the reply is both harsh and encouraging: “Write again, but try to thoroughly ascertain if your situation should be completely rejected or not in order to choose a true life. And be careful! We are not proposing moral solutions but simply your effective self-fulfillment. We hug you.”<sup>68</sup>

What is evident in the letters from the readers to both *Fuori!* and *Ompo* is that these magazines were a tremendous “emotional refuge” for their readerships, to use William Reddy’s term: a virtual place where the readers were able to find “safe release from prevailing emotional norms and . . . relaxation of emotional effort.”<sup>69</sup> The letter writers talked, almost freewheelingly, about very private and burning matters. Sometimes they received potentially destabilizing answers, but more often they received caring, tender, and fond ones.

Another telling example appears in the exchange of letters between Sergio B., a young man from the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region, and Francesco Merlini. After receiving a reply to his letters, Sergio expresses his gratitude, because the answer has been “of great and twofold help” to him. First of all, it gave him strength and made it possible for him to begin his “small-big fight in changing” himself. As a consequence, he now felt able to contribute to changing “certain attitudes of the society” in which he happened to live. Second, Sergio thanks Merlini for the “sense of warmth and fraternity” so evident in the letter. “It might seem a banality,” Sergio adds, “but the fact that you have called me brother is such a sweetly new and enthusiastic thing for me that I had not felt for a long, long time.”<sup>70</sup>

More generally, readers of *Fuori!* reacted enthusiastically to the news that a magazine specifically about LGBT issues was going to be published, demonstrating that such an event could mark an important change in their lives. A male nurse from Milan, Angelo S., writes, for example, that he “cannot express the enthusiasm” he feels in “realizing that finally we have our own magazine!!!” He reveals that he and his boyfriend had “managed to print some posters [advertising the magazine] and put them up in

<sup>68</sup> *Fuori!* to L.M., 26 August 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>69</sup> For the definition of “emotional refuge,” see William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 128–29.

<sup>70</sup> Sergio B. to Francesco Merlini, 30 November 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

many streets of the city.”<sup>71</sup> Felice G., a forty-four-year-old widowed worker from the province of Alessandria, Piedmont, was also very enthusiastic. He relates that he has read all the issues of *Fuori!* “until the last word,” and this enabled him to recover a bit from his “bad mood.” He adds that he would love to meet all of *Fuori!*’s contributors personally in order to hug them for the joy that they have given him. He concludes: “I feel I already LOVE YOU ALL.”<sup>72</sup> Felice wrote to the magazine again three years later with similar sentiments: “thanks to *Fuori!*” he had “rediscovered that it is possible to LOVE and to be desired and well-liked.”<sup>73</sup>

The tone of these letters suggests that having someone to write to about crucial personal matters, even if only through the impersonal channel of the letter to an editor, must have provided great relief for those who felt isolated and alone. Giuseppe S., an eighteen-year-old boy from Milan, for example, writes to Francesco Merlini that he is “extremely happy about having found [in him a] friend, who can help [him] to come out from the situation” in which he happens to find himself and with whom he is “finally able to talk about [his] problems.”<sup>74</sup>

While references to happiness are common in the letters in the *Fuori!* archive, they are virtually absent from the letters to Consoli and *Ompo*. As we have seen, this was the case with anger too. The same applies also to fear and affection. I found it particularly difficult to explain the frequency of mentions of fear only among the *Fuori!* readers, given the widespread presence, as we will see below, of references to courage in letters to both *Fuori!* and *Ompo*. A possible explanation could be that the more radical project of homosexual liberation proposed by *Fuori!*, in which the readers of the magazine were requested to be personally involved, might have caused a significant degree of anxiety in those readers. For example, in 1974 Giuseppe S. wrote to Merlini about how his consciousness of his situation had produced internal conflict, leading to great fear that he would not be able to accept a “completely new way of living.”<sup>75</sup> Merlini replies by asking: “Why does it frighten you *terribly* to be homosexual? . . . The homosexual world, free and liberated, is full of difficulties as much as in the straight

<sup>71</sup> Angelo S. to *Fuori!*, 2 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. The letter was published in issue no. 3 (September 1972).

<sup>72</sup> Felice G. to *Fuori!*, 18 July 1975, folder 195, AF-FF.

<sup>73</sup> Felice G. to Angelo Pezzana, 22 May 1979, folder 200, AF-FF. Other examples are Gabriele A. to *Fuori!*, folder 190, 27 June 1972, AF-FF; Bentivoglio to *Fuori!*, 5 February 1973; G.P. to *Fuori!*, 28 July 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>74</sup> Giuseppe S. to Francesco Merlini, 3 December 1974, folder 193, AF-FF. See also the letter from Paolo, a twenty-seven-year-old boy from Bologna, in which he thanks Merlini for his support and adds: “You can’t believe how happy I am” about his letter. Like Giuseppe, Paolo too describes the consequences of his sexual orientation as a “problem” that has left him embittered and is “still poisoning” his life. He describes his feelings of self-hatred and how he has repressed his own instincts. Paolo to Francesco Merlini, 14 January 1975, folder 194, AF-FF.

<sup>75</sup> Giuseppe S. to Francesco Merlini, 20 November 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

one, but it is so beautiful! Think about what redemption after long-term slavery means. It is no coincidence, in fact, that we say that we are proud to be gay.”<sup>76</sup>

In other cases, fear hides behind a surface layer of anger. Two letters from a sixteen-year-old boy from the province of Milan are full of words that have been crossed out. The boy himself comments on this, arguing that “the mess” he has written “is a clear image of the chaos” he has in his mind. He starts the first letter by saying that he has spent “16 years in the shit” and describing his resentment against his parents in dreamy and violent language. He writes that he does not “give a shit” about the “mild, sticky, sugary love” of his parents because he has realized that he has just been “an object to be shown to others.” In a rather delirious passage, he then curses his parents (or is he instead referring to the above-mentioned “others?”), describing them as “pigs” and “murderers” and claiming that he can see “blood flooding the streets”—his own blood. Furthermore, he describes his existence as a life of “loneliness, fear, and a guilty conscience,” adding that he actually “never existed” and is “already dead” and concluding: “I see only closed doors, I can’t love, I hate myself. I [crossed out: I am not heterosexual and maybe] am homosexual. . . . I am as brittle as a piece of glass. . . . I am trying to escape from myself . . . to kill myself, to become nothing in order not to find anything.”<sup>77</sup> Although the language is full of anger and violence, the underlying self-judgment clearly expresses fear.

Fear and suffering are very much present as well in a 1972 letter full of grammatical errors from Nino, a fifty-four-year-old man from Rome who uses the words “dear” and “dearest” thirteen times in the one and a half pages he wrote to *Fuori!*:

May God want that we can finally find our place, us, me, dearest, after so many tears and suffering and surprises [*sic*] and shame, I suffered too much. . . . I got married to cover the shame, I has [*sic*] two children who are married tank [*sic*] God and it seems that they are normal. I fond [*sic*] a woman like a sister and we get by. . . . I think, dear colleagues, that only a few people have suffered like I have suffered and still sufer [*sic*]. Since adolescence, then the [*sic*] soldier I asked to be discharged from the forces after terrible anguish that [*sic*] a friend did not come back because he perrished [*sic*] under the bombs. I did not believe, my dear, that in life one could love so much. Just imagine being forced to hide [my] torment [and] endless love, to play the cold person because otherwise [I would have been] derided. But a crush like that, my dear, God knows the truth. . . . I have always kept firm in the duty of assistance and commitment [*sic*] toward the family. . . . [T]his big cross and the shame I have been carrying are enough and

<sup>76</sup> Francesco Merlini to Giuseppe S., 27 November 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>77</sup> To *Fuori!*, 2 February 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.



[I had] a great fear that my children would be like me. I thought that after getting married it [*sic*] disappeared, vows, prayers, and weeping. . . . [T]he homosexuality we have been carrying and suffering like a life imprisonment always in the fear and in the shame and worst the FEAR of losing our job. . . . [O]ne day will come when we homosexuals will be able to look each other in the face openly, with no fear and shame and hypocrisy and make love and satisfy our instincts. . . . [L]et's hope that there will be liberty like in all free countries.<sup>78</sup>

The replies from *Fuori!* often provide remedies or strategies to fight these fears. In answering a seventeen-year-old boy from Tuscany, Francesco Merlini describes the boy's letter as full of "loneliness" and "unhappiness" and claims that if the boy started demolishing his own fears and taboos, he would entirely "recover [his] dignity as a human being" and would soon "feel the pride of being homosexual, which defies derision." Should the boy still feel "afraid of being derided," Merlini concludes that the boy should answer his accusers with the line "Yes, I am a queer, so what?" This would likely produce "either silence . . . or a dialogue."<sup>79</sup>

As noted, expressions of affection were quite common in the letters from the readers of *Fuori!*, while they were far less common among the readership of *Ompo*. Two factors were most likely at play. On the one hand, despite their rather confrontational and political language in response to readers' letters, members of the *Fuori!* staff nonetheless simultaneously stressed the importance of "positive" emotions such as joy and love. On the other hand, unlike *Ompo*, *Fuori!* staff members were much more likely to keep in touch with the magazine's readers, often exchanging several letters with them and thus frequently developing intimate relationships. This, for example, is quite clear in one of several letters from Gianfrancesco C. to Francesco Merlini, which ends with the words "with greatest affection (which I do not want to turn into love)."<sup>80</sup> Love is also mentioned by a fourteen-year-old boy who had watched an episode of a *Fuori!* TV show hosted by the national broadcasting company, RAI. Writing in 1978, he begins with a statement about "already lov[ing]" the whole *Fuori!* group.<sup>81</sup> Carmine claims that he has "always been a homosexual," has "never had a love relationship [or sexual intercourse?]," and has no friends because he is shy and never goes out. He adds that should his parents find out about his sexual persuasion,

<sup>78</sup> Nino to *Fuori!*, 7 August 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. The letter was published in a corrected version in *Fuori!*, no. 4 (October 1972).

<sup>79</sup> Francesco Merlini to Kim, 27 February 1975, folder 195, AF-FF. On strategies to fight fear, see also Gabriele A. to *Fuori!*, 27 June 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>80</sup> Gianfranco [Gianfrancesco] to Francesco Merlini, 8 February 1975, folder 195, AF-FF.

<sup>81</sup> The program was called Programmi dell'accesso—Spaziolibero and was run by associations or non-Catholic churches, which had to be authorized by the parliamentary Under-committee for Access and which reported to the Parliamentary Committee of Inspection of Radio Televisione Italiana (RAI).

it would “be the end of the world . . . and his brothers would laugh in his face.” For this reason, Carmine asks the *Fuori!* editorial office to “write the syllables [*sic*] xyz in place of the word homosexuality” when they write to him. He expresses his trust in them and begs them to please give him “some happiness” by granting his wish of getting him in touch with other boys. Carmine, who is from the province of Salerno, then concludes his letter, calling them “MY LOVE(S) [error]” and “my treasure” and writing: “I wish I could find as many friends as there are stones and shells in the world.”<sup>82</sup>

A further mention of love comes from a twenty-year-old boy from Gorizia who writes, again in 1978, that he is “homosexual and is proud of it,” because coming out had allowed him to strip off his “fake clothes.” After getting thrown out of the house by his parents, he had to resort to prostitution and was arrested and insulted by the police, who required him to remain in the area where he was living so they could remove “his walking papers.” Still he feels “proud, because they don’t know how beautiful homosexual love is . . . and even if somebody shouts at me ‘faggot go and hide yourself’ . . . I’m proud.” Then, addressing the *Fuori!* editorial office, he asks “for help and for some words” that would make him “smile a bit.”<sup>83</sup>

Mentions of words such as “love” and “affection” in letters from the readers of *Ompo* or from members of CIDAMS are very rare. Nicolino T. from Padua, who had previously published an article about homosexuality for the periodical *Homo*, wrote in 1973 to Massimo Consoli that “in order to pull down all the prejudices against homosexuality everybody should strive to behave in the most natural way,” and instead of “creating fake liberating ghettos” one should “have a circle of true friends.” His hope was to find a “friend” to share “affection” with, and for that reason he attached an advertisement to be published in CIDAMS’s magazine.<sup>84</sup> The second reader, a young priest, looked for “love, even a physical one.”<sup>85</sup>

It is not surprising that in the correspondence from both *Fuori!* and *Ompo* contributors (who often, though not always, were also close friends), affection and love find an important place. Cristina S., for example, expressed “friendship and affection” toward Consoli.<sup>86</sup> Delia C., who had met her girlfriend, Rita, through Consoli, described her “love at first sight” for Rita as something surprising: “I did not expect all this, in such a short time.”<sup>87</sup> Some months later she wrote to Consoli that both she and Rita were disappointed by the relationship. At the beginning everything was beautiful, and both “were under the illusion” that they had found their “kindred spirit.” But this initial enthusiasm soon faded, particularly for Rita.<sup>88</sup> As in

<sup>82</sup> Carmine D. to *Fuori!* [1978], folder 199, AF-FF.

<sup>83</sup> Roberto S. to *Fuori!*, 23 July 1978, folder 199, AF-FF.

<sup>84</sup> Nicolino T. to Massimo Consoli, 14 August 1973, box 2, FC-ACS.

<sup>85</sup> Lucio S. to Massimo Consoli, 17 July 1976, box 2, FC-ACS.

<sup>86</sup> Cristina S. to Massimo Consoli, 26 June 1976, box 2, FC-ACS.

<sup>87</sup> Delia C. to Massimo Consoli, 31 May 1975, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>88</sup> Delia C. to Massimo Consoli, 4 October 1975, box 1, FC-ACS.

any workplace romance, the job complicated the romance. Different views about the editing of the magazine or involvement in the larger movement could complicate intimate relationships.

In 1972 Mauro (Bertocchi?) wrote to Angelo Pezzana that he had decided he would no longer be an active member of *Fuori!* In an attempt to separate political and intimate relationships, the letter assures Pezzana that “for now, the only really spontaneous and uncomplicated thing” is the “affection” he feels for him and for the rest of the *Fuori!* group.<sup>89</sup> Offended by a statement of the Radical Party, with which *Fuori!* had allied itself, Emma Allais wrote to Angelo Pezzana in 1974 to inform him that she had made a decision that would likely ruin their friendship and that he was confusing “friendship with attachment to *Fuori!*.”<sup>90</sup> She declined a dinner invitation for fear that she would “fall victim to further affective blackmail,” to which she feared she “would give in” because she loved (“ti voglio bene”) Pezzana. She was therefore defending herself and—as odd as it may have seemed to Pezzana—their friendship by staying away from “this couple affection/*Fuori!*,” for which she had “already swallowed a lot of things.”<sup>91</sup>

So far we have discussed a group of emotions that were much more present in the correspondence between *Fuori!* and its readers than in the circle around Massimo Consoli. The letters to both groups, however, consistently dwell on the concept of courage. Being openly gay during this period in Italy was perceived as and in fact often was highly risky. Those who had the courage to choose the path of coming out and even to become gay activists were regarded with respect and a sense of admiration by those who remained in the closet. Victor De Sabata, a medical doctor who was a friend of Consoli’s, wrote to him that he “admires the courage with which you guys fight” and that he could “not conceal admiration and respect for your courage.”<sup>92</sup> In a 1975 letter, Consoli himself urged a new female contributor to *Ompo* to sign her articles with her true name because “the demonstration of courage implied by such an act always works as a means of encouraging readers.”<sup>93</sup> In 1974 Francesco Merlini similarly prodded Franco A. from Genoa, who describes himself as psychologically ill, “to declare to the world that you are a gay person, with no comfortable masking, then you come out for real, facing society with courage.” Merlini accused

<sup>89</sup> Mauro [Bertocchi?] to Angelo Pezzana, 10 November 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>90</sup> Probably a reference to a statement by the party leader, Marco Pannella. During a TV show he claimed that after the introduction of divorce through a referendum, Italy did not become, as Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani had previously warned, a “victim of lesbians and homosexuals” but instead proved to be a “serious country.” On this episode, see the anonymous article draft in folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>91</sup> Emma Allais to Angelo Pezzana, 23 October 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>92</sup> Victor De Sabata to Massimo Consoli, 3 November 1979, box 1, FC-ACS; Victor De Sabata to Massimo Consoli, 5 July 1976, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>93</sup> Massimo Consoli to Cristina S., 30 January 1975, box 2, FC-ACS.

Franco of “lazing” in his “condition as a sick person,” a condition that he had “almost voluntarily assumed.”<sup>94</sup> Franco answered by saying that he was “a potential revolutionary” but could not find “the courage to throw the first stone.”<sup>95</sup> These frequent references to courage clearly demonstrate that the two organizations were attempting to encourage emotional responses that would be useful in the fight to decrease discrimination against LGBT people.

Other emotions common to the circles around both *Fuori!* and Consoli are sadness, shame, and loneliness. All of these emotions are present, for example, in a 1979 letter to Consoli from Giorgio B., a man in his fifties: “Here in the village if they know that I am different from them they won’t give me a break and this would be a dishonor for me! I wish I could find some friends, but I can’t find anybody. . . . Anyway, let’s hope for the best! Obviously, I have been unlucky in my life!”<sup>96</sup> An undated letter from a “young homosexual” from the province of Venice to the board of the Ompo’s Association similarly expressed a wide range of emotions, including despair, sadness, anger, and loneliness:

I am a poor wretch. I should have been born a woman. And instead what have I turned out to be? A hybrid, a good-looking boy, with a micro penis, who walks (I am sorry for being vulgar) like a prostitute. Yes, right like a prostitute, that is swaying in an irritating manner, and not because I mean to walk that way, but just because my pelvis and bottom are deformed, or better: they look like a woman’s. . . . [A]t work . . . everybody laughs behind my back, whistles at me, or pretends to grab my ass. . . . When I go home I feel so humiliated that I pour out my anger by devouring food and wine, until I get drunk, almost every day.<sup>97</sup>

Similar feelings of sadness and loneliness are expressed in a 1975 letter to CIDAMS from M.B., a young boy from the province of Bolzano. He writes that he had “terrible experiences” because of his tendencies,” adding, “PS I feel so lonely.”<sup>98</sup>

Sadness and loneliness are also very present in the letters to *Fuori!* Severino F., a thirty-eight-year-old man from the province of Gorizia, stated in 1972 that he has “had a very sad life, on the other hand we are all a bit below the cross!”<sup>99</sup> This reference to homosexuality as a sort of torment comparable with the crucifixion of Jesus (in Italy there is a saying, “Everybody has his own cross,” meaning that everybody has to learn to deal

<sup>94</sup> Francesco Merlini to Franco A., 4 December 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>95</sup> Franco A. to Francesco Merlini, 8 December 1974, folder 193, AF-FF.

<sup>96</sup> Giorgio B. [to *Ompo*], October 1979, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>97</sup> Paolo F. to the Board of Ompo’s, n.d. [between 1976 and 1977], box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>98</sup> Marco B. to CIDAMS, 8 January 1975, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>99</sup> Severino F., 25 August 1972, folder 190, AF-FF. On sadness and loneliness, see also Alberto F. to Francesco Merlini, 22 January 1975, folder 195, AF-FF; Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 12 September 1979, box 293, FC-ACS.

with his or her own portion of suffering) appears also in a letter discussed above.<sup>100</sup> Sometimes this sense of loneliness also acquired a political meaning. In a 1981 letter to Consoli, Felix Cossolo expressed a sense of loneliness and discomfort, asking him to move back to Italy from the United States so that they could found a new magazine together. His loneliness, he wrote, was compounded by his inability to understand why he and his fellow activists “aren’t able to engage other homosexuals.”<sup>101</sup> Consoli for his part had earlier told another friend that “loneliness is a constant in our environment, yet we must admit that too often it is our fault if we suffer so much from that in such an acute way.”<sup>102</sup>

Readers in the process of transitioning from political (and personal) isolation to engagement with the LGBT movement often expressed mixed feelings: a sense not only of liberation but also of cultural and psychological inadequacy or confusion. Delia Cacciapuoti, for example, wrote to Consoli, who had asked her to send him some of her other writings for *Ompo*, that she did not feel that she was “entitled to express [her] opinion about something or to send messages” because she did not know herself well enough.<sup>103</sup> But she thanked Consoli and his coworkers, stating that “engaging in this environment has made [her] feel better than before.”<sup>104</sup> Another girl, from Rome, who described herself as a “straight person who might fall in love with a woman,” expressed her contradictory feelings upon first hearing about homosexuality on a radio program run by the *Fuori!* group on Radio Radicale. Her initial “disgust” and “dismay” turned into “curiosity” about the topic.<sup>105</sup>

In the Consoli archive, letters that are related to the publication of *Ompo* or to the LGBT movement are mixed together with Consoli’s private letters, so it comes as no surprise that correspondents are more likely to deal with much more intimate matters than the contributors of *Fuori!* Particularly interesting is the correspondence between Consoli and two of his friends, Salvatore Adelfio and the poet Dario Bellezza. The letters reveal that the friendship with Bellezza seems to have been somewhat turbulent. Bellezza, who suffered from depression, seems to have been insecure about his ability to maintain personal relationships. Yet at least in the correspondence with Consoli, he expressed a fierce self-confidence in his cultural abilities. For example, Bellezza provided a merciless critique of

<sup>100</sup> Nino to *Fuori!*, 7 August 1972, folder 190, AF-FF.

<sup>101</sup> Felix Cossolo to Massimo Consoli, 9 October 1981, box 279, FC-ACS.

<sup>102</sup> Massimo Consoli to Cristina S., 25 January 1975, box 2, FC-ACS.

<sup>103</sup> Delia Cacciapuoti to Massimo Consoli, 31 May 1975, box 1, FC-ACS. On her sense of cultural inadequacy, see also Delia Cacciapuoti to Massimo Consoli, 30 April 1975, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>104</sup> Delia Cacciapuoti to Massimo Consoli, 4 October 1975, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>105</sup> Isa M. to *Fuori!* [group of Rome], c/o Radio Radicale, 23 November 1976, box 8, FC-ACS. On confusion, see Angelo C. to *Fuori!*, 23 October 1979, folder 200, AF-FF.

some poems by Consoli that he had sent him.<sup>106</sup> In a subsequent letter he explained that he had not meant to offend him, as “every time I criticize and hate, there is always a constant of love.”<sup>107</sup> After Consoli was late in answering, Bellezza wrote again, asking if he was offended and proclaiming: “We are what we are: full of greed, disaffection and anguish. We must suffer. You are not a victim and I am no persecutor.”<sup>108</sup> In a later letter Bellezza seems to think that his friendship with Consoli has faded. After an ironic exclamation (“So you still love me!”), he wrote that he and Consoli “had together had the most traumatic experience of our lives, because we got to know our natures, their unconscious drives and manifestations.” However, “like Pasolini,” Bellezza thinks that “living a worn-out love affair produces anguish, the soul does not grow anymore. And yet we must grow. . . . [O]ur friendship will not be like it used to be.”<sup>109</sup> The fact that the two kept writing each other in the following years, maybe during periods when they were not both in Rome, seems to exclude the possibility that their friendship had irreparably faded. In an 1984 letter to Bellezza from New York, Consoli shared with his friend some thoughts about love. He expresses his “need to have somebody wait for me,” someone who “writes me to tell ridiculous lies,” for instance, that “he dreams of me at night and thinks of me in the daytime” and “[assures me that] he cannot live without me.”<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, in a letter from an earlier period to his lover Maurizio, who was on vacation with Consoli, Bellezza expresses his wish to receive “sincere little letters” in which Maurizio would talk about himself, “even with some [grammatical] errors,” as long as he comes to Bellezza “as genuine” as he is. This because Maurizio is part of Bellezza, and for him “it is sad” to live without Maurizio.<sup>111</sup> In these words, we can find a kind of desire for alleged “authentic” and humble partners, especially young men.<sup>112</sup> Bellezza, for example, shares with Consoli his conviction that Enrichetto, the latter’s younger partner, “gets more and more beautiful” and adds that “the boys . . . are better than us, humbly anonymous, while we strive to ambitiously exist in this world.”<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, n.d. [autumn 1970], box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>107</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 2 November 1970, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>108</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 28 November 1970, box 293, FC-ACS. Consoli answered by reassuring him: “You suffer from a persecution complex. . . . I still love you (puah!)” (Massimo Consoli to Dario Bellezza, 5 December 1970, box 293, FC-ACS).

<sup>109</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 22 July 1971, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>110</sup> Massimo Consoli to Dario Bellezza, 12 February 1984, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>111</sup> Dario Bellezza to “Maurizietto,” 5 August 1970, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>112</sup> It is interesting that in more recent years a former member of *Fuori!* has criticized Bellezza for having fostered “antihomosexual stereotypes” through his literature from the early 1970s. See Cristallo, *Uscir fuori*, 53. This fascination for young assumed proletarians was shared by Bellezza’s friend Pier Paolo Pasolini. For the erotics of the class divide in Britain, see Cook, *Queer Conflicts*, 161.

<sup>113</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 4 November 1971, box 293, FC-ACS.



Jokes and irony are often indications of affection, and this is also true in the case of Consoli and Bellezza. For example, in a 1970 letter, Consoli accused Bellezza of slandering him with mutual friends, ironically wishing him luck in benefiting from this activity. However, he continued, "It is a shame that in our friendship (?) I have always given, given, given in every sense, financially, in affection, physically . . . while what I got back from you was just 'dicks in the ass' (as people say in Rome). Be sure that when I chair the special revolutionary tribunals for crimes against humanity I will ask for the death penalty for you (which I will eventually commute to perpetual blocking up of your asshole)." <sup>114</sup> Even if this might sound like a more or less serious threat, from the context of the letter it is actually clear that this is a typical example of crude Roman irony made of black humor and swear words.

Sometimes, jokes seemed to play a cathartic role, exorcizing fears regarding the dangers that LGBT people were facing in a homophobic society. When Salvatore Adelfio, who was the first openly gay Italian conscientious objector, had to live abroad to avoid arrest in Italy, Consoli wrote to him that he has "just started the campaign 'Come back Salvatore Adelfio,'" and in the meantime he is "preparing the 'Salvatore Adelfio out of jail!' one" while keeping the "reserve campaign 'Fascist Police! Salvatore Adelfio has been assassinated!'" Consoli assured Adelfio that "Rome is waiting" for him and that "at [the prison of] Rebibbia they are setting up the torture chamber." <sup>115</sup>

Similarly, Bellezza, wrote to Consoli about his book *Morte di Pasolini* (Murder of Pasolini) with a good deal of gallows humor: "You will like it. [In it] I argue that Pasolini was killed by Pelosi [Pasolini's killer] out of love. Each of us has his own killer walking somewhere around the world. Who is yours? Will you also perhaps be killed by a faggot [*frocio*]?" <sup>116</sup> In an undated earlier letter, Bellezza talked again about the death of Pasolini, a close friend of his, which had deeply shocked him, addressing Consoli: "You are an asshole, but I love you. . . . I will publish *Morte di Pasolini* (by the way: when will we have 'Morte di Consoli?') and it will bring success and money, otherwise . . . suicide." <sup>117</sup> Despite the fact that, as we have just seen, nonconformist and provocative language was characteristic of Bellezza's style, it is somehow striking that just one year after Pasolini's death Bellezza wrote a review about an anthology of poems by Consoli in which he seems to assign creative value to images of murder. In it he praises "the lines full of irrational hate, of the wish to kill lovers and rivals, of shitting on [*smerdare*] the entire earth." <sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Massimo Consoli to Dario Bellezza, 17 December 1970, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>115</sup> Massimo Consoli to Salvatore Adelfio, 5 January 1973, box 1, FC-ACS.

<sup>116</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, 23 November 1981, box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>117</sup> Dario Bellezza to Massimo Consoli, n.d. [1981?], box 293, FC-ACS.

<sup>118</sup> Dario Bellezza, "Presto, mi declami tre insulti," *Tempo*, 8 August 1976.

In conclusion, the letters that are the subject of this essay are testimonies to a period in which many men and women in Italy took the first steps toward a new, important phase in their lives, namely, their coming out. Even those who decided to stay in the closet were influenced by these developments, since they could now buy a gay magazine or seek help or new contacts by writing letters to the editor. Since being openly gay was risky and living in secrecy usually caused extensive suffering, the very existence of periodicals for LGBT people offered a tremendous opportunity for thousands of non-straight people in Italy to live their own sexual orientation and/or identity with less anxiety and to get in touch with other men or women who faced similar challenges and had similar needs.

In this regard, as we have seen, the letters that readers sent to *Ompo*, directly to Consoli, or to *Fuori!* can indeed be seen as examples of emotional refuge. At the same time, especially in the case of *Fuori!*, this kind of refuge had some unwritten rules, and breaking them could incur emotional sanction. Beyond the widespread process of emotional identification that the sources I have analyzed testify to, self-adaptations to the linguistic, political, and emotional styles of the magazines certainly affected the experience of readers who wrote to the editors and publishers. The need to be accepted in the face of prevailing homophobic social pressures explains the letter writers' frequent apologies and efforts to conform to the emotional styles of the different publications. Even in this supportive space, in other words, LGBT people worried that their feelings might be disturbing or inadequate.<sup>119</sup>

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DARIO PASQUINI obtained a PhD in contemporary history from the University of Turin and the Free University of Berlin. Between 2007 and 2008 he was Marie-Curie-Fellow at the University of Bielefeld. He has published a book on the post-1945 policies of memory in Italy and Germany and essays on the history of the Italian and the German satirical press, on the relationship between satire and emotions, and on the Italian LGBT community during the 1970s and 1980s. Currently he is working on a research project regarding duties of global justice and emotions.

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, the letters from Severino F. to *Fuori!*, 25 August 1972; from Vincenzo Z. to *Fuori!*, 29 August 1972; from Paolo B. to Francesco Merlini, 17 January 1975; from Giovanni Dall'Orto to Francesco Merlini, 9 April 1976; from Paolo A. to *Ompo*, n.d.