

Chapter 4

Sexual (R)evolution, Sex Panic, and Homosexual Consciousness Raising

According to Gert Hekma and Alain Giami between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s more and more people wanted to rid themselves of what they saw as the religious, legal, medical, familial, and political restrictions of the past. Women demanded access to abortions and contraceptives in order to enjoy a free sexual life, many gay men came out of the closet, and many scrutinized the authority of religion, psychiatry, and medicine. The “holy triangle” of marriage, reproduction, and heterosexuality was broken in the name of pleasure and sexual self-determination. Mainstream periodicals – desirous of increasing sales and expanding their markets – publishing risqué images and disseminating articles about sex, played a key role in nurturing the proliferation of discourses around sexuality, affecting many people’s attitudes towards sexual taboos and sexual practices. Sex radicals, porn entrepreneurs, feminists, gay activists, and other sexual minorities demanded a freedom of sexual expression that promoted polymorphous sexual practices and proposed new ways to enjoy a serene sexual life.¹

¹ For the “sexual revolution” see Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), 322-323, 332-333; *Sexual Revolution*, Jeffery Escoffier ed. (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2003); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 144, 152-153; Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13, 133-134, 137; Gert Hekma and Alain Giami, “Sexual Revolutions: An Introduction,” in *Sexual Revolutions*, Gert Hekma and Alain Giami eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-24; Jeffrey Escoffier, “Pornography, Perversity and the Sexual Revolution,” in *Sexual Revolutions*, 203-218; Eric Schaefer, “Introduction. Sex Seen: 1968 and Rise of ‘Public’ Sex,” in *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, Eric Schaefer ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014): 1-22; Annette F. Timm and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe. A History from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 239-241. For the commodification of sex in the 1960s see also Dino Origlia, “Il rapporto Kinsey diventa vecchio,” *Epoca*, November 28, 1968, 44-46. In Italy the pill could be sold since 1967 only for therapeutic purposes. In 1976 it became available to the general public. Magazines started talking about the pill since 1964. The topic became particularly thorny in Italy after the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that condemned the use of contraceptives. See, for example, “Il dilemma della pillola,” *Panorama*, July 1964, 51-57; Arno Falkenburg, “La pillola,” *Cronaca*, September 12, 1964, 12-15; Franco Bandini, “Sta per cambiare il destino della donna,” *Il Tempo*, October 14, 1964, 28-34; Franco Bandini, “Speranze e timori per la pillola ‘Pincus’,” *Il Tempo*, October 21, 1964, 32-37; Franco Bandini, “Perché i preti d’oltralpe sostengono la pillola,” *Il Tempo*, November 4, 1964, 20-25; Pennaverde, “Il pericolo Pincus,” *Cronaca*, August 21, 1965, 3-4; “La pillola perseguitata,” *ABC*, December 12, 1965, 5; Guido Marini, “La ‘pillola’: una bomba disinnescata nelle mani delle donne italiane,” *ABC*, December 12, 1965, 21-23; Luigi de Marchi, “La pillola perseguitata,” *ABC*, June 5, 1965, 13; Dino Barberini, “La Pillola,” *Vie Nuove*, July 21,

However, even if “1968” seemed to be the beginning of a new sexual epoch, we need to think about it as the culmination of a much longer process. Neither in the US nor in Europe was there a watershed in the history of sexuality, a moment that deeply and suddenly changed how people had and understood sex. The “sexual revolution” developed over a long timescale, following a non-linear pattern. As historians Annette Timm, Joshua Sanborn, and Dagmar Herzog have emphasized, the “sexual liberation” had deep historical roots. The term “revolution” usually implies a rapid and dramatic change, but the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s “was an immense and contradictory process stretching out over the life span of at least two generations.” It was “the historical culmination of processes begun long before the two decades commonly ascribed,” and that continued to produce significant changes in the decades that followed.²

In Italy, “1968” has been narrativized as a turning point that redefined family, sexual morality, and individual and collective behaviors. In that year, according to conventional narratives, media addressed loss of virginity, adultery, orgasm, sex outside marriage, and sexual pleasure; broke the silence around sex; and allowed the emergence of new sexual ethics. But the circulation of discourses concerning sex and sexuality had begun before the “mythical” 1968. According to Peppino Ortoleva in particular, the closure of the *case chiuse*

1966, 32-39; “L’aritmetica delle culle,” *Panorma*, September 1966, 31-35; “Sesso sessanta/I-La sconfitta del maschio,” *Il Borghese*, April 13, 1967, 729-733; Maria R. Boensch e Luciano Cirri, “C’è una pillola nel vostro futuro-II/L’amore giudizioso e la legge timida,” *Il Borghese*, August 10, 1967, 813-815; Mino Monicelli, “E’ servita solo ai ricchi,” *L’Espresso*, May 5, 1968, 16-17; Guido Raifredi, “La pillola liberatrice,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 17, 1968, 20-22; Peter Kolosimo “La nostra pillola quotidiana,” *Cronaca*, August 10, 1968, 4-5; “Il processo alla pillola,” *Il Tempo*, August 13, 1968, 20-25; Mario Pancera, “L’enciclica del papa: che cosa significa?” *Oggi*, August 15, 1968, 50-51; PK, “La sveglia dell’amore,” *Cronaca*, November 2, 1968, 16-17; Franco Gianola, “Chi ha paura della pillola Pincus?” *Vie Nuove*, August 21, 1969, 44-48.

² For deep roots of the “sexual revolution” see: John Levi Martin, “Structuring the sexual revolution,” *Theory and Society* 25, no. 1 (1996): 105-151; Michael Seidman, “The Pre-May 1968 Sexual Revolution,” *Contemporary French Civilization* 25, no. 1 (2001): 20-41; Escoffier, “Pornography, Perversity and the Sexual Revolution,” 203-218; Alan Petigny, “Illegitimacy, Postwar Psychology, and the Reperiodization of the Sexual Revolution,” *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 62-74; Dagmar Herzog, “Sexual Morality in 1960s West Germany,” *German History* 23, no. 3 (2005): 371-384; Id., *Sex after Fascism*, 141-142; Marzio Barbagli, Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna, Franco Garelli, *La sessualità degli italiani* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 17-19, 301-302; Peter Edelberg, “The Long Sexual Revolution: The Police and the New Gay Man,” in *Sexual Revolutions*, 46-59; Hekma, Giami, “Sexual Revolutions: An Introduction,” 1-24; Timm, Sanborn, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe*, 14, 233-235, 241-244, 250-251. David Allyn underlined how the expression “sexual revolution,” coined in the 1920s by Wilhelm Reich, was used by different people, with different meanings and in different contexts, throughout the twentieth century. See David Allyn, *Make Love Not War. The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 5-6.

under the Merlin Law had caused an outburst of all forms of erotica that had transformed the Italian mediasphere into a “brothel without walls.” Magazines and newspapers were talking about contraception and premarital sex already in the first half of the 1960s, and in 1966 the first softcore men’s magazines and comics appeared in the Italian newsstands. The year 1968 was not a dividing line but rather an essential moment of acceleration in the continuum of the Italian *sexual evolution*. Moreover, this moment of acceleration was not the beginning of an irreversible emancipation. The Italian “sexual liberation” of 1968 was elusive, complex, contradictory, incoherent, scattered with backward steps and, above all, did not liberate everybody.³ Thinking about 1968 as a revolutionary milestone in the history of Italian sexuality after which nothing was the same is misleading. In that year, the Italian Parliament approved Loris Fortuna’s bill introducing the long overdue right to divorce, but in the same year Pope Paul VI issued the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that, officially forbade the use of contraceptives, thereby trying to influence the life of many Catholics.⁴ In 1968 many Italian students, who were involved in transnational anti-imperial and anti-capitalist revolts,

³ See Marica Tolomelli, “Giovani anni Sessanta. Sulla necessità di costituirsi come generazione,” in *Genere, generazioni, consumi. L’Italia degli anni Sessanta*, Paolo Capuzzo ed. (Roma: Carocci, 2003), 196; Anna Tonelli, *Comizi d’amore. Politica e sentimenti dal ’68 ai Papa boys* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), 47, 49-50, 53; Peppino Ortleva, *Il secolo dei media. Riti, abitudini, mitologie* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2009), 168-179; Mauro Giori, “A story of love and blood: the strange connection between Ludwig II, Luchino Visconti and Italian pornographic comic books,” *Porn Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 4; Mauro Giori, *Homosexuality and Italian cinema. From the fall of Fascism to the Years of Lead* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 206. For articles about contraception published in the Italian magazines in the 1960s see footnote 1. For articles about premarital sex see Salvatore Bruno, “Il seduttore sedotto,” *L’Espresso*, July 10, 1960, 12-13; Marialivia Serini, Livio Zanetti “Il peccato femminile. Rapporto morale su Roma,” *L’Espresso*, March 26, 1961, 1, 12-13; “‘Purezza’ e chirurgia” *Le Ore*, September 6, 1962, 6; “La verginità a gettone,” *Le Ore*, September 6, 1962, 7; Licinio Germini, “Ragazze attente ai movimenti,” *Cronaca*, February 9, 1963, 12-15; “Illibata sposerebbe,” *Le Ore*, February 21, 1963, 8-9; Arno Falkenburg, “Le ingenuè depravate,” *Cronaca*, January 18, 1964, 12-15; Arno Falkenburg, “Il mercato delle vergini,” *Cronaca*, January 25, 1964, 12-15; Arno Falkenburg, “Le illibate e le altre,” *Cronaca*, February 1, 1964, 12-14; Leda Muccini, “La verginità di plastica,” *ABC*, July 17, 1966, 16-17; Milena Milani, “Le ‘pasionarie’ della laguna,” *ABC*, July 24, 1966, 16-18; Emilia Granzotto, “Il tirocinio dell’amore,” *Panorama*, October 1966, 70-82. For virginity and pre-marital sex see also Gabriella Parca, *I sultani. Mentalità e comportamento del maschio italiano* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1965), 13, 87-90. According to this book men still preferred to marry a virgin. For articles about the overabundance of pornography in Italy see, for example, “Ma che cos’è la pornografia?” *Espresso colore*, November 19, 1967, 8-17; Agostino Greggi, “La stampa nuda,” *Lo Specchio*, March 30, 1969, 20-21; Adriano Baracco, “L’imbecillità nuda,” *Lo Specchio*, May 4, 1969, 8-9; Pietro Zullino, “La festa degli sporaccioni,” *Epoca*, May 11, 1969, 34-37; Pietro Zullino, “Perché gli sporaccioni dettano legge,” *Epoca*, June 22, 1969, 38-41; Telesio Malaspina, “Nude all’ombra di Mao,” *Espresso colore*, August 17, 1969, 4-17; Gabriele Invernizzi, “I provinciali del sesso. ‘Vedere no, toccare sì,’” *Vie Nuove*, October 30, 1969, 26-29; Telesio Malaspina, “La carne, la morte e il dialogo,” *Espresso colore*, November 2, 1969, 8-24; Gabriele Invernizzi, “Dove vai sesso?” *Vie Nuove*, November 6, 1969, 26-30.

⁴ Fortuna’s bill was presented for the very first time in the Italian parliament on October 1, 1965 without much fortune. Three years later, on October 7, 1968, the bill of Loris Fortuna – a Socialist deputy – was merged with the one presented by Antonio Baslini of the Italian Liberal Party. After an intense debate the Christian Democrats accepted to put to the vote the bill on the condition that they could hold a referendum against divorce. The bill, approved on November 30, 1968, entered into force on December 1, 1970. The referendum to repeal the law, held in 1974, was rejected by the majority of the voters (59.1%). Tonelli, *Comizi d’amore*, 67, 74-75. For the Encyclical see Tonelli, *Comizi d’amore*, 97-98.

passionately advocated the revolutionary power of sexual freedom, but the freedom they talked about often stopped well short of questioning heteropatriarchy.⁵ In the end, Aldo Braibanti's trial and Ermanno Laborini's homicide – two cases I will analyze in this chapter – showed the resilience of conservative values and traditional policies in the midst of “sexual liberation.”⁶

In this chapter I will demonstrate how at the alleged peak of the Italian “sexual revolution” (1968-1969) State and public opinion opposed queer sexualities. The trials against

⁵ For the 1968 revolts in Italy see George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left. A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987) 53-54; Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder. Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 3-4, 163-165, 178-179; Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 298-304, 306, 308-315; 328-334; Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 298-301; Nanni Balestrini, Primo Moroni, *L'orda d'oro 1968-1977. La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997), 335; Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 547, 553, 586-589, 601, 618; Stuart J. Hilwig, “‘Are You Calling me a Fascist?’ A Contribution to the Oral History of the 1968 Italian Student Rebellion,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (2001): 581-597; Tolomelli, “Giovani anni Sessanta,” 210-214, 216; Vittorio Vidotto, *Italiani/e – dal miracolo economico ad oggi* (Roma-Bari: Laterza 2005), 100-101; Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 81-84, 112-113; Jan Jurz and Marica Tolomelli, “Italy,” in *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth eds. (London: Palgrave, 2008), 83-96; Stuart J. Hilwig, “‘You Are Not Our Vanguard!’ A Study of the Italian Student Movement's Failure to Mobilize the Workers of FIAT in the 1960s,” *Critique* 36, no. 2 (2008): 245-256; Stuart J. Hilwig, *Italy and 1968. Youthful Unrest and Democratic Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 1-5, 32-33; John Foot, *Fratture d'Italia* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2009), 378; Maud Anne Bracke, *Women and the Revolution of the Political. Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (London: Routledge, 2014), 46; Nico Pizzolato, “Tactics of Refusal: Idioms of Protest and Political Subjectivities in Italy's '1968 Years',” *The American Historical Review*, 123, 3 (2018): 760-762. The rebellion of the Italian students failed to radically transform the political landscape, and it was not more successful in blowing away deep-seated traditions. The student movement critiqued and tried to delegitimize traditional ethical and cultural models by reinterpreting in new ways feelings, love, sexuality, family and the relationships between men and women. Nonetheless, despite triumphalist narratives describing the Italian youths as progressive iconoclasts, the flaunted “sexual liberation” was more apparent than real. Students did not actually question, or throw into crisis, the heteropatriarchal system they lived in. The predominant position of male students, and in particular of male leaders, was never questioned. See *L'ultimo uomo. Quattro confessioni-riflessioni sulla crisi del ruolo maschile* (Roma: Savelli, 1977), 42; Fabio Giovannini, *Comunisti e diversi. Il PCI e la questione omosessuale* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1980), 66-69, 118-125; Cristiana Ambrosetti, “Compagna fidanzata,” in *Il sogno degli anni '60. Un decennio da non dimenticare nei ricordi di 46 giovani di allora*, Gregorio Paolini ed. (Roma: Savelli Editore, 1981), 39; Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 304-306; Diego Leoni, “Testimonianza Semiseria sul '68 a Trento,” in *La cultura e i luoghi del '68*, Aldo Agosti, Luisa Passerini, Nicola Tranfaglia eds. (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1991), 188-189; “Movimenti delle donne/movimenti del '68,” in *Storie di donne e femministe*, Luisa Passerini ed. (Torino: Rosenberg&Sellier, 1991), 150-158; Alessandro Cavalli and Carmen Leccardi, “1958-1967: Inizia la stagione dei giovani,” in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, Vol. 3, *L'Italia nella crisi mondiale. L'ultimo ventennio* (Torino: Einaudi, 1996), 774-775; Marwick, *Sixties*, 547; Tolomelli, “Giovanni anni Sessanta,” 191-216; Vidotto, *Italiani/e*, 99-100; Eros Francescangeli, “The Bride in Red: Morality and Private Relationships in the Italian Revolutionary Left – the Case of the Maoist Group *Servire il popolo*,” *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire*, 22, no. 1 (2005): 102-105, 108, 112; Hilwig, *Italy and 1968*, 5, 31-33; Tonelli, *Comizi d'amore*, 11-13, 25-26, 42-47; Anna Bravo, *A colpi di cuore. Storie del sessantotto* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 42-43, 59, 69, 129, 185; Bracke, *Women and the Revolution of the Political. Feminism in Italy*, 50, 64-65; Maud Anne Bracke, “Our Bodies, Ourselves: The Transnational Connections of 1970s Italian and Roman Feminism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3, (2015): 570; Paola Stelliferi, “Is the Personal Political for Men too? Encounter and Conflict between ‘New Left’ Men and Feminist Movements in 1970s Italy,” in *Men at Home*, Raffaella Sarti ed., special issue of *Gender & History* 27, no. 3 (2015): 847, 851-852; Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2018), 3-15, 37-38, 119; Andrea Hajek, “A Room of One's Own. Feminist Intersections between Space, Women's writing and Radical Bookselling in Milan (1968-1986),” *Italian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2018): 86. Even if the state of subordination of many women seemed to be rather widespread in the student movement we need to take into account the possibility that some women might have had a different experience, see Luisa Passerini, “Non solo maschio. La presenza ambivalente delle donne nel movimento,” *Il Manifesto*, 76 (1988): 16-17.

⁶ For the complex relationship between homosexual liberation and “sexual revolution” in Europe see, for example, Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*, 169-171.

Braibanti and the media lynching following the murder of Ermanno Lavorini exposed such hostility against homosexual men – presented as monsters and pedophilic ogres. These two cases show the resilience of traditional forces against queers and young protesters. Braibanti’s and Lavorini’s stories were used to reaffirm the power of families over their rebellious children, and proved that new generations needed to be protected from the dreadful perils of sexual emancipation. Braibanti’s trials (1968-1969) and Lavorini’s homicide (1969) served as pretexts to attack homosexual men, make a stand against “sexual liberation,” and accentuate the necessity of defending youths from all those forces that were threatening their innocence. Many mainstream media exploited these two cases to emphasize the necessity of controlling and protecting the young generation, fighting against pornography, and avoiding the disruption of family patterns. Threats to children and youths supposedly proved the necessity of restoring family control and supervision. Mainstream media and conservative forces exploited these two cases to demonstrate the necessity of rethinking child education, family structure, gender roles, and personal behaviors. Braibanti and Lavorini ended up symbolizing the dangers of sexual non-conformity. The “anti-homosexual panic” that emerged around 1968-1969 expressed apprehensions about sexual practices and gender dynamics. It not only reflected deep anxieties about the future of the Italian family threatened by divorce and intergenerational tensions; it also signaled the uneasiness many Italians felt about new sexual cultures and new attitudes towards gender that seemed to have been sweeping over the younger generations over the previous years.⁷ Nevertheless, sexual conservatism and anti-

⁷ In the middle of the 1960s Italian hippies (known, from the length of their hair, as *capelloni*) and “beat” became visible in Rome and Milan. They did not feel the need of showing off their masculinity, they celebrated anti-conformism, creativity, eccentricity and personal expressions, and frowned upon bourgeois respectability, inhibitions, censorship, and consumerism. See Fernanda Pivano, *C’era una volta un beat. 10 anni di ricerca alternativa* (Roma: Arcana Editrice, 1976), 106-109; Marco Grisogni, “Combattenti di strada. La nascita delle culture giovanili in Italia,” in *Ragazzi senza tempo. Immagini, musica, conflitti delle culture giovanili*, Massimo Canevacci ed. (Genova: Costa&Nolan, 1993), 36-42; Cavalli, Leccardi, “1958-1967: Inizia la stagione dei giovani,” 750-751, 754-775; Gianni de Martino, “Un tentativo d’amore,” in *I capelloni. Mondo Beat, 1966-1967. Storia, immagini, documenti*, Gianni de Martino and Marco Grisogni eds. (Roma: Castelvecchi, 1997), 301; Marco Grisogni, “Angeli Fottuti. La gioventù senza ‘3M’,” in *I capelloni*, 12-13, 17-21; Roberto de Angelis, “Il Beat Italiano,” in *Giovani prima della rivolta*, Paola Ghione and Marco Grisogni eds. (Roma: Manifestolibri, 1998), 83; Marwick, *Sixties*, 493-494; Roberto de Angelis, “Il Beat Italiano,” in *Giovani prima della rivolta*, 74; Luca Gorgolini, “I consumi,” in *Il secolo dei giovani. Le nuove generazioni e la storia del Novecento*, Paolo Sorcinelli and Angelo Varni eds. (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2004), 238; Tonelli, *Comizi d’amore*, 31-39; Bravo, *A colpi di cuore*, 42; Jacopo Tomatis, “This

homosexual hostility, nurtured by part of the Italian media, expanded public discourses on “non-normative” sexualities, producing unintended effects. Conservative hatred spurred the homosexual “counterattack” and favored the emergence of a collective identity. The anti-homosexual phobia fostered by several journalists and a vocal part of the Italian public opinion in 1968-1969, I contend, was one of the elements that nurtured the Italian “homosexual (r)evolution” and contributed the emergence of the Italian gay movement.⁸

Aldo Braibanti: Homosexuality On Trial

Aldo Braibanti was a former anti-Fascist partisan and a renowned avant-garde writer well connected to the national artistic scene. In the 1950s, he left the Italian Communist party, in which he had had a leading role, and decided to live his life as a bohemian free spirit producing ceramics, studying ants, and writing poems, essays, and fiction. In 1964, the father of the 24-year-old Giovanni Sanfratello pressed charges against him. Braibanti, often called

Is Our Music’: Italian Teen Pop Press and Genres in the 1960s,” *IASPM@Journal* 4, no. 2 (2014), 28-30, 32-33, 37. Juvenile countercultures challenged consolidated values causing intergenerational conflicts. See Lietta Tornabuoni, “Come copiavamo,” in *Il sogno degli anni '60. Un decennio da non dimenticare nei ricordi di 46 giovani di allora*, Gregorio Paolini ed. (Roma: Savelli Editore, 1981), 198; Grispigni, “Angeli Fottuti. La gioventù senza ‘3M’,” 11; de Angelis, “Il Beat Italiano,” 76; Tolomelli, “Giovani anni Sessanta,” 210-211; Daniela Calanca, “Gruppo e famiglia,” in *Il secolo dei giovani*, 169-182; Luca Gorgolini, “I consumi,” in *Il secolo dei giovani*, 237-238; Hilwig, *Italy and 1968*, 26-33; Tomatis, “‘This Is Our Music’,” 30, 32-33, 37; Cecilia Brioni, “Between Two Stages: Rita Pavone and *i giovani* on *Studio Uno* (1961–1966),” *Italian Studies* 72, no. 4 (2017): 414–427, Id., “Shorn capelloni: hair and young masculinities in the Italian Media, 1965-1967,” *Modern Italy* (2019): DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2019.25>. Also high school students seemed to show more casual attitudes towards sexuality. On February 14, 1966 the school magazine of the Liceo Parini, *La Zanzara*, published an article entitled “*Scuola e società*” (School and Society) written by the 17-year-old editor, Marco de Poli. This piece summarized and analyzed the responses to a questionnaire that de Poli and two fellow students, Marco Sassano and Claudia Beltramo Ceppi (both 17), had circulated among female schoolmates. The poll, entitled “*Cosa pensano le ragazze d’oggi?*” (What do today’s girls think?), asked questions about sexual attitudes and behaviors. It covered topics such as contraception, sexual intercourse outside marriage, unmarried mothers, and illegitimate children. The article read as an exposé against parental authoritarianism and against the hypocrisy of a society that commercialized sex but at the same time concealed the importance of sexuality in everyday life. The content of the investigative report was not particularly transgressive; nor was its tone. Many girls gave rather conservative answers, but what the young students of the Liceo Parini did – talking about sex and sexuality without the supervision of doctors and psychologists – was for many adults shocking. The authors of the article, who had broken the law by failing to submit copies of their magazine to the police, were reported and put on trial together with the school principal, Daniele Mattalia. The trial ended with the acquittal of all the defendants. This case, according to historian Anna Tonelli, confirmed the existence of “two Italies”: the Italy of the adults, who wanted to keep sexuality private, and the Italy of the young, who wanted to free themselves from traditional forms of authority and challenge school, conformist morality, and traditional family dynamics. See Cavalli, Leccardi, “1958-1967: Inizia la stagione dei giovani,” 759-760; Marwick, *Sixties*, 548-551; Tonelli, *Comizi d’amore*, 27-29. To see how the case was treated by media see for example, Pennaverde “La Zanzara del sesso,” *Cronaca*, March 5, 1966, 3-4; “Le zanzare del Parini,” *L’Espresso*, March 6, 1966, 17; Maria Grazia, “Il sesso de La Zanzara,” *Lo Specchio*, March 6, 1966, 36; Alberto Giovannini, “La ‘controriforma’ del sesso,” *Il Borghese*, March 10, 1966, 518-519; “Ma quanto punge questa Zanzara,” *Cronaca*, March 26, 1966, 3; Massimo Rendina, “Le zanzare del Parini,” *Le Ore*, March 31, 1966, 18-19; Chicca Colli, “La Zanzara giorno dopo giorno,” *Vie Nuove*, March 31, 1966, 60-64; Carlo Gregoretti, “Peccatori con la media del nove,” *L’Espresso*, April 3, 1966, 6-7; “L’assalto ai giovani,” *Lo Specchio*, April 10, 1966, 34-36; Camilla Cederna, “Da Verona sotto la toga,” *L’Espresso*, April 10, 1966, 6-7; “Gli arrabbiati di Milano,” *L’Espresso*, April 10, 1966, 8-9.

⁸ For moral panic see Chapter 1, footnote 88.

by the press “*il filosofo*” (because of his university degree in philosophy) and “*il professore*” (even if he was not an academic), was accused of *plagio* (psychological subjugation).

According to Ippolito Sanfratello, his son had been seduced by Braibanti: the intellectual had induced Giovanni, who was a high school student when they first met in 1958, to break his ties with family and friends, and begin a homosexual relationship with him. During the investigation it emerged that Braibanti had “seduced” also another youth, Pier Carlo Toscani, an apprentice electrician. The relationships with these two young men happened at different times. But the two charges were joined because, it was argued, Braibanti’s conduct with each one of them was analogous, and showed the same criminal design. According to the prosecution he had separated the youths away from their families and values by flattering them, taking advantage of their limited intellectual capacities, praising sexual freedom, and pushing them to oppose traditional institutions such as church, state, and family. Furthermore, the accusers claimed, once Toscani and Sanfratello began to spend more and more time with him, Braibanti turned out to be possessive, discouraged their contacts with other people, violated their privacy, and secluded them. In addition, the prosecutors concluded, “the professor” forced them to read obscene and anarchist books, became aggressive when the youths talked about their families or past girlfriends, and he did not allow Pier Carlo and Giovanni to watch movies or browse newspapers – fearing that they might be enticed by female characters or pictures of beautiful women.⁹

Carlo and Giovanni, as the judge Orlando Falco explained in his verdict, had distinct personalities and backgrounds, and their relationships with Braibanti followed different courses. Toscani, who frequented Braibanti between the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960, was an orphan, had working class background, and little education. His sexual relations

⁹ Albert I. Borowitz, “Psychological Kidnaping in Italy: The Case of Aldo Braibanti,” *American Bar Association Journal*, 57 (1971): 990-991, and Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999), 43-45. See also the interview of Andrea Pini with Aldo Braibanti in *Quando eravamo froci. Gli omosessuali nell’Italia di una volta* (Rome: Il saggiatore, 2011), 179-187.

with Braibanti lasted just a few months, he never lived with the accused, never left his hometown, and broke off his relations with Braibanti by his own accord.¹⁰ Thus, the case against the defendant rested on his relationship with Giovanni Sanfratello, while Toscani's case, according to the accusers, served the principal function of showing the iterative criminal conduct of Braibanti. Sanfratello was older than Toscani, better educated, and had both his parents alive.¹¹ His relationship with his family was already rather conflicted before Braibanti appeared in his life. Between 1962 and 1964 Sanfratello lived intermittently with the defendant. In October 1964 members of Giovanni's family burst into the apartment he was sharing with Braibanti in Rome and abducted him. After the "kidnapping" Sanfratello was hospitalized in a mental institution where he underwent several sessions of electroshock therapy. Despite the accusations by Giovanni's family against Braibanti, during the trial the young man denied to have been psychologically subjugated, declined to be named as a formal party in the case, and was clearly concerned that his testimony might cause harm to his former "friend."¹² Braibanti did not deny having had sex with both Toscani and Sanfratello, but he underlined that what had happened between him and these two young men was consensual, or, as he put it, a consequence of "*vibrazioni comuni*" (shared vibes). In addition, he explained that the relationship with Giovanni Sanfratello hinged on strong reciprocal emotions.¹³ Giovanni indeed confirmed, during the questioning in court, that sex with the defendant was based on mutual feelings.¹⁴

¹⁰ For the relationship between Braibanti and Toscani see *La sentenza Braibanti* (Bari: De Donato editore, 1969), 20-32, 61-67, 131-136.

¹¹ For the relationship between Braibanti and Sanfratello see *La sentenza Braibanti*, 9-17, 32-47, 67-74, 136-140.

¹² Borowitz, "Psychological Kidnaping in Italy," 991-992. See also *La sentenza Braibanti*, 136. Looking at a case happened a couple of months after Braibanti's sentence it is evident that he was put on trial for his homosexuality. In September 1968 a man, Fulvio Parri, was accused of *plagio* by the family of Angela Bertelegni. Her parents argued that she had been seduced by him. But in this case the procedure against Parri was dismissed because the woman refused to accuse the man she loved. It is crucial to underline that Giovanni Sanfratello did not want to accuse Braibanti and that, thus, the trial was set up by his father against the victim's will. Gabriele Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti* (Torino: Sivio Zamorani editore, 2003), 184-185.

¹³ *La sentenza Braibanti*, 57, 60. See also Roberto Martinelli, "Braibanti confessa una relazione con uno dei suoi due 'discepoli'," *Il Corriere della Sera*, June 17, 1968, 13.

¹⁴ *La sentenza Braibanti*, 71, 74.



Figure 4.1. Aldo Braibanti.
Lo Specchio, June 23, 1968, 34.

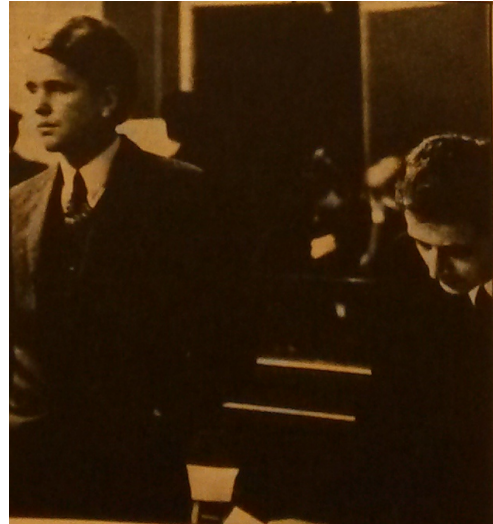


Figure 4.2. Giovanni Sanfratello and Pier Carlo Toscani.
Lo Specchio, December 7, 1969, 20.

Reading the verdict against Braibanti it is clear that the court had a rather hard time defining what *plagio* meant, or identifying conduct falling under such an ambiguous offense. The judge vaguely explained that *plagio* did not imply physical control over a person, but rather a form of psychological dominion eventually – but not necessarily – associated with material control. Moreover, according to the judge, the consent of the offended person did not justify the crime nor did it exempt the defendant from punishment. To prove the defendant’s guilt it was necessary to show that the offender consciously and willfully exercised forms of domination over the victim aimed at reducing the person to total subjugation. Furthermore, according to the judge, homosexual tendencies could increase the suggestibility of the subject. Orlando Falco argued that Braibanti’s homosexuality and his political-philosophical ideas, even if in themselves licit, were instruments used by the defendant to illicitly subjugate two weak individuals.¹⁵

In his final decision the judge declared that Braibanti was “not on trial for his homosexuality, nor for his atheism, nor for his *deep-seated* amorality” (emphasis mine). However, reading some statements of the prosecuting solicitor and of the public prosecutor,

¹⁵ Borowitz, “Psychological Kidnaping in Italy,” 992-994. See *La sentenza Braibanti*, 105-130, 174 (in particular pages 129-130).

and the final verdict of the judge it is clear that Braibanti's homosexuality *was* under examination.¹⁶ Rinaldo Taddei, Pier Carlo Toscani's lawyer, turned his closing statement into a moral declaration against homosexuality. He proclaimed: "You have to condemn Braibanti ... because, otherwise, there will be people who will feel entitled to follow a banner that says 'Pederasts of the world, unite!'"¹⁷ The prosecuting attorney Antonio Loiacono claimed that Braibanti had pushed Sanfratello and Toscani to embrace a Communist ideology, reject school education, repudiate state authority, and refuse family values. But, in his eyes, Braibanti's homosexual tendencies were the most eloquent evidence of his culpability. He was a moral corruptor whose main goal was to lead astray candid youths. In the final sentences closing his summation, while demanding fourteen years of prison for Braibanti, Loiacono declared: "... you must condemn Aldo Braibanti, because the battle for the wellbeing of our society must be fought also on the barricades of morality. And if you acquit him, you will authorize him to carry out again his nefarious action of seduction and corruption."¹⁸ And the judge Falco sustained such interpretation when he argued in his final sentence that Braibanti "did not want simply a 'partner' for his unnatural pleasures, but rather an object, a slave." His "unrestrained homosexuality" was an instrument of "oppression more than pleasure." He desired to annihilate his victims, control and destroy their souls, and possess, corrupt, and subjugate "normal" individuals.¹⁹

This trial, officially celebrated to evaluate how and if Braibanti had psychologically subjugated his two lovers, was in reality an unofficial (and illegitimate) trial against a

¹⁶ See, for example, *La sentenza Braibanti*, 17,19, 21, 23, 24, 40, 45, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62-65, 67, 71, 72, 74, 75, 84, 87, 92, 95, 123-124, 128-130, 133-135, 138-140, 142, 147, 148-152, 160, 168-171, 174. See also Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*. The trial against Braibanti was probably influenced also by a homicide happened in Rome in the spring of 1968. The Canadian teacher John King Gilmour was killed by a male hustler on May 29, 1968. Renato De Fede was a 21-year-old Neapolitan *capellone* who had lived together with the foreigner for some months before committing the homicide. See "Arrestato il giovane che uccise il professore canadese a Roma," *Il Corriere della Sera*, June 1, 1968, 15; g.m., "Arrestato, confessa l'assassino del professore canadese a Roma," *La Stampa*, June 1, 1968, 17; "Sorpreso all'alba mentre rubava il giovane assassinò il professore," *Il Messaggero*, June 3, 1968, 4.

¹⁷ "Grottesca arringa contro Braibanti," *l'Unità*, July 11, 1968, 5.

¹⁸ Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 89-91; P.G., "14 anni per Braibanti ha chiesto l'accusatore," *l'Unità*, July 13, 1968, 6.

¹⁹ *La sentenza Braibanti*, 148, 150-151. Toscani, in particular, was represented by magazines and newspapers as a "normal" man. His marriage and his two children were presented as the "incontrovertible" proof of his sexual "normalcy." See Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 153-154.

homosexual man stereotypically accused of being a seducer determined to spoil young and innocent (presumed) heterosexuals.²⁰ Also Braibanti's attorneys made use of their client's homosexuality to take apart the accusers' statements. They wanted to show how the trial was not about psychological subjugation, but was rather an illegal procedure pertaining the absolutely legal sexual relationships between three consenting individuals: "Braibanti is a homosexual, Toscani is a homosexual, Sanfratello is a homosexual. They are tied to one another by their anomaly. And homosexuals can behave with one another like [normal] lovers ... They declare their love, they threaten, and force their loved ones to cope with their whims. But this is not *plagio*."²¹

Braibanti was found guilty, according to the final verdict, "because with physical and psychological means, in execution of the same criminal purpose, at different times he brought Pier Carlo Toscani and Giovanni Sanfratello under his own power, in such a way as to reduce them to a total state of subjection." The court reduced the punishment because of the defendant's meritorious patriotic actions during the war and, thus, Braibanti was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment. The reading of the verdict on July 12, 1968 was followed by animated objections from the audience and, only after the intervention of the police, judges and jurors were able to leave the court of justice.²² The Appeal Court of Assize of Rome confirmed Braibanti's conviction on November 28, 1969, but it reduced the sentence to four years. Given the preventive imprisonment suffered by Braibanti before the trial, the court ordered to set him free on December 12, 1969. The Appeal Court rejected the argument made by Braibanti's lawyer that the crime of *plagio* was too vague to be applied against the accused, and agreed that Braibanti had committed *plagio* in the case of Sanfratello and attempted *plagio* in the case of Toscani, hence the reduction of his sentence.²³ The Appeal

²⁰ Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 98, 101, 103.

²¹ P.G., "14 anni per Braibanti ha chiesto l'accusatore."

²² Paolo Gambescia, "Sentenza da caccia delle streghe. Vivaci proteste contro i giudici," *l'Unità*, July 15, 1968, 1.

²³ Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 43-45. See also Borowitz, "Psychological Kidnaping in Italy," 995.

Court, though repeating that homosexuality was not on trial, underlined that Braibanti's revolutionary ideas – together with his sexual seductiveness – altered Sanfratello's psychological state and manipulated his personality.²⁴

The most immediate reaction to the first trial was the publication of the book *Il caso Braibanti ovvero un processo alla famiglia* (The Braibanti case, or a trial against the family). Written by Virginia Finzi Ghisi – who in 1972 would work together with the Italian gay liberation movement – the book focused on five figures who had played an essential role in Braibanti's case: Giovanni's family (father, mother and brother), the priest who had accused Braibanti of having led the young man astray, and the judge who had condemned "the philosopher." Finzi Ghisi described all of them as emblematic of traditionalism, repression, and authoritarianism. In her book the trial became an instrument to criticize the normative orders of family, church and state, and propose their radical change. The traditional family (symbolized by the Sanfratellos) was an instrument of dominant power structures (State and Church) aimed at preventing the self-actualization of individuals (such as Giovanni) after their encounter with unconventional ways of living (represented in this case by Braibanti). To Finzi Ghisi's eyes the legal action taken by Ippolito Sanfratello perfectly epitomized how the Italian families – together with its conservative allies (State and Church) – were trying to suffocate the youths and pervert their inclinations and desires.²⁵ In her book Finzi Ghisi talked, briefly, about the revolutionary power of sexuality. She underlined how sexual acts were instrumental in breaking bonds with traditional and authoritarian institutions. However, the book did not focus on homosexuality, and used the "Braibanti case" mostly to criticize bourgeois and

²⁴ Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 255. Aldo Braibanti was the only person ever convicted in Italy for *plagio* (and homosexuality). On April 9, 1981 the Constitutional Court declared that the crime of "psychological subjugation" was unconstitutional not only because, according to the Supreme judges, it was impossible to verify beyond a reasonable doubt that a person had been psychologically subjugated by another, but also because the impossibility of reaching an incontrovertible verdict could have caused unacceptable arbitrary acts of the judicial body – as the one experienced by Aldo Braibanti.

²⁵ Virginia Finzi Ghisi, *Il caso Braibanti ovvero un processo di famiglia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1968), 19, 68.

religious institutions in the wake of the 1968 youth movement.²⁶ Finzi Ghisi's interpretation of the case was similar to the reading offered by Katia D. Kaupp in "Le Nouvel Observateur." The French journalist argued indeed that the trial was a symbolic act by all those Italian families who had been feeling under fire because of the revolt of their sons and daughters. The trial was the counter-action of state, religion and bourgeois society against the youth revolt.²⁷

Liberal thinkers censured the lawsuit against Braibanti. Leftist intellectuals and politicians – such as Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Umberto Eco, and Marco Pannella – mobilized on his behalf.²⁸ One year after the trial the publishing house Bompiani released a collection of essays, entitled *Sotto il nome del plagio* (In the name of *plagio*), aimed at critically analyzing the most salient aspects of the case. On the back cover of the book the publisher clarified that what had made the Braibanti case particularly alarming was that the suspect had been found guilty not of *plagio*, but of unconventional personal ethics, political ideology, and sexuality. The trial against Braibanti, this was the main point the book made, was not a trial against a man who had committed a crime, but rather a trial against political and sexual "non-conformity." Loiacono and Falco – the public prosecutor and the judge of the first trial – indicted Braibanti for *plagio* but, as the authors of this collective volume emphasized, they concealed behind such vague crime their own anti-homosexual prejudice.²⁹ One of the most significant essays published in *Sotto il nome del plagio* was the piece written by Umberto Eco. He underlined that the judge, condemning Braibanti, had not acted fairly. Eco sarcastically described the "criminal" behavior of Braibanti in these terms: 1) he followed Spinozan pantheism, Marxism, and anarchism and opposed Catholicism and economic liberalism; 2) he gave philosophical explanations for his

²⁶ Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 240-241. See Finzi Ghisi, *Il caso Braibanti*, 11.

²⁷ Quoted in Dario Petrosino, "Crisi della virilità e 'questione omosessuale' nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta e sessanta," in *Genere e mascolinità. Uno sguardo storico*, Sandro Bellassai and Maria Malatesta eds. (Roma: Bulzoni editore, 2000), 342.

²⁸ Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 42-45.

²⁹ *Sotto il nome di plagio* (Milano: Valentino Bompiani, 1969), backcover. See also Alberto Moravia, "La cultura sotto accusa," *Sotto il nome di plagio*, 5, 10.

homosexual practices and desires; 3) he loved sharing his politico-philosophical ideas with others; 4) he had same-sex relationships with some of his “followers”; 5) he seduced his partners talking about philosophy and art; 6) his partners were reluctant to part company with him. Eco used this list to underline the absurdity of the allegations against Braibanti. The representation of “the philosopher” as “a disgusting homosexual used to follow subversive principles in order to drag others in a state of abjection” was surreal. Eco underlined that even if for some people Braibanti’s homosexuality was nauseating, his sexual behavior was not a crime. Endorsing the argument made during the trial by the defense attorney Leopoldo Piccardi, Eco stressed that no heterosexual man, showing a behavior similar to Braibanti, would have ever been accused of *plagio* and taken to court. A womanizer would have never been sentenced to nine years of prison for having seduced an inexperienced girl. Rather, according to Eco, such man would have been admired. Thus, Eco concluded, the accusation moved against Braibanti, was based on anti-homosexual bigotry.³⁰

While Umberto Eco wrote, “We are not scared by Braibanti’s non-conformity, but we are worried about those who do not accept unconventional behaviors,” there were also people who, after the final decision against Braibanti, invoked the necessity of criminalizing homosexuality and using anti-homosexuality laws against “people like him.” In an article published by *Giurisprudenza di merito* in 1969 (when, as we will see, also Ermanno Lavorini’s case was on everyone’s lips), Igino Giordani, a Christian Democratic member of the Italian Constituent Assembly, did not mention *plagio* at all in reference to Braibanti’s trial. He focused his attention instead on the defendant’s homosexuality describing it as an “inhuman attack against collective health.” Giordani explained that as a man, a citizen, and a scholar he deplored the Italian state because it was unresponsive to acts of gross immorality that were destined to cause its “collapse.” And he wrote further: “It is impossible to

³⁰ Umberto Eco, “Le parole magiche,” in *Sotto il nome di plagio*, 21-23, 33-39, 82. See also P.G., “Questo processo non sta in piedi: è lecito ciò che non è punibile,” *l’Unità*, July 12, 1968, 5.

understand why pornography (*oscenità grafiche*) and shows against public decency are punished, whereas homosexuality – cause of moral, civil and social corruption – is not considered a crime.” According to Giordani – who used the customary metaphor of the “epidemic” – those “who instill into the social body perverted ideas and manners are like those who inject infections and viruses into a physical body.” Morality was a public good and letting homosexuals pollute the Italian mores was like standing for the legitimacy of suicide.³¹

The Italian press showed a variety of attitudes towards Braibanti. Moderate newspapers – *Il Messaggero*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, and *La Stampa* – talking about his trial adopted a rather self-righteous tone.³² The more liberal magazine *L'Espresso*, in an article published immediately after the final verdict, described the glorious past of the defendant in the Italian Resistance, emphasized how Braibanti had been condemned for a nonexistent crime, and completely avoided talking about homosexuality.³³ In June 1968, the Socialist magazine *ABC* depicted Braibanti as an insatiable and dreadful homosexual who had enslaved Toscani and Sanfratello, and submitted them to “nauseating practices against nature.” Nevertheless, several months later, the same magazine showed a completely different perspective. In an article published in November 1969 Vittorio Pescatori argued that Sanfratello had not been subjugated by Braibanti but rather by his own family and by unprincipled psychiatrists. Pescatori underlined further that an innocent man had been spending the last three years in prison just because he had admitted to his homosexuality. The journalist emphasized that Braibanti had been the only person in the history of the Italian justice to declare publicly his homosexual orientation, and for this reason he had been incarcerated on the base of obscure accusations. The right-wing *Il Tempo* talked about

³¹ See Eco, “Le parole magiche,” 24-25 and Iginò Giordani, “Osservazioni sul caso Braibanti,” *Giurisprudenza di merito: rivista bimestrale di giurisprudenza dei giudici di merito*, 2 (1969): 399-400.

³² Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 154-174

³³ Fabrizio Dentice, “Il diavolo a Fiorenzuola,” *L'Espresso*, July 21, 1968, 17. Journalist Giorgio Pecorini behaved in the same way, not talking at all about homosexuality, in three articles, one published in October 1968, one published before the appeal and one after. See Pecorini, “Intervista dal carcere,” *L'Europeo*, October 17, 1968, 58-61; Pecorini, “Come si fabbrica il diavolo,” *L'Espresso*, Dicembre 14, 1969, 14; Pecorini, “Non sono una maschera,” *L'Espresso*, Dicembre 14, 1969, 14.

Braibanti as an indefensible corruptor of youths. The conservative *Lo Specchio* tried to discredit Braibanti by making allegations about his supposed pedophilia. In the end *Il Borghese* used Braibanti to begin a campaign against homosexuals, the left-wing intellectuals who had supported him (such as Alberto Moravia, Elsa Morante and Dacia Maraini), and Communists.³⁴

The attitude towards Braibanti in the Communist press, which had never stood for homosexuals nor homosexuality, was rather unexpected. On July 13, 1968, the day after the end of the trial, the director of *l'Unità*, Maurizio Ferrara, wrote a front-page article explicitly arguing that the lawsuit against Braibanti was not about *plagio*, but about homosexuality. The editorial, entitled *Processo aberrante* (Abhorrent trial), blamed both the penal code written during the Fascist regime and the judges educated and trained in pre-1945 Italy. *Plagio*, Ferrara argued, did not exist as a crime or, if it existed, it was a criminal offense committed every day by innumerable men and women. Every charismatic person, Catholic priests included, could be potentially accused of “psychological subjugation.” The director of *l'Unità* defined the lawsuit as a “pettifogging and racist mess against the ‘third sex’” and underscored how even the Fascist regime had not gone as far as Falco and Loiacono. *L'Unità* emphasized that the real problem brought to light during the trial was the existence of dangerously dysfunctional families.³⁵ *L'Unità*, that had played a major role in amplifying the *Balletti Verdi* scandal eight years before, seemed to have become more tolerant towards same-sex sexualities and in this article; while still talking about homosexuality as anomaly, it

³⁴ See Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 154-174, 187-193. See also Mario Gatti, “Le cinquantamila formiche orfane del ‘liberatore’ di Castellarquato,” *ABC*, June 2, 1968, 42-43; Vittorio Pescatori, “I boy-scouts di mezzanotte,” *ABC*, 28 Novembre 1969, 28-29. For *Lo Specchio* see Franco Duranti, “La voglia di Braibanti,” *Lo Specchio*, June 26, 1968, 33-35; Franco Duranti, “La morale capovolta-Per Aldo Braibanti, il mirmecologo accusato di ‘plagio’, è giunto il momento della verità. Il Tribunale di Roma sta mettendo a nudo la sua vita,” *Lo Specchio*, June 23, 1968, 34; Franco Duranti, “Braibanti preso a pedate-Gli incerti della morale capovolta,” *Lo Specchio*, July 7, 1968; Franco Duranti, “Nove anni da formica-Braibanti condannato per plagio,” *Lo Specchio*, July 21, 1968, 34; A.G. Solari, “Bigiarette apre a Braibanti,” *Lo Specchio*, December 22, 1968, 31; Franco Duranti, “Plagio bis-Quattro anni all’amico delle formiche,” *Lo Specchio*, December 7, 1969, 20. For *Il Borghese* see Gianna Preda, “Domande e risposte-Il ‘plagiato’,” *Il Borghese*, October 31, 1968, 440; Carlo Cusani, “Da Viareggio con amore,” *Il Borghese*, May 22, 1969, 172; Ivanovic Koba, “La patente di pederasta,” *Il Borghese*, November 16, 1969, 698-699; Gianna Preda, “Domande e risposte-Vietatissimo,” *Il Borghese*, December 21, 1969, 1.065.

³⁵ Maurizio Ferrara, “Processo aberrante,” *l'Unità*, July 13, 1968, 1.

recognized the possibility of sincere feelings among same-sex lovers.³⁶ The mouthpiece of the Communist Party in Italy underlined that Braibanti was a hero of the anti-Fascist Resistance, and had been unfairly condemned for a crime that should not exist.³⁷ Moreover, even if hesitantly, because after all homosexuality was still considered a bourgeois “sin,” *l’Unità* gave signs of unprecedented openness towards *sexual non-conformity*, criticizing all those moralists who were censuring a man brave enough to talk about his “otherness.”³⁸ The Communist *Rinascita* also seemed to show signs of tolerance towards same-sex sexuality. On July 19, 1968 in an article entitled “... come si condanna un negro proprio perchè negro” (“... as you condemn a negro just for being a negro”) the journalist underlined that in court no one had been able to prove that Giovanni and Pier Carlo had been psychologically subjugated, whereas defendant and “victims” had confirmed the existence of legitimate homosexual relationships between them. According to *Rinascita* Braibanti’s condemnation resulted from his sexuality. The journalist doubted that the judge would have inflicted nine years of prison on Braibanti, if he had not had a homosexual liaison with Giovanni Sanfratello and Pier Carlo Toscani. *Rinascita* underscored that the argument the prosecutors made against Braibanti was entirely based on their prejudice against homosexuality: “Braibanti was condemned the same way a negro in the US is condemned just for being a negro, when for the same charge a white person, just for being white, is acquitted.”³⁹ Even though there was no money exchanged between Braibanti, Sanfratello, and Toscani, Italian prosecutors and conservative media accused the former of having used his intellectual authority to contaminate the bodies and

³⁶See “14 anni per Braibanti ha chiesto l’accusatore.” At times Braibanti’s homosexuality was not mentioned at all by *l’Unità*. Two days after Ferrara’s editorial the journalist Paolo Gambescia wrote an article for the front-page of *l’Unità* omitting any reference to homosexuality and presenting the trial as a witch-hunt against intellectuals and vanguard artists, and as a menace against non conformist youths: Paolo Gambescia, “Sentenza da caccia delle streghe. Vivaci proteste contro i giudici,” *l’Unità*, July 15, 1968, 1. No hint at homosexuality also in “Disinvoltura in Corte d’Assise,” *l’Unità*, July 16, 1968, 3; “Braibanti sarebbe un ‘diabolico invasore di spiriti,’” *l’Unità*, January 3, 1969, 5; P.G., “Il processo a Braibanti completamente rinnovato,” *l’Unità*, November 7, 1969, 5. Also *Vie Nuove*, the weekly magazine of the Communist Party, after the verdict of July 1968 talked about *plagio*, but did not mention homosexuality. See Letizia Paolozzi, “Che cosa c’è dietro il processo a Braibanti?,” *Vie Nuove*, Luglio 18, 1968, 20-22.

³⁷ Ottavio Cecchi, “Invocato anche il diavolo per condannare Braibanti,” *l’Unità*, January 4, 1969, 3.

³⁸ “Braibanti oggi in appello,” *l’Unità*, November 6, 1969, 8.

³⁹ M. Rago, “... così come si condanna un negro proprio perché è negro,” *Rinascita* 25, no. 29 (1968): 10. See also Ferluga, *Il Processo Braibanti*, 212-214.

minds of two innocent youths, deeming them too naïve to protect themselves from the wiles of an experienced, astute and deceitful homosexual.

Six months after the end of the first Braibanti trial, on January 2, 1969 *Il Borghese* published a picture – an outtake from Gian Luigi Polidoro’s *Satyricon* (Figure 4.3.). The protagonist of the picture was Don Backy, who played in that movie the role of Gitone, a youth who – like Braibanti – engaged in sexual activities with two other men.



Figure 4.3. Don Backy as Gitone in Gian Luigi Polidoro’s *Satyricon* (1969).

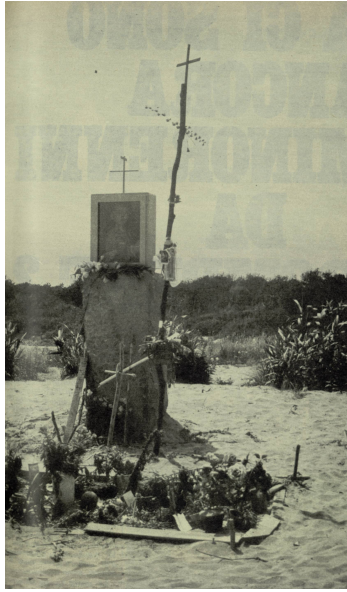
Hinting at the sexual innuendo behind the number of the year that had just begun, the magazine used for this image the caption “*Arriva il 69. Un anno tutto per loro*” (Here comes ‘69. A year all for them). The sarcasm of the right-wing periodical could not have been more well-timed. The year 1969 was indeed destined to be “theirs” not only in the US (where the Stonewall riots took place) and in West Germany (where male homosexuality was decriminalized) but also – for better or worse – in Italy. A few months after Braibanti’s first trial homosexuality and youth corruption were again at the center of media attention. This time Italian magazines and newspapers spotlighted the murder of a 13-year-old boy. This homicide turned homosexuality into one of the most discussed topics in the Italian press that year. During Braibanti’s trial numerous magazines and newspapers had talked about homosexuals as dangerous emotional seducers, but in the first months of 1969, at the height

of the “Lavorini affair,” many journalists undertook a truly vexing and painful anti-queer campaign that defamed homosexuals and, as I will demonstrate, brought them to closing ranks against their opponents.

The “Lavorini Affair”

On January 31, 1969, the 13-year-old Ermanno Lavorini disappeared in Viareggio, a Tuscan seaside resort. On the same day Ermanno’s family received a call. The telephone rang in Ermanno’s father’s shop, a well-known fabric store, and Marinella – Ermanno’s sister – answered. A male voice assured that Ermanno was safe, coldly asked to collect 15,000,000 lire, and ordered to refrain from calling the local authorities. Despite the kidnapers’ request, the family contacted the police immediately, and the search began soon thereafter. For thirty-seven days everyone hoped that Ermanno would return home alive. However, on March 9, 1969 Ermanno’s corpse was found by accident. The body was buried under 16 inches of sand on the beach of Marina di Vecchiano (about 4 miles away from Viareggio) – a location that quickly turned into a pilgrimage site (Figures 4.4. and 4.5.). The autopsy revealed that Ermanno had died the day of his disappearance, and the corpse did not show evident signs of sexual abuse.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See Marcello Coppetti, “È di Viareggio l’assassino di Ermanno?,” *Panorama*, March 20, 1969, 57-58; Emilia Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” *Panorama*, May 15, 1969, 22. According to the website of *Il Sole 24 Ore* (http://www.infodata.ilsole24ore.com/2016/05/17/calcola-potere-dacquisto-lire-ed-euro-dal-1860-2015/?refresh_ce=1) 15,000,000 lire of 1969 would be 143,000 Euro in current money (165,000 USD).



Figures 4.4.-4.5. Beach of Marina di Vecchiano. It became a pilgrimage site. A simple marble block, topped by a painting representing Ermanno the day of his first Communion, was placed where the body was found (*Men*, August 18, 1969, 20-21).

The literature produced over the years about Ermanno Lavorini has offered several detailed chronicles of the homicide. It has described the dynamics of the assassination, the investigation, and the trials. But it has not adequately analyzed the ways in which media, demonizing Italian homosexuals, made them more visible, more vulnerable, but also more combative.⁴¹ The murder of this boy from Viareggio increased the wide circulation of pictures, magazines, and newspapers that gave voice to “non-normative” sexuality. Such coverage inflamed bigots, but it also furthered the emergence of homosexual self-awareness, and incited the politicization of inchoate homosexual communities. If many Italian homosexuals reacted, resisted, and organized themselves at the beginning of the 1970s, I contend, it was also because of the exceptionally hostile atmosphere surrounding them after Ermanno’s death. In the following pages, after a brief overview of the investigation and

⁴¹ For a history and chronology of the Lavorini case see Adolfo Lippi-Fernando Galli, *Ermanno il Primo?* (Massarosa: Edizioni attualità, 1969); Benzio Bernabò, *L’infanzia delle stragi. Il caso Lavorini* (Trento: Reverdito, 1989); Marco Nozza, *Il pistarolo: da piazza Fontana, trent’anni di storia raccontati da un grande cronista* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2006); Sabina Marchesi, *I processi del secolo: enigmi, retroscena, orrori e verità in trenta casi giudiziari italiani da Gino Girolimoni a Marta Russo* (Sesto Fiorentino: Olimpia, 2008); Luca Steffènoni, *Nera: come la cronaca cambia i delitti* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2011), 187-202.

resolution of the case, I will focus my attention on the anti-homosexual campaign, and I will then conclude by looking at the homosexual counter-reaction.

The Case

After the discovery of Ermanno's body the hypothesis of the kidnapping for ransom – a hypothesis already not particularly supported by the press – lost its appeal, and the thesis of the homicide committed by one or more homosexual “monsters” – a lead followed by the police from the first day – took definitively hold.⁴² *Il Telegrafo* – the newspaper of Viareggio – wrote a few days after the recovery of the corpse that Ermanno's “infanticide” was the tragic consequence of the “unspeakable attempted sexual assault” of a “beast.”⁴³ The impression of Brunello Vandano, journalist of the magazine *Epoca*, was that prejudice against homosexuality did not push the police to sound out all the hypotheses behind Ermanno's death, and that everybody, investigators and public opinion in particular, liked the idea one or more “abnormal” adults were responsible.⁴⁴ The place where the boy was allegedly seen alive for the last time corroborated the story that media, public opinion, and police seemed eager to espouse.

⁴² Pietro Magi, “L'omicida di Ermanno è un anormale: noi ne abbiamo ormai la convinzione,” *La Nazione*, March 29, 1969, 7. From early February police and media had decided that to solve Lavorini's case it was necessary to seek answers in what they considered to be the “homosexual underworld.” See, for example, Sergio Cabassi, “Indagini nel mondo del vizio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, February 12, 1969, 5; Renzo Pellegrini, “È un brutto il rapitore,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 12, 1969, 1, 12; Piero Magi, “Nuove indagini a Viareggio nel mondo degli anormali,” *La Nazione*, February 12, 1969, 7; Id., “Lanciato un nuovo appello dal padre del bambino rapito,” *La Nazione*, February 13, 1969, 7; Renzo Pellegrini, “La polizia ha trovato le tracce di Ermanno?,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 14, 1969, 1, 12; Sergio Cabassi, “Interrogatori sospesi a Viareggio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 13, 1969, 5. For articles supporting the hypothesis of kidnapping for ransom see Renzo Pellegrini, “Un ragazzo rapito a Viareggio. La Versilia sotto choc per un inaudito episodio di kidnapping,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 1, 1969, 1, 12; Id., “Drammatico appello del padre ai rapitori,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 2, 1969, 1, 14; Id., “Trattative segrete dei familiari con i rapitori?,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 3, 1969, 1-2; Id., “I genitori ora potranno trattare il riscatto,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 4, 1969, 1, 12; P.L.T., “Viareggio e la pineta rastrellate. Un ragazzo complice dei rapitori?,” *Corriere della sera*, February 10, 1969, 1; Gianni Farneti, “Kidnapping a Viareggio: prima i genitori, poi la polizia,” *Panorama*, February 13, 1969, 22-23; Libero Montesi, “Kidnapping,” *L'Europeo*, February 13, 1969, 30-33; Marcello del Bosco, “Cominciano i kidnapping-Viareggio il dramma di Ermanno,” *Vie Nuove*, 13 Febbraio 1969, 18-20; Umberto Zanatta, “Viareggio: sei ipotesi (troppe) per la scomparsa del dodicenne,” *La Stampa*, February 15, 1969, 11; Gualtiero Tramballi, “Non gridate per Ermanno,” *Epoca*, February 16, 1969, 24-27; Giorgio Sgherri, “Giallo in maschera. Viareggio: la scomparsa del bimbo Ermanno Lavorini,” *Vie Nuove*, February 27, 1969, 20-21.

⁴³ Renzo Pellegrini, “‘Un brutto ha ucciso Ermanno!’ sostengono i viareggini,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 10, 1969, 4. See also Mauro Mancini, “Un'oasi in allarme,” *La Nazione*, March 12, 1969, 7.

⁴⁴ Brunello Vandano, “Viareggio. Fino a quando tre ragazzini potranno continuare a raccontarci bugie?,” *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 33, 35. *Epoca* was one of the few magazines that tried to take into account the possibility that Ermanno had not been killed by a homosexual gang, see Lazzerio Ricciotti-Gualtiero Tramballi, “Ermanno, figlio mio,” *Epoca*, March 23, 1969, 106-111.

On the day of his disappearance Ermanno had been seen around the *pineta* (pine grove). In the summer this forested area was replete with tourists, but in the winter it was a totally different place.



Figure 4.6. “Clean up the pinegrove!”
Epoca, May 11, 1969, 138.

As both liberal and conservative magazines recounted, the “fauna” of the pine grove was manifold. Besides *travestiti* (transvestites) and “inverts” it was possible to see male hustlers of different ages at every hour of the day. According to *L’Espresso* the youngest ones – who had to be back home early – waited for their clients from 5 to 7 pm, slightly older boys hung around until 9 pm, whereas from 9 pm onwards the *pineta* was the hunting ground of young men in their twenties. The racket of boys and adolescents selling themselves for a few thousand lire, and then blackmailing their clients, was relatively recent. The number of male hustlers and homosexuals, according to *L’Espresso*, had increased proportionally to the number of mopeds circulating in Viareggio. As the journalist explained, mopeds consumed a lot of gas, broke, and it was necessary to repair them. And if parents did not pay, sons had to find a way to raise money. Many families ignored the “double life” of their kids, while others, *Il Borghese* insinuated, did not complain about the illicit earnings of their sons. For the Italian

working class, as Carlo Cusani observed, engaging in “male pederasty” was a “profession” that many men practiced in their youth because it did not leave any visible “signs.”⁴⁵

Ugo Dotti, a journalist of the Florentine *La Nazione*, was the first to suggest – without hesitation and almost one month before the recovery of the remains – a possible connection between Ermanno’s case and the homosexual milieu of Viareggio.⁴⁶ In the following days the police began to question the population of the *pineta*, convinced that some of these men and boys could have useful information about the case. The disappearance of Ermanno and the subsequent unearthing of his corpse opened up a Pandora’s box and caused, in Emilia Granzotto’s words, “an explosion of moral cannibalism.” The police, investigating with difficulty a male milieu where silence was the rule, discovered that young male hustlers had been selling their sexual services to local and “commuting” homosexuals for years. Every witness was forced to reveal names of people involved in the “world of the sodomites” – using the expression of Remo Lugli – and in a few weeks investigators and police listened to hundreds of homosexuals. These men were interrogated in military barracks out of town because, as Lugli argued, investigators wanted to protect the people of Viareggio from their “indecorous presence.”⁴⁷

The police interviewed not only “transvestites” and homosexual men, but also many *ragazzi di pineta* (pine grove boys) – as the young hustlers of Viareggio were baptized by the press. One of them was Marco Baldisseri, aged 16, unemployed, and recently accused of having been part of a gang rape of a 12-year-old girl (Figure 4.7.). After days of questioning,

⁴⁵ For articles about the *pineta* see Libero Montesi, “Kidnapping,” *L’Europeo*, February 13, 1969, 31; Mauro Mancini, “Un’oasi in allarme,” *La Nazione*, March 12, 1969, 7; Luciano Cirri, “Il paradiso dei capovolti. Ipocrisia per il delitto di Viareggio,” *Il Borghese*, March 20, 1969, 630-631; Mino Monicelli, “Quando scende la sera in pineta,” *L’Espresso*, May 4, 1969, 9; “Pulite questa pineta!” *Epoca*, May 11, 1969, 138-141; Emilia Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” *Panorama*, May 15, 1969, 25-26; Lazzero Ricciotti and Gualtiero Tramballi, “Cosa dicono,” *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 41-42; Cusani, “Da Viareggio con amore,” 171-172.

⁴⁶ Ugo Dotti, “Il segreto della scomparsa nel mondo del terzo sesso,” *La Nazione*, February 11, 1969.

⁴⁷ See Dotti, “Il segreto della scomparsa nel mondo del terzo sesso;” Remo Lugli, “Si indaga tra gli anormali alla ricerca dell’assassino,” *La Stampa*, March 15, 1969, 2 and Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” 25-26. See also Mauro Mancini, “Perché non si trova l’assassino,” *La Nazione Sera*, March 17, 1969, 3; Cirri, “Il paradiso dei capovolti,” 630-631; Ugo Dotti, “Ermanno: sul ‘carnet’ della polizia lucchesi pisani fiorentini e massesi,” *La Nazione Sera*, March 25, 1969, 3; Id., “Mi ha rovinato Marco,” *La Nazione*, April 27, 1969, 7; Angelo Greco, “La costa del vizio,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 19, 1969, 20-24.

on April 19, 1969 Baldisseri confessed: he had killed Ermanno. In the following days two other youths admitted to having been present when the kid was murdered: Rodolfo della Latta (20 years old) (Figure 4.8.) and Andrea Benedetti (12) (Figure 4.9.). This first confession was the opening salvo of a barrage of continuously changing versions of how Ermanno died.⁴⁸

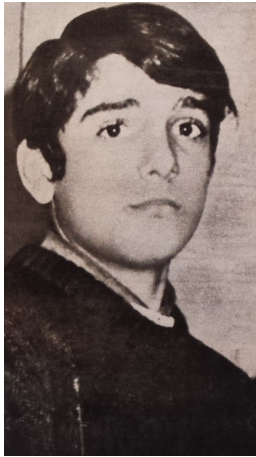


Figure 4.7. Marco Baldisseri.
Il Tempo, May 3, 1969.



Figure 4.8. Rodolfo della Latta.
Cronaca, May 10, 1969.



Figure 4.9. Andrea Benedetti.
Cronaca, May 10, 1969.

Marco's demeanor did not satisfy the mob that wanted "real monsters" to persecute. The Italian audience was ready to tear apart a despised scapegoat and, according to the journalist Brunello Vandano, Baldisseri and his accomplices offered to the investigators the

⁴⁸ For different versions of how Ermanno was killed see Giancarlo Ghislanzoni, "Finalmente la squallida verità," *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 16, 1969, 1-2; Mauro Mancini, "Lancia accuse su accuse un sedicenne di Viareggio," *La Nazione*, April 20, 1969, 1-2; Giancarlo Ghislanzoni, "Streghe a Viareggio," *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 25, 1969, 3; Id., "Eppure c'è qualcuno che manovra nell'ombra questi ragazzi," *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 28, 1969, 1; Mario Bernardini, "Gli 'efebi del flipper' non hanno tutta la colpa: chi c'è dietro di loro?," *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 3, 1969, 2; Remo Lugli, "Lungo confronto in carcere fra i tre ragazzi accusatori," *La Stampa*, May 7, 1969, 1; Ornella Ripa, "Ha pagato con la vita la sua innocenza di bambino-Ecco finalmente tutta la spaventosa verità sulla fine di Ermanno Lavorini," *Gente*, May 7, 1969, 6-8; Libero Montesi, "Diteci la verità sul caso Lavorini," *L'Europeo*, May 8, 1969, 39-41; Ornella Ripa, Renzo Allegri, "Così hanno corrotto i nostri poveri figli-Una inchiesta eccezionale: parlano i genitori dei tragici ragazzi coinvolti nel caso Lavorini," *Gente*, May 14, 1969, 8-14; Remo Lugli, "Si pensa ancora a un tragico festino," *La Stampa*, May 16, 1969, 2; Id., "Si cerca la casa del turpe convegno," *La Stampa*, May 17, 1969, 2; Giovanni Arpino, "L'aria di Viareggio," *La Stampa*, May 18, 1969, 3; Ornella Ripa, "Così a Viareggio raccontano la tragica morte di Ermanno-Poveri genitori: quel bimbo gliel'hanno ammazzato per cento giorni di seguito," *Gente*, Maggio 21, 1969, 22-25; Remo Lugli, "Ermanno potrebbe essere morto durante una riunione di soli ragazzi," *La Stampa*, May 21, 1969, 8; Brunello Vandano, "Come si spiega la mitomania di tanti ragazzi?," *Epoca*, May 25, 1969, 11; Ornella Ripa, "I ragazzini piangono: adesso fateli confessare," *Gente*, June 25, 1969, 14-16; Id., "Un vergognoso segreto," *Gente*, July 9, 1969, 16-18; Corydon, "Chi ci salva dal 'minorenne?," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 24, 1969, 18-19. For the *ragazzi di pineta* see, for example, Renzo Pellegrini, "Interrogata la 'troupe' del Luna Park viareggino," *Il Telegrafo*, February 19, 1969, 2 and sentence of the Lavorini case, n. 1/75 of March 6, 1975 of the Assize Court of Pisa. For the arrest of Baldisseri see: S.C., "16 anni: che sgomento," *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 21, 1969, 1-2; Giancarlo Ghislanzoni, "Viareggio-Già scoperto il 'terzo uomo'?", *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 21, 1969, 1-2; Sergio Bindi, "Ha confessato l'amico di Ermanno," *Il Telegrafo*, April 21, 1969, 1-2; "Il nominato M.B.," *Vie Nuove*, April 24, 1969, 7; Libero Montesi, "Mio figlio non è l'assassino di Ermanno," *L'Europeo*, May 1, 1969, 78-81. *Il Corriere della Sera* talked about the police questioning Marco Baldisseri already in February 1969. The newspaper at the time did not reveal his name and called him M.B.. See "Si interroga un ragazzo per l'enigma di Viareggio," *Il Corriere della Sera*, February 14, 1969, 14.

culprit they wanted: homosexual adults. Marco, Andrea, and Rodolfo recounted stories that they knew police and public opinion wanted to hear and were eager to believe in. They were not concerned with talking about their sexual experiences in the *pineta*, because, Vandano explained, they took it for granted that their behaviors were going to be excused. Moreover, these *ragazzi di pineta* were certain that public opinion would have been benevolent with them if they presented themselves as victims of modern moral corruption, and as young prey of the obscure, omnipresent, and monstrous sect of the “*mangiabambini*” (child eating ogres). Edgardo Bartoli, in an article published in *Il Corriere della Sera*, put down in black and white that Marco’s gang benefitted from the unique privileges that Italian society granted teens. They were on the edge of childhood and thus sacred and untouchable. Essentially, according to Bartoli, taking advantage of the generalized good disposition of Italians towards people of young age, these hustlers defamed several prominent adults without mercy. Furthermore, according to Pier Paolo Pasolini, these three hustlers regarded the “abnormal men” of Viareggio as individuals “devoid of humanity.” Therefore they felt entitled, with the implicit approval of society and media, to treat homosexuals however they pleased.⁴⁹

Marco, Andrea, and Rodolfo focused their accusatory fury on one of their “clients” and on another man reputed to be homosexual. The former, Adolfo Meciani (Figure 4.10.), was married, had a son, and owned a well-known beach resort in Viareggio. He had a reputation to defend, and the *ragazzi di pineta* knew he was vulnerable to blackmailing. The latter, Giuseppe Zacconi (Figure 4.11.), was the rich, unmarried son of a famous actor.⁵⁰

According to one of the most notorious versions of the story recounted by Baldisseri and his

⁴⁹ Maria Rosa Calderoni, “I volti dei ‘mostri’,” *Vie Nuove*, May 1, 1969, 51; Edgardo Bartoli, “A Viareggio e altrove,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 10, 1969, 15; Brunello Vandano, “Viareggio. Fino a quando tre ragazzini potranno continuare a raccontarci bugie?” *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 33. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Diario del ‘caso Lavorini’,” *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società* (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), 181-196 (in particular pages 189-192, 196-197). Pier Paolo Pasolini was severe in his judgement of the three young hustlers. He was convinced of their guilt, and he condemned the media lynching of homosexuals.

⁵⁰ See Sergio Cabassi, “Interrogato il figlio di Zacconi,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 21, 1969, 7; Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” 24-25; Franco Pierini “Hanno sconvolto la mia vita ci dice il figlio di Ermete Zacconi,” *L’Europeo*, November 27, 1969, 36-39.

friends, Lavorini was killed during a drug fuelled homosexual orgy gone bad.⁵¹ The realistic descriptions of homosexual acts during the interrogatories not only made the fantasies of the *ragazzi di pineta* plausible, but they also showed how these young men were relatively experienced hustlers who knew well how to satisfy the needs of their clients.⁵² Together with Meciani and Zacconi during the orgy there were also, the youths reported, Renato Berchielli, mayor of Viareggio, and Ferruccio Martinotti, head of the city's tourist office.⁵³



Figure 4.10. Adolfo Meciani.
Vie Nuove October 23, 1969.



Figure 4.11. Giuseppe Zacconi.
Europeo November 27, 1969.

Meciani, Zacconi, Berchielli and Martinotti professed themselves innocent. The last two in particular had solid alibis and when the young accusers subsequently retracted their statements they disappeared altogether from the story. Meciani and Zacconi instead were

⁵¹ The idea that Ermanno had died during a drug-sex party did not seem to be absurd because magazines and newspapers had been talking about the use of drugs among youths since the very first appearance of the *capelloni* around 1967 (see, for example, Camilla Cederna, "I sogni della droga-Il consumo degli allucinogeni e degli ipnotici si diffonde anche in Italia," *Espresso colore*, May 21, 1967, 8-15). In 1969 it is possible to notice a growth in the number of articles devoted to juvenile drug addiction (see, for example, "Pulite questa pineta!", *Epoca*, May 11, 1969, 141; Giuseppe Catalano, "Pollicino fa la vita," *L'Espresso*, May 11, 1969, 11; Ermanno Rea, "La droga in mano ai ragazzi," *Il Tempo*, May 17, 1969, 72-79; Brunello Vandano, "Viareggio. Fino a quando tre ragazzini potranno continuare a raccontarci bugie?", *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 33-35; Giuseppe Lugato, Giovanni Perego, "Arriva la mala erba," *Il Tempo*, October 25, 1969, 38-45; Giuseppe Lugato, Giovanni Perego, "... E come cura abbiamo solo le manette," *Il Tempo*, November 8, 1969, 39-46; Giuseppe Lugato, Giovanni Perego, "Perché non ci lasci fumare in pace?", *Il Tempo*, November 15, 1969, 38-42; Gianni Franceschi, "Il Governo ha scoperto la droga," *Lo Specchio*, Novembre 23, 1969, 18-19; Giorgio Aidinyan, "L'Italia allucinata", *Cronaca*, November 29, 1969, 10-11). Interestingly, according to Philip Jenkins, there is a close relation between panics about sex offenders and other fears, from anxieties about youth crimes to worries about drug abuse. See Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic. Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 19.

⁵² Roberto Galli, "Eravamo in sei al tragico festino," *Il Telegrafo*, May 4, 1969, 1-2; Roberto Galli, "I ragazzi concordi: otto al festino nella villa," *Il Telegrafo*, May 8, 1969, 1-2. See also their deposition in ATP, CL, f. 3, sf. 4B.

⁵³ See Renzo Pellegrini, "Viareggio: il sindaco reagisce e dà le dimissioni," *Il Telegrafo*, May 13, 1969, 1-2; "A Viareggio cannibali anche col sindaco," *Panorama*, May 22, 1969, 25-26.

continuously mentioned.⁵⁴ The former had engaged in sexual activities with Marco Baldisseri, Andrea Benedetti, and other hustlers. He was afraid that, once on the witness stand, he would have to confess publicly details about his sexual life, thereby jeopardizing his marriage and reputation.⁵⁵ Meciani, at the center of a persistent media campaign, could not handle the shame of being outed and tried to commit suicide. After having been in a coma for more than one month he died on June 24, 1969.⁵⁶ Zacconi, who was forced to confess to being asexual and suffering from genital malformations and impotence, died of a heart attack in July 1970.⁵⁷

While Marco, Andrea, and Rodolfo slandered innocent men, other people were busy profiting from the homicide. Peddlers sold food and beverage in the place where Ermanno's corpse was found to offer services to *crime tourists* who visited the site (Figure 4.12.).

Journalist Fernando Galli made money selling thousands of copies of his book about the case, and musician Franco Trincale released a series of records recounting the story of the boy from

⁵⁴ See "Parlano le vittime della calunnia," *Oggi*, November 26, 1969, 142; Franco Pierini "Hanno sconvolto la mia vita ci dice il figlio di Ermete Zacconi," *L'Europeo*, November 27, 1969, 36-39; Luciano Gherardi, "Ermanno vittima dell'estrema destra," *ABC*, February 7, 1971, 14-16. Among the first suspects, even before the body was found, there was also the boyfriend of Marinella Lavorini – Ermanno's sister. The name of Natalino Pardini was never mentioned by the *ragazzi di pineta*. See Franco Pierini, "Dicono che sono io l'assassino di Ermanno," *L'Europeo*, March 20, 1969, 30-33; Enrico Franco, "Un assassino per tutti," *Vie Nuove*, March 20, 1969, 18.

⁵⁵ The investigative magistrate Pierluigi Mazzochi had actually collected many pieces of evidence about the sexual life of Adolfo Meciani. He had had many encounters with several *ragazzi di pineta*. In particular he had had sexual intercourse with both Marco Baldisseri (since 1967) and Andrea Benedetti. See Piero Magi, "Imputazioni archiviate contro Adolfo Meciani," *La Nazione*, June 27, 1969, 7. See also Adolfo Meciani's medical record (signed by doctor Adolfo Benedettini di Poggio, director of Ville di Nozzano – a private hospital for neurological and mental disease), April 1969, ATP, CL, f. 2; Adolfo Meciani's depositions (April 19, 1969 and April 26, 1969) and cross-examination of Andrea Benedetti and Marco Baldisseri (April 26, 1969) in ATP, CL, f. 3, sf. 4B.

⁵⁶ See Giancarlo Ghislanzoni, "Meciani si impicca in cella," *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 9, 1969, 1-2; Kim, "Il negro della Versilia. Linciaggio a Viareggio," *Vie Nuove*, July 3, 1969, 21; Ornella Ripa, "Un vergognoso segreto," *Gente*, July 9, 1969, 16-18; Corydon, "Chi ci salva dal 'minorenne'?" 18-19.

⁵⁷ See deposition of Giuseppe Zacconi, March 20, 1969, ATP, CL, f. 3, sf. 2B. See also Fabio Galiani, "I ragazzi mentono perché temono il vero colpevole," *Oggi*, November 26, 1969, 140-142; "Parlano le vittime della calunnia," *Oggi*, November 26, 1969, 142; Franco Pierini, "Hanno sconvolto la mia vita ci dice il figlio di Ermete Zacconi," *L'Europeo*, November 27, 1969, 36-39; G. Ghislanzoni, "Zacconi è morto umiliato dalle accuse dei 'ragazzi terribili'," *Il Corriere della Sera*, July 6, 1970, 9. See also Nozza, *Il pistarolo*, 32; Marchesi, *I processi del secolo*, 268, 272. Marcella Meciani, Adolfo's wife, never seemed to show any doubts about her husband's innocence, and about his heterosexuality (Fabio Galiani e Carlo Palumbo, "Gli piacevano troppo le donne," *Oggi*, May 21, 1969, 108-110; Renzo Pellegrini, "Marcella Meciani difende il marito e lancia accuse," *Il Telegrafo*, May 26, 1969, 1-2; Fabio Galiani, "Se mio marito tornerà a casa vorrò avere da lui altri figli," *Oggi*, June 4, 1969, 100-103; Franco Pierini, "Marcella Meciani dice la verità?" *L'Europeo*, June 5, 1969, 46-49). After Adolfo Meciani's death his wife and his sister – Elisabetta Meciani Ciardella – continued their battle to prove his innocence: Giovanni Ribet, "'Eri innocente!' grida Marcella Meciani," *Il Telegrafo*, June 25, 1969, 1, 12; Fabio Galiani, "Riuscirò a perdonare i ragazzi che hanno ucciso mio marito?" *Oggi*, July 9, 1969, 24-26; Enzo Magri, "Parla la sorella di Adolfo Meciani," *L'Europeo*, February 12, 1970, 62-65; Roberto Galli, "Decisa a tutto la moglie di Meciani," *Il Telegrafo*, November 12, 1969, 1, 12. For Meciani's attempted suicide see, for example, Aldo Santini, "Perché Meciani ha cercato la morte," *L'Europeo*, May 22, 1969, 46-50.

Viareggio (Figure 4.13.).⁵⁸ The popular vacation destination suffered from such “publicity.” It was presented as a symbol of the dangers of capitalism, wealth, and hedonism. For the press Viareggio became the icon of a country that was changing traumatically, leaving young and innocent victims behind.⁵⁹ The municipal administration, afraid of losing summer vacationers, defended the city maintaining that it was not a new Sodom but a welcoming seaside resort, and assuring that the *pineta* was not a cruising area but a green space everybody could enjoy.⁶⁰



Figure 4.12. “Tourists” and peddlers on the beach where Ermanno’s corpse was found. *Panorama*, May 15, 1969, 23.



Figure 4.13. Picture of a store selling Trincale’s records. *Panorama*, May 15, 1969, 25.

Pierluigi Mazzocchi, the examining magistrate who was carrying out pre-trial investigations, was not convinced by the *ragazzi di pineta*’s story, and started thinking that homosexuals had nothing to do with the case.⁶¹ Marco, Rodolfo, and Andrea – besides hustling – had something else in common: they were all far-right activists. Rodolfo was a

⁵⁸ See M.M., “Il cantastorie,” *La Nazione*, March 16, 1969, 7; Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” 22-26; Giovanni Arpino, “L’aria di Viareggio,” *La Stampa*, May 18, 1969, 3.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Edgardo Bartoli, “A Viareggio e altrove,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 10, 1969, 15; Greco, “La costa del vizio,” 20-24; Arrigo Benedetti, “I peccati di Viareggio,” *Panorama*, May 29, 1969, 7.

⁶⁰ See, for example, “Lettere al direttore-Il delitto di Viareggio e la gente della Versilia,” *La Nazione*, March 15, 1969, 1; Mario Caccavale, “Processo alla città-Viareggio sotto accusa per l’uccisione di Ermanno,” *Lo Specchio*, May 18, 1969, 8-9; “La Versilia ospitale,” *Lo Specchio*, June 29, 1969, 3.

⁶¹ For Mazzocchi see, for example, Franco Pierini, “Il dramma del giudice che deve svelare il mistero della morte di Ermanno Lavorini,” *L’Europeo*, October 30, 1969, 34-38; Lorenzo Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini. Una narrazione tra storia e cronaca giudiziaria*, Chair Prof. Giovanni De Luna, academic year 2003-2004, Università di Torino. Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 50-51; Nozza, *Il pistarolo*, 32; Steffenoni, *Nera*, 198-199.

member of the neo-Fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*. Marco and Andrea instead were active supporters of the Monarchic Front led by Pietro Vangioni. Baldisseri, put under pressure by Mazzocchi, confessed that Lavorini was kidnapped to extort money and organize far-right terrorist activities in Tuscany.⁶² Andrea Benedetti corroborated this new version in a letter sent to investigators. He retracted his previous confessions and asserted that Della Latta and Vangioni convinced him to talk about homosexual exploiters and male-male prostitution in the *pineta* so that authorities would lose sight of the neo-Fascist lead.⁶³ In January 1970, one year after Lavorini's disappearance, Pietro Vangioni was officially implicated in the case (Figure 4.14.).



Figure 4.14. Pietro Vangioni. *Gente*, June 26, 1969.

⁶² On December 2, 1968 a group of day laborers organized a strike in Avola, Sicily. The demonstration ended with the intervention of the police and the death of two protesters. On December 31, 1968 members of the organization *Potere Operaio* from Pisa decided to organize a protest in solidarity with the Sicilian demonstrators and against privileged people celebrating New Year's Eve at *La Bussola*. The rally was announced through posters declaring: "*Bourgeois come to the Bussola or to the Capannina, come wearing your gala dress, on board of your big car. Come with your woman wearing a fur coat. Master, come to show off, let other people admire you, and parade your wonderful life. We will be there waiting for you.*" According to magazines and newspapers, in front of the nightclub gathered 500 young men from Pisa, Livorno, and Liguria. What was supposed to be a symbolic demonstration degenerated into a violent clash between protesters and *carabinieri*. A young man, Soriano Ceccanti (age 17), was seriously injured. Such a violent ending caused an intense dispute between the students – who accused the police of having shot at eye level – and the government (See Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato. Dal miracolo economico agli anni Ottanta* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2003), 280; Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini*, 143; Tonelli, *Comizi d'amore*, 58). The rally of December 31, 1968 might have provided the occasion for the decision of the right-wing youths to close ranks, open a branch of the Youth Monarchic Front in Viareggio in January 1969 (a few days before the kidnapping), and take action against far-left groups. The journalist Luciano Gherardi of *ABC* corroborated this version of the story and connected the riots outside of *La Bussola* with Ermanno's kidnapping (Gherardi, "*Ermanno vittima dell'estrema destra*," 14-16). However, already on April 22, 1969 *Lotta Continua* – a far-left group – had spread out a leaflet entitled "*I Fascisti in Versilia*" (Fascists in Versilia) highlighting the connection between Ermanno's death and far-right activism.

⁶³ See the deposition of Andrea Benedetti of August 27, 1970 (ATP, CL, f. 3, sf. 4B) and "Dieci rinvii a giudizio per il 'caso Lavorini'," *Il Corriere della Sera*, January 26, 1974, 10. Della Latta always denied the validity of the "terrorist lead" and asserted that Ermanno's murder was related to the "homosexual world" of Viareggio. He claimed that Ermanno was not an innocent adolescent, but one of the *ragazzi di pineta*: "Le trame nere non c'entrano nella morte di Ermanno Lavorini," *Il Corriere della Sera*, January 29, 1974, 11. See also Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini*, 102, 118.

Initially he was arrested for abetment. He was accused of having transported Ermanno's corpse from Viareggio to Vecchiano. Then, in August 1970, Mazzocchi issued a warrant against him for kidnapping and voluntary manslaughter.⁶⁴ Conservative magazines, such as *Lo Specchio*, tried to refute the hypothesis that the "Lavorini case" was a machination of the far right to cover the organization of neo-Fascist terrorism.⁶⁵ Communist and liberal press instead emphasized the "terrorist" lead and tried to definitively bury the "homosexual" one (Figure 4.15.).⁶⁶



Figure 4.15. *ABC*, February 7, 1971, "Ermanno, victim of the extreme right." The magazine explained that behind Ermanno's murder were not homosexuals but far-right activists.

In January 1975, six years after the murder, the trial for the "Lavorini case" began at the Assize Court of Pisa.⁶⁷ Beside the three main defendants were other seven people – most

⁶⁴ Giorgio Sgheri, "Perché è stato arrestato il dirigente monarchico," *l'Unità*, January 27, 1970, 1, 5; Sergio Cabassi, "Pietrino Vangioni sapeva," *Il Corriere della Sera*, January 28, 1970, 14; Giorgio Sgheri, "Senza più misteri dopo un anno il caso Lavorini?," *l'Unità*, January 31, 1969, 5; Segio Cabassi, "Viareggio un anno dopo," *Il Corriere della Sera*, January 31, 1970, 19; Enzo Passanisi, "Ermanno Lavorini fu rapito per ricatto," *Il Corriere della Sera*, August 20, 1970, 7. The name of Vangioni had appeared for the first time in the press in June 1969 when Della Latta and Baldisseri had suggested, in one of their versions of the story, that Ermanno had been killed during a orgy in the seat of the Youth Monarchic Front: Renzo Pellegrini, "Marco insiste nell'autoaccusa," *Il Telegrafo*, June 7, 1969, 1, 14; Giovanni Ribet, "'Dinamite', Vangioni e Marco oggi a confronto a Firenze," *Il Telegrafo*, June 9, 1969, 1-2.

⁶⁵ Benvenuto Pozzi, "Ora compagno i terroristi," *Lo Specchio*, August 30, 1970, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Giorgio Sgheri, "Caso Lavorini: la chiave è nel circolo monarchico?," *l'Unità*, January 28, 1970, 5; Giorgio Sgheri, "Volevamo sequestrare Lavorini e poi accusare i contestatori," *l'Unità*, February 24, 1970, 5; Giorgio Sgheri, "I carabinieri sapevano che Lavorini era stato rapito per motivi politici," *l'Unità*, February 26, 1970, 5; Marcello del Bosco, "Lo rapirono per acquistare armi contro i contestatori," *l'Unità*, August 21, 1970, 1, 5; Marcello del Bosco, "Dà fastidio a molti la svolta del giallo Lavorini," *l'Unità*, August 22, 1970, 1, 5; Giorgio Sgheri, "Da un fedelissimo di Vangioni la verità su Ermanno Lavorini," *l'Unità*, August 25, 1970, 5; Giorgio Sgheri, "In Versilia di nuovo tritolo," *l'Unità*, August 26, 1970, 5; Gherardi, "Ermanno vittima dell'estrema destra," 14-16.

⁶⁷ The trial was delayed for bureaucratic reasons such as the conflict between the Public Prosecutor of Lucca and the Public Prosecutor of Pisa. The former asked to move the investigation from Pisa to Lucca because it was not sure where Ermanno

of them members of the Monarchic Front – accused of minor felonies such as abetment and perjury. The public prosecutor, Giovanni Sellaroli, endorsed the homosexual hypothesis – Ermanno had been killed during a homosexual orgy – and imputed Baldisseri, Della Latta, and Vangioni for unpremeditated murder. Mazzocchi was convinced instead that Ermanno had been kidnapped by the *ragazzi di pineta* who wanted to subsidize the subversive activities of the youth Monarchic Front. He accused them of kidnapping for ransom, felonious homicide, and concealment of the body. Andrea Benedetti was not tried because too young at the time of the murder. In March 1975 the first trial ended with a guilty verdict for Della Latta (sentenced to 19 years) and Baldisseri (15 years), and with the acquittal of Vangioni for lack of evidence. Della Latta and Baldisseri were sentenced for kidnapping, unpremeditated murder, and concealment of the body. Sellaroli’s hypothesis was espoused by the judge: Della Latta kidnapped Ermanno, Baldisseri killed him, and the former – a mortician by profession – buried him. The homosexual environment of the *pineta*, according to the judge, was the breeding ground for the homicide.⁶⁸

On May 13, 1977 the High Court of Appeal of Rome confirmed the verdict of the Appeal Assize Court of Florence that in 1976 had rejected Sellaroli’s hypothesis – murder during a homosexual “bacchanal” – and espoused Mazzocchi’s assumption – kidnapping for ransom and subsequent murder.⁶⁹ Unlike the judges of Pisa, both the judges of the Appeal Court and of the High Court of Appeal admitted as evidence private conversations between Baldisseri, Della Latta, Benedetti, and Vangioni secretly recorded by the police in April, May, and July 1970. The recording disclosed essential information that reoriented the motive of the

had been killed, and because Marco Baldisseri had been arrested in the province of Lucca. See Report of the Public Prosecutor’s office, signed Raoul Tanzi, May 8, 1970, ATP, CL, f. 2.

⁶⁸ See Filiberto Dani, “S’è aperto il processo Lavorini. Prima vittoria per gli imputati,” *La Stampa*, January 10, 1975, 1; “Al processo Lavorini l’accusa ha chiesto 16 anni per Baldisseri e 21 per Della Latta,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, February 15, 1975, 2; Filiberto Dani, “Della Latta condannato a 19 anni, Baldisseri a 15, assolto Vangioni,” *La Stampa*, March 7, 1975, 9.

⁶⁹ See Vittorio Monti, “Caso Lavorini: i magistrati in appello cercano ancora il movente del delitto,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 5, 1976, 9 and “Delitto Lavorini niente omosessuali,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, September 7, 1976, 2.

murder from sexual to political.⁷⁰ The Italian justice system finally condemned Della Latta to 11 years, Vangioni to 9 years, and Baldisseri to 8 years for kidnapping and unpremeditated murder. The Appeal Court and the High Court of Appeal underlined that the gang kidnapped Ermanno for money, and that they knew from the beginning that they were going to kill him. However, the murder was deemed unpremeditated because it happened accidentally.⁷¹ After eight years of hypotheses, doubts and lies the Italian justice system sanctioned that Vangioni was the mastermind of the criminal act, and that Meciani and Zacconi were completely innocent. Ermanno's death had nothing to do with homosexuality. The 13-year-old boy had been kidnapped to finance neo-Fascist terrorism. The assassination of Ermanno Lavorini was one of many initiatives carried out in the late Sixties and early Seventies by right-wing groups to implement the "strategy of tension."⁷² But the "Lavorini affair" had caused such a powerful discursive explosion in the Italian media against homosexuality that still today many in Italy think that he was a victim of sadistic homosexual pedophiles. The final verdict was reached

⁷⁰ See case decision n. 18 of the Appeal Assize Court of Florence, June 28, 1976, ATP, CL.

⁷¹ Filiberto Dani, "Il 'caso' Lavorini è ormai chiuso la cassazione ha confermato tutto," *La Stampa*, May 14, 1977, 11 and "Non si svolgerà un altro processo Lavorini. La Cassazione conferma la sentenza d'appello," *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 14, 1977, 7. See also case decision n. 18 of the Appeal Assize Court of Florence, June 28, 1976, ATP, CL.

⁷² The electoral growth of the PCI in 1968, the students' movement, and the workers' movement incited the Fascist counteraction. Protests and unrest of students and workers, together with the positive electoral results of the Italian Communist Party, seemed to signal to many conservative forces that the country was on the brink of a revolution. Neo-Fascists accused Communists of having hatched a plot to seize power. The students' and the workers' movements, according to the right-wing *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, were forms of sabotage organized by the PCI under Soviet mandate. From 1969 onwards the country witnessed an appalling series of acts of subversion and violence which reached their peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The so called *stragismo* (from the term *strage* – massacre) started with two bomb attacks on April 25, 1969 in Milan (*Fiera Campionaria* and *Stazione Centrale*). The year ended with bombs planted in various public places in Milan and Rome. One of them exploded on December 12 in a crowded bank in Piazza Fontana, Milan, resulting in 17 dead and 84 injured. The terrorist attack, sealing a period imbued with fears and preceded by around twenty terrorist attacks, was a clear stance against the Hot Autumn – a term used for a series of strikes organized in Italian factories in the fall of 1969. Responsible for the massacres were groups on the extreme right. The goal of the neo-Fascists was to exacerbate the levels of fear and tension so that security forces would feel compelled to intervene and suppress left-wing subversives. The "strategy of tension," according to many historians, aimed not only at keeping the PCI from joining the governmental coalition, but also at nurturing an atmosphere of terror apt to create the right conditions for an authoritarian coup d'état in the country. See, for example, Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 333-334; Jeffrey McKenzie Bale, *The 'Black' Terrorist International: Neo-Fascist Paramilitary Networks and the 'Strategy of Tension' in Italy, 1968-1974* (Dissertation, University of California Berkley, 1994); Nicola Tranfaglia, "La strategia della tensione e i due terrorismi," *Studi Storici* 39, no. 4 (1998): 989-998; Maurizio Calvi, Alessandro Ceci, Angelo Sessa, Giulio Vasaturo, *Le date del terrore. La genesi del terrorismo italiano e il microclima dell'eversione dal 1945 al 2003* (Roma: Luca Sossella editore, 2003), 84; Anna Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism. The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 3-4, 7, 80; Guido Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell'Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta (1966-1975)* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), 40-52, 61, 76; Nicola Tonietto, "Un colpo di stato mancato? Il golpe Borghese e l'eversione nera in Italia," *Diacronie-Studi di storia contemporanea* 27, no. 3 (2016): 2.

eight years after the murder, and it did not receive much attention in the media. By then the anti-homosexual clamor of 1969 had produced a narrative that was hard to change.⁷³

The Anti-homosexual Campaign

Almost a decade after the *Balletti Verdi* a presumed case of murderous pedophilia showed how, at the end of the 1960s, homosexuals were viewed as dangerous predators.⁷⁴ In 1969, besides the “Lavorini case,” two other events ignited the press and nurtured anti-homosexual

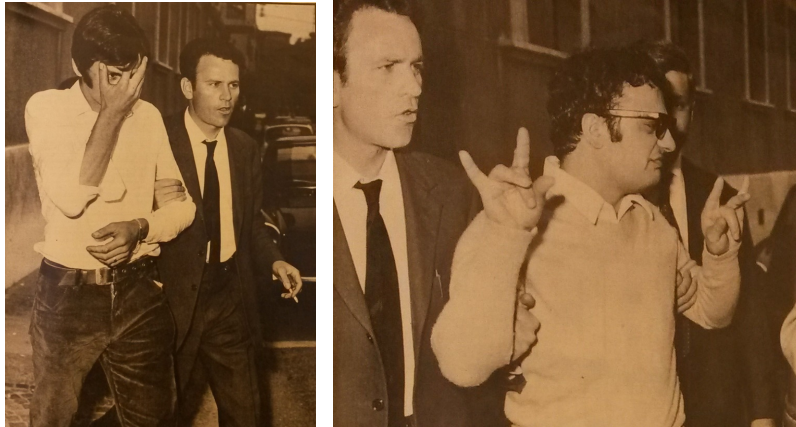
⁷³ Marchesi, *I processi del secolo*, 274. See Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini*, 152.

⁷⁴ As we saw in the previous chapter discourses about the *Balletti Verdi* kept circulating until 1964 – year of the final verdict. In the years between the definitive closure of the *Balletti Verdi* case and the Braibanti’s trial homosexuality continued to be talked about in the media. For discourses about normative and non-normative sexualities in the mid-1960s see Arno Falkenburg, “Sesso e controsesso” *Cronaca*, March 14, 1964, 14; Franco Vanni, “I fuorilegge dell’amore a Ferrara,” *Il Resto del Carlino*, March 20, 1964; “Anche uomini-squillo nella ‘casa’ di Trastevere,” *Paese Sera*, April 5, 1964; AF, “Le origini dell’omosessualità,” *Cronaca*, April 11, 1964, 15; AF, “Sono curabili gli invertiti?,” *Cronaca*, April 25, 1964, 14-15; “Battuta notturna al centro, Rimpatriati 26 ragazzi di vita,” *Paese Sera* May 4, 1964; Arno Falkenburg, “I becchini della felicità,” *Cronaca*, May 16, 1964, 14-15; “L’omosessualità,” *Panorama*; Gianni Luciolli, “Nelle notti d’estate emerge dalla metropoli la squallida colonia della gioventù bruciata,” *Il Tempo*, June 11, 1964; “Vestito da donna in Via Veneto,” *Il Messaggero*, September 6, 1964; “Operazione Bonifica” ieri notte a Villa Borghese,” *Il Tempo*, September 17, 1964; “Arrestati ‘Janenette’ e i suoi tre amici,” *La Notte*, October 6, 1964; “Offensiva del Buon costume contro il mondo del vizio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, October 16, 1964; “Ordinata dal Questore la chiusura dell’Etoile,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, December 3, 1964; “Le ‘passeggiatrici adulterate’ sono almeno cinquanta,” *La Notte*, April 3, 1965; “Arrestati dal Buon Costume tre squallidi personaggi,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 5, 1965; AF, “Sempre più spudorati,” *Cronaca*, April 10, 1965, 23; “I ‘ragazzi di vita’ sono infetti,” *Nuova Alta Tensione*, May 4, 1965, 6-7; Sandro Viola, “Omoseessuali si nasce?” *L’Espresso*, May 23, 1965, 12-13; Sandro Viola, “La paura della donna,” *L’Espresso*, May 30, 1965, 13; “Retata della Buon Costume tra le ‘amicizie particolari’,” *Il Gazzettino*, June 12, 1965; “Tre giovani in vesti femminili si spacciavano per ballerine,” *Il Messaggero*, July 7, 1965; Giorgio Vitangeli, “Rome (DC) by Night. Al Colosseo Terzo Sesso,” *Folla*, July 25, 1965; “Coprifuoco per il ‘terzo sesso’,” *Paese Sera*, September 11, 1965; “Coprifuoco per la ‘Romanina’,” *Cronaca*, September 17, 1965; “Attilio Pandini, ‘La Romanina e gli arresti domiciliari,’” *ABC*, September 20, 1965; Fermato un polacco: sarebbe implicate in uno scandalo di ‘balletti verdi’,” *Gazzetta del Popolo*, October 27, 1965; AF, “L’omosessualità è una malattia?” *Cronaca*, December 4, 1965, 18-19; Renato Proni, “Si chiamano ‘Soraya’ e ‘Betty Curtis’ i capovolti di Torino,” *ABC*, December 5, 1965, 12-14; Luigi Maltagliati, “L’altra sponda ci sommerge,” *Cronaca*, January 29, 1966, 16-18; Franco Vaudo, “Genova: sognano tre milioni per cambiar sesso a Casablanca,” *ABC*, February 14, 1966; “Un ragazzo di tredici anni nella casa dei balletti verdi,” *La Notte*, March 30, 1966; “Interrotti dal Buonc Costume i balletti verdi di corso Lodi,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 30, 1966; “Alt a una centrale di ‘balletti verdi’,” *Il Corriere Lombardo*, March 30, 1966; “Sembravano dodici ragazze ma erano uomini travestiti,” *Il Messaggero*, August 11, 1966; “Travestiti da donna denunciati a Genova,” *Il Messaggero*, August 18, 1966; Alessandro Mossotti, “Tollerati e felici. I venti milioni di ‘gay’ degli Stati Uniti,” *ABC*, March 19, 1967, 20; Benny Jeangold, “Una sposa di nome Harry,” *ABC*, July 23, 1967, 12. For letters written by homosexuals to magazines see “Libertà di parola,” *Cronaca*, November 23, 1963, 2; “Lettere,” *Panorama*, November 1964, 13; “Una testimonianza: cosa significa non essere come gli altri,” *L’Espresso*, June 6, 1965, 2; “Libertà di parola,” *Cronaca*, January 15, 1966; “Lettera capovolta,” *Il Borghese*, July 14, 1966, 553. For films, books and songs featuring homosexual characters see “Nouvelles d’Italie,” *Arcadie*, October 1963, n. 118, 468 and Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 42. The following movies featuring homosexual stories and/or characters were released between 1960 and 1969: Luchino Visconti, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), Federico Fellini, *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Pietro Germi, *Un maledetto imbroglio* (1960), Bernardo Bertolucci, *La comare secca* (1961), Roberto Rossellini, *Anima Nera* (1962), Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Mamma Roma* (1962), Umberto Rossini, *Mare* (1962), Dino Risi, *Il sorpasso* (1962), Damiano Damiani, *L’isola d’Arturo* (1962), Mauro Bolognini, *Agostino* (1962), Vittorio Caprioli, *Parigi o cara* (1962), Enzo Biagi, *L’Italia proibita* (1963), Paolo Cavera, *I malamondo* (1964), Luigi D’Amico, Dino Risi, Franco Rossi, *I complessi* (1965), Giulio Questi, *Se sei vivo para!* (1967), Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema* (1968), Steno, *Capriccio all’Italiana* (1968), Fernando di Leo, *Brucia ragazzo brucia* (1969), Marcello Fondato, *Certo, certissimo ... anzi probabile* (1969), Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, *Metti una sera a cena* (1969), Dino Risi, *Vedo nudo* (1969), Dino Risi, *Il giovane normale* (1969). See also the following books: Giovanni Testori, *Il Fabbricone* (1961), Gian Piero Bona, *Il soldato nudo* (1961), Vittorio La Monaca, *Il Tommaso di Milano* (1962), Alberto Arbasino, *Fratelli d’Italia* (1963), Enzo Siciliano, “Friedrich Holt e il suo ventitré giugno” in *Racconti Ambigui* (1963), Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (1965), Giorgio Villani, *Nata in trincea* (1965), Windham Donald, *Due vite* (1966), Gian Piero Bona, *I pantaloni d’oro* (1969). Two rather unflattering songs were released in 1962: Peos’ *Balletti Verdi* and Fred Bullo’s *Il Terzo Sesso*.

sentiments: in April a young hustler, Andrea Vozza, killed in Florence Giovanni Borri, a homosexual man, and in June the police discovered in Reggio Emilia an active male-male prostitution circle, involving mature clients and young hustlers. The press called this latter case, vaguely similar to the *Balletti Verdi* of Brescia, *Balletti Verdi di Reggio Emilia* (Figures 4.16. and 4.17.).⁷⁵ *Ragazzi di pineta*, Vozza, and dozens of youths involved in the new *Balletti* were portrayed as male hustlers prone to crime and other illicit activities, motivated not only by their thirst for easy money but also, and above all, by the malice of ruthless homosexuals. As a consequence of these and many other cases exposed by the Italian press, juvenile prostitution came to be seen as alarmingly on the rise, and homosexuals kept being branded as corruptors and killers.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ For Giovanni Borri's murder see Piero Magi, "Ha confessato a Roma il delitto un giovane di diciannove anni," *La Nazione*, April 6, 1969, 1-2; Sergio Bindi, "Arrestatemi: sono io l'assassino di Peretola," *Il Telegrafo*, April 6, 1969, 1, 14; Sergio Bindi, "'Sono stato drogato' afferma l'assassino," *Il Telegrafo*, April 8, 1969, 1, 14; Sandro Picchi, "Il biondo che ride," *La Nazione*, April 8, 1969, 15; Giuseppe Peruzzi, "Prima del delitto il 'biondo' invitò la fidanzata a fuggire," *La Nazione*, April 13, 1969, 7; "Il biondo che ride," April 19, 1969, *Cronaca*, 8-9; "Un passato inquietante," *Cronaca*, April 19, 1969, 10. At first some magazines tried to find a connection between Ermanno's and Borri's murder (see Dante Nocentini, "Assassinio a Firenze. La verità su Ermanno?," *Il Telegrafo*, April 5, 1969, 14; Carlo Lulli, "Tempo di Belve," *Il Telegrafo*, April 6, 1969, 1; "Viareggio sì e no," *Cronaca*, April 19, 1969, 10). The murder exposed the Florentine world of male prostitution (see Piero Rogat, "Cascine by night," *Cronaca*, April 19, 1969, 8-12). The police of Reggio Emilia pressed charges against 27 men – and arrested 18 of them – for male prostitution. The youths involved were about 150, most of them were adolescents. The accusations were: abduction of minor, corruption of minor, indecent assault, sexual violence, public indecency, and aiding and abetting prostitution. See, for example, "Casa squillo con sentinelle e garçoniere per invertiti," *La Nuova Gazzetta di Reggio*, May 23, 1969, 1; "Si allarga il giro dei balletti verdi," *La Nuova Gazzetta di Reggio*, May 25, 1969, 2; "I balletti verdi giravano attorno ad un albergatore," *La Nuova Gazzetta di Reggio*, May 28, 1969, 1; Leopoldo Baruffaldi, "Irretiti i ragazzi di un intero quartiere," *La Nazione sera*, June 12, 1969, 8; P.V.M., "Oltre trecento persone coinvolte nei 'balletti' di Reggio Emilia," *Il Telegrafo*, June 12, 1969, 1, 12; T.B., "Reclutavano i ragazzi anche con la violenza," *La Nazione*, June 12, 1969, 7; T.B., "Reclutavano i ragazzi anche con la violenza," *La Nazione*, June 12, 1969, 7; Filippo Abbiati, "I genitori organizzano squadre anti-adesatori," *Il Giorno*, June 13, 1969, 4; "Gli immondi spogliarelli nella cascina del Beggi," *Il Telegrafo*, June 13, 1969, 1, 12; P.M., "18 arresti a Reggio Emilia per i 'balletti verdi'," *Il Telegrafo*, June 14, 1969, 1, 2; M.R., "A Reggio Emilia la folla inveisce contro i fermati," *Il Telegrafo*, June 15, 1969, 1, 2; Franco Gianola, "Sei normale o vai con le donne?" *Vie Nuove*, June 19, 1969, 46-49; Corrado Spagna, "A Reggio Emilia si balla verde," *Cronaca*, June 21, 1969, 8-10; Gianni Franceschini, "Anormali Preti Manicomio-Reggio Emilia-I tre scandali di corso Garibaldi," *Lo Specchio*, June 22, 1969, 20-21; Fabrizio Dentice, "La via emiliana all'erotismo," *L'Espresso*, June 22, 1969, 9; Domenico Bartoli, "Siamo diventati più viziosi," *Epoca*, June 22, 1969, 29; Lorenzo Vincenti, "Sono anormale ma non corruttore," *Oggi*, June 25, 1969, 92-93; Giorgio Gatta, "L'alibi migliore è una bella ragazza," *Panorama*, June 26, 1969, 35-36; Aldo Santini "Da Viareggio a Reggio Emilia," *L'Europeo*, June 26, 1969, 42-45; Carla Ravaioli, "Parlano i ragazzi del 'giro'," *L'Europeo*, June 26, 1969, 45-49; Peter Kolosimo, "Guida all'omosessualità," *Cronaca*, July 5, 1969, 16; Fabio Galiani, "Volevo strapparli dal rogo, ma era troppo pesante," *Oggi*, March 3, 1970, 72-74. For the case see also the correspondence between the Ministry of Interior and the Prefecture of Reggio Emilia: letter of the Ministry of Interior to the Prefecture of Reggio Emilia, June 10, 1969; letter of the Ministry of Interior to the Prefecture of Reggio Emilia, June 14, 1969; letter of the Prefecture of Reggio Emilia to the Ministry of Interior, June 28, 1969; letter of the Prefecture of Reggio Emilia to the Ministry of Interior, September 11, 1970 (ACS, MI, Gab. 1967-1970, b. 56).

⁷⁶ See "Squallidi incontri di ragazzi," *La Nazione Sera*, May 23, 1969, 2; Lucio Galluzzo, "Omoseessuali a porte chiuse," *Cronaca*, July 19, 1969, 14-15; "Il giovane anormale," *Vie Nuove*, September 25, 1969, 19-22; Roberto Nunzi, "Un falso prete per i matrimoni tra uomini," *Cronaca*, December 13, 1969, 10-11.



Figures 4.16.-4.17. Two of the men arrested for the *Balletti Verdi* in Reggio Emilia. *Europeo*, June 26, 1969.

The “Lavorini case” was different from all the others because the Italian TV profusely reported about it. The story of the young kid disappeared in Viareggio entered millions of Italian homes.⁷⁷ To follow the latest news from Viareggio it was not necessary to buy and read a magazine or a newspaper, it was sufficient to turn on the TV and just listen to the broadcaster. TV and newscasts communicated news in unprecedented ways. The possibility of seeing and listening to the protagonists of dramatic events made them more real. TV, especially as a relatively “new” mass medium, had an affective power that other media lacked. On February 1, 1969, the day after the disappearance, Armando Lavorini, Ermanno’s father, talked to the entire nation on the first channel of the Italian TV crying and begging the kidnappers to give him back his son.⁷⁸ Television nurtured the collective pain of the nation. Italians ate lunch and dinner watching TV and waiting in suspense for good news that never came. Ermanno was everybody’s child, brother, and son. He became the personification of innocence. From the first day Ermanno was for many mothers and fathers the metaphoric symbol of one of their greatest fears: the sudden and tragic loss of their children. The

⁷⁷ In 1966 80% of the Italian population had access to a TV set. 20 million people regularly watched TV programs during the prime time. In 1968 there were around 8 million families with a subscription to the Italian national TV. See Mauro Morbidelli, “‘Posso dire una parola?...’ I giovani dentro e davanti la TV,” in *Giovani prima della rivolta*, Paola Ghione and Marco Grispigni eds. (Roma: manifestolibri, 1998): 179-186; Francesca Anania, *Breve storia della radio e della televisione* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2004), 75-76.

⁷⁸ Giancarlo Ghislanzoni, “Streghe a Viareggio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 25, 1969, 3.

monsters who had taken this kid away from his family and had killed him became unforgivable in the eyes of an entire national audience.⁷⁹

Browsing Italian newspapers and magazines from the first half of 1969 it is hard to find voices even vaguely sympathetic to homosexuals. Some magazines, such as *Il Tempo*, tried to avoid inflammatory tones, but the majority of the press talked about homosexuals using old terms – such as *pederasti* (pederasts), *sodomiti* (sodomites), *invertiti* (inverts), *perversiti* (perverts), *contronatura* (against nature) – and more recent ones – such as *capovolti* (upturned).⁸⁰ The *Corriere della Sera*, one of the most important Italian newspapers, described the homosexual milieu as a filthy “world of vice” and talked about its inhabitants as squalid, shameful, lewd, and depraved *anormali* (abnormal individuals).⁸¹ The Viareggio local newspaper, *Il Telegrafo*, used similar language and did not make any distinction between homosexuals and perverted sex maniacs. These terms were used as interchangeable synonyms.⁸² *La Nazione Sera*, a Florentine newspaper particularly fond of the word *anormale* to describe homosexuals, argued that they lived in a world of “secrecy and insanity,” in “a limbo of eternal damnation” where “the most unbelievable, the most grotesque, the most infamous maliciousness happens.” Homosexuals, according to this newspaper, were ontologically different and had nothing in common with “the other men.”⁸³ The right-wing magazine *Lo Specchio* described the case as “*uno sporco affare di sodomiti*” (a sodomites’ dirty affair). Moreover, the same magazine, talking about Viareggio as a new Sodom where

⁷⁹ Cirri, “Il paradiso dei capovolti,” 630; Mario Caccavale, “Processo alla città-Viareggio sotto accusa per l’uccisione di Ermanno,” *Lo Specchio*, May 18, 1969, 8-9. See also Renzo Pellegrini, “I genitori ora potranno trattare il riscatto,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 4, 1969, 1, 12; Sergio Saviane “Scaraventato il cuore al di là del video,” *L’Espresso*, August 23, 1970, 22.

⁸⁰ See Francesco Frigieri. “Hanno ucciso lui invece del padre?,” *Il Tempo*, March 22, 1969, 75-80; Ermanno Rea, “Viareggio: il terzo uomo c’è,” *Il Tempo*, May 3, 1969, 26-31. Lorenzo Benadusi explains how words such as “sodomite,” “pederast” and “invert” were largely used during the Fascist regime in Italy (see Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man. Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012], 9). As we know already the word “*capovolto*” was used as a synonym of homosexual after the publication of Giò Stajano’s queer-themed book *Roma Capovolta* in 1959.

⁸¹ See, for example, Sergio Cabassi, “Indagini nel mondo del vizio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, February 12, 1969, 5; Arrigo Benedetti, “Emozioni e pensieri,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 7, 1969, 3; Sergio Cabassi, “Interrogatori sospesi a Viareggio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 13, 1969, 5.

⁸² See, for example, Renzo Pellegrini, “È un brutto il rapitore,” *Il Telegrafo*, February 12, 1969, 1, 12.

⁸³ Mauro Mancini, “Perché non si trova l’assassino,” *La Nazione Sera*, March 17, 1969, 3.

kids were corrupted and even killed, brought up again the old-fashioned expression “*terzo sesso*” (third sex) to talk about homosexuals, an expression used also by the newspaper *La Nazione Sera* and even by the more progressive magazine *L'Espresso*.⁸⁴ *Epoca* seemed to be less aggressive against homosexuality and more cautious in trusting the accusations by the *ragazzi di pineta* against Meciani and Zacconi. In an article published in June 1969 entitled *Siamo diventati più viziosi?* (Have we become more depraved?) – sparked by the *Balletti Verdi* of Reggio Emilia rather than by Ermanno’s murder – the author underscored that Italy had not been punishing homosexuality for decades and that this had to be considered as proof of Italian tolerance. In his view, homosexuality between adults and without scandals did not need to be criminalized. However, and here the open-mindedness of the journalist showed its cracks, “when this vice, instead of remaining secret and recognizing in this way its own abnormal nature and its own moral condemnation, becomes public, and is displayed and almost praised on the streets, in movies and in some magazines, then it is necessary for the law to intervene and protect young people.” While claiming to be more tolerant than others, the journalist underscored: “We are not talking about prosecuting homosexuals, but about avoiding that their vice, tolerated when circumscribed, become object of imitation and almost admiration, a reason of corruption, an incentive to crime, prostitution, and blackmailing.”⁸⁵

Panorama, a rather liberal magazine, published an article in March 1969 – two weeks after the discovery of Ermanno’s body – about the increasing number of sexual “monsters” in Italy and about the growing number of homosexuals accused of enticing innocent kids.⁸⁶ *L'Espresso* explained that in Viareggio had come to the surface a phenomenon that was present also in many other Italian cities: child prostitution. In Rome many male prostitutes were younger than eighteen, and some of them were only twelve or thirteen. This market,

⁸⁴ See F.A., “Il giallo che fa arrossire,” *Lo Specchio*, May 4, 1969, 46; F.A., “Orrore in Versilia. Come il terzo sesso ha ucciso Ermanno Lavorini,” *Lo Specchio*, May 11, 1969, 46; Caccavale, “Processo alla città,” 8. See also Ugo Dotti, “Ermanno: sul ‘carnet’ della polizia lucchesi pisani fiorentini e massesi,” *La Nazione Sera*, March 25, 1969, 3 and Catalano, “Pollicino fa la vita,” 11.

⁸⁵ Bartoli, “Siamo diventati più viziosi,” 29.

⁸⁶ Luigi Vacchi, “Dieci italiani diventano mostri ogni giorno,” *Panorama*, March 27, 1969, 28-29.

according to *L'Espresso*, was thriving because the number of men searching for this specific group was increasing considerably.⁸⁷ The periodical *Cronaca*, talking about the homicide of Viareggio, underlined that pedophilia and “sexual inversion” were not necessarily the same phenomena because there were also male pedophiles interested in little girls. However, the journalist underlined, “almost all homosexuals [were] pedophiles” because approaching and making innocent young boys fall into their traps was much easier than searching for other sexual outlets.⁸⁸ A few weeks later the same magazine maintained that only a small number of homosexuals did not suffer from pedophilic tendencies, and that the “Lavorini case” was without doubt intimately related to the world of male prostitution and pedophilia.⁸⁹ *Cronaca* insisted on this point by reporting a series of homicides committed by homosexual pedophiles, and underlining how the homosexual vice went hand in hand with other perversions such as exhibitionism, masochism, sadism, necrophilia, fetishism, and gerontophilia.⁹⁰ This magazine, well disposed towards the “sexual liberation” of the heterosexuals, was rather severe against homosexuals. Homosexuality, according to *Cronaca*, was a threatening and rapidly spreading perversion. It was curable through psychoanalysis, it could be prevented with proper sexual education, and the Italian society had the right to defend itself by refusing to tolerate homosexuals and introducing a law criminalizing homosexuality.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Catalano, “Pollicino fa la vita,” 11.

⁸⁸ P.K., “Il problema della settimana-I banditi del sesso,” *Cronaca*, April 26, 1969, 21.

⁸⁹ Kolosimo, “Guida all’omosessualità,” 16, 18.

⁹⁰ Peter Kolosimo, “La natura impazzisce?,” *Cronaca*, July 12, 1969, 16.

⁹¹ Nunzi, “Un falso prete per i matrimoni tra uomini,” 11. For the pro-heterosexual sex attitude of *Cronaca* see, for example: Arno Falkenburg, “Le ingenuè depravate,” *Cronaca*, January 18, 1964, 12-15; Id., “Il mercato delle vergini,” *Cronaca*, January 25, 1964, 12-15; Id., “Le illibate e le altre,” *Cronaca*, February 1, 1964, 12-14; Id., “Confessioni terribili,” *Cronaca*, March 7, 1964, 16-19; P.K., “L’eterno assillo,” *Cronaca*, March 25, 1967, 19; Peter Kolosimo, “Lui&Lei,” *Cronaca*, November 11, 1967, 16-18; Id., “Lui&Lei,” *Cronaca*, November 18, 1967, 16-18; P.K., “‘Petting’ all’Italiana,” *Cronaca*, December 2, 1967, 19. In spite of its anti-homosexual tone *Cronaca* showed great interest in sexual queerness already before the Lavorini case. In 1967, for example, it devoted a report to sexual deviations, and male and female homosexuality in sixteen installments. And in the summer of 1969 the magazine published several articles about queer sexuality. In an article published in July 1969 Peter Kolosimo explained the meanings of *omosessuale*, *invertito*, *pedofilo*, *efebo*, and *travestito*. *Omosessuale* and *invertito*, according to Kolosimo were two synonyms, and pedophilia was presented as a phenomenon related to male homosexuality (Kolosimo, “Guida all’omosessualità,” 18). In another article published the following week Kolosimo defined *bisessualità* and *transessualità* (Peter Kolosimo, “La natura impazzisce?,” *Cronaca*, July 12, 1969, 16-18), whereas on July 19 he talked about the so-called *ermafroditi* (Peter Kolosimo, “Gli ermafroditi,” *Cronaca*, July 19, 1969, 16-

In this atmosphere of a witch hunt on homosexuals, the magazine *Men-Settimanale per gli uomini* (Men-Weekly magazine for men) and the Communist press emerged as exceptions.⁹² *Men*, a risqué magazine published to satisfy the sexual curiosity and voyeurism of heterosexual men, turned out to be an important publication for many homosexuals who wanted to read articles about themselves, publish personal ads to find friends and sexual partners, and – after 1970 – enjoy photographs of male nudes. Capitalizing upon the homosexual market Saro Balsamo’s periodical produced discourses about same-sex sexualities like no other magazines before, and expanded the boundaries of the *commercially palatable*. From its first issue in 1966 *Men* talked about homosexuality.⁹³ But same-sex sexualities acquired more and more space from 1968 onwards, when the magazine discussed the Braibanti case with compassion and sensitivity, criticized all those allegedly nonconformist individuals who were actually rather conformist when talking about, and dealing with, same-sex sexuality, and granted some attention to its homosexual and gender non-conforming readers looking for help in the columns “*Lettere al direttore*” (Letters to the director) and “*Il divano di Lady Chatterley*” (Lady Chatterley’s couch).⁹⁴ In the same year

18). Arno Falkenburg and Peter Kolosimo were pseudonyms of Pier Domenico Colosimo, a Communist dabbling in psychology who became renowned in the 1970s as a ufologist, see Giori, *Homosexuality and Italian cinema*, 153.

⁹² The first issue of *Men* was published on November 25, 1966. According to Saro Balsamo, who had designed this new periodical, *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini* was destined to give space to “provocative” and half-naked women, but it soon became a point of reference for many Italian homosexuals. The magazine became immediately target of police repression and the first eight numbers, considered obscene, were confiscated. After the publication of *Men*, since 1967, were founded other periodicals “for men only” such as *King*, *Kent*, *Tab*, *Tabù*, *Playmen*, *Supersex*, *Sexybell*, *Caballero* and *Adam*. Also these magazines, deemed obscene, had to face multiple requisitions. See Gianni Passavini, *Porno di carta* (Guidonia: Iacobelli Editore, 2016), 10, 13, 29-31, 49-50, 54, 55.

⁹³ Passavini, *Porno di carta*, 41.

⁹⁴ For letters about the Braibanti’s case see “Lettere al direttore-Braibanti e gli altri,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 19, 1968, 2; Maria Teresa Greco, “L’importanza di essere omosessuale,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 26, 1968, 12-14; “Lettere al direttore-I bullelli e gli omosessuali,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, August 16, 1968, 2. For letters sent to the director see for example “Lettere al direttore, Noi omosessuali,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 25, 1968, 2; “Lettere al direttore, Il dramma di una ex-uomo,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, Novembre 25, 1968, 2; “Lettere al direttore, Il razzismo dei sessi,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 25, 1968, 3; “Lettere al direttore, Per essere donna,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 9, 1968, 2. The director also fought with fire against some readers who used a rather aggressive tone against homosexuals see “Lettere al direttore, Omosessuali e repressione,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 30, 1968, 2. “Lady Chatterley” had a tendency to sermonize her correspondents. Most of the times she told her homosexual readers to go to therapy if they wanted to “heal.” See, for example, “Il divano di Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, March 15, 1968, 64; “Il divano di Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 21, 1968, 32, 39; “A Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 2, 1968, 32; “A Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, February 10, 1969, 60; “A Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, March 31, 1969, 54; “Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 12, 1969, 38-39; “Il divano di Lady Chatterley,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 15, 1969, 46-47. In November 1970 the magazine also began the publication of a column – *Il Salotto di Oscar Wilde* (Oscar Wilde’s parlor) – where Giò Stajano answered letters about the

Men talked about transgender issues showing its support for men and women who wanted to be their “true” selves,⁹⁵ and began discussing with its readers the possibility of publishing male nudes, an option many heterosexual men strongly opposed – threatening to stop buying the magazine – and many female and male homosexual readers warmly welcomed.⁹⁶ In 1969, articles about homosexual men and letters from homosexuals and transgender individuals multiplied.⁹⁷ While in the midst of the “Lavorini case” other magazines were accusing homosexuals of being monsters, *Men* criticized excessive puritanism, and even published an article talking about “homosexual love.”⁹⁸ This piece, which dealt with a stable couple formed by two men loving each other, was an example of rare tolerance.⁹⁹ *Men* did talk about the *pineta*, about Meciani, and about the young hustlers of Viareggio, but instead of pointing an accusing finger at homosexuals, the magazine accused the adults in general for having turned the other way.¹⁰⁰ In July 1969 the magazine began the publication of an investigative report about homosexuality that was devoid of any prosecutorial zeal, and offered precious information to all those men searching for friends and sexual partners in Rome, Milan, Naples, Florence and other tourist destinations. As the director of the magazine underlined, these articles were a way to demystify and debunk with irony and lightheartedness taboos, fears and false myths about homosexuality. Even if the cover of the first installment of the

most disparate topics sent by homosexual readers. Many letters did not seem to be real and, at times, I had the impression that some of them had been written directly by Stajano, however, this column was a real rarity in the Italian media landscape. *Il Salotto* not only offered information about where men could meet other men, not only was a place to read more or less credible homosexual stories, but – above all – it allowed the circulation of discourses about same-sex sexuality using a rather ironic and light tone.

⁹⁵ Gillo Fiorentini, “Quando ‘lui’ si sente donna,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 21, 1968, 28-31; Gillo Fiorentini, “Quando ‘lei’ ha i baffi,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 28, 1968, 44-47; Uberto de Andrè, “Genova: il sesso truccato-Travestiti e marinai sul fronte del porto,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 18, 1968, 14-17.

⁹⁶ “Lettere al direttore, ... e nudi maschili,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 14, 1968, 2; “Lettere al direttore, L’uomo nudo a chi piace?,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 4, 1968, 2-3. The first male nude, in the end, was published in 1970, see “Prima intervista con un uomo nudo,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 20, 1970, 20-21.

⁹⁷ Homosexuals sent letter to the magazine thanking the director for his open-mindedness and his support. See, for example, “Al direttore. Una terapia per pochi,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, March 24, 1969, 2; “Al direttore, Firenze e gli omosessuali,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, April 21, 1969, 2; “Al direttore. Omosessuali e psicoterapia,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 5, 1969, 2; “Al direttore. Contestazione omosessuale,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 26, 1969, 2; “Al direttore. Contestazione omosessuale bis,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, June 16, 1969, 2.

⁹⁸ For the criticism of sexual puritanism see the article about the suicide of a homosexual in Pavia: “Condannato a morte dai bacchettoni un omosessuale,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, March 10, 1969, 3-8

⁹⁹ Anna Bonanni, “I ragazzi bene del terzo sesso. Come nasce un amore ad una ‘festa-gay’,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, February 10, 1969, 56-58.

¹⁰⁰ Greco, “La costa del vizio,” 20-24.

investigative report (Figure 4.18.), representing Italian homosexuals through the image of an effeminate dandy, seemed to reassert stereotypes rather than demystifying them.¹⁰¹



Figure 4.18. *Men*, July 14, 1969, cover. First installment of the investigative report about homosexuals in Italy.

In February and March 1969, still in the wake of Braibanti's trial, the Communist magazine *Vie Nuove* was rather resistant to embrace the homosexual lead in the "Lavorini case," and blamed conservatives and fascists for using such hypothesis to incite moralistic purges against innocent scapegoats.¹⁰² *L'Unità*, while other newspapers enthusiastically talked about the homosexual lead in early February 1969, also exhibited caution.¹⁰³ According to the correspondent of the newspaper from Viareggio, the "story of the sexual maniac" seemed to be a decoy, while other leads such as kidnapping for ransom or revenge were more convincing.¹⁰⁴ Even after the discovery of the body *l'Unità* did not embrace the homosexual lead enthusiastically, whereas *Vie Nuove* argued that even if Ermanno had been actually killed

¹⁰¹ Andrea Silveri e Giovanni della Valle, "Gli omosex in Italia," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 14, 1969, 8-13; Corydon, "Roma. La capitale del 'Terzo'," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 14, 1969, 14-17; Corydon, "Le 'arci-zie'," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 21, 1969, 14-17; Corydon, "Capri e l'isola dei sireni," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 28, 1969, 22-25; Corydon, "Napoli. Le 'femmenelle' del Golfo," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, August 4, 1969, 18-20; Corydon, "Taormina. I modelli del Barone," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, August 11, 1969, 26-28; Corydon, "In pineta la guerra continua," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, August 18, 1969, 18-21; Corydon, "Riviera. I rampolli degeneri," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, August 25, 1969, 26-28; Corydon, "Riviera. I rampolli degeneri," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 1, 1969, 26-28; Corydon, "Puglia. Il rossetto di Rudy," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 15, 1969, 26-28; Corydon, "Milano. Scatenati di Notte," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 22, 1969, 26-28; "Al direttore-Corydon e gli omosex," *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 22, 1969, 61.

¹⁰² Giorgio Sgherri, "Giallo in maschera. Viareggio: la scomparsa del bimbo Ermanno Lavorini," *Vie Nuove*, February 27, 1969, 21; Enrico Franco, "Un assassino per tutti," *Vie Nuove*, March 20, 1969, 18.

¹⁰³ Giorgio Sgherri, "Ucciso per disgrazia o per vendetta?" *l'Unità*, February 12, 1969, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Giorgio Sgherri, "C'è una traccia nuova ma segreta nel giallo del ragazzo scomparso," *l'Unità*, February 14, 1969, 8. When Pierluigi Mazzocchi began to head towards the "political lead," *l'Unità* seemed to espouse it with ill-concealed pleasure. See Giorgio Sgherri, "Caso Lavorini: sopralluogo nella sede del movimento giovanile monarchico," *l'Unità*, October 20, 1969, 2.

by a group of sexual “deviants,” this could not be a justification for transforming a legitimate quest for justice into a call for indiscriminate revenge.¹⁰⁵ In an article published in May 1969, the Communist periodical underlined that being homosexual did not mean being a criminal: “homosexuals, like the sexually normal people, can commit crimes, but as homosexual they are not intrinsically guilty, they are what they are.” The magazine, trying to answer the question *Cosa sono gli omosessuali?* (What are homosexuals?), argued that some of them were sick, whereas others were physically and mentally healthy. They were *normal*. *Vie Nuove* explained that speaking this truth would spark scandal, but it also added that the “Kinsey report” had made it more difficult to classify homosexual tendencies as “abnormal.” However, in spite of this somewhat unprecedented stance, the magazine invoked the *disease paradigm* when it underlined that despising a homosexual was as absurd as despising a diabetic. Furthermore, trying to keep a salutary distance from homosexuals, *Vie Nuove* underscored that what they wrote did not have to be understood as an apologia of homosexuality, but only as the description of a scarcely known phenomenon.¹⁰⁶

Il Borghese did not wait long to respond. The right-wing magazine argued that the Italian Communists were protecting homosexuals because many *capovolti* had leading positions in their party, and because homosexuals were fulfilling an important Communist task: the destruction of the Italian family.¹⁰⁷ Ten days after the discovery of Ermanno’s corpse, Junio Valerio Borghese – a passionate Fascist who would attempt an unsuccessful coup d’état in 1970 – went to Viareggio. He organized a conference to prevent the Monarchic Front from being suspected, and to show how the Italian monarchists condemned the moral corruption that had allegedly caused Lavorini’s death. To further advertise his political message, Borghese paid for the billposting all over Viareggio of a poster. Printed on red paper

¹⁰⁵ Giorgio Sgherri, “Ermanno trovato morto. Fu ucciso 15 giorni fa,” *l’Unità*, March 10, 1969, 1-2. See also Id., “Fu ucciso subito: forse da un maniaco,” *l’Unità*, March 12, 1969, 1, 5; Id., “L’assassino è un tipo distinto,” *l’Unità*, March 13, 1969, 5; Id., “Clima di tensione sospetti e paura a Viareggio,” *l’Unità*, March 14, 1969, 5; Id., “Ermanno morì in una casa?” *l’Unità*, April 30, 1969, 5; Maria Rosa Calderoni, “I volti dei ‘mostri’,” *Vie Nuove*, May 1, 1969, 50-51.

¹⁰⁶ Flavio Casale, “Che cos’è l’omosessualità? La norma e l’antinorma” *Vie Nuove* (May 15, 1969), 8-9.

¹⁰⁷ Cusani, “Da Viareggio con amore,” 170-172. See also Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini*, 97.

the bill showed a crying child trapped under a clawed hand. Each finger represented a social issue that, according to the right, was vexing the new Italian generations: corruption, drugs, pornography, homosexuality, and prostitution. The child represented in the poster screamed: “Mom, dad: what are you doing to protect me?”¹⁰⁸ A similar message came from Giuseppe Niccolai, who was a parliamentarian of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* from Pisa. In one of his speeches at the Chamber of deputies in May 1969 he accused homosexuals of infecting the young, and he blamed the Italian family and the Italian state for being unable to contain the spread of all those vices that were destroying the new generations. Movies glorified murders, vices, rape, homosexuality, obscenities, and drugs, pornographic magazines and novels were available and easy to find, and even in school newspapers young students were talking about daring topics.¹⁰⁹ Right-wing press and politicians – perhaps already aware of who the real murderers of Ermanno were – used the homicide of Viareggio to launch a campaign aimed at protecting youths and family from Communism, homosexuality, and divorce.¹¹⁰

The crusade for the protection of youth from the homosexual “vice” was not a discourse of conservative forces alone. Even after Baldisseri’s admission of guilt the Italian press continued to blame homosexuals. Even when they did not seem to be directly involved in the case, they were responsible anyway. They were guilty because they had *infected* Marco and guys like him. These youths were sexually “normal,” but they had ceded to abnormal sexual practices to earn money. They were not the ones to be blamed. The adults who had led them astray were at fault.¹¹¹ According to *Il Corriere*, the homosexual corruptors – the “mafia of vice” – pushed innocent kids to depravity. Those who corrupted – the homosexuals – rather

¹⁰⁸ Iacona, *Gli anni 70: Il caso Lavorini*, 145-146.

¹⁰⁹ Here Niccolai was making a rather clear reference to the *Zanzara*. See footnote 7.

¹¹⁰ Giuseppe Niccolai, Chamber of Deputies, Parliamentary Acts, Fifth Legislature, May 6, 1969, 7610-7611.

¹¹¹ Franco Nencini, “I fantasmi non sono scomparsi,” *La Nazione Sera*, April 21, 1969, 2; Ornella Ripa, “Così a Viareggio raccontano la tragica morte di Ermanno-Poveri genitori: quel bimbo gliel’hanno ammazzato per cento giorni di seguito,” *Gente*, May 21, 1969, 24; Ornella Ripa, Renzo Allegri, “I ragazzi non sono colpevoli-La prima intervista con la mamma di Ermanno dopo la scoperta dello sconvolgente assassinio,” *Gente*, May 28, 1969, 12-16.

than those who were corrupted – the *ragazzi di pineta* – were to be condemned.¹¹² *Il Telegrafo* talked about homosexuals as exploiters who turned kids into instruments of degradation.¹¹³ According to *L'Espresso*, homosexuals were “obsessed with making proselytes on the road to vice.”¹¹⁴

The mothers of Ermanno and of his young killers, interviewed by the popular magazine *Gente*, agreed that vicious homosexuals had to be blamed because they infected poor children’s minds.¹¹⁵ In other interviews Marco’s mother and Andrea’s father not only shifted the blame of their sons’ behaviors onto others, but they also insisted that their sons were sexually “normal.” In an interview with *Epoca* Giovanna Maria Baldisseri, Marco’s mother, claimed that his son was marginally implicated in the murder, and that “others” actually were responsible. When the journalist asked about Marco’s “*inclinazioni equivoche*” (ambiguous inclinations) and about his “activities” in the *pineta*, the mother rejected any allegations about his son’s sexual ambiguity, and declared that Marco was a womanizer, always surrounded by multiple girls and women. However, she admitted that maybe, just for money, his son could have committed “some stupid things in the *pineta*.” She explained that his son, like other boys who did not have much, at times went to the pine grove “just for money, not for other reasons.”¹¹⁶ Renato Benedetti, father of Andrea – the youngest member of the gang – maintained in an interview with the periodical *Oggi* that he did not blame his son. In his opinion Andrea and all the other *ragazzi di pineta* could not be judged because no one knew the reasons behind their behaviors. His son, he explained, had always been a “normal” boy, and he was convinced that his “deviant” conduct depended only on the bad influence by others. Renato Benedetti did not hold the town of Viareggio responsible for what

¹¹² Enzo Passanisi, “Gli angeli dalla faccia sporca,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 4, 1969, 11.

¹¹³ C.A. Di Grazia, “La responsabilità degli adulti,” *Il Telegrafo*, May 4, 1969, 3.

¹¹⁴ “Malati di proselitismo sulla strada de vizio,” Camilla Cederna, “La caramella di Erode,” *L'Espresso*, March 30, 1969, 13.

¹¹⁵ Ripa, Allegri, “I ragazzi non sono colpevoli,” 12-16.

¹¹⁶ Gualtiero Tramballi, “Figlio mio,” *Epoca*, May 4, 1969, 112-117. Other magazines published interviews with Baldisseri’s mother: Libero Montesi, “Mio figlio non è l’assassino di Ermanno,” *L'Europeo*, May 1, 1969, 81; Fabio Galiani, “Leggete il diario di mio figlio. Marco non può aver ucciso,” *Oggi*, May 7, 1969, 30-32. Also Marco Baldisseri’s father, Dino Vanni, denied his son’s homosexuality: Ornella Ripa, Renzo Allegri, “Così hanno corrotto i nostri poveri figli—Una inchiesta eccezionale: parlano i genitori dei tragici ragazzi coinvolti nel caso Lavorini,” *Gente*, May 14, 1969, 12.

had happened. But he thought that it was necessary to intervene in the *pineta* – “an island of horrific perversion.” He knew, even before Ermanno’s death, that the pine grove was a cruising area for “depraved individuals,” but – he contended – he thought that these men did not try to bait people outside of their clique. Now that the “rot was visible”, now that everybody knew how these criminals were tempting the youths, it was time to eradicate such blight. In closing the interview he expressed his anger at the men who had harmed his son, but he also proclaimed that Andrea had not been permanently corrupted because, the father assured, he was still attracted to women.¹¹⁷

The press was not particularly well disposed towards parents and families of the young protagonists of this crime. The problematic families of Andrea and Marco in particular were presented as deeply implicated in the boys’ psychological, moral and sexual distortions. Andrea Benedetti, according to the press, had an “irregular family.” His parents had separated, and Andrea had been living at times with his mother and her new partner, and other times with his father, his stepmother and his two stepsisters. Also Marco Baldisseri was described as “*figlio di una coppia irregolare*” (son of an irregular couple): his father and his mother were not married. He spent most of his time on the streets, his father was never at home, his mother was always working, and in the last months Marco’s father had begun a relationship with another woman. The media uproar surrounding the “Lavorini case” broke while the Parliament was discussing the possibility of introducing divorce into the Italian legal system. Many journalists, trying to find a causal link between unconventional families, sexual “deviations,” and Ermanno’s homicide seemed to endorse the necessity of protecting “the family.” In May 1969, the magazine *Panorama*, for example, put together on its cover the scandal of Viareggio and the battle for the introduction of divorce in Italy. Ermanno is the center of attention but the diagonal band seems to insinuate that his premature death – the torn page – might be associated with the crisis of the Italian family. (Figure 4.19.). Even if

¹¹⁷ Renato Benedetti, “Non chiamatelo delinquente mio figlio ha solo tredici anni!”, *Oggi*, May 21, 1969, 113-114.

journalists such as Natalia Aspesi denied that Ermanno’s murder could be somehow associated with the broken homes of the *ragazzi di pineta*, other journalists used this crime to throw accusations against all those dysfunctional families who did not care adequately for their children. The death of Ermanno was used not only to condemn homosexual men but also to warn against the approval of a law that, Catholics and conservatives thought, could have favored the demise of the family and could have had catastrophic consequences for many Italian youths. Broken families and youth “deviance” were two faces of the same coin. The introduction of divorce, the press seemed to suggest, would have favored the appearance of many other *Marcos* and *Andreas*. Some journalists presented stability and cohesion of the Italian families as bulwarks against juvenile deviance.¹¹⁸



Figure 4.19. Cover of *Panorama* (May 15, 1969).

If some magazines and newspapers pointed an accusing finger at Marco’s and Andrea’s families, and many considered only the “*pederasti maledetti*” (damned pederasts, as *Il Borghese* put it) responsible for Ermanno’s death, there were also journalists who tried to

¹¹⁸ Natalia Aspesi, “Come hanno potuto tenere il segreto?,” *Il Giorno*, May 4, 1969, 3; Leoncarlo Settimelli, “La scuola è un covo di omosessuali?,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 5, 1969, 14-17; Ornella Ripa, “Ha pagato con la vita la sua innocenza di bambino-Ecco finalmente tutta la spaventosa verità sulla fine di Ermanno Lavorini,” *Gente*, May 7, 1969, 6; Ripa, Allegri, “Così hanno corrotto i nostri poveri figli,” 12, 14; “Dietro il dramma di Viareggio,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 17, 1969, 15; Giancarlo Zanfrohini, “Ragazzi corrotti,” *La Nazione*, May 21, 1969, 3; Benedetti, “Non chiamatelo delinquente mio figlio ha solo tredici anni!” 111; Ripa, Allegri, “I ragazzi non sono colpevoli,” 15; “Lettere,” *Panorama*, June 5, 1969, 5; Ornella Ripa, “I ragazzini piangono: adesso fateli confessare,” *Gente*, June 25, 1969, 14-16; Vincenti, “Sono anormale ma non corruttore,” 93.

search for other culprits.¹¹⁹ The Communist press pushed against viewing the town of Viareggio as responsible for what had happened, but it did claim that the town's bourgeoisification had negatively affected the local youths. The glorification of commodities and the accumulation of wealth had turned money into the supreme goal, a goal youths wanted to achieve by any means, even hustling. Thus, the spread of juvenile male prostitution was a consequence of youthful hedonism.¹²⁰ The magazine *Cronaca* threw accusations against society, the media, and the educational system for having abdicated their educational responsibilities, and for having pushed young men into the arms of ruthless corruptors. The growing number of homosexuals and male prostitutes, according to *Cronaca*, did not depend on the greater availability of erotic movies and pornographic magazines – as some claimed, but rather it was a consequence of sexual ignorance. To face the emergency, tragically signaled by Ermanno's death, it was necessary to introduce sex education in schools, and parents had to talk frankly about sex with their own children. Knowing more about sexual practices and behaviors, children and adolescents might have been more prepared to defend themselves.¹²¹

However, reading the interviews granted by some *ragazzi di pineta*, we see that they did not consider themselves as victims led astray by the *anormali*. In his interview to *Gente* Andrea Benedetti underscored that no one forced him to hustle. *Ragazzi* like him accepted proposals and invitations, he explained, because “they wanted to.” In his opinion such choices

¹¹⁹ Cirri, “Il paradiso dei capovolti,” 630-631.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Aldo De Jaco, “I ragazzi di Viareggio,” *Paese Sera*, May 5, 1969, 3; Giorgio Grillo, “Il caso Lavorini è anche uno specchio,” *l'Unità*, May 7, 1969, 3; “Scandalo vero e falso a Viareggio,” *Vie Nuove*, May 15, 1969, 6-7; Casale, “Che cos'è l'omosessualità,” 8-9; Concetto Testai, “I ragazzi della pineta,” *l'Unità*, May 20, 1969, 3; Maria Rosa Calderoni, “Attentato alla città,” *Vie Nuove*, May 22, 1969, 17-19; “Il giovane anormale,” 19-22.

¹²¹ See Pennaverde, “Il ‘Carnevale’ di Viareggio,” *Cronaca*, May 10, 1969, 3-4; Pennaverde, “I Balilla del vizio,” *Cronaca*, May 17, 1969, 3; Corrado Spagna, “A Reggio Emilia si balla verde,” *Cronaca*, June 21, 1969, 8-10. For the effects of pornography see P.K. “Il problema della settimana-Sesso a scuola,” *Cronaca*, May 24, 1969, 18-19. Also *Vie Nuove* did not blame media, literature and cinema for the alleged growth of homosexual behaviors: Franco Gianola, “Sei normale o vai con le donne?,” *Vie Nuove*, June 19, 1969, 46-49. *Epoca* published a couple of letters and one article about the alleged negative effects of pornography on the youths: “Lettere al direttore-Parlano i giovani,” *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 6; “Lettere al direttore-Chi ferma i minori,” *Epoca*, May 18, 1969, 8; Pietro Zullino, “Perché gli sporcaccioni dettano legge,” *Epoca*, June 22, 1969, 38-41. Also *Oggi* wondered if movies should be considered accountable for the growing juvenile corruption see Vincenti, “Sono anormale ma non corruttore,” 93.

were not reprehensible, because “Everyone can do what they want.”¹²² Another *ragazzo di pineta* interviewed together with others by *Oggi*, confirmed that nobody had forced the kids to hustle. They decided to sell themselves for fun and for money. Furthermore, he explained that this life – defined “depraved” by the journalist – was not disgusting because he knew that it was just a phase that would not affect his future as a man.¹²³ According to Natalia Aspesi the ethics of these youths were incompatible with the shared values of Italian society. None of these youths blushed, hesitated or tried to hide the real nature of their “forbidden games.” None of them felt ashamed for selling themselves in exchange for a few thousand lire to play pinball, buy some gas, or repair their mopeds.¹²⁴ The *ragazzi di pineta* were set against Ermanno, presented as an innocent victim that had fallen into a lions’ den. The picture taken during his first communion (Figure 4.20.), published by some Italian magazines, aimed at distinguishing him from the young hustlers of Viareggio, and further criminalizing the cruel and “abnormal men” who had allegedly caused more or less directly his death.¹²⁵

¹²² See Ripa, Allegri, “Così hanno corrotto i nostri poveri figli,” 13.

¹²³ “Come siete diventati ‘ragazzi di vita’,” *Oggi*, May 21, 1969, 113.

¹²⁴ Aspesi, “Come hanno potuto tenere il segreto?”

¹²⁵ See for example the pictures published in *Gente*, May 7, 1969, 7. For articles about Ermanno’s innocence see Renzo Pellegrini, “‘Un brutto ha ucciso Ermanno!’ sostengono i viareggini,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 10, 1969, 4; Mauro Mancini, “Perché non si trova l’assassino,” *La Nazione Sera*, March 17, 1969, 3; Cirri, “Il paradiso dei capovolti,” 630-631; Paolo Cattaneo, “Ermanno Lavorini. Nella fossa dei leoni,” *Cronaca*, March 22, 1969, 4-7; Sandro Mayer, “Senza Ermanno la nostra vita è finita. A colloquio con i familiari del ragazzo trucidato a Viareggio,” *Oggi*, March 26, 1969, 102-105; Sergio Bindi, “Il monito di Viareggio,” *Il Telegrafo*, April 22, 1969, 1; Granzotto, “Una città nel fango,” 22. Some journalists, at least in the very first days after the discovery of the corpse, had made assumptions about Ermanno’s participation in the sex market of the *pineta*: Francesco Frigieri, “Hanno ucciso lui invece del padre?,” *Il Tempo*, March 22, 1969, 80. Some others did not deny that Ermanno was a good boy, but they also argued that hanging out with some *ragazzi di pineta*, he had lost his ingenuousness, see Lazzero Ricciotti-Gualtieri Tramballi, “Ermanno, figlio mio,” *Epoca* March 23, 1969, 108, 111. Alfonso Barsotti, Marco Del Carlo, Massimiliano Giannini, and Marco Fabbrini, close to the Monarchist juvenile Front, tried to present Ermanno as a young hustler. But during the first trial in Pisa the evidence and the depositions of Ermanno’s closest friends – Aurelio Lucchesi, Massimo Incroci, Denio Caravano, Alfio Di Beo – belied their testimonies. See case decision n. 18 of the Appeal Assize Court of Florence, June 28, 1976, ATP, CL.

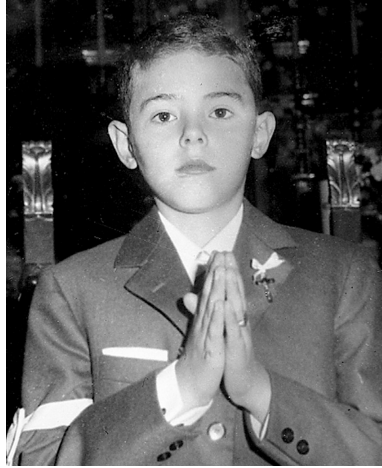


Figure 4.20. Ermanno Lavorini on the day of his first Communion. *Gente*, May 7, 1969, 7.

The idea of homosexuals as child predators coexisted in the media with the idea of homosexuals as “sexual inverts.” *Il Borghese* powerfully visualized the feminization of homosexual men and the ambiguity of their gender identity on its cover of May 22, 1969 (Figure 4.21.).



Figure 4.21. Cover of *Il Borghese* (May 22, 1969)

The diagonal band at the top of the front page – “*Da Viareggio con amore*” (From Viareggio with love) – aimed at associating this picture with Lavorini, Viareggio, and the *habitués* of the *pineta*. The picture was a collage of a dark-haired and hirsute man hiding his face, and of a female figure disguised by a blonde wig, bright red lipstick, and black mascara. Looking at the picture the subject seemed to be the same person, but the ambiguity and the uncertainty

communicated by the cover aimed at increasing societal anxiety about sexual and gender non-conformity: What is a man? What is a woman? What is a homosexual? How can we be sure about the “real” nature of the people we meet every day? Looking at this image we see how homosexuality was represented as a schizophrenic identity, and how the homosexual appeared as an assemblage of masculinity and femininity. The “male” half is covered, symbolizing not only shame but also deceit. The female “half” is larger, expressing a fear of “feminization,” epitomized also by the shaved hand contrasted against the hairy forearm. In the image femininity is represented as creeping dangerously and inexorably into this male body destined to be sooner or later completely devoured. In this image the distinction between homosexuality, cross-dressing, and gender non-conformity was blurred.

The same confusion informed also the popular tabloid *Oggi* that had a circulation of around one million copies. In an investigative report published in the summer of 1969 the periodical discussed homosexuals, “transvestites,” and transsexuals as belonging to the same group. The tone of the report was all but indulgent. The title and the subheading of the first installment said it all: “When sex becomes vice or sickness” “Why is the scourge of the abnormal men spreading?” *Oggi* explained that the magazine’s articles were the final result of long conversations with policemen, doctors, priests, sociologists, psychologists, and lawyers about the “homosexuals’ seedy underworld.” The goal of the magazine was not only to understand “the actual spread of this ‘social disease’” but also to figure out “how the abnormal have to be judged.” The journalist asked in the first installment: “Are we turning into a country where the third sex reigns, we, always proud of our reputation of virility and of our reputation as Latin lovers (to the point of turning them into tourist attractions)?” And he explained he was particularly worried about violent crimes perpetrated by homosexuals, about male prostitution, and juvenile corruption – three phenomena strictly intertwined with one another. The journalist Silvio Bertoldi underlined that the *Balletti Verdi* of Brescia and

Reggio Emilia, and the murder of Ermanno Lavorini were three stories that had received particular attention in the Italian media, but they were not isolated cases. Browsing through magazines and newspapers – Bertoldi bombastically claimed – it was possible to read about “transvestites” arrested by the police, and about children raped or killed by dangerous pedophiles. Homosexuals, male prostitutes and “transvestites,” Bertoldi remarked with alarm, were invading Milan, Turin, Rome, and Naples. The investigative report set out to comprehend how big the homosexual problem was, what caused homosexuality, till what point homosexuality had to be considered a disease, what therapies could cure it, what tools society had to protect itself from criminal degenerations of homosexuality, to what extent the image of Italy emerging from homosexual scandals corresponded to reality, and if the perception of homosexuality as spreading was distorted by scaremongering.¹²⁶

The second installment of the report tried to understand, thanks to a priest, a psychologist, and a neurologist, if the “*anormali*” deserved scorn or pity, and if they could recover. The article concluded asserting that the homosexual was an unhappy human being because he was “the first to consider his condition as the opposite of normalcy.” This was the reason why he tried “to keep his true nature desperately secret, controlling his behavior, and showing off virile tastes and habits.” However, the double life he had to live was exhausting and turned him into a neurasthenic. Doctors considered homosexuality a biological or a psychological disease. Therapies were so difficult and results so uncertain that many men suspended their treatment. The last installment of *Oggi*, entitled *I sessi sono due o tre?* (Are sexes two or three?), turned into a criticism of the existing (and non-existing) laws. The Italians’ open-mindedness and the inadequacy of the penal system, according to the journalist, dangerously favored the growing number of male hustlers on the streets. A law to keep homosexuality under control was due. According to Bertoldi it was not acceptable to convey the message that the “third sex” was tolerable. There were two and only two sexes: “Sexual

¹²⁶ Silvio Bertoldi, “Perché si sta diffondendo la piaga degli anormali,” *Oggi*, July 16, 1969, 54-57.

normalcy is only one: the heterodox sexuality. And this does not depend on the fact that the majority of human beings are normal; but this is a matter of fact proved by science, genetics, tradition and, please allow me to say that, logic.” According to *Oggi*, it was inadmissible that some homosexuals were beginning to praise their own deviant condition, forcing it on other people, as if it was a source of pride and prestige. The report ended then with a complete censure of non-normative sexualities. Two weeks later the director of the magazine, Vittorio Buttafava, explained that after the publication of the report *Oggi* had received many letters. The discussion generated by Bertoldi’s articles had proved that it was impossible to ignore – and criminal to underestimate – the homosexual phenomenon in Italy. Buttafava argued that it was necessary to cure “the poor abnormal men that tortured themselves” because of their disease, but he also underlined that it was time to punish severely all those depraved men who exploited and corrupted others.¹²⁷

After Ermanno’s murder authorities became more intransigent in the repression of homosexual activities. On May 5, 1969 the Minister of Interior sent a telegram to all the Italian Prefects. Police were urged to take action against both homosexuals and “homosexuals dressed like women.” Against both it was possible to implement law n. 1,423 of 1956, whereas against the latter it was also possible to adopt article 85 of the Consolidated Law on Public Security which forbade to appear “masked” in public. Referring to this norm the police could organize mopping up actions and arrest “transvestites” hanging out on the streets.¹²⁸

Between the end of May and the beginning of June 1969, the Italian Prefects sent reports to

¹²⁷ Silvio Bertoldi, “Gli anormali possono guarire?” *Oggi*, July 23, 1969, 38-42; Silvio Bertoldi, “I sessi sono due o tre?” *Oggi*, July 30, 1969, 52-56; “Lettere a Oggi-Risponde il direttore. ‘I malati del sesso’,” *Oggi*, August 13, 1969, 3. For homosexuality as a physiological and psychological disease see also Neera Fallaci (con la consulenza dello psichiatra Tito Caselli), “I malati gravi dell’amore,” *Oggi*, November 5, 1969, 44-51. *Oggi* was not alone in talking about a homosexual invasion. Other magazines and newspapers were talking about the growth of homosexual men and homosexual hustlers of all ages. See, for example, Edgardo Bartoli, “A Viareggio e altrove,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 10, 1969, 15; Catalano, “Pollicino fa la vita,” 11; “Quanti sono i ragazzi nel mondo del vizio?”, *La Nazione*, June 4, 1969, 4.

¹²⁸ See Ministry of Interior, newsletter of May 22, 1969, “Art. 85 testo unico leggi di PS-Omosessuali travestiti da donna-Sentenza della Corte di Cassazione in data 17 marzo c.a.” One year later, on March 31, 1970, the Constitutional Court declared illegitimate the arrest in flagrante of people who appear “masked” in public. The police could still adopt fines against such individuals but they could not be arrested anymore, unless they committed other crimes. See Ministry of Interior, newsletter of March 31, 1970-Illegittimità dell’arresto per coloro che compaiono in pubblico mascherati-Sentenza Corte Costituzionale n. 39 del 1970. See also Armando Borno, Nicola Baroni, *Lei, Armando* (Milano: Morelli editore, 2017), 6-9.

the Ministry of Interior describing the ways in which they had intensified their controls to monitor the presence of homosexuals in villas, parks, fun fairs, train stations, cinemas, gyms, and in areas around schools and where children and adolescents routinely hung out.¹²⁹ Some Prefects were rather concise and reported that in their areas the situation was not particularly worrisome. But on June 4, 1969 the Prefect of Lucca, the province where Viareggio is located, sent a thorough report. He underlined that the investigations around the “Lavorini case” had revealed the extent and gravity of the homosexual phenomenon, and explained that the police had been focusing their anti-homosexual actions on areas known to be particularly popular among young men. In the last months the police had verified the presence in Viareggio and surrounding areas of fifty “inverts,” fifteen of whom were between the age of 14 and 17. The Prefect clarified that most of these minors seemed to be part of Marco Baldisseri’s clique, and prostituted themselves. The “deplorable activity of the youths” was favored by the continual coming and going of tourists, and by the presence of the *pineta*, where people could meet and have sex without being seen. Both sides of the pine grove – *pineta di ponente* (western pine grove) and *pineta di levante* (eastern pine grove) – thanks to their dense vegetation and tangled undergrowth, offered comfortable and safe shelters for prostitutes and homosexuals. The Prefect explained that he had taken countermeasures to combat juvenile male prostitution. He had ordered to intensify the surveillance of both sides of the pine grove; watch with particular attention cafés, cinemas, dance halls, and areas surrounding schools; identify cases of vulnerable children who required special protection or

¹²⁹ See, for example, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Arezzo, June 4, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Asti, June 6, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Chieti, June 4, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Cuneo, June 4, 1969, telegram of the Questura of Genoa to the Prefect of Geona, May 29, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Gorizia, June 6, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Lecce, June 11, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Ragusa, May 31, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from the Prefect of Reggio Emilia, June 5, 1969, telegram to the Minister of Interior from *Commissariato del governo nella Regione Trentino Alto Adige*, June 3, 1969 (ACS, MI, Gab., 1967-1970, b. 56). For other police actions against homosexuals and “transvestites” carried out in Spring 1969 in Naples, Florence and Milan see “A soquadro il mondo del vizio per una lodevole operazione di polizia,” *Roma*, May 16, 1969, “Una radicale pulizia nel mondo dei ‘travestiti,’” *La Nazione*, May 16, 1969 and A.G. “Rastrellato il mondo dei travestiti,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, May 16, 1969 (ACS, MI, DGPS, DPAS, b. 620). The repression of male prostitution, juvenile prostitution, and homosexuality continued also in the following years see, for example, “Reports of the Women Police 1969-1973” (ACS, MI, DGPS, DPAS, bb. 686-700).

needed to be removed from their homes due to neglect; create a special center to support and help minors at risk in Viareggio; build sport facilities; open a center for youth mental health; and, in the end, hire a new social worker for the town of Viareggio.

The “Lavorini case” inflamed media, stirred anti-homosexual police activities, and pushed people to express their opinions about homosexuality and homosexuals. Newspapers and magazines published many readers’ letters that often showed great familiarity with terms such as homosexuality, heterosexuality and transvestitism, and demonstrated that some people were trying to learn more about “non-normative” sexualities.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, most of the letters were rather homophobic. They expressed fears about the alleged increasing number of “abnormal” men, complained about the presence of “sodomites” in cinemas and parks, depicted homosexuality as a “sordid and infectious disease,” and talked about the “third sex” as a plague that needed to be eradicated because it was threatening children’s innocence.¹³¹

One reader of *Il Telegrafo*, the lawyer Gastone Pucci, wrote in his letter: “You will find in me the most severe of the censors. 48 hours after Ermanno Lavorini’s disappearance, I thought immediately that the kidnapper had to be searched for in the third sex’s world.” And he concluded “From an emotional point of view I am with the sheik of Amman, who finishes off the pederasts by shooting them behind the nape. From a legal point of view I believe the kidnappers should be killed on the electric chair as they do in the United States of America.”¹³² Other readers demanded the introduction of a law to penalize homosexuality. In his letter to *Oggi* a lawyer from Milan wondered why the law to prosecute “pederasty” in Italy

¹³⁰ The discussion on media probably favored the acquisition of sexological terms. See, for example, “Lettere al direttore-Il fango sale,” *La Nazione*, April 5, 1969, 11; “Lettere al direttore-Una signora che approva,” *La Nazione*, April 6, 1969, 9; “Lettere al direttore-Una madre,” *La Nazione*, April 18, 1969, 9.

¹³¹ See letter from Gioietta Marchesi in “‘Giallo’ di Viareggio. Le opinioni dei lettori. Rispondono uomini di legge, genitori e studenti,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 13, 1969, 7; Enzo Paolini and Vinicio Puccini in “Sul ‘giallo’ di Viareggio ecco l’opinione dei lettori,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 15, 1969, 10; letter from Cesare Antoni in “Sul ‘giallo’ di Viareggio ecco l’opinione dei lettori,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 16, 1969, 7; letter from Bruno Barattini in “Sulla tragedia l’opinione dei lettori,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 17, 1969, 3; letter from Luciano Marselli in “L’opinione dei lettori sul ‘giallo’ di Viareggio,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 20, 1969, 2; anonymous letter in “Lettere al direttore-Anomalie patologiche,” *La Nazione*, March 23, 1969, 9; letter from Tommaso Gottardo in “Lettere al direttore-Omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, March 29, 1969, 12; letter from Stefano Marsili Libelli in “Lettere al direttore-Gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 4, 1969, 9; letter from “Una mamma che soffre” in “Lettere al direttore-Una madre,” *La Nazione*, April 18, 1969, 9.

¹³² See “Sul ‘giallo’ di Viareggio ecco l’opinione dei lettori,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 15, 1969, 10.

had been covered up and never discussed. Given that the presence of “pederasts” in “normal” society was a danger, according to this lawyer, it was necessary to get rid of this “national shame”. And he concluded: “if the pederast is sick, he has to be institutionalized; if he is depraved, he has to be incarcerated.”¹³³ A reader of *La Nazione Sera* was instead more worried about the loud noise around homosexuality and about the presence of homosexuals in delicate positions. He thought that it was necessary to talk less about homosexuality because the more people discussed it the more it produced dangerous effects in Italian society. And, using a typical 1950s “Lavender scare” argument he concluded, “We need to focus our attention on identifying homosexuals so that they will not be able to become educators or fulfill positions that can allow them to be aware of military and industrial secrets.”¹³⁴

Some readers of *La Nazione* were particularly bothered by the publication in the “director’s column” of letters written by homosexuals who, as we will see, were trying to rebut the hateful rhetoric of the newspaper. Lanfranco di Collalto asked the newspaper to stop giving prominence to “fags” who deserved only to be ignored and, if necessary, beaten up.¹³⁵ An anonymous reader confessed to be astonished by the fact that *La Nazione* was giving space to letters written by such miserable individuals who, instead of hiding their own “defect,” had the nerve to demand that society understand their “anomaly” and justify their actions.¹³⁶ And another reader, who preferred not to sign his letter, wrote that the director should have stopped giving space to homosexuals’ complaints, arrogance, pride, victimism, insolence, and overconfidence. The uproar caused by these men was unprecedented. The anonymous reader wrote to be 66 years old and to have never read anything similar to the letters published by the Florentine newspaper. He sarcastically asked when, at this point, the director was going to give space to “whores, murders, thieves, crooks” and other “pieces of

¹³³ “Lettere a Oggi,” *Oggi* (August 13, 1969), 3. See also the letter from Claudio Bragoni in “Sul ‘giallo’ di Viareggio ecco l’opinione dei lettori,” *Il Telegrafo*, March 16, 1969, 7. For homosexuals as sick individuals that needed to be cured see letter from Grazia Agati in “Lettere al direttore-Come gli struzzi,” *La Nazione*, May 19, 1969, 2.

¹³⁴ Letter from Rodolfo Costantini in “Lettere al direttore-Tristizie,” *La Nazione*, May 19, 1969, 2.

¹³⁵ Letter from Lanfranco di Collalto in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9.

¹³⁶ Letter from “Un Lettore” in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9.

human waste.” And he concluded his letter saying that he hoped not to see such filth published anymore.¹³⁷

Beside these readers there were others who accused “normal” people of ignorance, hypocrisy, and callousness, tried to underline that homosexuals were often victims of the youths everybody was strenuously protecting, and maintained that “sexually normal individuals” were not allowed to take a discriminatory stand against the “others.”¹³⁸ There were also readers who, despite their good intentions, ended up empathizing with homosexuals as suffering and sick individuals no one could blame.¹³⁹ In the end a reader, who wrote that perhaps one day homosexuals would have been accepted by the rest of society, proposed to institute a “homosexual day” to make them feel accepted and bring these “poor victims of persecution” together with the “normal” majority.¹⁴⁰

Homosexual Counter-reaction

Homosexuals also appeared in mainstream media to talk about themselves. Some homosexual readers of the magazine *Oggi* used the words “abnormal” and “normal” to make distinctions between themselves and others. They underscored that there were sick people on both sides, but they also asked the “normal” ones to understand that there were some “abnormal” people who nevertheless had jobs, did not cause any scandal, and just wanted to be left in peace.

Others pathologized their sexual orientation asking for compassion: “Why are we homosexuals abhorred? Do people despise blind, idiotic, or paralytic people because they lack something others have? Before judging, normal people should think about what they would

¹³⁷ Letter from “Un lettore” in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9.

¹³⁸ See letter from “Una lettrice” in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9; letter from Maurizio Ammannato in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9; letter from Luciano Gori in “Lettere al direttore-Un altro protesta,” *La Nazione*, April 6, 1969, 9. For homosexuals as victims of blackmailing see also letter from Clarice Mara Sanni “Lettere al direttore-Replica di una lettrice,” *La Nazione*, May 19, 1969, 2.

¹³⁹ See letter from M.D. in “Lettere al direttore-Il fango sale,” *La Nazione*, April 5, 1969, 11; letter from Maurizio Funis in “Lettere al direttore-Malati o sani?,” *La Nazione*, April 8, 1969, 9; letter from F. Cioli in “Lettere al direttore-Anormali,” *La Nazione*, April 18, 1969, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Tommaso Gottardo in “Lettere al direttore-Omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, March 29, 1969, 12.

have done if such a big disgrace had happened to them.”¹⁴¹ The magazine *ABC* also published several homosexuals’ testimonies in an article entitled *Questi ragazzi di vita si possono recuperare?* (Can we rehabilitate these hustlers?) (Figure 4.22.).

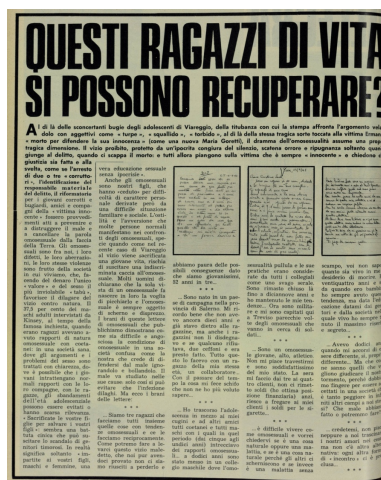


Figure 4.22. *ABC*, May 23, 1969, 14

Given the preamble of the article though, pointing to homosexuality once again as an evil infection, the fact that most testimonies talked about it as a damned vice, a secret to hide, a disease, a torment, and a curse might not come as a surprise. Homosexuals in these letters described their disgust for having sex in dirty toilets, confessed to having become homosexuals when lured by older men, and talked about their desire for a “normal” family. One man, obsessed with hiding his identity, explained: “I am a representative of the most revolting category in the world, the category of the invert.” He was happy to be masculine and discrete but he concluded his testimony by saying “if my abnormal tendency leaked, I would have to run away or kill myself.”¹⁴²

Some homosexuals may have internalized hatred, blame, and pathologizing discourses, but, as the magazine *Cronaca* underlined, there were many others who resisted by rejecting the degrading adjectives used to describe their world and the notion that their relationships led to crime. Particularly significant, according to *Cronaca*, were the letters sent

¹⁴¹ “Lettere a Oggi,” *Oggi*, August 13, 1969, 3.

¹⁴² “Questi ragazzi di vita si possono recuperare?” *ABC*, May 23, 1969, 14-15.

to *La Nazione*.¹⁴³ The director of this newspaper admitted that the “Lavorini case” had caused a flood of letters written by homosexuals who were appalled by the ways in which his correspondent from Viareggio was talking about homosexuality.¹⁴⁴ On March 16, F.G. sent a letter to the director of the Florentine newspaper criticizing the use of the word *squallido* (sordid) to describe the “homosexual milieu.” F.G. explained that he was homosexual, but he did not think about himself as *squallido*. Moreover, the “homosexual milieu” was so large that one adjective was not enough to describe its complexity. F.G. argued that it would be easier to be “normal” for practical reasons but, at the same time, he did consider himself “normal.” He had a job, a life, friends, lovers, and he did not cause problems or scandals. In the end, he reminded, “brute and insane people also exist among the so-called ‘normal,’ and yet we refrain from thinking that those represent ‘the other side’ in its entirety; therefore I do not think it is right to generalize when we talk about homosexuals.”¹⁴⁵ Another homosexual who signed as L.A., in his letter published on March 23 maintained:

I am a citizen who, as others, works, pays taxes, did the compulsory military service, and has not done anything wrong to anyone, so should not I have the right to be what I am without being tormented and humiliated? Many of us live in terror of being discovered, of losing our job and the love of our families; we are blackmailed by criminals who remain unpunished and we are damned to loneliness. Dear director, believe me, I do not want anyone’s pity, I just want the justice I deserve. Many of us hang out in parks and dark places only because society’s repression and hypocrisy force us to do so. If in Italy existed clubs for us, like in Northern Europe, none of us would risk a heart attack in the darkness of the woods.¹⁴⁶

L.A. forcefully emphasized in his letter that he was a “citizen.” And he asked to be recognized as such. He did not want to be a pariah, he did not want to be a second class subject anymore. He asked the director of *La Nazione*, as he asked the Italian state, to recognize his full-fledged citizenship.

¹⁴³ “Viareggio sì e no,” *Cronaca*, April 19, 1969, 10.

¹⁴⁴ “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9

¹⁴⁵ “Lettere al direttore,” *La Nazione* (March 16, 1969), 9. The correspondent from Viareggio, a couple of weeks after the publication of this letter, explained why he used the word “*squallido*” to talk about the homosexual milieu of Viareggio. He emphasized that he did not need to apologize for what he had written and that he would use the word “sordid” again to describe what was happening in the *pineta*. See letter from Piero Magi in “Lettere al direttore-Gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 4, 1969, 9.

¹⁴⁶ “Lettere al direttore,” *La Nazione*, March 23, 1969, 9.

F.G. sent another letter on March 29 proclaiming: “Like it or not, homosexuals exist, they exist you bet... and they are determined to stay; and this is something people will have to accept, sooner or later, and then they will have to take off those blinders they are used to wearing – like donkeys – and learn to treat us like human beings, because that is what we are.” When talking about homosexuality it was irresponsible to generalize, F.G. explained, because every person was different from another. All those conformists who were writing letters against homosexuals were “not only deceiving but also considerably stupid” because they thought they could judge people from their sexual tastes.¹⁴⁷ P.V. from Bozen wrote that people were born homosexuals, they did not become homosexual. If homosexuality were a “becoming” and not a “being,” “prisons, colleges, barracks, boarding schools, etc. would have been real breeding grounds for homosexuals.” And he continued explaining, “we are not sick, we are like God wanted us to be, and if I could be born again, I would not renounce my present situation.” P.V. underlined that homosexuals did not corrupt anybody, but were instead harassed and vulnerable to extortion and blackmailing.¹⁴⁸

After Baldisseri had confessed to murdering Lavorini, homosexuals demanded that society no longer consider them as causes of every human evil, or as a doomed and repulsive sect.¹⁴⁹ P.V. wrote, in particular, that he felt finally at peace. He underlined that homosexuals were not used to harming, but to being harmed, they were not used to killing, but to being killed, they were not used to harassing, but to being harassed. He highlighted that on this occasion, like never before, the so-called “normal” people had showed their wickedness and their ruthless hate. He explained that never, not even during the Fascist regime, had so many evil words slandered homosexuals. P.V. wondered who was going to pay them for the damages caused by a stupid, cruel, and racist campaign. One particularly fascinating element that emerges reading this letter is the way in which P.V. talked about Italian homosexuals as

¹⁴⁷ “Lettere al direttore,” *La Nazione*, March 29, 1969, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from P.V. in “Lettere al direttore-Ancora sugli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 2, 1969, 9.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Francois Danty, “Lettere al direttore-Riscrivono gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 26, 1969, 2.

“us” and as his “comrades.” This document shows how hatred stimulated a new sense of “community.”¹⁵⁰ But homosexuals did not just write letters, they also began organizing and taking action.

On May 26, 1969 *La Nazione Sera* published an article entitled “*Incredibile manifesto diffuso da giovani del ‘terzo sesso’*” (“Incredible Manifesto Published by Young Members of the ‘Third Sex’”). This manifesto was posted around the city center to protest against the actions carried out by the police in cruising and hustling areas of Florence.¹⁵¹ In this statement homosexuals demanded the end of their marginalization, and asked for their full recognition as Italian citizens. This public declaration was one of the very first concrete actions carried out by an organized homosexual group asking to be recognized as legitimate full members of the Italian society. The flyer declared:

Patience is limited and the patience OF HOMOSEXUALS HAS EXCEEDED EVERY LIMIT.
ITALIAN HOMOSEXUALS are free citizens of a free and democratic state and, as such, they ask for FREEDOM and for official acknowledgement.
HOMOSEXUALS work, are active members of society, pay taxes and the Italian government has to deal with their problems, preventing them from being victims of capricious and unfair persecutions by the Police that mortify and destroy the most sacred rights of these human beings.
On the basis of what laws do the Italian Police drag off HOMOSEXUALS to the police central station and keep them there for hours?
HOMOSEXUALS ARE NOT CRIMINALS! THEY ARE NOT CORRUPTORS!!
Parents have to raise their children.
Stop these NAZIFASCIST persecutions!
Prisons are full of normal criminals.
Stop racist media speculations!
Citizens, each one of you can have a HOMOSEXUAL son, a HOMOSEXUAL brother.
ITALIAN HOMOSEXUALS are tired of enduring unfair ‘ENDLESS WARS.’
They will fight united against those who want to exacerbate their problems.
Stop police persecutions!
Stop the abuse of power!
Stop cease and desist orders!¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Letter from P.V. in “Lettere al direttore-Riscrivono gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 26, 1969, 2. Also an anti-homosexual reader of *La Nazione* and the journalist Piero Magi had noticed how the homosexuals were turning into a proud group. See letter from Stefano Marsili Libelli in “Lettere al direttore-Gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 4, 1969, 9 and letter from Piero Magi in “Lettere al direttore-Gli omosessuali,” *La Nazione*, April 4, 1969, 9.

¹⁵¹ “Una radicale pulizia nel mondo dei ‘travestiti’,” *La Nazione*, May 13, 1969, 4; “Giovannotto di nome Massimo la ‘vistosa ragazza bionda’,” *La Nazione*, May 22, 1969, 5.

¹⁵² The text of the flyers was reported in Gianna Preda, “Domande e risposte-Uno che si vergogna,” *Il Borghese*, July 24, 1969, 714.

The war on homosexuals, *La Nazione Sera* underscored, was a consequence of new tensions emerging after Lavorini's murder, but it also caused "the counter-battery fire" of "the third sex 'front.'" Insolent groups of youth, the journalist argued, "who under their male garments hide deviant feelings and habits, handed out in the underground passages of the train station and in other zones of the center ... anonymous flyers asserting those things said again and again ... in many letters sent to our newspaper in the last weeks."¹⁵³ In Reggio Emilia where, as I mentioned before, several men were arrested for aiding and abetting the prostitution of dozens of male minors, homosexuals also protested by writing slogans on walls.¹⁵⁴ Homosexuals authoring combative letters to the press, handing out flyers, and asking to be treated equally with heterosexuals were all activists waiting for the decisive thrust to coalesce into a movement.

The "Lavorini case" nurtured the circulation of homophobic discourses, which in turn convinced many alleged *homosexual ogres* that they needed to respond. Media denigrated Italian homosexuals, but they also allowed many of them to come to terms with their own sexuality. Thus, I would argue, if many homosexual individuals reacted, resisted, and organized themselves at the beginning of the 1970s it was also because of the exceptionally hostile atmosphere emerged after Braibanti's trial and Lavorini's death. Obviously I am not arguing for a monocausal explanation of the foundation of the first organized Italian gay groups, a phenomenon catalyzed also – as we will see – by transnational connections and influences. Nevertheless, the "Lavorini case" in particular – as constructed by press and TV – gave a boost to the 1970s Italian homosexual response. Media imagery became moments of revelation that led many homosexuals, using Didier Eribon's words, from "subjection" to "reinvention of the self," "from a subjectivity shaped by the social order to a chosen subjectivity." Insults ended up being remarkable forms of "interpellation." Their

¹⁵³ "Incredibile manifesto diffuso da giovani del 'terzo sesso'," *La Nazione Sera* (May 26, 1969), 14.

¹⁵⁴ Kolosimo, "Guida all'omosessualità," 17-18.

consciousness, “wounded” and “shamed” by insults, became a formative part of their new personalities. Negative media campaigns consolidated social categories and pushed sexually marginalized individuals to reclaim their full-fledged citizenship, become part of a stronger collective body, and resist abuse, defamation, name-calling, and social stigmatization.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 7-9, 15-21, 56-58, 72-73.

Chapter 5

OUT!: Gay Liberation Discourse and the Construction of an Insurgent Community

In the “pre-sexual revolution era,” according to Andrea Pini, many working class young men deemed having paid sex with homosexuals as “natural.” Only later on, he explains, when Italian women were more sexually available, did young men begin “deserting their homoerotic nocturnal rendezvous.” Female sexual emancipation, together with the improved economic conditions of Italians, destroyed “traditional sexual mores” and re-shaped male sexual behaviors.¹ As Robert Aldrich put it, the era “of a free and natural male sexuality and, its complement, the availability of boys for the modest sum of a few hundred lire” was over.² In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Pini argues, these boys were supplanted by drug addicts, immigrants, thugs, and transvestites who did not consider hustling a “rite of passage” but a primary source of income. Only then did violence, robbery, and aggression intensify. Pini looks back with nostalgia at the years between the end of World War II and the *dolce vita*, a time when, as one of the men he interviewed recalled, it was easy to have sex with soldiers off duty and same-sex sexuality was experienced “with no problems whatsoever.”³ Pini describes, based on the memories of his witnesses, a time when the modern notion of gay identity did not exist and men having sex with young “*veri maschi*” (real men) were called – and called themselves proudly – “*froci*” (faggots).⁴ Both my dissertation and Pini’s book show how diverse the experiences of men living their homosexuality in post-war Italy were.

¹ Andrea Pini, *Quando eravamo froci. Gli omosessuali nell'Italia di una volta* (Roma: Il Saggiatore, 2011), 128, 134.

² Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 203.

³ Pini, *Quando eravamo froci*, 169-170.

⁴ See Andrea Pini, “La prostituzione maschile,” in *Porneia. Voci e sguardi sulle prostituzioni* (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2003), 76-77; Pini, *Quando eravamo froci*, 102.

Same-sex desires and behaviors continued, and continue, to be multiple and hardly classifiable.

The foundation of the first gay liberation organization took place at the same time as a new media campaign meant to expose the pervasiveness and dangerousness of male prostitution. A mostly new and increasingly vocal discourse of liberation came in opposition to the disorderly world of Pini's *froci*, signaling emancipation but also the effacement of difference and the toning down of contradictions. Its activists sought to discursively create a homogeneous homosexual imagined community, and purposely constructed a *new homosexual* who was supposed to replace the allegedly apolitical *frocio*, reject the exploitative and dangerous *marchetta*, and counter the image of homosexuals as youth corruptors. Through its own periodical, considered by the movement as its sole mouthpiece, the Italian Homosexual Front contrasted images and arguments perpetuated by mainstream media and favored the circulation of reverse discourses aimed at challenging the status of homosexuals as partial citizens.

Male Prostitution On National TV

On June 9, 1972 the TV investigative series *AZ: un fatto come e perché* (*AZ: One Fact, How, and Why*) devoted its sixth part to male prostitution.⁵ RAI – the national broadcasting company – had decided to cover such an issue as a result of the alleged increased visibility of transvestite prostitutes on the streets. The Italian TV considered the topic too thorny for prime time, and decided to air the program one hour later than usual – 10 pm instead of 9 pm. That night five *travestiti* (transvestites) were interviewed by the Italian television, and exposed to the gaze of millions of eager spectators.⁶ Their voices and faces – recorded in recent months

⁵ “Prostituzione maschile,” *AZ: un fatto come e perché*, June 9, 1972, part 6. See also Mauro Benedetti, “Lo scottante problema dei travestiti in una delicata inchiesta televisiva,” *Gazzetta del Popolo*, June 10, 1972; “Buio mondo dei travestiti,” *La Stampa*, June 10, 1972, 7.

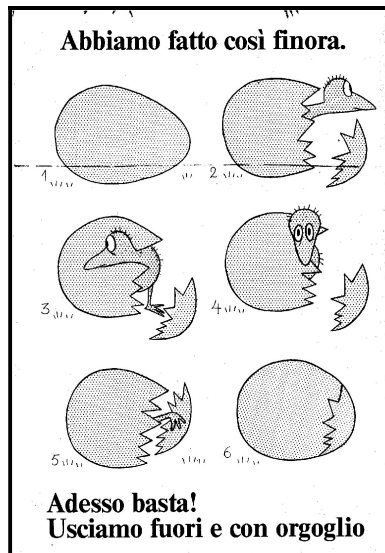
⁶ Italian media used the category “*travestiti*” to talk about people we might have labeled today as transsexuals or transgender. In the following pages I will adopt such category because it is the one that both media and subjects used at the time. People

by the journalist Gigi Marsico – were interlaced with opinions about “sexual deviations” expressed by a group of experts interviewed in a television studio by Ennio Mastrostefano. The TV program was not, as promised, an accurate analysis of the world of “male prostitution,” but rather a showcase of pain and death aimed at convincing the Italian audience that “transvestites” and “homosexuals” – confusedly presented as overlapping identity categories – were miserable individuals bound to a dreadful existence.

Eleven days after the broadcast of *AZ* the first homosexual periodical ever published in Italy appeared in the newsstands. For Italian gay activists, the publication of their own magazine was a crucial breakthrough. They hoped that it could have a profound impact on the lives of many Italian queers pushing them to resist homophobic discourses, challenge public morality, explode stereotypical myths, and actively participate in the “(homo)sexual revolution.” They wanted their periodical to be a space for activism, empowerment, self-expression, and self-awareness. 1971 and 1972, as we will see, were pivotal years because for the first time in Italian history homosexuals created their own organization and periodical, and began challenging mainstream narratives about “deviant” sexualities and gender expression as never before. Through their own magazine the members of the Italian Homosexual Front were able to proclaim that their lives were not dreadful, that homosexuality was something to be proud of, and that it did not have to be hidden, but rather displayed (Figure 5.1).⁷

interviewed by the Italian TV talked indeed about themselves as “*trasvestiti*.” The word “*transessuale*,” even if appeared sporadically in the Italian media since the 1960s, according to Tullio de Mauro came into use around 1972 (<https://dizionario.internazionale.it/parola/transessuale>). The *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* explained that the word “*transessualismo*” came into use in 1974 and the word “*transessualità*” in 1979 (<http://www.gdli.it/Ricerca/Libera?q=transessuale>).

⁷ The word “gay,” according to the linguist Tullio De Mauro, began to spread in the Italian language between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s thanks to the circulation of documents produced by Anglo-Saxon Gay Liberation Movements and FHAR. See Tullio De Mauro, “Lessico dell’omosessualità,” in *Pratiche innominabili. Violenza pubblica e privata contro gli omosessuali*, Riccardo Reim, Laura di Nola, Antonio Veneziani eds. (Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta editore, 1979), 103.



5.1. Cartoon, *FUORI!*, June 1972, n. 1, backcover. "Until now we have been doing this. That's enough! Let's come out with pride."

Italian TV explained that male prostitution was an urban phenomenon, and implied that in recent years, with the migration from the countryside to the city of thousands of Italians searching for more job opportunities, many individuals had left their small towns hoping to vanish into the anonymous urban mass and unleash their sexualities. Turin in particular had not only experienced a significant demographic growth, but since the beginning of the 1970s had also registered a considerable expansion in the number of transvestites walking the streets. For this reason Mastrostefano and his collaborators considered Turin as the best place to conduct their journalistic investigation. To set the tone for the program from the very beginning, the first images that the Italian audience saw watching *AZ* were shot at the site of the murder of Sofia, which occurred just days after Marisco interviewed her. The first section of the program was then completely devoted to this transvestite and to her murderer (Figures 5.2. and 5.3.).⁸

⁸ For transvestites in Turin see Renato Proni, "Si chiamano 'Soraya' e 'Betty Curtis' i capovolti di Torino," *ABC*, December 5, 1965, 12-14; Franco Vaudo, "Il vizio perbene," *Lo Specchio*, February 26, 1967, 20-23; Silvio Bertoldi, "I sessi sono due o tre?" *Oggi*, July 30, 1969, 56; Peter Kolosimo, "Castrati e contenti," *Cronaca*, August 22, 1970, 16-19; "Crocetta: vietato affacciarsi alla finestra," *Stampa Sera*, December 10, 1970; "Lotta a sfruttatori e travestiti," *La Stampa*, February 26, 1971; "Una retata tra ragazzini travestiti," *Stampa Sera*, June 23, 1971; Guido Cappato, "Torino è diventata un immenso bordello per gli invertiti," *ABC*, March 3, 1972, 36-39.



Figure 5.2. Sofia together with her murderer.
Gente, March 11, 1972, 81.



Figure 5.3. Sofia photographed during her interview.
Gente, March 11, 1972, 80.

The body of Sofia, stabbed twenty-eight times, was found on February 24, 1972 in the vicinity of the cemetery of Moncalieri (Turin). In a few hours, checking their fingerprints' database, the police discovered that the victim was Salvatore Petruolo. He had come to Turin from Marcianise – a small town close to Caserta – a few years before and, once in the city, he had begun working as a transvestite prostitute. Everybody knew him as Sofia. Giorgio Gagliardotto – a body shop mechanic described by the press as Sofia's *amico del cuore* (bosom buddy) – was immediately suspected, and the following day he confessed to her homicide. After having showed a short clip of Sofia's morose interview with Marsico, *AZ* emphasized the opportunistic nature of the relationship between this beautiful transvestite and her greedy young lover. In this case, unlike the ones I have analyzed throughout my research, the killer was not a male hustler and the victim was not a homosexual searching for company. Sofia had been killed by a man who was her friend, her lover, and her pimp.

Even if it was evident that Giorgio was a “kept man” who exploited and killed Sofia, the Italian TV did not resist the temptation of presenting the stereotypical narrative of the good young man fallen under the spell of a seductive and corrupting creature. One of Gagliardotto’s friends, interviewed by *AZ*, underlined that Giorgio was “*normale*” (normal) and that for him the murder had been a “*liberazione*” (liberation) from a relationship that had become unbearable. This man explained that Sofia and her lover had been together for about five months, and he emphasized how Giorgio had begun dating her “as a joke.” He could not understand why the relationship had lasted for so long, and he insinuated that maybe Sofia was blackmailing Gagliardotto. The latter, interviewed by *Gente*, explained that he had killed her because he could not handle the relationship anymore. He “felt ashamed in front of his friends,” and he could not accept Sofia’s requests of being introduced to his mother as his girlfriend. Media did not use the word homosexual to talk about Giorgio. And in his interview he never defined himself in those terms. His friend Walter Cotevino, talking to the journalist Renzo Allegri, maintained that before meeting Sofia, Giorgio was a “normal man” who hung out with “normal girls.” His relationship with a transvestite was not seen as “normal” but, at the same time, it was not interpreted as a homosexual affair either. The relationship between Giorgio and Sofia, a person who looked like a woman and who was seen as playing a passive/receptive role, was used by the young man, by his friends, and by media as evidence of Gagliardotto’s *normalcy*. Italian TV, magazines and newspapers were determined to reassure viewers and readers that only the *queer others* with their deceptive bodies were the *anomaly*.⁹

⁹ For more details about the homicide see “Torbido delitto a Moncalieri. Ucciso un travestito,” *La Stampa*, February 25, 1972, 1, 4; “L’omicida vent’anni si costituisce alla polizia,” *La Stampa*, February 26, 1972, 5; “Confessione: ‘La sua gelosia mi nauseava,’” *La Stampa*, February 26, 1972, 5; Gildo Carigli, “Dopo l’amore la nausea. Una tragedia balorda,” *Cronaca*, March 4, 1972, 16-17; Renzo Allegri, “Omicidio per vergogna,” *Gente*, March 11, 1972, 80-84; “Pugnalò a morte l’amico travesto ‘Mi nauseava dover uscire con lui,’” *La Stampa*, August 10, 1972, 4; “L’assassino di ‘Sofia’ scoppia in pianto disperato mentre il p.m. chiede la condanna a ventisei anni,” *La Stampa*, February 1, 1973, 5; “L’assassino di Sofia condannato a 18 anni dice: ‘Sono pentito,’” *La Stampa*, February 2, 1973, 4.

That night, beside Sofia's story, *AZ* broadcast Marsico's interviews with other four transvestites and with the mother of Romina – presented by RAI as a “male prostitute.” The latter, talking about her life as a living hell, explained how hard it was to have a “son” like that. She hoped that science could save “him” and concluded her interview claiming that, for her part, she would never give up searching for a cure. The four transvestites interviewed by Marsico explained that they had moved to Turin in order to escape from their small towns, from their families and friends, from gossip and insults. They talked about their childhood (“*I began cross-dressing when I was a young girl*”) and about their desire to protect their families (“*I have never wanted to hurt my mother*”). They explained how hard it was to find a “normal” job because no one wanted to hire them (“*How can you stop? Who would give you a job? It is easy to say ‘Take off your wig’ ... but who would give you a job?*”; “*I can't. How can I go to work like this? Who is going to hire me? They look at me and they ask me if I am a man or a woman*”). They claimed to be sick and tired of working on the streets (“*I want to quit ... I cannot stand this heinous life anymore. I am sick of all this*”; “*I don't do it because I like it. It makes me sick*”). Some of them emphasized that they had done everything they could to be “normal” men (“*Why did nature play such a trick on me?*”, “*I tried some treatments ... I tried everything to be normal*”), and one transvestite described her existence as a life spent on the “*carro degli appestati*” (plague cart), constantly subject to scrutinizing and censuring looks. Most of the interviewees underscored that they felt at ease wearing female clothes, that they would never wear male clothing again (“*I never felt comfortable wearing men's attire and I never will*”), that their biggest desire was to become “full-fledged” women, and that they were prostituting themselves only to collect enough money to achieve this goal (“*My aspiration is to have surgery and open a shop*”; “*When I am a woman I hope ... to go to another city ... another country ... and have a man who loves me by my side*”). Genders and sexualities of the interviewees were probably not easy to understand and classify for many

Italian spectators, but all these people – even if they felt the social stigma attached to themselves, and even if most of them were still trying to understand who they were – knew that they wanted to live according to their own hopes and desires.

These interviews were blended with supposed “scientific truths about sex” offered to the Italian viewers by a group of professionals and academics who talked almost indistinguishably about transvestites, transsexuals, homosexuals, and male prostitutes.¹⁰ According to their analyses, transsexuals and transvestites were one and the same; transvestites were a subgroup in the general homosexuality category; the line separating homosexuals from transvestites was flimsy and blurred; transvestites were all prostitutes; and *heterosexual* male hustlers, as well as lesbians, were completely ignored. Ugo Sisti, a jurist of the High Court of Appeal of Rome, reiterated that homosexuality – as well as male and

¹⁰ Throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s the Italian press talked confusedly about transvestites, transsexuals and homosexuals. See G.S., “Le piccole Coccinelle di Firenze,” *Lo Specchio*, May 22, 1960, 36-38; Paolo Sforzini, “Il sesso travestito,” *L'Espresso*, July 3, 1960, 11; “Il travestito di Milano,” *Lo Specchio*, September 10, 1961, 32-33; Dino Sanzò, “La dolora confessione di un travestito,” *Lo Specchio*, February 3, 1963, 38-39; “Retata della polizia a Via Veneto,” *Lo Specchio*, August 22, 1965, 14-15; Piero Sani, “Lulù si chiama Annibale,” *Cronaca*, September 3, 1966, 8-10; Enzo Giustiniani, “La Casbah di ‘Toledo,’” *Lo Specchio*, December 11, 1966, 12-16; Franco Vaudo, “Le tremila dei Caruggi,” *Lo Specchio*, February 12, 1967, 22-25; Aldo S. Doni, “La capitale delle case aperte,” *Lo Specchio*, February 19, 1967, 16-19; Marina R. Boensch/Luciano Cirri, “I ‘matusa’ del sesso II. L’amore dei poveri,” *Il Borghese*, June 1, 1967, 242-244; Lilyam Tomasi, “A Milano si fabbricano anche le donne finte,” *ABC*, August 10, 1967, 8-11; Franco Serra, “Le tragiche strade del vizio,” *Oggi*, October 10, 1968, 78-85; Gillo Fiorentini, “Quando ‘lui’ si sente donna,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 21, 1968, 28-31; Uberto de Andrè, “Genova: il sesso truccato,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 18, 1968, 14-17; Mauro Calamandrei, “Adama ed Evo,” *L'Espresso*, May 4, 1969, 12-13; Silvio Bertoldi, “Perché si sta diffondendo la piaga degli anormali?,” *Oggi*, July 16, 1969, 55-57; Laura Conti, “Non sempre gli uomini-donna sono viziosi irrecuperabili,” *Panorama*, September 25, 1969, 50; Genny Berto, “Un dopobarba per Dalida,” *ABC*, October 31, 1969, 16-19; Rina Comelli, “Noi siamo le neo-donne,” *ABC*, February 20, 1970, 10-17; Rina Comelli, “Con i miei quarti di femminilità,” *ABC*, May 22, 1970, 18-19; “Le fate di Cinecittà,” *Playmen*, July 1970, 138-149; Emilio Servadio, “Chi sono i travestiti,” *Playmen-Psiche e sessualità*, July 1970, 1; “Travestiti adescano sui viali,” *Il Resto del Carlino*, July 10, 1970; “‘Retata’ della buoncostume per donnine e ‘travestiti,’” *Roma*, July 11, 1970; Gaetano Basilici, Marcello Ugolini, “Un inquietante problema: i travestiti,” *Momento Sera*, July 28, 1970; Gaetano Basilici, Marcello Ugolini, “Gli uomini-donna dell’acquedotto felice,” *Momento Sera*, August 12, 1970; Lino Matti, “Il mio amore è travestito,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 14, 1970, 40-43; Bruno Stocchetti, “Il vizio: inesauribile fonte della criminalità,” *Roma*, September 26, 1970; “Roma Sporca,” *Lo Specchio*, November 22, 1970, 30-31; Luciana Varbello, “Così è se ti piace-L’Italia travestita,” *ABC*, November 9, 1970, 40-42; “L’innocenza di sentirsi donne,” *ABC*, November 6, 1970, 36; Maria Adele Teodori, “Chiamatemi Cristina,” *L'Espresso*, February 14, 1971, 12-13; “Scuderia di travestiti,” *La Nazione*, May 27, 1971; Mario Zoppelli, “Fenomeno ignorato: l’uomo da marciapiede,” *Il Giorno*, May 28, 1971; Giuseppe Peruzzi, “Femmine con la barba,” *La Nazione Stampa*, June 1, 1971; Carlo Valentini, “O me lo tolgono o me lo taglio,” *ABC*, February 18, 1972, 44-45; Neera Fallaci, “Un ragazzo chiamato Lola,” *Oggi*, March 25, 1972, 82-87; Vittorio Pescatori, “Amami Alfredo,” *ABC*, May 5, 1972, 46-47; Guido Cappato, “Una Firenze di appuntamenti,” *ABC*, June 9, 1972, 50-53; Vincenzo Cicerone, “Tra vestiti e reggiseni,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 25, 1972, 54-56. *Il Borghese* published in every issue a photographic supplement. Since 1969 the magazine published several pictures of transvestites to underline the “moral decay” of Italy see the issues of July 10, 1969; September 11, 1969; June 14, 1970; August 16, 1970; September 9, 1970; November 29, 1970; January 30, 1972; March 12, 1972; May 21, 1972. And see also the cover of *Il Borghese* (April 23, 1972). In 1970 it was published an autobiographic book written by a transvestite: Roberto Franciolini, *Io, un travestito* (Torino: MEB edizioni, 1970). In 1972 Lisetta Carmi published a stunning photographic book – *I travestiti* – completely devoted to transvestites living in Genoa. See also, for other biographic experiences, Romica Ceconi, *Io, la Romanina. Perché sono diventato donna* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1976) and Porpora Marcasciano, *Favolose narranti. Storie di transessuali* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2008).

female prostitution – was not illegal. He underlined that soliciting was a crime regulated by the Merlin Law, and that transvestites could not be arrested but only fined for disguising their identity. However, according to Sisti, male prostitution was more dangerous than the female one because it was related to a higher number of felonies such as homicides, blackmailing, extortion, and other crimes motivated by homophobia. The geneticist Umberto Bigozzi surprisingly tried to depathologize same-sex sexualities and “transvestism.” He described the transvestites interviewed by Gigi Marsico as “a particular case of homosexuality,” and argued that hormones or chromosomes were not the reasons for their deviant behaviors. In his opinion “transvestites” and “true homosexuals” were “normal” individuals at least from a biological and hormonal point of view. The sociologist Sabino Acquaviva underlined that homosexuals were visibly developing new urban subcultures, and blamed unmanly fathers and mannish mothers for the recent aggravation of the homosexual phenomenon. The psychologist Leonardo Ancona stressed that homosexuals suffered from “an interruption of their psycho-sexual evolution,” and guaranteed that they could be successfully treated by expert psychotherapists. The Catholic jurist and politician Gabrio Lombardi, founder of the National Committee for a Referendum on Divorce, denied that homosexuals could love each other, and argued that the number of homosexuals was increasing because the Italian family was in crisis, and because sex was conceived by more and more Italians as a mere non-procreative pleasure.¹¹ In the end the theologian Father Enrico Chiavacci stressed that homosexuals were condemned to unsatisfying and unloving relationships, and that they needed, for these reasons, help and compassion. Moreover, given that in his opinion homosexuality was not an innate disposition but rather an acquired behavior, it was possible to avoid the spread of homosexual practices by teaching sex education to young children. Ultimately, the experts convened by Mastrostefano did not challenge any conventional

¹¹ Christian groups led by Gabrio Lombardi promoted the referendum to repeal the law that had introduced the divorce in Italy in 1970. The referendum, held on May 12, 1974, confirmed that the Italian population wanted divorce laws to remain in force.

stereotype publicized in the last decades by sensational magazines, and equated homosexuality – loosely defined – with unhappiness, crime, death, and moral rotteness.¹²

Something else happened that night on the Italian TV. *AZ* touched upon the growing politicization of some Italian homosexuals who had “completely accepted their own condition,” and who, actively following the example of the American Gay Liberation Front, had been inviting other gays and lesbians to come out.¹³ These activists – as we will see in the following pages – had challenged sociologists, psychiatrists and theologians convened in April 1972 in Sanremo for the “International Conference on Deviant Sexual Behaviors.” They belonged – Mastrostefano claimed – to that part of the Italian homosexual “iceberg” that, after having been submerged for decades, was beginning to come to the surface. These “proud” gays and lesbians were members of FUORI (*Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano*-Italian Revolutionary Homosexual United Front).¹⁴

In the years following the foundation of the American Gay Liberation Front (1969) other similar organizations were instituted in Great Britain (Gay Liberation Front, 1970), France (*Front homosexuelle d'action révolutionnaire*-FHAR, 1971), Belgium (*Mouvement homosexuelle d'action révolutionnaire*-MHAR, 1972), and Italy (FUORI, 1971).

Revolutionary homosexuals were often imbued with ideals of New Left and 1960s counterculture. They were part of a larger movement that asked for the social, cultural, political, and economic reorganization of the world according to anti-capitalist principles of social justice. Nonetheless, homosexuals were not particularly welcomed by other non-queer members of the radical movement. The latter wanted to appear as progressive sexual

¹² For criticism against *AZ* see “Lettera aperta alla Rai-TV-Salotto di Oscar Wilde,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 3, 1972, 40-41; Stefano Malatesta, “Stiamo bene fuori,” *Panorama*, July 13, 1972, 27-28; Domenico Tallone, “TV un crimine contro gli omosessuali,” *FUORI!*, July-August 1972, no. 2, 1-4.

¹³ This was not the first congress about homosexuality organized in Italy. On May 11 and 12, 1963 the *Centro Italiano di Sessuologia* (Italian center of sexology-CIS) had already held a conference in Rome about the pathogenic aspects of homosexuality. Papers tried to clarify the etiology of homosexuality providing genetic, endocrine, morphological, and psychological explanations. In the end experts agreed that the pathogenesis of homosexuality was complex, and that it was necessary to reject monocausal explanations of such a “disease.” See “Atti del convegno sugli aspetti patogenici dell’omosessualità (Roma, 11-12 maggio 1963),” *Sessuologia*, no. 3 (1963).

¹⁴ The name of the Italian movement, FUORI, was inspired by the French FHAR, but it also made reference to the English “come out.” “*Fuori*” in Italian means out.

iconoclasts but, in the end, they did not actually question, or throw into crisis, the system they lived in. “Free love” did not promote the redefinition of traditional gender roles, and did not mean acceptance of same-sex desires and practices. Even if members of the New Left wanted to appear as sexually uninhibited, heteropatriarchy and its corollary – anti-homosexuality – were widespread in many revolutionary groups. Many young members of the New Left, anchored in moral and ethical traditions of Marxism, did not accept behaviors deemed selfish and bourgeois. Homosexuality was one of those. In Italy, as well as in other countries, new-left groups were disproportionately sexist and hetero-centric. Thus, gays and lesbians – as well as women’s liberationists – were at the same time in and out of the radical movement that was trying to redefine Western culture.¹⁵

Revolutionary gays were more radical than previous homophile groups. They stressed pride, defiance, and openness. They did not settle for mere acceptance and assimilation in the heterosexual society, and they were not willing to conform to bourgeois respectability.

Homosexuals – they argued – were not the problem. The real problem was the reluctance of

¹⁵ For Italy see *L'ultimo uomo. Quattro confessioni-riflessioni sulla crisi del ruolo maschile* (Roma: Savelli, 1977); Fabio Giovannini, *Comunisti e diversi. Il PCI e la questione omosessuale* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1980); *Il sogno degli anni '60. Un decennio da non dimenticare nei ricordi di 46 giovani di allora*, Gregorio Paolini ed. (Roma: Savelli Editore, 1981); Ida Dominijanni, “Anni Sessanta. Albori femministi,” *Il Manifesto*, no. 76 (1988): 16; Diego Leoni, “Testimonianza Semiseria sul '68 a Trento,” in *La cultura e i luoghi del '68*, Aldo Agosti, Luisa Passerini, Nicola Tranfaglia eds. (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1991), 188-189; “Movimenti delle donne/movimenti del '68,” in *Storie di donne e femministe*, Luisa Passerini ed. (Torino: Rosenberg&Sellier, 1991), 150-158; Eros Francescangeli, “The Bride in Red: Morality and Private Relationships in the Italian Revolutionary Left – the Case of the Maoist Group *Servire il popolo*,” *European Review of History—Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 1 (2005): 102-105, 108, 112; Anna Tonelli, *Comizi d'amore. Politica e sentimenti dal '68 ai Papa boys* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), 12, 45-46; Anna Bravo, *A colpi di cuore. Storie del sessantotto* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 185; Maud Anne Bracke, *Women and the Revolution of the Political. Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (London: Routledge, 2014), 50, 64-65; Id., “Our Bodies, Ourselves: The Transnational Connections of 1970s Italian and Roman Feminism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3, (2015): 570; Paola Stelliferi, “Is the Personal Political for Men too? Encounter and Conflict between ‘New Left’ Men and Feminist Movements in 1970s Italy,” in *Men at Home*, Raffaella Sarti ed., special issue of *Gender & History* 27, no. 3 (2015): 847-852; Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2018); Andrea Hajek, “A Room of One’s Own. Feminist Intersections between Space, Women’s writing and Radical Bookselling in Milan (1968-1986),” *Italian Studies* 73, no. 1 (2018): 81-97. Also in the US and France, for example, homosexuals had to deal with a hostile and homophobic New Left: Jacques Vandemborghe, “Mai 68, dans la Sorbonne occupée,” *Mec Magazine*, no. 1 (1988): 30-33; Terence Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York’s Gay Liberation Front, 1969-1971,” *Radical History Review*, 62 (1995): 104-134; Angus McLaren, *Twentieth-Century Sexuality: A History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), 189-190; Julian Jackson, “Sex, Politics and Morality in France, 1954-1982,” *History Workshop Journal*, 61 (2006): 87-88; Id., *Living in Arcadia. Homosexuality, Politics, and Morality in France From the Liberation to AIDS* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2009), 172-194; Michael Sibalis, “The Spirit of May '68 and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement in France,” in *Gender and Sexuality in 1968. Transformative Politics in the Cultural Imagination*, Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 236, 241; Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Berkeley-CA: University of California Press, 2016), 29. A better form of collaboration between the New Left and homosexual groups seemed to emerge in 1968 San Francisco, see Justin David Suran, “‘Out Now!’: Antimilitarism and the Politicization of Homosexuality in the Era of Vietnam,” in *Gender and Sexuality in 1968. Transformative Politics in the Cultural Imagination*, Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 25-58.

heterosexual societies to accept them. Gay radicals asserted a universalizing vision of gender and sexual liberation. They did not want to be admitted to society as it was, they wanted to transform it.¹⁶ The Italian FUORI was a combination of different political and ideological viewpoints that would result in tensions and separations. Individualistic, separatist and elitist ideas and opinions all coexisted with other collective-minded, egalitarian, and revolutionary ones. Radical members of FUORI wanted to destabilize normative society and completely re-organize the political, social, and sexual system they lived in. Moderate ones instead – those who eventually took leadership of the Front – wanted to be accepted in the society of “normal people.” In its very first years of activity, despite ideological conflicts between radicals and moderates, the Italian Homosexual Front highlighted the necessity of nurturing as much as possible solidarity and cooperation among members of the *homosexual imagined community*.¹⁷

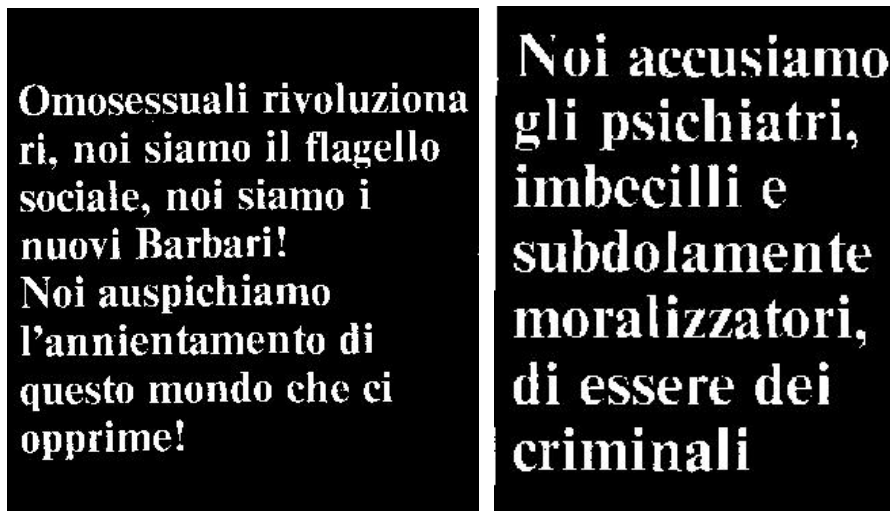
Alfredo Cohen, a radical activist of FUORI, emphasized that no one could think of themselves as emancipated in a society that, glorifying the presumed sexual freedom of the normative majority – the so-called *sessualmaggioritari* – discriminated against everybody else. Cohen underscored that, as long as the society they lived in was patriarchal, sexist, and

¹⁶ Whitney Strub, “Gay Liberation (1963–1980),” in *The Routledge History of Queer America*, Don Romesburg ed. (London: Routledge 2018), 82-94. See also, for example, Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming out. Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 185; Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries,” 108; Alan Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?,” *Science & Society*, no. 1 (2005): 92-112; Hobson, *Lavender and Red*, 28.

¹⁷ FUORI collected members with both revolutionary and homophile attitudes. Tensions between them caused secessions. In Milan, for example, some members of FUORI, more in line with the homophile ideals advocated by Arcadie and COC, formed their own group: the *Associazione italiana per il riconoscimento dei diritti degli omofili* (Italian Association for the Recognition of Homophiles’ Rights-AIRDO) led by Elio Modugno. Tensions between “revolutionary” and “conservative” groups inside the organization did not fade. In 1974 the members from Turin pushed for a federation with the *Partito Radicale* (Radical Party). This decision, sanctioned by two congresses, caused a divide between a group of radicals based in Milan and the rest of the organization. Some Milanese members of FUORI vindicated their own autonomy, and between 1975 and 1976 founded the *Collettivi Omosessuali Milanesi* (Milanese Homosexual Collectives, COM). Moreover, in the mid-1970s, also the lesbian members of FUORI decided to carry out their battle separately. The divide between “revolutionaries” and “moderates” became irreversible when some members of FUORI decided to run for office in the elections of June 1976 as members of the Radical Party. It was the first time that openly gay citizens ran for office in Italy. The Radical Party won four seats and Pezzana was the first of the non-elected. Eventually he became a representative in the Italian Chamber for eight days in February 1979. At the end of the 1970s there were many homosexual and lesbian groups independent from FUORI. The *Fronte* declared its dissolution during the last Congress of Vico Equense in 1982. See Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 120-123; Cohen, “Introduzione,” 26; Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 110 -111, 115; Rossi Barili, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 46-157; Massimo Prearo, “La trajectoire révolutionnaire du militantisme homosexuel italien dans les années 1970,” *Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique*, 119 (2012): 5-7; Michela Teresa Ravasi, “*Lotta dura contro natura*.” *Controcultura e omosessualità in Lambda (1976-1982)*, Tesi di Laurea Magistrale, Università degli Studi di Milano, 2016-2017, 15-25.

phallocratic, the *sessualmaggioritari* would never be able to realize that their freedom was illusory. Going against such society, and opposing repressive socio-cultural impositions, it was possible to achieve the “real” sexual liberation of homosexuals and heterosexuals. Radical activists of FUORI talked about their sexual “abnormality” as a privilege that had allowed them to recognize the power of oppression. They maintained that, thanks to their sexuality, they had understood the urgency of fighting along feminist and anti-racist movements in order to revolutionize the society they lived in from an economic, cultural and social point of view. Moreover, in line with the 1960s antipsychiatry movement represented in Italy by Franco Basaglia, FUORI targeted psychiatrists as hegemonic agents of repression, and as inflexible gatekeepers of the *norm* who unjustly claimed the right of defining what was *normal* and what was *deviant*. In front of a Catholic Church that condemned them silently, and in front of an Italian State that did not criminalize them plainly, the Italian gays of the Front directed their very first initiatives against doctors and therapists who were publicly labeling homosexuals as deviant psychopaths. Psychiatrists and psychologists were perceived as watchdogs of a socio-cultural system that had condemned for decades same-sex behaviors and desires. The Italian Homosexual Front wanted to overthrow that system. For the more radical wing of FUORI homosexuality was an instrument of transformation of heteronormative structures (Figures 5.4. and 5.5.).¹⁸

¹⁸ See Alfredo Cohen, “Introduzione,” in *La politica del corpo*, Angelo Pezzana ed. (Roma: Savelli, 1976), 9, 16; Gianni Rossi Barili, *Il movimento gay in Italia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999), 48; Massimo Prearo, “Elementi di critica della liberazione omosessuale: per una politica del movimento,” in *Tribadi, sodomiti, invertite e invertiti, pederasti, femminelle, ermafroditi ... per una storia dell’omosessualità, della bisessualità e delle trasgressioni di genere in Italia*, Umberto Grassi, Vincenzo Lagioia, Gian Paolo Romagnani eds. (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2017), 258. For revolutionary goals and revolutionary jargon of the Italian homosexuals see also “Gli omosessuali rivoluzionari si organizzano nascono il FUORI e il FLO,” *Re Nudo*, March 1972, 10; Mariasilvia Serini, “Sempre meglio deviante che psichiatra,” *L’Espresso*, April 16, 1972, 15; Collettivo Fuori, “Omosessualità e liberazione,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 1; Anna Della Vida e Angelo Pezzana, “L’informazione manipolata ovvero la resistibile disinformazione del solito ‘grande’ quotidiano,” *FUORI!*, July-August 1972, no. 2, 6; Mario Mieli, “Per la critica della questione omosessuale,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 1-2; Mauro Bertocchi, “Il nuovo omosessuale,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 10; IHR, “Incontro degli omosessuali per una tecnica di autodifesa,” *FUORI!*, October 1972, no. 4, 5-6; Domenico Tallone, “Strutture autoritarie, capitalismo illuminato e omosessualità,” *FUORI!*, December 1972, no. 6, 1. For the “antipsychiatry movement” see, for example: Michael Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988); Paul Taylor, “Antipsychiatry Movement,” in *Encyclopedia of Pharmacology and Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 196-198; David Rissmiller, Joshua Rissmiller, “Evolution of the antipsychiatry movement into mental health consumerism,” *Psychiatric Services* 57, no. 6 (2006): 863-866; Gerald N. Grob, “The Attack of Psychiatric Legitimacy in the 1960s: Rhetoric and Reality,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, no. 4 (2011): 398-416; Michael E. Staub, *Madness is*



Figures 5.4.-5.5. Slogans against heterosexist society ad psychiatrists.

The Italian gay movement launched in its magazine radical political messages. Some of them were about the necessity of changing the socio-political system (“*Revolutionary homosexuals, we are the social scourge, we are the new Barbarians! We wish for the annihilation of this world that oppresses us!*” – *FUORI!*, October 1972, 4, 18). Some others targeted psychiatrists (“*We accuse psychiatrists, who are morons and sneaky moralizers, to be criminals*” – *FUORI!*, November 1972, 5, 12).

The Foundation of FUORI

In the early 1970s, after the unsuccessful attempts carried out in the 1950s by Bernardino del Boca, Italian gay and lesbian groups were established in Rome, Turin and Milan. These gatherings were independent of one another and, initially, not aware of their mutual existence.¹⁹ One particular event catalyzed the mobilization of the Turinese group, with major consequences in the history of Italian gay liberation. On April 15, 1971 *La Stampa* published an article, written by Andrea Romero – chief neuropsychiatrist at Turin’s Maurizio Hospital – entitled *L’infelice che ama la propria imagine* (the unfortunate in love with his own image). The article described homosexuals as individuals whose psychological development had been blocked at an infantile level, and as narcissists, incapable of love and trust, potentially

Civilization. When the Diagnosis Was Social, 1948-1980 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); John Foot, “Franco Basaglia and the Radical Psychiatry Movement in Italy, 1961-1978,” *Critical and Radical Social Work*, no. 2 (2014): 235-249; Abram J. Lewis, “‘We are certain of Our Own Insanity’: Antipsychiatry and the Gay Liberation Movement, 1968-1980,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, no. 1 (2016): 83-113; Ian Cummins, “Putting Diagnosis Into Brackets: Franco Basaglia, Radical Psychiatry, and Contemporary Mental Health Services,” *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, no. 3 (2018): 187-199.

¹⁹ For Del Boca’s attempts to create the *Centro Italiano* (the Italian equivalent of *Der Kreis*) in the 1950s see the letter exchange between Del Boca and Welti in SAZ, Ar. 36.38.10, NW, 1.5.20; Ar. 36.38.7, NW, 1.4.2.3.; Ar. 36.38.7, NW, 1.4.2.4.; Ar. 36.38.7, NW, 1.4.2.5. Reading some letters sent to *Men* it is evident that homosexuals were forming small groups and were thinking about the creation of a national homosexual organization already in 1970. See “Lettere dall’altra sponda,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, April 13, 1970, 2-3; “Lettere aperte di omosex,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, April 27, 1970, 3; “Niente drammi per omosex,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 4, 1970, 2-3; “Un club per non morire,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 18, 1970, 3; “Uomini e topi,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 25, 1970, 2-3.

inclined to committing crimes. Nonetheless, Romero assured, psychoanalysis could heal them, as Giacomo Dacquino had proved in his recent book *Diario di un Omosessuale* (Diary of a homosexual, 1970).²⁰

This article was not unusual or particularly aggressive, nor did it argue anything different from what doctors and psychoanalysts had been writing and saying for decades. However, this time, a group of homosexuals from Turin decided to counterattack under the leadership of the bookseller Angelo Pezzana – destined to become a major figure among FUORI’s moderates. They sent a response to Romero hoping that *La Stampa* would publish it. In their letter they explained that “homosexuality [was] not a problem per se.” Problematic was “the way in which it [was] perceived by society.” Homosexuals, they argued, were constantly judged, and their psychological development was deeply affected by the negative attitude of those surrounding them. In their letter the homosexuals from Turin asked to consider how a repressive society, unable to deal with diversity, unloaded fears and frustration on the archetypal deviant which was from time to time “the homosexual, the Jew, the Communist, the negro, the *meridionale* (southern Italian), the lunatic, etc.” They concluded their letter claiming that they rejected any form of medical science that condemned “deviants,” and hindered social and human progress.²¹ *La Stampa* denied the publication of this letter. The director maintained that the newspaper wanted to avoid a controversy about a topic – homosexuality – that he did not find appropriate to cover profusely on the pages of a newspaper. Moreover, the director added, everybody was already talking far too much about it.²²

After such a rejection Pezzana decided to hold a meeting with his friends in his bookshop to discuss possible further actions. Meeting after meeting, talking about their

²⁰ See *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione: Documenti, testimonianze e foto della rivoluzione omosessuale*, Mariasilvia Spolato ed. (Roma: Edizioni Samonà&Savelli, 1972), 117; Cohen, “Introduzione,” 23. For criticism against *Diario di un omosessuale* see also a letter written by a homosexual published in *Men*: “Lettera aperta al Dott. Dacquino-Salotto di Oscar W.,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, December 7, 1970, 48.

²¹ Letter sent to Alberto Ronchey – director of *La Stampa* – on April 28, 1971, FSP, AF, b. 184.

²² Letter of *La Stampa* sent on May 11, 1971, FSP, AF, b. 184.

personal distress, they understood that time had come to do something concrete. In May 1971 men and women coming from several Italian towns decided to create a national umbrella organization during an animated meeting at Fernanda Pivano's apartment in Milan. The Italian intellectual, who had recently come back from the United States where she had had the opportunity of observing closely the Gay Liberation Front, was convinced that the Italian homosexuals should – and could – do something analogous. The first meeting was followed by other gatherings in Milan, Rome, Turin, and Bologna aimed at laying the foundations of a united Italian homosexual movement.²³

Italian homosexual activists, while working at the creation of a national gay association, started planning the publication of a magazine where they could express their thoughts and ideas, and advocate their own rights. Although the creation of the new periodical seemed to be stuck, because of disagreements and conflicts with the homosexual group of Milan, the Italian magazine *Panorama* announced in June 1971 the forthcoming publication of *O* – presented as the first homosexual magazine ever published in Italy.²⁴ In the end the premiere issue of the new periodical – entitled *FUORI!* rather than *O* – was released in December 1971, the same month as the official foundation of the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano*.²⁵ As some activists recall: “The day when the premiere issue of *FUORI!* came from the printing press seemed to be a fundamental historical moment for us. We had created something that was completely ours, we had forged an instrument that would have allowed us to alter, if not interrupt, the oppressive system in which we lived. We

²³ See Collettivo redazionale, “2° editoriale: Quale movimento? Quale giornale?” *FUORI!*, January-February 1973, n. 7, 4; Cohen, “Introduzione,” 23-25; Angelo Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori. Un'autobiografia omosessuale* (Milano: Sperling&Kupfer, 1996), 52-53; Rossi Barili, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 48-50; Prearo, “La trajectoire révolutionnaire,” 81-92.

²⁴ “Per gli omosessuali un giornale tutto cultura,” *Panorama*, June 24, 1971, 67; letter from Bruno to Angelo Pezzana, June 29, 1971, FSP, AF, b. 188; letter of Angelo Pezzana to Massimo Consoli of August 31, 1971, ACS, AMC, b. 2, Corrispondenza Consoli-Privati 1970-1981, Angelo Pezzana; letter of Massimo to Angelo Pezzana on September 22, 1971, ACS, AMC, b. 2, Corrispondenza Consoli-Privati 1970-1981, Angelo Pezzana; letter signed “Il gruppo FUORI” sent to the “Gruppo di Milano” on October 24, 1971, FSP, AF, b. 240.

²⁵ See Stefania Jaconis, “Omosex alla luce del sole,” *Vie Nuove-Giorni*, December 29, 1971, 30-31; Vittorio Pescatori, “Le pantere verdi all'assalto,” *ABC*, December 24, 1971, 34-36; “Gli omosessuali rivoluzionari si organizzano nascono il FUORI e il FLO,” 10.

were sure about it and we were happy.”²⁶ The first issue of *FUORI!* – printed in a run of around 1,000 copies – was hand-delivered in places where homosexuals usually hung out.

The main goal of this first issue was to publicize the initiative and search for collaborators.

Pezzana, remembering this particular moment, wrote:

Just as left-wing activists distributed their leaflets and publications during demonstrations and in front of universities and factories, it seemed natural for us to search for our future advocates not only among our own friends scattered all over the country, but also in places where we knew we could find many potential readers: train stations, parks, public restrooms ... In the beginning we entered these places on tiptoes ... but, once our initial hesitations were overcome, we began approaching our future allies more casually ... giving them a copy of our magazine and briefly explaining our goals. The distribution of the magazine continued for about one month. We obtained an extraordinary result The need for a homosexual organization was clearly felt with great urgency People felt involved in a true liberation project, so much so that many, even though they disagreed with our approach, contacted us and told us that they were available to collaborate.²⁷

The newly formed FUORI began immediately to give concrete signs of its existence.

At the beginning of 1972 the police commissioner Giuseppe Montesano, alarmed by the alleged presence of too many transvestites hustling on the streets on Turin, launched his attack to confront the homosexual “emergency.” He closed down discos – such as *Le Roi* and the *Sharp-Club* – where homosexuals and transvestites hung out, and organized sting operations in the city center, in the *Parco del Valentino*, and in areas surrounding *Porta Nuova* – the main train station.²⁸ This offensive, according to the press, was justified by the dreadful state of Turin. The city, *ABC* bombastically claimed, had become “the world capital of homosexuality.” It was described by the tabloid not only as an enormous brothel “for invert, pimps, transvestites, and whores,” but also as a renowned market for Italian and foreign pedophiles.²⁹ In January and February 1972, while Montesano was trying to “mop up”

²⁶ Collettivo redazionale, “2° editoriale,” 4.

²⁷ Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 54-55. See also Letter of Pezzana to Massimo Consoli on October 1, 1971, ACS, AMC, b. 2, Corrispondenza Consoli-Privati 1970-1981, Angelo Pezzana; Prearo, “La trajectoire révolutionnaire,” 4.

²⁸ In the early 1970s the first night clubs for homosexuals began to open in Italy. In Rome Riccardo Peloso opened *Kitsch* – closed after six months by the police, *Le Garage* – closed after two months, and then the more fortunate *Superstar* – which was open for about ten years. Massimo Consoli opened in Rome *Il solito posto*. See Letizia Battaglia, “Un post in penombra vietato ai normali,” *ABC*, March 10, 1972, 30-32; Andrea Pini, *Quando eravamo froci. Gli omosessuali nell’Italia di una volta* (Rome: Il saggiatore, 2011), 104-112; 285-286.

²⁹ Cappato, “Mi chiamo Mario,” 36-39. See also “Fronte omosessuale. Torino: il sordido mercato della prostituzione maschile,” *La Stampa*, Febbraio 4, 1972, 3; “Due camion di travestiti,” *La Stampa*, February 5, 1972, 1,4; “La tricotante

the city, members of FUORI began to write on walls and monuments of Turin slogans such as “*Fronte omosessuale*” (Homosexual Front), “*Potere omosessuale*” (Homosexual Power), “*Omosessuali uniamoci*” (Homosexuals, let’s get together), and “*Anti-omosessualità=Repressione*” (Anti-homosexuality=Repression). Authorities read this reaction as an initiative carried out by the transvestites’ cartel, whereas media interpreted these writings as political statements of the burgeoning Italian homosexual movement. The Italian homosexuals, *La Stampa* maintained, defining themselves as “an oppressed minority,” were getting organized and were beginning to ask for real equality. *Cronaca* emphasized that homosexuals after decades of silence were ready to take action. *OS-Settimanale dei quattro sessi*, a pornographic magazine for heterosexuals, homosexuals, lesbians, and sadomasochists, wrote that this was only the beginning of the growing “homosexual guerrilla.”³⁰ *OS* was not mistaken. The writings on the walls of Turin were a minor initiative compared to the demonstration about to be organized in Sanremo in April 1972.

The protest originated in the already mentioned International Conference on Deviant Sexual Behaviors. The event, organized by the Catholic *Centro Italiano di Sessuologia* (Italian Centre for Sexology), saw the participation of 250 scholars coming from Italy and abroad.³¹ When FUORI learned about the organization of the conference, it invited gay groups from all over the world to come to Sanremo to protest against the pathologization and medicalization of homosexuals, and “explain” to psychotherapists and psychiatrists that homosexuals could not be “cured” resorting to hypnosis, electroconvulsive therapy, and

offesa di ‘Madame Royale’,” *La Stampa*, February 5, 1972, 4; “Nella Torino-pédé. Inchiesta sul ‘Fronte Omosessuale’,” *La Stampa*, February 9, 1972, 3; Carigli, “Le ‘madame’ contro i ‘madamin’,” 10-13.

³⁰ For the reaction of the police see communication of the Prefecture of Turin to the Ministry of Interior, March 18, 1972, ACS, MI, DGPS, DPAS, b. 620. For the reaction of the press see “I lettori ci scrivono-Omosessuali oppressi?” *La Stampa*, January 6, 1972, 5; Cappato, “Mi chiamo Mario,” 36-39; Leo Sandi, “Il Fronte Omosex,” *Cronaca*, February 26, 20-22; Guido Genovesi, “Guerriglia Omosex,” *OS*, February 26, 1972, 8-9; “Fronte omosessuale. Torino: il sordido mercato della prostituzione maschile,” “Dopo la retata, scritte ‘omosex’,” *La Stampa*, February 7, 1972, 4. In the early 1970s began the publication of porn magazines for homosexuals. Since July 1970 *Men* published more or less “censored” male nudes. In February 1971 *Le Ore* began the publication of a homosexual insert entitled *Extraora* which moved towards more daring homosexual images. *OS* published in 1971 male full frontals and homosexual porn photo stories. In 1972 the publishing house Edifumetto released *Rolando del Fico* – a homosexual comic for adults. The publication ended in 1973 after 14 issue.

³¹ For the conference see “Congresso internazionale su ‘Comportamenti devianti della sessualità umana’,” *Sessuologia*, no. 2 (1972): 119-124; *Comportamenti sessuali devianti. Atti del I Congresso Internazionale di Sessuologia promosso dal Centro Italiano di Sessuologia. Sanremo 1972* (Roma: Edizioni Minerva Medica, 1972).

reparative therapy because they were not sick. A few dozen male and female homosexuals from Turin, Rome, Milan, Paris, Brussels, London, Copenhagen, Germany and Norway began their public protest on April 5, 1972 – the very first day of the convention. Outside of the Sanremo Casino – where the conference took place – members of FUORI handed copies of the premiere issue of their magazine. Furthermore, together with representatives of other organizations, they distributed leaflets in Italian, French and English to everybody – even to nuns and priests going to the Conference, and welcomed speakers shouting “*Normali! Normali! Normali!*” – to underline the normalcy of their sexuality – and showing anti-homophobic placards that were quickly seized by the police. The bills sent clear messages to organizers and speakers: “Psychiatrists we are here to heal you,” “No one has the right to repress our sexuality,” “Sexual repression equals social repression,” “Homosexuals come out with pride,” “Homosexuality is wonderful,” “First and last Congress of sexphobia,” and “Psychiatrists, shove your electrodes into your own brains.” The police confiscated the protesters’ IDs and some of them were escorted to the police headquarters for further investigation. Journalists of the Italian TV, as activists of FUORI recalled, tried to interview them. But they refused to talk. They accused RAI of falsifying facts and ridiculing their demonstration. The homosexuals demonstrating in Sanremo declared that their cause was too serious to be mocked and used by insensitive Italian media.³²

³² See “Professori cattolici a convegno sull’omosessualità,” *Men-Sexy Mirror*, March 6, 1972, 2; E.B., “Saffo alza la voce,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 6, 1972, 19; E.B., “I gruppuscoli del ‘terzo sesso’,” *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 7, 1972, 4; Serini, “Sempre meglio deviante che psichiatra”; LF, “Un uomo vestito da donna gridava: ‘I migliori siamo noi!’,” *Novella 2000*, April 18, 1972, 86-87; “Associazioni omosessuali a congresso,” *Men-Sexy Mirror*, April 24, 1972, 5; Luigi Vacchi, “Omosessuali ma felici,” *Panorama*, April 20, 1972, 54-55; Silvia Galois, “Colpo ‘omo’ al Casino,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, May 8, 1972, 10-11; “Come si vince contro chi ci opprime,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, n. 1, 3; Alfredo Cohen, “L’omosessuale rivoluzionario presente al I Congresso Internazionale di Sessuologia a Sanremo,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, n. 1, 4-5; Anna Siciliano, “I cani da guardia del sistema,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, n. 3, 5.



Figures 5.6.-5.7. Gay protesters outside of the Casino. *Men*, May 8, 1972, 10-11.



Figure 5.8. Two French activists in Sanremo. *Men-Sexy Mirror*, April 24, 1972, 5.



Figure 5.9. Italian activists in Sanremo. “Homosexuals come out with pride” and “No one has the right to repress our sexuality.” *Panorama*, April 20, 1972, 55.



Figure 5.10. Members of IHR outside of the Casino. *Novella 2000*, April 18, 1972.



Figure 5.11. Activists trying to hand leaflets to nuns going to the Congress. *Novella 2000*, April 18, 1972.

Protesters were outside and inside the building. Some activists, who had surreptitiously registered to participate in the conference, were indeed able to make their voices heard. Pezzana proclaimed in his brief communication, entitled “Reasons to reject this conference,” that he was there as a man happy to be homosexual (“*Sono un omosessuale felice di esserlo*”), and as representative of FUORI. He accused speakers and organizers of being Catholic bigots, and he emphasized how they were scared of free and proud homosexuals because they knew that gay liberation would revolutionize the entire society, redefining family and gender roles and challenging the premises of capitalism in the process. During the second day, Françoise d’Eaubonne, one of the co-founders of FHAR, stepped on the podium and launched into a tirade against psychiatry and the imposition of fixed gender roles (Figure 5.12.). After four minutes she was silenced and expelled.³³



Figure 5.12. Françoise d’Eaubonne speaking at the Conference. *Men*, May 8, 1972, 10.

Alfredo Cohen described the demonstration of Sanremo in these terms: “first year, first day, First Fundamental Moment of our full, authentic, desired coming out.” And talking about the protesters confronting the conference delegates, Cohen continued: “Our imagination stood out against the walls of the Casino, against their cars, against their senility ... against

³³ Cohen, “Introduzione,” 21. See also “Come si vince contro chi ci opprime,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 3; “Ecco la dichiarazione del Gruppo al Congresso,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 6.

their smirks, against their snickers, against their idleness, against their Repression, against their Sexphobia, and against every rotten, moldy, and withered idea that was infecting their brains.” Men and women contesting sociologists, psychiatrists, and priests in the name of everybody’s liberation were – Cohen emphasized – free, proud, “joyfully young,” “pissed off,” and had “boundless and open minds.”³⁴ Sanremo was a moment of continuity and rupture. As I have underlined throughout my work many homosexuals have been resisting for decades. They resisted by cruising, getting together, searching for each other, falling in love, and writing letters to magazines and newspapers. But this was the first face-to-face protest against those who, considering homosexuality a disease, wanted homosexuals to be cured and repressed. The demonstration organized by FUORI was an action of public resistance where a group of homosexuals proudly showed their faces to cameras. It was the coming out of several men and women who wanted to end their state of subjection, and claim their right to full citizenship. Sanremo was the concrete expression of the vocal politicization of a group of Italian homosexuals who felt to belong to a community that – they thought – could be an engine of sexual, social, and political change for everybody.

The sabotage of the Congress publicized by magazines, newspapers, radio, and television made FUORI visible. For the first time, Italian media gave space to unusually proud homosexuals who, clenching fists, screaming and smiling, dared to proclaim that their homosexuality was beautiful, that their homosexuality was love.³⁵ “For us – Cohen explained – that morning [of April 5, 1972] had been a revolution. Slaves stopped waiting and broke their chains.”³⁶ After Sanremo, as Pezzana remembers, “it was a succession of interviews, letters, debates ... The acronym FUORI, maybe, was not particularly welcomed, but certainly

³⁴ Cohen, “L’omosessuale rivoluzionario presente al I Congresso Internazionale di Sessuologia,” 5.

³⁵ Cohen, “Introduzione,” 18, 23. In 1970 gay right activists had disrupted a convention of the American psychiatric association (APA) in San Francisco demanding to voice their opinion about homosexuality. We do not know if the Italian activists were inspired by such initiative. See Sarah Baughey-Gill, “When Gay Was Not Okay with the APA: A Historical Overview of Homosexuality and its Status as Mental Disorder,” *Occam’s Razor*, 1 (2011): 12; Lewis, “‘We are certain of Our Own Insanity,’” 83.

³⁶ Cohen, “Introduzione,” 20.

it began to be known.”³⁷ Some Italian homophiles condemned the protest, as the article published by Maurizio Bellotti in June 1972 in *Arcadie* seemed to suggest. In his piece, entitled “An Important Congress,” he praised the alleged “enlightened opinions” about homosexuality expressed by some of the speakers present at the Conference, and deplored instead the actions carried out by the activists of FUORI because, in his opinion, they attracted too much negative attention from the Italian media. He was afraid that gay extremist militancy could alienate respectable members of society.³⁸

This foundational event for the Italian gay movement, which involved the participation of many activists coming from abroad, had a rather transnational character. According to Dagmar Herzog, lesbian and gay liberation movements emerged in the early 1970s “often simultaneously and without initially knowing about each other’s existence.”³⁹ The history of FUORI – and same can be said about FHAR – does not seem to corroborate such an argument.⁴⁰ Italian homosexual activists, similarly to contemporary Italian feminists, took their cues from American and French publications, and by personal contacts with associations abroad.⁴¹ Moreover, from the mid-1960s to the early-1970s, the Italian press, which talked about homosexuals and homosexuality in other countries, turned out to be an important source of information for all those interested in learning more about queers and queer sexualities in Europe and in the US. The circulation of information from abroad was inspiring because it

³⁷ Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 101.

³⁸ See Rossi Barili, *Il movimento gay in Italia*, 57-58. See also Weeks, *Coming out*, 207.

³⁹ Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 168. See also, for the same argument, Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 264.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Marwick Arthur, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 730; Sibalis, “The Spirit of May ’68,” 244.

⁴¹ In the late 1960s-early 1970s Italian feminist groups were influenced by French and American feminisms. Italian women arranged events together with foreign feminist organizations. They read, discussed and translated book published abroad. Italian feminists began organizing consciousness raising groups following the American example. See, for example, Luisa Passerini, “Movimenti delle donne/movimenti del ’68,” in *Storie di donne e femministe*, Luisa Passerini ed. (Torino: Rosenberg&Sellier, 1991), 154; Id., “Per un’interpretazione del neofemminismo radicale,” in *Storie di donne e femministe*, 162-163, 167, 179; Bracke, *Women and the Revolution*, 64-65, 67-69, 134, 136, 211-212; Id., “Our Bodies, Ourselves,” 565-567, 569; Hajek, “A Room of One’s Own,” 86-88.

encouraged some Italian homosexuals to follow foreign examples.⁴² The foundation of FUORI was a consequence of the Italian social, cultural and political context, but it also depended on transnational impulses.⁴³ Pezzana, one of the most decisive catalysts for the emergence of the Italian gay liberation movement, was already well aware of the activities carried out by American and French homosexuals before the foundation of the Italian Homosexual Front. In one of his books he remembers how, as a young man, he crossed the border to buy the French homophile magazine *Arcadie* in the bookstores of the French Riviera. Moreover, he also recalls that his bookshop – opened in 1963 in Turin – became

⁴² See, for example, “L’omosessualità,” *Panorama*, September 1964, 56-64; Carlo Rovere, “I ‘capovolti’ in Germania: una grossa piaga sociale,” *ABC*, December 12, 1965, 34-35; Uberto Quintavalle, “Il vademecum del terzo sesso,” *ABC*, August 21, 1966, 19-20; “Il manuale del terzo sesso,” *ABC*, September 4, 1966, 2; Fulvio Grimaldi, “La dolce legge dei nipotini di Oscar Wilde,” *ABC*, October 30, 1966, 18-21; “I peccatori dell’Impero,” *L’Espresso*, March 6, 1966, 14-15; M.C., “Sodoma e Camorra,” *L’Espresso*, March 13, 1966, 5; Salvo Mazzolini, “La giungla del Terzo Sesso,” *L’Espresso*, June 5, 1966, 9; Alessandro Mossotti, “Tollerati e felici. I venti milioni di ‘gay’ degli Stati Uniti,” *ABC*, March 19, 1967, 20; Benny Jeangold, “Una sposa di nome Harry,” *ABC*, July 23, 1967, 12; M.T., “Il matrimonio delle ‘checche’,” *Il Borghese*, July 13, 1967, 620; Benito Manocchia, “Controlleremo la Casa Bianca,” *ABC*, December 24, 1967, 26-27; Bruce Phinton, “Omossessuali di tutta l’America unitevi contro il clan Kennedy,” *ABC*, May 5, 1968, 32-33; Arthur Mott, “Sposiamoci Fratello,” *ABC*, August 11, 1968, 74-75; Francesco Russo, “I sette arditi di Amsterdam,” *L’Espresso*, August 18, 1968, 17; “L’omosessuale è un malato che lo psicanalista può guarire,” *Panorama*, August 29, 1968, 35; “Noi omossessuali,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, November 25, 1968, 2; Giancarlo Marmorì, “Il terzo sesso ringrazia commosso,” *L’Espresso*, January 5, 1969, 14-15; “Omossessuali al bando,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, January 20, 1969, 2; Luciana Zanuccoli, “Gli omossessuali olandesi sono riuniti a congresso,” *La Nazione*, May 4, 1969, 3; Luciana Zanuccoli, “Ballano fra loro e si baciano al circolo degli omossessuali,” *La Nazione*, May 8, 1969, 3; “Con la riforma del codice nessuna pena per gli omossessuali,” *Panorama*, May 29, 1969, 44-45; “L’Olanda è vicina,” *Il Borghese*, June 12, 1969, 376; Raimondo Franchetti, “C’è un uomo nel letto di papà,” *ABC*, May 16, 1969, 18-19; Mary Hudson, “Un cervello elettronico per accoppiare i viziosi,” *ABC*, June 20, 1969, 75; Peter Kolosimo, “Guida all’omosessualità,” *Cronaca*, July 5, 1969, 16-19; Kitty Fargo, “Omossessuali: Oggi sposi,” *Cronaca*, April 4, 1970, 21-22; Giò Stajano, “Riservato ad omosex,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, June 15, 1970, 20-21; “Perché ci odi America,” *ABC*, July 24, 1970, 24-27; Marta Wengi, “L’offensiva anormale,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, July 27, 1970, 8-9; “La marcia del terzo sesso,” *Vie Nuove*, August 30, 1970, 7; P.K., “Pederasti in Parlamento,” *Cronaca*, September 26, 1970, 14-15; “La terza parrocchia,” *Panorama*, January 28, 1971, 47-48; Merle Miller, “Essere omossessuale,” *Panorama*, March 25, 1971, 86-92; Massimo Cervi, “Omossessuali in TV,” *ABC*, June 4, 1971, 41-43; Neri dal Verme, “Tra i formaggi e i tulipani anche un ‘omo’ ci sta bene,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, September 13, 1971, 12-13; Neri dal Verme, “I caporali di nottata,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, October 4, 1971, 12-13; Vittorio Pescatori, “Le pantere verdi all’assalto,” *ABC*, December 24, 1971, 34-36; “Biglietti di auguri per gli omosex,” *Sexy Mirror-Men*, January 3, 1972, 10; “New York-Manifesti speciali per omossessuali e lesbiche,” *Men-Sex Mirror*, January 10, 1972, 10; Neri dal Verme, “Fiocco verde sulla Torre Eiffel,” *Men. Il settimanale degli uomini*, March 13, 1972, 18-19; “Il mondo alla rovescia,” *OS*, March 14, 1972, 5; Gianluigi Radaelli, “Unione d’amore-Unione di pace,” *OS*, March 14, 1972, 8-9; George Reynolds, “Omosex senza complessi,” *OS*, March 14, 1972, 10-13; “Matrimoni per soli uomini,” *Vie Nuove-Giorni*, March 15, 1972, 10; “A Dio piacciono così,” *L’Espresso*, April 30, 1972, 11.

⁴³ Members of FUORI and Pezzana were not alone in pursuing international connections. The emergence of a homosexual international network depended also on the activities carried out by Massimo Consoli and Maria Silvia Spolato. The latter, founder in August 1971 of the Roman *Fronte di Liberazione Omossessuale* (Homosexual Liberation Front-FLO), discovered the existence of FUORI in France when members of her organization and members of the *Fronte Unitario* met at a gathering organized by FHAR. That meeting was the beginning of their collaboration and of their later merger. Consoli lived in the Netherlands between 1970 and 1971. Here he wrote together with Dario Bellezza, Françoise D’Eaubonne, Pierre Hahn (both members of FHAR) and Maurizio Bellotti (author of the column *Nouvelle d’Italie* in *Arcadie*) the *Manifesto per la rivoluzione morale: l’omosessualità rivoluzionaria* (Manifesto for the Moral Revolution: Revolutionary Homosexuality). Moreover, Consoli collaborated with the Danish homosexual magazine *UNI* and with the Swedish *Viking*. *UNI* had an entire section in Italian and, according to Consoli, the magazine also had many Italian subscribers. See Daniele Scalise, *Cose dell’altro mondo. Viaggio nell’Italia gay* (Milano: Zelig Editore, 1996), 33 and Spolato, *I movimenti omossessuali di liberazione*, 117-118, 128. For the international initiatives of Consoli see also, for example, Massimo Consoli’s letter to the director of *ABC*, October 9, 1970, ACS, AMC, b. 3, Corrispondenza Consoli-Testate 1970-1980, *ABC*; Massimo Consoli’s letters to Angelo Pezzana on September 22, 1971, October 5, 1971 and October 11, 1971, ACS, AMC, b. 2, Corrispondenza Consoli-Privati 1970-1981, Angelo Pezzana.

immediately a reference point for all those interested in Anglo-American books and “alternative” publications. Reading the American gay magazines displayed and sold in his bookshop, such as Winston Leyland’s *Gay Sunshine*, Pezzana started wondering why in Italy there was no homosexual movement. It was in particular the “flux of information” coming from the US that made him realize the necessity of “direct political intervention.”⁴⁴ Foreigners played a role in inspiring Pezzana’s political action, and foreigners contributed to the success of the demonstration in Sanremo, where Italians protested together with representatives of FHAR, MHAR, British GLF and IHR (*Internationale Homosexuelle Révolutionnaire*).⁴⁵ Physical and intellectual transnational encounters fostered ideological cross-fertilizations and produced political actions. Mario Mieli was an example of such “transnational gayness.” In London, where he was studying, he came in contact with the British Gay Liberation Front. He became an activist in this organization, and was sent to Sanremo as its representative (Figures 5.13.-5.14.). The time spent in Britain was a formative experience for Mieli, who in the following years, once back in Milan, became one of the most important radical figures of the Italian gay movement.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See letter exchange between Winston Leyland and Angelo Pezzana in FSP, AF, b. 176. See also Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 17, 29-30, 50 and Scalise, *Cose dell’altro mondo*, 27.

⁴⁵ For IHR see Mariasilvia Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 152-157. The IHR, founded immediately before the Conference of Sanremo, was a transnational gay organization gathering several European homosexual Fronts and Movements. However, after the demonstrations in Italy in 1972, it never really got off the ground. See Paul Borghs, “The Gay and Lesbian Movement in Belgium from the 1950s to the Present,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 3 (2016): 39-40. Seemingly the tensions between revolutionary gays and more conservative homophiles caused the failure of IHR. See for these tensions Alfredo Cohen, Angelo Pezzana, “Ahrus, Danimarca. Sex Festival. 1° incontro internazionale omosessuale. 9, 10, 11 settembre,” *FUORI!*, October 1972, no. 4, 3-4; IHR, “Incontro degli omosessuali per una tecnica di autodifesa,” *FUORI!*, October 1972, no. 4, 5-6.

⁴⁶ See Collettivo Fuori, “Come si vince contro chi ci opprime,” 61-65; Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 118-119; Cohen, “Introduzione,” 21; Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 99-100; Prearo, “La trajectoire révolutionnaire,” 4; Ravasi, “*Lotta dura contro natura*,” 19-20. The International relations of FUORI continued after Sanremo. See, for example, Cohen and Pezzana, “Ahrus, Danimarca. Sex Festival. 1° incontro internazionale omosessuale,” 3-4; “Vogliono stare fuori,” *Panorama*, October 26, 1972, 39; “Processo alla società maschile-Milano-Incontro-scontro tra femministe e omosessuali,” *FUORI!*, November 1972, n. 5, 2-3; Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 124; Pezzana, *Dentro e Fuori*, 72-73, 75, 78. See letter sent by COC to Pezzana on October 18, 1972, FSP, AFSP, b. 319; letter exchange between Angelo Pezzana and Michael Holm, director of the Swedish magazine *Revolt* in 1972, FSP, AF, b. 177; letter exchange between Angelo Pezzana and Jerald Moldenhauer of *The Body Politic* in 1972, FSP, AF, b. 178. *FUORI!* published translations of foreign articles and short essays: see, for example, Martha Shelley, “Non vi permetteremo più,” *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 10 (translation of *Gay is good*); Ralph S. Schaffer, “La perversione eterosessuale,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 9 (translation of an article originally published in *Gay Sunshine*); Guy Hocquenghem, “L’importante è raccontarsi,” *FUORI!*, November 1972, no. 5, 8-10. *FUORI!* published information about activities carried out abroad by other organizations: see Eckart Ranke, “Due corrispondenze dalla Germania,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 14-15; Mario Mieli, “London Gay Liberation Front, Angry Brigade, Piume & Paillettes,” *FUORI!*, November 1972, no. 5, 5-6; Pierre Hahn, “La repressione in Francia,” *FUORI!*, December 1972, no. 6, 9-15.



Figure 5.13. Mario Mieli. *Novella* 2000, April 18, 1972.



Figure 5.14. Mario Mieli. *FUORI!*, June, 1972.

The importance given to transnationality by *FUORI!* is also exemplified by one of its first publications. In 1972 Maria Silvia Spolato – a member of the Roman chapter of the organization – edited a book entitled *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione: documenti, testimonianze e foto della rivoluzione omosessuale* (The Homosexual Liberation Movements: Documents, Testimonies and Photographs of the Homosexual Revolution) in which she talked about the creation of the Homosexual International (IHR), showcased several documents produced by the Gay Liberation Front (US and UK), the Black Panthers, and the French FHAR, and publicized useful addresses of Italian and foreign homosexual groups.⁴⁷ In her introduction to the volume Spolato emphasized how, in spite of mail difficulties, gay organizations all over the world were making an effort to exchange magazines, flyers, and cyclostyles. And she underlined how often such exchanges depended on enthusiastic activists who, travelling from one place to another, had played – and continued to play – a significant role in gay liberation.⁴⁸

The First Italian Homosexual Periodical: *FUORI!*

In June 1972 – two months after Sanremo – the number one issue of *FUORI!* was officially released. The periodical was sold at newsstands and in left-wing alternative bookshops.

⁴⁷ See Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 9-116 (GLF, FHAR), 152-157 (IHR), 159 (addresses of homosexual organizations). For the book see also Della Vida, Pezzana, “L’informazione manipolata,” 6.

⁴⁸ Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 15.

FUORI! was self-financed, therefore the editorial staff tried to promote annual subscriptions.

The magazine was able to reach a rather widespread distribution, but after the first year publication became rather irregular because of lack of funding.⁴⁹



Figures 5.15.-5.17. Back covers of the issues of *FUORI!* number 3, 4 and 5. The editorial staff of the magazine underlined in all of them that they needed subscribers. The back cover of the number 5 (right) sounded rather emphatic: “We ask everyone who shares the ideas of this magazine to subscribe. We desperately need money. If you cannot buy a subscription (and we understand why) send money anyway. Only with your help we will be able to go on. The next issue will be special: it will have more pages, it will cost a little bit more (500 lire), but just for this issue, and it will be on sale on December 20. We ask you to buy two copies. You will help us with the distribution and you will be able to give your extra copy to somebody who does not know about our magazine yet – Please, do it!”

FUORI! circulated information, built and reinforced networks among homosexuals, lesbians and transvestites, emphasized the necessity of carrying out a sexual, cultural and political revolution, advertised helpful contact information, publicized events, announced the foundation of new chapters of the Italian Homosexual Front, and gave space to readers’ letters.⁵⁰ *FUORI!* wanted to create and sustain an imagined community, and wanted its readers to consider themselves as part of a larger gay entity.⁵¹

To launch the first issue of *FUORI!* the Italian Homosexual Front organized a press conference in Rome. On this occasion the activists stressed how this new publication would

⁴⁹ The last issue of the periodical – the number 32 – was released in April 1982, a few months after the dissolution of the *Fronte*.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 15; *FUORI!*, July-August 1972, no. 2, 19; *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 19; *FUORI!*, October 1972, no. 4, 19; *FUORI!*, November 1972, no. 5, 18-19; *FUORI!*, December 1972, no. 6, 19-20, 23. Letters sent to *FUORI!*, for example, from Agrigento (September 29, 1972, FSP, AF, b. 190) and from Trieste (August 15, 1972, FSP, AF, b. 190) showed that it was possible to find the magazine in both Northern and Southern Italy.

⁵¹ Angelo Pezzana, “Chi parla per gli omosessuali?” *FUORI!*, June 1972, no. 1, 2.

allow Italian homosexuals to finally speak for themselves.⁵² Pezzana, in the first opinion editorial published by *FUORI!*, reiterated that with this new magazine Italian homosexuals were becoming protagonists of their own story. They were going to talk about themselves, and they were going to become active voices in the production of their own narratives. By doing so they were contrasting the commercial exploitation carried out by magazines and newspapers that had been capitalizing for decades on their defamation.⁵³ “None of the shitty magazines who treat us as lab rats” Pezzana explained, “will tell us anymore who we are and how we are. The great awakening of homosexuals has begun. In the past it has been the turn of others, such as Jews and Blacks (do you remember?). Now it is ours. And the awakening will be immediate, contagious and wonderful.”⁵⁴

Browsing the letters sent by some readers to *FUORI!* it is evident how they were excited about finally having “their own” magazine. G.A. wrote to the editorial staff a heartfelt letter expressing all his gratitude: “Dear friends of *FUORI!*, I am a homosexual man from

⁵² Donata Aphil, “Anche gli omosessuali si battono per la libertà,” *Il Tempo*, June 29, 1972; Gianni Sarrocco, “Anche per gli omosessuali ci deve essere la rivoluzione,” *Il Giornale d’Italia*, June 29, 1972.

⁵³ Already in the 1950s Bernardino del Boca di Villaregia had tried unsuccessfully to publish the first Italian homophile magazine: *Tages* (see the letter exchange with Welti in SAZ, Ar. 36.38.7, NW, 1.4.2.3. and SAZ, Ar. 36.38.7, NW, 1.4.2.4. For *Tages* see also interview of del Boca with Enzo Cucco, July 16, 1984, ASP, AFSP, b. 463, and “Come eravamo. Intervista a Bernardino del Boca a cura di Giovanni dall’Orto,” *Babilonia*, November 1987, 14-16). Gioacchina Stajano (Giò Stajano pursued sex reassignment surgery in 1983) underlined in an interview of 2006 that she did not support magazines for homosexuals only. She defined them “periodicals of the gay ghetto,” and she explained that only magazines for a general audience could actually make a difference. Reading tabloids such as *Men* the Italians were able to get used to homosexuals and homosexuality. A “piece of paper” for “insiders only,” she argued, was destined to be rather inconsequential, because it was not talking to the Italian society generally but to the members of the gay world only. See Pini, *Quando eravamo froci*, 349.

⁵⁴ Pezzana, “Chi parla per gli omosessuali?” 2. Pezzana, reader of American essays and books, probably did not make reference to Jews and Blacks accidentally. The presence of this two groups in his first article published by *FUORI!* – and also in his letter sent to *La Stampa* in April 1971 – was a consequence of transnational cultural transfers. He presumably knew Daniel Webster Cory’s *The Homosexual Minority in America* (1951) – where homosexuals were presented as a minority along the same line as “Jews and Negroes,” as well as Carl Wittman’s *Gay Manifesto* (1969) and Huey Newton’s letter “To the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters” (1970) – both about the common battle of blacks and gays. In addition, *Gay Sunshine*, one of the periodicals Pezzana sold in his bookshop, often talked about the collaboration between Gay Liberation and Black Panthers in the Bay area (for the relationship between Gay Liberation and Black Panther Party see, for example, Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries,” 108, 125-126; Kevin J. Mumford, “The Trouble with Gay Rights: Race and the Politics of Sexual Orientation in Philadelphia, 1969-1982,” *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (2011): 49-72; Ronald K. Porter, “A Rainbow in Black: The Gay Politics of the Black Panther Party,” *Counterpoints*, 367 (2012): 364-375; Hobson, *Lavender and Red*, 17-41; Strub, “Gay Liberation,” 82-94; Jared Leighton, “‘All of Us Are Unapprehended Felons’: Gay Liberation, the Black Panther Party, and Intercommunal Efforts Against Police Brutality in the Bay Area,” *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 3 (2019): 860-885. For Cory, Wittman and Newton see Mumford, “The Trouble with Gay Rights,” 52-54; Leighton, “‘All of Us Are Unapprehended Felons,’” 864, 866. For the translation into Italian of Wittman and Newton see Spolato, *I movimenti omosessuali di liberazione*, 22-43 and 63-67. For *Gay Sunshine* and collaboration with Afro-American in the Bay Area see Leighton, “‘All of Us Are Unapprehended Felons,’” 862, 866, 870, 871). Also another important member of *FUORI!* talked about Jews and homosexuals. Mario Mieli, comparing and contrasting the “Jewish ghetto” with the “homosexual ghetto,” emphasized similarities and differences between the forms of discrimination that these two marginal groups had experienced and were still experiencing (see Mario Mieli, “Per la critica della questione omosessuale,” *FUORI!*, no. 3 (1972): 1-2).

Florence who bought your magazine today. Believe me, for me today it is the happiest of days, seeing that finally someone had decided to do something to unite us and fight against this dirty society Let's keep fighting together." A reader from Milan wrote: "Dearest comrades, I cannot express how enthusiastic I am after having learned that in the end we have our own periodical too."⁵⁵ And another man from Rome sent a short note underlining: "I discovered your magazine *FUORI!* by chance ... and after having read it in one go I want to tell you: BRAVI! BRAVISSIMI! GO *FUORI!*."⁵⁶ In the end Monica Galdino Giansanti, a transvestite from Ancona, showed her unconditional support underscoring: "Dear brothers and sisters of *FUORI!* I write full of joy because finally we have a magazine all for us and, for this reason, I thank you Committed homosexuals from all over Italy, bisexuals, transvestites, lesbians, let's get together! ... Let's meet up, let's come together thanks to *FUORI!*, let's not allow bunglers to organize conferences: let's be the ones organizing them! Let's collaborate in the distribution of the magazine I will always be ready to do whatever it takes for our just cause."⁵⁷

The Italian Homosexual Front, probably under the influence of its most radical representatives, was especially adamant in resisting all those initiatives aimed at despoiling homosexuality of its revolutionary character, and turning it into a business. Part of the "bourgeois society," according to *FUORI!*, had reached such a degree of "repressive tolerance" that it was ready to accept homosexuals as long as they gave up their revolutionary battle, and as long as they became pawns of capitalism, porn industry, and fashion. Periodicals such as *Men* and *OS* were an example of such trend. Both magazines were playing an essential role in the circulation of sex-positive discourses, by giving voice to homosexual readers in their advice columns and promoting the initiatives of the Italian Homosexual Front.

⁵⁵ See, example, *FUORI!*, September 1972, no. 3, 19.

⁵⁶ See *FUORI!*, November 1972, no. 5, 18.

⁵⁷ Monica Galdino Giansanti, "Travestirsi e fare la rivoluzione," *FUORI!*, October 1972, no. 4, 13. Monica Galdino Giansanti ended up being a permanent member of the editorial staff of the magazine ("2° editoriale," 5).

However, according to *FUORI!*, they were false allies that talked about homosexuality only for the sake of profits.⁵⁸ Accepting such conditions – *FUORI!* argued – homosexuals would be assimilated into the “universal factory where everything was continuously bought, sold and consumed.” They would become “gears of the Big Capitalist Machine.” And, by accepting this compromise, they would be definitively “castrated,” losing their identity and their revolutionary power.⁵⁹ The activists of the Italian Homosexual Front – worried about the capacity of popular magazines and newspapers to co-opt and misinterpret the homosexual movement – tried to boycott the mainstream media in favor of DIY alternative initiatives. *FUORI!* was for Italian homosexuals an instrument to cover events and issues that were distorted and marginalized. It was an instrument to resist, share information, and express opinions without being subjected to the gatekeepers of for-profit media.⁶⁰

FUORI! took a stand against popular media, but most people acquired information through those outlets. By means of newspapers, magazines, and tabloids “the exotic world of

⁵⁸ Mauro Bertocchi, “Le false immagini,” *FUORI!*, December 1972, no. 6, 3-4. Stajano, remembering her experience working for *Men*, underlined how the owner of the magazine – Saro Balsamo – decided to talk about homosexuals to increase the circulation of his publication. Balsamo was aware that Italians liked reading about sexual “deviant” behaviors (see Pini, *Quando eravamo froci*, 343). Between 1972 and 1973 other homosexual magazines appeared on the market. *Homo, Homo Sex, Sexy Homo, Super Homo* talked about homosexual liberation, but they were certainly more oriented to mainstream and porn than *FUORI!*.

⁵⁹ Bertocchi, “Le false immagini,” 4. For anti-commercial attitudes in 1970s-1980s gay communities see, for example, Weeks, *Coming out*, 193-194; Jon Binnie, “Trading places: Consumption, sexuality and the production of queer space,” in *Mapping desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, David Bell and Gill Valentine eds. (London: Routledge, 1995), 182-199; Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries,” 120; Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist and Klara Arnberg, “Ambivalent Spaces—The Emergence of a New Gay Male Norm Situated Between Notions of the Commercial and the Political in the Swedish Gay Press, 1969–1986,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, no. 6 (2015): 763-781.

⁶⁰ For the importance given by social movements to the creation of independent newsletters, magazines and zines see, for example, Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women’s Liberation* (New York: David McKay Company, 1975), 111-116; Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber&Faber, 1995); Kissack, “Freaking Fag Revolutionaries,” 117-118; Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground. Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (New York: Verso, 1997); Kate Adams, “Built Out of Books,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, no. 3-4 (1998): 113-141; Melanie A. Ferris, “Resisting mainstream media: girls and the act of making zines,” *Canadian Woman Studies*, Winter/Spring (2001): 51-55; Diane Richardson, “Extending Citizenship: Cultural Citizenship and Sexuality,” in *Culture and Citizenship*, Nick Stevenson ed. (London: Sage, 2001): 153-166; Kristen Schilt, “‘I’ll Resist with Every Inch and Every Breath’: Girls and Zine Making as a Form of Resistance,” *Youth and Society*, no. 1 (2003): 71-97; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired. Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 201-250; Stefanie Snider, “Revisioning Fat Lesbian Subjects in Contemporary Lesbian Periodicals,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, no. 2-3 (2010): 174-184; Anna Feigenbaum, “Written in the Mud,” *Feminist Media Studies*, no. 1 (2013): 1-13; Cait McKinney, “Newsletter networks in the feminist history and archives movement,” *Feminist Theory*, no. 3 (2015): 309-328; Julie R. Enszer, “‘Fighting to create and maintain our own Black women’s culture’: Conditions Magazine, 1977–1990,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism*, no. 2 (2015): 160-176; Julie R. Enszer, “Night Heron Press and Lesbian Print Culture in North Carolina, 1976–1983,” *Southern Cultures*, no. 2 (2015): 43-56; Michelle Kempson, “‘My Version of Feminism’: Subjectivity, DIY and the Feminist Zine,” *Social Movement Studies*, no. 4 (2015): 459-472; Agatha Beins, *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Heidy Berthoud, “My Life as a ‘Like-Minded Misfit,’ or, Experiences in Zine Librarianship,” *Serials Review*, no. 1 (2018): 4-12.

bohemia” went out to the masses, and thanks to the same media – as we have seen throughout my work – the masses discovered alternative cultures.⁶¹ Niche and mainstream venues were interlaced, and the Italian Homosexual Front was aware of it, as the advertisement published on June 25, 1972 by *L’Espresso* seems to suggest (Figure 5.18.).



Figure 5.18. Advertisement of *FUORI!* published in *L’Espresso* on June 25, 1972: “Are you ready for what we want to tell you? For the first time in Italy there is a political monthly devoted to sexual liberation.

***Fuori!* in newsstands and bookshops starting June 20. A magazine by the Italian Revolutionary Homosexual United Front”**

The Italian Homosexual Front wanted to be known by a larger public, and it certainly benefited from all the media that, by “advertising” its initiatives, activities, and goals, promoted the organization and its periodical.⁶² However, it did not want to be manipulated or used. When the Dutch artist Peter Boom released his record at the same time as the publication of issue number one of *FUORI!*, the magazine *L’Espresso* publicized his two songs *Lui ama lui* (He loves him) and *Fuori*. The latter song was presented by *L’Espresso* as

⁶¹ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 165.

⁶² Some men sent letter to *FUORI* explicitly saying that they had learned about the organization and the magazine through *Men* and *L’Espresso*. See, for example, letters of G.T. to *FUORI*, June 14, 1972, letter of Fabrizio M. to *FUORI*, June 23, 1972, letter of *FUORI* to G.T., June 30, 1972, letter of G.T. to *FUORI*, July 12, 1972, letter of G.M. to *FUORI*, August 19, 1972, letter of A.G. to *FUORI*, August 21, 1972, letter from *FUORI* to Pietro P., October 2, 1972 (FSP, AF, b. 190) and letter to Fabrizio from *FUORI*, June 30, 1972 (FSP, AF, b. 189)

the official anthem of the Italian Homosexual Front.⁶³ The article provoked an irritated reaction from Pezzana. In a note to the magazine he disassociated his organization from the Dutch singer, and explained that Boom was not singing in the name of FUORI but for himself. Asking *L'Espresso* to rectify the inaccurate information Pezzana concluded his letter emphasizing that *FUORI!* was the only instrument of political expression of the *Fronte*, and “the one and only mouthpiece of the movement.”⁶⁴



Figure 5.19. The magazine *OS* publicized FUORI and Peter Boom with a series of pictures representing the Dutch singer as Jesus Christ. The magazine wanted to show how homosexuals were suffering because of widespread homophobia. Boom was supposed to embody an entire category of people crucified, laughed at, and forced to hide. Such initiatives were not viewed highly by the Italian Homosexual Front because, even if useful in advertising their goals and activities, they exploited homosexuals for the sake of profits (*OS*, July 14, 1972, 10).

The activists of the newborn Italian gay movement felt the urgency of presenting their “truthful” image of homosexuals and homosexuality without clichéd representations nurtured by decades of homophobia. They wanted to own their image and manufacture their own identity. They wanted to resist misrepresentations and tell their own version of the story. The best way to achieve this goal, they realized, was having an apparatus to communicate to the rest of the world their “truths.”⁶⁵ This necessity of talking to homosexuals and non-

⁶³ “Un disco anche per loro,” *Espresso*, June 25, 1972, 21. See also “Fior di Pisello antifascista,” *Il Borghese*, July 9, 1972, 633-637; Marialivia Romualdi, “Una canzone e tanto amore,” *OS*, July 14, 1972, 10-13; “Omosex a 45 giri,” *Sexy Mirror-Men*, October 30, 1972, 20. The lyrics of *Lui ama lui* are: “I love him-He loves me-Society says no-But we don’t care-Because love-Is the strongest thing-In the world. Yes, yes!-My father said: Woe betide-My mother sobbed-They cannot understand-That love is not to have children-Pure love- Is caring for him-With joy-In my heart-Yes, yes!” The lyrics of *Fuori* are: “We come out-And we say to the world with pride-We are homosexual-And we are happy that we can love like this-Hypocrisy go away-We come out gaily-And we want freedom to love-Homosexuals-Are many in the world-You cannot count them-We are revolutionary-We decide what to do with our own bodies-Go away phallocracy-Go away oppression-We will shout together-Down with this fake society.”

⁶⁴ Letter signed by Angelo Pezzana for FUORI sent to *L'Espresso*, June 23, 1972, FSP, AF, box 184; “Io amo lui e loro protestano,” *L'Espresso*, July 16, 1972, 21.

⁶⁵ Della Vida, Pezzana, “L’informazione manipolata,” 6; Cohen, Pezzana, “Ahrus, Danimarca. Sex Festival. 1° incontro internazionale omosessuale,” 3-4. FUORI and other organizations criticized Rosa von Praunheim’s *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* (1971) because, they argued, “in this film the homosexual conforms with

homosexuals pushed the Front to pay particular attention to the magazine and its expansion.⁶⁶ Three months after the publication of the first issue, the editorial staff of *FUORI!* wrote that many male and female homosexual comrades, victims of homophobic repression all over the peninsula, had found in the magazine “their own instrument of expression and information, the means to carry out a fight that would be harder and harder, and more and more strenuous.” *FUORI!* was “an incentive to break with a past and a present made of fear and misery.” Finally, the editorial staff underlined, “we, the homosexuals, speak for ourselves. We, thanks to the movement, lead our own battle.”⁶⁷ The association and the periodical were political and identitarian instruments to resist, proclaim the existence of a community, oppose self-victimization, and fight for recognition. For the activists of the Italian Homosexual Front having an independent magazine meant contrasting all those who for decades had used queer experiences, lives, and stories as commodities to be sold. They did not want to be products for sale on the editorial market, but active subjects able to make their voices heard. They wanted to overrule the authority and expertise of doctors and therapists, and they wanted to deprive the “narrating class” – formed above all by journalists, academics, and psychiatrists – of their discursive power.⁶⁸

The Italian gays and lesbians of *FUORI* embraced their identities, while writing and talking about themselves and their own experiences. As Pezzana stressed one year after Sanremo, Italian homosexuals had made one big mistake in the previous decades: they had been waiting for someone to speak for them. However, they learned that that would not happen and realized that it was time for them to talk. Pezzana, emphasizing this point further, wrote: “I will never allow, from now on, anybody to talk about my homosexuality, which is my skin, my body. I am the one who will set my homosexuality free, other people will never

the bourgeois stereotype that all liberation movements reject.” See “Dichiarazione solidale dei Gruppi *FUORI*, *FHAR*, *MHAR*, *IHR* contro la presentazione di un film realizzato dall’*HAW* di Berlino,” *FUORI!*, October 1972, n. 4, 5.

⁶⁶ “2° editoriale,” 4-5.

⁶⁷ Collettivo Redazionale, “Editoriale,” *FUORI!*, September 1972, n. 3, 18-19.

⁶⁸ For the concept of “narrating class” see Nadine Hubbs, *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music* (Oakland-CA: University of California Press, 2014), 32-39.

do it.”⁶⁹ Activists of FUORI and their supporters asserted that they were going to be the main protagonists of their own lives and that they would fight against stigmatization and marginalization. They opposed the ways in which media, through sensationalistic scandals, manipulated and capitalized on the personal stories of gays, lesbians and transvestites. The periodical of the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* described homosexuality as a joyful explosion of juvenile enthusiasm, invited homosexuals to make love instead of paying for sex, and contrasted the image of the homosexual as a youth corruptor with the image of the homosexual as a young and committed political activist fighting for sexual freedom and sexual equality (Figure 5.20).⁷⁰



Figure 5.20. Cover of the first issue of *FUORI!* Italian gay and lesbian activists wanted to present homosexuality as joyful, cheerful and young (December 1971).

FUORI deployed an overtly anti-capitalist, anti-racist and communitarian language in order to show its intention of being as inclusive as possible, but it is undeniable that its leading voices often ended up monopolizing discourses and presenting their experiences as relatable to every member of the “community.” The *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* ended up simplifying complexities, often effacing individual identities.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Angelo Pezzana, “Contro Reich,” *FUORI!*, Winter 1973, no. 11, 3.

⁷⁰ See “Lettere a FUORI,” *FUORI!*, October 1972, n. 4, 11.

⁷¹ For FUORI as an elitist movement see Prearo, “Elementi di critica della liberazione omosessuale,” 261-264.

Conclusion

Like the liberal and Fascist regimes, the Italian democratic republic did not criminalize homosexuality, while still stigmatizing same-sex behaviors and queer identities. However, unlike the Fascist media, post-war magazines and newspapers gave novel visibility to homosexuality and male prostitution, its inseparable companion. Homosexual men were presented as public enemies, counter-models, psychopaths, child molesters, and anti-citizens. The moral panic generated in the 1940s by sensationalist articles reinforced heteronormativity, nurtured fears about the “homosexual contagion,” and denied the full citizenship of homosexuals. But moral panic also displayed and publicized “sexual deviants” and “sexual deviations” in new ways.

In the 1950s, as a result of national and international changes, homosexual behavior began to be more severely policed. Homosexuals were depicted as risk factors not only for the young generations but also, more generally, for the well-being of the new Italian democracy. Nonetheless, the moralization battle carried out against Italian homosexuals by tabloids and the Italian police prompted the emergence of *reverse discourses* that solicited the legitimization of homosexual identities and same-sex behaviors. A new wave of scandals, including Konstantin Feile’s “call boys,” *Balletti Verdi*, and the murder of Norman Donges, ushered in the 1960s – a decade marked by the redefinition of social, cultural, and economic structures. The reconfiguration of Italian masculinities after the closure of the state-licensed brothels exacerbated fears of homosexual epidemics, while media and political parties fomented anti-homosexual crusades. Over the course of the 1960s homosexuals continued to be represented as deplorable and evil, as youth corruptors, and as enemies of Italy’s “racial

integrity.” Fascism was not a parenthesis after all. Letters to the editor in magazines and newspapers became simultaneously spaces for acrimonious anti-homosexual rants and an opportunity for many homosexuals to make their voices heard. The mediatization of same-sex scandals peaked in the 1960s, making homosexuality more worrisome than before but also more intelligible to many Italians.

The last years of the decade were characterized by an acceleration of the “sexual (r)evolution” but also by sexual conservatism. Reactionaries, presenting themselves as champions of family values and as youth protectors, emphasized the dangers of sexual emancipation. Furthermore, capitalizing on Aldo Braibanti’s trials and the murder of Ermanno Lavorini, conservative forces instigated a new anti-homosexual panic that caused apprehension about sexual practices and gender dynamics. Most Italian magazines and newspapers once again exonerated young hustlers as victims of depraved degenerates, while condemning homosexuals with the blessing of many of their readers, who did not consider queer individuals as their equals and called for their legal prosecution. But the anti-homosexual witch-hunt generated in particular by the homicide of Ermanno also inspired a more assertive homosexual combativeness and nurtured self-awareness. Hate and contempt, together with transnational stimuli, spurred a new sense of community, identity, and belonging, pushing many homosexuals to proudly assert their right to political, social, and sexual citizenship.

In post-Fascist Italy, heterosexuality was an essential discriminatory factor in the definition of citizenship that was propagated by the media, the Italian state, the Italian political parties, and the Catholic Church. Between the fall of Fascism and the emergence of the Italian Homosexual Front in the 1970s, discourses around same-sex scandals and murders related to the world of male-male prostitution brought debates about acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviors and identities to the fore. Homophobic sensationalism and

mechanisms of sexual repression turned homosexuals into subjects of concern, but also favored circulation of discourses that allowed self-identification and mutual solidarity. The foundation of FUORI was certainly a turning point in the production of discourses about same-sex sexualities and gender identities. The Italian Homosexual Front challenged images of homosexuals as infectious agents, sex maniacs, and youth corruptors, and sought to present a new image of the homosexuals as young and proud subjects able to cultivate significant affective relationships. The *new homosexual* discursively produced by FUORI was a sanitized figure. The idealized activist of the Front, avoiding scandals and disorderly forms of sociability, embodied one version of homosexuality that had better chances to be accepted by the society of the “normal.” The Italian Homosexual Front, disassociating homosexuality from male prostitution, set out to make homosexuality the object of emancipation and challenged the status of homosexuals as sexual pariahs and partial citizens. The resulting tension between liberation and normalization reverberates to this day.

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