

The role of minority press in the creation and negotiation of a queer community in Florence, Italy, in the 1990s: a case study of the magazine '*QUIR : il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica e gay, e non solo...*' (1993-1997).

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I, the undersigned, Matylda Rentflejsz, candidate for the MA degree in History in the Public Sphere, declare herewith that the present thesis titled “The role of minority press in the creation and negotiation of a queer community in Florence, Italy, in the 1990s: a case study of the magazine ‘*QUIR : il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica e gay, e non solo...*’ (1993-1997)” is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person’s or institution’s copyright.

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Abstract

From *samizdat*, to the underground press of the 1960s and 70s, and the ‘zine culture of the 1990s, alternative press has played key roles in the diffusion of information, organisation of resistance, and the formation of community among its readers. Whether born under occupation, censorship, or out of erasure from the mainstream media, alternative press has facilitated the development of a democratic public sphere in which factors like social class, gender, or sexual orientation became criteria for community rather than exclusion. Though some academic attention has been paid to the alternative press of the 1970s homosexual movements, the magazines, newsletters, and ‘zines of the late 1980s and 1990s cannot claim the same. This thesis utilises Critical Discourse Analysis to discuss the Italian magazine ‘*QUIR: il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita gay e lesbica e non solo...*’ (1993-1997) and how it utilised the concepts of imagined and emotional communities, subaltern counterpublics, and self-determination to create a homogeneous queer community amongst its readership. The thesis finds that the magazine was at the vanguard of the drive for a more intersectional Italian queer movement, both through its use of the term ‘queer’ as an identity term, and the international influences of its creators, yet, despite its early stage success, struggled to endure due to the lack of a clear ‘enemy’ against which to unite its community.

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A note on style

While the terms ‘queer’ or ‘LGBT’ are frequently used in this work due to having become the ‘preferred’ terms in academic contexts to refer non-heterosexual, non-cisgender communities, this thesis also employs a variety of period-specific terminology. For example, when discussing male homosexual behaviour in early Renaissance Florence, the terms ‘sodomy’ or ‘sodomites’ are used. Similarly, the homosexual movements of the 1970s are referred to precisely thus: the *homosexual* movements, or, on occasion, the gay or homophile movements. When analysing the *QUIR* magazine, the term ‘queer’ is frequently utilised to refer to the magazine, the local community, and the movement itself, as that was the preference expressed therein. This variety was maintained to minimise the risk of revisionism or presentism, as to apply the terms ‘LGBT’ or ‘queer’ to the homosexual movements of the 1970s would be an anachronism and a misrepresentation of the attitudes at the time, just as calling the Florentine movement of the 1990s ‘homosexual’ would deny the diversity of the community involved in it.

For non-English sources, all the English translations included in the body of the thesis are the writer’s own unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

Thesis statement

This work was born out of my long-held interest in underground print culture of the twentieth century and the formation of queer movements in countries with a deep-rooted religious tradition. Hailing from a country with a strong presence of the Catholic Church and one which developed a sophisticated culture of underground press under occupation, I wanted to explore how similar social movement press might form in a country that had not been occupied following the end of the Second World War, but where religion still held an important role in public behaviour, morality, and policy-making.

As a result of this interest and my familiarity with the country and the language, I chose to focus on Italy. Additionally, rather than looking at the development of all Italian alternative press over the second half of the twentieth century, I decided to focus on the press of the movement that is historically the most opposed by a religious state: that of the homosexual community. Thus, this thesis explores the formation of the homosexual/queer/LGBT community in Italy through a close study of the role that the alternative press produced by the homosexual movement over the second half of the twentieth century played in the consolidation of that community.

I chose depth over breadth for this study, and thus concentrated on one specific magazine: *QUIR: il mensile Fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica e gay, e non solo*. The magazine – henceforth referred to as *QUIR* – was produced in Florence, Italy, between 1993 to 1997. The focus on this period and this magazine is due to the dearth of materials on the Italian gay press of the 1990s that was revealed over the course of the initial research, as well as the characteristics of the magazine itself, both in its style and its origins.

This work will explore the function of the magazine as ‘product’ and ‘producer’ of public history. As this thesis will argue, the *QUIR* magazine was a *product* of public history due to its

connections to the gay movement of the 1970s and the alternative press it produced, and a *producer* due to being exported beyond Italy's borders, which positioned it as a primary source on the characters of the Florentine queer community of the time. The relevance of this study for the field of public history, queer studies, and the history of sexuality is thus clear in its goal to bring to light an element of Italian gay history that has been underrepresented due to "fragmentary evidence in archival, library, and museum collections due to censorship, selfcensorship, and outright instances of erasure and suppression"¹ and aim to foster dialogue about a period of the community's history – and the products of that history – which have not been as extensively studied as some other eras.

My focus on print media is not intended as a dismissal of the role of free radio or in-person interactions in public and private spaces in the community-building project. Rather, I chose to concentrate on print media due to its long-acknowledged role as the primary site of movement-building"², the necessary considerations given to ease of access to the material, and the constraints of both time and format imposed by the nature of a Master thesis.

Structure of the thesis

In terms of structure, in the Introduction, I present the methodology of the research and discuss the specificity of the primary materials under study in this work, such as its bilingual format and its Florentine origins. In the first chapter, I provide a thorough literature and theoretical overview, exploring the academic concepts which prove useful in the analysis of social movement press and its role as a tool of community-building. In the second chapter, I present

¹ Melinda Marie Jetté, "Public History and Sexuality," in *The Cambridge World History of Sexualities Volume I*, (Cambridge University Press, 2024), 514.

² Benjamin Serby, "'Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals': The Underground Press, the New Left, and the Gay Liberation Counterpublic in the United States, 1965–1976," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 32, no.1 (2023): 3, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/878042>.

the historical, political, and socio-cultural context in Italy over the twentieth century to properly ground the analysis and explain all the elements which contributed to the creation, reception, and legacy of the *QUIR* magazine. In the third chapter, I address the *QUIR* magazine and its community-building practices, commenting on the magazine's use of emotions to create community as per the model based on the 1970s movement offered in Dario Pasquini's "*Con Rabbia Felice*", the use of slurs to help the Italian community reclaim power over the language used against them, and the overall function of the magazine as a forum for members of the queer community to meet and interact with other queer individuals in Florence and Italy at large.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I discuss the successes and failures of the magazine's community-building project, its function as both product and producer of public history, and the potential reasons behind the difficulties in constructing a community around or within the homosexual movement in Italy at the time. I also offer suggestions on how the study could be expanded in the future to provide a more thorough overview of the Florentine queer community of the 1990s.

Primary materials

The primary source that I analyse in this thesis is the magazine '*QUIR: il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica e gay, e non solo*' which ran for 28 issues, from April 1993 until the summer of 1997.

The *QUIR* magazine was selected as the primary source for this thesis for three reasons:

firstly, the magazine was first created and distributed in Florence, Italy. Though I do not claim that the same characteristics attributed to city of Florence in the early-Renaissance period were true half a millennium later, the overlap between the history of the city and the history of

homosexuality in Italy still ought to be acknowledged. Additionally, Florence has long been known as an international city, boasting high numbers of foreign visitors. This addition of the international perspective, both from the foreigners living in Florence as well as the Italians who, thanks to increasing social mobility, were able to travel abroad and see what homosexual movements looked like in places like London, Berlin, or San Francisco³, led to building of national and international queer networks and an overall more tolerant attitude within the city.

Secondly, the material on queer history in Italy, both academic and grassroots, is already more scarce than in many other European countries. Of the material that is available, majority of the sources from the twentieth century tends to cover the initial years post-1968, largely focusing on the rise, fall, and legacy of the F.U.O.R.I. organisation and their homonymous magazine. Few queer historians or activists delve into the period between the end of F.U.O.R.I. and the advent of social media, causing the magazines or events of that time to be largely overlooked in the discussions of the history of the Italian gay movement.

While conducting my research for this thesis, I was able to find ample literature on four distinct periods of Italian LGBT history: the Renaissance, particularly in Florence⁴; the Fascist period and its aftermath; the 1970s and the rise of the first ‘homosexual movement’; and the 2000s onwards, with significant research dedicated to the role of social media in gay activism. There is also some literature on the arrival, development, and legacy of the AIDS pandemic in Italy, but majority of the research is either from the medical, scientific community, or from the field of media studies, resulting in the research being done with the ‘public health’ perspective in mind rather than that of rights and community-building. This work could therefore contribute

³ Peter M. Nardi, “The Globalization of the Gay & Lesbian Socio-Political Movement: Some Observations about Europe with a Focus on Italy,” *Sociological Perspectives* 41, no. 3 (1998): 580.

⁴ *Forbidden Friendships : Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence (Studies in the History of Sexuality)* by Michael Rocke offers a particularly thorough overview of the importance of the time period and the city itself in regards to the history of homosexuality.

towards partially filling the research gap on the homosexual movement in the 1990s, especially considering the importance of Florence in the history of homosexuality in Italy.

Finally, the magazine's title caught my attention when I was researching gay publications in Italy, particularly once I learned that it had been running in the early 1990s. The term "queer", even domesticated as it has been for the title, was not a term I had expected to see outside of anglophone activist groups or academia. Upon finding out that the magazine was also bilingual – the importance of which will be developed in the Findings – I was inspired to explore the apparent transnationalism of goals and ideologies that had emerged out of the anglophone gay movements of the time (such as the reclamation of the term "queer").

Another important element to consider that pertains to the choice of primary sources is that the magazine has not been digitised, and there is no single archive that has the full collection. Nevertheless, with help from members of the *Azione Gay e Lesbica* in Florence and the materials in the archive of the *Cassero Centro di Documentazione* in Bologna, I was able to locate and read all the editions of the magazine. However, as this is a Master's thesis and has certain limitations in terms of style, scope, and wordcount, I have decided to focus my analysis on the first year of the magazine's publication, from April 1993 (№ 0) to May 1994 (№ 11). The reason for the choice is twofold:

- 1) the first year of the magazine's publication was the period in which the writers were the most successful at keeping to the nature of a '*mensile*' – a magazine where an issue is published once per month, every month. Barring one exception of one issue covering two months, a magazine was issued monthly April 1993 and May 1994. In the magazine's later years, however, there were some cases of bimonthly, or even quarterly issues, such as in 1996, where only four issues were published over the course of the calendar year.

- 2) As one of the foci of this thesis is the community-building potential of minority press, the regularity of the magazine's releases helps illustrate how the queer community in Florence was reacting to, and interacting with the magazine.

Nevertheless, the scope of the thesis means that I will not be able to comment on any potential changes in approach or evolutions of the magazine's stance that may have occurred; as such, should an opportunity to analyse the collection in its entirety ever arise, I believe it would be of great interest- and value- to the elaboration of queer identity in 1990s Florence.

Methodology

The late 1990s saw the rise of Queer Studies and, subsequently, queer methodologies. Jane Ward, in her contribution to *Imagining Queer Methods*, asserts that queer methodology is a “praxis aimed at undoing prevailing assumptions about epistemic authority, legitimate knowledge, and the very meaning of research”⁵. Browne and Nash offer a thorough overview of the assorted queer methodologies that have been elaborated over the years, largely emerging out of poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches, and the distinctions that a queer methodology can bring to queer-related research. In their Introduction, they specifically address the importance of undertaking sustained consideration of how queer approaches might sit with methodological choices and remembering to apply “queer re-theorising, re-considering and re-conceptualising”⁶ to the methodologies of the research. Due to their anti-normative stance, these queer methodologies and theories often find themselves “at loggerheads with the strict procedures and structured techniques required by well-established research methods”⁷,

⁵ Jane Ward, “Dyke methods: A meditation on queer studies and the gay men who hate it,” in *Imagining Queer Methods*, ed. Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim (New York University Press, 2019), 262.

⁶ Catherine J. Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne. (Routledge, 2010), 1.

⁷ Tommaso M. Milani., Rodrigo Borba, “Queer(ing) Methodologies,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design*, ed. Uwe Flick (SAGE Publications, 2022), 196.

resulting in what Ward terms a ‘productive oxymoron’⁸. Milani and Borba propose sexual identity categories as an example for the researcher to apply ‘queer re-theorising’. This is due to their “two-faced” nature, where, as summarised by Butler, they serve as both the “normalizing categories of oppressive structures” and “the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression”⁹. Another important element that emerges out of the complexities of queer methodologies is the positionality of the researcher; while Haraway’s ‘situated knowledge’¹⁰ denounces the concept of objectivity, the recognition of the impact of the researcher’s roots on the partiality of their perspective¹¹ is nonetheless an important one.

Additionally, the intersectional nature of the topic of this work demands a certain flexibility in approaches; to give the concept of a ‘queer methodology’ its due consideration, this work recognises the distinction between *methods* and *methodology* made by Bogdan and Biklen. That is to say, *methodology* refers to the “general logic and theoretical perspective” of the research project, while *methods* refers to the specific techniques one uses, such as surveys or interviews¹².

Per the outlined distinction, the methodological approach of this study is a qualitative one, utilising the methods of discourse analysis. In Chapter 2 of *What is Discourse Analysis?*, Stephanie Taylor offers a comprehensive overview of the many definitions of ‘discourse’ that can be found across the various fields which employ some form of discourse analysis, from Hall’s summary of the Foucauldian concept of discourse, to Fairclough’s elaboration of

⁸ Ward, “Dyke methods,” 262.

⁹ Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, David M. Halerpin, (Routledge, 1991), 308

¹⁰ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 581, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>.

¹¹ Elisa Virgili, “Performatività del linguaggio e risignificazione dei termini nella costruzione delle identità di genere” (PhD diss., Università degli Studi dell’Insubria, 2015), 40.

¹² Robert, C. Bogdan., and Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 31.

discourse as ‘language as a form of social practice’¹³. For the purposes of this work, the definition offered by James Gee is the most compelling:

Each Discourse in a society is ‘owned’ and ‘operated’ by a socio-culturally defined group of people. These people are accepted as ‘members’ of the Discourse and play various ‘roles’, give various ‘performances’, within it. Each Discourse involves ways of talking, acting, interacting, valuing, and believing, as well as the spaces and materials ‘props’ the group uses to carry out its social practices. **Discourses integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes**¹⁴.

This definition was chosen as the most relevant for the study due to Gee’s assertion that discourses are a way of displaying *membership* in a particular social group, as well as the claim that discourse rewards *and* sanctions “characteristic ways of acting, talking, believing, valuing, and interacting, and in doing so it incorporates a normative or ideal set of mental associations and folk theories, toward which its members more or less converge”¹⁵. The concept of specific discourse and discursive practices becoming recognisable enough to be considered a way of identifying members of specific cultural or counter-cultural groups is particularly compelling in the context of minority press and the creation of community through such discourses. Additionally, as will be elaborated in the Findings in Chapter 4, the *QUIR* magazine published letters sent by its readers, showing cases where readers questioned or contested the specific discursive practices encouraged by the editorial board. These contestations were then either ‘sanctioned’ by the editors’ responses published in the subsequent issues, or negotiated. This interaction between the producers of the discursive practices (the writers) and the practitioners (the readers) evidences Gee’s claim that discourses can both, be used to establish a sense of ‘membership’, as well as reward and sanction member behaviour.

There has recently been acknowledgement that “the techniques of discourse analysis can legitimately be applied to written language and that written texts constitute ‘communicative

¹³ Stephanie Taylor, *What is Discourse Analysis?* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 16.

¹⁴ James Gee, *The Social Mind: Language, Ideology and Social Practice* (Bergin and Garvey, 1992), 107.

¹⁵ Ibid.

acts in their own right”¹⁶. Thus, given that the basis of this work is contextualised textual analysis of the discursive practices employed by the *QUIR* magazine, the method selected for this study is that of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with elements of Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) elaborated by Reisigl and Wodak¹⁷.

Per Fairclough’s framework, each discursive element has three dimensions: it is a spoken or written language text, it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text, and it is a piece of social practice¹⁸. In addition to the elements of text, interaction, and social context, Fairclough recognises three stages of CDA – the three ‘dimensions’ – as “*description* of text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context”¹⁹. Fairclough elaborates that the values embedded in the discourse “only become real, socially operative, as parts of institutional and societal processes of struggle”²⁰. Thus, although CDA typically has “political goals” such as changes in policy, and largely focuses on revealing “systems exploited for the oppression of people within specific social structures”²¹, it was deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study as the magazine here analysed was created due to the exclusion of homosexuals – and thus their ‘oppression’ – from the mainstream discourses. Additionally, per Reisigl and Wodak, the Discourse-Historical Approach should “make the object under investigation and the analyst’s own position transparent and should

¹⁶ Laurel Brinton, “Historical Discourse Analysis,” in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 224.

¹⁷ Martin Reisigl, and Ruth Wodak, “The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA),” in: *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, ed. by Karen Tracy, Cornelia Ilie, and Todd Sandel. (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 88.

¹⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, (Routledge, 2010), 94.

¹⁹ Norman Fairclough, “Language and Power,” in *Language in Social Life Sciences*, ed. Christopher N. Candlin (Longman Group, 1989), 109.

²⁰ Fairclough, “Language and Power,” 140.

²¹ Roman Kuhar, *Media Representations of Homosexuality: An analysis of the Print Media in Slovenia, 1970-2000*, ed. Brankica Petković (Peace Institute, 2003), 17.

justify theoretically why certain interpretations and readings of discursive events seem more valid than others”²², thereby assuaging the concern of researcher positionality raised in the first paragraph.

In terms of the methods, Roman Kuhar’s application of CDA will be used as a model. Kuhar, in his work *Media Representations of Homosexuality: An analysis of the Print Media in Slovenia, 1970-2000*, acknowledges that certain perceptions of homosexuality, such as that of it being ‘unnatural’ or ‘indecent’ are discursive constructs, created out of the mainstream’s exclusion of other discourses which offer other kinds of knowledge and understandings of homosexuality²³. He then asserts that the aforementioned exclusion of other discourses was what led gay and lesbian theorists to invest a great deal of effort into “overturning the presumed naturalness of the dominant (heteronormative) discursive structures” and revitalizing the “excluded discursive positions which should be made accessible and should enjoy a certain credibility”²⁴. Given the similarity in focus of Kuhar’s study to this one, Kuhar’s application of the three-dimensional framework shows that CDA is a valid method to use to analyse how the discursive practices of the *QUIR* magazine were used to build a community among the magazine’s readers, as well as how they reflect the magazine’s function as both a product and producer of public history.

²² Reisigl and Wodak, “The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA),” 88.

²³ Kuhar, *Media Representations of Homosexuality*, 14.

²⁴ Kuhar, *Media Representations of Homosexuality*, 14.

Chapter 1: Literature review

1.1 Social movement press

National newspapers, journals, magazines, and broadsheets are tools of the public sphere and recognisable elements of the mainstream media landscape. While mainstream media can be frequently attributed to a particular side of the political spectrum, it also deals with news and events which are considered important for every citizen of a given nation or region. However, given that mainstream media is also frequently *mass* media, it is both product and producer of the beliefs, attitudes, and goals held by the masses. As a result, groups which do not belong to the mainstream society may be misrepresented, excluded, or outright targeted by mass media, leading to the creation of minority media.

Minority press, also referred to as ‘social movement press’, ‘alternative press’, or ‘underground press’, refers to print media of those excluded from the mainstream society. Bob Osterag, writer of *People’s Movements, People’s Press* which delves into the history of the print media that arose out of radical or alternative movements, acknowledges that social movement press’ most important role has been in “the creation of a community and culture”. He also adds that “overcoming isolation” is the first step of social movements, and names movement journals as the key to transforming an individual from “passive isolation to engaged citizen”²⁵. This assertion is echoed by Benjamin Serby, whose use of the term ‘underground press’ encompasses “publications that positioned themselves as an alternative to commercial and professionalized print media”²⁶. Per Serby’s definition, *QUIR: il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica e gay, e non solo* is, indeed, an example of underground press, the reasons for which will be elaborated in the Findings Chapter. Due to its function as a means of communication, underground press also served to “anchor gay and lesbian epistolary

²⁵ Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Beacon Press, 2006), 19-20.

²⁶ Serby, “‘Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals’,” 6.

networks”²⁷, a function that granted it particular importance in the development of community within the minority groups.

1.2 Imagined communities

It would be shortsighted to discuss the community-building potential of social movement press without acknowledging Benedict Anderson’s concept of an ‘imagined community’. Per Anderson’s approach, even a nation is “an imagined political community”, and it is imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”²⁸. Nevertheless, Anderson claims that a sense of community is created through the shared experiences of reading printed media; where individuals who would otherwise never have met their fellow-members share in the “collective acts of simultaneous reading”²⁹ and although the routine is performed “in silent privacy”, each communicant is aware that the ceremony they perform is being “replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion”³⁰.

Since the publication of Anderson’s book back in 1983, many have taken the concept of ‘imagined communities’ and extended it to other fields. One such field was that of social movement press, where the non-mainstream press serves as the vehicle in the creation of community identity through uniting otherwise disparate individuals not just in the mere act of reading but also in the act of reading about communities and events they would not have otherwise encountered in the mainstream press. Serby expands on the connection between

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Verso, 2006), 5-6.

²⁹ David, T, Humphries. “Sherwood Anderson’s Imagined Communities,” in *Different Dispatches. Journalism in American Modernist Prose*, ed. William, E. Cain (Routledge, 2006), 50.

³⁰ Anderson. *Imagined Communities*, 35.

social movement press and imagined communities, claiming that the gay underground publications of the 1960s and 70s in America “intended to unite and politicize an ‘imagined community’ of gays and lesbians”³¹. He stresses that these publications distinguished themselves from commercial press by prioritizing “accessibility, transparency, and participation” thereby blurring the boundaries between readers and writers. This blurring of the lines facilitated a “democratic public sphere in which even those with the least social power, including the incarcerated, could stake a claim to be recognised as equals”. As a result, gay underground press was able to create a sense of community amongst its readership that was not reliant on gender or social class, as, despite being ‘symbolic’, the connections forged through the text of the underground press “were critical to the coalescence and growth of gay liberation after Stonewall”³².

1.3 Subaltern counterpublics

While Anderson’s concept of an ‘imagined community’ can help explain the function of press in creating a sense of community, Nancy Fraser’s ‘subaltern counterpublics’ can be used to discuss how minority press, once successful at establishing a sense of community, can then be used to prompt community activism.

The term ‘subaltern counterpublics’ was coined by Nancy Fraser in 1990 and emerged out of the concept of the public sphere initially elaborated by Jurgen Habermas. Habermas’ public sphere was the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs – per Habermas’ own definition, “a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body”³³. In the words of Fraser, the Habermasian

³¹ Serby, “‘Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals’,” 2.

³² Serby, “‘Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals’,” 2.

³³ Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article,” in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen, E, Bronner., Douglas, M, Kellner (Routledge, 1989), 136

public sphere was envisioned as “a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk”³⁴. However, while Habermas claims that “access [to the public sphere] is guaranteed to all citizens”³⁵, Fraser’s critique of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere was a bourgeois conception and that it was a “masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule”³⁶ and thus it was not accessible to everyone, as many were excluded based on class, race, or gender.

Fraser thus suggested the concept of ‘subaltern counterpublics’, where members of the subordinated social groups, such as women, workers, people of colour, and LGBT individuals have benefitted from creating alternative publics in order to “signal that there are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”³⁷. Fraser cited the example of media that feminist subaltern counterpublics used in the late-twentieth century in the United States, such as “journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals and local meeting places”³⁸. With these different arenas for circulating counterdiscourses, the feminists were able to “invent new terms for describing social reality” and with the new language, they were able to recast their needs and identities, thereby “reducing, although not eliminating, the extent of [their] disadvantage in official public spheres”³⁹.

³⁴ Nancy Fraser. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466240>.

³⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article,” 136.

³⁶ Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Another important element which is mentioned alongside subaltern counterpublics is that of ‘feminist consciousness’⁴⁰. Per Virginia Niri, feminist consciousness is a political method, derived from the United States and adopted in Italy with a highly original theoretical thought and a practical application that is influenced by the peculiar characteristics of Italian 1968⁴¹. Importantly for the purposes of social movements, feminist consciousness meant “analyzing a new language, a new way of doing politics, of being together” with the aims of “increased political awareness”⁴² and activism.

Thus, the creation and discussion of counterpublics and practices of consciousness is essential in the study of minority movements; as highlighted by Serby, “at a time when even the yellow pages refused to print the word ‘gay’, liberationists made gay and lesbian representation a priority”⁴³, thus challenging the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the mainstream media. Moreover, the counterpublic created by the gay underground press allowed “historically silenced subjects [to] articulate their identities, interests, and needs”⁴⁴.

Minority press is therefore one of the key arenas for the expression of subaltern counterpublics and the circulation of counterdiscourses, as well as a tool for the creation of minority group identity and bridging the gap between the minority and the mainstream.

1.4 Emotional communities

Much like Fraser’s concept of subaltern counterpublics is important for the study of minority press, so too is the history of emotions and the concept of emotional communities. As explained by Susan Matt, “emotions research alters conceptions of politics, social relations, and market

⁴⁰ On occasion also referred to as ‘feminist self-awareness’ (Italian: *autocoscienza femminista*)

⁴¹ Virginia Niri, “Dalla rivoluzione alla liberazione. Autocoscienza femminista e sessualità nel ‘lungo Sessantotto’,” *Italia contemporanea* no. 300, (2022), 247, DOI:10.3280/ic300-0a2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴³ Serby, “‘Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals’,” 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

interactions, showing links between power and emotion in public life”⁴⁵, making their study important for understanding the larger impact of minority press on individuals belonging to those minorities, as well as society at large.

In Barbara Rosenwein’s terms ‘emotional communities’ are “groups in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals”⁴⁶. Per Rosenwein, the characteristic styles of emotional communities “depend not only on the emotions that they emphasize-and how and in what contexts they do so - but also by the ones that they demote to the tangential or do not recognize at all”⁴⁷. Minority press is thus not just a physical manifestation of these groups but also a means of setting into motion strategies for achieving the group’s shared goals through agreed-upon strategies.

In terms of the specific relevance of emotions and emotional communities to queer history, Ann Cvetkovich explains that lesbian and gay history “demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism—all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive”⁴⁸. Thus, per Cvetkovich, emotion and affect are not just essential to the commemoration of queer history, but also to the understanding of the people behind that which usually makes it to the archive.

Dario Pasquini, with his *Con Rabbia Felice: Politica ed emozioni nella prima stampa LGBT italiana (1969-1979)* and “*This Will Be the Love of the Future*”: *Italian LGBT People and Their Emotions in Letters from the Fuori! and Massimo Consoli Archives, 1970–1984* has contributed to the literature on emotions in the Italian LGBT movement. In *This will Be the Love of the Future*, he applied Rosenwein’s concept of emotional communities in his analysis

⁴⁵ Susan J. Matt. “Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out,” *Emotion Review* 3, no.1 (2011): 122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073910384416>.

⁴⁶ Barbara Rosenwein. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Cornell University Press, 2006), 24.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2003), 241.

of the ‘emotional style’ of the early LGBT movement in Italy, arguing that there was a significant cultural transfer and transnational propagation of emotional styles between the Anglophone LGBT movements and the Italian one⁴⁹, resulting in the use of anger, joy, and pride to create an emotional style under which the growing Italian LGBT community could unite, which Pasquini elaborates on in *Con Rabbia Felice*⁵⁰.

The relevance of the concept of emotional communities for minority press and specifically for the *QUIR* magazine will be further developed in the Findings.

1.5 Queer press

In his article on the evolution of the American gay press, Willard Spiegelman claims that when a group is neglected by the majority, whether on the basis of race, geography, or sexuality, it begins to “publicize itself as a gesture of self-definition”⁵¹. He adds that the mainstream – or ‘straight’ – press has been “uninterested in, or openly hostile to, the politics of homosexuality and of homosexuals” and, as a result, the gay periodicals that began to emerge in the mid-twentieth century were not only “performing an act of self-interest, but also literally filling a void”⁵², rendering the study of queer press essential to understanding the history of queer movements and the development of queer rights.

Yet, Elizabeth Coretto claims that “mainstream press, and straight society in general, places little emphasis on the role of queer press” and that queer historians and academics often fall into the trap of undervaluing or outright minimizing the role of queer press in queer history

⁴⁹ Dario Pasquini, “‘This Will Be the Love of the Future’: Italian LGBT People and Their Emotions in Letters from the Fuori! and Massimo Consoli Archives, 1970–1984,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 29, no. 1 (2020): 60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26872292>.

⁵⁰ Dario Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice: Politica ed emozioni nella prima stampa LGBT italiana (1969-1979)* (PM Edizioni, 2023), 51.

⁵¹ Willard Spiegelman, “The Progress Of A Genre: Gay Journalism And Its Audience,” no. 58/59 (1983): 308, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40547575>.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 314.

despite the crucial role queer press played in the early movements thanks to their placement “at the intersection of identity, community, and activism”⁵³. The notion that the importance of queer press is often ignored when discussing the history of queer movements was also echoed by Robert Cover in his article on the role of queer print journalism in the creation of community and the relationship between queer press and the sense of community belonging⁵⁴. Francesca Polo also states that queer literature “is part of a sub-culture, marginal and unacknowledged by Culture and the mainstream” and notes that its key role is ensuring “that we talk about certain issues that otherwise would not come out of hiding and would be forever obscured”⁵⁵, giving the examples of the AIDS pandemic or the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazis. Importantly, Spiegelman also adds that gay press not only publicises what the mainstream media might ‘ridicule or scant’, but also “makes sexuality a serious issue” all the while “liberating it from scientific language, euphemism, or joyless cant”⁵⁶. Dario Pasquini, meanwhile, acknowledges that there is a lack of academic sources on Italian LGBT press and claims that this void reflects “the wide disinterest shown by historical studies towards the history and protagonists of the Italian LGBT movement”⁵⁷.

It is this lack of recognition of the role that queer print media has played in the creation of Italian queer communities, as well as the negotiation of the various identities that make up these communities, that motivated the creation of this thesis. The following section will thus explore the origins of queer press in Italy, its accomplishments, and its legacy, in order to contextualise the later analysis of the *QUIR* magazine.

⁵³ Elizabeth, A. Coretto, "The Fountain Pen and the Typewriter": The Rise of the Homophile Press in the 1950s and 1960s", (Bachelor's thesis, Oberlin College, 2017), 2, <https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors/214>.

⁵⁴ Robert Cover, “Engaging sexualities: Lesbian/gay print journalism, community belonging, social space and physical place,” *Pacific Journalism Review* 11, no. 1 (2005), 113, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v11i1.823>

⁵⁵ Francesca Polo. “L’editoria Lesbica, Gay e Transessuale/Transgender,” in: *WE WILL SURVIVE!/: Storia del movimento LGBTIQ+ in Italia*, ed. Paolo Pedote and Nicoletta Poidimani, (Mimesis/Eterotopie, 2020), 174.

⁵⁶ Spiegelman, “The Progress Of A Genre ,” 323.

⁵⁷ Dario Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice*, 25.

1.6 Community-building potential of queer press

Using the example of the *FUORI!* magazine provided above, Riccardo Bulgarelli, the author of the article ‘*Chi parla per gli omosessuali?*’ (‘Who speaks for the homosexuals?’) traces the role of *FUORI!* magazine in the process of community-building in the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* movement. He claims that “The newspaper was perceived as a means of coming out from the confines of “oppression” and as the engine of a “liberation process” in which the written word, published and disseminated, was to be an essential element”⁵⁸. Bulgarelli also acknowledges the community-building aspect of the *FUORI!* magazine, claiming that it “constituted a platform for common dialogue among movement groups”⁵⁹, which served to communicate the association’s arguably radical thinking to the readership and provide the magazine’s readers with the results of the association’s activism.

1.7 Slurs, homophobic epithets, and derogatory group labels

As noted by Coretto, “without an identity there cannot be a community, and without a community it is difficult to define yourself in positive terms”⁶⁰. Additionally, Bucholtz and Hall claim that, in the context of identity, language is exceedingly important because, “among the many symbolic resources for the cultural production of identity, language is the most flexible and pervasive”⁶¹.

This section aims to address the significance of LGBT individuals using slurs in speeches, media, and publications aimed to foster a spirit of community and community identity.

⁵⁸ Riccardo Bulgarelli, “«Chi parla per gli omosessuali?». Il ruolo del giornale «FUORI!» nel processo di community building del Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano (1971-1973),” *LGBTQIA+: sessualità, soggettività, movimenti, linguaggi* 3, no. 47, (2021), 2. <https://doi.org/10.4000/12zpi>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Coretto, “The Fountain Pen and the Typewriter,” 2.

⁶¹ Mary Bucholtz., and Kira Hall. “Language and Identity,” in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 369.

In the academic context, slurs aimed at homosexuals are often termed ‘homophobic epithets’ (HEs) which themselves are hyponyms of ‘derogatory group labels’ (DGLs). According to Simon and Greenberg, DGLs, of which homophobic epithets are a subgroup, are offensive terms which aim to “negate a person or group’s culture, heritage, and family in one word, by dehumanizing the person or group”⁶².

As noted by Agovino, Bevilacqua, and Cerciello, the influence that language has on perception is particularly relevant for minorities, as “lexicon has often been used as a weapon, to stigmatise actions, attitudes and identities”⁶³. Thus, derogatory terms such as slurs can legitimise “an unconscious form of violence and marginalisation, reinforcing a socio-cultural barrier based on conformation to heteronormative standards”⁶⁴. They also maintain that frequent usage of homophobic epithets “has subtly trained individuals to marginalise LGBT people”, adding that many studies have found significant correlation between “exposure to homophobic insults and homophobia”⁶⁵, a notion which is further reinforced by Herbert, who argues that slurs specifically reflect “long standing [practices] of systematic dehumanisation, marginalisation, and exclusion from social spaces”⁶⁶.

Considering the negative impact of derogatory group labels, the usage of such terms might appear counterproductive to the goal of fostering safe spaces and community identities. However, what this thesis will argue is that the use of derogatory group labels in minority press, such as in the case of the *QUIR* magazine, is an intentional choice on behalf of the writers to

⁶² Linda Simon, Jeff Greenberg. “Further progress in understanding the effects of derogatory ethnic labels: The role of preexisting attitudes toward the targeted group,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22, no. 12 (1996), 1195, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672962212001>.

⁶³ Agovino, M., Bevilacqua, M., Cerciello, M. “Language as a proxy for cultural change. A contrastive analysis for French and Italian lexicon on male homosexuality,” *Quality & Quantity* 56. (2021), 150, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01121-x>.

⁶⁴ Agovino et al., “Language as a proxy for cultural change,” 151.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Cassie Herbert, “Precarious projects: The performative structure of reclamation,” *Language Sciences* 52, (2015): 133, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2015.05.002>.

reclaim the terms that had previously been used to harm LGBT individuals and ascribe them a new meaning and discursive power.

1.8 Reappropriation and reclamation of slurs

Bianchi et al. claim that the reappropriation of derogatory group labels by minority members is a “coping strategy against stigmatization”⁶⁷. Reclamation projects are therefore a “form of social protest, one which is explicitly discursive in nature”, and can provide a “tangible objective for the group to rally around”⁶⁸. Queer theory is not the only field to encourage linguistic reclamation; Crip theory, a more recently elaborated interdisciplinary critical disability theory, also encourages the embracing of stigma and frames the reappropriation of derogatory language by persons with disabilities. This is presented as a means of taking control “over representation and language to challenge dominant understandings of what it means to be human or ‘normal’”⁶⁹ to “confront disability-related injustices and change unjust agencies”⁷⁰.

In the queer theory application, the use of homophobic epithets in a self-referential way by those targeted by the labels can “deprive the dominant group of the linguistic devices that previously granted them superiority”⁷¹. This notion is further developed by Ponzio, who adds that the process of reappropriation “rests the same words on another history, on a history of claiming rights and rediscussing the relationship of subordination” which allows those who

⁶⁷ Mauro Bianchi, Andrea Carnaghi, Fabio Fasoli, Patrice Rusconi, Carlo Fantoni. “From self to ingroup reclaiming of homophobic epithets: A replication and extension of Galinsky et al.’s (2013) model of reappropriation,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 111 (2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104583>.

⁶⁸ Herbert, “Precarious projects,” 131-2.

⁶⁹ Alan Santinele Martino and Ann Fudge Schormans, “Theoretical Developments: Queer theory meets crip theory,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability and Sexuality*, ed. Russell Shuttleworth and Linda R. Mona, (Routledge, 2021), 58.

⁷⁰ Terence Paul Friedrichs, “Gifted and Talented LGBTQ+ Students With Disabilities: A Queer Crip Analysis,” *Journal for the Education of the Gifted* 47, no. 2 (2024):184, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01623532241235624>.

⁷¹ Bianchi et al, “From self to ingroup reclaiming of homophobic epithets,” 2.

engage in the act of reappropriation to “rewrite the discourse on other assumptions”⁷². Thus, as summarised by Bianchi et al., the reappropriation of homophobic epithets via self-labelling results in two key outcomes: “enhanced perceptions of self-power, [...] and reduced perceived negativity of HEs”⁷³.

Recently, in Florence, there has been a local graphic design project focused on “raising awareness and creating dialogue through design”⁷⁴. The project, titled *FAGS – Fightin’ Against Gay Slurs*, consists of a “series of artworks that are presented in the form of the Manifesto, reimagining the insult with a sense of irony or pride”⁷⁵ which “reverse the meaning of homophobic insults, turning them into acts of visual resistance”⁷⁶. This project demonstrates the ongoing importance of slur-reclamation, and the use of visually-stimulating graphics, humour, and normalisation is one of the many potential strategies for non-academic, community-led approaches to slur reappropriation.

1.9 Slurs as identity terms

Another form of reclamation is the direct resignification of slurs as identity terms.

Eva Nossem offers a thorough overview of how reclaiming derogatory group labels can ameliorate their meaning through the example of the term ‘queer’ and how it was used by the activist groups Queer Nation and ACT UP New York towards the end of the twentieth century. She explains that the reappropriation not only showed a “useful means of dealing with and overcoming the offensiveness” but also “overturned and transformed its discriminatory quality

⁷² Julia Ponzio. “Il potere delle parole: risignificazione e riscrittura in Audre Lorde,” *Post-filosofie* 11 (2018): 113, <https://philpapers.org/rec/PONIPD>.

⁷³ Bianchi et al, “From self to ingroup reclaiming of homophobic epithets,” 2.

⁷⁴ Dario Manzo (@dariomanzo.jpeg), December 14, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDjz5LzoM89/?igsh=dGRmaXZsOGJrcGF1>

⁷⁵ Dario Manzo (@dariomanzo.jpeg), December 13, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C0yfiPwIZPN/?igsh=MTJpYXJ5endtZ3BpaA==>

⁷⁶ Dario Manzo (@dariomanzo.jpeg), April 17, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DIjIeHbiRSc/?igsh=MTJtbWtkZGp0d3l2ZA==>

into the aggressive power needed in queer activism”⁷⁷. Reclaiming homophobic epithets can thus serve “not only as a form of defence, but rather of protest, which allows the targeted person to regain agency”⁷⁸.

However, as will be seen in the later chapters and the specific example of the *QUIR* magazine used in this work, not all members of minority groups may derive power from the reclaimed term. Judith Butler’s analysis of the power of the term ‘queer’ in her article ‘*Critically Queer*’ simultaneously acknowledges the potential of ‘queer’ as a self-identifying label and cautions to remember whom of the minority group the chosen label represents, and whom it excludes:

The expectation of self-determination that self-naming arouses is paradoxically contested by the historicity of the name itself: by the history of the usages that one never controlled, but that constrain the very usage that now emblemizes autonomy; by the future efforts to deploy the term against the grain of the current ones, efforts that will exceed the control of those who seek to set the course of the terms in the present⁷⁹

Nevertheless, though not all agree with the reappropriation project, Meredith Worthen, in her recent article on the reclamation and stigma of queer identities in the twenty-first century, presents data on young people who self-identify as queer. Although she acknowledges that, even in the 2020s, the term is simultaneously “reclaimed and stigmatized”⁸⁰, she still claims that it is an example of successful reclamation of a derogatory group label by the community⁸¹.

Another recent case of the success of reclaiming derogatory group labels in the fight against stigmatization is the case of the late Pope Francesco using the term ‘frocìaggine’ in May 2024.

As evidenced in the article of *Corriere della Sera*⁸² and the many international media outlets

⁷⁷ Eva Nossem. “Queer, Frocia, Femminiello, Ricchione et al. – Localizing “Queer” in the Italian Context.” *gender/sexuality/italy*, no.6 (2019): 8, <https://doi.org/10.15781/31yc-ys20>.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁹ Judith Butler. “Critically Queer,” *GLQ* 1 (1993): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17>

⁸⁰ Meredith Worthen, “Queer identities in the 21st century: Reclamation and Stigma, Sexual & Gender Diversity in the 21st Century”, *Current Opinion in Psychology* 49 (2023): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101512>.

⁸¹ *Figure 1* in: Worthen, “Queer identities in the 21st century,” 4.

⁸² Gian Guido Vecchi, “Le scuse del Papa sugli omosessuali «Non volevo offendere nessuno»”, *Corriere della Sera*, May 29, 2024, https://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/view_preview.shtml#!/NDovZXMvaXQvcnNzZGF0aW1ldGhvZGUxL0A0OTg1NDc%3D.

which covered the story⁸³, when discussing the possibility of homosexual men becoming priests during a *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (Italian Episcopal Conference), the Pope used an Italian slur that, in English, translates to ‘faggotry’ or ‘faggotness’.

The outcry that followed was not limited to Italy, the global nature of the Catholic Church and internet media allowing the news to spread quickly. Among the general demands for an apology from the Pope and the Vatican, as well as many personal accounts of upset or disappointment, the other common reaction – especially from non-Italians – was a positive reframing of the term through humorous posts and memes⁸⁴. These humorous posts could be seen as trivialising the matter, but they also serve to demonstrate the long-acknowledged subversive power of humour as a means of protest and resistance⁸⁵, aligning it with the more action-minded reclamation efforts.

Although it could be argued that the non-Italian participants should not be considered in the reclamation process due to the derogatory term not having the same emotional and cultural weight for them as for Italians, the reclamation of the term was not limited to social media. Despite the official statement promptly ordered by the Vatican, as well as the reminders that Italian was not the late Pope’s mother tongue, both mentioned in the many news articles on the matter, the indignation the Italian LGBT community felt at the Pope’s faux-pas was still felt keenly when the Rome Pride march took place a fortnight after the incident. The posts, posters, and placards⁸⁶ made for the event – as well as the other Pride marches in the country, such as

⁸³ Christopher Lamb and Sharon Braithwaite. “Pope Francis apologizes for using a homophobic slur during a meeting with bishops”, *CNN*, May 28, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/28/world/pope-francis-apologizes-reports-anti-gay-slur-intl/index.html>.

⁸⁴ Matt Stopera. “The Pope’s Homophobic Slur Is Now A Meme,” *Buzzfeed*, May 30, 2024, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/mjs538/the-pope-used-a-homophobic-slur-and-now-its-a-meme>

⁸⁵ Patrick Merziger. “Humour in Nazi Germany: Resistance and Propaganda? The Popular Desire for an All-Embracing Laughter,” *International Review of Social History* 52, Supplement 15: Humour and Social Protest, (2007): 275, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26405494>.

⁸⁶ Giansandro Merli. “Ironia, musica e protesta. Il Pride invade la capitale,” *Il manifesto*, June 16, 2024, <https://ilmanifesto.it/ironia-musica-e-protesta-il-pride-invade-la-capitale>.

the one in Milan⁸⁷ – show that the movement to reclaim the derogatory term was not limited to social media and occurred semi-organically as a form of protest against the language used by the Pope.

This event is a relevant case study for the reclamation process presented by Ponzio, as it demonstrates the step-by-step progression of: 1) a word being used disparagingly against a minority group; 2) it then being reclaimed by the group through collective action and self-determination; and 3) the subsequent overwriting of the term's prior history of subordination and its conversion into a means of regaining agency by the minority group which it had initially disparaged.

⁸⁷ Edoardo Bianchi., Andrea Lattanzi. "Milano, i 350.000 del Pride: "Grazie a Dio per la frociaggine"," *La Stampa*, June 29, 2024, https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/06/29/video/milano_i_350000_del_pride_grazie_a_dio_per_la_frociaggine-423331965/.

Chapter 2: Queer in Italy

2.1 Homosexuality and the Italian law

Prior to the unification of Italy, different Kingdoms and Duchies did not have homogenous laws regarding homosexuality, with some being more permissive, and some being more punitive. The Italian Penal Code of 1889 – also referred to as the Zanardelli Code – managed to standardise the legal approach to homosexuality within the Kingdom of Italy, effectively decriminalising it, by not mentioning homosexual acts directly, but including them under the category of insults to public decency. Per Lorenzo Benadusi in his book *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*, “Homosexuality was considered a “disgusting” behaviour, but if practiced in private between consenting adults, it was outside of the dominion of the law⁸⁸. Thus, by leaving the *vizi innominabili* (unnameable vices) out of the legislation, the Italian Penal Code of 1889 effectively removed sodomy from the penal code⁸⁹. The Zanardelli code remained in place until the Fascist regime, when it was replaced by the Rocco Code of 1930. Unlike the Zanardelli code, the Rocco Code named homosexuality as a punishable crime. However, the article was soon changed for multiple reasons; first, to avoid implying that homosexuality was a widespread phenomenon in Italy, second, the security police, which could – and did – “exercise an effective repression of homosexuals without ever publicizing their acts or even naming them”⁹⁰, and finally, the power that the Catholic Church and the clergy held in the country over “public morality”⁹¹.

According to Pires Marquez, the Rocco Penal Code was also a “crucial mediator in the negotiations between the fascist government and the Vatican”⁹², culminating in the Lateran

⁸⁸ Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*. trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 92

⁸⁹ Marta Luxan., Jone Miren Hernandez., Xabier Irujo. LGBTQI+ In The Basque Country. Basque Politics Series, n.17, 2020: 4

⁹⁰ Tiago Pires Marquez. *Crime and the Fascist State, 1850-1940*. Routledge, 2013: 97

⁹¹ Andrea Pini. “Quando eravamo froci; Gli omosessuali nell’Italia di una volta”, (Il Saggiatore, 2011), 2011: 3
“La morale «pubblica» era sempre sotto la mannaia della Chiesa cattolica”

⁹² Pires Marquez, *Crime and the Fascist State, 1850-1940*, 72

Pacts of 1929. The Pacts, among many other terms, established the Vatican City State, guaranteed compensation for losses suffered since the Capture of Rome in 1870, and established Catholicism as the state religion, granting the Church significant influence over education and marital law⁹³. The other important aspect of the Lateran Treaty, one that would become well-known by the Italian public almost a century after the Treaty was signed, was the stipulation that “all future legislation must comply with canon law”⁹⁴ which, as will be discussed in the Conclusion, became particularly relevant when the *DDL Zan* gained enough traction to pass in the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian parliament in 2020.

2.2 Fascism, the post-war, and the 1960s

In addition to introducing a new penal code, the fascist regime also built on the existing model of the ‘ideal man’. Per Benadusi, the fascist regime built a sense of national identity in part through the reliance on ‘hegemonic masculinity’⁹⁵ and physiological patriotism⁹⁶; the regime propagated the image of the ‘ideal fascist’ as the strong, virile young man, causing masculinity to become symbolic of “virtue, health, vigor, and national regeneration”⁹⁷. This evidences the claim made by Passerini, according to which Italy of the post-war period was “a country of patriarchal traditions”, which both Catholicism and Fascism exploited, albeit in different ways, “to establish their ideological domination”⁹⁸.

Additionally, due to the deep preoccupation of the regime with the virility of the Italian men and the femininity of the women, as well as the establishment of traditional family values, both

⁹³ Andrzej Gaca. On the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Lateran Pacts. Their genesis, most important provisions, and significance. *Studia Iuridica Toruniensia*, vol. 25, 2019: 66-67

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66

⁹⁵ Lorenzo Benadusi, “Masculinity,” in *The Politics of Everyday Life in Fascist Italy*, ed. Joshua Arthurs., Michael Ebner., and Kate Ferris, (Palgrave MacMillan. 2017), 52.

⁹⁶ Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man*, 12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁸ Luisa Passerini, “Gender Relations,” in *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. David Forgacs and Robert Lumley (Oxford University Press, 1996), 145.

homosexuality and feminism were perceived as enemies of the state as they were “intolerable for those who viewed virility as an indisputable requisite”⁹⁹. As explained by Spackman, “any redistribution of properties, any mixing and matching of terms — a feminine man, a masculine woman — is counted as an unnatural monstrosity, perversion, or aberration”¹⁰⁰. Homosexuality was therefore incompatible with the fascist vision for the new Italian man. Although, the penal code of 1930 did not mention homosexuality outright, the fascist regime was still able to punish this ‘incompatibility’ through “extrajudicial police repression”¹⁰¹ such as warnings, admonitions, and *confino* (internal exile). The understudied nature of the *confino* has unfortunately resulted in multiple people, including people in positions of authority¹⁰², believing that “spending two or three years on a Mediterranean island looked more like a holiday than a tough punishment”¹⁰³. Importantly, due to the extrajudicial nature of the repression, one of the key criteria that was cited as justification was that of a ‘public scandal’. Per Romano, “only what attracted public attention called for repression and segregation” and, as a result, homosexuality was punished when recognisable, declared, public”¹⁰⁴.

As a result, by the early 1960s, homosexuality was perceived in Italy in three declinations: that of a crime, that of an illness, and that of a sin¹⁰⁵.

⁹⁹ Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 34.

¹⁰¹ Pasquini, ““This Will Be the Love of the Future”,” 54.

¹⁰² Silvio Berlusconi quite infamously claimed that “Mussolini didn’t kill anyone, but used to send people on vacation in internal exile”. The interview was originally published in *The Spectator*, September 11, 2003, and reported by Italian newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera*, «Mussolini non ha mai ammazzato nessuno», September 11, 2003. Available from:

https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2003/09_Settembre/11/berlusconi.shtml

¹⁰³ Gabriella Romano, *The Pathologisation of Homosexuality in Fascist Italy: The Case of ‘G’* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 8.

¹⁰⁴ Romano, *The Pathologisation of Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ Giorgio Umberto Bozzo, *Le radici dell’orgoglio: La storia del movimento e della comunità LGBTQIA+ in Italia*, (GUB Edizioni, 2024), 20.

With the significant social and economic changes that marked the late 1950s and early 1960s¹⁰⁶, “Italy ceased to be a peasant country and became one of the major industrial nations of the West”¹⁰⁷. Between the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, increased social mobility, and an active left-wing, the 1960s in Italy saw a rise in movements that began to question certain sociocultural maxims and some of the “basic structures of capitalist society which contributed to sexual oppression”¹⁰⁸. Per Donatella della Porta, these movements resulted in waves of protests across factories and cities, with claims on themes such as “labor rights, housing conditions, and the price of public transport”¹⁰⁹. These transformations, along with increased exposure to international developments and activism culminated in Italians also experiencing a 1968 movement¹¹⁰. In addition to social upheaval and a rise in social movements, the late 1960s also saw the beginning of over a decade of terrorist attacks from both left and the right side of the political spectrum known as *Anni di Piombo*¹¹¹ (Years of Lead) which would go on to last until the early 1980s.

Overall, although the 1968 movement in Italy was not connected to a homosexual revolution as such, the model it set for social activism, in combination with the shockwaves of the Stonewall riots of 1969, did have an impact on, and set into motion, the gay liberation efforts that emerged in Italy in the 1970s¹¹².

¹⁰⁶ For a thorough overview of the social and economic development in Italy over this period, I recommend consulting “The ‘Economic Miracle’, Rural Exodus and Social Transformation” in Paul Ginsborg’s *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (Penguin Books, 1990), 212.

¹⁰⁸ Nardi, “The Globalization of the Gay & Lesbian Socio-Political Movement,” 578.

¹⁰⁹ Donatella della Porta, “Social Movements,” in *The Oxford Handbook to Italian Politics*, ed. Erik Jones and Gianfranco Pasquino (Oxford University Press, 2015), 646

¹¹⁰ For a compelling overview of the 1968 movement in Italy which encapsulates both the importance of oral history as well as the ‘personal is political’ approach, the author recommends Luisa Passerini’s *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy 1968*, tr. Lisa Erdberg. 1996, specifically Chapter 4 : One 1968.

¹¹¹ For a more thorough overview on the Years of Lead, please see: Anna Cento Bull, “Terrorist Movements,” in *The Oxford Handbook to Italian Politics*, 656-667.

¹¹² Rosaria Claudia Romano, “Le riviste LGBT. Storie ed evoluzione,” *Bibliomanie. Letterature, storiografie, semiotiche* 51, no.5, (2021):1, <https://doi.org/10.48276/issn.2280-8833.5946>.

2.3 F.U.O.R.I, *FUORI!* and the homosexual movement of the 1970s

It would be disingenuous – if not actively revisionist – to discuss the state of the queer movement and press in Italy in the twentieth century without acknowledging the pioneering work carried out by the members of the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* (Italian Revolutionary Homosexual Unitary Front), otherwise known as F.U.O.R.I. As can be inferred from the name, the group represented a “radical leftist movement” which placed itself at the front of the fight “for liberation sexuality and in opposition to heteronormative society”¹¹³ both through their activism and their homonymous magazine, *FUORI!*.

F.U.O.R.I and its magazine are frequently discussed as the Italian response to two things: the article by Andrea Romero in *La Stampa* titled ‘*L’infelice che ama la propria immagine*’ (‘The sad man who loves his own image’), published in April of 1971, wherein the author claimed that there was no such thing as a “happy homosexual”¹¹⁴, and the far-reaching shockwaves of the Stonewall riots that took place in the United States in 1969 and the ‘personal becoming political’¹¹⁵. In Adriana Morante’s historiographical article on the interaction between Italian queer film festivals and queer movements of the nineteen-seventies and eighties, she compares the impact of the creation of F.U.O.R.I to the Stonewall riots in the United States, claiming that the movement “embraced the demands of the new activism by already recalling in its name the imperative of coming out and declaring the need for an integration of the ‘sexual revolution’ with the ‘political’ one”¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice*, 26.

¹¹⁴ Andrea Romero, “L’infelice che ama la propria immagine,” *La Stampa*, April 15, 1971, http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option.com_lastampa/task/search/mod.libera/action.viewer/Itemid,3/page,17/articleid,0136_01_1971_0085_0017_24669492/

¹¹⁵ Elena Zambelli, Arianna Mainardi, Andrea Hajek. “Sexuality and power in contemporary Italy: subjectivities between gender norms, agency, and social transformation,” *Modern Italy* 23, no.2, (2018): 130, doi:10.1017/mit.2018.11.

¹¹⁶ Adriana Morante, “Dall’invisibile al visibile. Mappatura dei proto-festival omosessuali tra anni Settanta e Ottanta,” *Cinergie–Il cinema e le altre arti*, no. 26, (2024):137, <https://cinergie.unibo.it/article/download/20705/19054?inline=1>.

*FUORI!*¹¹⁷ was, per many sources, the first magazine of its kind in Italy¹¹⁸; that is, a magazine that accompanied the homosexual political movement¹¹⁹. While there had been sections of post-1968 publications dedicated to homophile press prior to the conception of the *FUORI!* magazine, they were largely “commercial, and far less politically-oriented than *FUORI!*”¹²⁰. The name of the magazine was also political; *FUORI!* was both the acronym for the name of the movement, as well as a direct reference to ‘coming out’ and “claiming our homosexual identity and taking the floor”¹²¹, and the play on words, according to **Pasquini**, was inspired by *Come Out!*, the first North American gay magazine of the post-Stonewall period¹²². Thus, the name’s significance was both cultural and political, showing familiarity with the developments of the LGBT movements outside of Italy, as well as a desire to bring LGBT issues out of the private and into the public sphere.

Unlike some other cases of social movement press whose trailblazing importance became apparent with the passage of time, the writers of *FUORI!* were aware of the cultural and historical value of their actions. According to Corrado Levi, one of the original writers for *FUORI!*, the members of F.U.O.R.I who were writing for the magazine were conscious of their position “as the vanguard of enormous importance” and the fact that they were simultaneously creating “a piece of history” through their articles for *FUORI!* magazine, as well as that the history that they were creating “was also a part of [their] lives”¹²³. This sense of being at the vanguard of the movement was also echoed by Pezzana himself in the first edition of the

¹¹⁷ Although many ways of representing the title can be found across Italian books and articles about the association and its magazine, for the sake of cohesion, this work will use *FUORI!* to refer to the magazine, and F.U.O.R.I to refer to the organisation.

¹¹⁸ Giovanni Dall’Orto. “Prefazione alla prima edizione,” in *Uscir Fuori: Dieci anni di lotte omosessuali in Italia: 1971-1981*, ed. Myriam Cristallo (Sandro Teti Editore, 1996), 13.

¹¹⁹ Cristina Tosetto, “Sesso, carta e palco: La fabbrica del teatro nelle riviste LGBT+ «Fuori!», «Lambda» e «Babilonia» (1971-1984),” *Mimesis Journal* 8, no.1, (2019): 69, <http://journals.openedition.org/mimesis/1646>.

¹²⁰ Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice*, 41.

For a more thorough overview of the pre-*FUORI!* LGBT press, the author of this thesis recommends Chapter 1.2 *Sviluppo del movimento e della stampa LGBT in Italia*

¹²¹ Tosetto, “Sesso, carta e palco,” 69.

¹²² Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice*, 23.

¹²³ Andrea Pini. *Quando eravamo froci; Gli omosessuali nell’Italia di una volta* (Il Saggiatore, 2011), 52.

FUORI! magazine, who claimed that it was obvious to all involved that they were not creating “simply ‘another’ journal” but creating an entirely new discourse, which wanted to begin the process of liberation with an explosion of joy and anger”¹²⁴.

However, even those at the heart of F.U.O.R.I had different approaches to the homosexual liberation project; the Pezzana-led merger of F.U.O.R.I with the Radical Party in 1974¹²⁵ was met with dissent from the more radical members such as Mario Mieli, leading to the *Fuori-autonomo*¹²⁶ and other separatist groups, such as the lesbian feminist groups seeking to gain autonomy from ‘heterofeminism’¹²⁷. By 1982, these differences led to the dissolution of F.U.O.R.I and a definitive end to the production of the magazine; the explanation offered by Pezzana was that times had changed and the original members of the association had grown up; as a result, instead of continuing to antagonise, the group would seek dialogue and become a *lobby*; a pressure group¹²⁸.

The above exploration of the *FUORI!* magazine proves two essential elements that will form the basis for the analysis and commentary of the *QUIR* magazine: firstly, that social movement press can be both product and producer of history, and second, that minority press can create a community around shared emotions and use them to rouse the readers into achieving the community’s goals. It also provides important context to the later years of the Italian homosexual movement, the early years of the AIDS pandemic, and the socio-cultural environment out of which the *QUIR* magazine was born.

¹²⁴ Angelo Pezzana, “Chi parla per gli omosessuali?,” *FUORI!*, no.1, June 1972: 2.

¹²⁵ Morante, “Dall’invisibile al visibile,” 138.

¹²⁶ Laura Schettini, *Mieli Mario*, Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, 2015, Available from: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/mario-mieli_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/mario-mieli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

¹²⁷ Francesca Cavarocchi. “Orgoglio e pregiudizio: note sul movimento gay e lesbico italiano,” *Zapruder: storie in movimento*, (2010): 84, https://storieinmovimento.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Zap21_7-Schegge1.pdf.

¹²⁸ Edoardo Ballone. “I gay mettono la cravata”, *La Stampa*, 22 January 1982. Available from: http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,6/articleid,1035_01_1982_0018_0006_14646790/.

2.4 AIDS and the 1980s

The late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by the rise, fall, and subsequent evolution of many forms of homosexual press, their foci and chronologies expertly presented in the *Quaderni di Critica Omosessuale* by the Centro di Documentazione in Bologna¹²⁹. Importantly for this Chapter, however, the more longevous publications of the era, particularly those that boasted a wide readership such as *Ompo* or *Babilonia*, grew to serve as points of reference, sources of information, and examples of good-practice for the community during the AIDS pandemic.

Even forty years after the first diagnosed case, the academic research on the impact of AIDS in Italy still tends to focus on the medical and scientific aspects of the disease, rather than social . As pointed out by Arfini et al., “the grass-roots response it elicited is yet to be extensively and systematically investigated, all the while its memory is endangered by the lack of easily accessible sources”¹³⁰. As a result of this research gap, it is more difficult to trace the specific activism of the Italian LGBT community than, for example, that of the Anglophone groups such as ACT UP! or Queer Nation. Nevertheless, there are some studies, conducted largely through academic theses much like this one, which specifically trace the activity of Italian LGBT groups or notable individuals from the 1980s onwards in AIDS education and prevention within their communities. Three of such works, by Paolo Antonelli, Rachele Perelli and Alessia Bon respectively, acknowledge the initial mishandling by the media of the disease by labelling it a ‘homosexual disease’¹³¹, leading to prevailing disinterest of the government and national health services in studying the disease¹³², and resulting in the responsibility of

¹²⁹ Centro di Documentazione Cassero, *Quaderni di Critica Omosessuale: catalogo dei periodici omosessuali italiani*, ed. Stefano Casi, 1986: 13-39.

¹³⁰ Elia AG Arfini, Beatrice Busi, Alina Dambrosio Clementelli, Antonia Anna Ferrante, and Goffredo Polizzi. “An infectious example: early Italian HIV activism”. *Socioscapes. International Journal of Societies, Politics and Cultures* 2, no.1, (2022): 2, DOI 10.48250/1027.

¹³¹ Paolo Antonelli, “Il minority stress nella popolazione gay e lesbica italiana: il ruolo dell’omonegatività interiorizzata” (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2012), 23.

¹³² Rachele Perelli, “«Si può far bene l’amore senza rischio». L’HIV/AIDS e l’attivismo LGBT+ in Italia (1980-1990)” (Master’s thesis, Università degli Studi di Padova, 2024), 35

collaborating with health services, informing the community about the disease and risk management, to grassroots groups such as the aforementioned homosexual press, the *Lega Italiana per la lotta contro l'AIDS* (Italian League for the Fight against AIDS) – henceforth LILA – or Arcigay¹³³.

Arcigay – occasionally also Arci Gay – is the first and largest Italian LGBT non-for-profit organization¹³⁴. Originally created in 1980 in Palermo, associated groups spread across Italy over the following years, though it was not until March 1985 that the association transformed itself into a “full-fledged national organisation by endowing itself with a platform, a board of directors, a national president, and a national secretary”¹³⁵.

According to Arfini et al, the initial goal of Arcigay had been more recreational, focusing more on providing “places where [LGBT] people could meet, hang out, have fun together”¹³⁶, but the arrival of the AIDS pandemic required a different sort of activism. Arcigay took up this mantle, dedicating itself to the protection of rights, diffusion of information, and practical initiatives such as the distribution of condoms¹³⁷. The professionalisation of Arcigay, while allowing it to benefit from wider resources and outreach, also caused it to face what Jetté calls ‘institutional anxiety’, resulting in “internal and external censorship pressures due to their relationships with governmental agencies and corporate funders”¹³⁸.

¹³³ Alessia Bon, “Discriminazione e violenza contro le persone LGBTQIA+: presa in carico e prospettive educative all’interno del servizio Villa C.A.R.R.A” (**Bachelor’s** thesis, Università degli Studi di Padova, 2022), 29

¹³⁴ “Who we are,” Arcigay, <https://www.arcigay.it/en/chi-siamo/>.

¹³⁵ “La storia di Arcigay,” Arcigay, <https://www.arcigay.it/en/archivio/2007/12/la-storia-di-arcigay/>.

¹³⁶ Arfini et al., “An infectious example,” 9.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁸ Jetté, “Public History and Sexuality,” 507.

2.5 ACT UP, Queer Nation, and the context of the *QUIR* magazine

In the United States, the poor handling of the AIDS crisis creating a void that “invited, indeed forced, the gay community to coalesce politically in novel ways, [...] to fight the disease on its own”¹³⁹. As a result, ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was formed in New York City in March 1987, engaging in “office occupations, road blockades, and demonstrations at international AIDS conferences and the headquarters of government bureaucracies”¹⁴⁰. In 1990, Queer Nation formed out of those active in ACT UP who were more focused on queer liberation and queer identity politics than strictly disease mitigation, participating in “kiss-ins, anti-bashing actions, and protests against homophobic officials and institutions”¹⁴¹. Queer Nation’s famous accomplishment was their ability to reclaim the word “queer”. Citing Bérubé and Escoffier, Erin J. Rand claims that queer was intended to be confrontational, and that Queer Nation activists used it in an attempt to “combine contradictory impulses: to bring together people who have been made to feel perverse, queer, odd, outcast, different, and deviant, and to affirm sameness by defining a common identity on the fringes”¹⁴². This particular interpretation of the motivations behind the term queer – with the term encapsulating both, the ‘oddness’ and the ‘sameness’ of the community behind it – will be of particular importance for the purposes of analysing the *QUIR* magazine’s use of the word.

Unlike the United States, in Italy, the early 1990s were a moment of “social, political, and economic disarray” which challenged the postwar political status quo; notably, the dominance of the *Democrazia Christiana* (Christian Democracy) which had won every election between 1948 and 1992. As summarised by Gianluca Passarelli:

¹³⁹ Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 139.

¹⁴⁰ Liz Highleyman, “Radical queers or queer radicals? Queer activism and the global justice movement,” in *From Act Up to the WTO: Urban protest and community building in the era of globalization*, ed. Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, (Verso, 2002), 107.

¹⁴¹ Highleyman, “Radical queers or queer radicals?,” 107.

¹⁴² Allan Bérubé and Jeffrey Escoffier, “Queer/Nation,” *Out/Look* 11, (1991): 12 as quoted in Erin J. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*, 2014: 4

The early 1990s were marked by the Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) and Tangentopoli (Bribe City) corruption investigations in Milan, and the Communist Party's (PCI) change of name, organization, and ideology after 1989's international events¹⁴³.

As a result of these crises and the Mafia massacres of 1992-93, over the two-year period between 1992 and 1994, the parties which had dominated the country either collapsed and disappeared or restructured and returned, and the electoral and party financing systems were significantly reformed¹⁴⁴.

With the changing political structures as well as the general unrest caused by rapid social, economic, and political change, the way of organising social movements also changed. As developed by Donatella della Porta, the classical social movements of the 1970s had to evolve in the 1990s, developing "formal, centralized, well-structured organisations" marked by lobbying, pressure politics, and "interactions with local and national parliaments and governments"¹⁴⁵.

Additionally, through the initial institutionalisation of the homosexual movement that began in the late 1970s, the faltering, but nonetheless present, media coverage of AIDS, and the aforementioned centralisation and politicisation of the homosexual movement, by the early 1990s, the mainstream media was aware of the homosexual community and, even more importantly, the struggles faced by its members. One such case is evidenced in Paolo Gusmeroli and Luca Trappolin's quantitative overview of the appearances of the word 'omofobia' or 'omofob*' in Italian newspapers *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*. Their study traces the use of the term 'omofobia' in the respective newspapers between 1979 until 2007 and offers contextual explanations for the reasons behind the increase in usage. As can

¹⁴³ Gianluca Passarelli, "Populism and the Lega Nord," in *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, ed. Erik Jones and Gianfranco Pasquino (Oxford University Press, 2015), 228.

¹⁴⁴ Passarelli, "Populism and the Lega Nord," 309.

¹⁴⁵ Della Porta, "Social Movements," 647-8.

be seen from their section on the 1990s¹⁴⁶, by the time the *QUIR* magazine was being written, the term ‘omofobia’ was already in use by the mainstream newspapers. Although it was usually used in response to a homophobic comment or incident by people who belonged to or were at least supportive of the gay counterpublic, it nonetheless implies, at least on some level, an awareness of the phenomenon amongst the writers and the readership of Italian mass media.

It is this context – rapid political change, economic development, ongoing AIDS crisis, and slow but steady rise in media coverage of homosexual issues – that led to the creation of the *QUIR* magazine.

2.6 *Siamo qui, siamo quir...*

As explained in the Introduction, the *QUIR* magazine ran from April 1993 (№ 0) to Summer 1997 (№ 26). Although this work only analyses the first year of *QUIR*’s publication, the period nevertheless saw staggering social, political, and cultural change, both on the local and international levels. On the international front, the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993, the first of its kind since the end of the Cold War, and the adoption of the Roth Report¹⁴⁷ in February 1994 were positive developments. On the domestic front, Italy transitioned from the First to the Second Republic with the elections of March 1994 and had to find its way among the shift to the right that followed the victory of the centre-right *Forza Italia*.

In its first publication, (№ 0 of April 1993), the *QUIR* magazine expresses its *raison d’être*, the motivations behind its unconventional name, and its hopes for the future in the first Editorial.

¹⁴⁶ Paolo Gusmeroli., Luca Trappolin, “Homophobia as a Keyword in the Italian Liberal Press (1979–2007). Debating New Boundaries of Sexual Citizenship,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 25, no. 5 (2020): 655-657. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2020.1825182>.

¹⁴⁷ Referred to as such for the contribution of Claudia Roth, a member of the German Green Party and voted on – with a favourable result – on the 8th February 1994. For the full report, see: Claudia Roth, Report on the Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs on equal rights for homosexuals and lesbians in the EC. Session Documents 1994, Document A3-0028/94, 26 January 1994. [EU European Parliament Document], available from: <https://aei.pitt.edu/49350/>

When addressing the magazine's goals, the creators acknowledge that "*QUIR* is meant to reflect Italian culture, or, more precisely, Florentine culture"¹⁴⁸, and express their intentions to do so for both, the local readers, as well as the foreign ones, through the inclusion of English translations for most articles as well as the choice to mail the magazine abroad. The circulation of the magazine to other queer groups outside of Italy copied the practices of the earlier homophile organisations which aimed to ensure a "transnational circuit of ideas and resources" and educate the readers and writers about the "history of sexuality and their own connections to a perceived shared past"¹⁴⁹.

Regarding its format, the first Editorial acknowledges the importance of Arci Gay and the organisation's help in the diffusion of the magazine all over Italy, but states that *QUIR* was not intended as the association's magazine. Instead, the Editorial stresses that "*QUIR* is for everyone"¹⁵⁰, a powerful statement in a country experiencing increasing political polarisation. Moreover, the Editorial adds that *QUIR* was intended as the forum for all the different gay and lesbian groups operating in Florence regardless of their political or cultural divisions, and, to that end, *QUIR* welcomed contributions from its readers.

This approach to publishing is in line with Serby's analysis of similar magazines from the 1960s and 1970s that emerged in the United States: given that the goal of many editors was to "build an activist counterpublic"¹⁵¹, they often "eschewed commercial imperatives and shared creative control with the readers whose letters, drawings, poems, and polemics filled the pages of their publications"¹⁵². This horizontal publishing model allowed them to create what Serby terms a 'public epistolary network' which allowed the publications' readers to communicate,

¹⁴⁸ Nina Bellini [alias for Nina Peci], "Editoriale," *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, April 1994, 1994: 2 [English text taken directly from the magazine]

¹⁴⁹ Jetté, "Public History and Sexuality," 496.

¹⁵⁰ Bellini, "Editoriale," April 1994, 2.

¹⁵¹ Serby, "Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals", 11.

¹⁵² Ibid., 4.

and embodied the principles of participatory democracy. As evidenced by the magazine's very first issue (№ 0) and reiterated in its anniversary edition (№ 11 of May 1994), *QUIR*'s editors also followed this approach: although there was a core team of editors and recurring writers, they were few in number; per the Interview with Nina Peci, (Appendix 1), there were only three people 'on staff', while most of the material published in the magazine came from the comments, letters, and articles sent by the readers.

Additionally, the openness granted by the horizontal model of publishing meant that problems which other, more hierarchal magazines might have encountered, such as one-sided representation of the queer community, were avoided. As noted by the few scholars of the underground press of the time, though parity was never quite achieved, the predominantly masculine character of Italian gay press began to diminish by the end of the 1980s, in part due to the internal fracture in the movement caused by lesbian separatism¹⁵³. The *QUIR* magazine is one of the heralds of this change: in its anniversary issue of May 1994, the editors address some of the comments they had received over the year of the magazine's existence; one being that "'there's too many women in the magazine'"¹⁵⁴. Though whether the original commenter's intention was in reference to articles covering women's matters or the quantity of female writers is unclear, the editor, Peci (often writing under the pseudonym of 'Nina Bellini'), nevertheless responds "*Quir è per tutti i sessi quindi abitatevi, boys!*" ('QUIR is for all sexes, so get used to it, boys!'). The full significance of this editorial choice, as well as the importance of the English translations, will be addressed in the Findings.

In addition to the inclusion of lesbian issues in magazines and the generally more horizontal mode of publication, Romano also observes that the 1990s saw "increased distribution of free

¹⁵³ Romano, "Le riviste LGBT," 12.

¹⁵⁴ Nina Bellini, "Editoriale," *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, May 1994, 1994: 3.

periodicals, which lived off the advertising of the places where they were distributed”¹⁵⁵. The *QUIR* magazine was one of such periodicals; offering advertising space to anything from discotheques, bars, cafes and restaurants to hairdressing salons, hotels, saunas, and language centres. The magazine was free to pick up from the Arci Gay headquarters as well as various bookshops, cafes, and even the tourist information point at the Santa Maria Novella station. However, due to the underground and not-for-profit nature of its production, *QUIR*, much like its predecessors, relied on reader-to-reader exchanges to reach a mass audience¹⁵⁶. This, while undoubtedly fostering the spirit of community, made it difficult to calculate the magazine’s monthly readership¹⁵⁷.

Stylistically, the magazine aligns with Serby’s assessment of the aesthetics of underground press publications often reflecting their creators’ ambitions: “handwritten text, haphazard layouts, and whimsical flourishes and imperfections drew attention to the production process, heightening the intimacy between readers and writers”¹⁵⁸. These same aesthetic choices can be seen in *QUIR*: black-and-white, with eye-catching covers and provocative graphics, often eschewing the common two-column layout in favour of having the arrangement of the text itself add to the message, the magazine’s format was not just bold but also easily-recognisable. In the words of Peci¹⁵⁹, the black-and-white format was chosen to cut costs, while the unconventional layout was inspired by the ‘zine’¹⁶⁰ look coming out of militant groups in other countries. However, the magazine’s concordance with the graphic styles of similar works did

¹⁵⁵ Romano, “Le riviste LGBT,” 12-13.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁵⁷ In the interview (Appendix 1), Peci claims that the writers would print “**a thousand copies**” for the first few years of publication, and asserted that everyone at Arci Gay Florence was reading – or at least aware – of the publication’s existence. Additionally, she recounts seeing a couple on a beach in Croatia reading her magazine, evidencing the magazine’s international reach.

¹⁵⁸ Serby, “”Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals”,” 11.

¹⁵⁹ See: Appendix 1

¹⁶⁰ ‘a non-commercial often homemade or online publication usually devoted to specialized and often unconventional subject matter’, Merriam-Webster, “zine” (n), accessed: May 24, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/zine>

not mean that its visual was universally-appreciated. Writing in the anniversary edition (№ 11), Peci acknowledges that some have criticised the ‘slick’ (*svelto* in Italian) look of the magazine as ‘too-American’, yet explains that it was chosen to “put an end to the idea that just because we are gay we have to put up with ‘shoddy’ design” and that the queer community “deserves a bit more self-respect” and one way of doing that is producing a good-looking product¹⁶¹.

¹⁶¹ Nina Bellini, “BUON COMPLEANNO QUIR / HAPPY BIRTHDAY QUIR,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, May 1994, 1994: 2.

Chapter 3: Findings

This chapter is dedicated to an in-depth discourse analysis in order to explore the specific ways in which the *QUIR* magazine went about establishing a queer community, and the strategies employed by the writers and editors to combat the lackadaisical attitudes of its members.

The first copy of *QUIR* (№ 0 of April 1993) opens with an Italian-English editorial which explains the meaning of ‘queer’, the reasoning for the magazine’s title, and the hopes of the magazine’s creators for its future. Given its clear explanation of the magazine’s *raison d’être*, the whole page has been included in the Appendix 2.

Firstly, though it is not stated in the Editorial, the choice for the magazine’s title originated from Peci’s involvement with Queer Nation prior to her arrival to Italy (see: *Interview with Nina Peci* in Appendix 1). However, the Editorial, written by Peci herself under the pseudonym ‘Nina Bellini’, acknowledges that ‘queer’ does not lend itself to a neat translation into Italian. Moreover, in the interview, Peci explains that the choice to write ‘queer’ phonetically stemmed from her unwillingness to be perceived as imposing the American approach on the Italian movement. As a result, the term is frequently transcribed as ‘quir’, domesticating it for the Italian readership¹⁶². This domestication also supports the Editorial’s claim to a desire to reflect Florentine culture and life, yet also the diversity within the community. Peci claims that ‘queer’ encompasses *everybody*:

gay, lesbian, homosexual, faggot, queen, women who prefer women, men who prefer men, separatist, leather, dyke, butch, femme, bear, transvestite, transexual – in other words, anything not heterosexual¹⁶³.

¹⁶² While it is unknown whether the creators were aware of the precedent when choosing the name, the *QUIR* magazine was not the first in Italy to domesticate the English term this way: a leather and accessories store in Palermo has had ‘Quir’ as its name since the late 1980s. Nicola Belluci recently released a documentary about the shop, its owners, and its role in Palermo’s gay culture and history. See: “A Palermo Love Story: Quir,” Quir, accessed 30 May, 2025, <https://quir-film.com/>.

¹⁶³ Nina Bellini, “Editoriale,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, April 1993, 1993: 2.

Thus, it is precisely the connection between the diversity of the community to the diversity embedded in the term that Peci utilised as the justification for the use of ‘queer’ despite the potential risk of forcing an anglophone term on a non-anglophone readership. Moreover, her claim that “‘queer’ means ‘*vive la difference*’ between us but uniting ourselves in the struggle to make society less oppressive” serves as a call to arms, painting the differences within the queer community as an element to promote unity, rather than separatism.

Additionally, the use of ‘*frocio*’ (‘faggot’) or ‘*buco*’ (‘queen’) as identity labels of the same valence as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ in the first edition – that Peci called the ‘sample copy’ – clarifies the tone the magazine intended to take in its future editions. The inclusion of these terms also lends itself to the editors’ later efforts of using the magazine as a means of mobilising its readership into a more intersectional struggle. Yet the use of the English term ‘queer’ also inadvertently highlights the predominantly homosexual nature of the queer community in the early 1990s, as it evidences the lack of language to refer to anything not strictly homosexual in Italian. Though the Editorial has the Italian and English text side-by-side, the translation in some sections is unequal: for example, the English text reads: “It [the magazine] should be used as a way of expressing all these differences under one roof of ‘queerness’, between one cover, QUIR”, while the Italian text uses the term ‘*omosessualità*’ rather than ‘queerness’ or anything similarly broad. This unequal translation of terms occurs more than once in the first few editions; usually, where the Italian text uses the neutral, scientific ‘*omosessualità*’, the English translation utilises a more inflammatory term, such as ‘queerness’ or ‘faggots’, or terms which had already been established as collocations with the queer community, such as ‘raging’ or ‘flaming’. In the few occasions where the writers wish to reflect a similar sentiment in Italian, they used the term ‘*scheccare*’, which, while already established in the urban areas of

Italy by the early 1990s, was not a direct equivalent¹⁶⁴. This could reflect the lack of a similar ‘umbrella term’ in the Italian language, as well as the more pervasive lack of intersectionality in the queer community of the time.

Finally, the Editorial ends with the declaration that “*QUIR* is the hope for all of us, not to put aside our differences but to unite them and use them in a common struggle. ‘We’re here, we’re queer, get used to us!’”. Thus, the № 0 edition of the *QUIR* magazine emphasised the differences within the Italian gay movement, yet also the propensity for separating due to those differences, rather than uniting under them. To that end, the magazine’s writers used the № 0 edition to express their intention to provide a platform for all those diverse voices to express themselves between the pages of the *QUIR* magazine, thus positioning it as a tool for the construction of community.

The following sections will analyse how the magazine set about creating a readership community. This will be accomplished through an analysis of five strategies employed by the writers, notably: the participatory, horizontal nature of the magazine; its positioning as a source of important information for the queer community; its function as a vehicle for interaction; its appeals to the social responsibility of its readers; and its use of language and emotions to provoke certain reactions.

3.1 For the people, by the people

The creators were clear from the № 0 edition that they intended to make something that could overcome the divisions within the queer community and unite it instead, a sentiment which

¹⁶⁴ Per the 2009 Supplement to the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*: “*Scheccare*, Assumere atteggiamenti affettatamente o marcatamente effeminati” (‘Display markedly effeminate behaviours’) Available from: https://www.gdli.it/pdf_viewer/Scripts/pdf.js/web/viewer.aspx?file=/PDF/GDLI24/GDLI_Supplemento_2009_72_8.pdf&parola=scheccare [accessed May 25, 2025]

was later reiterated in the Editorial of the № 7 January 1994 issue titled ‘1994: L’ANNO DEI QUEER’ / ‘1994: THE YEAR OF THE QUEER’ (see: Appendix 3&4).

The Editorial of № 7 acknowledges that *QUIR* was created as both, a challenge to the Florentine community, and a release. A ‘challenge’ to “all the different realities that make up the queer world” – where the writers mix the ‘standard’ identity terms such as lesbian, homo- or bisexual, with the more divisive ones, such as ‘fag-hags’, ‘*buchi*’ (‘faggots’), ‘*checcce*’ (‘queens’), or ‘*camioniste*’ (‘diesel dykes’) – and a ‘release’ for “all the squabbling that usually occurs between all these different realities of the queer world”. Specifically, the writers reiterate that the *QUIR* magazine is a space open to anyone, adding that only through this exchange of ideas can the community learn to “accept ourselves and love ourselves as one big diverse but unified family”.

However, this openness to diverse viewpoints was not without consequences. Though Peci states in the interview that the editors did not have anyone abusing the power of the print, the lack of outright abuse did not mean that the readership always agreed with what was being published:

the first two editions (№ 0 and № 1) both featured strongly-worded sections on religion vis-à-vis homosexuality. In ‘*La condizione omosessuale in Europa: Parte I*’ / ‘The gay situation in Europe: Part I’ by Andrea Baldi, the writer discusses the rights of homosexuals in various European countries, and includes a somewhat forlorn “The church, always the church against us, whether it be Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant”¹⁶⁵. Still in № 0, in the article ‘*Gli Ayatollah prossimi venturi; In Italia non c’è solo Tangentopoli e l’operazione mani pulite, anche se noi, gay e lesbiche...*’ / ‘The Next Ayatollahs; In Italy, with Tangentopoli and Operation Clean

¹⁶⁵ Andrea Baldi, “La condizione omosessuale in Europa: Parte I’ / ‘The gay situation in Europe: Part I’,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, April 1993, 1993: 6.

Hands on our minds, gays and lesbians...’ the writer, Maria Perez¹⁶⁶, claims that the gay community has had to fight to construct even the minimum of “liveable space in a country still deeply conditioned by the fundamentalist catholic lobby”. The most direct denigratory comment appears in the responses of ‘Doctor Love’ – a sort of Agony Aunt column where readers could write and receive advice – to a girl who had developed feelings for an older woman in her parish. The answer from ‘Dr. Love’ was: “*Spesso gli ambienti cattolici sono frequentati da omosessuali tormentati capaci di rovinare la vita a se stessi e agli altri*”¹⁶⁷ (‘Often Catholic circles are frequented by tormented homosexuals capable of ruining lives for themselves and others’).

The reader response appeared in the next issue, № 1 of May 1993 (see: Appendix 5), where ‘Marcello’ wrote to ‘Dr. Love’ to address the views expressed by the writers about religion:

The thing that offended me most was definitely the response to the letter of the Christian girl, who manifested all her doubts about falling in love with a woman older than her, whom she met in the Community. [...] At this point I wonder which side the prejudice is on and whether the new “sin” is not wanting only a platonic relationship with those you love¹⁶⁸.

The magazine’s reply, beyond the explanation that the girl had never claimed to be religious herself, and that the harsh tone of ‘Dr. Love’ was due to the girl’s age, was rather unapologetic:

I have never claimed to be a neutral person without personal convictions so I take full responsibility for what I said: debatable, but it is what experience has taught me.

This exchange shows that religion was a sensitive and divisive topic among the community, demonstrating Italy’s deep-rooted religious tradition. Moreover, it shows the magazine negotiating its positionality on certain subjects with its readership; though ‘Dr. Love’ did not explicitly apologise for their words in the № 0 issue, the opportunity to discuss contrasting views was nevertheless in fulfilment of the hopes for debate established in the Editorial of № 0. Additionally, the exchange between ‘Marcello’ and ‘Dr. Love’ evidences Gee’s claim that

¹⁶⁶ Confirmed as a pseudonym, although real name unknown

¹⁶⁷ Dr. Love, *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, April 1993, 1993: 23.

¹⁶⁸ Dr. Love, *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, May 1993, 1993: 30.

discourses are ‘owned’ and ‘operated’ by a socio-culturally defined group of people, and that they can “reward and sanction characteristic ways of acting, talking, believing, valuing, and interacting”¹⁶⁹. Though the response to ‘Marcello’s’ complaint was politely worded, it was nonetheless uncompromising in respect of the views expressed. This reinforces Pasquini’s point that even places which were intended as ‘emotional refuges’ for queer individuals, such as gay magazines, could become places of emotional sanction if the unwritten rules governing them were broken by the members¹⁷⁰.

The letter by ‘Marcello’ was not the only case of the readers using the platform of the magazine to voice their discontent with something done or said by the writers or the editorial team. The № 3 July/August 1993 issue includes a letter from Lunardi Eliano, representative of the Livorno group of Arci Gay Pisa (see: Appendix 6). Eliano begins by complimenting the *QUIR* magazine and the initiative of its writers to “give an extra voice to those who still have too few opportunities to have their say”, acknowledging the need for queer people to build and manage their own media spaces and the role of that media in fostering emancipation and awareness. However, Eliano then criticises the *QUIR* magazine’s referral to an ‘American type homosexual culture’, claiming that the Italian community was still light-years away from it. He observes that there are “too many difficult words” in the articles and accuses the writers of “intellectual snobbism”. Finally, Eliano concludes with a “benevolently poisonous” objection about the inclusion of the English translations, asking: “Since you call yourselves ‘Florentine monthly’ wouldn’t a translation in the colourful Florentine dialect have been more sympathetic?”.

The response to Eliano’s letter reiterates the aims established in the Editorial of the № 0 issue. Firstly, the writers state that the *QUIR* magazine intends to function as a point of reference and

¹⁶⁹ Gee, *The Social Mind*, 107.

¹⁷⁰ Pasquini, “This Will Be the Love of the Future”, 78.

debate for all the realities that make up the Italian gay and lesbian world. Secondly, they remind that the magazine is translated into English to promote ‘Italian-style’ homosexuality beyond Italy’s borders, as, per the response, the Italian perspective on homosexuality “has never left the country”.

Additionally, this response was the first instance in which the writers explicitly stated that the *QUIR* magazine was structured differently to other newspapers due to its lack of “a real staff of journalists who write regularly every month”. Instead, the response clarifies that the editors were more so in charge of organising and publishing the material which the *readers* sent to them:

In short, you are the ones who 'create' this newspaper, with your articles and letters. So when you read something in here, keep in mind that it is an expression not of a rigid 'line' of a journal that wants to impose its philosophy at all costs, but of a person from our community, with their own cultural background, and their own opinions.

The reminder that the contents of the *QUIR* magazine were decided by its readers was efficient in absolving any single individual involved in its creation of the accusation of ‘intellectual snobbism’, as well as a point of evidence for the magazine’s collaborative, horizontal, “by the people, for the people”¹⁷¹ nature.

Thus, the ability for the readers to communicate directly with the editors of the *QUIR* magazine aided in the negotiation of the magazine’s role in the local queer community, and allowed its members to directly participate in the way their community was represented.

3.2 A source of information

One of the practical ways in which the magazine built a sense of community among its readership was by providing information and creating opportunities for interaction. For

¹⁷¹ See: **Appendix 1:** *Interview with Nina Peci*

example, the magazine frequently published announcements celebrating successes of the Arci Gay association or the Italian queer community in other cities, or included Public Service Announcements (PSAs) informing the readership of the developments in public health measures for the queer community, both in the fight against AIDS and everyday life.

In the № 3 issue of July/August 1993 of the *QUIR* magazine, the editorial team praised Arci Gay's achievement in getting a full page of advertising space to celebrate the International LGBT Pride Day¹⁷² in the *la Repubblica*, *l'Unità*, and *il manifesto* newspapers, citing it as the “first time such an outspoken message has found an echo in the 'big' national media” and calling it a “victory to rejoice in”. Similarly, the № 8 February 1994 edition mentioned the recent formation of Arci Gay Pisa, specifically commenting on the involvement of the student population and those originally from Livorno, joking that Arci Gay Pisa had succeeded in unifying under a single banner “gay representatives of two cities that over the ages have always hated and taunted each other”¹⁷³. This remark, while humorous, especially considered that it's followed by local sayings ‘*meglio un morto in casa che un pisano all'uscio*’ and Livorno's ‘*ghiozza e piu che ghiozza*’ is nonetheless important in showing how community can be formed even among difference, and how bonds formed through a common, queer identity can overcome other forms of prejudice, even those of regionalisms or upbringing.

The magazine also covered the more impactful developments such as those in the fields of legal rights of queer individuals: in the Stampa Flash section of the № 6 December 1993 issue, the editors included a line celebrating the success of Empoli, a small town in Tuscany, in allowing homosexual couples to “officially register their relationship in the town hall and take advantage

¹⁷² The Arci Gay advertisement can be found on page 12 of the *L'Unità* newspaper from 28 June 1993.

Available from:

https://ia902203.us.archive.org/view_archive.php?archive=/35/items/archivio_unita/L%27Unit%C3%A0_Archivio_Storico_Annuario_1993.rar&file=1993%2F19930628.pdf [Accessed 20 May 2025]

¹⁷³ Marco Rava, “Toscane: Un viaggio queer nelle province / Tuscans: A queer look at Tuscany's counties,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, February 1994, 1994: 8.

of the same rights granted to married heterosexuals”¹⁷⁴. The Stampa Flash of the № 1 May 1993 issue, meanwhile, celebrated the successful establishment of the union counselling service against discrimination in the workplace carried out by Arci Gay Florence in collaboration with the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL). Another development that was highlighted by the *QUIR* magazine as a cause for celebration was the organisation of the first Arci Gay Donna convention in May of 1993. The article offers an overview of what was discussed at the Convention, mentioning subjects such as the relationship of the lesbian movement to the more general women’s movement or that of civil unions and matrimony for gay couples, and concludes with a hopeful note that “the two basic objectives of the convention, a public validation and a means of strengthening our identity as a movement, were overwhelmingly met”¹⁷⁵. Beyond merely reporting on the developments in Arci Gay, the magazine also informed the readers of how they could get involved in those initiatives and have their say. For example, in the article published in the № 7 January 1994 issue titled ‘*Anche le lesbiche nel loro piccolo s’incassano: Convegno nazionale Arci Gay Donna a Firenze*’ / ‘Raging Lesbians: The National Lesbian Convention held in Florence’, Valeria de Sanctis discusses the National Convention of Arci Gay Donna that took place in November of the previous year, informing the community of the topics discussed during the Convention, such as civil unions, paedophilia, or minority politics, serving once more as the source of information for the magazine’s readership. Importantly, however, she also invites “all groups interested to discuss our proposal in order to help give direction to the opinions and thoughts

¹⁷⁴ Stampa Flash, *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, December 1993, 1993: 4.

¹⁷⁵ Graziella Bertozzo, “Convention Arci Gay Donna: Una nuova generazione in movimento / The Italian National Lesbian Association: The latest convention intitled “A New and Growing Generation”,” in: *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, June 1993, 1993: 23.

brought forth by the lesbians of Arci Gay and thus furthering the active collaboration to the movement”¹⁷⁶.

The inclusion of these achievements and suggestions for how the readers could get involved shows the magazine’s commitment to proving that the queer community exists, and that, no matter how isolated or disparate its members may feel, has people who are willing to fight for the improvement of their legal rights and wellbeing. This could be seen as a means of bolstering hope amongst the readership or even indirectly guiding the community towards a more engaged activism and political consciousness.

Additionally, given the ongoing crisis caused by the AIDS pandemic, the *QUIR* magazine frequently included articles and PSAs on health. For example, the № 1 edition includes an article ‘*Donne a rischio*’ / ‘Women at risk’ by Mirella Sandonnini about the risk of breast cancer in women, covering everything from statistics and developments in treatment in Italy and abroad, to more practical information on who’s the most at risk, what to do, and where to turn for advice or treatment. Similarly, № 4 includes an article titled ‘*Solidariet e Salute – il Consuntorio per la salute omosessuale di Firenze*’ (‘Solidarity and Health – the Florence’s Clinic for Homosexual Health’) by Riccardo Pieralli and Sandro Ocarina (Appendix 10). In it, the writers highlight the inadequate response of the national public health services to the AIDS crisis and the need that lacking response caused for the gay community to organise and fill that gap, resulting in structures like the Clinic that offer ‘self-help, from homosexual to homosexual’. This, combined with the interview with Mirella Sandonnini, the HIV/AIDS consultant at the Clinic (Appendix 11), helped inform the readership of the ongoing danger posed by the AIDS pandemic, as well as what constituted as ‘good practice’ behaviours – such

¹⁷⁶ Valeria de Sanctis, “Anche le lesbiche nel loro piccolo s’incazzano: Convegno nazionale Arci Gay Donna a Firenze / Raging Lesbians: The National Lesbian Convention held in Florence,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, January 1994, 1994: 25-30.

as the practice of safe-sex and regular health checks – positioning the magazine as a point of reference and a repository of important information on queer life.

3.3 A point of connection

The magazine also built a sense of community through the facilitation of communication between the readers, whether through the magazine itself or in person. This was accomplished through the organisation of a writing competition *QUIR-SQUILLE* in the № 2 June 1993 issue, or the frequent mentions of gay-friendly establishments, both through its advertisements or the full-page PSAs such as in Appendix 7, or even through the publishing of information for those who wanted to explore alternatives to the ‘official’ meeting places and associations dedicated to gays and lesbians. An example of the latter can be found in an article titled ‘*Trovarsi, incontrarsi, conoscersi: dove e come*’ (‘Find each other, meet each other, and get to know each other: where and how’) in the № 2 issue, which delves into the practice of ‘cruising’¹⁷⁷ and discusses the various places in Florence known for their popularity as sites of queer encounters. Each edition after № 0 also featured a section dedicated to *Annunci* (Announcements) which included a column for *Personali* (Personal) – an echo of the traditions of the American gay press of the 1960s to include sections for ‘classified ads’¹⁷⁸ or ‘personals’¹⁷⁹. These ‘*Personali*’ allowed for the magazine’s readers to express what they were looking for, be that friendship, companionship, or even romantic relationships. The sections dedicated to *Dr. Love* or *Lettere* also provided a forum for the magazine’s readers to write to both, the editorial team, as well as to other readers, often responding to letters that had been published in previous editions. A notable example of such an interaction can be found in the № 4 September 1993 issue

¹⁷⁷ Cruising – *battuage* in Italian – refers to (usually male) homosexuals scoping public places in order to look for sexual encounters with anonymous same-sex partners.

¹⁷⁸ Robert J. Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Indiana University Press, 1970), 92.

¹⁷⁹ Serby, “‘Not to Produce Newspapers, but Committed Radicals’,” 7.

(Appendix 9), where ‘Maila M’ wrote to the *QUIR* magazine in response to a woman whose message to ‘Dr. Love’ had been included in the № 3 edition. In the № 3 issue, a woman anonymously asked for advice, revealing that she no longer had any will to live, and concluded by remarking that those living in Florence were incredibly fortunate to live in big city. The № 4 ‘Dr. Love’ section included a response from ‘Maila M’ to the letter of the previous edition, in which ‘Maila M’ claimed that she’d like to help the other woman and asked that she not do ‘anything stupid’. The whole response in Italian can be found in Appendix 9; however, for the purposes of discussing how the letter demonstrates the magazine’s function in building a community among its readership, the following section has been translated:

Others taught me this and so I am passing it to you: life can be beautiful, it can also be pink, as long as you want it, as long as you have above all faith in yourself and in those people who want your happiness, but without hiding yourself, without hiding what you are, what we are. I know it is difficult but you will have to do it to be a truly happy person. If you want you can write to me; Arci Gay has my address and I authorize them to give it to you.

Beyond merely reminding someone struggling with depression that life can be beautiful, the response also encapsulates the community spirit of ‘pay-it-forward’ – ‘Maila M’ acknowledges that someone had helped her in the past, and so she now offers to help someone else, both through words of encouragement and the offer of more personal communication. Thus, the *QUIR* magazine functioned not just as a repository of information for its readers, but also as a means for forming connections through the act of reading the same publication and being able to empathise with others over shared experiences. This shared practice ties back to Anderson’s theory of an ‘imagined community’ and his claim that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members”¹⁸⁰ as, through the shared experience of reading the same magazine, the readers of *QUIR* had the opportunity to come into contact with their

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5-6.

peers through the magazine, and, as demonstrated by ‘Maila M’ inviting a complete stranger to contact her personally, even form bonds with them in real life.

3.4 An appeal to social responsibility

An important factor to consider when discussing the magazine’s contents is the fact that the *QUIR* magazine was written at a time where women’s presence in gay associations was steadily increasing, yet the overall political and activist participation of the members of these associations was in decline.

The reason for this decline is addressed in the № 2 June 1993 issue. Firstly, in the article ‘*Orgoglio gay dall' America all'Italia "Muro di pietra" o muro di gomma?*’ / ‘Gay Pride from America to Italy: Stonewall or Rubberwall?’ (Appendix 12) Peci claims that the reason why the Italian gay community is “un-organised and un-united” is because there are no laws banning homosexuality in the country. She asserts that “not even Mussolini dared during his fascist regime, to openly punish homosexuality” and that even the Catholic Church “puts homosexuality as being all right just as long as one does not practise it”. This claim is in accordance with Pasquini’s observation that the absence of a homosexual movement in Italy in the 1960s was due to the fact that “Italian law did not explicitly consider homosexual acts as a crime”¹⁸¹. Peci also states that the Italian form of oppression was an ‘abstract’ one, rather than the real, physical enemy of police brutality, ‘fag-bashings’, or homophobic politicians that the American gays and lesbians had to fight against; as a result of this abstract enemy, she concludes that Italians “have a harder social battle to fight than our brave American colleagues because we don't even realize that there's any battle to be fought”¹⁸². These claims were briefly

¹⁸¹ Dario Pasquini, *Con Rabbia Felice*, 26.

¹⁸² Nina Peci, “*Orgoglio gay dall' America all'Italia: "Muro di pietra" o muro di gomma?* / Gay Pride from America to Italy: Stonewall or Rubberwall,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, June 1993, 1993: 5-7.

challenged by the homosexual movement that emerged in the early 1970s, but, as has been elaborated in Chapter 2, even the militant activism of F.U.O.R.I was short-lived. This fault was also picked up in the № 2 issue, in the section ‘Thoughts’¹⁸³ by Elena Innocenti (Appendix 13) where she claims that a lot of the women who participated in the Convention had not lived through the feminist movements of the 1970s and had instead been moulded in the 1980s, “with all its laziness, fallen ideals, the ‘go with the flow’ attitudes, and with its new values like the family, a place in the sun”. Innocenti thus seconds the lack of militancy in the gay and lesbian groups of the 1990s, a phenomenon which proves in-line with Della Porta’s discussion of the structure of the social movements of the time¹⁸⁴.

Nevertheless, the magazine makes the efforts to mobilise its readership against complacency. On multiple occasions, when the readers wrote to the magazine to complain about a lack of queer-friendly spaces in their hometowns, the editors reminded them of the power of the individual in making a difference for the community. For example, the № 3 July/August issue includes a letter from a reader (Appendix 6) in which he – Francesco – says that there is an ‘almost complete lack of gay spaces’ in Florence, and those that exist are ‘poorly managed, too expensive, or do not allow for any other encounters than those of the sexual kind’. In response, the magazine’s editors agree with some of his points, noting that most gay spaces are managed by heterosexuals, or that there is not even a space specifically for lesbians in the city. However, they then insist that the blame lies partially with the members of the queer community, who are quick to point out faults in whatever new queer-led initiative that emerges. The most important part of the message, however, is the reminder that: “*tu stesso potresti contribuire a migliorarli*”¹⁸⁵ (‘you, yourself, could help improve them [the existing queer spaces]’), showing the power of individual action. Another message in a similar spirit appears in the № 11 May

¹⁸³ Likely a typographical error of ‘Thoughts’.

¹⁸⁴ Della Porta, “Social Movements,” 647-649.

¹⁸⁵ Lettere, *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, July/August 1993, 1993: 5.

1994 issue in the form of an open letter by Jean Gorges d'Hoste titled '*Lettera ad un amico gay mai nato*' / 'Letter to an Unborn Gay friend'¹⁸⁶ which addresses an unborn gay person, asking them to be proud of being gay. The letter acknowledges that not everyone will be able to be proud publicly, whether for personal or professional reasons, but goes on to say that they should still "make a greater, more pondered commitment within the organization of Arci Gay/Arci Lesbica" as one's life as a gay person "must reflect moral and cultural commitment, not just a specific sexual choice". They also remind that "Arci Gay Health Centre needs your help, ideas, or whatever you know how to do best" and the concluding line entreats: "So, come on, you young ones and not so young ones: hang up your slippers and join in!"¹⁸⁷.

The reminders that sexual identity is not just sexuality but also a cultural commitment served to encourage the readers to take an active interest in their community and work continuously to improve the lives of queer individuals.

The calls to get involved were not limited to involvement in public spaces or health centres, however. On occasion, the writers and editors also appealed to the readers to get involved politically to support their community, though with the title of the magazine being '*il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica*', they seldom took explicit political stances. Instead, they published resorting to open letters or emotive appeals to the social responsibility of their readers, such as the Editorial in № 5 titled '*Il diritto del più forte*' / The Right of the Strongest' by Emme Esse¹⁸⁸, an open letter to 'Minister Contrì', the Italian Minister of Social Affairs about revising the adoption law to also include unmarried, single individuals. The letter criticises the Minister's refusal to modify the law and the social perception that there are 'two classes of people' who can adopt: the grade A class composed of the "married and physically

¹⁸⁶ The title of which echoes the *Lettera a un bambino mai nato* written by the Florentine journalist Oriana Fallaci in 1975

¹⁸⁷ Jean Gorges d'Hoste, "Lettera ad un amico gay mai nato" / "Letter to an Unborn Gay friend," *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, May 1994, 1994: 20.

¹⁸⁸ Confirmed as a pseudonym, real name unknown.

sane” and the grade B class comprising the “non-bodily abled, HIV+, singles, faggots, dykes, etc”¹⁸⁹ and reveals the Italian law’s unequal treatment of those who fall outside of its ‘heterosexual hegemony’¹⁹⁰. A similar open letter titled ‘*La mia Ghinea*’ / ‘My Guinea’ by Andrea Baldi was published in the № 9 March 1994 edition (Appendix 14): this one addressed to an unnamed candidate of the Italian progressive front, explaining the onerous position of queer voters; one where a vote for a progressive candidate is not a vote *for* the candidate, but *against* their more conservative opponents. Both letters reveal the political difficulties of the queer community and inform the readership of the political developments in their country.

Some articles discuss politics more explicitly. For example, the importance of maintaining a political consciousness even with the increasing international recognition of minority rights is introduced in the first edition in 1993: № 0 hosts an article titled ‘*Gli Ayatollah prossimi venturi; In Italia non c’è solo Tangentopoli e l’operazione mani pulite, anche se noi, gay e lesbiche...*’ (‘The Next Ayatollahs: In Italy, with Tangentopoli and Operation Clean Hands on our minds, gays and lesbians...’). In that article, Maria Perez¹⁹¹ informs the readers about the Amato government’s plans to change certain civil rights laws¹⁹² in the chaos of the Clean Hands scandals and cautions the gay and lesbian community not to consider itself separate from the other minorities, warning them not to allow the increased media attention being given to homosexuality to make them complacent, demonstrating a very intersectional approach for the Italian public of the time. The intersectionality of Perez’s approach could be ascribed to familiarity with other movements outside of Italy or to a desire to counter “the structures of

¹⁸⁹ Emme Esse, “Il diritto del più forte / The Right of the Strongest,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, October/November 1993, 1993: 3.

¹⁹⁰ Nardi, “The Globalization of the Gay & Lesbian Socio-Political Movement,” 576.

¹⁹¹ Confirmed as a pseudonym, real name unknown.

¹⁹² The law referred to in the article is the Legge 5 giugno 1990 n. 135 which pertained to the public health service’s strategy in the fight against AIDS.

For more information, see: Legge 5 giugno 1990, n. 135, “Legge-Programma di interventi urgenti per la prevenzione e la lotta contro l’AIDS”, *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 8 June 1990, n. 132, 1990: 5.

male patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism”¹⁹³ present in society of the time. Nevertheless, in her words, “it is necessary, as a homosexual community, to remember our history, how hard and tragic gay life in this country was up until twenty years ago” and to “stop taking for granted the small amount of freedom we’ve managed to obtain”, reminding the readership that the future of that freedom is “very fragile”¹⁹⁴.

The reminders of the fragility of the situation of queer rights and appeal to social responsibility is repeated in the № 7 January 1994 edition in the article ‘*Etruria Felix: Il voto queer alla ricerca dell’uomo (o donna) giusti*’ / ‘Etruria Felix: The queer vote for the right man (or woman)’ which discusses the politics of the Lega Nord and the need for queer lobbying and an increased queer presence at local and national elections. The article addresses how ‘scandalised’ the Italian gay press had been when confronted with the lobbying carried out by the American gay and lesbian movement, viewing political action alongside left-wing candidates as something “dirty and vulgar that risked soiling the ‘purity’ of the gay movement”¹⁹⁵. Yet, that same article insists that the presence of an Italian queer lobby, made possible by the change to the electoral system, and the “effort of every single homosexual citizen to make his voice heard and to use the weapon of his vote” are the only ways to ensure a Florence that is prosperous and respectful of its citizens’ rights.

The № 9 edition, published between the adoption of the Roth Report and before the March 1994 elections, also appeals to the sense of collective responsibility established by the concept of community. In an article titled ‘*Voto a rendere, Ovvero: il nuovo come politica dei ‘porci*

¹⁹³ Jetté, “Public History and Sexuality,” 499.

¹⁹⁴ Maria Perez, “Gli Ayatollah prossimi venturi; In Italia non c’è solo Tangentopoli e l’operazione mani pulite, anche se noi, gay e lesbiche... / ‘The Next Ayatollahs: In Italy, with Tangentopoli and Operation Clean Hands on our minds, gays and lesbians...,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, April 1993, 1993: 19.

¹⁹⁵ Maria Perez, “Etruria Felix: Il voto queer alla ricerca dell’uomo (o donna) giusti / Etruria Felix The queer vote for the right man (or woman),” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, January 1994, 1994: 23.

comodi / ‘Recycled votes: is the new just a comfortable return of the same old same old?’, Maria Perez reiterates the fragility of the freedoms the Italian queer community could claim, reminding the readers that the past fifty years had made Italians into “citizens without rights, forced to asking politicians and administrators for ‘favours’”. She then appeals to the readership to challenge this status quo and do their civic duty to ensuring that Italy gets the Progressives in government in the 1994 elections, since, “as queers”, they have a duty to challenge the stagnant political situation. She concludes with an encouraging:

Let's get informed in each precinct about our candidate's platform. Let's use some of our free-time to go hear the candidates speak and even question their platform it seems to be weak in civil rights. Let's observe how much of a moralist he or she may be: after all, there's left and left and progressive and progressive and one may consider himself such even though he feels that "homosexual" is a dirty word not to be pronounced in public in front of an audience.

In the same edition, Elena Innocenti acknowledges that while it is sometimes hard to determine where, or *whether*, a gay and lesbian community exists in Italy, or if it can be considered a driving political factor, gay, lesbian and bisexual people “share common political interests” and as such ought to “give space to queer political reflections”. She concludes with a buoying admission that:

I don't believe we are citizens who just happen to be gay, but rather gay citizens and therefore taken into consideration as thus socially and politically as electors¹⁹⁶.

As can be seen from the above cases where the magazine appealed to its queer readership's sense of collective responsibility born out of a shared history and culture, though the *QUIR* magazine was significantly less militant than the radical publications of the 1970s, the few political articles they published were intended to rouse the magazine's readership into awareness and participation. Through emotive language, collective identity (‘we Italian queers’, ‘as queers’, ‘as gays and lesbians’), and appeals to a sense of collective responsibility,

¹⁹⁶ Elena Innocenti, “L'insopportabile pesantezza del voto / The Unbearable Heaviness of Voting,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...*, March 1994, 1994: 2.

the writers and editors simultaneously fostered a spirit of community and tried to use their community to secure a better future for queer individuals.

3.5 A tool to take back power

In the № 2 June 1993 *Riflessioni* section (Appendix 10), Innocenti discusses the gravity of the Arci Gay Donna Convention deciding to change the name to Arci Gay Lesbica, calling the choice a political act, not just a formality, since “calling everyone just ‘gay’ hides the dichotomy between the two separate realities” and, even more importantly, “what isn’t said doesn’t exist”. This highlights the importance that labels have for the queer community, and the role of self-determination in the fight for minority rights.

In the interview (Appendix 1), Peci admits that the Queer Nation-inspired ideal of taking back, reclaiming harmful words was one of the motivations for the *QUIR* magazine using slurs in its articles. Another reason, as she explains, was to antagonise- both the queer and heterosexual readership accessing the magazine. In her words, it was important for the readers to understand what it feels like to be called those slurs, and hoped that the heterosexual readers might hesitate before using those terms against members of the queer community in the future.

Perhaps predictably, slurs were most commonly included in the articles which demanded an emotional response, or when highlighting the differences between the Italian queer scene and that of other countries. For example, in № 10 in the article ‘*È una cosa personale*’ / ‘It’s a personal thang’ (Appendix 15), Peci discusses her reaction upon walking into a bar and hearing one of the patrons say ‘“*Se avessi un figlio buco lo ammazzerei!*”’ / “‘If I had a faggot for a son, I’d kill him!’”, followed by the response from the owner “*meglio buco che drogato!*” / “‘better a faggot than a junkie!’”¹⁹⁷. By showing that this sort of language was still actively

¹⁹⁷ Nina Bellini, “E una cosa personale / It’s a personal thang,” *QUIR: il mensile di vita e cultura gay e lesbica fiorentina e non solo...* April 1994, 1994: 3.

used even by the “neighbourhood everyday person”, the magazine not only highlights the need for a movement to fight for the community’s rights so that they will no longer be so casually discouraged, but also the importance of reclaiming words that had been used against members of the community and rewriting their meanings so that they can be used to unite, rather than target, the queer community. Additionally, by including material meant to elicit an emotional response, the *QUIR* magazine followed in the steps of *FUORI!* and used anger or indignation as a means of uniting the community and spurring the readership into more active participation through their emotional response, thus creating an ‘emotional community’ with its use of slurs.

Another context in which the magazine used slurs was to highlight the differences between the Italian queer community, both on the national and international levels. In a humorous article titled ‘*Fiorentini: istruzioni per l'uso, Guida ragionata per i turisti*’ / ‘Florentines: instructions for use, A tourists' guide’, offers a simultaneously ‘helpful’ and satirical guide to navigating the Florentine nightlife, dating scene, and attitudes to sexual difference. In the article, Maria Perez claims that “‘faggots’ have always been part of local folklore” in Florence, adding that “no one will bother you if you’re publicly affectionate with your loved one”. However, she warns against “wearing an explicit t-shirt like ‘proud to be a faggot’” (*‘sono frocio e me ne vanto’* in the Italian text), claiming that it would be judged an “unsupportable provocation” even by the queer community as the “gays and lesbians of Florence aren’t known for their courage”, which ties back to the historical argument of ‘public morality’ discussed in Chapter 2.1. Similarly, an article titled ‘*Toscane: un viaggio queer nelle province*’ / ‘Tuscans: a queer look at Tuscany’s counties’ in the № 8 February 1994 edition also highlights the relationship between location and language. In it, Marco Rava discusses the differences between homosexuality in the big, metropolitan cities and the small, provincial towns and villages, claiming that places like San Miniato or Fucecchio don’t “offer anything to gays”, a point that could be made about many other small towns outside of Italy. Still, Rava notes that even in places like San Miniato or

Fucecchio, “there are gays”, though, importantly, he points out that they likely do not think of themselves as ‘gay’ but *finocchi* (‘fairies’) seeing as the word ‘gay’ in the medieval streets of rural neighbourhoods sounds “terribly foreign, English, and out of place”. This observation reveals the internalised homophobia that those born outside of the big cities often grow up with and emphasises the need for self-determination and being able to *choose* the labels one wishes to be known by. Additionally, the linguistic disparity highlighted by Rava reveals the differences in the attitudes and culture that existed in the small, provincial towns and the big cities. In the bigger cities, with access to international publications and a more elaborated queer ‘culture’ and movement, queer individuals used slurs to refer to themselves as means of reclaiming power over those words; in the small towns, meanwhile, they used those terms because it was the only language available to them.

Thus, a magazine like *QUIR*, offering multiple perspectives both from within Italy and abroad, functions both as a source of information on the many different queer realities and identity terms, a safe space for people to explore what terms might describe them best, and a source of impetus for the queer community to reclaim power from the mainstream.

Yet the arguably most important article for the purposes of this work published within the time period under study is the Editorial celebrating the first anniversary of the *QUIR* magazine that was published in the № 11 edition of May 1994 (Appendix 16). Firstly, the Editorial reiterates the goals of the magazine: to give voice to the various factions within the queer world; create a more unified community; and promote Italian queer culture abroad. The Editorial also states for the first time the magazine’s desire to create a “resource of queer culture among ourselves” through the collection and publication of the “ideas, opinions, and experiences” of its readership. Also included are some of the responses to the magazine over the first year of its publication, and, per Peci, they ranged from “it’s the most intelligent magazine in all of Italy” to “it’s disgusting”, showing the diversity of the viewpoints within the community and the

difficulty inherent in producing something that represents and pleases that diversity. The Editorial also celebrates the impact that the success of the *QUIR* magazine has had on the local and national community, citing the opening of more local queer venues through the collaboration of the various groups within the queer community, as well as *QUIR*'s role in inspiring other queer groups across Italy to also start their own magazines and newsletters.

The Editorial concludes with the reiteration of *QUIR*'s goal to embrace diversity and “put an end to this futile battle of the sexes” as well as “break down the ‘separatisms’” within the community, thereby “creating a unified and stronger queer voice within society at large”. To that end, Peci recalls the ongoing problem of largely homosexual representation within the magazine, adding that the editors would like to hear more from “transvestites, transsexuals, bisexuals, HIV+'s and people with Aids” as those are “often ostracized more painfully by other queers than by society at large” and states that *QUIR*'s goal is to be an “instrument for breaking down these barriers”.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

As evidenced in the Findings, the *QUIR* magazine served as a point of information, connection, and organisation for its readers. Through the inclusion of news on the developments in queer rights in other countries, it succeeded in offering its readership not only a target to strive towards, but also a point of connection, creating a sense of community not just with other queer readers in Italy, but also abroad. Additionally, thanks to the magazine, those from smaller towns who may have felt isolated in their hometowns were able to learn of and interact with other people in similar situations, combating the isolation that queer individuals often experience¹⁹⁸. Moreover, the *Calendario* section including dates and locations for queer events, whether organised through Arcigay or independently, allowed those who could make it to the city of Florence to meet in person with those they interacted with through the medium of the magazine. The magazine's international approach also exposed its readers to concepts that had not yet emerged in Italy by that point, such as the importance of reclaiming language that had been used harmfully in the past. Overall, this work argues that the *QUIR* magazine built a community on difference. Through publishing material written by readers even if they did not agree with it, the editors highlighted the diversity of the voices within the queer community, rather than trying to suppress it, which, in turn, encouraged the attitude that there was no one single way to *be queer* and created a safe space for those who felt ostracised from mainstream society. This approach of unity-through-difference renders the *QUIR* magazine unprecedentedly intersectional for its time and location, calling for the sort of unified queer community that is difficult to find even thirty years later. Although one has to bear in mind that the use of pseudonyms and the anonymity of the writers, both for the articles and the letters, makes it difficult to confirm the veracity of some of the material, the fact that one can nonetheless

¹⁹⁸ Michael J, Johnson., Elaine J, Amella. "Isolation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: a dimensional concept analysis," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 70, n. 3, (2014): 524, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23869967/>.

identify distinct writing styles in the magazine shows that *QUIR* was not the product of a single person, nor the result of transplanting foreign ideology into the Italian context. This, in turn, lends itself to this work's argument that the *QUIR* magazine was both product and producer of Italian public history, as mentioned in the Introduction.

Being built on the tradition of *FUORI!* and similar publications both in and outside of Italy, the magazine was a *product* of the earlier precedent of homophile and homosexual movement press. Additionally, through serving as a repository for the diverse views, ambitions and experiences of its readership, it was also a product of the local community, its reader-written content offering a genuine reflection of the Florentine socio-political and cultural context. However, the magazine was also a *producer* of public history as it was created with the aim of exporting it beyond Italy's borders, which, combined with Peci's admission that she intended for the magazine to 'educate' foreign visitors on the nature of the Italian queer community¹⁹⁹ led to its positioning as a primary source on the contemporary character of the Florentine queer community.

Although only the first year of the magazine's production is represented in this study (1993-1994), the magazine only lasted three more years, as it was terminated in the summer of 1997. Per Peci, this was due to the excessive politicisation and homogenisation of the views being expressed between its pages, which led to it no longer serving its purpose as a repository for the diversity of the voices within the Italian queer community. With the fracturing of Arcigay, those involved in the *QUIR* magazine lost the common ground that their membership in Arcigay had provided, and the birth of Arcilesbica, *Azione gay e lesbica*, and the health-oriented *IREOS* only furthered these divisions. This fracture evidences both Peci and Benadusi's claims about the Italian queer community's need for a clear target against which to

¹⁹⁹ Appendix 1: *Interview with Nina Peci*

unite. In the 1970s, the initial impetus for the gay movement came from the article by Andrea Romero in *La Stampa*; in the 1980s, from the need step up where the state was failing with the response to the AIDS crisis. It could be argued that the ‘target’ of the 1990s was the increasing political polarisation and the shift to the right that Italy was experiencing, resulting in a need for a ‘unity in adversity’ approach. However, given that Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* did not actively target homosexuals in its two years in power, and the April 1996 elections saw the return of the centre-left with the victory of Romano Prodi (even though it only lasted for two years), the community that the *QUIR* magazine was being written by – and for – fractured among ideological fault lines, much like their predecessors in the 1970s, once there was no longer a concrete ‘threat’ to their continued existence.

Finally, while my work contributes to the literature on the 1990s Italian queer community, it is by no means exhaustive. I suggest that it would be beneficial to study the topic further, for example by analysing the entirety of the *QUIR* collection, rather than only the first year of publication to see how the views expressed between the magazine’s pages changed overtime. Another potential avenue for further study could be an oral history project aimed at analysing the reception of the magazine at the time. This could be done by interviewing those involved in the Florentine queer community but not in the production of the *QUIR* magazine, with the aim of exploring whether the magazine truly reflected the “organic growth of the Italian movement”²⁰⁰ or whether some of its editorial choices were made with the conscious consideration of the international readership and the desire to represent the Italian community as ‘more queer’ than it necessarily was.

²⁰⁰ Appendix 1: *Interview with Nina Peci*

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview with Nina Peci, Florence, May 6 2025

Matylda Rentflejsz: I just wanted to confirm that you're alright with the audio of this interview being recorded.

Nina Peci: Yes.

M.R: Would you mind telling me a little about yourself and how you came to be in Florence in the 1990s?

N.P: My name is Nina Peci, I am originally from San Diego in California and I came to Milan in 1988 to get my Masters in Advertising and Communications. I worked in Milan for three years and then in 1991 I moved to Florence for love; I met a woman from Florence and I followed her down here and I've been here ever since.

M.R: What did you do in the States before you came to Italy?

N.P: I was a student, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Design in 1986 from UCLA and I worked two years as a graphic artist, saving up money so I could come abroad. I had always wanted to come to Italy or Europe in general as I am a first generation immigrant.

I wasn't involved in the gay movement in the States up until my Senior Year of university, but I lived in West Hollywood, in the gay area of town and had lots of gay friends who I used to go to Pride with and hang out with. But then my friends started dying of AIDS. So I was very active that way, with the awareness campaigns and safe sex campaigns, and I even volunteered for some hospices at the time because a lot of those people were dying all alone. My last year before moving to Italy I was involved in Queer Nation, a big gay visibility movement that was parallel to ACT UP [whose slogan was] '*we're here, we're queer, get used to it*'. We would do a lot of civil disobedience; public actions to annoy people; it was fun, it was good trouble, so to speak.

So then when I came to Milan, I got in touch with local gay groups and Giovanni dall'Orto, from the *Centro di Documentazione Omosessuale* in Milan, and he had me bring books and magazines and anything I could get my hands on and fit into my suitcase without it being overweight. We had a little lesbian group there, with Rita Faustini; we started working for the AIDS hotline that was set up, the *Consultorio* for suicide prevention, AIDS prevention, coming out issues, trans issues, whoever it was calling, we were trained to offer peer-to-peer help. So

it naturally grew into good trouble in Milan and then I came to Florence and started with Arci Gay Firenze and continued my work in activism. One of the biggest ones was starting the magazine QUIR.

M.R: Would you say that your trajectory before coming to Florence influenced you in making the magazine?

N.P: Yes, I think. What influenced me to make that kind of magazine was first of all, on a very personal, selfish level, I wanted to have some creative space graphically, do my own thing, as I was working for agencies and working for graphic design studios so we had to follow what the clients wanted and I couldn't express myself graphically.

And I was also attracted to the 'zine' look that was coming out of other militant groups. David Carson's work in England¹ attracted me - that was kind of post-punk, very full-on, playing around with different fonts and images - so I wanted to do something like that. And that combined with the growing pains with the Arci Gay group: we were getting trans, we were getting a lot of the original feminist separatists. There were a lot of voices and growing pains that we needed to work on. Some people wanted to still concentrate mostly on health issues, other people wanted to do more activism and gay rights, so we were lots of voices and I just wanted to make an outlet for it.

And then also the fact that I wanted to do it in English because I would notice that people would come visit from abroad and they knew nothing about Italian gay history. I don't know whether they had in their head that Italy was this third-world, backwards country, but I wanted to export Italian queer history. So that's why we did it also in English, as best as we could.

M.R: Thank you. In general, what was Florence like in the nineties?

N.P: Oh, it was brilliant. It was actually a lot better than it is now for the queer movement. I know there were lots of clubs, lots of gay and lesbian nights going on, some underground scenes. Musically, it was very... I think it had a good vibe. I can't remember the names of these places, but they're historic and you could talk to any older person in Florence, they've heard of them. And it was a very fun time. Almost every Friday or Saturday night there was some place you could go, a gay night or a queer-oriented type of event. There was much more to offer than there is now. I think that what's happened is that the apps have killed the nightlife. You mostly went out to these places to meet people and have fun, now you can just swipe left or right. Though I think it's a phenomenon that's almost anywhere, any group really.

M.R: Would you say that the general public was aware of this underground scene or the nightlife?

I wouldn't say it was completely underground, but if you knew, you knew. And I think a lot of open-minded heterosexual friends would come hang out as well because it was a cool place to hang out. We didn't really care about being seen, not seen...It wasn't completely underground at all. It was just cool, you know?

M.R: So there wasn't any sort of danger in being seen?

N.P: Not really, no. I mean, you still had the verbal harassment. For the women, a lot of women, lesbians hanging out, especially in places like out in Viareggio, like at Mamma Mia Beach and the nightclubs that they had there, they started getting more and more heterosexuals going there and harassing, especially the women. Towards the end it kind of got unpleasant. But usually not.

You had people who got beat up, of course, like you get now. You had the name calling, if you dressed a certain way. The first big pride parade that we had was I think in 1993, or 1994 in Rome. It was for the Jubileo² and 10,000 people came, so that was a big deal back then. And I think there were people dressed normally, just like people not dressed normally. And for us it was okay, but of course what gets printed in the newspapers were the people that were a little bit more flamboyant with their self-expression. So that kind of started, I think, a lot of homophobia. Like, *why is that guy in chaps and leather?*

So yes, I mean, it happens. It *still* happens. Those are still the photos that are getting in the newspapers; it sells more.

M.R: When you started QUIR, did you have any specific inspirations for the magazine?

My inspiration were other queer zines that were coming out of the States. One in particular that I loved was called *Cunt*³. It was a kind of punk, feminist, lesbian take-back-the-word, take-back-our-sexuality, it's our word, it's our body part, it's our sexuality. It was so hardcore, it was in your face. Like I mentioned earlier, David Carson from Britain was doing some really 'in your face' type graphics that had never been seen. I liked that kind of energy. I'm an ex-punk, and I think inside I'm still a punk. So I wanted to kind of mirror that kind of energy and that anger, but put it to good use.

M.R: What did you think about the sexually-explicit magazines that used to circulate in the 70s? Was it something that you supported and wanted to also have in QUIR? Or were you more along the later angle of not commodifying sexuality?

N.P: I've never really thought about it. When I first came out, I did a lot of research and read up on my history and I understood why it was so explicit, why it was so important to reclaim our spaces and to show people that we are having sex, we're having gay sex. And yes, it was a mostly male-dominated movement at the time, but I think it was important to also show that women can take control of their bodies and have fun and we do have sexual pleasure and, you know, calling a magazine *Cunt* is-

I remember they were talking about safe sex for women and they actually pasted into the magazine- it was photocopied and stapled together- but they had a rubber glove, like, "okay, use a rubber glove". Then they were talking about dental dams and other things that were unheard of at the time. And I loved it. I wanted to do something similar, maybe not so 'in your face'.

I don't think that in Italy it was the right hubris for that. We still had the Catholic Church, sex was- you know. But we did publish a lot of sexually-explicit material, but more towards health and more towards the scenes; it was kind of in its cultural context, not just to be obnoxious. Although some issues were. Some of the covers might have been a little bit 'in your face'.

M.R: You mentioned that *Cunt* and the writers of that magazine were also thinking of taking back the word and taking back ownership over the body, sexuality. Did the initiative of the writers of *Cunt* impact your choice also to use 'queer' as a term in the magazine?

N.P: Yeah, I embraced the word 'queer' because of us who worked with Queer Nation because it was another example of taking- owning- derogatory words, taking it back. Like the whole ACT UP taking the pink triangle and reclaiming it as your own and that's something that I appreciate a lot.

I know there are a lot of gay, lesbian people my age that still don't want to be called queer because that's what they were called when they were getting beat up as children and they don't want to have anything to do with that word. But I just thought it was a good umbrella term, at the time, to include anyone that wasn't fitting the norm of what you were 'supposed to be'; heterosexual, cis-gender... Now I don't know. Now I think it's gotten out of hand, it became

cool. Everyone's queer; you dye your hair blue, you're queer, so let's get involved. And, you know, that's great. But what bothers me is that it's taken away from the actual point of a community and fighting for rights.

Not everybody is political nowadays, which is okay, but they also do need to appreciate the work that we've done, the foundation that we've laid, the fact that so many people come out to any kind of pride event, Gay, Straight, whatever, we have a lot of support in the general public. I think that's also thanks to the visibility that we did, the laws that we tried to get passed, the civil unions- at least we have that. I think that's just what happens when you're not *that* oppressed. You're not at risk of any physical harm — it's fun. I think we've got to keep our guard up because once it doesn't become fun anymore, we have a situation like we did in the States with Stonewall, I think a lot of those people are going to wash their hair dye out and become 'normal', 'not queer'. And that's where we'll have to take over again.

M.R: When you used the word 'queer' here in Italy, in Florence, for the magazine and in the articles, did you try to emphasise the political use of the word in the States? Did you try to bring the legacy of the word here?

N.P: I did to a certain point, because I didn't want to be accused of the typical American trying to impose her culture on others. I was very respectful of Italian culture. Which is why I also spelled it how an Italian would spell queer (i.e. 'quir'). I didn't want to say "this is the best way to do it because this is how we've done it in the States"; I was very aware of the cultural differences and what was needed and what the voices were here; I wasn't not trying to impose any standard that wasn't coming from the organic growth of the Italian movement.

M.R: Did you ever get accused of transplanting the ideology?

N.P: At the beginning I did. I published a number zero, kind of like a sample copy of what became the first issue, which was number zero. I got some nasty anonymous note pinned up to the to the draft that I had posted at the Arci Gay center, criticizing the fact that it was in English. I think it was probably just stupid jealousy from people that said, "oh look, Nina's doing something cool, let's hate it". And if it was you doing something cool, they would have hated that. I still have that letter somewhere. I saved it. I have an archive at home. I think I know who wrote it. But I didn't care. I still went on with it. I think overall it was very much appreciated. I had a lot of support from a lot of people.

M.R: I've read that a lot of 'alternative' or 'underground' magazines - especially those that chose not to charge for their magazines - depended on volunteers for office space, printing, copy editing, distribution, all those things. How was the production of QUIR organized and financed?

N.P: It was self-financed, through distribution in all the clubs and gay bars and we asked people to donate if they took a copy: "Can you give us a thousand lire?" so that we could cover printing costs. We sold advertising space to the few brave people that didn't mind being seen in a queer magazine. We all worked at home on it. I had a computer at home, a Macintosh, that I was laying it out and designing it on in my free time.

And then we'd meet up maybe about weekly to go over the translations. And we had a queer group that we met to publish it. And then we went around distributing it, we mailed it... It was just kind of self-financed. The biggest cost, of course, was the printing. But we were able to cover it. And I wasn't worried about making a profit, it was just to cover printing costs.

I called it "guerrilla graphics" because back then we needed it, it was done in black-and-white on purpose to cost less and the film that we produced to make the printing plates I kind of bootlegged down at the place I was working at at the time. I feel a bit bad about it because the guy was a nice guy, a good guy, but you know, you do that. You do that with guerrilla graphics.

M.R: And approximately, if you remember, how many copies of each edition did you make?

N.P: I think we started off a thousand copies, because we not only distributed it around here, but we mailed it all around Italy to all the Arci Gay centres, as well as abroad to gay and lesbian centres that we were in contact with. And then I think, like I said, towards the end it got less, maybe about 500 copies. I really don't remember because it was all cash in hand, so I don't have any official record of it.

M.R: Approximately how many people were involved in the writing? I saw that you invited the readers to also send their own materials and their own articles, but I noted that there were a few recurring names in each edition.

N.P: Yeah, we had, I think there were three of us that were working on the actual magazine, three or four of us monthly (n.b. in the editorial team). We all took on two names, our real name and our fake name, to make the group look bigger than it was. And then we had people that just loved to write; they loved the fact that they had a voice and they would write almost

every month. We had someone who was really into film, so they would do film reviews. We had book reviews. We had the guy that was writing about religion, I think that was his area of study and he loved to have that venue to publish. We had a psychologist, Mirella Sandonnini, that used to write a lot about mental health as well as physical health and other cultural events. So, the idea was that it was supposed to be “for the people, of the people” and that's what it was pretty much up until the end.

When it started getting a bit too many of the same people writing the same views, that's when I killed it. That was one of the reasons. The other reason was it was getting too big to maintain the way that it was - it was something that you either made professional, with people doing it for a job, getting paid, getting it registered and getting it ‘legal’. But then I feel it would have lost its feel. So I said, okay, kill it in its prime and it'll become a legacy, and that's exactly what it's become.

M.R: Thank you. I also had a related question: why did the publications become more sporadic towards the end?

N.P: It was taking a lot of energy and effort and time out of people's lives. Like I said, this was all done on our own spare time so we all had full-time jobs and you'd get home and do this and then go out at night and go around the clubs getting money and collecting. I think it also became harder and harder to collect material, and the original people that had been in the group moved away, so then we started publishing once every two months, until the last year when I think we only did about five or six copies.

M.R: And of the core team of writers, were you all of a similar age and background, or was it a diverse group?

N.P: It was pretty diverse. We had, like I said, the people that were interested in getting their voice out there, that loved to write, so that was always helpful. And then towards the end, it was getting to be almost too political, but not political in terms of gay and lesbian rights. It's kind of like the beginning of what the movement is now, where they're doing everything but concentrating on queer rights.

Of course, if somebody comes out with a homophobic statement, they're on it, but that's not their main argument. And it just got risky that it was going to get too one-sided. So, again, that was part of the reason also.

And Arci Gay was splitting up. There was a big schism in the whole group where we had people that wanted to break away from the whole health, *Consultorio* aspect of it, and gay rights aspect, and they were getting more and more into politics in general. Very left-wing, combining workers' rights with the gay movement, which is fine- there are overlaps, and that would have made an interesting article.

But it just wasn't... That's what kind of broke up Arci Gay at the time. I remember we all just broke up. Now there's a new Arci Gay Firenze. It's been around now for like six, seven, eight years now. And then the group that broke off, *Azione Gay e Lesbica*⁴, that's still going. The group that wanted to do *Consultorio* was *IREOS*- in fact I was one of the co-founders of *IREOS*, and then I left pretty soon after it got on its feet. And that was the group of people that wanted to keep with the mental health and the health issues and they're still running it. They're the ones who started the queer festival, the film festival⁵. So you know, *IREOS*, the group of people from *IREOS* I think they're still the main organizers of the film festival. So everyone got into their own area.

M.R: Thank you very much. One of the few existing published articles which mentions the QUIR magazine refers to it as a “*monthly magazine which was published by Arci Gay slash Arci Gay Donna Firenze under the responsibility of Franco Griglini with editorial coordination from Nina Bellini. The magazine shows its close connection to and influences from the English-speaking world and is published in a bilingual Italian-English format*”⁶. Is that a fair description, in your opinion?

N.P: Okay, Franco Grillini, being a registered publisher and journalist, graciously lent his name as the editorial director because in Italy they have very strict editorial rules that if you're publishing a magazine, even if it's free, even if it's underground, just to be legal, you do need to have an editorial responsibility that comes from a professional. And so he was kind of that person that lent his name to let, allow us to do this. That was probably the only legal part of that whole magazine. I think I was thinking ahead, like, were it to become professional, we had that covered. And the only English-speaking person that was behind it was me.

Nina Bellini was one of my names, Nina Peci. I put Nina Peci as the art director and creative designer, but Nina Bellini was also me. I chose Bellini because it was one of the fake names that my father had when he was a boy escaping the Nazis from Croatia. He came to Italy and he had fake papers: Beniamino Bellini. So I chose Bellini for that reason.

M.R: Thank you for sharing that. Would it be alright with you if I were to write that Nina Bellini and Nina Peci were the same person?

N.P: Yeah, yes. I kind of regret that decision now that I didn't just keep with that, but I really thought: 'let's make this look bigger than it is'. I had visions of grandeur; 'we can't just be three people doing a magazine', we need all sorts of people on staff. So there were six people on staff, but in reality, there were only three, each with two names.

M.R: Is there anything that, apart from maybe your name, that you would have done differently if you were to do this magazine again, in the context that you originally made it in?

N.P: Not really. I like the fact that it worked. It was kind of this... I planted a seed and it grew on its own. It was very organic and I kind of... that was the idea and it worked. It worked for five years and then I trimmed it. Well, I didn't just trim it, I uprooted it.

But I think, you know, if I were to do something like that again, it would definitely obviously be online. They have Facebook pages that do a similar thing, they have Reddit posts... I think it would have to be monitored a lot more carefully nowadays because of the trolls, because of the bots, because of how mean people behind the screen can be. Whereas if you put something black and white on paper, that's it. You cannot deny it, you cannot say 'fake news'. So I don't think there's a need for something like QUIR nowadays because of the way the internet has taken off and how you can go find your voice somewhere and express your voice somewhere by starting a blog, for example.

The only thing I would do is to get it online (i.e. the QUIR magazine) and accessible to everybody. That's a little project of mine. But I know there are people working on it and I'm grateful for that.

M.R: What was the process for people getting their articles or their letters published? Did you publish everything you received?

N.P: We pretty much did. We did do a lot of controversial things. If it was something completely offensive, I think we tended to write a little editorial introduction to it and then invite people to debate it, to send their ideas in, to send their comments in. They sent it in by sending us an email with the article or handing it in on paper; at the time, it was still the beginning of email communication.

We didn't ever have anyone really abusing that power of the print. There were things we printed that none of us agreed on, but we let it go, sort of like 'okay, this person has this opinion and wants to talk about this'. And if we had something to say about it, we'd write in on the next issue and publish the rebuttal. It was open, and I wanted to kind of keep that, even if I knew that it was a dangerous format to have. But luckily, no tragedies came of it.

I think only one article I wrote set off quite a tragic event. I criticized somebody that used December 1st, World AIDS Day, to pocket some money. It was a shady thing that was happening at one of the theaters. We were supposed to raise money for the *Consultorio* and we didn't see a dime of it because they said, 'oh, we had to cover our costs there's no money left'. So I kind of criticized that- I was young, I was rebellious, I was vociferous and, you know. Now, I might have written it in a different way or I might have just confronted the people in a different way, but back then I just... And then they wrote back with their response, so I think that was probably the most controversial piece we've ever had.

M.R: There were a few articles, including even some written by yourself, which actively used derogatory language like 'froci', 'checce', etcetera, both in English and in Italian. Was that intentional?

N.P: Yeah, again the whole idea of taking back words, owning words that were negative and turning them into something else. Or to call people out, to get a point across. Someone was called a 'brutto frocio' (i.e. 'filthy faggot'), I would say 'yes, it's true, I'm a brutto frocio, whatever'. It was also to antagonize a bit, because that was the spirit at the time, the kind of publications that were coming out.

M.R: Antagonize the queer readership or antagonize anybody outside of the group?

N.P: I would like to think people outside the group were reading this too, but it was also to antagonize people within the group, to make it uncomfortable, in a 'this is what it feels like to be called that, so you need to feel that too' style. And I hoped that, if heterosexual people were reading it outside of our group, I hoped that they also would feel a little bit uncomfortable and think before using those words in the future. But I never actually analyzed our readership, there was no way to analyze it back then really.

M.R: I heard and also read that a lot of the time these sorts of magazines and zines would be passed from person to person, so it was difficult to track readership because of that, but do you have an approximate idea of the numbers?

N.P: In Florence, I think the whole community was reading it because it was something they all looked forward to getting once a month. I think I mentioned before that I went to this gay beach in Croatia one summer with a friend of mine- it was a very remote, very hard to get to beach, and two gay guys were there reading my magazine.

I know in the States, we'd get letters that they appreciated having it, then ask us to keep sending it - we sent it to gay lesbian centres and archives in the States, as well as all around Europe.

M.R: Thank you very much!

¹ Memory correction: there is a British film and TV director named David Carson. However, the more likely David Carson referred to here, a graphic designer famous for his works in magazines such as *Beach Culture* or *Ray Gun*, was born in Texas and worked largely in the US. For more information, see: <https://www.famousgraphicdesigners.org/david-carson>

² Memory correction: the first Rome Pride took place in 1994, not a Jubilee year, meanwhile the first World Pride, also held in Rome, took place in the year 2000, which was a Jubilee year.

³ *Cunt*, created by Rachel Pepper and originally published in San Francisco, California in the early 1990s. For more information, see: <https://zinewiki.com/wiki/Cunt>

⁴ *Azione Gay e Lesbica* was created in 1989

⁵ Florence Queer Festival

⁶ Nossem, Eva. "Queer, Frocia, Femminiellə, Ricchione et al. – Localizing "Queer" in the Italian Context." *gender/sexuality/italy*, no.6 (2019): 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.15781/31yc-ys20>

EDITORIALE

queer [kwier*] *agg.* 1 strano, bizzarro 2 (*fam.*) omosessuale 3 (*fam.*) svitato // - street, difficoltà finanziarie; traffici poco onesti s. omosessuale // in -, (*sl.*) nelle peste 4 (*loc.*) **quir**, il mensile fiorentino di cultura e vita lesbica, gay e non solo.

"Siamo qui, siamo quir..."

Questa espressione è nata dopo anni di ricerca di una identità omosessuale che andasse bene per tutte le realtà e diversità che rendono il nostro mondo gay così complesso. Con una parola sola, (*queer* in inglese) era possibile a descrivere finalmente tutti - gay, gaia, lesbica, omosessuale, frocio, buco, donna che ama un'altra donna, maschio che ama un altro maschio, diverso/a, separatista, leather, camionista, butch/femme, orso, travestito, transessuale, bisessuale; insomma, qualsiasi cosa non eterosessuale.

"Quir" vuol dire "viva la differenza" fra di noi, ma unendoci nell'impegno di rendere la società meno oppressiva nei nostri confronti. Invece di cercare di difendere un'unica identità fino al punto di escludere tutte le altre, andiamo avanti con tutte le nostre belle realtà diverse ma unite sotto la bandiera quir!

Queer purtroppo non si traduce bene in italiano. L'unica cosa da fare era almeno di scriverlo all'italiana, cioè, "quir". In effetti QUIR deve riflettere la vita e cultura italiana o più specificamente quella fiorentina. Allo stesso tempo deve anche avere in mente la globalità - non dimentichiamoci che siamo ovunque! QUIR è tradotto in inglese per questo motivo, non per il/la turista che visita la nostra città e cerca i "luoghi del giro" (anche se ci auguriamo che possa aiutarlo/a) ma per dare la possibilità al resto del mondo di conoscere e capire la nostra particolare cultura. Vogliamo "promuovere" l'omosessualità ma quella italiana.

QUIR non è nemmeno inteso come il "giornalino" di ARCI GAY. Grazie a loro è possibile distribuire QUIR in tutta l'Italia e senza il loro impegno a livello locale questo giornale non sarebbe possibile; comunque, QUIR è di tutti. Firenze è una città unica nel senso che pur avendo tante realtà omosessuali o lesbiche diverse, divise politicamente o culturalmente, bene o male questi gruppi riescono comunque a collaborare su alcune questioni fondamentali. Questo giornale è per loro. Dev'essere usato come modo di esprimere queste diversità sotto l'unico tetto dell'omosessualità, in uno stesso contenitore, QUIR.

QUIR è un'occasione per non mettere da parte le differenze, ma per unirle ed usarle come mezzo di aggregazione.

"Siamo qui, siamo quir, fateci l'abitudine!"



"We're here, we're queer..."

This expression was started after years of trying to find a gay identity that could fit in all the diverse factions that make our gay world so complex. With just one word, "queer", it is finally possible to describe everyone - gay, lesbian, homosexual, faggot, queen, women who prefer women, men who prefer men, separatist, leather, dyke, butch, femme, bear, transvestite, transsexual; in other words, anything not heterosexual. "Queer" means "vive la différence" between us but uniting ourselves in the struggle to make society less oppressive. Instead of trying to defend one's own identity to the point of excluding all others, let's get on with it, together, with all our beautiful differences united under the queer flag.

Queer unfortunately can't be translated very well in Italian due to the problem of the use of gender in the Italian language. We've decided to at least write it as it would be pronounced by an Italian and that is "quir". In fact, QUIR is meant to reflect Italian culture or more precisely, Florentine culture. At the same time, it should keep in mind globality - after all, we are everywhere! QUIR is translated in English for this reason, not for the various tourists that visit our city in search of places to go (although, they are welcome to consult the magazine even for this), but to give the rest of the world the possibility to understand our particular culture. (editor's note: some sections have not been translated since they deal with subjects of little interest outside of Italy such as the travel section or news from abroad). We want to "promote" our homosexuality, Italian homosexuality.

QUIR is not intended to be the magazine of ARCI GAY (the Italian National Gay and Lesbian Association). Thanks to them the distribution of QUIR is possible throughout Italy and without their help at the local level this magazine would not be possible; however, QUIR is for everyone. Florence is an unique city in that, despite all of its different gay and lesbian groups divided politically or culturally, these groups are able to still work together on common points of interest. This magazine is for them. It should be used as a way of expressing all these differences under one roof of "queerness", between one cover, QUIR. QUIR is the hope for all of us, not to put aside these differences, but to unite them and use them in a common struggle. "We're here, we're queer, get used to us!"

Nina Bellini

Appendix 3 : Editorial in the January 1994 (№ 7) edition of '*Quir: il mensile fiorentino di vita e cultura gay e lesbica e non solo...*' [Italian]

(due to the poor lighting in the archives when scanning, some words may not be fully legible)

EDITORIALE

di Nina
Bellini

Ll 1993 è quasi finito e sarà definitivamente tramontato quando leggerete questo editoriale. Come il Papa, il Presidente della Repubblica o, in sintonia con i miei gusti camp, la Regina di Inghilterra, vorrei anch'io fare un discorso di fine anno. Un discorso che parte da una piccola realtà di nome QUIR, qui a Firenze. Una realtà piena di differenze, pregiudizi, provincialismi, razzismi, maschilismi, sessismi, omofobia, ed altro ancora ma che, con buona volontà e desiderio di collaborazione, è riuscita a superare questi "ismi" e produrre qualcosa di positivo. QUIR è nato nel 1993 come sfida alla nostra comunità. Una sfida a tutte le diverse realtà del mondo queer: i giovani militanti, le lesbiche separatiste, le "regine", i buchi, le camioniste, le checche, i gay, il/le "velate", il/le bisessuali, i travestiti, il/le transessuali, le "lipstick lesbians", le "fag-hags" o "frotti", i leathers, e ad ogni altro modello queer in cui ognuno di noi possa riconoscersi. La sfida era un invito a non mettere da parte le differenze, a non voler omologarsi ad un ennesimo stereotipo alla moda buono per tutti e tutte, ma confrontarsi sulle nostre stesse diversità, farne materia di arricchimento per fondare una cultura comune capace di fonderle ed armonizzarle. QUIR è nato anche come sfogo. Uno sfogo contro tutte le "beghe" e le polemiche artificiose che spesso dividono tutte queste realtà. Hai qualcosa da dire? Una critica da fare? Scrivilo, QUIR ti lascia lo spazio. È uno spazio aperto a tutti. Solo così le varie opinioni esistenti possono servirci a capire ed a conoscerci e cessare di essere pettegolezzo autodistruttivo. Solo così, confrontandoci, possiamo impa-

1994: L'ANNO DEI QUEER

rare a conoscerci e magari anche a volerci bene. Scrivere è molto meglio di parlare perché è necessario riflettere ed elaborare di più. Quello che sembrava un lavoro impossibile, raccogliere le vostre storie, opinioni, creazioni, testimonianze, ecc, e cercare di riunirle in un unico prodotto che andava bene per tutti (rompendo le solite regole di marketing che cerca di mirare prodotti a settori specifici e già definiti) non sarebbe stato possibile senza l'aiuto di tutti voi queers. Il vostro entusiasmo e la voglia di uscire dai soliti schemi di definizione più la curiosità di conoscere altri simili ma diversi da voi è quello che ha aiutato a far crescere questa rivista. Guardatevi un pò in giro. L'aria della Firenze queer sta cambiando, magari con lentezza, ma grazie a voi. Per la prima volta, siamo riusciti a creare spazi veramente misti fra donne e uomini (e con successo); separatiste stanno collaborando con non-separatiste e anche con gay maschi per aprire nuovi dialoghi; uomini gay hanno seguito l'ultima conferenza lesbica (vedi articolo di questo numero), non per controllare, ma per osservare, imparare e partecipare; c'è più un senso di comunità - una nuova comunità queer. Insomma, la guerra fra poveri sta finendo. Vorrei anche ringraziare i nostri inserzionisti non solo per il loro aiuto con la produzione, ma soprattutto perché hanno creduto nel nostro progetto. Così hanno anche riconosciuto che una comunità queer esiste. La sorprendente risposta da così tanti posti fuori dai cosiddetto "giri" gay dimostra che finalmente anche "gli altri" ci vedono come persone "normali" che, ahimè, consumano. ("Siamo qui, siamo queer, andiamo a fare shopping!") Se andiamo avanti così, magari i politici si adegueranno, quando si renderanno conto che votiamo. Nel frattempo, cerchiamo di ringraziarle in modo pratico i nostri inserzionisti - frequentandoli, andando a comprare da loro e dicendo loro che ci ha fatto piacere trovarli su QUIR. Così cresceremo insieme.

1994. Sarà l'anno del queer? QUIR se lo augura e continuerà a tenere in serbo uno spazio per le vostre opinioni. Ognuno può fare la sua parte, anche piccola, impegnandosi nella crescita di una identità queer. E così, auguroni per un nuovo anno assolutamente queer!

Appendix 4: Editorial in the January 1994 (№ 7) edition of *'Quir: il mensile fiorentino di vita e cultura gay e lesbica e non solo...'* [English]

1993 is almost over (it might already be over by the time you read this). Like The Pope, the President, or more for to my camp tastes, the Queen of England, I too would like to make a closing speech. A speech that starts from a small reality named QUIR here in Florence. A reality full of differences, prejudices, provincialism, racism, macholism, sexism, homophobia, etc., that, with the want and desire of collaboration, has been able to supersede these "isms" and produce something positive.

QUIR was born in 1993 as a challenge to our community. A challenge to all the different realities that make up the queer world: the young militant, the separatist, the disco queen, the faggot, the lesbian, the homo, the butch or diesel dyke, the raging queen, the gay, the homosexual, the bisexual, the transvestite, the transsexual, the lipstick lesbian or femme, the fag-hag, the leather, the rubber, the bear, etc. – to not put aside these differences but rather to develop them in order to create an identity in itself and share it with the other components of this queer world. In other words, create a dialog, a debate, a culture.

QUIR was also founded as a release. A release for all the squabbling that usually occurs between all these different realities of the queer world. Do you have something to say? Something to criticize? Write it down, QUIR offers you that space. It's a space open to everyone. Only in this way the various opinions and criticisms can have a meaning. Only in this way may we learn from the next and accept ourselves and love ourselves as one big diverse but unified family. Writing is much better than talking because you need to think twice before writing (usually) and writing produces, talking sometimes just means making

1994: THE YEAR OF THE

nothing but noise.

What seemed like an impossible job, collecting your stories, opinions, creations, identities, etc., and trying to produce a single product that was pleasing to everybody (breaking all the rules of marketing that tries to target products to specific and defined groups of people), wouldn't have been possible without the help of all you queers. Your enthusiasm and your want of breaking out of the usual definitions plus the curiosity to get to know others similar but different from you is what has helped this magazine to grow. Look around. The atmosphere of Florence is changing thanks to you. For the first time we were able to create places really mixed between men and women (and with success); separatists are collaborating with non-separatists and also with gay men in order to create more dialog and debate; men showed up at the last lesbian conference (see article this issue), not to control or to hassle, but to observe, learn and participate; there's more of a sense of community – a new queer community. In other words, the civil war is ending.

I would also like to thank our advertisers not only for their help with producing this magazine, but more for their belief in our project. More than believing in our project, they have recognized that a queer community exists. The surprising attention of so many places out of the usual "family" shows that even the "others" see us as "normal" people who, shall I?, consume. ("We're here, we're queer, let's go shopping!") If we keep at it, maybe politicians will follow by realizing that we vote as well. In the meantime, let's try to thank them in a practical way – frequent or visit them saying you saw them in QUIR. In this way, we'll grow together.

1994. Will it be the year of the queer? QUIR hopes so and will continue to produce your voices. Everyone can do his part, even small, busying himself in the growth of a queer identity. Let's yell together, "we're here, we're queer" until 1994 becomes ours! Best wishes for a new absolutely queer year!

QUEER

DR. LOVE



Avevo un amico, un caro amico. È stata una storia che ancora mi strugge nei ricordi di certi momenti che l'hanno appuntata. È una storia preziosa. È la storia di una timidezza, della rassegnazione a non poter competere affidata a poche parole anonime appuntate una sera di un inverno su un biglietto lasciato alla sorte. Passò poi del tempo; il tempo della maturazione. Durante quei mesi qualcosa pareva addensarsi, ciò mi fornì il coraggio, assai timido invero, di provare a cercarlo. E il 9 di aprile di un anno passato iniziò una storia: ah, come fu bella! Oh, come fu travagliata! Il travaglio all'inizio mi indurì: non ero abituato a delle storie così vissute. Ma poi lo accettai e servì a cementare il mio sentimento d'amore. Ma il mio amico, il mio caro amico, anche lui fu segnato: mi parve da allora meno affettuoso, più assente. Forse attendeva più evidenti segnali da me, che, però, già chiuso, di fronte a quella sua assenza, non sono riuscito a esternare; anche per un cattivo orgoglio, pensando che se forse non mi ama davvero avrei solo perso la faccia a mostrarmi. Ahimè, quanto sono stato stupido! Oggi questo amico mi manca. Ma non so se mi manca per quei momenti che hanno appuntato la nostra bella storia o per un amore che ancora non vuole morire. Non lo so, ma forse a una persona si vuol bene non perché ha gli occhi blu o un bel sorriso, ma glielo si vuole perché è lei; al di là dei ricordi, dei suoi occhi o del sorriso nel mio cuore rimane lui. Avevo un caro amico, ma oggi se ci incrociamo per strada facciamo finta di non vedersi.

Lettera firmata.

Carissimo, la tua lettera è davvero molto sentita e poetica, ma forse, proprio per questo, difficile da capire per chi, come me, non sa nulla della tua vicenda. Il tuo racconto mi dà comunque delle sensazioni. Sensazioni di un rapporto un po' fantasma, più fatto di rincorse e fughe, di speranze e di orgoglio, che di realtà. Insomma, una storia di due solitudini che si sono spiate, cercate, desiderate, ma sempre rigorosamente separate tra loro dalla diffidenza, forse dalla paura di rischiare. Se è stato veramente così, è ovvio che oggi tu non riesca a superare la malinconia, legata ad una sensazione di fallimento. Cosa posso dirti? Forse non sarebbe difficile recuperare l'amico che ti manca con un po' di sincerità e mettendo completamente da parte l'orgoglio, ma non recuperai probabilmente l'amante. L'amore ama gli audaci e se non si è capaci di prendere al volo il momento giusto, il momento passa e spesso per sempre. C'è qualcosa su cui ti sarà utile comunque riflettere: si può amare l'amore, che abbia di volta in volta occhi blu o occhi neri, e si può amare una persona. Nel primo caso nessuno ti chiede di metterti in discussione, nel secondo, è tutta un'altra cosa...

Sono un omosessuale credente di 32 anni. Circa una settimana fa un mio amico mi ha mostrato il vostro giornale. Mi sono subito incuriosito e l'ho letto d'un fiato. Premetto che l'ho trovato estremamente simpatico ed anche superiore, nella sua semplicità, ad altre pubblicazioni cosiddette "gay" che in realtà sono solo pornografia. Purtroppo però, ho notato che in quasi tutti gli articoli erano contenuti commenti

negativi contro la Chiesa cattolica. La cosa che mi ha offeso di più è stata sicuramente la risposta alla lettera della ragazza credente, che manifestava tutti i suoi dubbi riguardo l'innamoramento per una donna più anziana di lei, conosciuta in Comunità. Questo Dr. Love ha affermato che "Spesso gli ambienti cattolici sono frequentati da omosessuali tormentati capaci di rovinare la vita a se stessi ed agli altri." A questo punto mi chiedo da che parte sta il pregiudizio e se il nuovo "peccato" non sia volere una relazione solo platonica con chi si ama.

Marcello.

Caro Marcello, per prima cosa vorrei precisare che la ragazza non si definiva credente, ma affermava solo di frequentare la parrocchia che, come saprai anche meglio di me, rappresenta per molti giovani solo un luogo di aggregazione. Se ho usato un tono "ruvido" nella mia risposta è perché ho creduto che la situazione lo richiedesse. La ragazza era molto giovane e si lamentava per le ambiguità di comportamento della donna più anziana che avrebbe potuto farla soffrire moltissimo. Quanto poi al giudizio di merito da te citato, non ho mai preteso di essere una persona neutra e senza convinzioni personali perciò mi prendo tutte le responsabilità per quello che ho detto: discutibilissimo, ma è quello che mi ha insegnato l'esperienza.

Indirizzate le vostre lettere a Dr. Love, QUIR, presso Arci Gay, Via del Leone 5/11r, 50121 Firenze

LETTERE



Cari amici di QUIR, poiché ho avuto la possibilità di ricevere una copia del vostro giornale, vorrei farvi partecipi dell'impressione che ne ho ricevuta. Innanzitutto complimenti per la sempre lodevole iniziativa di dare una voce in più a favore di chi, come noi, di possibilità di dire la propria ne ha ancora troppo poche. Dal momento che gli spazi che ci vengono riservati sui mezzi d'informazione per affermare in prima persona le nostre idee sono ancora troppo limitati, l'unica valida alternativa è quella di costruirceli e gestirli. Certamente così facendo potrebbe succedere che il pubblico cui si rivolgerà il giornale potrebbe limitarsi ai soli "adetti ai lavori", per lo meno all'inizio; ma in questo io non vedo un gran male, anzi credo che raggiungere una grossa parte della popolazione omosessuale "indigena" sarebbe già un risultato più che positivo. Senza pensare poi all'importante valore pedagogico che una pubblicazione di questo tipo potrebbe avere per una certa tipologia di lettore, favorendone l'emancipazione e la consapevolezza. E questa io penso dovrebbe essere la motivazione prima della vostra iniziativa. Nel nostro paese siamo anco-

ra lontani anni luce da quella "cultura omosessuale" di tipo americano, a cui voi, in qualche misura, mi sembra vi richiamate; troppo lontani perché gli obiettivi da raggiungere nella nostra realtà non debbano essere di più basso profilo, e comunque, proprio per questo, non meno importanti! Così io dissento sui metodi e sulle modalità cui avete deciso di ricorrere nel vostro giornale per proporvi al lettore. Troppi paroloni difficili, spesso messi lì per fare impressione più che per aiutare a capire chi, purtroppo, la possibilità di elevarsi culturalmente come voi non l'ha avuta. Non credo che lo snobismo intellettuale ci possa rendere più simpatici o giochi in qualche maniera a nostro favore. Non cerchiamo competizioni che non hanno ragioni di essere, credetemi, facendoci un po' più accorti alla fine riusciremo a fregare perfino gli etero su uno dei terreni a loro più cari per la "coltivazione" della discriminazione: quello della "normalità". Dimostriamo che abbiamo né più né meno dotazioni e capacità intellettive identiche a tutti gli altri, e perciò nessuno dovrà chiedere risposte diverse o più sofisticate di quelle che darebbe chiunque altro. Concedetemi ora un'ultima benevolmente "vele-

nosa" obiezione. Come mai la traduzione in inglese? Dal momento che vi definite "mensile fiorentino" non sarebbe stata più simpatica una traduzione nel colorito accento cittadino...? I miei migliori auguri.
Lunardi Eliano
(per il gruppo sociolivornesi dell'ARCI GAY di Pisa)

Caro Eliano, È un peccato che non abbia letto il numero 0 di QUIR in cui venivano spiegate le scelte editoriali della nostra redazione. Le ricapitolò, visto che possono aiutarvi a chiarire le idee. Questo giornale è nato con l'intenzione di raccogliere le opinioni, le idee, i fatti di tutte le varie realtà che compongono il mondo gay e lesbico (e non solo!) in modo da creare un punto di riferimento e di dibattito comune. È un mensile fiorentino perché partire dalla nostra realtà locale significa avere i piedi per terra. Questo non vuol dire che non dovrebbe rivolgersi altrove: infatti QUIR è distribuito non solo in tutta Italia, ma anche all'estero. Il nostro giornale affonda le sue radici nella cultura fiorentina, ma si propone di esportare il punto di vista italiano che per quanto riguarda l'omosessualità, non è mai uscito dal nostro paese.

È tradotto in inglese per questo motivo: promuovere l'omosessualità "all'italiana" in altri posti ed aprire il dialogo a livello globale. QUIR è strutturato diversamente da altri giornali perché non ha un vero e proprio staff di giornalisti che scrivono con regolarità tutti i mesi. Noi siamo soprattutto responsabili per l'organizzazione e la pubblicazione del materiale che ci arriva. Insomma, siete voi a "creare" questo giornale, con i vostri articoli e le lettere. Quindi, quando leggi qualcosa qui dentro, tieni presente che è espressione non di una rigida "linea" del giornale che vuole imporre a tutti i costi la sua filosofia, ma di una persona della nostra comunità, con il suo percorso culturale e le sue opinioni. Può darsi che procedendo così si corra il rischio di pubblicare "snobismi" o "estrosità", ma solo in questo modo possiamo cominciare a conoscersi veramente. Anche l'impostazione grafica è particolarmente curata, ma non per sembrare più chic. Siamo convinti che gay e lesbiche meritano di avere le cose ben fatte. Quante volte dobbiamo accontentarci di squallore e cattivo gusto solo perché non c'è alternativa? Speriamo di offrire un prodotto che dimostra

che non è necessario accontentarsi della seconda scelta solo perché siamo queer.

Un'ultima cosa - Perché quando ci si offre qualcosa che vuole proporsi come alternativa al solito squallore (in questo caso un prodotto veramente gay e lesbico, non pornografico e con un minimo di gusto) viene etichettato come un "americanato"? Non credi che anche gli italiani siano capaci di produrre cultura (queer) senza cadere negli stereotipi più biechi?

□

Da circa 2 anni vivo in questa città piena di storia, ma così scarsa di iniziative nell'ambito di una inesistente cultura gay. Una delle grosse contraddizioni dell'essere gay in Italia e in particolare in una città apparentemente tollerante come Firenze è la totale, o quasi, mancanza di spazi nei quali confrontarsi, e allo stesso tempo la presenza di una serie di luoghi all'aperto nei quali può essere più o meno facile avere degli incontri occasionali e una serie di locali che hanno il solo scopo quello di ottenere denaro. Per instaurare dei rapporti sia a livello prettamente sessuale che dialettico sono costretto a frequentare ed entrare in contatto con la realtà di chi vive la propria ses-

sualità in maniera sotterranea e frequenta i cinema a luci rosse o in altri luoghi dove è facile nascondere la propria condizione. Chi invece, come me, cerca di vivere la propria sessualità allo scoperto, senza crearsi troppi problemi e si è addentrato negli spazi gay fiorentini ha trovato che sono mal gestiti, troppo costosi, e non offrono la possibilità di un dialogo o di un confronto che eluda da quello prettamente sessuale. Il confronto con altre realtà europee mi pare a dir poco agghiacciante. Riassumendo. Vivere a Firenze come gay mi costringe ad essere molto critico verso le iniziative nel settore. Non esiste per esempio un bar dove non si è costretti a pagare per entrare, non esiste un punto d'incontro, un locale dove non si respiri un'atmosfera elettrizzante. Avendo vissuto a Londra faccio dei confronti. E' ovvio che le due realtà non sono paragonabili. Io e i miei amici preferiamo ritrovarci a casa o frequentare locali non gay. Per passare una serata divertente si è costretti ad uscire dall'Italia, tempo e soldi permettendo.

La grafica del vostro giornale e il contenuto sono molto interessanti: che sia un segnale di cambiamento? E' ovvio però

che il cambiamento non può essere preteso dagli altri, ma bisogna sforzarsi in prima persona, oppure, come nel mio caso, è più comodo recarsi in vacanza in luoghi dove i gay sono meglio organizzati. Mi piacerebbe comunque confrontarmi direttamente con voi per uno scambio costruttivo di opinioni e di progetti.

Francesco

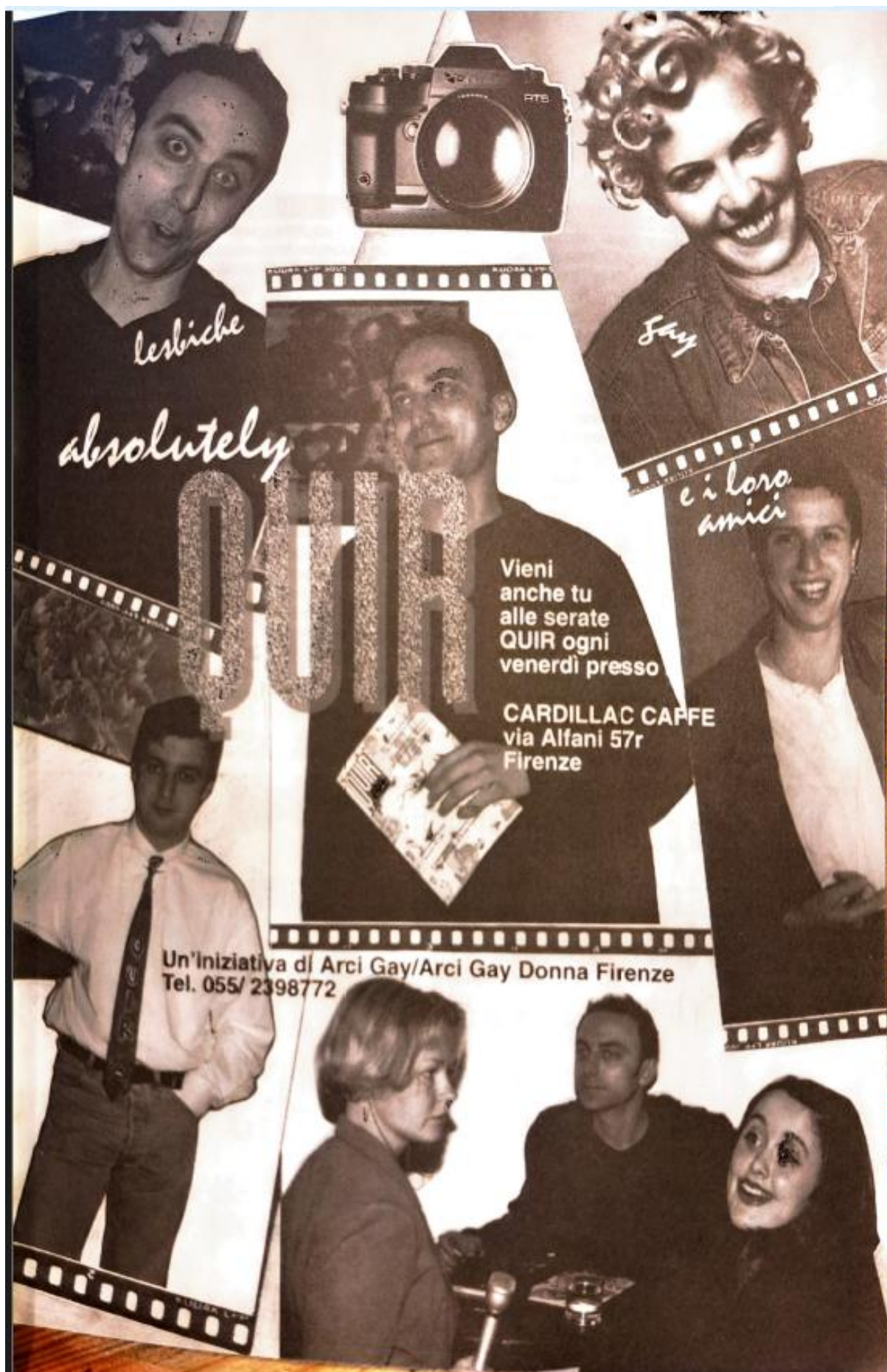
Caro Francesco, com'è possibile non darti ragione in certi aspetti delle tue "lamentele". Purtroppo l'"intrattenimento notturno" in generale è in crisi, non solo quello gay. C'è un grosso calo nelle iniziative culturali della nostra città e sembra sopravvivere solo quello che guarda al puro "scopo di lucro". Firenze era considerata la città più gaia d'Italia, ma a tutt'oggi i locali gay della città sono gestiti da eterosessuali e non esiste neanche un posto per lesbiche. Triste sì, ma è solo colpa del nostro atteggiamento ipercritico rispetto alle iniziative proposte da gay e lesbiche! Sembra che ogni volta che si mette in moto un'iniziativa "nostrana" venga considerata soprattutto come una succulenta occasione di critiche velenose, fino all'esaurimento dei suoi promotori. Se guardi bene

i fumori e favole "pentiti all'estero", ti renderai conto che funzionano bene perché c'è più unità all'interno della comunità gay e lesbica non perché c'è più tolleranza all'esterno! Comunque, se ci permetti i consigli per gli acquisti, Arci Gay potrebbe offrire questi spazi alternativi e tu stesso potresti contribuire a migliorarli. Per di più, di recente, il Cardillac Café in via Alfani ci ospita ogni venerdì sera per una serata "queer". Questo spazio ci dà la possibilità di un ambiente diverso dalla solita discoteca e ci dimostra che esistono gestori non gay con una grande apertura nei nostri confronti, che collaborano a realizzare un ambiente "misto" e che funziona pure! Speriamo di vederli là una di queste sere!

□

Indirizzate le vostre lettere a, REDAZIONE QUIR, presso Arci Gay, Via del Leone 5/11r, 50121 Firenze

Appendix 7 PSA in the June 1993 (№ 2) edition of *Quir: il mensile fiorentino di vita e cultura gay e lesbica e non solo...*



DR. LOVE



Caro Dr. Love,
ho letto due numeri della vostra rivista e mi sento ancora più triste. Abito in un paesino, ho ventinove anni e lavoro come commessa in un negozietto. Dieci anni fa mi sono innamorata di una mia compagna di scuola. E' stata una storia bellissima che è durata sette anni. Gli ho voluto bene più che a me stessa, ma facevamo tutto di nascosto e avevamo paura che qualcuno potesse capire che eravamo assieme. Poi lei mi ha lasciata perchè diceva che non c'era futuro per noi e si è sposata con uno conosciuto attraverso un'agenzia matrimoniale. Ha anche traslocato lontano da qui, è andata a stare vicino a Roma. Mi è rimasto solo un vecchio, caro amico, che è omosessuale anche lui e che conosce questa mia odissea e che mi ha fatto vedere questa rivista. Io abito lontano da Firenze e non ho motivi o scuse da inventare per venire da voi e così non so se potrò uscire da questa depressione. Mi piacerebbe fare quello che lei ha fatto a me, ma so che non potrei far finta di amare un uomo. Vorrei che qualcuno mi aiutasse perchè vedo tutto nero e non ho più voglia di vivere. Saluto voi tutti con tanto affetto, ma sappiate che siete fortunati a vivere a Firenze e che non tutti hanno la stessa fortuna.

Non posso firmare.

*Carissima,
La tua lettera è tristemente vera. Anche questa, che ci racconti, è ancora e per molti la via gay. Mi dici che non hai scuse per venire a Firenze, ed io so ben poco di te: com'è la tua famiglia, se hai la patente e la macchina, se sei autosufficiente economicamente. Credo però che di fronte a te ci sono 3 alternative. La prima*

sembra facile: è dire tutto alla tua famiglia, ai tuoi amici e cercare di vivere più naturalmente la tua omosessualità laddove abiti. L'altra è di trovare quelle benedette scuse che dici di non avere e cominciare a frequentare altre lesbiche e gay, a Firenze o in altre città vicine. Infine la terza è non fare nulla, non reagire e farti travolgere dalla depressione. La terza ipotesi può essere attraente per persone come noi, abituate ad odiarci, perchè così ci hanno insegnato, ma per favore, non sceglierla! In questo mondo gay che ti sembra così lontano abbiamo bisogno anche di te.

Ti scrivo per un consiglio. Per una serie di cause che sarebbe troppo lungo spiegare, sto passando un periodo di depressione. Io mi sono convinto che l'aiuto di uno psicologo potrebbe aiutarmi a superare questa crisi. Ne abbiamo parlato insieme con i miei amici e tutti, nessuno escluso, mi hanno sconsigliato dicendomi che dagli psicologi c'è da aspettarsi solo guai perchè appena gli riveli di essere gay si convincono che quello lì è il "tuo problema", e ti fanno il lavaggio del cervello. Mi piacerebbe sapere se le cose stanno veramente così e come posso risolvere questa questione.

Roberto S.

Affronti un argomento che si sente riproposto spesso da persone omosessuali. La cosa ha due aspetti. Il primo è che spesso, a causa del pregiudizio, molti gay e lesbiche si convincono di avere un problema psicologico appunto perchè sono omosessuali e cercano il rapporto con lo psicoterapeuta per risolvere questo presunto problema. D'altro lato c'è la tendenza, anche in

situazioni di malessere psicologico reale, ad evitare di cercare un aiuto specializzato per paura di quello che tu definisci "lavaggio del cervello". Credo che le due situazioni vadano distinte. Il disagio che nasce dalla scoperta dell'omosessualità e dalla necessità di convivere, specialmente in persone giovani, spesso non necessita un intervento professionale, ma può essere sconfitto più efficacemente dalla socializzazione con altri gay. Al contrario, stati depressivi che limitano il proprio benessere, la capacità lavorativa o di relazione, possono essere affrontati solo con una psicoterapia vera e propria. Bisogna ammettere però che molti psicologi e psicoterapeuti ancora oggi in Italia rifiutano di misurarsi con il dibattito scientifico sull'omosessualità in corso in altri paesi e che ha portato, ad esempio, alla cancellazione dell'omosessualità dalla lista delle malattie riconosciute. L'unico consiglio che mi sento di darti è di chiedere esplicitamente ai professionisti che interpellare la loro opinione sull'omosessualità e di scartare decisamente quelli che ti esporranno punti di vista conservatori o ambigui.

Indirizzate le vostre lettere a Dr. Love, QUIR, presso Arci Gay, Via del Leone 5/11r, 50121 Firenze

DR. LOVE



Indirizzate le vostre lettere a Dr. Love, QUIR, presso Arci Gay, Via del Leone, 5/11r, 50121 Firenze

Riceviamo e volentieri pubblichiamo in risposta alla lettera della lettrice anonima pubblicata sul numero 3 di QUIR.

Carissima amica che ti firmi "NON POSSO FIRMARE", ho letto e straletto il tuo messaggio disperato e confesso che mi ha fatto male. Non mi va di dare giudizi su persone che non conosco. Sento che tu sei una ragazza molto sensibile e dolce. La tua amica ha fatto molto male a lasciarti per una scusa così stupida e ha fatto ancor peggio a cercarsi un uomo tramite un'agenzia matrimoniale. Io non ti parlo di me perché non è il caso, ma sappi però che abbiamo una storia un po' analoga. Vorrei poterti aiutare se me lo permetti. Dici che non hai più voglia di vivere. Eccome, se ti capisco!!! Ti prego solo di non fare stupidaggini. Mi hanno insegnato e io lo comunico a te che la vita può essere bella, può essere anche rosa, basta che tu lo voglia, che tu abbia soprattutto fiducia in te stessa e in quelle persone che vogliono la tua felicità, però senza nasconderti, senza nascondere quello che sei, quello che siamo, lo so che è difficile ma dovrai farlo per essere una persona veramente felice. Se vuoi puoi scrivermi, il mio indirizzo ce l'ha l'Arci Gay che autorizzo fin da ora a darlo solo a te. Stai su, mi raccomando. Ciao.

Maila M

Sono tranquilla con la mia omosessualità, dichiarata in famiglia e al lavoro e coinvolta in una bellissima storia d'amore con una coetanea. Allora, ti dirai, perché mi scrivi? Il mio problema ti sembrerà scemo, ma mi tormenta tanto. Il fatto è che non sono mai riuscita a dirlo alla mia amica

d'infanzia, non so perché, ma di lei mi vergognavo. Due anni fa sono tornata alla mia città d'origine e ci ho provato, ma non ci sono riuscita. Ho sempre pensato di scriverglielo, ma sono già passati due anni e non l'ho ancora fatto. Adesso questa mia amica si sposa e voglio finalmente scriverle almeno per farle gli auguri e spedirle un regalo. Il problema è: se dopo tanti anni le scrivo solo per farle gli auguri ho l'impressione di essere banale e fredda, ma se le racconto di me sembrerà che voglio rovinarle il matrimonio, come se dicessi "tu puoi sposarti, io no". Cosa devo fare?

Elisabetta

Cara Elisabetta, prima di tutto sfatiamo un'idea errata. Non mi aspetto affatto che chi mi scrive debba essere per forza scontento o depresso, anzi, sarebbe bello se qualcuno scrivesse anche solo per comunicare agli

altri quanto vive bene ed è contento, anche come gay. Tuttavia cercherò di darti una mano con il tuo problema, che per fortuna è un "piccolo" problema. Premesso che niente e nessuno ti obbliga a parlare della tua omosessualità agli altri, se non ne hai voglia o non lo ritieni necessario, credo che non esista un momento giusto per farlo. E' sempre il momento sbagliato ed il modo sbagliato, anche se dopo in genere ci si sente meglio. Invia pure i tuoi auguri pieni dell'affetto che senti, ma rimanda "la rivelazione" al ritorno dal viaggio di nozze, e se proprio non puoi farlo di persona, comunicaglielo almeno per telefono. Probabilmente la tua amica vorrà sentirsi la protagonista indiscussa del suo giorno di matrimonio e non sarà molto disponibile (e come biasimarla!) ad affrontare scomodi problemi posti da altri, anche se questi altri sono la sua migliore amica.

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Appendix 10 'Solidarietà e Salute – il Consultorio per la salute omosessuale di Firenze' in the September 1993 (№ 4) edition of *Quir: il mensile fiorentino di vita e cultura gay e lesbica e non solo...*

All'inizio degli anni '80 la comunità omosessuale si trova costretta a fare i conti con se stessa. Mai nessuna malattia a trasmissione sessuale aveva imposto una presa di coscienza così repentina e indifferibile, mettendo in discussione comportamenti e culture prima dati per scontati. Infatti, di fronte alla paura del contagio dell'AIDS, la cultura del comportamento sessuale "facile", fino ad allora considerata liberatoria, viene sottoposta a severa critica. In questo mutato contesto emergono valori diversi, ispirati ad un senso di solidarietà che cambia le modalità di rapporto con l'altro. Al contempo l'emergenza Aids viene gestita in modo inadeguato dalle strutture pubbliche, non sufficientemente preparate ad affrontare problematiche e bisogni delle persone omosessuali. Di conseguenza alcuni gruppi gay si organizzano, dapprima in maniera spontanea, poi sempre più consapevole, fino a creare delle vere e proprie strutture che lavorano su un'idea che si potrebbe definire di "autoaiuto", da omosessuale ad omosessuale. Infatti l'esperienza dimostra che condividere lo stesso vissuto di disagio aiuta ad abbattere gli steccati che usualmente separano l'operatore dal paziente e facilita la relazione d'aiuto. Anche il Circolo Arci Gay di Firenze, dopo anni di impegno "spontaneo" nel campo della prevenzione, nel 1991 ha presentato alla Regione Toscana un progetto per la realizzazione di un vero e proprio Consultorio per la salute fisica e psichica delle persone omosessuali. Il progetto è stato accolto favorevolmente e finanziato per il 1992, con l'assicurazione di un ulteriore finanziamento per l'anno in corso.

Ma come funziona il Consultorio? Spesso il primo contatto avviene attraverso la linea telefonica, un numero a cui rispondono volontari formati tramite corsi promossi da Arci Gay e da altre strutture, come l'Istituto Superiore di Sanità di Roma. L'anonimato del mezzo telefonico può agevolare l'interlocutore ad esporre i propri problemi, che si tratti di informazioni su qualche malattia venerea o più profondi problemi di accettazione della propria omosessualità o di difficoltà di rapporto con il partner. Se lo richiede, l'utente può anche usufruire presso il Consultorio di una serie di servizi specialistici, ad esempio il test Hiv accompagnato da consulenza pre e post test. Il prelievo viene fatto in sede da un infermiere professionale che presta la sua preziosa opera come volontario, mentre i campioni di sangue vengono analizzati presso il laboratorio della USL 10D di Careggi, in accordo con la responsabile, Dott.ssa De Maio. Questo servizio

di test costituisce il fulcro delle attività del Consultorio anzitutto per l'anonimato e la riservatezza che spesso vengono a mancare nelle strutture pubbliche, in secondo luogo perché le consulenze che accompagnano il test possono diventare davvero luogo efficace di informazione sulla prevenzione, senza rischiare di scambiare il test stesso per una forma di prevenzione, invece che per un puro accertamento del proprio stato di salute.

Svolgono una funzione di sostegno gli altri servizi disponibili all'interno del Consultorio. Le persone sieropositive possono avvalersi di consulenze mediche e psicologiche. Le consulenze mediche sono eseguite dal Dott. Di Pietro, infettivologo dell'unità operativa di S.Damiano a Careggi, quelle psicologiche si avvalgono dell'esperienza di Mirella Sandomini, referente nazionale dell'Arci Gay per i problemi legati all'Aids. Per i problemi di identità sessuale è disponibile un sessuologo, Alberto Bigagli. Questo è stato il primo servizio offerto dal Consultorio, insieme alla linea telefonica, poiché gli omosessuali si interrogano di più degli eterosessuali sulla propria identità sessuale. Altri obiettivi sono l'attivazione di un servizio di consulenze mediche sulle malattie a trasmissione sessuale ed un servizio di consulenza psicologica. Poiché per il concetto di lavoro del Consultorio è di importanza strategica che gli operatori condividano l'esperienza omosessuale, si è cercato di entrare in contatto con professionisti gay residenti in Toscana, ma a quanto pare gli annunci pubblicati sono passati inosservati. Per questo autunno sono comunque previste altre iniziative: un gruppo di sostegno sull'identità omosessuale gestito da una psicoterapeuta ed un gruppo di autoaiuto per persone sieropositive con la presenza di una facilitatrice, infine una serie di conferenze aperte al pubblico riguardanti l'identità sessuale, le malattie veneree, l'alimentazione, le terapie alternative e le terapie anti-stress.



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Il punto su Firenze gay e l'Aids

A colloquio con Mirella Sandonnini, consulente Hiv/Aids del Consultorio Arci Gay

domanda-Da tempo ti occupi della consulenza nel campo dell'Aids, cosa ci puoi dire riguardo le motivazioni che vi hanno spinto ad istituire un servizio di test dell'Aids?

risposta-Volevamo continuare il lavoro sulla prevenzione, ma nel modo più concreto possibile. Molte persone omosessuali denunciavano il disagio provato nel rapporto con l'istituzione pubblica, così sentito da farli rinunciare spesso a sottoporsi al test. C'è bastato trarre le dovute conclusioni.

d-Sono in molti a rivolgersi al vostro servizio?

r-Quest'anno abbiamo registrato un vero e proprio "boom" di utenza, proprio in relazione al test dell'Aids. Dato che per il momento siamo in grado di garantire il servizio solo al Martedì, ci è capitato di dover rimandare qualcuno alla settimana dopo, con dispiacere.

d-Che tipo di persone vengono a fare il test al Consultorio?

r-Soprattutto uomini gay dai 20 ai 35 anni, ma anche un certo numero di bisessuali. In genere persone di un certo livello culturale e che hanno in buona parte superato problemi di accettazione della loro sessualità.

d-Che livello di informazione sulla prevenzione hai riscontrato nei tuoi utenti?

r-Buona, in teoria. Ad esempio tutti hanno dimostrato di avere in chiaro la pericolosità dei rapporti di penetrazione non protetti. D'altro canto quasi tutti avevano dubbi riguardo certe "zone d'ombra" come il corretto uso del preservativo ed i rapporti orali, che non sono stati affrontati adeguatamente dalle campagne di informazione ufficiale.

d-Si può dire che la comunità gay fiorentina ha preso coscienza del pericolo Aids?

r-Non completamente. Come dicevo, la teoria è conosciuta, ma la messa in pratica è assai carente. Soprattutto negli incontri sessuali occasionali molti utenti hanno denunciato la tendenza a lasciarsi andare a comportamenti pericolosi per paura di essere giudicati male o rifiutati.

d-Ma esiste davvero un problema Aids per i gay fiorentini?

r-Direi di sì. Per due motivi. Il primo è che non è ancora diventata automatica e scontata la pratica del sesso sicuro, l'altro è che si fa finta di ignorare un dato noto a tutti, e cioè che nella comunità gay fiorentina esiste un buon numero di persone sieropositive.

d-Qual è il problema più grave con cui hai a che fare nella tua attività al Consultorio?

r-Appunto quelle dei sieropositivi. In questo clima "da struzzi" le persone sieropositive vivono una pesante situazione di isolamento psicologico che le rende difficili da raggiungere.

d-C'è stata una risposta dei sieropositivi all'offerta di servizi da parte del Consultorio?

r-Finora molto scarsa. A Firenze le persone a comportamento omosessuale che si scoprono sieropositive hanno paura di essere emarginate dagli stessi gay e quindi non approfittano di ciò che gli è offerto "per paura di essere riconosciuti". D'altra parte, visto il clima psicologico che le circonda, non posso certo biasimarli, anche se continueremo ad impegnarci per garantire la discrezione e l'anonimato necessario perché possano usufruire dei nostri servizi.

Orgoglio gay dall'America all'Italia

"Muro di pietra" o muro di gomma?

Gay Pride from America to Italy

Stonewall or Rubberwall?

di Nina Peci

OPINION



27 Giugno 1969. Il bar Stonewall, a Christopher street, Greenwich Village, New York. Per la quinta volta in quella settimana l'ispettore Seymore Pine e altri sette agenti di polizia si accingevano a chiudere le porte dello Stonewall, un bar per gay, lesbiche e travestiti. Le altre volte i clienti avevano sopportato quella violenza, i raids erano frequenti a quei tempi, ma quella notte in particolare, si resero conto di averne abbastanza. Quando quattro travestiti furono fatti entrare nel cellulare, un grido di protesta si levò dalla folla, che tentò anche di rovesciarlo, ed il guida:ore fece appena in tempo a dileguarsi. Subito dopo ad essere arrestata fu una lesbica che ingaggiò una dura lotta a pugni e morsi. Fu proprio in quel momento che la folla esplose. Lattine di birra e bottiglie cominciarono a volare sulla testa dei poliziotti e quando quelle si esaurirono, si cominciò a gettare tutto quello che era a portata di mano: sanpietrini, cestini dei rifiuti, macchine dei giornali. L'unico rifugio per i poliziotti rimase proprio lo Stonewall, ma un gruppo di travestiti veramente arrabbiati sradicarono un parchimetro e lo usarono per rompere la barriera davanti alla porta del bar. In quel momento arrivarono i rinforzi e la strada fu ripulita. Ma la notte dopo, il 28 giugno, gay, lesbiche e travestiti, unirono le loro forze nelle strade intorno allo Stonewall e per ancora qualche giorno tennero viva la protesta in quella che fu chiamata "la rivolta di Stonewall". Ora, ogni 28 giugno, gay e lesbiche in tutto il mondo celebrano questa data come la Giornata dell'Orgoglio Gay. Benchè il movimento di liberazione gay può essere fatto risalire alla pubblicazione in Germania nel 1860 dei lavori di Karl Heinrich Ulrich e alla formazione del Comitato Scientifico Umanitario, quello che accadde in quei quattro giorni del '69 a New York segnò un cambiamento socia-

June 27, 1969. The Stonewall Inn on Christopher St., Greenwich Village, New York. For the fifth time that week, Deputy Inspector Seymore Pine and seven other police officers attempted once again to close the doors of The Stonewall, a local gay, lesbian and transvestite bar. The other times, the patrons obliged to the harassment, raids were frequent in those times, but on this particular night, they felt they had enough. As four transvestites were loaded into the paddywagon, a cry of protests came from the crowd as well as an attempt to overturn the paddywagon, which was able to get away in the nick of time. The next one to get arrested was a dyke who put up quite a struggle with her fists flying and teeth biting. It was in that moment that the crowd exploded. Beer cans and bottles started flying towards the cops and when those were finished, they started throwing whatever they could get their hands on; cobblestones, trashcans, newspaper machines. The cop's only refuge was inside the Stonewall, but the angry group of transvestites outside uprooted a parking meter and used it to break down the barrier behind the door of the bar. By this time reinforcements had arrived and the streets were cleared. On the next night, June 28, gays, lesbians and transvestites joined forces on the streets surrounding The Stonewall Inn and for the next several days protested in what was to be called The Stonewall Riots. Every June 28th since, gays and lesbians all over the world have celebrated this date as Gay Pride Day.

Although the gay liberation movement can be traced back to Germany in the 1860's with the publications of Karl Heinrich Ulrich and later with the formation of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, what happened during those four days late June of '69 in New York marked a definite social and political change for homosexuals much like the actions of Rosa Parks, the black woman who refused to give up her seat to a white on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955, thus triggering the start of the civil rights movement, or even more recently, the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles which brought attention to the decay of the American urban infrastructure and more important, the end of the



Robert Longo, USA,
Senza titolo (serie
"White Riot"), 1982,
carbone, matita, e
inchiostro su carta,
96x120

Robert Longo, USA,
Untitled (White Riot
Series), 1982, charcoal,
graphite, and ink on
paper, 96x120

le per gli omosessuali, altrettanto quanto, per il movimento dei diritti civili, l'azione di Rosa Parks, la donna nera che rifiutò di cedere il posto ad un bianco a Montgomery, Alabama, nel 1955. Più di recente, il verdetto sul caso Rodney King a Los Angeles che ha rivelato la decadenza del sistema sociale americano e ha determinato la fine della politica del "laissez-faire" economico di Reagan e Bush.

I gay e le lesbiche americane (e i travestiti!) possono essere orgogliosi di questo. A 24 anni dalla rivolta, la comunità omosessuale, non solo è diventata una importante e visibile forza politica, ma ha anche giocato un ruolo di leadership nella lotta contro l'Aids: organizzandosi e prendendo parte in prima persona a tutti gli interventi che riguardano la prevenzione, per non parlare del lavoro di lobbying per quanto riguarda gli aspetti politici della malattia. Forme di razzismo, sessismo e discriminazioni riguardo l'età sono ancora dei problemi reali con cui la comunità deve confrontarsi, ma nessuna minoranza fino ad ora ha fatto così tanto per dare un riconoscimento alle diversità insite in un gruppo così variegato, ma tuttavia unito, di persone.

Reagan/Bush era of laissez-faire politics.

American gays and lesbians (and transvestites!) have a lot to be proud about. Over the last 24 years since the riots, the American homosexual community has not only become an important, visible and influential political force (in 1987, 600,000 gays and lesbians marched on Washington and this year over 1 million repeated the protest, both times being the largest civil rights manifestation ever held in the history of The United States), but has also led the way in the struggle against Aids as the first and foremost to organize and take action in all areas of prevention and education, not to mention their lobbying on the political aspect of the disease. Racism, sexism, genderism, ageism and non body-ableism are still some of the issues which affect the gay and lesbian

community, but no other "minority" group has ever done so much to recognize and deal with all the aspects of such a diverse yet united milieu of people. Gay Pride Day, by now an institution not only in America, but also in many other countries, is experienced quite differently in Italy. Although gay and lesbian groups such as Arci Gay (the national gay and lesbian association) and Mario Mieli in Rome organize some sort of public happening in cities all over Italy, on its best occasions they draw only around 200 people. Only last year did gay pride day draw national attention with Milan's public wedding between 6 gay and 1 lesbian couple. This year Nando Della Chiesa, the most likely candidate for Milan's next mayor, has promised to make an appearance on June 28, and if he keeps his promise, will be the first politician at such a high level to do so.

Of course it's futile to compare the Italian gay and lesbian community with its American counterpart. Let's face it: an Italian Stonewall is very improbable. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes just that—a good bash in the head—to unite a group of oppressed people, but Italian society is too clever to allow this to happen. There are no laws banning homosexuality and recently a law extending family status to non-married couples which includes same sex couples whether they be two old aunts living together out of need or gay and lesbian couples was passed. Some communities, based on this law,

Il Giorno dell'Orgoglio gay, che ormai è diventato un'istituzione non solo in America, ma anche in molte nazioni, viene vissuto in modo molto diverso in Italia. Anche se alcuni gruppi gay come Arci Gay e il circolo Mano Mielì di Roma organizzano degli avvenimenti pubblici un po' dovunque nel paese, nel caso più fortunato sono in grado di radunare intorno alle 200 persone. Soltanto l'anno scorso i festeggiamenti per l'orgoglio gay attirarono l'attenzione della nazione perché a Milano ebbero luogo dei matrimoni pubblici tra sei coppie gay ed una lesbica. Quest'anno Nando Dalla Chiesa, l'ex più quotato candidato alla poltrona di sindaco di Milano, ha promesso di essere presente ai festeggiamenti del 28 Giugno, e se sarà eletto e manterrà le sue promesse, sarà il primo politico italiano a questo livello, a fare una cosa del genere. Certamente è inutile fare un raffronto tra la comunità gay e lesbica italiana e la sua sorella americana. Rendiamocene conto: una Stonewall italiana è assai improbabile. Sfortunatamente, a volte c'è bisogno di un bel colpo in testa per rendere unito un gruppo di persone oppresse, ma la società italiana è troppo furba per far sì che questo accada. Non esistono leggi che criminalizzano l'omosessualità. La chiesa cattolica, sempre così influente nella società italiana, comprende il potere dell'oppressione ed arriva perfino a considerare legittima la tendenza omosessuale, a patto di non metterla in pratica. Perfino Mussolini, durante il regime fascista, non dette vita a norme che punivano direttamente l'omosessualità, ma si limitò a spedire al confino in Sardegna ed in altre isole gli omosessuali, piuttosto che rischiare che si potes-

sero in qualche modo organizzare ed insorgere. Così, grazie a questo classico "muro di gomma" tutto italiano, restiamo ancora disorganizzati e disuniti come comunità, con più di uno Stonewall psicologico da abbattere.

Mentre i gay e le lesbiche americani hanno la fortuna di confrontarsi con un autentico nemico visibile - la politica omofobica, la brutalità della polizia, i "picchiatori di gay", i licenziamenti sul posto di lavoro - gli italiani devono lottare contro una forma di oppressione interiorizzata. Il modo italiano e cattolico di separare il pubblico ed il privato è probabilmente la cosa più determinante per il nostro rifiuto di affrontare la questione omosessuale. Accettando quella filosofia ci sentiamo "liberati" perché possiamo praticare l'omosessualità tra le quattro mura di casa o di una discoteca privata, senza finestre sulla strada, in modo che nessuno possa vedere cosa accade dentro, ma non sopportiamo l'idea che vivere davvero l'omosessualità debba significare viverla alla luce del sole. Finché questo non accade, finché gli omosessuali italiani non avranno l'orgoglio e la dignità di vivere come tali e di dare il loro contributo per arricchire la comunità gay e lesbica, il più grande nemico da combattere sarà in noi stessi.

Questo 28 Giugno, invece di cercare altrove modelli da seguire, cominciamo a guardare in noi stessi e dentro la nostra società. Smettiamo di non considerare il bisogno di dignità che abbiamo, come omosessuali. Abbiamo una battaglia sociale davanti assai più dura dei nostri coraggiosi colleghi americani perché non siamo neppure ancora in grado di capire che c'è una battaglia da fare.

have also extended public housing to same sex couples as well. The Catholic Church, ever so present in Italian society, also understands the power of oppression and therefore puts homosexuality as being all right just as long as one does not practice it. Not even Mussolini dared, during his fascist regime, to openly punish homosexuality and only sent homosexuals in exile to the island of Sardinia rather than risk their uprising as an organized angry oppressed group. So, thanks to this classic "rubber wall" attitude that is present in Italian society, we as a community still remain un-organized and un-united with more of a psychological Stonewall to fight rather than a physical one.

So you see, while American gays and lesbians have the good fortune of having a real physical enemy - the homophobic politician, the homophobic city ordinance on the ballot, the police brutality, the "fag-bashings", the loss of a job, etc - Italians must fight against an abstract form of oppression, usually starting within ourselves. The Italian (and Catholic) way of separating public and private is probably the biggest factor in our denial as homosexuals. By accepting this philosophy, we feel "liberated" because we are able to practice our homosexuality within the four walls of our home or within the four walls of a private disco with no windows so no one passing on the street can see who's in there, but we deny the living of it which would mean coming-out, first to ourselves and then in our everyday lives as well. Until this happens, until the Italian homosexual has the pride and dignity to start living as such and get involved in enriching the gay and lesbian community, the biggest enemy we will have to fight is ourselves. This June 28th, instead of looking elsewhere for a model to follow let's start looking inside ourselves and within our own society. Let's stop denying the dignity we deserve as homosexuals. We have a harder social battle to fight than our brave American colleagues because we don't even realize that there's any battle to be fought.

RIFLESSIONI

Tra i tanti e sentiti interventi delle convenute mi è parsa particolarmente rilevante la proposta delle donne del neonato circolo di Ferrara per i contenuti ed anche per l'unanime consenso con cui è stato accolto. La proposta è quella di cambiare il nome Arci Gay facendo comparire la "ancora non accettata" parola lesbica. Non si tratta ovviamente di una questione di forma, bensì di un atto politico sostanziale nel raggiungimento di una chiara posizione, in forza delle nostre differenze politiche di uomini e donne, perché "ciò che non si dice non è", come ha sottolineato Lidia Menapace. Importante credo sia questo passo per la realizzazione di una politica paritaria, quindi basata sulle differenze, costruttiva e dinamica, fra gli uomini e le donne di Arci Gay, anche all'interno dei singoli circoli. Infatti definirsi tutte/tutti gay è funzionale a nascondere le differenze (fatto che, come le donne di Ferrara hanno rilevato, "è costato molto in termini di solidarietà tra omosessuali e lesbiche") e quindi a mistificare una realtà di fatto

ricreando la marginalità delle donne nella società, nei gruppi Arci Gay. Guardandosi poi attorno, al di là delle relatrici e degli interventi al microfono, nella sala della Società Letteraria che ci ospitava, anche nei momenti di attesa, nella festa che le ragazze dell'Arci Gay di Verona avevano organizzato, era difficile, ed anch'io non mi sono astenuta, fare un'analisi "generazionale" di queste donne. Tutte o quasi eravamo molto giovani, donne cioè che non hanno vissuto gli anni '70 dell'impegno, delle grandi utopie, del pensiero "forte". Donne che si sono formate durante gli "scintillanti anni '80", quelli del disimpegno, della caduta delle ideologie, del riflusso, in cui ancora come valori nuovi ci sono stati propinati la famiglia, il posto al sole...contro i "terribili spettri" del turbolento decennio precedente: il femminismo, la contestazione, la lotta armata e magari la musica rock, tutto in un unico mostruoso calderone. Donne però che a Verona ci sono andate e che hanno vissuto questi due giorni con atten-

zione ed interesse e che quindi, in qualche modo, una loro coscienza politica se la sono formata, pur probabilmente prive delle grandi ideologie politiche ed orfane del femminismo militante. Donne tra le quali io, politicamente scettica, piena di dubbi e talora anche indolente, mi sono sentita a mio agio, forse proprio per questa politica all'insegna del pensiero debole, fatta di una certosa attenzione nel prendere appunto di un impegno che si realizza attraverso tante piccole attività, di una fiducia nei traguardi non certo risolutivi, forse un po' più da "revisionisti" che da "rivoluzionari", ma tangibili. Questo lungo sproloquio non vuole davvero essere un elogio della mia generazione, né tantomeno una critica a chi, molto prima di noi, con metodi e forse finalità diverse, si è rimboccato le maniche, ma solo un tentativo di spiegazione che faccio a me stessa, prima che ad altri, dei motivi per cui a Verona c'eravamo ed in tante, alla faccia del clima politico-culturale che per tutt'altro ci aveva cresciute.

di Elena Innocenti

Among all the ideas presented at the convention, I found most interesting the proposal by the group of women from Ferrara not only for its content but also for the fact that it was widely accepted by most others present. The proposal was to change the name of Arci Gay/Arci Gay Donna in order to include the "not yet accepted 'L' word", lesbian. This is a political act, not just a formality, in order to achieve a more clear position on the political differences between male and female; as Lidia Menapace even said, "what isn't said doesn't exist". This is an important first step for the achievement of political fairness, based on the dynamic and constructive differences between the men and women of Arci Gay as well as in the local chapters. In fact, calling everyone just "gay" hides the dichotomy between the two separate realities and therefore re-creates within Arci Gay the same ostracization that women face in society. Looking around at all the women in the convention room, during the various pauses, and at the party that evening that the women from the Verona chapter of Arci Gay had organized, it was difficult not to make a general analysis of all these women. Almost all of us were very young, women who have not lived through the feminism of the '70's with its great efforts, thoughts and utopias. We were women who were molded during the "sparkling" '80's with all its laziness, fallen ideals, the "go with the flow" attitudes and with its new values like the family, a place in the sun... against the "terrible aspects" of the past decade: the feminist movement, the protests, the armed political battles and even rock music, all in one melting pot. Women, however, that came to Verona and experienced these

by Elena Innocenti

THOUGHTS

two days with interest and attention and therefore, in one way or another, confirming the formation of a political conscience anyway even without great political thought and militant feminism behind them. Women, like myself, uninterested in politics, full of doubt and laziness, felt at ease due to this new way of looking at politics based on the efforts at the local level through lots of little activities and a faith in its goals, not always with a definite resolution (maybe more revisionist than revolutionist), but realistic. This reflection isn't meant to be an eulogy to my generation nor to criticize those who before us, with ways and means definitely different, paved the way for the next generations. It is only an explanation, first to myself and then to others, of why we were so numerous at Verona defying the political and cultural climate that have raised us.

LETTERA APERTA



La mia Ghinea My Guinea

di Andrea Baldi

Egregio Candidato del fronte progressista, ho ascoltato con grande attenzione i suoi ripetuti inviti rivolti a me, omosessuale, a votare per lei. Non posso non condividere la sua opinione quando dice che come minoranza discriminata non posso ritrovarmi se non nelle idee portate avanti dai progressisti, soprattutto in questo momento di un passaggio così delicato per il nostro paese; un passaggio che, come si è sentito ripetere tante volte negli ultimi mesi, dovrebbe essere dal Vecchio al Nuovo, ma che rischia di essere dal Vecchio al Bieco, se malauguratamente vincessero quelle forze conservatrici che al suo fronte si oppongono e che per ora altro non hanno mostrato se non l'arroganza dei loro egoismi e il tentativo di sottrarsi al confronto delle idee (che forse non hanno? o che forse vogliono tenere celate perché troppo contrastano con il Nuovo che tutti aspettiamo?) riesumando parole vecchie di quasi cinquant'anni, più indirizzate a toccare istinti che non la ragione. Non posso anch'io non sentire il rischio, nella mia coscienza di democratico (e come potrei averla sviluppata altrimenti dopo le sofferenze e le discriminazioni patite per la mia diversità?), celato in certe manifestazioni di rozza arroganza o più sottile irrazionalità di recenti manifestazioni anche trasmesse. Io so, io non sono cieco, che dietro al Cavaliere si nascondono le seconde, le terze file di coloro che ingrassavano dietro la prima fila dei grandi accusati del nostro disastro nazionale. E so anche che dietro il Carroccio stanno le quarte e le quinte file: coloro che si avvantaggiavano del Sistema e per i loro interessi lo puntellavano col loro voto, coloro che ancora vogliono solo salvare il loro piccolo portafoglio: gli industrialotti, i commercianti che non pagano, impunemente, le tasse e che questa impunità voglio ora legalizzata. Io non son cieco e so che una vittoria di queste forze lascerebbe al potere chi c'è sempre stato, ma, questa volta, con più arroganza. E so anche che quest'arroganza sarà anche contro di me, omosessuale. Per questo, Egregio Candidato, anche solo per questo io le darei il mio voto. Diciamo che io ho una Ghinea da spendere in suo favore; che io le darò comunque, per quanto sopra le ho

Dear Candidate of the progressive front, I listened with great attention to your repeated invitations to me, homosexual, to vote for you. I cannot share your opinion when you say that as a discriminated minority I will be able to find myself only in the ideas brought forward by the progressives, especially in this ever so delicate moment of passage in our country; a passage that, like we have heard repeated many times in these months, should be from Old to New, but that risks being from Old to Sinister, if unfortunately the conservative forces, to which you are opposed and for now have not shown anything other than their egotistical arrogance and have attempted to subtract from the comparison of ideas (that maybe they don't have? or maybe they want to keep hidden because too many of them conflict with the New that we're all waiting for) digging up fifty year old words meant to effect instinct rather than reason, were to win. I can't not feel the risk, in my democratic conscience (and how could I have developed it otherwise after the suffering and discrimination brought on by my diversity?), hidden in certain manifestations of coarse arrogance or the more subtle irrationality of recent manifestations, even on television. I know, I'm not blind, that behind the Knight are hidden the second and third ranks, those who were getting fat behind the front row who in turn were being accused in our national disaster. And I also know that behind the Chariteer stand the fourth and fifth: those who took advantage of the System and, for their own interests, supported it with their votes; those who still only want to save their little wallet: the industrialists, the merchants that don't pay taxes, unpunished, and want this privilege legalized. I'm not blind and I know that a victory for these forces would leave the power in the hands of those who have always had it, but, this time, with even more arrogance. And I also know that this arrogance will be against me as a homosexual. For this reason, Dear Candidate, and only for this reason, I would give you my vote. Let's say that I have a ghinea to spend in your favor, that I will give you anyway, for the reason I already explained, but, let's make it like a loan that I can always collect. The times in which we are living are very serious, everyone agrees. They are serious from the institutional point of view since many people for whom the State had to provide work were overwhelmed by disgraceful scandals that left behind burnt ground, dangerous, because this hole has created instability and insecurity and the demand for justice, and the end of the Strong Man. We almost get the impression that certain social strata are inclined to make



"Ambarabà, cicci, coccò", disegni digitali di Nina Peci

spiegato, ma, facciamo, come in prestito, la cui restituzione posso sempre esigere.

Il momento che stiamo vivendo è assai grave, ormai tutti ne conven-gono. E' grave da un punto di vista istituzionale poiché molte delle per-sone che lo Stato dovevano far fun-zionare sono state travolte da igno-minosi scandali che hanno lasciato dietro di sé terra bruciata, e pericolosa, perché questo vuoto ha creato insta-bilità e insicurezza e cresce la richie-sta di giustizialismo, e fin'anche di un Uomo Forte. Si ha quasi l'impressione che certi strati socia-li siano inclini a commettere gli stessi errori, dimentichi dei disa-stri che hanno già provocato.

Il momento è grave perché il nostro paese è attraversato da una crisi economica senza precedenti. E la miseria fa paura e la paura fa sragionare. Fa sragionare la gente che chiede sicurezza, ed è più sicuro ciò che si è già sperimentato di ciò che si deve ancora provare: si accentuano così posizioni conservatrici; ma sragionano anche i politici che pro-pongono controsensi e iniquità.

Il suo fronte sarà tentato, a volte sarà abbligato, a venire a compromessi con queste posizioni. Io capisco le ragioni della pratica politica, che non possono sempre coincidere con quelle degli ideali, ma non voglio, egregio candidato, fare di noi omo-sessuali l'offerta sacrificale a "più

ampie necessità politiche".

So che lei dovrà allettare l'elettore moderato, lo richiede il nuovo siste-ma elettorale, e l'elettore modera-to da noi vuol dire soprattutto cat-tolico, lo riconosco ai cattolici il diritto di vivere la loro vita secon-do i loro principi, non riconosco a loro, però, l'arroganza di voler imporre questi principi a tutti. Ed è qui che passa il discrimine fonda-mentale che, a mio avviso, dovrà esserci tra progressisti e conserva-tori: a voi tocca il compito di garan-tire diritti e giustizia a tutti e nel rispet-to di tutti, di garantire che una mag-gioranza non sopraffaccia i diritti di una minoranza. La sua politica nei miei confronti dovrà avere il corag-gio dell'intransigenza della giusti-zia, il coraggio della dis-sacrazione di un'ordine morale che si vuole spaciare per naturale, ma che, come ogni ordine morale, è solo contingente. Se lei vorrà rappresentarmi dovrà sganciarsi da un senso comune alla cui base sta la morale cattolica.

Io le ho chiesto di aiutarmi a portare avanti, anche in Parlamento, alcu-ni punti che, come individuo e come appartenente a un movimento omosessuale, mi sembrano indi-spensabili: per migliorare la mia situazione, ma anche quella di altre persone discriminate per vari moti-vi, all'interno della società; tutti questi punti si scontreranno con il ben pensare dei cattolici: lei dovrà

the same mistakes, forgetting the disa-sters that they already caused.

The moment is serious because our country has been crossed by an economic crisis without precedent. People frigh-tened by poverty begin to talk non-sense; the same people who are asking for security. But that which has already been tried is always more secure than that which has never been done, accentuating the conservative positions. Even the politicians are proposing nonsense and injustice. Your front will try to, and be obligated to, come to a compromise with these forces. I under-stand the reasoning of practical poli-tics that cannot always coincide with ideals, but don't. Dear Candidate, sacrifice us to pursue "more important political necessities".

I know that you will have to entice the moderate voters, especially with the new electoral system, and the moderate voters here are for the most part Catholic. They have the right to live their life according to their own prin-ciples, but do not have the right to im-pose these principles on everyone. And it is here that we find a fundamental separation that, as I see it, must exist between the progressives and the con-servatives: it is your turn to guaran-tee rights and justice to everyone, respecting everyone, to guarantee that a majority does not overtake the rights of a minority. Your policy towards me must have the courage of the inflexibility of justice, the coura-ge of the desacralization of a moral order that tries to pass itself off as natu-ral; but that, like any moral order, is only relative. If you want to represent

avere forza e coraggio.

Io le ho chiesto di difendere il mio diritto a vivere con la persona che amo e che questo diritto mi venga riconosciuto dalla legge. Io ho chiesto il riconoscimento delle Unioni Civili per tutti, anche per me; e il Parlamento di Strasburgo mi è venuto inaspettatamente in aiuto proprio in questi giorni, e lei ha anche potuto assaggiare quali saranno le polemiche che una simile legge potrà suscitare in Italia. Ma io lo sapevo, l'ho sempre saputo che la mia affettività avrebbe fatto più scandalo della mia sessualità, perché se amo e voglio vivere con la persona che amo non accetto più una marginalità sociale, ma mi inserisco nei gangli di questa società che pensa solo a conservarsi identica e cioè nel tessuto cattolico della famiglia.

Ma io le ho chiesto anche di difendere i diritti dei singoli individui, affinché chi vive in coppia non abbia a godere di privilegi a scapito di chi questa scelta non la vuol fare o non è riuscito a farla. E di nuovo lei dovrà scontrarsi con la morale cattolica che pone la famiglia al centro di tutto il suo potere.

E io le ho chiesto anche che l'educazione sia vera educazione, che nelle scuole non si menta più sull'omosessualità. Ma di nuovo avrà contro la moralità cattolica, che fa di un'educazione strumentale il secondo pilastro del suo potere.

Le ho chiesto di proteggere la mia salute. Si parli chiaramente di preservativo; si parli di sessualità, quella vera, non di astinenza, con l'arroganza di termini comprensibili. E di nuovo dovrà combattere contro il mondo cattolico, perché, si sa, la sessualità è libertà e una sessualità veramente libera è una minaccia assai più grave, per il potere morale, di un'alternanza politica.

Le ho chiesto di condannare la denigrazione, e non solo quella rivolta a me. Questo le sarà, se vuole, più facile perché non tocca nessun pilastro e glielo potranno, senza troppo rischiare, concedere. Ma lei non si accontenti, perché io non mi accontenterò.

Dovrà, egregio candidato, come ben vede, avere il coraggio di iniziare a scalfire la famiglia nel suo aspetto di unità-base del potere sociale e morale che viene usato per perpetuare secoli di ingiustizia.

Non compia l'errore di considerare secondaria, in questo momento di grave crisi economica e istituzionale, la giustizia sociale della difesa delle minoranze; se lei cede adesso sarà molto più difficile in seguito recuperare il terreno perduto.

Lei comunque l'otterrà la mia Ghinea, perché ho fiducia in lei e perché ho paura di ciò che gli altri potrebbero farmi, ma su quello che lei farà la giudicherò e le potrò chiedere di restituirmela.

me you will have to get away from a common sense based on the Catholic morality.

I have asked you to help me pursue, even in the Parliament, some points that, as an individual and belonging to a homosexual movement, seem indispensable to better my situation, as well as that of other people, discriminated for various reasons, in this society: all of these points clash with the good thinking of the Catholics; you will have to have strength and courage.

I asked you to defend my right to live with the person I love and that this right be recognized by the law. I asked you about the recognition of Civil Union for everyone, even for me; and the Parliament of Strasbourg has unexpectedly come to my aid in these last few days. And you also had a taste of the controversy that a similar law would cause in Italy. But I knew, I always knew, that my affection would have caused more scandal than my sexuality, because if I love, and want to live with, the person I love, I no longer accept a social margin, but I get down to the bone of the society that thinks only of conserving itself, within the Catholic fabric of the family.

But I have also asked you to defend the rights of single individuals, so that those who live in couples cannot enjoy privileges at the expense of those who don't want to make that choice, or cannot make that choice. And again you will have to clash with the Catholic morality that puts the family at the center of its power.

And I also asked you that education be real education, that in the schools they stop lying about homosexuality. But again you have against you the Catholic morality, that uses education as the second instrumental pillar of their power.

I asked you to protect my health. Speak clearly about condoms; talk about sexuality, the real one, not about abstinence, with understandable terms. And again you will have to fight the Catholic world; because, we know, that sexuality is freedom and a sexuality truly free is a menace much more serious to the moral power than an alternate policy.

I asked you to condemn denigration, and not only toward me. This will be easier for you because it does not touch any of the pillars and they can, without too much risk, concede. But you must not be content with this, because I will not be content with this. You will have to, Dear Candidate, as you can see, have the courage to start to scratch at the family in its unity-based aspect of social and moral power that is used to perpetuate centuries of injustice. Do not make the mistake of considering as secondary, in this moment of serious economic and institutional crisis, the social justice of defense of minorities; if you give up now, it will be much more difficult later to regain the lost ground.

You, however, will get my ghinea, because I trust you and because I am afraid of what the others could do to me. But, I will judge what you do and I might ask you to give a back.



EDITORIALE

di
Nina Bellini

E' una cosa personale It's a Personal Thang

Si parla molto di "comunità gay", "mondo gay", "ghetto gay" e ultimamente sono sorti espressi alcuni dubbi sia dagli autori degli articoli pubblicati su *Quir*, così come da alcuni lettori, sull'esistenza di questo "spazio gay". Che cosa definisce esattamente la comunità gay? E' davvero una comunità?

Come coordinatrice e fondatrice di *Quir*, che si rivolge alla cosiddetta comunità queer, mi sento obbligata a riflettere su questo problema. Personalmente mi capita di frequentare bars, discoteche e feste solo perché sono queer, ma mi capita anche di chiedermi "Come mai sono qui? Cosa hanno a che fare tutte queste persone con la mia vita? Perché parlo con loro? Solo perché sono queers come me non vuol dire che dobbiamo avere necessariamente qualcosa in comune. Se non fossimo gay probabilmente non sarei qui! CHIAMATEMI UN TAXI!"

Mi diverte la notizia secondo la quale l'omosessualità avrebbe potuto avere una causa genetica. Le persone con gli occhi azzurri non passano il tempo tra loro né formano movimenti politici a causa del loro comune colore degli occhi, così perché dovremmo farlo noi a causa delle comuni preferenze sessuali?

Tuttavia mi sono sempre considerata parte della comunità queer ed ho lottato per la sua esistenza, sia concretamente che a livello culturale. Non ci avevo mai pensato su troppo prima che questi dubbi venissero espressi da voi, i miei lettori, la mia comunità. Come posso difendere l'esistenza di qualcosa che neppure sono in grado di definire, di qualcosa che non accetto, ma di cui allo stesso tempo mi sento di far parte, qualcosa che vorrei evitare, ma di cui allo stesso tempo non posso fare a meno, qualcosa di cui a volte sono fiera, che altre volte mi disgusta. Ho

We talk a lot about "the gay community", "the gay world", "the gay ghetto" and lately there's been some doubts by some of our guest writers as well as by some of our readers about the very existence of this "gay space". What exactly defines the gay community? Is it really a community?

As the coordinator and founder of a magazine, *QUIR*, that caters to this so-called "queer" community, I naturally had to think hard about this question. I often go out to the various bars, discos, and parties just because they're for us queers, but more times than not I ask myself, "What the fuck am I doing here? What do all these people have to do with my life? Why am I talking to this person? Just because they're queer like me doesn't mean we have a lot in common. If I weren't gay, I wouldn't have to be here! TAXI, PLEASE!" I cheered at the news that homosexuality was maybe genetic. People with blue eyes don't hang-out with each other nor form political movements just because of their common eye color so why should we just because of our common homosexuality?

Nevertheless, I've always considered myself part of the queer community and have always fought for its existence on a physical as well as philosophical level. I just had never really thought much about it until these doubts came-up from you, my readers, my target audience, my community. How could I possibly defend the existence of something that I couldn't even define, something which I loathed as well as felt part of at the same time; something which I can't live with nor live without; something which I am proud of yet sometimes a bit disgusted by. I've always taken its existence for granted. I certainly wouldn't be in front of this damned computer month after month putting together a queer magazine if I really didn't believe in it.

It was a hard question to settle and it made me uneasy for some time until one day, the answer smacked me hard upside my head, leaving some pretty nasty scars that I'll never forget for the rest of my life. No, I'm not talking about a fist, but rather some good ol' verbal abuse; not the kind by some stupid hoodlums, some conservative politicians or some religious fanatics, but by

sempre dato per scontata l'esistenza di una comunità gay. Di sicuro non starei, mese dopo mese, di fronte a questo dannato computer cercando di mettere insieme una pubblicazione queer se non ci credessi.

E questa questione non è stata facile da mettere da parte e mi ha tormentata per una intera giornata, ma la risposta è arrivata come uno schiaffo in pieno viso, lasciando delle brutte cicatrici che non si rimargineranno per il resto della mia vita. No, non sto parlando di un'aggressione fisica, ma piuttosto delle solite vecchie aggressioni verbali, non di stupidi teppistelli, politici conservatori o fondamentalisti religiosi, ma proprio quella di una signora come tante in un caffè, inconsapevole del fatto che una ragazza qualsiasi entrata a prendere il caffè fosse una lesbica. Il vicino di caso che innocentemente ti colpisce di sorpresa. Queste persone fanno molto più paura perché hanno l'aspetto "innocente", votano, non hanno l'aspetto di fanatici, i sondaggi di opinione sono basati su di loro, sono le colonne portanti della società e proprio per questo sono capaci di ferire.

"Se avessi un figlio buco lo ammazzerei!" Questa è la frase che mi ha accolto nel mio solito bar, alla mia solita pausa caffè dal lavoro. SMACK! La mia faccia è avampata in un secondo. Non potevo fare altro che difendere la "mia specie". "Via signora, cosa c'è di tanto terribile nell'omosessualità?" La signora esitava alla ricerca di una risposta, quando la barista si inserì nel discorso "Certo, meglio buco che drogato!" POW! Ho sentito rompersi una costola sotto questo colpo. Anche la signora alla fine aveva trovato qualcosa da dire. "Non è che non mi piacciono

i buchi, è che non potrei sopportare se mio figlio mi venisse a casa con un orecchino e con i pantaloni tutti attillati." BAM! Un'altra costola che salta. "Ah sì, quello anch'io," replica la barista, "ma fortunatamente ho una bambina". Mi affretto a rispondere, "Anche le ragazze crescono ad essere lesbiche, ma non è così terribile. Ci sono anche dei gruppi di aiuto per genitori di gay e lesbiche che aiutano ad amarli invece che odiarli." "Ma certo, non ho niente contro i buchi se restano tra di loro e non danno fastidio. Ma insomma, cosa sono tutte queste cazzate sui diritti?" OOF! E' sangue quello che sta uscendo dal mio naso? "Gli omosessuali preferirebbero stare nella tranquillità della loro vita privata se non fossero loro negati gli stessi diritti civili degli eterosessuali. Il movimento gay esiste proprio per questo motivo ed andrà avan-

just a normal everyday lady in a coffee shop ignorant of the fact that the everyday normal girl who came for coffee was a lesbian. The neighborhood everyday person who innocently takes you by surprise. They're a lot more harmful than you think because they seem innocent enough, they vote, they're not dismissed as fanatics, opinion polls are based on them, they are the foundation of society, they can hurt.

"If I had a faggot for a son, I'd kill him!", she declared as I entered my usual bar for my usual coffee break from work. SMACK! My face reddened from the blow. I couldn't help but butt in and defend my kind. "Oh come on lady, is homosexuality really all that bad? Think about it." She stammered for some response but couldn't find any until the bartender chipped in, "Yeah, better a faggot than a junkie." POW! I felt a rib crack on that one. The lady finally found some words. "It's not that I dislike faggots, it's just that I sure would feel bad if my son came home with an ear-ring through his ear and his pants all tight and stuff." BAM! There goes



ti con la sua battaglia finché ogni gay e lesbica possa entrare in un caffè qualsiasi senza essere esposti a discorsi assurdi come quelli di questa signora", mi sono difesa.

Non so se avrei dovuto sentirmi orgogliosa per aver avuto il coraggio di rispondere o se avrei dovuto sedermi a piangere per la violenza che mi era stata servita gratuitamente con il caffè. Mi sono permessa entrambe le reazioni e contemporaneamente mi si è chiarito che sì, la comunità gay esiste davvero. Mi sono sentita di merda, offesa, violentata spiritualmente, ferita e arrabbiata, ma allo stesso tempo più forte e più orgogliosa di me stessa. Capisco ora che non accetterò più quella violenza da nessuno e che tutti i "piccoli compromessi" che ero abituata a fare a causa della mia omosessualità, come tollerare commenti moralistici o lasciare a casa la mia partner in caso di riunioni di famiglia, sono definitivamente finiti. Quella del bar è stata un'esperienza che non ho potuto condividere né con i miei colleghi all'ufficio, né con la famiglia, e neppure con nessun amico eterosessuale, anche se sono a conoscenza delle mie preferenze sessuali. Non avrebbero capito. Quello che ho sentito in quella situazione era una cosa che solo un altro queer avrebbe potuto sentire. Lesbica camionista, femme, checca, travestito, separatista, "velata", queer della classe operaia come queer manager, queer che ha finito solo la seconda media come queer laureato- avremmo provato tutti la stessa cosa. Qualcuno avrebbe reagito con più forza di me, qualcuno con meno, e qualcuno forse sarebbe intervenuto "Ah sì, quei froci di merda!", ma interiormente tutti avremmo provato quello che ho provato io. E' questo che fa di noi una comunità; questa comune reazione personale a quello che la società ci propina. E' questo il motivo per cui continuo a frequentare locali queer. Questo è il motivo per cui posso parlare con persone queer anche se in apparenza non abbiamo interessi in comune. Questo è il motivo per cui pubblico una rivista gay. E' un fatto personale- una sorta di legame queer che riunifica tutti percorsi della realtà gay in una unica e grande famiglia GAY.

*La conversazione riportata si è verificata realmente.

another rib. "Yeah, I would too," replied the bartender, "but luckily I have a little girl." I quickly answered, "Little girls can grow up to be lesbians you know, but in any case it's not so bad. They even have support groups now for parents of gays and lesbians so you can learn to love instead of hate." "Well I certainly have nothing against faggots as long as they keep to themselves and don't bother anyone. I mean what's all this bullshit about gay rights?" "OOF! Is that blood running from my nose?" "Gays would love to keep to themselves if they only weren't denied the same rights as heterosexuals. The gay rights movement exists because of this and won't stop fighting until every gay and lesbian can walk into a coffee shop and not be subject to such discussions as this lady was making upon my arrival". I defended

I didn't know if I should have felt victorious and proud of the fact that I had found the strength to respond or if I should have sat down and cried for the violence that had been unwillingly served with my coffee. I actually did both and that's when it dawned on me that indeed the gay community existed. I felt like shit, abused, spiritually raped, angered and hurt, but at the same time stronger and prouder. I now realized that I wasn't ever going to take shit from anyone again and that all the "little compromises" that I had been making because of my homosexuality, like tolerating overheard bigoted remarks or leaving my life-partner at home for "family" functions, were going to stop. It was a feeling that I couldn't describe to my colleagues back in the office, nor to my family, nor to any of my heterosexual friends even though they are all aware of my sexual preferences. They just wouldn't understand. What I felt back there was something that only another queer could feel. Whether it be a butch dyke, a femme, a raging queen, a guppie, a closet homosexual, a transvestite, a leather, a separatist, a working class queer, a top manager queer, a queer high school drop-out or a queer college grad- we all would have felt the same thing. Some of us would have reacted more than I did, some less and some maybe would have shamefully chipped in with, "Yeah, these damn faggots!", but on the inside we all would have felt the same hurt that I did. This is what makes us a community; this common personal reaction to what society feeds us. This is why I continue to frequent queer places. This is why I am talking to this queer person even though they don't seem to have common interests. This is why I publish a queer magazine. It's a personal thing- a sort of queer bonding that unifies all walks of queer life into one big GAY family.

*This is not a fictitious conversation

EDITORIALE

di Nina Bellini

BUON COMPLEANNO QUIR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY QUIR

Quir compie un anno questo mese! Quello che è sembrato quasi impossibile - una rivista scritta dai suoi lettori, e distribuita gratis localmente - è riuscita a compiere il primo anno di pubblicazione. Per quelli che leggono Quir per la prima volta, Quir è stato fondato l'anno scorso per dar voce alle varie realtà che compongono il mondo queer, tipo froci, buchi, checche, camioniste, lesbiche, femme, butch, culi, leather, bisessuali, orsi, travestiti, transessuali, separatiste, sieropositivi, sieronegativi, persone con Aids, ecc, nella speranza di creare una comunità più unita o almeno per aprire un dialogo fra ogni specifica identità. Insomma, abbiamo tentato di creare una fonte di cultura queer fra di noi ed allo stesso tempo promuovere la cultura queer italiana all'estero (il motivo per cui Quir è anche tradotto in inglese). La redazione spesso non è neanche d'accordo con il contenuto degli articoli, ma siccome questo è il vostro giornale e non il nostro, vengono pubblicati lo stesso. L'unica regola che ci si è imposta è di non pubblicare niente che offenda direttamente un gruppo di persone o un singolo. In questo modo, Quir diventa veramente un contenitore per le vostre idee, opinioni e esperienze. Il look "svelto" della rivista, criticato da alcuni come "troppo Americano" (ioché vol dire?), è stato studiato apposta per smentire l'idea che solo perché siamo gay bisogna sopportare un design "sciatto". Tutto ciò che è indirizzato alla nostra comunità, tipo bar, discoteche o anche altre riviste sono così limitate che delle volte dobbiamo sopportare il fatto che siano brutti solo perché non esistono alternative. Noi crediamo che ci meritiamo più rispetto ed un modo per dimostrarlo è almeno fare un bel prodotto. Le copertine di Quir hanno incluso di tutto, da un capezzolo sudato forato al Papa nella sua ricerca di rappresentare tutte le semiotiche della nostra realtà. Delle volte sono state un po' scioccanti, ma va bene così - era nelle nostre intenzioni! Fa parte del nostro impegno suscitare un

Quir celebrates its first birthday this month! What seemed like an almost impossible project - a magazine written by its readers, produced entirely by volunteers and given away free locally - has actually survived its first year.

For those of you who are new Quir readers, Quir was started last year to give a voice to the various factions that make up the queer world from faggots, queens, dykes, leather, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, homos, butches, femmes, separatists, bears, HIV+ 's, HIV- 's, PWA's, etc., in hopes of creating a more unified community or at least opening up a dialog between each subculture. On a larger scale, we hoped to create a resource of queer culture among ourselves as well as promoting Italian queer culture abroad (which is why the magazine is translated in English). The editorial staff does not decide what to publish and a lot of the time doesn't even agree with what is being published, but since this is your magazine and not ours, it gets printed anyway. Our only guideline is to not publish anything that directly offends any group of persons. (We do allow the offending of a person, but only if they deserve it!) In this way, Quir becomes a true container for your ideas, opinions, and experiences.

The "slick" look of the magazine, criticized by some as too "American" (whatever that means), was intended to put an end to the idea that just because we are gay we have to put up with "shoddy" design. The things that are targeted to our community whether they be bars, discos or other magazines, are so limited that sometimes we must tolerate its ugliness just because there's no alternative. We feel that we deserve a bit more self-respect and one way of doing that is at least producing a good-looking product. The covers of Quir have included everything from a sweaty pierced nipple to the Pope in its attempt to symbolize realities of our community. They sometimes are shocking, but that's good - they're supposed to be! It's all in our attempt to provoke debate within our community.

Other responses to the magazine have ranged from "it's the most intelligent magazine in all of Italy" to "it's disgusting", but mostly have been positive. The most distur-

dibattito fra le realtà della nostra comunità.

Altri commenti alla rivista variavano da, "è il giornale più intelligente in tutta l'Italia", a, "fate schifo", ma per la maggior parte sono stati positivi. Quello che ci ha turbato di più è stato, "ci sono troppe donne". Svegliatevi! Quir è per tutti i sessi quindi abituatevi, boys! Forse il motivo di questo commento è che nessun'altra rivista in Italia aveva mai dedicato più di due pagine alle donne, sicché quando è uscito qualcosa fifty-fifty, è sembrata un'esagerazione. La maggior parte degli articoli su Quir piacciono a tutti e due (tre?) i generi; alcuni sono più per maschi (o maschili), alcuni più per femmine (o femminili)- noi pubblichiamo soltanto quello che ci mandate quindi l'unico modo per "equilibrare" ciò che vi può sembrare una mancanza di equilibrio è di scrivere qualcosa. Quir, comunque, si propone di far smettere questa battaglia inutile fra i sessi e iniziare a mostrare più rispetto per tutte le componenti del mondo queer- ricordatele mentre scrivete!

Quir è molto orgoglioso del suo impatto sulla comunità. Guardando soltanto a Firenze, uno può notare tanti cambiamenti. Grazie alle idee di Quir unitamente alla dedizione ed impegno di Arci Gay/Arci Lesbica Firenze, un locale "normale" ha aperto le sue porte una volta la settimana con una serata dedicata alle lesbiche e gay con un risultato più che positivo e un pubblico veramente misto. Altri locali hanno seguito dopo aver visto il successo. Per la prima volta la gente ha collaborato insieme- le separatiste con gli uomini gay, i giovani con i più anziani- per creare nuovi spazi e per aprire nuovi dialoghi. Anche la risposta della comunità "etero" è stata positiva. In realtà, abbiamo più sponsor da negozi, alberghi, bar e ristoranti "normali" che dai classici locali "del giro". Potere economico (purtroppo) vuol dire più potere al livello politico e per la prima volta la comunità queer è stata capace di farsi notare dai candidati politici duran-

bing comment thus far has been, "there's too many women in the magazine". Get a clue! Quir is for all sexes so get used to it boys! I guess no other magazine in Italy has ever dedicated more than two pages to women's issues so when something finally comes out which is fifty-fifty, it seems like an exaggeration. Most articles in Quir are pleasing to everyone, some are more for boys (or butches), some are more for girls (or femmes)- we publish what is sent to us so the only way to change that is to write an article. Quir would like to put an end to this futile battle of the sexes and start showing more respect for all the different aspects of our queer world so keep that in mind while writing.

Quir is quite proud of its impact on our community. In Florence alone there have been considerable changes. Thanks to the ideas behind Quir and the dedication of Arci Gay Florence, a quite "normal" bar has opened their doors once a week for a gay and lesbian night with great success and a truly mixed crowd. Other venues soon followed after seeing the positive results. For the first time people worked together- separatists with gay men, the youth with the more seasoned- to create new spaces and to open new dialogue. The response from the straight community has been positive as well. We actually have more sponsors from "straight" stores, hotels, bars and restaurants than from traditionally gay places. Economic power (unfortunately) means political power and for the first time we were able to get candidates to directly address our community during the last elections. They've finally woken up to the fact that a queer community exists.

Thanks to the success behind Quir, many other groups from all over Italy have been inspired to start their own newsletters and magazines. We totally support these initiatives and are pleased that so many new voices can now be heard. Abroad, Italian queer culture is finally being read and understood thanks to Quir's efforts in producing a bilingual periodical.

Some voices that we'd like to hear more of are those of transvestites, transsexuals, bisexuals, HIV+ 's and people with Aids. These people are often ostracized more painfully by other queers than by society at large and

te le ultime elezioni. Hanno finalmente capito che esiste una comunità queer.

Grazie al successo di Quir, tanti altri gruppi in tutta l'Italia hanno iniziato a pubblicare riviste e bollettini. Noi salutiamo queste iniziative e siamo entusiasti che così tante nuove voci possano essere sentite. All'estero, la cultura queer italiana è finalmente letta e capita grazie all'impegno di Quir di produrre un periodico bilingue.

Alcune voci che vorremmo sentire di più sono quelle di travestiti, transessuali, bisessuali, sieropositivi e persone con Aids. Queste persone sono spesso più dolorosamente emarginate da altri queers che dalla società nel suo insieme e Quir vorrebbe essere uno strumento per rompere queste barriere. Quir, fino ad adesso, ha pubblicato la maggior parte di articoli dedicati a gay e

lesbiche perché la risposta dei lettori è stata questa, ma vi prego di ricordarvi che queer vuol dire di più che gay e lesbica e che vorremo sentire di più da questi altri "queers". Beh, se non avete ancora capito, Quir è stato fondato in modo da rompere i "separatismi" dentro la nostra comunità e quindi creare una voce queer più unita e forte dentro la società in genere. Crediamo nella visibilità, unità e globalità in modo da ottenere il nostro meritato diritto di esistere proprio per quello che siamo. Questo primo anno di pubblicazione ha dimostrato che in effetti è possibile, che una cultura in comune possa esistere, che possiamo andare tutti d'accordo. Noi continueremo nella nostra lotta per più spazi queer e speriamo che voi ci aiuterete nel nostro impegno di promuovere orgogliosamente la cultura queer.

Quir would like to be an instrument for breaking down these barriers. Quir thus far has mostly published articles catering to gays and lesbians because the response has been great, but please remember that queer means more than just gay or lesbian and we would like to hear from these other "queers".

Well, if you haven't understood by now, Quir was founded in order to break down the "separations" within our community therefore creating a unified and stronger queer voice within society at large. We believe in visibility, unity and globality in order to obtain our much deserved right to exist exactly for what we are. This past year of publication has proved that this indeed is possible, that a common culture can exist, that we can all get along. We will continue in our struggle for more queer spaces and hope you will join us in our efforts in proudly promoting queer culture.



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