

‘POLIMORFI E POLIGAMI E UN PO’ ANCHE POLIPI.’ REPRESENTATIONS OF
AMBIGUOUS MASCULINITY IN LATE 1970S BOLOGNA

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“Polimorfi e poligami e un po’ anche polipi.”¹ Representations of Ambiguous Masculinity in Late 1970s Bologna

Abstract

Cultural studies are underlining ambiguity and fluidity concepts to grasp how gender narratives have been changing since the upheaval of 1968. Scholars have acknowledged that traditional masculinity has been challenged and remolded as a result of second-wave feminism. However, representations of masculinity have yet to be examined in one of the key moments of postwar Italian culture: the sociopolitical turmoil of the late 1970s. Bologna was the center of the Italian Movement of 1977. Its subcultural scene flourished thanks to the confluence of young creatives at the DAMS University of Bologna, where Umberto Eco taught. The symbolic productions of this scene provide brilliant portrayals of the reshaping of gender becoming ambiguous and fluid. This article examines the literary representations of masculinity in exemplary works by the three most notable authors tied to subcultural Bologna: Andrea Pazienza, Enrico Palandri, and Pier Vittorio Tondelli. My argument is that their narrative constructions of masculinity reveal three remarkably different reactions to second-wave feminism and to the challenging and remolding of gender in the late 1970s. These reactions are a tendency towards resentful and sarcastic rejection of pro-feminist discomfort, an aestheticizing acceptance of melancholic and ambiguous masculinities, and a postmodern turn towards the conception of gender fluidity. Furthermore, displacement, ambiguity and fluidity can be observed in the mixed language and experimental syntax. In doing so, this paper sheds new light on the transition toward postmodern and backlash gender narratives in the subsequent decade.

1 Gender Ambiguity: A Motif in US-American and European Discourses of Masculinity

In the early 1970s, as women’s studies and the emerging academic field of queer studies challenged the essentialist assumptions of sociological sex role theory,² a major impact among heterosexual men from leftist-alternative and academic circles was also clearly noticeable. Against the backdrop of second-wave feminism and LGBTQ+ movements, quite a few of these men began to participate in the discussion, as a prompt to reflect explicitly on their own male role, and to explore ways of liberating themselves from sex role stereotypes as well as from what they identified as the ‘burdens of masculinity.’³ First in the US, then also in Europe and Italy, this occurred within “a small network of men’s consciousness-raising groups”⁴ as well as in the emerging academic field of men’s studies, which was supportive of feminist theory. Starting in 1970, a large number of non-fiction books and the first science-oriented papers on men and masculinity were beginning to be published and translated.⁵

Within the texts of this framework, a striking motif stands out: the blurring of lines between femininity and masculinity, with the two becoming more fluid or ambiguous. This motif was used both to grasp how roles had already been remolded since the post-war era and to reinforce this process through a pro-feminist and ‘humane’ transformation of the male role. Its reshaping is thus suggested as the desirable (‘fluidity’) or inevitable (‘ambiguity’) result of a supportive response by heterosexual men to second-wave feminism and LGBTQ+ movements. In particular, in his manifesto *On Male Liberation* (1970), psychologist Jack Sawyer pleaded for the dissolution of gender dichotomy in order to achieve a “fuller concept of humanity,”⁶ while activist Warren Farrell in *The Liberated Man* (1974) suggested the use of a “more human vocabulary” with the purpose of “undefining masculinity and femininity.”⁷ Building on his overview of existing research literature on the male role and its societal implications in 1981, psychologist Joseph Pleck wrote — on a rather negative note — about a “general blurring of male and female roles that is occurring now in society.”⁸

The motif of masculine fluidity or ambiguity could soon be found in European discourses as well. Here too, as Germanist Barbara Kosta argues, a “burdened image of masculinity” was emerging. Its most evident social phenomenon was the revision of the male appearance: “A new sort of masculinity was cultivated in the 1970s — that of the ‘Softie.’”⁹ Indeed, in the leftist-alternative and activist ‘Verständigungsliteratur,’ which was experiencing a minor boom in Germany at the time, men were encouraged to cultivate their “unmännliche Anteile,”¹⁰ since the traditional masculinity of the post-war period and the student revolt of 1968 had to be replaced by “andere Leitbilder, sanftere, schönere, auch narzißtischere Männer, tendenziell androgyn.”¹¹ Furthermore, in *Männerphantasien* (1977/8), a prelude to German-speaking men’s studies, Klaus Theweleit decried the masculine ‘Körperpanzer’ as psychic protection against all conditions culturally associated with the feminine, i.e. against everything fluid, flowing or ambiguous.¹²

2_Gender Ambiguity in the Movement of 1977: Between Creativity and Activist Practice

A crucial phase of post-war Italian history and culture, the socio-political turmoil of the late 1970s correlated with a different approach of dealing with sexuality, gender issues and equality. In the decade after 1968, several activist collectives campaigning

for the rights of women and homosexuals were founded — first and foremost, the Roman group *Rivolta Femminile*¹³ in 1970 and the Turinese LGBTQ+ association *Fuori!*¹⁴ in 1971. Although in Italy women's and queer studies did not emerge as academic fields until much later,¹⁵ the manifestos, journals, and flyers of these collectives contain references to European discourses, in particular to Marxism and psychoanalysis.¹⁶ At this time, a union between the Radical Party, LGBTQ+ and feminist movements was able to achieve significant reforms in Catholic Italy, including the possibility of divorce in 1970,¹⁷ the transition from marital power to equality between spouses as a result of the reform of family law in 1975,¹⁸ and the decriminalization of abortion in 1978.¹⁹ While these legal reforms should be viewed in their context with European or US developments regarding gender relations and female self-determination,²⁰ the interrelationships between these changes and activist and literary discourses can also be seen in a differentiated manner in the case of Italy.

This is especially due to the particularly prolonged effects of the student and worker protests in Italy, which had reached their symbolic climax in 1968.²¹ In the late 1970s, the numerous autonomist and extra-parliamentary groups²² that had characterized the Italian political landscape since '68 experienced a second, spontaneous but distinct climax with the Italian movement of 1977. The movement was fertile ground for feminist and homosexual collectives, as their demands would now be debated intensively in discussion groups as well as propagated through demonstrations and by means of alternative and subcultural media.²³ The diffusion of such demands, as well as the now increasing reception of foreign-language texts on masculinity and their reciprocal translation²⁴ had a strong influence on a great number of men of the movement of 1977, regardless of their sexual orientation. This materialized in the form of conflicts with their fathers' generation and the generation of '68,²⁵ and as an attempt at male relocation in view of feminist claims and changing social structures. As stated by Claudia, one of the members of a feminist collective interviewed in 1978 by sociologist Aldo Ricci, "i maschi si sono trovati spiazzati e, dopo qualche escandescenza, si son messi in discussione anche loro, come forse nessun partito ha fatto."²⁶

In Italy too, these shifts were reflected in a small network of men's discussion groups²⁷ and in reactions to feminism and LGBTQ+ activism in non-fiction books on masculinity. In such works, it is striking that the same male role concepts are ad-

dressed that were distinctive for the above-mentioned US-American and German texts. The similarities of the frameworks underscore the interrelations between Italian and other countries' discourses of masculinity. On another note, the Italian works differ mainly in their conception of change in perceptions of masculinity as a result of a collective and political practice. This difference should be seen in connection with the authors' frequent mentioning of the feminist influence on the movement of 1977 as a main reason for writing. Examples of these books include *L'ultimo uomo* (1977, *The Last Man*), edited by psychiatrist Marco Lombardo-Radice, and *L'uomo incinto* (1979, *The Pregnant Man*) by historian Roberto Zapperi. In the former, four men²⁸ visualize a pro-feminist and 'feminizing' change of the male role, nevertheless admitting their anxiety that ambiguity might cause inhibitions in their sexual relations.²⁹ Thus, they assert that it is too late for them to free themselves from socio-cultural 'conditionings,'³⁰ and claim: "non faremo più in tempo a essere i primi uomini nuovi e allora forse, quasi quasi, preferiamo essere gli ultimi uomini vecchi."³¹ In the latter book, similar fears of ambiguity are explored from a cultural-anthropological perspective. *L'uomo incinto* took up the ancient myth of the pregnant man as a literary and iconographic motif for the blurring of gender boundaries. The motif is explained here with the fear of the dreaded dissolution of gender differences, and of a consequent relapse of humanity into original chaos.³²

As can already be seen from these examples, the motif of fluid or ambiguous masculinities is intriguing in Italian discourse too. Here, the motif itself is characterized by a vacillating duality: On the one hand, it is associated with the concern that ambiguity could lead to a loss of sexual tension and meaning; on the other, it is presented as the only solution to meet feminist and LGBTQ+ demands, standing for the need to overturn the stereotypical male role (i.e. 'ruolo-di-maschio-italico-ruspante'³³). To this end, the motif takes on the weakening of 'masculine attributes' in view of a supposed feminization: "come riappropriazione [...] di quanto di non VIRILE è in noi: di quanto è istinto, irrazionalità, sentimento, sensibilità. Riappropriazione della nostra completezza. (Della *donna* che è in noi?)."³⁴ Moreover, it emerges as the belief that homosexual experiences might bring about male self-liberation: "L'essere sodomizzato è, per l'uomo [...] l'accettazione consapevole della debolezza, del 'vuoto' [...]. [...] per il maschio l'essere penetrato evoca l'immagine della omosessualità, dello stare sotto, di ruoli diversi da quelli tradizionali."³⁵ However, a major limit of these

assumptions becomes evident: If rationality and strength ought to be rejected as masculine, this is based on an essentialist notion of femininity as being irrational and weak. Oddly enough, it is precisely the writers' purpose of transgressing role boundaries that leads them to exaggerate the degree to which roles are fixed. Since they cannot conceptually detach from sex role theory altogether, they are also unable to abandon its core assumption that sex differences between men and women should necessarily be coupled with either masculine or feminine 'traits' as well as heterosexuality — as is further pointed out by the use of the more biologically connotated term 'maschio' ('male') to exclusively denote a heterosexual man.

In this framework, the consideration of homosexuality as a 'method'³⁶ to free oneself from the male role also appears to be of critical importance. Since from the point of view of these writers, homosexuality seems to cut the essential link between assigned sex and prescribed role, it is inevitably classified as ambiguous. The understanding of homosexuality as psychologically but to some extent also physiologically ambiguous is the basis of one of the first Italian academic essays on the topic, namely the Freudo-Marxist oriented *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (1977, *Elements of a Homosexual Critique*)³⁷ by Mario Mieli, co-founder³⁸ of the aforementioned collective *Fuori!* Referring to the Freudian concept of the polymorphous perversity of the child, Mieli argues that its original bisexual disposition is being repressed by education (a process he calls 'educastrazione'). This induces heterosexual men (i.e. 'criptocheche') to sublimate same-sex desire, while only with homosexuals the initial 'hermaphroditism' remains present: "La nostra condizione di omosessuali, [...] la nostra *ambiguità* sessuale, il tipo di equilibrio raggiunto in noi tra connotati soggettivi e connotati del rimosso, è tendenzialmente ermafrodito, è espressione di transessualità."³⁹ For this reason, the activist sees the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements inextricably linked in the revolutionary project of disrupting patriarchal roles and liberating both themselves and 'cryptogays' with the means of an all-encompassing sexual fluidity.⁴⁰ Mieli's fascinating and utopian argumentation, later deemed "impossibile"⁴¹ by queer theorist Teresa de Lauretis, seems to be remarkably analogous to the trains of thought of some literary and artistic figures appearing in Italian works of the late 1970s.

This is especially the case in the works stemming from the avant-garde scene of Bologna, which was the creative center⁴² of the movement of 1977. Indeed, a glance

at the representations of masculinities within cultural productions situated in Bologna is very promising. Between the summer of 1976, when free radios were allowed to proliferate in the wake of the liberalization of local broadcasting,⁴³ and the fall of 1977, when following the police murder of militant Francesco Lorusso⁴⁴ and the escalation of riots⁴⁵ the movement dissolved after an unsuccessful attempt at a reorganization,⁴⁶ the Bolognese literary and artistic scene experienced a flourishing period.⁴⁷ The subcultural centrality of Bologna was the result of the emergence of underground magazines (*Cannibale*, *A/traverso*), free radios (*Radio Alice*, *Radio Città*), and art squats (*Traumfabrik*), as well as of academic innovation. There was a confluence of young creatives at the DAMS University of Bologna,⁴⁸ where writers and scholars Umberto Eco, Giuliano Scabia and Gianni Celati were teaching. The most prominent works of this scene provide brilliant portrayals of the reshaping of masculinities to become ambiguous or fluid. Moreover, I argue that Andrea Pazienza's *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal* (1977–81), Enrico Palandri's *Boccalone: Storia vera piena di bugie* (1979) and Pier Vittorio Tondelli's *Altri libertini* (1980) reveal three remarkably different reactions to and receptions of the questioning and remolding of masculinities in interrelation with second-wave feminism and LGBTQ+ movements.

3 Three Literary Reactions to Second-Wave Feminism and LGBTQ+ Movements

These three exemplary works stemming from the subcultural and avant-garde scene of late 1970s Bologna are intriguing in that their representations of masculinities reveal three influential and remarkably different reactions and interrelations with the socio-cultural processes that began around 1968 and culminated around 1977, especially with regard to the pro-feminist and queer challenging of sex role theory as well as the questioning and renegotiation of gender identities. In this light, the above-mentioned motif of fluid or ambiguous masculinities forms a prism through which three color valences become apparent. These are, respectively, a tendency towards resentful and sarcastic rejection of pro-feminist discomfort, stemming from an increasing displacement in performing traditional masculine roles (**A**), an aestheticizing acceptance of melancholic-affective and ambiguous masculinities, achieving a conciliatory aim (**B**), and finally a postmodern turn towards the conception of fluid masculinities and gender configurations (**C**).

Tendency **A** characterizes Andrea Pazienza's *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal*, his later productions (e.g. the co-founded magazine *Frigidaire*, first appeared in 1980) and numerous literary works of the 1980s,⁴⁹ such as Botho Strauß's *Paare, Passanten* (1981), Sam Shepard's *True West* (1981), and Andrea De Carlo's *Due di due* (1989). This tendency in the US-American and European discourses of masculinity in the 1980s should be viewed in its interrelations with a 'mythopoetic men's movement'⁵⁰ and a conservative backlash⁵¹ against pro-feminist conceptions and the gender-related changes achieved in the 1970s. In fact, a remarkable transition to misogynistic poetics already takes place in the final panels of Pazienza's *Pentothal* series, titled *Donne (Women)*. In this regard, the demand "Ascolta bambina: al mio tre tu gli vai incontro agitando i pugnetti col faccino feroce, mentre io fuggo in quella direzione"⁵² contrasts sarcastically with the opening scene to be analyzed below.⁵³ Cynical male dominance behavior is employed to counter women's emancipation. This becomes most openly visible in the *Zanardi* series (1981–88). Massimo Zanardi, hegemonic leader of a clique modelled on *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, mocks both the vulnerable Pentothal, whom he even knocks down in a team-up scene,⁵⁴ as well as the self-determination of female figures.

Tendency **B**, with its emphasis on male vulnerability as in Enrico Palandri's *Boccalone*, appears to be the most representative of the discourses of masculinity of the late 1970s.⁵⁵ In addition to the conjuncture of the softie-ideal in the above-cited German 'Verständigungsliteratur' and Italian non-fiction on masculinity, this can also be observed in light of coinciding works from Italy and other European countries, e.g. in Nanni Moretti's movie *Ecce bombo* (1978), Lucio Dalla's song *Disperato erotico stomp* (1977), and Martin Walser's novel *Seelenarbeit* (1979). As Germanist Toni Tholen suggests, this lack of confidence was "a result of the abandonment of traditional notions of masculinity and paternity,"⁵⁶ hence of the reshaping of gender identities becoming ambiguous and fluid. Although over the course of the 1980s, this version of masculinity was displaced by restitutive, solidifying tendencies, the tendency reappeared in several pop-cultural coming-of-age novels of the 1990s.⁵⁷ It can be recognized most prominently in *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo* by Bolognese author Enrico Brizzi, a novel dedicated to the '77 scene and to their most prominent authors Pazienza and Tondelli, as mentioned in the front matter: "Per Andrea P. e per T. / che hanno disegnato e scritto."⁵⁸

The queer and postmodern inclination C of the fluidity and ambiguity motif, as in Pier Vittorio Tondelli's *Altri libertini*, was able to inspire major Italian and European literary works of the following years, such as Aldo Busi's *Seminario sulla gioventù* (1984), Botho Strauß's *Der junge Mann* (1984), and Stefano d'Arrigo's *Cima delle nobildonne* (1985).⁵⁹ Yet, its decidedly experimental and avant-garde gesture remained an unusual development, at least with regard to representations of masculinities; not so, however, in the literary draft of fluid, juvenile European identities which proved to be pioneering in Tondelli's later works.⁶⁰ In these essays and novels, there is a certainly equally weakened, yet effective ironic view of backlash-masculinities. As an example, Tondelli's catalogue of typical 1980s pop-cultural figures in *Un weekend postmoderno* includes a sarcastic portrayal of the Italian beach macho.⁶¹ Similarly, in *Manuale del perfetto Gentilomo*, Aldo Busi parodies rigid and stereotypical notions of sexuality and gender. In its fluidity, his conclusion could be seen as reminiscent of a central passage from *Altri libertini* quoted in the next section:⁶² "Non esiste l'omosessualità, l'eterosessualità, la bisessualità: esiste la sessualità."⁶³

4_Representations of Ambiguous Masculinity in Selected Works from Late 1970s Bologna

Cartoonist Andrea Pazienza (1956–88) and writers Enrico Palandri (1956) and Pier Vittorio Tondelli (1955–91) all moved to Bologna in their twenties to attend the new DAMS University course. The debut works of these three most notable authors were all published between 1977 and 1981 and are thus inextricably linked to the artistic and literary tendencies of Bologna's '77 movement. While Pazienza's panels were created immediately during the climax of the movement,⁶⁴ Palandri's first novel, conversely, can be read as a near-term treatment of individual and collective experiences,⁶⁵ while Tondelli's collection of short stories was intended to provide a retrospective portrait of that peculiar period.⁶⁶ The interdependence of these works with the Bolognese movement of 1977 is also evident in the fact that, after leaving the city in 1980, both Tondelli and Palandri adopted fundamentally different modes and genres, while Pazienza, despite remaining in the city for four more years, from 1981 onwards dedicated himself to the figure of the narcissistic and macho Zanardi, which is rather a polar opposite of his former protagonist Pentothal.

In *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal* (1977–81, *The Extraordinary Adventures of Pentothal*), Pazienza tells the romantic and travelling adventures of his alter ego.

Due to his weak involvement in the movement's activities, Andrea Pentothal is an outsider. While the student protests form the soundscape of the comic,⁶⁷ Andrea's masculine and existential crisis is much more relevant. If a generational tendency towards a privatization of the political can be assumed for the late 1970s,⁶⁸ then the portrayal of this young artist as an outsider can also be read in the light of this phenomenon. Indeed, it seems indicative of a 'riflusso nel privato'⁶⁹ — a key term in the Italian media discourses of that time — that here, the political demands of feminism are translated into a private displacement in performing masculinity. This is triggered by the very first scene, in which Andrea is abandoned by the feminist Lucilla due to his weakness and passivity. Remarkable in their depiction of a reversal of a gendered active-passive dichotomy⁷⁰ are the divergent word balloons, since Andrea's melancholic words are only thought,⁷¹ while Lucilla argumentatively declares the reasons for their separation.⁷² This reversal further concerns a theory-practice dilemma.⁷³ In his thoughts Andrea attempts to ironize Lucilla's pragmatic conciseness by ascribing this to feminists or women in general⁷⁴ (**A**), then obsessively repeats her declaration 'Ti lascio' struggling to grasp its practical content.⁷⁵ Here, two topical gender conflicts are depicted: one between an approaching group of neo-fascist men who want to 'bend the woman into shape' ("fatti la femminista, e picchia che poi sta punita"⁷⁶) and one between gender-related self- and external determination within the alternative milieu: He wants to take on a male protective role ("Corri verso casa mentre io cerco di..."⁷⁷), albeit this is questioned by Lucilla, while she throws a cobblestone at the attackers herself ("Corro verso dove mentre tu fai cosa?"⁷⁸) before leaving Andrea behind in solitude.

This gender fracture also appears as a leitmotif in Palandri's autofictional coming-of-age novel *Boccalone: Storia vera piena di bugie* (1979, *Blabbermouth: True Story Full Of Lies*). Enrico, dubbed 'Boccalone' ('blabbermouth') for his talkativeness, appears in a Wertherian love triangle with the emancipated Anna⁷⁹ and her ex-boyfriend Massimo. In this setting, the narrative largely diverges from a hegemonic male perspective (**B**): Enrico feels unjustified in defeating his eventual rival and strives to maintain the fluid status of the relationship instead of aiming at an exclusive romance with Anna.⁸⁰ On the contrary, the narrator aims at merging with a collective of "polimorfi [...] e poligami e un po' anche polipi,"⁸¹ "esseri desideranti,"⁸² as he describes the movement of 1977. Therefore, he metatextually declares⁸³ a fluidification

of categories as the main purpose of his writing.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, a downside of this fluidity experiment is presented too: since Enrico cannot avoid feeling jealousy towards Anna, the love triangle eventually appears to him not as a realizing utopia, but rather as troubled by ambiguity, which makes him feel guilty.⁸⁵ Actually, the sense of guilt is portrayed as a reaction of numerous ‘maschi’ to feminist claims, as they fail at adapting: “il senso di colpa, il macigno dei maschi, non sapersi guardare in faccia senza piangere dallo schifo. [...] vengono cacciati dall’assemblea, i maschi là dentro tutti muti e attoniti.”⁸⁶ Here, again, the rejection of ‘masculine features’ in view of an alleged feminization, which is based on a conception of femininity as inherently weak, can be seen as a major reason for male insecurity and failure: “Senza anna [sic] [...] sono riaffiorate tutte le mie attività da uomo, un uomo non è un cazzo, [...] identità con la copertina rigida, senza niente dentro, come una scatola vuota.”⁸⁷ In fact, even the novel’s ambiguous subtitle is the result of a failed attempt to bring about fluidity. As Palandri admits, it is a ‘true story full of lies’ because, despite his intentions of fusion, he could apparently only articulate his individual, male voice.

In *Altri libertini* (1980, *Other Libertines*), Tondelli goes one step further. Even though the romantic and travelling adventures narrated here are also based on autobiographical experiences,⁸⁸ unlike in *Pentothal* and *Boccalone*, this is not marked by allusions to the author’s name or metatextual annotations. Rather, these six narratives can be seen as carrying out Palandri’s purpose, since within them the first-person perspective of a homodiegetic narrator constantly merges with the we-perspective and, thus, a plural subjectivity, in which the narrator articulates the voices of the other characters even more than their own. Although the six-part division suggests a collection of stories, these can — or should, if one wishes to follow Tondelli’s intention — be read as a whole, as a generational “episodic novel.”⁸⁹ Moving between the Emilian countryside, Bologna, and other European cities, *Altri libertini* represents an ensemble of queer figures (C). Their fluidity or ambiguity is marked by deviant gender references, as in the alternation of masculine and feminine suffixes (“il Benny [...] dice di sentirsi emarginata”⁹⁰) and Janus-headed comparisons, as in the depiction of two characters as being “fieri e incazzati come due leonesse.”⁹¹ These devices take their most intriguing shapes in the second episode, *Mimi e istrioni*, in which a group of three young women (Nanny, Sylvia, Pia) and a transvestite man (Benny), collectively called ‘Splash,’ undertakes a search for gender authenticity.⁹² To this end, they prac-

tice transgressive and experimental sexuality and cross-dressing, as well as participating in feminist discussions and conventions. Because of their active, even aggressive attempts to seduce men, they are taunted as “quattro assatanate”⁹³ and considered sexually ambiguous⁹⁴ by many residents of their hometown. As a result of this aversion to the provocative behavior of long-haired men and lesbian women, ‘Splash’ is constantly chased out of the bars and squares of Reggio Emilia, and later of Modena: “nessuno sopportava che il cuore della propria città venisse così infartato dai capelli e dalle lesbiche.”⁹⁵ In fact, the narrative is characterized by constant changes of space, and by the intervening conflicts between the subversive practices of these eponymous ‘mimes and histrions’ and a disoriented, judgmental audience. Finding confirmation in these alarmed views, the first-person narrator Pia proudly describes the gender ambiguity of the ‘Splash’ members by deliberately blurring the line between male and female connotations. In addition to the devices already mentioned, this is also achieved through the inventive variation of idiomatic expressions, which is either aimed at an adaption of locutions regarding women’s bodies and conventional clothing (as in “togliamo la nostra topa dalle sedie”⁹⁶ and “decidiamo di levare le sottane”⁹⁷), or is again pointed at their satirical masculinization, as in the representation of Sylvia having “un cazzo per ricciolo.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, this occurs through an ironic objectification of male body parts (“un’uccellagione come la nostra non gliel’ha nessuno,”⁹⁹ “il mercato del cazzo”¹⁰⁰), unorthodox and ambivalent animal comparisons (“come lupe in lunapiena,”¹⁰¹ “son come galli nel serraglio, pronte solo a far la guerra”¹⁰²), and especially the vacillating gender attribution of queer men (“Benny si chiama Benedetto ed era un uomo o meglio un ragazzo ma ora fa la checca con noi,” “coi suoi capelli cortissimi è davvero bella”¹⁰³). In all respects, ambiguity is exhibited in this narrative as an opportunity of liberation within the creative activities of the student movement, and concerning the consciousness-raising applied by feminist groups and the first institutional homosexual collectives in Italy, which were founded in Bologna in 1977.¹⁰⁴ Activism and creativity are considered triggers for what Pia calls the “farsi e disfarsi ermafrodita,”¹⁰⁵ where it fosters an experimental subculture: “Insomma tutto un inventario colorato di autodefinizioni, [...] gridi inni e slogan tutti sovrapposti gli uni agli altri e inseriti tra parola e parola a far fuori irresistibili ironie e tutto nel gergo mischiato e poliglotta della fauna stessa.”¹⁰⁶

However, the conceptual limits of these pioneering movements are already being questioned in this narrative. These limits are pointed out by Benny, who is convinced that the mere ambiguation of gender categories cannot bring about their fluidification, which is the actual and desired change. For instance, as the female ‘Splash’ members propose to participate in a feminist congress, Benny complains about feeling excluded due to sex difference and, after being solicited to lay off such male dominance behavior, claims that an effective fight against masculinity cannot possibly ignore queer men: “dice che [...] non si vuole capire una sega di niente e che quelle come noi non vogliono far guerra al cazzo, ma soltanto addomesticarlo mentre il cazzo va domato con la frusta e col fuoco e tutto questo si fa con le finocchie che son la vera rivoluzione.”¹⁰⁷ This statement causes a fracture in the group, the consequence of which is soon represented in the narrative. After some months, Benny reappears ‘disguised as a male’ and accompanied by a new girlfriend, as he announces the decision to give up any binary model of sexuality, since the time has finally come to renounce categorization and to free oneself from all ‘conditionings:’

L’avvio è di Benny, che si presenta in osteria vestito da uomo con la barba e il portamento virile che quasi non lo si riconosce tanto è cambiato ed è davvero, conciato da maschio, un gran pezzo di ragazzo. Dice che deve riscoprire la propria eterosessualità, che anzi qualsiasi definizione del comportamento gli sta stretta e che per quanto lo riguarda farebbe a meno degli omo e degli etero, perché esiste soltanto una sessualità contigua e polimorfa e allora bisogna iniziare a superare questi settarismi di merda e liberarci finalmente dai condizionamenti [...].¹⁰⁸

Benny’s decision to overcome ambiguity in contemplation of supple fluidity is considered a betrayal by the female ‘Splash’ members. An actual end to the story, however, is heralded with the reception of an invitation from private television for a twenty-minute performance, which they understand as a sign that times have changed and that their provocative behavior has now become a local TV show attraction.¹⁰⁹ After this insight leads them towards suicide attempts and, later, to taking up a bourgeois lifestyle, the ‘mimes and histrions’ are ultimately left with only a feeling of nausea for the past turbulent years and with a past “che vorremmo anche noi rigettare.”¹¹⁰

5 Conclusions: Ambiguous Masculinity as Subversive and Utopian Literary Motif

From the perspective of cultural studies, tracing the striking motif of ambiguous and fluid masculinities between US-American, European, and Italian discourses can offer

an intriguing insight into how gender narratives have been changing since the sociopolitical turmoil of 1968. Moreover, this approach can also shed new light on three different reactions of pro-feminist and heterosexual men to feminist and LGBTQ+ demands, as well as providing a primal insight into the crucial interrelations between science-oriented, activist, and literary discourses of masculinity. Because literary and artistic representations have the potential to aesthetically confirm, alter or even reject the gender status quo, they are particularly suitable to challenge essential or normative assumptions of masculinity. Through a narrative emphasis on masculine crises, subversive ambiguity, or utopian fluidity, they interrelate with momentous concepts of gender studies.

The three outlined tendencies of sarcastic rejection, aestheticizing acceptance and postmodern conception highlight the deep interrelations between feminist and LGBTQ+ discussions and literary and artistic representations of masculinities in late 1970s Bologna. Common to all of them is a certain gender anxiety and melancholia, which the authors and their literary figures explicitly relate to and take a stance on. With its innovations and restitutions, the motif of ambiguous or fluid masculinity offers an excellent means of precisely capturing these cultural reactions. While the backlash against and propensity for the softie-type seem to be based on an essentialist dichotomy, the transition towards postmodern fluidity in Tondelli's *Altri libertini* reveals subversive and utopian potential. This potential becomes particularly clear in the literary anticipation of the consideration of gender and masculinity as fluid, which queer studies and scientific discourse were to articulate only much later.

Endnotes

- ¹ “polymorphs and [...] polygamous and to some extent also polyps [octopuses]” (my translation, as well as all of the following non-English quotations). Enrico Palandri, *Boccalone: Storia vera piena di bugie* (Milan: Bompiani, 2017), 188.
- ² According to Talcott Parsons, sex roles were understood to be appropriate codes of conduct for women and men, through which the anatomical sex finds its psychological and cultural confirmation. See Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales, *Family Socialization and Interaction Process* (Illinois: Free Press, 1955), 151–52.
- ³ Cf. Jack Sawyer, “On Male Liberation,” in *Liberation* 15, no. 6, 7, 8 (1970): 32–33, here: 32.
- ⁴ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995), 27.
- ⁵ See e.g. Joseph Pleck, “The Male Sex Role: Definitions, Problems, and Sources of Change,” *Journal of Social Issues* 32, no. 3 (1976): 155–64; and Joseph Pleck and Jack Sawyer, *Men and Masculinity* (Hoboken: Prentice Hall, 1974).

- 6 Sawyer, "On Male Liberation," 32–33.
- 7 Warren Farrell, *The Liberated Man: Beyond Masculinity* (New York: Random House, 1974), xxx and 29.
- 8 Joseph Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 3–4.
- 9 Barbara Kosta, "Väterliteratur, Masculinity, and History: The Melancholic Texts of the 1980s," in *Conceptions of Postwar German Masculinities*, ed. Roy Jerome (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 224.
- 10 "unmanly features." Ulli Dietzel, "Männerrolle vorwärts — Männerrolle rückwärts," in *Männersachen: Verständigungstexte*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Müller-Schwefe (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1979), 114–54, here: 117.
- 11 "other models, gentler, more beautiful, also more narcissistic men, tending to be androgynous." Jochen Schimmang, "Text Nr. i — auf die Frauenbewegung schielend," in *Männersachen*, 7–18, here: 10.
- 12 Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* (Frankfurt a. M., Basel: Roter Stern, 1977–1978).
- 13 Cf. Lea Melandri, *Una visceralità indicibile: La pratica dell'inconscio nel movimento delle donne degli anni Settanta* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000), 25.
- 14 Cf. Marco Invernizzi and Paolo Martinucci, *Dal "centrismo" al Sessantotto* (Milan: Ares, 2007), 77.
- 15 Cf. Chiara Saraceno, "Women and Gender Studies in Italy," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17, no. 3 (2010): 269–74, here: 169.
- 16 Cf. Carla Lonzi, Elvira Banotti, and Carla Accardi, *Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile* (1970); Cf. also Mario Mieli, "London Gay Liberation Front Angry Brigade: piume & paillettes," *Fuori!* 5 (1972): 5–6.
- 17 "Disciplina dei casi di scioglimento del matrimonio," Public Law 898, signed on December 1st, 1970, accessed December 4, 2021, <<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1970/12/03/070U0898/sg>>.
- 18 "Riforma del diritto di famiglia," Public Law 151, signed on May 19th, 1975, accessed December 4, 2021, <<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1975/05/23/075U0151/sg>>.
- 19 "Norme per la tutela sociale della maternità e sull'interruzione volontaria della gravidanza," Public Law 194, signed on May 22nd, 1978, accessed December 4, 2021, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1978-05-22&atto.codiceRedazionale=078U0194&elenco30giorni=false>.
- 20 I am referring, for example, to the establishment of the right to abortion in the German Democratic Republic in 1972, in Austria in 1975, and in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1976.
- 21 Cf. Mario Baccianini and Luigi Fenizi, "From Student Protest to Terrorism: Italy 1968–1977," in *Jugendprotest und Generationenkonflikt in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Dieter Owe (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, 1986), 304.
- 22 Especially *Lotta Continua* (1969–1976), *Movimento Studentesco* (1968–1976), and *Autonomia Operaia* (1973–1979).
- 23 Cf. Paola Stelliferi, "Il 1977 nel femminismo italiano," in *Il movimento del '77*, eds. Monica Galfré and Simone Neri Seneri (Rome: Viella, 2018), 79–95.
- 24 See the Italian translation of *Men and Masculinity* as Joseph Pleck and Jack Sawyer, *Maschio e maschismo. Esperienze americane contro il potere del cazzo* (Milan: La Salamandra, 1977). See also the Italian translation of the experience reports of the German men's discussion groups in:

- L'antimaschio: Critica dell'incoscienza maschile*, ed. Stefano Segre (Milan: Moizzi, 1977), as well as the German translation of *Porci con le ali* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977), and of *L'ultimo uomo* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978).
- 25 See e.g. Aldo Ricci, *I giovani non sono piante: Da Trento 1968 a Bologna 1977* (Milan: SugarCo, 1978), 119.
- 26 “the males found themselves displaced and, after a few outbursts, they too questioned themselves, as perhaps no party has done.” Ricci, *I giovani non sono piante*, 78.
- 27 See e.g. Claudia Ravaioli, *Maschio per obbligo. Oltre il femminismo per l'abolizione dei ruoli istituzionali* (Milan: Bompiani, 1973). Further information about men's discussion groups in Italy can be found in Paola Stelliferi, *Una liberazione 'fratricida e iconoclasta'* (Venice: Univ. Ca' Foscari, 2016), 119–20.
- 28 “L'intellettuale, il compagno di base, il politico, il giovanissimo” (“the intellectual, the basis comrade, the politician, the very young man”). Marco-Lombardo Radice, ed., *L'ultimo uomo* (Rome: Savelli, 1977), index.
- 29 “il giorno in cui ci si ritrovano davanti finalmente femminilizzati e deboli cominciano a chiedersi ansiosamente se non ci piacciono più o se siamo diventati omosessuali” (“the day they finally find us feminized and weak they begin to anxiously wonder if we don't like them anymore or if we have become homosexual”). Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 15.
- 30 The use of the more critical term of ‘conditioning’ to denote male socialization is a salient characteristic of both these non-fiction books and the dialogues of the literary characters, see Pier Vittorio Tondelli, *Altri libertini* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2009), 64.
- 31 “we are out of time to be the first new men, thus somehow we prefer to be the last old men.” Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 24.
- 32 Cf. Roberto Zapperi, *L'uomo incinto* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1979), 31–32.
- 33 “role of the free-range Italic male.” Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 83.
- 34 “as a reappropriation [...] of what is not VIRILE in us: of what is instinct, irrationality, sentiment. Reappropriation of our entirety. (Of the woman in us?)” (emphasis in original). Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 106–107.
- 35 “Being sodomized is, for men, [...] the conscious acceptance of weakness, of ‘emptiness’ [...]. [...] for the male being penetrated evokes the image of homosexuality, of being below, of roles different from the traditional ones.” Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 119–20.
- 36 Indeed, homosexuality is seen as a method of expressing one's otherness and creativity by one of the four men: “[...] mi venne una voglia caparbia [...] di definirmi come omosessuale [...]. [...] un po' speravo di essere tanto più geniale quanto più ero omosessuale” (“[...] a stubborn urge came over me [...] to define myself as homosexual [...]. [...] I hoped to be all the more brilliant, the more homosexual I was”). Radice, *L'ultimo uomo*, 50.
- 37 Soon translated into English. See Mario Mieli, *Homosexuality and Liberation. Elements of a Gay Critique* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1980).
- 38 Cf. Andrea Pini, *Quando eravamo froci: Gli omosessuali nell'Italia di una volta* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011), 65.
- 39 “Our condition as homosexuals, [...] our sexual ambiguity, the kind of balance achieved in us between subjective connotations and connotations of the repressed, tends to be hermaphroditic, is an expression of transsexuality” (emphasis in original). Mario Mieli, *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2017), 197.

- 40 “Il movimento delle donne e il movimento gay apprestano quel terremoto che provocherà il crollo dell’intera struttura patriarcale” (“The women’s movement and the gay movement are preparing that earthquake that will cause the collapse of the entire patriarchal structure”). Mieli, *Elementi*, 198.
- 41 “Impossibile, e affascinante, per l’incompatibilità delle premesse teoriche e le contraddizioni di un pensiero che sconfinava dai margini del discorso nel quale e contro il quale si forma e si dibatte” (“Impossible and fascinating because of the incompatibility of the theoretical premises and the contradictions of a thought that trespasses from the margins of the discourse in which and against which it is formed and debated”). Teresa de Lauretis, “La gaia scienza, ovvero la travagliata Norma” in *Elementi*, 261–268, here: 261–62.
- 42 See Sabrina Pedrini, Raffaele Corrado, and Pier Luigi Sacco, “The Power of Local Networking: Bologna’s Music Scene as a Creative Community: 1978–1992,” in *Journal of Urban Affairs* (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2020.1863817>>.
- 43 Court Decision 202, signed on July 28th, 1976, accessed December 4, 2021, <<https://cortecostituzionale.it/actionSchedaPronuncia.do?anno=1976&numero=202>>.
- 44 On March 11th, 1977. See Vittorio Monti, “Violenze a Bologna fra gruppi di studenti: Scontri con la polizia che spara: Giovane ucciso,” in *Corriere della sera*, March 12, 1977.
- 45 Especially after the Minister of the Interior sent military tanks to Bologna to monitor the university district. See Vittorio Monti, “Mezzi corazzati all’università e nel centro di Bologna,” in *Corriere della sera*, March 14, 1977.
- 46 I.e. after the conference “Contro la repressione,” held in Bologna between the 23rd and the 25th September 1977. The title of the conference refers to the title under which the appeal against repression by various French intellectuals (including Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, and Roland Barthes) was published on July 5, 1977 in the magazine *Lotta Continua*: “Questa è la repressione del compromesso storico,” *Lotta Continua*, accessed December 4, 2021, <https://fondazionefeltrinelli.it/app/uploads/2017/09/Appello-intellettuali-francesi_Lotta-continua_1977_07_05_completo_2-pp.pdf>. The end of this phase could also be attributed to the political climate after the killing of the former prime minister Aldo Moro by the terrorist organization Brigate Rosse on May 9, 1978, as well as the terrorist bombing of the Bologna Centrale station on August 2, 1980.
- 47 Chiara Cretella, “L’ala creativa bolognese,” in *Gli anni Settanta: Tra crisi mondiale e movimenti collettivi*, eds. Alberto De Bernardi, Valeria Romitelli, and Chiara Cretella (Bologna: Archetipolibri, 2009), 353–70. See also Pier Vittorio Tondelli’s statement in “Tondelli – Intervista 1.” YouTube, 0m35s-1m00s, accessed June 28, 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMlu4RVpJy4>>.
- 48 DAMS is an acronym for *Discipline delle Arti, della Musica e dello Spettacolo*. The DAMS course was first established in 1971 at the University of Bologna. Elisabetta Mondello describes the artistic and literary milieu, which had its central meeting point at the DAMS University in the 1970s, as the origin of numerous narrative elements that can be found in Italian literature from that point on: See Elisabetta Mondello, “La giovane narrativa degli anni Novanta: ‘cannibali’ e dintorni,” in *La narrativa italiana degli anni Novanta* (Rome: Meltemi, 2004), 26.
- 49 Cf. Toni Tholen, “Deutschsprachige Literatur,” in *Männlichkeit. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, eds. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2016), 270–87, here: 282.
- 50 See especially Robert Bly, *Iron John. A Book About Men* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1990).

- 51 Cf. Grant Tyler Peterson and Eric Enderson, “Queering Masculine Peer Culture,” in *Queer Masculinities*, eds. John Landreau and Nelson Rodriguez (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2012), 125. See also Connell, *Masculinities*, 13 and 27.
- 52 “Listen kid: on the count of three you will go towards him waving your little fists with a fierce face, while I flee in that direction.” Andrea Pazienza, *Le straordinarie avventure di Pentothal* (Rome: Coconino Press – Fandango, 2010), 120.
- 53 Cf. section 4.
- 54 Cf. Andrea Pazienza, *Zanardi* (Rome: Coconino Press — Fandango, 2013), 22.
- 55 Cf. Tholen, “Deutschsprachige Literatur,” 281–82; Arnaldo Spallacci, *Maschi in bilico* (Milan, Udine: Mimesis, 2019), 185–86; and Sergio Rigoletto, *Masculinity and Italian Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), 33.
- 56 “Resultat der Verabschiedung traditioneller Vorstellungen von Männlichkeit und Paternalität.” Tholen, “Deutschsprachige Literatur,” 282.
- 57 As, for instance, in Andrea De Carlo’s *Due di due* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) and Christian Kracht’s *Faserland* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1995).
- 58 “To Andrea P. and T. who drew and wrote.” Enrico Brizzi, *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo* (Ancona: Transeuropa, 1994), front matter.
- 59 For a comprehensive analysis of Tondelli’s influence on representations of homosexuality, see Derek Duncan, *Reading and Writing Italian Homosexuality* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), 106–07.
- 60 See Pier Vittorio Tondelli, *Un weekend postmoderno: Cronache dagli anni Ottanta* (Milan: Bompiani, 1990) and Pier Vittorio Tondelli, *L’abbandono: Racconti dagli anni Ottanta* (Milan: Bompiani, 1993).
- 61 Cf. Tondelli, *Un weekend postmoderno*, 102–04.
- 62 Cf. footnote 108.
- 63 “There is no such thing as homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality: there is sexuality.” Aldo Busi, *Manuale del perfetto Gentilomo* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1992), 34.
- 64 “[...] nel mese di febbraio ’77, ero convinto di disegnare uno sprazzo [...]. Ne avessi avuto il sentore, avrei aspettato e disegnato questo bel marzo” (“[...] in February ‘77, I was convinced that I was drawing a splash [...]. If I had had any inkling of this, I would have waited and drawn this beautiful March”). Pazienza, *Pentothal*, 26.
- 65 Palandri also collaborated on Radio Alice, and co-edited one of the most relevant books by and about the Bolognese movement. See Autori molti compagni, *Bologna marzo 1977: ...fatti nostri...* (Verona: Bertani, 1977).
- 66 Cf. “Intervista a Pier Vittorio Tondelli e Romana Pucci.” YouTube, 2m46s–2m55s, accessed June 28, 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klhFpeAQpBw>>.
- 67 See e.g. Pazienza, *Pentothal*, 14–15.
- 68 As antithetical to the motto ‘The Personal is Political’ of both the ‘68 movement’ and early Women’s Studies, see Carol Hanisch, “The Personal is Political,” in *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation*, eds. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), 76–77.
- 69 “backflow into the private.” See e.g. Giovanni Gozzer, “Ma cos’è questo riflusso? Sui banchi se ne parla così,” in *Corriere della sera*, January 23, 1979.
- 70 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Die männliche Herrschaft* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), 24.

- 71 “Mi domando come ha fatto a resistere tanto. Come ha fatto a resistere tanto? Bah!” (“I wonder how she managed to resist so long. How did she manage to resist so long? Bah!”). Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 11.
- 72 “Ti lascio [...]. Le ragioni sono la tua totale disinformazione, la tua pigrizia e la tua scarsa dignità” (“I leave you [...]. The reasons are your total misinformation, your laziness and your lack of dignity”). Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 11.
- 73 According to Reinhard Mohr, this is another characteristic of what he calls the ‘78er-Generation.’ See Reinhard Mohr, *Zaungäste. Die Generation, die nach der Revolte kam* (Frankfurt, a. M.: Fischer, 1992), 9.
- 74 “L’impegno le rende concise” (“[Political] commitment makes them concise”) Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 11.
- 75 “Ma che significa ‘ti lascio!’ Che non faremo mai più l’amore, che non ci vedremo più, o che incontrandomi non mi saluterai?” (“But what does ‘I leave you’ mean! That we’ll never make love again, that we’ll never see each other again, or that when meeting me you won’t say hello?”). Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 13.
- 76 “bang the feminist, and beat her up to punish her.” Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 12.
- 77 “Run home while I try to...” Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 12.
- 78 “Where do I run to while you do what?” Paziienza, *Pentothal*, 12.
- 79 The name Anna is used here as a reference to Woody Allen’s film *Annie Hall* (1977). See Enrico Minardi and Monica Francioso, *Generazione in movimento: Viaggio nella scrittura di Enrico Palandri* (Ravenna: Longo, 2010), 88.
- 80 In contrast to the typical resolution of the literary motif of a woman between two men: Elisabeth Frenzel, *Motive der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1988), 499–500.
- 81 “polymorphs [...] and polygamous and to some extent also polyps [i.e. octopuses].” Palandri, *Boccalone*, 189.
- 82 “desiring beings.” Palandri, *Boccalone*, 73.
- 83 “Devo riuscire a rompere la catena grammaticale legata alla prima persona e ai tempi passati [...]: mi servono modi e costrutti sintattici di movimento” (“I need to be able to break the grammatical chain tied to the first person and past tenses [...]: I need modes and syntactic constructs of movement”). Palandri, *Boccalone*, 18.
- 84 “le categorie svaniscono come l’etere” (“categories vanish like thin air”). Palandri, *Boccalone*, 13.
- 85 Cf. Palandri, *Boccalone*, 165–66.
- 86 “the sense of guilt, the burden of males — not knowing how to look at the other without crying in disgust. [...] they are expelled from the assembly, the males in there all silent and astonished.” Palandri, *Boccalone*, 133–34.
- 87 “Without anna [sic] all my male activities have resurfaced, a man isn’t worth shit, [...] a hard-cover identity, with nothing inside, like an empty box.” Palandri, *Boccalone*, 47.
- 88 Cf. Viller Masoni and Fulvio Panzeri, *Studi per Tondelli* (Parma: Monte Università Parma, 2005), 64.
- 89 “romanzo a episodi.” Antonio Spadaro, *Lontano dentro se stessi* (Milan: Jaca, 2002), 57.
- 90 “*He*, Benny, says *she* feels marginalized” (my underlinings in the original quote, to mark the deviation between the masculine article and the feminine adjective ending — my emphasis in the translated quote tries to emulate the effect of this device). Pier Vittorio Tondelli, *Altri libertini*

(Milan: Feltrinelli, 2009), 61.

- 91 “proud and pissed like two lionesses” (my underlinings in the original quote, to mark the deviation between the masculine and feminine adjective endings). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 155.
- 92 “abbiamo pagato troppo caro il prezzo per la ricerca di una nostra autenticità” (“we have paid too high a price for the search of our own authenticity”). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 65.
- 93 “Four horny [~‘Satan-obsessed’] ones.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 35.
- 94 “non faremmo che sbatterci e per giunta anche fra noi quando il mercato del cazzo non tira” (“we would do nothing but bang and this even among ourselves when the dick market is not pulling”). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 35.
- 95 “nobody could stand that the heart of their city has been so fouled by long-haired and lesbians.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 38.
- 96 “we get our pussy off the chairs” (varying “togliamoci dal cazzo” — “~we get our dick out of here”). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 37.
- 97 “we decide to raise the skirts” (varying “leviamo le tende” — “we raise the curtains”). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 56.
- 98 “one dick per curl” (varying “avere un diavolo per capello” — “to have one devil per hair”). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 37.
- 99 “~no one has a birding like ours” (“uccello” — “bird” indicates here the penis). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 35.
- 100 “~the dick market.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 35.
- 101 “like female wolves in full moon.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 39.
- 102 “they’re like roosters in the henhouse, ready only to make war” (my underlinings in the original quote, to mark the deviation between the masculine noun ending and the feminine adjective ending). Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 43.
- 103 “Benny’s name is Benedetto and he was a man or rather a boy but now she plays the faggot with us,” “with her very short hair she is really beautiful.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 44 and 49.
- 104 The “Collettivo Frcialista.” Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il movimento gay in Italia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999), 92.
- 105 “hermaphroditic doing and undoing.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 53.
- 106 “In short, a whole colorful inventory of self-definitions, [...] shouts, hymns and slogans all superimposed on each other and inserted between word and word to produce irresistible ironies and all in the mixed and polyglot jargon of the fauna itself.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 57.
- 107 “she says that [...] we don’t understand shit and that those like us don’t want to make war against the cock, but only to domesticate it while the cock must be tamed with the whip and with fire and all this is done with the queers that are the real revolution.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 62.
- 108 “The start is by Benny, who shows up in the osteria dressed as a man with a beard and a virile bearing that you hardly recognize him so much he’s changed and he’s really, disguised as a male, a great piece of ass. He says that he must rediscover his heterosexuality, that indeed he has outgrown any definition of behavior and that as far as he is concerned he could do without homos and heteros, because there is only contiguous and polymorphic sexuality and then we must start to overcome these shitty sectarianisms and finally free ourselves from conditionings [...]” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 63–64.
- 109 “numero da esibizione tivù locale.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 64.

¹¹⁰ “which we, too, would like to reject.” Tondelli, *Altri libertini*, 65.