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Abstract: June Scialpi's poetry embodies a poetics of queerness and Southerness, intertwining marginalized identities, historical inheritances, and the fluidity of selfhood. Her work resists dominant cultural narratives by contesting patriarchal structures and advocating for an identity shaped through relationality, vulnerability, and transformation. This study examines how her engagement with themes of conflict and magic reframes the queer subject through a Southern Italian lens, in which ritual and myth offer alternatives to normative frameworks of identity. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theorisation of the "closet," alongside recent theorisations of trans experience by Sandy Stone and Susan Stryker, and Ernesto De Martino's studies on Southern Italian rituality whose temporality is suspended within the queer horizon of expectation theorized by José Esteban Muñoz, this analysis explores how Scialpi's poetry negotiates repression, self-determination, and cultural resistance. By positioning queerness and Southerness as intertwined modes of non-normative existence, Scialpi's poetics articulates a vision of subjectivity that rejects rigid categorisations in favor of the generative possibilities of instability, disobedience, and self-invention. Through the lenses of obliquity, conflict, and magic, her work challenges not only normative gender and sexual paradigms, but also the hegemonic cultural hierarchies that have historically marginalized the South.

Keywords: Queer South; Poetry; June Scialpi; Relationality; Resistance

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The Southern Queer Poetics of June Scialpi: Obliquity, Conflict, Magic

MARZIA D'AMICO*

Introduction

June Scialpi's work represents a profound interrogation of gender, identity, and the fluidity of existence. Rooted in queer theory and trans perspectives, her literary contributions challenge dominant cultural narratives, subverting traditional notions of subjectivity and representation. Drawing inspiration from feminist theorists such as Virginia Woolf and Adriana Cavarero, this contribution aims to highlight how Scialpi's poetry contests the entrenched patriarchal structures that prioritize stability and verticality, advocating instead for a radical rethinking of identity. Through themes of vulnerability, relationality, and bodily experience, her writing offers a reimagining of the self that positions instability not as a weakness, but as a generative space for creativity, empathy, and transformative engagement with the world. The additional intersection of conflict and magic within queer poetics underscores the negotiation of identity, resistance, and transformation within societal and historical contexts. In this study, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work provides a crucial framework for understanding how both internal and external conflicts shape queer literature and existence. Through her analysis of the closet and the epistemological tensions it engenders, Sedgwick examines how queer individuals navigate societal expectations, repression, and the pursuit of self-authenticity.¹ These concerns are further explored in Scialpi's poetry, where the interplay between personal disobedience, cultural critique, and the possibility of self-creation becomes central. Furthermore, the integration of magical and ritualistic elements, aligned with the cultural and symbolic frameworks outlined by Ernesto De Martino, offers a distinctive approach to identity formation, rooted in Southern Italian traditions.² This study will examine how the themes of conflict and magic converge in Scialpi's poetry, proposing a reimagined queer subjectivity that resists normative structures while embracing the fluidity of self-creation.

At the heart of Scialpi's poetics is the tension between liberation and constraint, explored through the multiple lenses of obliquity, conflict, and magic, adopted here as keywords. As she negotiates the complex dynamics of historical inheritance and queer self-determination, her work provides a potent response to the rigidity of traditional gender, sexuality, and poetic forms.

June Scialpi

Scialpi (b. Galatina, 1998) holds a degree in Performance and Communication Studies, having completed a thesis on the redefinition of shōjo spaces and female identity in Japan from the post-war period to the gender equality era—a work now set to be published by Moscabianca. Relocating to Pisa in 2019, Scialpi has cultivated a diverse literary and cultural contributor career. Her publications include *Carne incognita* (Flesh Incognita, 2019; under a deadname), *Il Golem. L'interruzione* (Golem. The Interruption, 2022), the chapbooks *Condotta del simbiote* (Symbiont Behavior, 2023), and *In mezzo ai*

* I would like to take this opportunity to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for the clarity of their critical observations, which have served as a valuable guide in the appropriate revision of this contribution—a gesture of genuine academic collegiality.

¹ See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

² See De Martino, *Sud e magia*.

giorni (i) dati (Amidst the [Con]Figured Days, 2024).³ The latter collection was deeply inspired by the contrasting landscapes of Gallipoli and Teggiano, two southern Italian locations—one by the sea and the other in the mountains.⁴ Scialpi is also a contributor to *Stasera faremo cadere il cielo* (Tonight We'll Make the Sky Fall), the first Italian anthology of speculative fiction entirely devoted to queer voices. Additionally, she writes as a freelance contributor for various online platforms and is notably the author of “Vita sessuale segreta delle donne trans” (Secret, Sexual Lives of Trans Women), an article most recently translated into Romanian for the transfeminist journal *Cutra*.

Scialpi's creative and academic work often explores the intersections of queerness, media, and literature, with a particular emphasis on the contributions of trans theory to the understanding and reimagining of narrative forms and identities. Her work reflects a deep engagement with the ways in which trans perspectives challenge traditional literary paradigms, offering insights into fluidity, hybridity, and the subversion of binary structures in storytelling. By incorporating the lens of trans theory, Scialpi interrogates dominant cultural narratives, exposing their limitations and highlighting the transformative potential of queer and trans experiences in reshaping literary and media discourses. Her creative writing frequently embodies this theoretical framework, blending poetic experimentation with reflections on embodiment, temporality, and spatiality, particularly as they intersect with trans subjectivities. Similarly, her writing pursuits beyond poetry contribute to a broader understanding of how trans theory not only disrupts normative frameworks but also provides tools for envisioning alternative modes of existence, representation, and relationality. Through this multifaceted approach, Scialpi's work affirms the vital role of trans voices in expanding the boundaries of literature and media, challenging exclusionary practices, and fostering more inclusive and dynamic cultural narratives.

Obliquity.

In 1928, Virginia Woolf was invited to Cambridge to speak on the topic of *Women and Fiction*. During her lecture, she analysed the works of male and female authors, rejecting the age-old belief that writing is an act of neutrality, universality, or genderlessness. Woolf likened the authoritative “I” that dominates the page—claiming space as if marking territory—to the embodiment of a distinctly masculine perspective: assertive, autonomous, and celebrated by the cultural norms of her time. Woolf found this vision not only frustrating but also limiting, drawing parallels between this masculinized “I” and the rhetoric of fascism, which she viewed as emblematic of a broader cultural authoritarianism.

Woolf argued that gender inevitably informs the act of writing, as authors are shaped by their historical, social, and cultural contexts. While she worked within the binary framework of her time, distinguishing between masculine and feminine perspectives, her ideas subtly destabilized this dichotomy. This is evident in her own work, particularly in the fictional biography *Orlando*, which questions fixed categories of gender through its exploration of identity as fluid and mutable. Woolf's view does not imply that writing styles are inherently tied to gender or that there is a distinctly male or female way of writing—a debate she dismissed as both tiresome and reductive. Instead, she contended that the “I” in literature is never neutral, as it inevitably reflects the writer's lived

³ Translations are my own.

⁴ The undeniable relevance of such a geographical framework is given away immediately by the fact that the book opens with geographic coordinates that root the text in these settings.

experiences: how they see the world, experience desire, relate to others, and are shaped by their education and societal values.⁵

Orlando exemplifies Woolf's challenge of traditional binaries, portraying gender as dynamic and performative, an idea that later scholars such as Judith Butler would expand upon in works like *Gender Trouble*. Woolf's insights also prefigure concepts explored in feminist literary theory, such as Hélène Cixous's notion of *écriture féminine* (women's writing), articulated in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, which foregrounds the bodily and contextual nature of writing. By interrogating the implicit gendering of literary authority, Woolf laid a foundation for critical perspectives that explore the intersection of gender, power, and creativity. Her work continues to inform contemporary debates on how identity shapes narrative voice and resists the illusion of universality in literature.

This literary and sociological insight, which Woolf so astutely encapsulates in the metaphor of the erect, phallic "I" overshadowing the rest of the text, obstructing a true reading of its potential richness, finds a theoretical counterpart in the political philosophy of Adriana Cavarero.⁶ Cavarero has long critiqued the monolithic, self-sufficient subject posited by patriarchal modernity. In both early works such as *Nonostante Platone* (In Spite of Plato) and later contributions like *Inclinations*, she outlines how Western philosophical traditions privilege a vertical, exclusionary model of identity—one that isolates the subject as autonomous and self-possessed. For Cavarero, this upright model not only erases relationality but symbolically encodes dominance and rectitude within the masculinist metaphors of posture, independence, and sovereignty.⁷

Cavarero's alternative is grounded in a philosophy of inclination: a leaning-towards-the-other that figures vulnerability, interdependence, and embodied singularity as fundamental to the human condition. As she writes, "emphasizing vulnerability is not a matter of correcting individualistic ontology by inserting the category of relation into it. It is rather to think relation itself as originary and constitutive."⁸ Her vision challenges the patriarchal model not through abstract deconstruction but through a refiguration of the subject as always already exposed to the other, narratable but never self-authored.

This article draws from Cavarero's critique of verticality and phallic posturing, but it also seeks to extend these spatial metaphors into a queer theoretical register that Cavarero herself explicitly resists. Her fidelity to a sexed, narratable, and non-fabricable singularity distances her from the queer performative paradigm developed by Judith Butler and others, who instead understand identity as constructed through iteration and citationality. As Butler famously argues, gender identity is "[...] the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity," a process that both constitutes and destabilizes the coherence of the subject.⁹ In this framework, identity is not merely relational but contingent, embodied through repeated gestures that may fail, mutate, or rupture normative expectations.

While Cavarero's thought is deeply rooted in the Italian feminism of sexual difference—and her commitment to the embodied voice and sexuate singularity remains foundational—her spatial metaphors of inclination and verticality can nonetheless be put into productive tension with queer

⁵ "At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial—and any question about sex is that—one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold." See Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

⁶ "The worst of it is that in the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? No, it is a woman." See Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, chap. 6.

⁷ See Cavarero, *A Critique of Rectitude*.

⁸ Cavarero, *A Critique of Rectitude*, 13.

⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 140.

theories of performativity, obliquity, and illegibility.¹⁰ Jack Halberstam, for example, offers the notion of queer failure as a mode of resisting the demands of legibility and success under heteronormative capitalism.¹¹ In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz, too, invites us to think queerness not as identity but as a horizon—an aspiration, a movement toward an elsewhere.¹² These theoretical framings embrace instability, ephemerality, and refusal not as symptoms of alienation but as strategies of resistance and world-making.

It is within this broader constellation that the poetry of June Scialpi can be re-read not merely through Cavarero's critique of verticality but as an instance of queer obliquity: a deliberate destabilisation of posture as a necessary manifestation of epistemological and political instability. Scialpi's poetics do not simply reject patriarchal authority; they enact an alternative sensorium—one that privileges slant, distortion, and collapse over coherence, consistency, or the upright.

Whereas Cavarero rejects the idea of self-invention as dangerously abstracted from embodied singularity, queer theory embraces this very notion as a space of play, excess, and invention. Butler's later work in *Undoing Gender* explicitly reconsiders vulnerability and relationality as ethical preconditions for agency, bringing them closer to Cavarero, yet she retains the performative tension that allows subjects to be undone and redone through iterative and non-normative acts. Likewise, Halberstam's work on low theory and queer time imagines alternative ways of being in and through failure, rest, or refusal in gestures that might seem unproductive or illegible to dominant frameworks but that nonetheless forge radical new possibilities.¹³

In Scialpi's poetry, we see a commitment to what might be called queer inclination: not just a leaning-towards-the-other (as in Cavarero), but a wilful tilt out of legibility. Her work resists the alignment with a fixed subject—sexed, stable, or otherwise—and instead performs an obliquity that is at once disobedient and generative. It is precisely this instability—formal, epistemic, ontological—that constitutes her political gesture. The rejection of the upright is not a descent into abjection but a recalibration of what it means to stand, move, or relate.

As such, Scialpi's queer poetics echoes Muñoz's call for “stepping out” of line and reimagining being as a temporal and spatial deviation.¹⁴ Obliquity becomes not only a critique of verticality but also an enactment of a different geometry of relation—one that cannot be reduced to a centre, a narrative, or a singular voice. Here, queer subjectivity is not rooted in a stable body or coherent story but animated by a performative, precarious, and resistant angle of approach.

While Cavarero offers a compelling critique of patriarchal verticality and affirms the ethics of relationality, her philosophical attachment to embodied singularity limits her engagement with more radical queer notions of subjectivity. However, by juxtaposing her metaphors with Butler's

¹⁰ The neologism “sexuate” (from the French *sexué*), introduced by Luce Irigaray, designates an ontological difference, referring to subjectivity as shaped by sex in its psychological, relational, cultural, and embodied dimensions, without reducing it to any single one of these aspects. See Irigaray, *Conversations*.

¹¹ See Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

¹² See Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

¹³ In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam introduces the notion of low theory as a strategy for unsettling the normative frameworks that dictate conventional understandings of success and failure. Drawing on Stuart Hall, Halberstam employs this concept to challenge heteronormative benchmarks of achievement, suggesting instead that deviation from such standards may generate alternative, more imaginative modes of thought and being. Halberstam develops the notion of low theory across multiple works, most notably in *The Queer Art of Failure*, but also in essays and later texts such as *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon Press, 2012) and *Trans: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (University of California Press, 2018), where it continues to serve as a mode of theorizing from the margins and in resistance to disciplinary hierarchies.

See Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

¹⁴ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 186.

performativity, Halberstam's failure, and Muñoz's horizontality, we can recuperate the language of inclination into a more fluid, unstable, and oblique queer theory. Scialpi's poetry embodies this movement, not by narrating a sexed voice, but by refusing the terms through which identity is supposed to cohere, leaning instead into the generative potential of queer disorientation. More than a physical limitation, this emphasis on uprightness imposes a metaphorical isolation, privileging independence and autonomy over relational being. In contrast, queer poetics embrace inclination as a mode of openness and vulnerability, challenging the hegemonic ideals of individuality and self-sufficiency. This shift from verticality to inclination enables a more inclusive framework that celebrates multiplicity, fluidity, and the interconnectedness of human lives.

By choosing not to reproduce the dominant identity and instead embracing plurality, fluidity, and resistance, non-cismale subjects engage in a profound reimagining of identity that disrupts the hierarchical and exclusionary logics of patriarchal authority. In this sense, I propose that the poetics and poetry of June Scialpi serve as an emblematic example of a positioning that is unequivocal yet articulated through a deliberate inclination—a destabilisation of posture as a necessary manifestation of instability. This instability functions as a fundamental principle of knowledge, representation, and identity. Scialpi's work resists the rigidity of fixed, vertical frameworks, instead embracing a dynamic and fluid approach that challenges the illusion of coherence imposed by normative structures.

Through this inclination, her poetry not only destabilizes established forms but also foregrounds the productive potential of instability as a mode of engagement with the world. It reflects a commitment to exploring the fractures, tensions, and contradictions inherent in identity and representation, proposing these as sites of creative and epistemological richness. By doing so, Scialpi's work offers a profound commentary on the relational and contingent nature of subjectivity, aligning with broader discourses in feminist, queer, and trans theories that advocate for a rejection of monolithic paradigms in favor of multiplicity and openness.¹⁵

La donna camminava **buffa**
 nella **scoliosi** di nascituro
 si lasciava essere
 masticata viva
 da vita in grembo
 non creduta, perché **isterica**
 avanza latte materno¹⁶

The *buffa* walk—perhaps best translated as *funny* or *absurd*—and the scoliosis, as an anticipated inheritance of an unfinished act (since the pregnancy, in fact, does not exist), are key elements in interpreting the queer poetics presented here, positioned in opposition to the elevated ego of straight (with all the ambivalence that term carries) cis-subjects. By choosing to focus on this unsteady, teetering figure, Scialpi performs a political act, centering a highly vulnerable subject who emerges from the margins.

¹⁵ It is interesting to observe how this openness can be interpreted in diametrically opposing ways within the context of the South, according to two predominant stereotypes that shape its depiction in dominant culture. On the one hand, Southerners are viewed as warmer and more passionate, reflecting distinct cultural perceptions (see Villano and Passini, “Competent in the North, Passionate in the South.” On the other hand, the South is often associated with a certain closed-mindedness regarding the acceptance of non-conforming individuals (see Callahan and Loscocco, “Homophobia in Italy”).

¹⁶ “The woman walked absurd / in the scoliosis of the unborn / letting herself be / chewed alive / by life in the womb / disbelieved, for being hysterical / she lingers maternal milk. Where not otherwise indicated all translations into English are mine.” Scialpi, *Carne Incognita*, 18.

Scialpi's approach is decisive and at times almost heartbreaking in its raw depiction of events, drawing on familiar tropes of female exclusion, such as hysteria. There is no immediate sense of empathy; it almost seems as though what is happening to this wounded woman's body does not concern us. This is where the ethical tension of Scialpi's queer poetics becomes evident: it places value on the tension itself—an essential, programmatic force that cannot be taken for granted. It is, in fact, our responsibility to decide how to engage with this subject: to recognize its centrality, to understand its anxieties, to empathize, and to allow this engagement to alter the way we exist in the world, just as poetry shapes our being.

i
 non contemplavi l'errore nell'esserci fatti
disobbedienti (del sangue denso a macchiare
 il parabrezza, quella terra che non si lava)
 ora è diverso: che **manca qualcosa alla stazza**
spezzata (la sua gamba ingessata: è un peso
 farlo dormire in su con la pancia) cosa sogna
 la notte? la frenata, lo stridio, la sterzata
 l'auto che sbanda di netto¹⁷

This second example draws from June Scialpi's second collection, *Il Golem. L'Interruzione*, in which the subject experiences an accident. The Golem's features, typically statuesque and impervious to time, are precisely those that are disrupted by the accident.¹⁸ In this instance, we witness a profound slippage in the subject's existence: the Golem's stature—once symbolic of strength and permanence—is fractured by a broken leg, which is subsequently encased in a plaster cast. This physical alteration makes the subject's existence appear clumsy, in stark contrast to the idealized immortality and unyielding form traditionally associated with the Golem.

What this moment illustrates is a subversion of the previously unshakable and elevated identity. The uprightness of the ego, embodied here as the poetic ego and linked to the symbolic self, is confronted by the harsh reality of the body's fragility. The clash between the idealized figure of the Golem and the limitations imposed by everyday physical existence makes this tension both literal and figurative. The impact of reality—embodied in the form of injury and its consequences—undermines the mythic ideal and reconfigures it into a form of poetry.

In this narrative, the body bends not to divine will or the perfection of myth but to the raw, undeniable truth of human existence, with its everyday struggles and vulnerabilities. Through this act of revelation, the self is exposed for what it truly is: unrighteous, imperfect, and fundamentally human. This poetic exploration serves as a reminder of the ways in which identity and existence are shaped not only by idealized myths but by the frailty and contingencies of real life.

¹⁷ "You did not contemplate the error in our being / disobedient (the thick blood staining / the windshield, that earth which never washes clean) / now it's different: something is missing from the broken frame / (its leg in plaster: it's a burden / to make it sleep on its back, with its belly up) / what does it dream of at night? / the brake, the screech, the sharp turn, / the car swerving violently." Scialpi, *Il Golem*, 35.

¹⁸ The golem is a figure within Jewish folklore, typically represented as a humanoid entity fashioned from inanimate matter—most commonly clay or mud—and brought to life through mystical or magical practices. Conventionally, the golem is created to serve its maker, functioning as a protector or laborer. Yet, folkloric narratives consistently caution that the golem may become uncontrollable, thereby symbolizing the unforeseen consequences of human hubris and the perils inherent in the exercise of divine power.

Conflict.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) is foundational for understanding how conflict is not a peripheral condition but an ontological core of queer existence. The closet is not merely a spatial metaphor, but a structure of knowledge and ignorance, visibility and opacity, that organizes Western understandings of sexual identity. In Sedgwick's formulation, the closet is the axis around which modern sexual identity revolves, generating perpetual tension between disclosure and concealment, between being known and remaining unknowable. It therefore produces a constant state of epistemological conflict—not simply psychological, but cultural and political.¹⁹

Sedgwick's insistence that queerness is always marked by this entanglement of knowing and not-knowing prefigures the foundational shifts in trans theory, particularly in Sandy Stone's critique of the medical-industrial and narrative pressures placed upon trans subjects to conform to legible, coherent gendered narratives.²⁰ For Stone, the injunction to pass as a stable man or woman reinscribes the closet in another form: one where disclosure of trans identity becomes either compulsory or punishable. She invites trans individuals to engage in constructing the counter-discourse to the dominant medical narrative to embrace conflict not as pathology, but as a generative terrain for self-determination.²¹ This queering of identity through deliberate narrative dissonance resonates deeply with Sedgwick's conceptualisation of the homosexual/heterosexual binary as a violent simplification that forecloses other possible modes of being.

Both Sedgwick and Stone thus identify epistemological violence as a primary site of conflict. The imperative to be legible—whether as straight or not, cis or trans—compels subjects into narrative coherence, demanding a self that is knowable according to dominant regimes of truth. Susan Stryker furthers this interrogation, reclaiming the figure of the monster to articulate trans embodiment not as failed humanity, but as a site of radical potential.²² Stryker's elaboration of the monster becomes a metaphor for inhabiting conflict: to live within the interstices of the symbolic order is to refuse the violence of stable gender or sexual taxonomies.²³ To see how such a conception resonates beyond theoretical elaboration, we may turn to Scialpi's own poetics of the monstrous:

Creare un Golem, quindi, vuol dire sempre disfarsi di un Golem, interromperlo. Per me però, che sono cresciuta a pane e film horror, questa non è mai stata una possibilità. Prima che la mostruosità simboleggiasse la queerness, prima che fosse la metafora di un discorso di controllo bio-politico di corpi e identità, prima di conoscere qualsiasi theory, per me il mostro era l'immortale, l'irriducibile, ciò che non si batte. Era il costante colpo di scena. Questo è il Golem, un mostro fatto di impulsi affettivi, che non può essere dismesso o interrotto, ma solo assimilato. Con il quale si convive. Che esiste per essere un prodigio, ma anche un monito.

(To create a Golem, then, always means to undo a Golem, to interrupt it. For me, however, having grown up on bread and horror films, this was never a possibility. Before monstrosity symbolized

¹⁹ See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

²⁰ See Stone, "A Posttranssexual Manifesto."

²¹ See Stone, "A Posttranssexual Manifesto."

²² See Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein."

²³ Susan Stryker conceptualizes the "monstrous" through the figure of the transgender body, aligning it with Frankenstein's creature as a site of radical difference and critical potential. The trans body, seen as unnatural by normative society, is reclaimed as a disruptive and politically charged position that exposes the artificiality of gender boundaries and resists normative violence. See Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein."

queerness, before it became the metaphor of a biopolitical discourse on bodies and identities, before I knew any theory, for me the monster was the immortal, the irreducible, that which cannot be defeated. It was the constant plot twist. This is the Golem: a monster made of affective impulses, which cannot be dismissed or interrupted, but only assimilated. With which one coexists. Which exists in order to be a marvel, but also a warning).²⁴

What emerges here is a vision of monstrosity not as lack but as persistence—an understanding that reframes conflict as a condition of existence. This reading of conflict as constitutive rather than exceptional allows for a more nuanced interpretation of queer and trans literature. Conflict is not merely a narrative device, but a structural necessity: the means through which identity, desire, and community are negotiated under the weight of normative violence. Queer and trans characters are thus not just reacting to societal pressures—they are producing new forms of knowledge through the friction of their misalignment with dominant logics.

María Lugones's concept of the colonial/modern gender system complements this framework by showing how binaries such as pure/impure, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, function as technologies of imperial domination.²⁵ Lugones emphasizes that those positioned as “impure” (queer, racialized, gender non-conforming) are marked by conflict not of their own making but inscribed through the colonial matrix of power.²⁶ For Lugones, embracing multiplicity and relationality becomes an act of epistemic resistance. In this sense, queer and trans narratives that refuse linear, binary, or teleological resolutions can be read as acts of decolonial disruption, destabilizing the purity-based logic of identity. Consider, for instance, the conflict in Jeanette Winterson novel's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. The protagonist's journey is not simply about coming out, but about disorganizing the epistemic scaffolding of religious, familial, and sexual normativity. The narrative itself resists closure, interweaving myth and memory to reflect the instability of queer subjectivity. Winterson queers the form as much as the content, refusing narrative reconciliation in favor of conflictual coexistence. Similarly, Melania G. Mazzucco stages a layered conflict around familial legitimacy and social legibility in *Sei come sei* (You Are As You Are). Eva, raised by two fathers, is thrust into a world that demands her to translate her identity into recognisable scripts—ones shaped by Catholic morality and legal exclusions. Mazzucco's portrayal of Eva's navigation through public scrutiny, legal erasure, and private grief exposes the violence of normativity and the conflictual texture of queer kinship. The novel does not seek to resolve this conflict but to inhabit it—to make visible the impossibility of resolution under current social logics. In both examples, genre and narrative form are queered to match the epistemic instability of their protagonists. These stories do not merely represent conflict—they are structured by it, refusing the fantasy of reconciliation or normative closure. As Stone might argue, these texts refuse to disappear into their narratives; they remain unruly, monstrous, visible. Conflict in queer and trans literature should not be pathologized as internalized shame or external opposition alone. Rather,

²⁴ We can therefore observe how the relationship with monstrosity is not resolved in either rejection or acceptance (even though Scialpi does indeed speak of assimilation as an absorption of the element as both conflictual and magical), but rather in a troubled and consciously sustained constant turning point—a twist. In a Zoom discussion on May 3, 2023 titled “Ora che la poesia è questione di vita o di morte (“Now that poetry is an issue of life or death”), Scialpi described the confluence of apparent polarities as “a marvel and a warning.” Despite the event not being recorded, Scialpi kindly offered me access to her own notes for the lectio and for that, and much more, I thank her greatly.

²⁵ See Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.” It is necessary to include in this note that the article opens with a scholarly and cultural insight and claim, which aligns elegantly with the interpretative proposal put forth in this context. To this end, the first two guiding lines are provided: “Note to the reader: This writing is done from within a hybrid imagination [...]” (page).

²⁶ Lugones, “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” 458.

as Sedgwick, Stone, and Stryker reveal, it is the condition of possibility for new ways of being, knowing, and relating. Conflict becomes a tool for resistance, a strategy for survival, and a method of worldmaking. To live queerly or transly is to dwell in contradiction—and to transform it.

In this sense, once again, the poetic mastery of Scialpi in balancing form and content becomes emblematic of the union of revolutionary forces, both in her earlier works and her more recent ones. Through a versification that increasingly takes on a free, unrestrained quality, the traditional constraints of past Italian poetic forms are reshaped and bent to the poet's will. The dissolution of these historical poetic knots reflects not only a departure from conventional norms but also a reclamation of agency over language and structure.²⁷ However, equally significant is her ability to navigate with fluidity within established forms: in such instances, thematic syllabification unfolds through rhythmic disruptions, which are then recuperated through linguistic and sonic enjambments. These disruptions or ruptures are further fragmented by the use of paragraphemic signs placed strategically at mid-line or so, creating a fragmented yet cohesive sense of meaning. This intricate interplay between freedom and constraint reflects Scialpi's engagement with poetic forms, not merely as structures to be followed, but as spaces for innovation and redefinition. Her work consistently demonstrates a tension between the liberation from traditional forms and the deep awareness of their potential for subversion. Such an approach not only disrupts but also re-envisions poetic tradition, making it a vital and dynamic force within queer poetics. In this way, Scialpi's verse emerges as a powerful statement, not only of personal artistic vision but also of a broader cultural critique, engaging with the politics of form and identity in the context of contemporary queer discourse.

Specifically, disobedience is a vital value that in Scialpi's poetics also expresses, as Antonio Francesco Perozzi notes in his introduction: "the need to rethink one's relationship with oneself and with others, to enter into conflict with inherited models that can no longer be worn."²⁸ In *The Golem*, this tension is vividly embodied:

ci hai chiamati, a noi—lo ricordiamo
eravamo sovrapposti prima, una
confusione eravamo **sbattevamo**
 l'un l'altro a ridosso, voltati aspettando

noi siamo quel Golem con la parola
morte in fronte. fatti dalla pasta
 del respiro di un Padrone. un dio

²⁷ This discussion can clearly be extended to experimental poetry, research poetry, in opposition to traditional linear poetry. Intervening on the text, in its classical conception, is traditionally the domain of avant-garde movements, and the direct influences on, for example, Scialpi's innovative practices are both acknowledged and explicitly referenced in various poetic works. Nonetheless, more broadly speaking, while the use of certain avant-garde techniques can be observed from a feminist perspective as interruptions of the "patriarchal monologue": I contend that the deconstruction of formal traits and signs, when a queer positionality is explicitly claimed as a political act—as in the case of Scialpi—takes on the dimension of a deliberate subversion of cisnormative discourse. As Carla Lonzi states, "Unifichiamo le situazioni e gli episodi dell'esperienza storica femminista: in essa la donna si è manifestata interrompendo per la prima volta il monologo della civiltà patriarcale" ("We bring together the situations and episodes of feminist historical experience: in it, women have made themselves manifest by interrupting, for the first time, the monologue of patriarchal civilisation"). See Lonzi, "Manifesto della Rivolta Femminile."

²⁸ Perozzi, "Prefazione," 10.

minore, pur sempre un dio²⁹

In this passage, the Golem represents the perpetual confrontation with death, emblematic of queer existence and its daily encounters with the weight of history and inherited legacies. The subject here lives the ongoing conflict of a missed inheritance—a theme deeply rooted in queer poetics, particularly with the absence of models for queer identity, often lost through the AIDS pandemic, violence, and suicides induced by systemic oppression.³⁰

We are the creators of our own selves, constantly in conflict with the models imposed upon us. The straight, verticality-driven systems of conventional identity compel us to exist in a singular, predetermined way. These models are so rigid that they lead to self-collisions, disorienting the subject who struggles to understand their place within these structures. In this framework, the only alternative is conflict, a refusal to embrace a categorical masculinity as defined by heteronormative standards, and instead, a recognition of queerness as inherently contradictory and subversive.

A useful reference here can be found in *Carne Incognita*, particularly in a passage that resonates with our current analysis:

Fibula

I
 Appeso al gancio
 a testa in giù
 dimentico dove ho messo sangue
 non fa ritorno
 dalla ferita cade;
 essere eucarestia di attese
essere figlio mio soltanto
come Saturno
 lo faccio a pezzi e mangio.³¹

The line *essere figlio mio soltanto* (“to be my son alone”) captures the idea of self-partenogenesis, a theme that links back to the poetic philosophy of *Il Golem*. Scialpi’s work anticipates the necessity of

²⁹ “You called us, to us—we remember / We were superimposed before, / a confusion we were bumping / into each other, pressing close, turned, waiting. / We are that Golem with the word / death on our foreheads. Made from the dough / of a Master’s breath. A god, / a lesser god, but still a god.” Scialpi, *Il Golem*, 23.

³⁰ It is nevertheless crucial to observe that, beyond a distinctly queer inflection, the issue of the absence of mentors also emerges at a generational level, as noted by Perozzi in the introduction to *Il Golem* and further developed in Vittorio Parpaglionni’s review of *Il rifugio dell’Innocenzo*: “L’assenza di maestri mette la generazione dei nati negli anni Novanta con le spalle al muro; con una parete di polvere al posto della pelle. La domanda, che in realtà è un’urgenza, è: cosa siamo? Bisogna farne una questione generazionale” (“The absence of mentors leaves the generation born in the 1990s with its back against the wall—with a wall of dust in place of skin. The question, which is in fact an urgency, is: What are we? It must be made a generational matter”). See Parpaglionni, “La ricostruzione del corpo ne *Il Golem* di June Scialpi.” What would be far more compelling, however (and I hope to be able to explore this myself in the near future) is an investigation into how the absence of mentors is not simply lamented, but countered through the dismantling of the very status of the magister, a gesture akin to queer politics’ refusal to mythologize militant figures, in favor of a human, fallible, and shared sense of collectivity.

³¹ “Fibula, I. / Hanging from the hook / upside down, / I forget where I placed the blood, / it does not return, / it falls from the wound; / to be the eucharist of waiting, / to be my son alone, / like Saturn, / I tear him to pieces and devour him.” Scialpi, *Carne incognita*, 9.

parthenogenesis rather than mythopoiesis, which is a crucial distinction. The process of self-creation and self-determination emerges as a central act of rebellion, rejecting the traditional notion of inheritance and instead opting for the radical autonomy of identity formation.

This concept of self-partenogenesis is echoed in the closing line of another poem from *Carne Incognita*, which concludes with the phrase: “Ma non darò stirpe” (But I will not give lineage). This line crystallizes the rejection of traditional kinship models and the refusal to perpetuate inherited legacies. It speaks to the radical choice of queer self-creation, a refusal of normative reproductive practices in favor of an alternative mode of existence, free from the constraints of inherited identity and societal expectation.

Through these poetic explorations, Scialpi’s work offers a profound commentary on the possibility of constructing alternative, queer subjectivities that resist and subvert the dominant cultural narratives of verticality, lineage, and predetermined identity. In her verse, conflict is not merely an external struggle but a necessary, generative force that enables the queer subject to carve out a new space for self-realisation, free from the confines of past structures.

It is interesting for the purpose of this study to observe how the second poem brings together this disobedience and unites it with the practice of inclination previously noted. This connection creates a subtle yet powerful intertwining of themes in Scialpi’s poetics, where disobedience, as an active resistance to prescribed norms, becomes linked with the act of inclination, a symbolic gesture that challenges traditional uprightness and hierarchical structures.

II
 Il banchetto è in superficie
 succede a intervalli
ma io non mi sazio
 chiunque si avventa
 per prendere un pezzo
e cedo sbilenco, collasso
in questo contenitore scavo
 fino al ritorcersi dell’entrate
 non trovo che materiale umano.³²

Accompanying a voracious hunger that cannot be satiated by the conventional banquet of classical, normative, and straight historical and poetic legacies, the queer inclination resurfaces—a posture that yields precisely because it recognizes its own yielding, its fragility, and its tentative forward movement. This act of bending or collapsing is not a sign of weakness but a profound critique of verticality, challenging the dominant narratives of strength, rectitude, and unyielding self-sufficiency. By embracing the instability inherent in yielding, queer poetics reclaims fragility as a form of resistance and as an essential mode of rethinking identity and representation beyond rigid, upright structures. This inclination, as observed in Scialpi’s work, becomes a site of tension and transformation, where the collapse of traditional forms enables the emergence of new, non-conforming modes of expression.

Magic.

³² II / The feast is on the surface, / it happens in intervals, / but I am not satisfied. / Anyone who lunges / to take a piece, / and I give way, uneven, collapse / into this container, I dig / until the innards turn, / and find nothing but human matter. Scialpi, *Carne Incognita*, 9.

To demonstrate thematic continuity, I revisit the first section of *Fibula*, previously analysed. However, I now shift focus to different verses, allowing for a broader and more nuanced engagement with the work, while also situating it more explicitly within a queer methodological framework.

Fibula

I

Appeso al gancio

a testa in giù

dimentico dove ho messo sangue

non fa ritorno

dalla ferita cade;

essere eucarestia di attese

essere figlio mio soltanto

come Saturno

lo faccio a pezzi e mangio.³³

Scialpi's verses evoke a layered imaginary in which myth, ritual, and corporeal intensity intersect to stage a queer and anti-normative subjectivity. The suspended body recalls the figure of the Hanged Man in tarot iconography—an inverted, calm presence embodying sacrifice, liminality, and altered temporality. The card itself holds polyvalent meaning, and while not present in Ernesto De Martino's corpus, can be interpreted through a queered application of his anthropological lens. De Martino viewed symbolic systems, including magical and ritualistic practices, as cultural technologies for negotiating crises of presence. From a queer perspective, this insight can be retooled to foreground how symbolic inversions (such as the Hanged Man or the cannibalistic Saturn) are mobilized to articulate aesthetic forms of disobedience and ontological refusal.

The imagery of sacrificial fragmentation and ingestion ("come Saturno / lo faccio a pezzi e mangio") recalls Saturn devouring his children, but also sacramental allusions in the line "essere eucarestia di attese." While De Martino analysed the symbolic function of Christian rituals in Southern Italy—particularly their entwinement with magical worldviews in *Sud e magia* (South and Magic) and *La terra del rimorso* (The Land of Remorse)—his rationalist framework centred on ritual as a means to resolve cultural disorientation. However, this article intentionally departs from De Martino's anthropological position by reframing it through a queer poetic lens. Rather than seeing ritual solely as a stabilizing force, Scialpi's poetics queer ritual into a space of aesthetic disruption and self-invention.

This methodological repositioning allows for the strategic repurposing of De Martino's notion of crisis as a site of generative disidentification. In this light, Scialpi's use of Christian and mythic references does not reinstate their normative meanings but fragments and recombines them into a radically open, queer symbolic order. The poetic subject becomes not the bearer of communal identity, but the *locus* of its decomposition and re-assemblage.

In *Il Golem*, another layer of ritualistic imagery emerges:

³³ Fibula, I. / Hanging from the hook / upside down, / I forget where I placed the blood, / it does not return, / it falls from the wound; / to be the eucharist of waiting, / to be my son alone, / like Saturn, / I tear him to pieces and devour him. Scialpi, *Carne Incognita*, 9.

sarà per gli altri la falsa icona
 il tòpos degli umani
 il dio pasto per il pranzo:
un rito da fare
per un significato³⁴

Here, the Eucharistic language returns, yet it is queered through irony and ambiguity. The divine is no longer a transcendent origin but a “falsa icona,” a consumed artefact of communal expectation. The verse “un rito da fare / per un significato” leaves open the possibility of meaning, suggesting ritual not as a fixed vehicle for truth but as an embodied, performative action always in flux. This resonates with Butler’s theory of performativity, where identity is constituted through reiterated acts. The rite does not guarantee meaning—it merely opens a space for its provisional emergence. The article now returns to a crucial and polysemic fragment from *Fibula*, where the terms *terra* and *rimorso* appear:

Terra mi hai rimorso
 ed è uno slaccio tra fili di ferro
 e ruggine;
 lasciarti è attraverso una fitta
 di nubi dense e umide;
 ti ci passo nel mezzo all’occasione
 ma mi lasci di lacrime
 senza che me ne accorga³⁵

This passage conjures a complex psychic and somatic topography. The word *rimorso* serves both as emotional residue (remorse, regret) and as a gesture toward De Martino’s *terra del rimorso*. However, while De Martino understood *rimorso* as part of a cultural-ritual framework to address existential disorientation, Scialpi appropriates the term to queer ends. The tears are not symptoms to be cured but markers of a subject in flux, entangled in a sensual, affective ecology. It is important to underscore that this article does not uncritically transpose De Martino’s ethnographic model onto Scialpi’s poetics. Instead, it posits a deliberate queer deviation. Where De Martino sought cultural containment of crisis through ritual, Scialpi cultivates dissonance, ambivalence, and magical thinking as political and aesthetic gestures. Her poetics engage what José Esteban Muñoz might call a queer futurity, where rituals are not recuperative but utopian, opening the subject to non-normative temporalities and collective imaginaries.³⁶

In invoking Muñoz’s notion of queer temporality, I refer not merely to a disruption of linear causality but to a mode of time that unfolds as both projection and performance. In chapter three of *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz describes queerness as an anticipatory illumination—a horizon of potentiality that gestures toward what has not yet arrived, a futurity glimpsed rather than possessed. The line *senza che me ne accorga* / *before I even know* encapsulates this dynamic, as awareness follows rather than precedes the event, reversing the order of cause and effect and situating desire within the not-yet-realized. Yet,

³⁴ It will be the false icon for others, / the topos of humankind, / the god consumed for the feast: / a ritual to perform / for meaning to take shape. Scialpi, *Il Golem*, 30.

³⁵ Earth, you have gnawed at me, / an unfastening of barbed wires / and rust; / to leave you is to pierce / a thicket of sodden, heavy cloud; / I slip through when chance allows, / yet you leave me in tears / before I even know. Scialpi, *Carne Incognita*, 63.

³⁶ In using this term, I borrow Muñoz’s understanding of queer futurity, as theorized in the title of his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. See Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

in Muñoz's account, this utopic temporality does not remain abstract or deferred: it becomes perceptible in embodied gestures, in fleeting actions that materialize the possibility of another world within the present. The poem's non-linear unfolding thus enacts what Muñoz calls the performative dimension of futurity—time felt through affect and movement rather than chronology—where queerness is lived as both horizon and gesture, an incarnate anticipation that continually resists closure.

Scialpi's verse uses the cultural and bodily dimensions of dance to queer the *tarantella*. Tarantism and the *tarantella* function as key elements in De Martino's fieldwork in Galatina—a place that inevitably also shapes Scialpi's poetic landscape. The dance, originally a form of collective healing becomes an affective metaphor for resisting stability, a choreography of woundedness and release.³⁷ Scialpi's South is not the land of remorse but the site of affective excess, resistance, and residual enchantment. Ultimately, her work invites a reconfiguration of ritual not as a stabilising practice, but as an open-ended, aesthetic-political technology. By queering De Martino's anthropological tools, her poetry enacts a practice of self-making rooted in refusal, fragmentation, and sensory intensity. It is precisely in this refusal to cohere that Scialpi's poetic subject asserts its queer presence.

Conclusions

In Scialpi's poetry, the destabilisation of identity and the embrace of fluidity transcend literary exploration, evolving into a profound political act. Through fragmented bodies, fractured identities, and poignant depictions of vulnerability, Scialpi exposes the fragility inherent in traditional conceptions of selfhood and the societal norms that sustain them. Drawing on intersections between queer and feminist theories, her work challenges the monolithic, vertical ideals that govern both literature and life. By privileging obliquity and instability over the rigidity of uprightness, Scialpi proposes a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of existence—one that values multiplicity, relationality, and the productive potential of instability. Her poetry, thus, offers a space to rethink our engagement with the world and, more critically, how we relate to one another in a society still contending with exclusionary frameworks.

Within this context, Scialpi's work invites us to reconsider the power of vulnerability and the politics of resistance in the ongoing formation of queer identities, and Sedgwick, Stone, and Stryker's exploration of the epistemological divide created by the closet uncovers the psychological, cultural, and political conflicts faced by those whose identities exist beyond the heteronormative binary. Yet this conflict, rather than merely a site of oppression, becomes a *locus* of transformation—one where queer individuals resist, subvert, and create new spaces for self-expression. Scialpi's work further elaborates this tension, intertwining disobedience and inclination generate a dynamic interplay between freedom and constraint, resistance and submission. In doing so, her poetics reflect the tension between inherited legacies and the radical potential for self-creation, particularly in its rejection of traditional kinship and identity models. Ultimately, both this theoretical framework and Scialpi's poetic vision provide a compelling narrative of queer existence as an ongoing struggle and re-creation. In this framework, conflict emerges not simply as an external force but as a generative, creative power—one

³⁷ For an intermedia approach to evoking tarantism in contemporary electronic practices of community, see Various Artists, "Odyssey of an Italian Ritual." The tarantella is "a tribute to Pizzica, an antique music used to heal people suffering from a mysterious disease. This release represents a contemporary attempt to reflect on this extraordinary phenomenon involving frenetic rhythms and maniac dancing, through a trans-disciplinary and ambitious artistic approach."

that facilitates the emergence of new meanings, identities, and possibilities, underpinned by the transformative magic of queer resistance.

By incorporating magical and ritualistic elements, Scialpi engages in a reimagining of both personal and collective histories, offering new forms of queer subjectivity that challenge and transform societal norms. Moreover, the ritualism that Scialpi engages with is distinct, drawing on the specific terminology of the South, particularly from oral tradition: This terminology assumes a connotation that further centralizes the margin, not only in its content but also in its forms of legacy. Through this, Scialpi repositions the marginal as both a cultural and narrative force, highlighting its significance within a broader historical and social context.

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