



AVANTI, PARLA



Lidia

RAVERA



ROMANZO
BOMPIANI





LIDIA RAVERA
OUT WITH IT

translated from the Italian
by Alice Kilgariff

SAMPLE COPY

BOMPIANI

End of August, 2019

I don't like to write. I don't like having to find words or choose them. I find it arbitrary, pointless. Presumptuous even. This is why I have never written, if you don't take into account the ninety-eight letters composed between 1983 and 1996, which are no longer in my possession anyway. I hope Furio has destroyed them. He probably has, he doesn't like leaving a mark and he's probably right. Though I had kept the letters he sent me in return - not ninety-eight but thirty-six, because often he just didn't feel like it.

I wrote this on Sunday evening, but I digress, I don't know how to keep the rudder straight and point my reasoning where it needs to go.

I should just leave. In fact, I did think about doing that. I thought about it all day yesterday, which was Monday.

(see: why does it matter if yesterday was Monday? The days that make up my life are all entirely interchangeable. Before, when I still worked, Sundays existed. Sunday was the only unformed day)

I asked myself, why do you need to write this summary, this tale that no one asked you for, this reverse diary?

To share it with who?

Why don't you stay cooped up in your silence, like you've always done, like you did when you emerged from your noisy youth?

My silence.

This is precisely the point.

I haven't been able to find it. Ever since they blew into my refuge like the gust of a storm from a window left open.

My silence fell to pieces.

That silence.

And that silence wasn't easy to obtain. It is a blank picture, it requires order and that parsimonious attitude that conditions one to be economical with one's strength.

Silence isn't just not talking, like the rules of the cloister.

This silence, mine, is a conversation that doesn't look for feedback, reactions, answers. Comments.

It presupposes the absence of interlocuters, my silence.

I can say good morning if I meet someone on the stairs, or in the hallway. And receive a good morning in return.

I do my shopping at the supermarket.

I choose, fill my trolley, place my goods on the till in front of the cashier, I hand over my card, I type in the pin.

“Goodbye and thank you,” I say, but not always.

I am sixty-six years old. I haven't cut my hair since I was forty, and it is white and very thick. I tie it back with whatever I can find. Shoelaces, elastic bands. Even twenty years ago I had thick, white hair.

But I plaited it. I would go to work wearing plaits. I had to be composed so as not to make the situation worse. There was already a problem with my taciturn nature, aggravated by the forced relationship with the other women, eight of them, all in the same room carrying out the same gestures, assembling little boxes with their fast fingers, more artisans than factory workers.

There was the fact I didn't chat.

When you don't chat while you work with your hands and you are surrounded by the same people working every day, except Saturdays and Sundays, you're like a teetotaller at a wedding reception.

There is an implicit no which offends, which calls the actions of others into question.

Exchanging signals, recognising one another.

Giving each other life.

One to the other.

Day after day, year after year.

So, there was the fact I didn't chat. And if I did, it was clear it wasn't spontaneous. But, most of all, was this incongruous address, in this picturesque, prestigious part of the city, there was this house far from the areas where the other women lived.

Prenestino, Tiburtino.

Far away, different.

A bourgeois apartment block, built in the 1930s, looking over the trees that screened the Tiber. I have never invited anyone, I have never accepted an invitation.

“Where do you live?”

“Outside the city.”

The eldest stopped inviting me, the youngest never started, so I had stopped smiling and excusing myself. Thank you so much. That's very kind. But no. Thank you, but no.

When the management told me they no longer needed me, I was able to perfect my absence. I no longer had anything to hide. I no longer offended anyone.

I could stay silent forever.

I have read one thousand three hundred and twelve novels. I read novels because they are my breath, because it is perfectly in keeping with my nature to distract myself with lives that are not my own.

I read novels because they are like music, there is a perfection in their proportions, a hidden design, an exactitude that brings me peace.

And yet, I haven't learned a thing from the novels that I've read.

In a novel I would have already spoken about Michele and Maria. Instead, I've written "they". I wrote: ever since "they" blew into my refuge like the gust of a storm from a window left open.

I put them in speech marks.

There is nothing more stupid than enclosing a man and a woman inside a cage of speech marks.

In any case, it all started a year ago, on August 25th.

It was eight in the morning, and an equatorial heat was already pressing against the windows. The sky was white and low, filled with a boiling steam that wasn't able to become rain.

I had walked for an hour like I always do, and I allowed myself to enjoy the city emptied by holidays, crossing the *lungotevere* as if it were a country lane, without having to wait for the lights to turn green, without looking left or right.

The lorry suddenly appeared whilst I was lost in minimal thought, the kind that follows physical exercise, featuring not so much my own unimportant mental facts as searching for the shade, looking forward to a shower and a coffee.

I hear the sound of a kind of hunting horn and freeze just like deer undoubtedly do when they sense the presence of their assassin.

(is it right to switch to the present tense here? I did it instinctively, as if it were a film sequence)

I stand still in the middle of the road.

The lorry avoids me.

I take a closer look: it's a pick-up truck. Used furniture is piled up in the back. I can make out two bedside tables, a wooden headboard, a floor lamp, a little table with its legs in the air and a double mattress.

Driving is a guy wearing a white shirt.

He stops right in front of number 3, where I live.

He takes up space as he parks, as the deserted city allows.

At first, I think he's stopped for me, to shout at me for crossing like that, forcing him to brake.

Then I realize he has no intention of saying anything to me.

He noticed me just enough to not run me over and that was that.

He jumps down from the cabin.

I see him climb up onto the back and pull off the elastic cords holding the load in place. His gestures are imprecise, clumsy, like someone who has never had the opportunity in life to use their hands for operations any more complex than washing their face.

I look at him. And I would like to help.

I have able fingers and strong arms.

Naturally, I don't dare.

I should get closer, I should talk.

I can't jump up on the back and free that jumble of furniture without agreeing to the preamble.

So, I just carry on watching him.

He is a young, thin man with a profile that looks as if it's been carved from wood, a single line tracing out his forehead and nose, his mouth is large, his cheeks dirty with beard, black hair.

He could be twenty-five, but he could equally be forty-five.

I later discover that he is thirty-seven, an age that made me flinch, that forced me to drink a glass of wine in one gulp to justify unexpectedly going red, but this will come later.

In that first encounter I thought only that now everyone is young in the same way until they become old.

Twenty-five or fifty-nine. It makes no difference.

And it's not because of clothing.

It is rather something to do with expectation. Expectation can be found in the eyes, in the stride, in the misguided certainty with which you take a wrong turn without worrying about the time lost. It is that "beyond" in which you are placed as the master, planning without urgency, your hands on your hips, the desire to see what life has in store.

I chose Rome when buying my first house.

The first property of a whole life spent as a non-owner, the mistress of nothing, proudly poor.

I chose Rome because, in my youthful wanderings, I had tested out its extension and its softness, its civil disorder and supreme indifference. It was in Rome that I hid when I needed to hide, albeit in a more anonymous

district than this, without a view over the river or any other privileges.

But, more than anything, I remember breathing in that patina of dust that rests on the beautiful and the ugly without distinction.

I remembered that I had found it welcoming in its indolence.

It was a large city, monumental and perpetually in its death throes.

Rome.

Perfect for disappearing into.

And disappearing was my only plan, once I had – as they say – paid my debt to society.

All I needed was to not exist except for myself. All I wanted was a good window: to be able to watch a river flowing, trees whose leaves change according to the season, the different light as the day passes, with my back protected by the domestic walls.

After a few minutes I realised that the room chosen by the young couple was next to my own. The only thing separating us was a wall.

That was where they had dragged their double mattress.

That was where I heard them talk.

“You didn’t think about bringing the sheets?”

“There’s a blanket.”

“Come on...smell it, it stinks.”

“That’s not true, it doesn’t stink, it’s just a bit musty.”

“The worst thing is that we don’t have anything underneath, like a frame.”

“We can pretend it’s a futon and that we are Japanese.”

“And what do they do on their first night married those disgusting, hairless Japanese husbands with their long yellow fingers?”

I heard Maria laugh, as if trying to fight off someone tickling her.

I thought about how they would have made love, that I would have heard them moaning and panting, and then shouting and exchanging those intimate words that exclude everyone and confirm the couple’s miniscule we.

I thought about how they would kiss each other and that kisses don’t make a sound.

I jumped up and grabbed the radio from the bathroom, agitated, I pulled the plug from the socket. I ran back to my room.

I placed the radio on my bedside table after throwing four books on the floor with a hurried gesture that was not my own, I tuned it onto any old station, without

choosing anything in particular, I turned the volume up to max.

A rock group I didn't know exploded into the room, spitting out electric lightening. I put up with the rhythmic din until the end. Like a hero. When the song ended, the voice of a girl with a soft r started to weave into a nonsense script with a guy who had a broad Roman accent. They laughed along together and seemed entirely satisfied with one another,

I turned off the radio.

I kept an ear out, I thought about how you must face your fears.

I was still missing a few biographical details: age, work.

Age. I couldn't age Maria's triumphant youth. During the day she looked about sixteen, but in the evening, when she zipped herself into certain tight, short dresses and left the house walking backwards, ("Look at me! How much do you like me?") she could have been a thirty-year old woman far too aware of her seductive powers.

As for him, Michele, a slightly receding hairline, a minor tapering of his hair giving depth to his forehead,

placed him slightly older, but not necessarily. He could have just lost his hair early.

Besides, I hadn't taken the necessary time to look at him properly.

If I met them, and I met them often, I quickly got away, pursued by their happiness as if by a beautiful but persecutory melody, played too loudly, too rhythmically, too overwhelmingly, that makes you want to dance and stops you from doing so, because you know you don't have a dance partner.

So, it's best to just slip into a corner. And watch the others with a bitter smile.

Because dancing alone puts you on show.

You must love yourself a great deal to do this, I forgot how to love myself a long time ago.

If I ever did.

The only art I have perfected is that of forgetting myself and focusing, apparently without reason, on others. Anyone. A passer-by, a delivery man, a woman getting off a bus.

It was perhaps also because of this attitude that, at the beginning, I thought only of them, I would listen intently whenever I heard the lift door open, pushing my ear to the wall when they went into their bedroom together.

As to whether or not they were in love- not so much with one another as each one with themselves - I was in no doubt.

I sensed it from the first moment. It seemed to me that they moved as if the whole world was watching them. Every morning, they pulled up the curtain on another day, and studied to interpret the parts assigned as best they could.

They did it in order to be admired.

And I, the silent audience about whom they were entirely none the wiser, I admired them.

I admired their soft, self-satisfied strutting, it seemed to me that they were savouring every moment of life, with the understanding of two food lovers sitting at the same table.

They apparently didn't work.

Or, at least, they didn't have fixed hours for leaving the house.

After that first move with their friends, large boxes bound by different coloured ribbons had arrived, along with a pink, child's size armchair, and four chests with the word 'toys' printed on the side.

A fridge. Three large bicycles and a tricycle.

The last object that was moved along the landing was an upright piano. Black. Fukuyama.

As the movers were catching their breath and before they rang the bell, I was able to take a careful look at it.

It wasn't new, and there were two portraits on the case, one was Giuseppe Verdi and the other Jim Morrison, sharing the rectangle of black wood like different coloured idols watching over a chaotic vocation.

Intrigued, I stayed there a moment to watch.

When Maria opened her door, I went to close my own with suspicious timing.

She noticed, and her "Hello Giovanna", imbued with an air of light disapproval, forced me to abandon my retreat.

"It's better than the drums. I mean, if your neighbours play the drums, it's much worse, don't you think?"

In any case, if it bothers you, you only have to knock on the wall and he'll stop, or use the silencer."

This is how I discovered Michele was a pianist.

Though, naturally, he wasn't a "pianist". He played the piano to write songs. Was he a composer? No, but he composed songs.

"They are very good," said Maria, before smiling at me as if she were about to offer me a basket of treats, and added, "Their style is a bit old. It's stuff from a different era. With a heart-rending melody, soft rhythm. And intelligent lyrics."

It was Malvina who knocked at my door, and she wasn't shy about it.

I would discover later that she particularly likes the sound of knuckles on wood.

She knocked loudly, several times.

I wasn't expecting to find such a miniscule creature.

She was wearing blue pyjamas with little white whales on them, her tiny feet swimming in a pair of perforated clogs.

She was her mother in miniature, Maria as a child with titian hair down to her buttocks that continually fell in her face, forcing her to carry out that extremely coquettish gesture of flicking them away with her hand, attempting to push them behind her ear and then letting them fall back down.

“Hi Malvina”, I said.

And from that first time, I no longer recognised my voice.

I have to be mercilessly honest: I was almost certain that the family next door would fall apart upon the arrival of the thirteen year-old son.

Adolescents are carriers of relationship problems in any such group, whether directly related or not.

I was counting on this as the play was losing its shine.

When admiration flows over into envy, a few slip-ups make it more bearable.

It did not go as I had hoped.

There was no slip-up.

Malcolm is handsome, his face still childlike, his skin hairless and bright, with black curls.

The same blue eyes as his father.

He hides the clear discomfort caused by his stature (1 metre 85 cm Maria told me proudly), and the body weight of a hunger striker, by walking extremely slowly.

It seems to be absorbed by realigning his long bones. He moves like a dancer.

That precise, cautious gait is not the only detail distancing him from the clumsiness typical of his age. No. There is something even more unpredictable: Malcolm listens. He speaks rarely and, unlike the rest of the family, takes it seriously.

I would discover later that he is a strict vegetarian, he does not tolerate the purchase of any food in plastic wrapping, he gets around exclusively by bike.

He refuses to get on an aeroplane or use any kind of spray, he will not connect to the internet for more than

one hour a day because he doesn't want to increase electricity consumption.

And he uses that hour to keep in contact with his environmentalist group. He belongs to a chat group, I believe. An international one. "It's up to me" is its slogan. It depends on me.

I had prepared a tray of apple fritters.

It was like passing through a screen, sitting in their kitchen, watching him turn the meatballs in the sauce, her chopping the radishes into the salad, Malcolm laying the table and Malvina lining up her favourite cheese triangles on the floor. I felt promoted from secret spectator to supporting actress.

I aced the part with winner's luck.

As I was getting dressed, I drank two glasses of wine.

I immediately drank a third, the prosecco we used to toast.

She said: To our new neighbour.

He said: To patience. To our good luck.

And everything suddenly became easy.

I picked up Malvina and shared each mouthful with her as I ate, protected by her flaming infancy, which was as invasive as the weeds that oppose the winter with their spontaneous green.

I felt unpredictably light.

They both looked at me with satisfaction.

Their telephones on the table, next to the napkins, rang out at regular intervals.

They received dozens of messages.

They were polite enough to give their screens nothing more than a quick glance.

At most, they would send an emoticon without stopping the conversation.

Michele was the first to flatter me.

“You are so good with children.”

He had managed to address me with familiarity despite the many years separating us.

I blushed with gratitude.

“Malvina adores you”.

Maria never dined alone.

I would leave discretely when she got home from work.

“Look who’s here: it’s Mummy!”

Malvina clapped her hands as I had taught her to, and Maria hugged her tight while invoking all the most gracious beings in the animal kingdom, chick, sparrow, swallow and so on.

I hastily relayed how well our afternoon of game-playing had gone, adding my personal congratulations to Malvina for having eaten everything I had made for her, including the carrots and peas, before disappearing into the apartment next door having enjoyed my dose of maternal gratitude.

I would have liked to tell her I was grateful to her, and even more so to Malvina.

Malvina who was always moving and forced me, with her unstoppable desiring activity, to always invent new games.

I got home tired.

And it was exactly what I needed.

What I had been missing since I had been let go from the factory where I assembled gift boxes, folded boxes and fixed rosettes on my feet.

I wanted to go home tired, and use this alternation between effort and rest to give my life rhythm.

It was exactly what I needed, a very lively child to look after.

That evening, I had just laid down on the sofa as the water filled the bathtub, when Maria knocked at the door.

“Hi, I was wondering if you fancied eating together?”

I didn't have the courage to deny myself, I felt a pull in one direction and then another, as usual.

I was curious, I was scared.

(what was I scared of? I have to write this, I have to leave evidence of it. Of my fear. Stronger and clearer now that I lead a life without risk than when I would put myself in danger of being captured or killed on an almost daily basis. Fear is a degenerative form of the discomfort of being in the world. I have always felt this discomfort. I have never found my place, even in my primary school photos I'm the child who isn't looking at the photographer but off to the right, where there is no one, pushing my gaze far away, as if looking for an escape route. I will never find my place in the world. I'm certain of it now. If I didn't have curiosity to counter the fear, I would never leave my den)

I went to put my shoes back on.

Writing for no one is like throwing a ball against a wall. Everything I say comes back to me.

And I know, deep down I have always known, that when you write to forget, you end up remembering. Everything. Every phrase that forms in your mind and is deposited on the page strikes the surface of the void, that artificial lake that you have cared for with such knowledge and foresight. It disturbs the water, it makes it unwieldy.

The defences fall and what is repressed bursts through.

First come the feelings, with a strength equal to your desire to chase them away.

Then the facts, like bodies that grow closer through the fog. And suddenly you see it all again: atmospheres, shadows, irrelevant details that catch the light like common objects exhibited in a museum.

Finally, the people enter the scene, they impose themselves on your gaze, they stir your memory, you find them on top of you once more.

Laura, for example.

I should not have disinterred Laura. Now she is here, as if we had never been apart. And if she is here, so is everything I was before, before I met Furio.

Laura and me at the same desk in high school.

Her passion for the Beatles.

My passion for politics.

The letters we exchanged continuously, ripping pages from our workbooks. She signed off with a primrose, Laura Saint-Saëns, Marquise of Exilles and Gambarana. I signed off with a sickle and hammer, Giovanna Ibárruri, battle name Dolores. Her face without edges or makeup, my face always covered in a pink cream to try and hide my spots, my eyelids painted black, her blonde and chestnut eyelashes, so long they featured two colours; the obstinacy with which she exhibited

her good nature, the solemnity with which I opposed injustice and inequality, the war in Vietnam, the third world, the wretched of the earth, famine.

Our journey to the United States.

Me and her.

Me who smuggled my little stolen items as praiseworthy acts of insubordination against American imperialism.

She who was embarrassed by it and then laughed and then begged: but now we're going to the till to pay for this.

We have no money.

And so we won't get it.

Me who eventually placed the green felt hat on the mannequin's head but slipped two bars of her favourite chocolate into my knickers.

And gave them to her when we were at a safe distance.

Because I was a young thief on a whim and she, a greedy child.

In all couples everyone ends up playing a role, each rendering more extreme the reasons for their opposition.

Laura and I were night and day, light and shade, the calm, flat summer sea and the foam of the tempest.

The first few days I felt stupefied the entire time.

How long had it been since I'd seen the sea?

A recluse by my own volition, I had always allowed myself contained doses of artificial beauty: music, walks along the river. Some square piazza with a fountain in the middle. Churches whose stories I learned, like a keen tourist.

I never left the city. Never. Not for twenty years.

I had forgotten the pre-eminence of the colour blue, the freedom to roam with your gaze to the clear line of the horizon, to be distracted by the light, to be surprised by the ending of the day, to be enchanted by the golden remnants of the sun when it is about to plunge into the sea.

At night I heard the plates roll over one another, a soft suction that appeased inertia. In the evening, I fell into an oxygenated tiredness, as if my lungs were no longer used to taking in such rich air. Up to the last moment, before falling asleep, and then the minute I awoke, at dawn, I could feel the force of nature. A constant pulsating that made me feel I was at the mercy of an unknown but physically present God, so present and generous that he welcomed me without imposing upon me the need to believe in his existence.

He was there, in the fire that slipped from the volcano's mouth.

In the dry, salty air, in the irresistible dance of the waves, in the heavy scent of the prickly pears that fell in gardens and lay on the ground to be melted by the sun.

With Malvina we spent a lot of time in the water, that mysterious element that made her scream with joy, in an ecstatic return to her pre-natal life.

And it made me scream to with the unforeseen explosion of happiness in a body that had been buried for more than half a century.

I was incredulous and grateful.

The comparison with my dry life as a recluse was a feast for the senses every time I immersed my head in the sea.

Pietro Saverio joined us at the beach late.

I felt observed as I built castles from black sand that Malvina destroyed as she played the evil monster.

I cannot say that I was indifferent to his approval.

He expressed it whilst respecting my reserve.

Smiling at me from afar.

After that first evening, he hadn't asked me to eat with him again.

I cooked, I lay the table on a small terrace, the one closest to the point where you could see the sun disappear into the water.

Then I dealt with putting Malvina to bed, and almost always fell asleep with her.

One evening, I had been there for a week, I woke a little after midnight and instead of reading, I decided to look at the stars.

There was no electricity on the island. The road, which wound between the bright walls of the houses, was lit only by the road. Some nights more than others, depending on the shape of the moon. The August sky takes on an extraordinary solidity, it becomes black velvet embroidered with silver. The stars multiply and their brightness varies, some are pale like light dust and others are bright like precious stones.

I walked slowly, looking where we never look, up high, towards the sky, seized by an imprudent emotion.

I found him upon me, Pietro Saverio. A clash of bodies.

In the darkness I recognised him immediately and apologised.

When he said, “It’s Pietro”, I apologised again.

He hadn’t told me he’d be going out, otherwise I would not have left Malvina alone.

I muttered something, the spell was broken, and I made my way towards the house.

He joined me and took me by the elbow.

“Malvina’s asleep, don’t worry.”

I slowed down, but only slightly.

I looked ahead, tense.

“Stop running away from me, I’m not an ogre!” he said. “I haven’t got any bad intentions. I’ve been out for dinner with a group of friends, people who have been coming here for thirty years, horrifically boring. On the

way home I bumped into you, we can walk these five hundred meters to the house arm in arm. Try it. It's a stability exercise. Like walking on a wire. You'll see nothing terrible will happen."

I let him take my arm.

I felt like he was squeezing me more than necessary, but I didn't want to move away from that contact.

When we arrived at the house, I went with him to the first terrace, the most beautiful, the biggest, after checking that Malvina was asleep.

It was me that went to the fridge for a cold bottle of wine and two glasses.

It was a friendly gesture, one that beneath that sky heavy with stars inevitably became romantic.

I don't know why I did it. I needed a drink.

I felt a light tension on my skin, an unknown languor.

I stayed silent.

He was silent too. A shared silence was the last thing I was expecting.

It requires a certain intimacy to stay silent together.

We were sitting next to one another on the stone seat that ran along the terrace wall, and both of us watched the sea, as if the images of a film were moving before us.

"Are you ok Giovanna?" he asked me, without shifting his gaze.

"Yes, of course," I said, after a pause.

“I’m feel good with you too.”

That phrase scared me.

I poured myself another glass of wine.

“You drink a lot,” he said.

And as I didn’t answer, he added:

“It wasn’t a criticism, I drink a lot too. In fact, I’m already almost drunk. At dinner I drank because I was bored. I get bored regularly. Every time I go to a gathering, and yet I can’t help going. To gatherings, I mean. I go, I get bored, I drink.”

He also poured himself another glass of wine.

I couldn’t resist and asked:

“Are you getting bored?”

I realised, hearing an idiotically affectionate inflection in my voice, that I was flirting.

“Fishing for compliments,” he said. “You are the least boring person I know.”

“Because I don’t talk much?”

“Of course. Being with a person who doesn’t speak much is the perfect solution for someone who can’t be on his own yet gets bored of others. At the beginning, Gloria didn’t speak much because she didn’t know much Italian and I refused to speak Spanish so as not to give her an advantage. Then she learned Italian. Brilliantly. She has a real gift for languages. And learning Italian was her downfall. Now she speaks too much. And I get bored.”

I didn't ask for further clarification.

I didn't want to be rude, but nor did I want to be too welcoming.

I tried to focus on the night and the sea, that mobile darkness that bordered with the sky along the straight line of the horizon.

After a few minutes of silence, he turned to me and watched me.

I didn't move, as if I hadn't noticed.

“Not to bore you with my romantic troubles, but I don't think she'll last until September, Gloria. I don't think she'll come back to Italy, I think she'll have rediscovered one of her old flames, one of those fun men who never let you miss a party, a trip, a premiere, a preview, an event. Younger than me, older than her, but not by too much. Perfect. Does it upset me? No, I'm not upset. I actually think it'll do me good. I need to reset myself, instead of resting on my laurels.”

I thought I should say something before getting up and leaving.

But I didn't get up, I had no desire to get up.

“I don't think it'll be too difficult for you,” I said, after a pause that was too long.

“What won't be difficult for me?”

I managed to stand up, obeying my fear.

But with a hand on my shoulder, he made me sit down again.

“Resetting yourself.”

What makes you say that? What idea have you got of me?”

I felt sorry for him. I’m not saying that to absolve myself of not having sniffed out the trap behind his attentions. I felt sorry for him because he needed to talk about himself continually.

He was desperate for the world to pay him attention.

“Maria told me you are very popular with women.”

My voice sounded ridiculous as I’d made every attempt to eliminate any inflection.

“Maria has seen me with many...that’s true, I’ll admit it. And she loves me, so she overestimates me. She thinks I am the dream of every divorced, widowed and unmarried woman the world over. She idealises me... even if we did argue just three hours ago”.

“You and Maria? Why?”

I needed to get away from love, it was too risky a subject.

Lidia Ravera Out With It

AVANTI, PARLA

A lonely woman telling her story and confronting her past. When love knocks at your door, whichever the form it takes, you cannot shut it away.

Giovanna is sixty-six years old and wears her thick, long, white hair tied back. She dresses and lives as if cloistered. She is a retired manual labourer, yet she lives in an expensive apartment overlooking the Tiber, and this is not her only contradiction. Her only company are books, music and good wine, sometimes a little too much. Her life is turned upside down with the arrival of a couple and their children as new neighbours: Maria, young, light-hearted and enchanting; her partner Michele, a musician, father of little Malvina, and Malcolm, a socially-conscious interesting teenager. Giovanna's solitude and the couple's vitality are separated by nothing but a thin wall, and soon the woman with the white hair becomes a kind of babysitter-cook-guardian-confidante, fascinated and bound to the little girl's grace but also by the dynamics between the couple, which she cannot help but observe with voyeuristic curiosity.

LIDIA RAVERA Born in Turin, the journalist and author found fame in 1976 with her debut novel, *Porci con le ali* (*Pigs Might Fly*), a manifesto for a generation that has sold three million copies over the last forty years, and which is available today as part of Bompiani's tascabili series. She has written thirty books, of which the three novels *Piangi pure*, *Gli scaduti* and *L'amore che dura*, and the narrative essay, *Tempo con bambina* (2020) feature in the Bompiani catalogue, alongside the short story, *La somma di due*, adapted for the theatre by and featuring Marina Massironi and Nicoletta Fabbri, directed by Elisabetta Ratti. She has worked in cinema, theatre and television.

FOLLOWING L'AMORE CHE DURA 20,000 COPIES SOLD

We cannot escape our past, it is always there, pursuing us, ready to bite. And when it does, no one is safe, not even those who are in no way involved.



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HIGHLIGHTS

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