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Abstract: When looking for literary and cultural genealogies for Giorgia Meloni, Italy's first female prime minister and co-founder of the ultraconservative *Fratelli d'Italia*, the women of Italian Futurism offer a revealing perspective. The historical avant-garde provides examples of the rhetoric of exceptionalism that continues to mark conservative feminism, particularly in the work of Benedetta Cappa. Meloni's refrain—"Io sono Giorgia, sono una donna, sono una madre, sono italiana, sono cristiana"—reflects the same themes of nation, motherhood, and religious identity that shaped Cappa's futurist poetics. Like Meloni, Cappa was a woman in a male-dominated movement and acknowledged the privilege of this position in her 1919 *parole-in-libertà* *Spicologia di 1 uomo*. The title plays on both futurist rejection of literary psychology and Cappa's husband, futurist leader F.T. Marinetti. The poem's reference to "spica," a star in the Virgo constellation linked to ancient astrology, and its ironic Biblical citation "Benedetta fra le donne" suggest—quite ironically since Cappa was one of the *few* women in futurist circles—Cappa's exploration of womanhood, motherhood, and Christianity, themes that remain central in her later works.

However, the analogy between Cappa and Meloni has limits. Cappa's Futurism hinges on a strict masculine-feminine binary, which she never fully transcended, as seen in her 1924 novel *Le Forze Umane*. In contrast, Meloni plays with traditional gender roles. Her identity as a mother is a critical part of her image, with personal touches like baking cupcakes for her daughter, Ginevra. Yet, Meloni also adopts a warrior persona, embodying heroic defiance with her assertive rhetoric: "Io sono Giorgia [...] e non me lo toglierete!" This blend of nurturing motherhood and combative nationalism, where Meloni positions herself as a defender of family, country, and faith, suggests that, looking for genealogies for her political performance, it would be fruitful to look to Marinetti himself.

Keywords: Meloni, feminism, Futurism, femonationalism, avant-garde

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Futurist Genealogies of Giorgia Meloni's Conservative Feminism

ERIN LARKIN

“Io sono Giorgia, sono una donna, sono una madre, sono italiana, sono cristiana” (I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian). These words, pronounced by Giorgia Meloni at the 2019 “Orgoglio Italiano (Italian Pride)” center-right political rally in Rome, inspired a viral techno remix and came to define a political ascent that would culminate in Meloni’s installation as Italy’s first female prime minister. This paper will argue that, when looking for literary and cultural genealogies for Meloni’s brand of feminism, the women of Italian Futurism can provide valuable perspective. And while the historical avant-garde offers many examples of conservative feminism, nowhere do these genealogies resonate more clearly in Meloni’s political becoming than in the work of Benedetta Cappa, the futurist painter, poet, and scenographer known mononymously in art as Benedetta. Significantly, the “Io sono Giorgia” refrain is an important element of Meloni’s political persona. It’s the title of her autobiography, reappropriated from the techno remix meant to mock her; instead, she seized on the exposure it brought and succeeded in using the notoriety to her advantage.¹ It contains the same themes of nation, motherhood, and religious identity that were the organizing principles of not only Cappa’s futurist poetics but also the gender politics—with its intersections with racial and class privilege—that developed in the interwar years.² Examining these genealogies can shed light on Meloni’s highly mediated self-fashioning and its relationship to her identity as Italy’s first female premier and give new insights on women in art and politics of the last 100 years, as well as the conservative idea of womanhood that has emerged from them.³

Futurist women poets and artists participated in every phase of the cultural movement that, launched in 1909, spanned more than three decades. Though their interventions shaped, often in significant ways, the evolution of futurist discourse, their art expressed diverse perspectives and politics.⁴ What their varied contributions had in common was an appropriation of futurist topoi to forge a new discourse on gender and the place of women in art and society. Moreover, they shared an acknowledgement and even leveraging of their privileged status within the male-dominated movement to do so.⁵ This was the case from the very origins of Futurism. Valentine de Saint-Point, the French dramatist and dancer active during the movement’s so-called “heroic years”, authored the 1912 *Manifeste de la femme futuriste* (Manifesto of the futurist Woman), which celebrated the female warrior as

¹ *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. “‘Sono Giorgia, sono una madre, sono cristiana’: il remix del discorso di Meloni diventa una hit virale.”

² Meloni, *Io sono Giorgia: Le mie radici le mie idee*. For more on gender politics and its intersections with issues of race and class in Fascist Italy, see Lombardi-Diop’s presentation “Fascinating Fascism: Sexuality, Heteronormativity, and Italian White Femininity” at the American Association Giornata di Studio “1922-2022: Italy one hundred years later. Femminismi di destra” held online on January 27, 2023.

³ While I am not suggesting there is any evidence that Meloni is aware of Cappa’s work, I am using the term ‘genealogy’ in an expansive way that conveys the sociohistorical framework surrounding the figures, in order to highlight elements of continuity and discontinuity between the two and illuminate new ways of thinking about women in art and politics.

⁴ See Vergine, *L'altra metà dell'avanguardia 1910-1940: Pittrici e scultrici nei movimenti delle avanguardie storiche*; Salaris, *Le futuriste: donne e letteratura d'avanguardia in Italia (1909-1944)*; Carpi, *Futuriste: letteratura, arte, vita*, 1.

⁵ See Re, “Futurism and Feminism;” Orban, “Women, Futurism, and Fascism;” Barbara Spackman, “Fascist Women and the Rhetoric of Virility;” Contarini, *La femme futuriste : mythes, modèles, et représentations de la femme dans la théorie et la littérature futuristes (1909-1919)*; Bello Minciocchi, *Scrittrici della prima avanguardia: concezione, caratteri e testimonianze del femminile nel futurismo*; Sica, *Futurist Women: Florence, Feminism and the New Sciences*; and Re, “Mater-Materia. Maternal Power and the Futurist Avant-Garde;” as well as most recently Griffiths, “Futurist Women Artists and the (Pro)Creative Metaphor.”

embodiment of an essential instinct, an exceptional partner for the exceptional futurist hero.⁶ It was also true during the years of the “Democrazia futurista” (Futurist Democracy), which culminated in the formation of the Partito Politico Futurista (Futurist Political Party) in 1918. Enif Robert was one of the women who contributed to publications *L’Italia futurista* (Futurist Italy) and *Roma futurista* (Futurist Rome), which featured regular columns on the postwar evolution in women’s status.⁷ *Un ventre di donna: romanzo chirurgico* (A Woman’s Womb: Surgical Novel) —coauthored by Robert and F.T. Marinetti—creates a place for the “*questione della donna* (female question)” in futurist narrative, even if the female point of view shares space with that of a man.⁸ The semi-autobiographical novel recounts the protagonist’s journey to health, her diseased uterus symbolizing a rejection of conventional femininity; only by having her sexual organs surgically removed is the fictional Enif made well and able to realize her creative ambitions.

This rhetoric of exceptionalism that characterizes the work of Saint-Point, Robert, and many other *futuriste* (women futurists), emphasizes a difference if not from the rest of womankind, then at least from conventional models of womanhood; it also continues to be a marker of right-wing feminism.⁹ Examining these genealogies is especially fruitful in the case of Benedetta Cappa. Like Meloni (and the *futuriste* who preceded her), Cappa was a woman in a movement made largely of men. While Meloni essentially created a party of her own—co-founding the ultraconservative Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy) in the aftermath of the 2012 collapse of the ring-wing Il Popolo della Libertà (People of Freedom) and claiming a seat for herself next to coalition allies Matteo Salvini, leader of La Lega (the League), and Silvio Berlusconi, three-time prime minister—Benedetta worked from within futurist circles. She acknowledged the privilege of her position in her very first futurist publication, *Spicologia di 1 uomo* (Spycology of 1 man) (see Fig. 1). The *parole in libertà* (words in freedom) established how Benedetta would appropriate futurist poetics to privilege the perspective of the woman artist. Futurist *parole in libertà* combined poetic elements with words “liberated” from syntax and grammatical structure, often incorporating onomatopoeia, mathematical symbols, an unconventional use of fonts, and other typographic effects. *Spicologia di 1 uomo* is a mock-analysis, in geometrical form, of man’s psychology. The concrete poem is made of a series of overlapping triangles that form a star and meet at an axis labeled “vuoto” (emptiness); handwritten words—*ambizione, orgoglio, ideali, sensualità, materialismo* (ambition, pride, ideals, sensuality, materialism)—float within the forms. Letters at the point of each triangle make up the words *v-i-t-a* (life) and *n-o-m-i-n-i*, a neologism that combines the words *uomini* (men) and the Latin for “name” (*nomen*).¹⁰ The title is a play on the futurist rejection of literary psychology (“spicologia”/psicologia [“spycology”/ psychology]) and a vindication

⁶ In the *Manifeste de la Femme futuriste*, Saint Point argues that men and women are beings with both masculine and feminine traits and espouses positions closer to contemporary distinctions between gender identity and biological sex.

⁷ *L’Italia futurista* (Futurist Italy) was founded in 1916 and until its cessation in 1918 was the primary outlet for the writers and artists associated with Florentine Futurism. *Roma futurista* (Futurist Rome), the weekly publication of the Futurist Political Party, ran from 1918 to 1920.

⁸ For more on the novel written “a quattro mani” (co-authored, lit. by four hands), see Re, “Enif Robert, F. T. Marinetti e il romanzo *Un ventre di donna*: Bisessualità, trauma e mito dell’isteria.”

⁹ The rhetoric of exceptionalism in right-wing feminism is explored by Glynn’s paper “Giorgia Meloni: Femonationalist Matriarch?” presented at the AAIS Giornata di Studio of January 27, 2023.

¹⁰ Previously identified as *uomini-vita* (men- life), Griffith’s analysis convincingly supports the claim that the letters instead form ‘*nomini-vita*’ (names-life): “In a manner that prefigures Balla’s *Mia biografia* (My Biography), Benedetta uses these adjectives to describe her sitter rather than picture him. Letters at each tip of a ten-pointed star seem to spell out *nomini vita* -life name, perhaps. It is a deceptively simple image about the way in which words or thoughts animate or give us life.” Griffiths, “Stati d’animo: Futurism, Theosophy and Portraiture.”

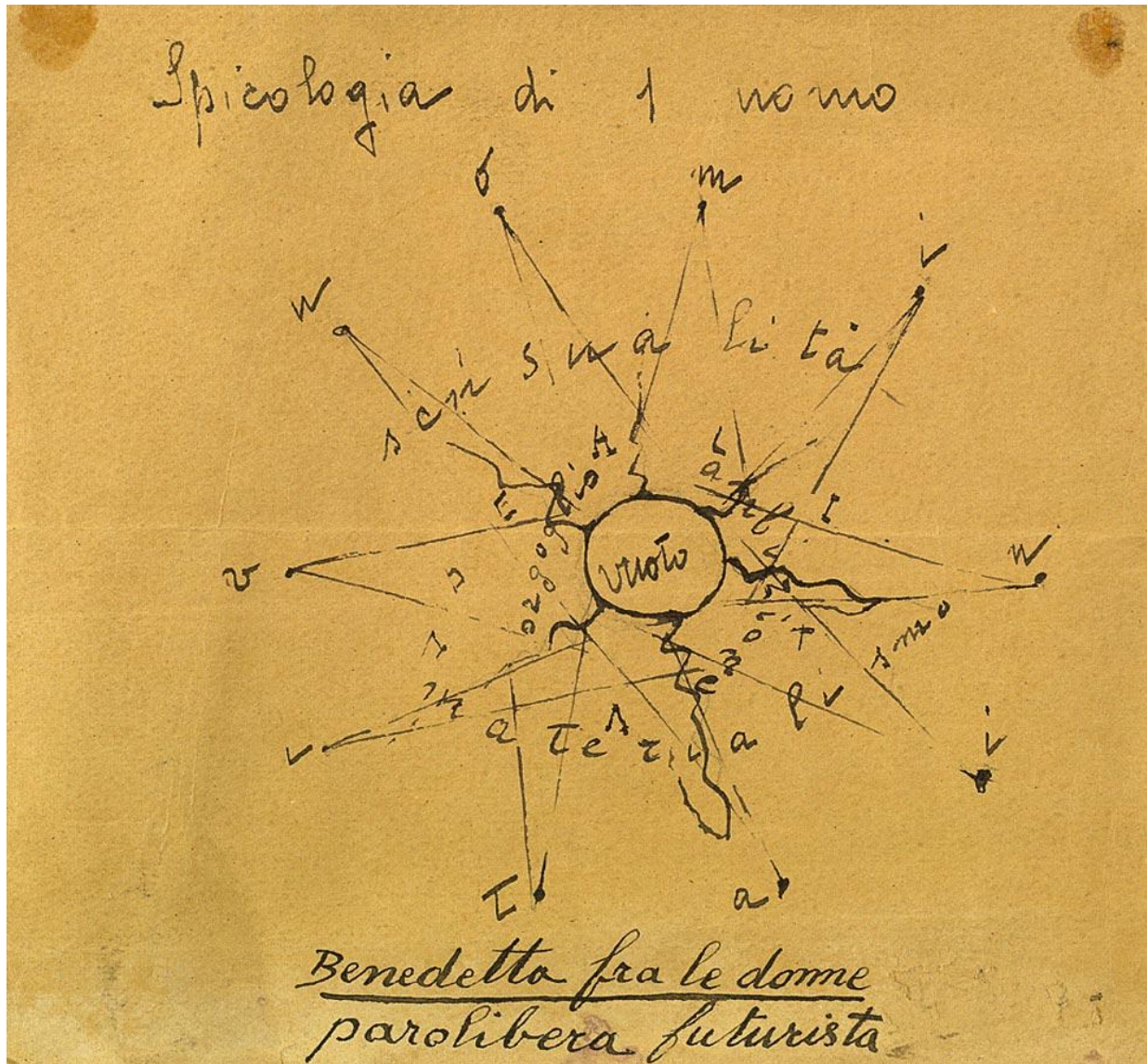


Figure 1. Benedetta (Benedetta Cappa Marinetti), *Spicologia di 1 uomo* (Spicologia of 1 Man), 1919, India ink on paper, 16 x 16 cm., private collection, Rome, http://exhibitions.guggenheim.org/futurism/words_in_freedom/#5

of the literary “io (I)” that futurists sought to cancel from poetic language.¹¹ The object of analysis is quite plainly Cappa’s spouse, Futurism’s founder F.T. Marinetti, whose superstitious affinity for the

¹¹ The *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista*/ *Technical manifesto of futurist literature* enjoins artists to, “Distruggere nella letteratura l’io” cioè tutta la psicologia. L’uomo completamente avariato dalla biblioteca e dal museo, sottoposto a una logica e ad una saggezza spaventose, non offre assolutamente più interesse alcuno. Dunque, dobbiamo abolirlo nella letteratura, e sostituirlo finalmente colla materia, di cui si deve afferrare l’essenza a colpi d’intuizione, la qual cosa non potranno mai fare i fisici né i chimici. Sorprendere attraverso gli oggetti in libertà e i motori capricciosi, la respirazione, la sensibilità e gli istinti dei metalli, delle pietre, del legno ecc. Sostituire la psicologia dell’uomo, ormai esaurita, con l’ossessione lirica della materia. Lo scopo primario della poesia futurista è la rappresentazione della realtà moderna nella sua concretezza” (Destroy the ‘I’ in literature: that is, all psychology. The sort of man who has been damaged by libraries and museums, subjected to a logic and wisdom of fear, is absolutely of no interest anymore. We must abolish him in literature and replace him once and for all with matter, whose essence must be seized by strokes of intuition, something which physicists and chemists can never achieve. Capture the breath, the sensibility, and the instincts of metals, stones,

number “1” was legendary.¹² The words that define the man’s psyche recall the literary persona cultivated in his essay *Come si seducono le donne* (How to Seduce Women), which had appeared the previous year.¹³ They evoke Marinetti as futurist provocateur/dandy and constitute a playfully irreverent satire of the movement’s origins, homosocial makeup, and contradictions when it comes to women, from the much-discussed “disprezzo della donna” (contempt for woman) embraced in the bombastic first manifesto to the tongue in cheek manual that employs seduction as tool to recruit women to the movement.¹⁴ In fact, *Spicologia* gives a first glimpse at what would be Benedetta’s very distinct approach to Futurism—one that privileges a female subjectivity—at a time when she herself was reflecting on her place within the movement.¹⁵

Echoing the concrete poem’s shape, its title refers to “spica”, which in ancient astrology was the brightest star of the constellation Virgo (*spica virginis*, “the virgin’s ear of wheat”) that figured prominently in the mystical traditions Cappa studied at the Theosophical Society of Rome.¹⁶ What is more, the poem carries the signature “Benedetta fra le donne” (Benedetta/Blessed among women). That Cappa was blessed (“benedetta”) is ironic, as she was one of the *very few* women in futurist circles, and while the tone is light and even self-mocking, the underlying message is a serious one. This playful allusion to the all-male makeup of the group and her “blessed” position therein is a Biblical citation from the Gospel of Luke; it is also a moment of acknowledgement between two women, the words spoken by Elizabeth—herself pregnant—who sees Mary and realizes that she is carrying the son of God.¹⁷

This religious imagery is developed in Benedetta’s subsequent work and connected to futurist artistic creation. In the penultimate segment of her 1924 novel *Le Forze Umane* (Human Forces), “L’Essenza e la sua attuazione immediata: L’arte” (The Essence and its Immediate Actualization: Art), the narrative is abruptly interrupted by a personal manifesto explaining the author’s reasons for adhering to the movement:

Nell’assieme delle rivoluzioni spirituali distruzioni e ricostruzioni affannose che si chiama il Futurismo, io ho sempre scorto un caratteristico sforzo verso questa creazione immediata [...] Giungeremo al di là delle *sintesi* grafiche, ai puri miracoli e alle pure magie e poiché esistono dei fachiri che hanno ridotto a poche ore il tempo necessario al fiorir d’una rosa, noi, sorpassando la lentissima natura, identificheremo miracolosamente il seme con la rosa.¹⁸

In the whole of the arduous spiritual revolutions, destructions and recreations that make up Futurism, I have always discerned a distinct impulse for this kind of immediate creation [...] Going beyond the graphic syntheses, we’ll achieve pure miracles, pure magic and—just as there exist fakirs, miracle

woods, and so on, through the medium of free objects and capricious motors. Substitute, for human psychology now exhausted, the lyrical obsession with matter). F. T. Marinetti, *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista*, 122.

¹² Ceccagnoli, “Anniversari, date e alfabeto in libertà: Marinetti 70 anni dopo,” 87-90.

¹³ F. T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, and Emilio Settimelli. *Come si seducono le donne*.

¹⁴ See Re and Douglas, “Women Futurists,” 47-66.

¹⁵ The *tavola parolibera* was published in *Dinamo* in 1919, yet in a letter to Marinetti dated the previous year, Benedetta refers to an earlier printing of the poem, “Ho provato fastidio (legami alle membra) nel vedere il mio nome unito a ‘parolibera futurista’. Sono troppo libera e ribelle—non voglio freni. Voglio essere io solamente. Forse mi ci abituerò. Questo per essere sincera” (I was annoyed [I felt ties round my limbs] when I saw my name joined to ‘parolibera futurista’. I am too free and rebellious—I do not accept any checks. I only want to be me. Perhaps I’ll get used to it. All this to be sincere). Zoccoli, “Benedetta Cappa Marinetti: Queen of Futurism,” 89. Emphasis is in the original.

¹⁶ See Griffiths, “Stati d’animo: Futurism, Theosophy and Portraiture,” in *The International Yearbook of Futurism*.

¹⁷ “Esclamò ad alta voce, e disse: Benedetta tu sei fra le donne, e benedetto è il frutto del tuo seno” (And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb). (Luke 1:42-45).

¹⁸ Cappa Marinetti, *Le forze umane; Viaggio di Gararà; Astra e il sottomarino*, 117-118. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

workers who have reduced to few hours the time it takes for a rose to flower, we, overcoming sluggish Nature, will like a miracle—identify the seed with the rose.

The speed celebrated by futurists for its capacity to bring distant, even contradictory, images and ideas together, is responsible for a kind of immediate creation, which recalls the automatic writing described by Marinetti years earlier in *Risposte alle obiezioni*/Response to the objections.¹⁹ Here, Benedetta emphasizes the creative potential of Futurism over the destructive one of the early movement, which hyperbolically called for libraries and museums to be razed to make way for new art forms. In doing so, she brings attention to the spiritual, a realm she associates with the feminine. In undated manuscript notes entitled *Arte femminile*, Benedetta addresses women artists, telling them it is their instinct to create:

Istinto—torniamo a glorificarlo. Intendendo per istinto ciò che nel profondo di noi è legato alle forze della natura, ciò che in noi è essenziale, che è la continuità della specie, che non mente, non è ritorto non ammette pause; preme verso la vita come la forza di un chicco di grano nella buia Terra spaccata per salire a concretarsi in spigo d'oro al sole.²⁰

Instinct, let us return to exalting it. And by instinct, I mean what is tied in our deepest depths to the forces of nature, what is essential within us that is the continuity of humankind, which does not err, never stumbles, is never-ending: it pushes towards life with the force of a tiny seed of grain that breaks through the dark earth, to rise and grow into a spiky golden ray reaching toward the sun.

The seed that becomes a spiky golden ray (“spigo d’oro”) evokes the *spica virginis* (“virgin’s ear of wheat”) of *spicologia*. This second Marian reference also alludes to the Gospel of John, which describes the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection.²¹ The pairing of religious imagery and the natural world permeates not only Benedetta’s writings, but also her work as visual artist in the interwar years; what they share is a deep connection to a feminine sacred in Futurism and the role of women as creators of art, just as they are creators of life through maternity.²²

These threads of motherhood and spirituality coalesce with that of national identity in a series of speeches Benedetta made by radio broadcast and—dressed in Fascist uniform—in cities throughout Italy from the mid 1930s to the early 40s. Most of these lectures centered around two essays—*Spiritualità della donna italiana* (Spirituality of the Italian woman) and *Donne della patria in guerra*

¹⁹ *Risposte alle obiezioni*/Response to the objections was a supplement to the *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista*/ Technical manifesto of futurist literature written by Marinetti in 1912. “Dopo parecchie ore di lavoro accanito e penoso, lo spirito creatore si libera a un tratto dal peso di tutti gli ostacoli, e diventa, in qualche modo, la preda di una strana spontaneità di concezione e di esecuzione. La mano che scrive sembra staccarsi dal corpo e si prolunga in libertà assai lungi dal cervello, che, anche esso in qualche modo staccato dal corpo e divenuto aereo, guarda dall’alto, con una terribile lucidità, di frasi in attese che escono dalla penna.” F.T. Marinetti, “Risposte alle obiezioni (1912),” 56. “After several hours of unremitting and painful work, the creative mind is suddenly freed from the weight of all obstacles and becomes, in some way, the prey of a strange spontaneity of conception and execution. The hand that writes seems to separate from the body and freely leaves far behind the brain, which, having itself in some way become detached from the body and airborne, looks down from on high with terrible lucidity upon the unforeseen phrases emitted by the pen.” F. T. Marinetti, “A Response to Objections (1912),” 126.

²⁰ Cappa Marinetti, *L’arte femminile* in my article, “Benedetta and the creation of ‘Second Futurism,’” 453, 461.

²¹ “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:24-25).

²² For example, her 1936 painting *Monte Tabor* (Mount Tabor) refers to the location of Christ’s transfiguration as described in Matthew 17; 1-6. For more on creation and the sacred in Benedetta’s work as visual artist, see Conaty, “Benedetta Cappa Marinetti and the second phase of futurism.”

(Women of the Fatherland at War)—that celebrated the Fascist state embodied in the figure of Mussolini. They encouraged service to the nation, chiefly in the form of maternal sacrifice:

Quando si è dato tutto bisogna dare ancora di più. Questa la legge d'anima della donna italiana [...] Noi resistiamo e aspettiamo. E aspettiamo perché crediamo nella vittoria. Da noi che sappiamo soffrire fisicamente 9 mesi plasmando nello spazio e nella carne con occhi felici il nostro figlio, si aspetta la disciplina quotidiana di tutte le rinunce [sic] possibili, la durezza di saper dare alla Patria senza tremare figli sposi fratelli.²³

When you have given everything, you have to give even more. This is the law governing the Italian woman's soul [...] We resist and wait. And we wait because we believe in victory. From us—we who know how to suffer physically for nine months, forming our child in space and in flesh with smiling eyes—he expects each day the discipline of all possible sacrifices, the difficulty of knowing how to offer unhesitatingly sons, spouses, and brothers to the nation.

This sacrifice is conceived as not only an act of patriotism, but also spiritual devotion tied to women's artistic potential:

[...] noi donne accoglieremo il nuovo compito e nel momento in cui le forze spirituali italiane si leveranno per sondare l'infinito e dare colore e gioia agli uomini, noi non solo diremo I nostri figli, passeremo noi a portare alti i motivi ispiratori del tempo fascista: intrecceremo un ordito dei fili luminosi sui quali ricamare sogni e realtà. E comincerà la nostra tenacia e volontà di creazione artistica.²⁴

[...] we women will welcome a new task and when the Italian spiritual forces will rise to probe the infinite and give color and joy to mankind, we will not only say Our children, we will raise up the inspiring motifs of the fascist era: we will weave a warp of luminous threads on which to embroider dreams and reality. And our tenacity and will for artistic creation will begin.

While it is true that the theme of maternity developed in her visual art and writing is part of a broader futurist vision and women's role in creating a spiritual dimension therein, Benedetta undeniably allowed her work's focus on motherhood and creation to be used to support fascist pronatalist policies connected to Mussolini's colonial ambitions. She sought to give visibility to women within Futurism, making a space “denied” to them—at least symbolically—in the founding manifesto; yet in the end, as Lucia Re has argued, Benedetta was complicit in supporting a regime that restricted the primary

²³ Cappa Marinetti, “Esaltazione della spiritualità della donna italiana.”

²⁴ The speech continues: “[...] Chiedo molto chiedo tutto a noi tutte. Quando si è dato tutto bisogna dare ancora di più. Chiedo la parola che crea il miracolo per la forza della fede dalla Sicilia oggi sale, con la mia voce, rinnovato giuramento del vostro cuore dal cuore di tutte le donne di Italia sale con la mia voce un rinnovato giuramento: ‘DUCE, non temere, ti seguiamo nella tua visione che diviene realtà ti va domani giusto e glorioso, siamo degni della tua tenacia conta sentiamo un tuo amore che dovrà perché ci deve chiedere molto, ma ci chiede solo quello che è indispensabile per il nostro orgoglio italiano e la nostra vittoria.’ Soldati l'Italia di terra mare e cielo, vi circonda il nostro respiro. Non possiamo togliere alle vostre ore lo sforzo e sacrificio le ferite la morte, ma abbiamo nel cuore c'è la nostra vittoria. Voluta dal Duce nostro. Credetelo!” [...] I ask a lot, I ask everything from all of us. When you have given everything, you have to give even more. I ask for the word that makes miracles by the strength of faith that from Sicily today rises, with my voice, an oath renewed by your heart from the heart of all the women of Italy, a renewed oath that rises with my voice: DUCE, fear not, we will follow in your vision that becomes reality tomorrow is just and glorious for you, we are worthy of your tenacity, we feel your love that will have to be because you must ask a lot from us, but you ask us only what is indispensable for our Italian pride and our victory.' Soldiers Italy of land, sea and sky, our breath surrounds you. We cannot take away the hours and effort and sacrifice of wounds and death, but we have our victory—desired by our Duce—in our hearts. Believe it!) Cappa Marinetti, *Donne della patria in guerra*, 16.

role of the majority of women to wife and mother.²⁵ Thus, Benedetta embodied the exceptional woman not only within the Futurist movement, but also in Italian society.

Though the ethos of her discourse is markedly different from that of Benedetta, motherhood, Christian identity, nation, and sacrifice are critical to Meloni's self-fashioning. Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), the radical right party Meloni co-founded, promotes the idea of Italy as ethnically homogenous, built around the traditional family. Thus, their platform espouses defense of family and motherhood as inextricably linked to the preservation of Italian culture and the health of the state.²⁶ Rallies leading up to the 2022 general election became a battleground on which Meloni set to prove herself as contender for premier of a right-wing government, upholding what she has called its cornerstones in God, family, and homeland: declaring support for traditional gender roles and defense of the heterosexual family (expressed in policies meant to curtail access to abortion and safeguards for rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity). Since she has taken office as premier, she has marked national celebrations with speeches that connect motherhood and the "madrepatria" (motherland), which is self-sacrificing but also demands sacrifice from its children. On the day before Christmas Eve in 2022, she traveled to Iraq and, dressed in military uniform, addressed Italian soldiers:

[...] è il periodo delle feste, il periodo del Natale, il periodo in cui le persone sono abituate a tornare a casa, sono abituate a stare in famiglia, io penso che sia importante, se è vero che la 'patria è una madre', che quella madre ci sia in un momento come questo e quindi ci tenevo a portare il ringraziamento della nazione, che io e voi rappresentiamo.²⁷

It's the holidays, Christmastime, the time in which everyone is used to going home, used to being among family. I think it is important—if it is true that the 'homeland is a mother'—that that mother is there at a time like this. And thus, I wanted to convey to you the thanks of the nation, which you and I represent.

Meloni posits herself as a stand-in for the "madrepatria" (motherland), a mother for all Italians who thanks these soldiers for their sacrifice at a time of religious celebration. Underpinning her speech is the idea of Italy and Italian culture as homogeneous, sharing rites and symbols that are religious in nature. On Mother's Day she posted to her social media an acknowledgement of her own mother's sacrifice—"Grazie per aver sempre creduto in me, mamma. E se c'è una cosa che mi rende felice, è averti resa abbastanza fiera da ripagare i tuoi sacrifici, la tua solitudine, il tuo amore" (Thank you for always believing in me, mom. And if there's one thing that makes me happy, it's that I made you proud enough to repay your sacrifices, your solitude, your love)—connecting once again the theme of motherhood and sacrifice to the nation, reminding Italians, "Oggi è la festa della mamma, ma noi abbiamo sempre un'altra mamma che è la Patria, e senza questo legame non c'è niente che possiamo fare" ([...] Today is Mother's Day, but we do have another mom, which is the motherland; without this bond nothing can be achieved.)²⁸ She makes calculated references to being mother to 6-year-old

²⁵ "Her writings of the second-half of the 1930s, including the one on the spirituality of the Italian woman, are mainly patriotic speeches that she delivered in uniform at female rallies throughout Italy, not only loyal to the regimes maternalistic vision but also complicit in its claim to modernize women [...] taking advantage of her unquestionably privileged and, in some ways, official position, but Benedetta also endeavored, however, to secure a place and power for women other than those of an exclusively maternal and sacrificial nature. As she stated in the same speech, 'the word mother must be given its great meaning of generatrix; generatrix of men, feelings, passions, ideas.'" Re, "Mater-Materia: Maternal Power and the Futurist Avant-Garde," 56-7. See also my article "Benedetta and the creation of 'Second Futurism'."

²⁶ See Donà, "Women's and Equality Rights Under Giorgia Meloni."

²⁷ Here, it is difficult to disassociate the colonial associations of "madrepatria" (motherland) and its Greek etymology, given the context of the premier's visit to the Middle East. "Meloni in Iraq, 'grazie dalla madre patria' ai soldati italiani."

²⁸ "Meloni: 'Festa della mamma, la patria è la seconda mamma'."

Ginevra in both the private and public spheres, from concluding a TG2 interview by saying she was off to make cupcakes for her daughter's birthday, to her participation in the 2022 Hanukkah celebration at the Jewish Museum of Rome.²⁹ In the latter, Meloni was introduced by Jewish community leader Ruth Dureghello, who thanked her for attending and emphasized the importance of her presence for disavowing Fascism in Italy: “ritengo che nel suo ruolo di presidente del Consiglio, queste parole contribuiscano a contrastare definitivamente le ambiguità che in una parte del Paese sono ancora presenti sul fascismo e sulle sue responsabilità” (I believe that, given her role as prime minister, these words help to definitively counter the ambiguities that still remain in a part of the country regarding fascism and its responsibilities.) At Dureghello's introduction, Meloni seems to become emotional, explaining, “Noi femmine ogni tanto facciamo questa cosa un po' così, di essere troppo sensibili, noi mamme in particolare” (We females sometimes do things like this, we're too sensitive, we mothers in particular.) Meloni deftly used this seemingly offhand comment to create a sense of human solidarity between the women. That took center stage in the news headlines, when her long-standing relationship with Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance) and its neo-Fascist roots in the Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement) could have been the focus of her participation in the religious ceremony taking place in the Roman ghetto, setting of the deadly 1943 roundups.³⁰ Elsewhere she has attributed to motherhood the capacity to establish intimacy even with her staunchest critics: “[...] esiste la solidarietà tra mamme. Ho un ricordo molto dolce di Laura Boldrini, da cui mi separa tutto, che mi accarezza la pancia. Roberta Pinotti mi mandò un paio di scarpine da neonata. Sono gesti che restano” (there is solidarity between mothers. I have a very sweet memory of Laura Boldrini, who couldn't be more different from me, caressing my belly. Roberta Pinotti sent me a pair of baby shoes. They are gestures that stay with you).³¹ Meloni's social media activity—reflecting her populist desire to communicate directly with constituents—features prominently not only her role as mother but also engaging in activities traditionally associated with Italian womanhood: baking cakes during the COVID lockdown, preparing a tricolor Caprese – “l'insalata più italiana di tutte” (the most Italian salad of them all) with Made in Italy ingredients, rolling a pizza in Naples, and folding tortellini in Bologna.³² These references to motherhood and traditional gender roles work to define a political identity that is at one with the state, while softening the underlying rhetoric of power at play.

Though her emphasis on traditional gender roles plays a crucial part in the political persona she has crafted, Meloni's speeches present a more complicated picture. Her defining declamation, “Io

²⁹ The exchange comes at the end of a conversation on women in politics, which closes with a somewhat bizarre turn: journalist Manuela Moreno introduces the Jimi Hendrix song *Foxy Lady*, dedicating it to Meloni “l'unica donna leader” (the only woman premier), on the 50th anniversary of the singer's death. After an awkward pause, Moreno asks what Meloni will do over the weekend; the latter deftly segues from reflections on Margaret Thatcher and Angela Merkel to her responsibilities as mother in the family realm, ignoring the musical reference. *TG2 Post*, “Interview with Giorgia Meloni.” For a transcription of the interview see Delbarba, “Donna, madre, italiana, cristiana. Usi linguistici e strategie comunicative nei discorsi di Giorgia Meloni”, 96-99.

³⁰ Jakhnagiev, “Meloni si commuove alla festa ebraica Hannukkah: ‘A noi mamme succede di essere troppo sensibili.’” Dureghello's words were likely in response to a video sent by Meloni to members of the international media prior to the 2022 national elections, explaining her views on fascism. Though she recorded the speech in Spanish, French, and English, she did not release the statement in Italian, explaining that “la destra italiana ha consegnato il fascismo alla storia da decenni ormai condannando senza ambiguità la soppressione della democrazia e le vergognose leggi contro gli ebrei” (the Italian right relegated fascism to history decades ago by unambiguously condemning the suppression of democracy and the shameful laws against Jews). Poggioli, “Giorgia Meloni Is Italy's First Female Prime Minister.” “L'intervento di Giorgia Meloni in tre lingue: Condanniamo nazismo e comunismo.”

³¹ Cazzullo, “Giorgia Meloni: mio padre in fuga, mia madre stava per abortire poi decise di tenermi.”

³² Meloni, “Torta allo yogurt e mirtilli fatta in casa con amore. Vi piace? Buona domenica a tutti voi;” *Corriere di Bologna*, “Giorgia Meloni alle prese i tortellini;” *Repubblica*, “Italia contro Europa, Giorgia Meloni prepara la caprese nella cucina di casa.”

sono Giorgia, sono una donna, sono una madre, sono italiana, sono cristiana” (I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian) was followed by, “e non me lo toglierete!” (and you won’t take that from me!)³³ Essential to Meloni’s self-fashioning is the idea that her identity as a white European woman and mother is under attack. Indeed, the hallmark of recent speeches that have gained her global infamy is precisely a rhetoric of heroic defiance in the face of what an unspecified “voi” (you, plural) might “take from her”; this makes a direct appeal to the frustrations of Italians who perceive a loss of cultural identity within the neoliberal global economy, a loss that her coalition ally and anti-immigration party La Lega (The League) has successfully conflated in the minds of many voters with the recent immigration that has transformed Italy into a more racially and culturally integrated society. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Meloni characterizes the previously ambiguous “voi” thus:

Among the enemies I count, firstly, the left. There’s a leftist ideology, so-called globalist, that aims to consider as an enemy everything that defines you — everything that has shaped your identity and your civilization. I think the West is paying for such weakness, as we’ve also seen in recent times. Instead, I think that what identifies you, i.e., the Christian values that founded our civilization, regardless of whether one believes in God or not. I’m all in favor of the crucifix hanging on the walls of our public schools, not because I want to impose the religion I believe in on anyone.³⁴

Meloni has cast herself as warrior-defender of family, country, and Italy’s Christian heritage, always ready to do her duty to her party. When asked in 2019 on TG24 cable news if she would be a candidate in the European Parliament elections, she replied, “[...] se il partito me lo chiede, volentieri. Io sono sempre *una* [sic] *soldato*, diciamo così. Se il partito me lo chiede sono pronta a candidarmi” ([...] if the party asks me, gladly. I’m always a soldier, so to speak. If the party asks me, I’m ready to run).³⁵ Three years later, in an interview that appeared in the Italian publication *Chi*—a “social entertainment” magazine with a predominantly female readership—Meloni expressed readiness to serve as premier:

Se mi sento pronta a diventare la prima donna premier in Italia? Mi sono sentita spesso inadeguata, a dire la verità, e a volte tutto mi sembra più grande di me. Ma sono *un soldato*, io, una combattente. Combatto e sono sicura che la gente ci seguirà. Verrà a votare.³⁶

Do I feel ready to be the first female prime minister in Italy? I have often felt inadequate, to tell you the truth, and sometimes everything seems overwhelming. But I’m a soldier, I’m a fighter. I fight and I’m sure people will follow us. They will turn out to vote.

With the cable news program, Meloni uses the ungrammatical “una soldato” (a soldier), which combines a feminine definite article (“una”) with a masculine noun (“soldato”), mixing the masculine and feminine forms of nouns of “mobile” gender. In the *Chi* article that appeared in the lead-up to the 2022 general elections (and with a markedly different audience), she is quoted instead as using the masculine form of soldier, “un soldato”. This gender play is characteristic of Meloni’s rhetorical

³³ *Repubblica*, “Centrodestra in piazza, Meloni contro gay e lgbt: ‘Sono una donna, sono cristiana,’” video. 1:44.

³⁴ Harlan and Pitrelli, “Giorgia Meloni’s interview with *The Washington Post*.”

³⁵ “Intervista di Giorgia Meloni a Sky TG24,” *YouTube* video, posted by Fratelli d’Italia. For a transcription of the interview see Lorenzo Delbarba, “Donna, madre, italiana, cristiana. Usi linguistici e strategie comunicative nei discorsi di Giorgia Meloni,” 74-79.

³⁶ A *Corriere della Sera* headline reporting on the *Chi* publication edits Meloni’s statement to join her declaration of being a “soldier” to that expressing protectiveness of her daughter, should she be elected. *Corriere della Sera*, “Meloni: ‘Io sono un soldato. Se sarò premier non rinuncerò a nulla ciò che riguarda mia figlia (Meloni: I am a soldier. If I’m premier, I won’t give up anything having to do with my daughter).’”

embrace of both traditionally feminine and performatively masculine behaviors and attitudes in various contexts.³⁷

Because, while there are noteworthy genealogies to Meloni's self-fashioning in the women of the historical avant-garde—Benedetta in particular—there are also disruptions to and discontinuities in the Cappa-Meloni analogy. Benedetta's treatment of motherhood is critical to her intensely personal vision of Futurism and the spiritual dimension therein that she connects to the woman artist. Meloni also uses God and family—tropes of *italianità*—but in a way that is devoid of any such spiritual tension. Perhaps most significantly, Benedetta's futurist poetics hinges on a binary opposition between the feminine and masculine, a dichotomy explored in her 1924 novel, *Le Forze Umane* (Human Forces).³⁸ Yet her work never breaks from this gender essentialism. Meloni, on the other hand, carefully crafts a persona that plays with traditional notions of the feminine and masculine in ways both complex and subtle.³⁹ Her personal narrative emphasizes strength and assertiveness; when telling the story of how she met her former partner, journalist Andrea Giambruno, Meloni recounts that it was she who took on the traditionally masculine role of pursuer:

Lo vidi in uno studio Mediaset, con le cuffie, bello come il sole. Ma non mi filò. Mi prese pure in giro. Stavo mangiando una banana durante la pubblicità, e lui venne a prendermi la buccia: “Ci manca solo di far vedere la banana...” Poi ci siamo rivisti. Ho chiesto il suo numero a Giovanna, la mia portavoce, e gli ho mandato un sms innocente [...]⁴⁰

I saw him in the Mediaset studios, headphones on, as beautiful as the sun. But he didn't pursue me. He even teased me. I was eating a banana during the commercial, and he came to get the peel: ‘All we

³⁷ For more on the evolution of and contemporary debate on feminine noun forms in Italian, see Sulis and Gheno, “The Debate on Language and Gender in Italy, from the Visibility of Women to Inclusive Language (1980s–2020s).” For a deeper exploration of Meloni's performative mixing of feminine and masculine, see Minervini's presentation “Girls will be Boys? A Gender-Based Analysis of Giorgia Meloni's Speech Acts” at the AAIS Giornata di Studio on Femminismi di destra and Minervini's article “‘Il Presidente’ Giorgia Meloni. Right-Wing ‘Feminism,’ Queerness, and Gender Neutrality in Contemporary Italian Politics” in the current issue of *gender/sexuality/italy*, 111-132).

³⁸ The experimental novel features graphic syntheses embodying “forze femminili (feminine forces)” as abstract, spiritual energies, and “forze maschili (masculine forces)” represented by vertically pointed shafts suggesting bellicose physicality. “Benedetta challenged the hegemony of purely male virility and spirituality, giving a leading role to femininity and to the heterosexual union, which she saw as both material and spiritual. She put forward a heterosexual ideal of reciprocity and difference, a passionate dialectic according to which two bodies and two “atmospheres”—male and female—by intersecting in erotic pleasure and involving the entire material universe and multiple worlds in a vortex through their passion, can realize a higher and more authentic creative potential. This erotic-creative ideal is based on a bond that the lovers construct with each other while preserving a relative degree of individual autonomy. The lovers, who constitute separate nuclei of matter before meeting, unite to create a new nucleus through which the individual transcends her- or himself and becomes—in this feminized version of Marinetti's topos, ‘multiplied’ and externally extended, without the involvement of machinery or slaves. In contrast with both the Platonic model and the ideal of male parthenogenesis, the generation of a creature of flesh and blood in a woman's body is thus not a merely carnal fact in Benedetta's novel. It is also, above all else, a shared creative phenomenon that symbolizes the fundamental importance of giving life to the other and with the other, and of recognizing this life as free and separate” (56). See Re, “Mater-Materia: Maternal Power and the Futurist Avant-Garde,” 48-59. See also Griffiths, 69-70.

³⁹ There is an irony to this, as in her 2022 campaign, Meloni took every opportunity to push back against what she calls “ideologia gender” (gender ideology), a term she uses as catch-all for the hardly radical notion that gender is a culturally determined construction, separate from biological sex.

⁴⁰ Cazzullo, “Mio padre in fuga, mia madre stava per abortire poi decise di tenermi.” In this account, Meloni notices his attractiveness and initiates contact with him. His role is passive; he even cleans up after her. Giambruno's account of the encounter differs in subtle but significant ways: it includes the detail that Meloni was famished and “about to faint” when she arrived at Mediaset prior to an interview and omits the text exchange. Candela, “Giorgia Meloni: chi è il compagno Andrea Giambruno, dall'arrivo a Mediaset con Alfonso Signorini all'incontro con la premier grazie a una banana.”

need is to show you with a banana...’ Then we saw each other again. I asked Giovanna, my representative, for his number and sent him an innocent text.

When the interviewer follows up, asking why they are not married—a question presumably on the minds of her constituents, given Meloni’s unwavering support for conservative family values—she responds coyly, “Di solito non sono cose che chiedono le donne...” (It’s not usually the woman who asks...) On the matter of women in politics, Meloni underlines her assertiveness and merit. When asked about gender quotas, she juxtaposes her agency to what she characterizes as the passivity of PD (Democratic Party) women, content to have settled for handouts from (male) party leaders: “Sono per il merito. Non capisco le donne del Pd, tutte felici perché il capo ha deciso che due di loro potevano fare le capogruppo. Tu non devi andare al potere perché l’ha stabilito un uomo, ma perché sei la migliore. In Fratelli d’Italia è andata così” (I’m here because of merit. I don’t understand the women of the Democratic Party, happy because their party chair decided that two of them could be leaders. You don’t come to power because a man put you there, but because you are the best. That’s how it went in Fratelli d’Italia).⁴¹ In Meloni’s most notable speeches—the ones that have gone viral and gained her global infamy, in particular those given at the 2019 World Congress of Families in Verona and the 2022 Vox rally in Marbella—a defense of traditional values and gender roles stands in sharp contrast to her bellicose body language and delivery: voice raucous and intonation low, she addresses the audience with chest and neck puffed out, her posture strongly defiant. The repetitive structure of the speeches and their rhythmic cadence reinforce the simple message of God, family, and nation.⁴² That is, Meloni embraces positions, attitudes, and even gestures that are not only traditionally feminine, but also ones that are performatively masculine. In fact, if we are examining futurist genealogies in rhetoric and strategy for Meloni’s highly mediated self-fashioning, we would do well to look to the movement’s founder, F.T. Marinetti himself. Meloni’s assertive—even aggressive—style of declamation, the provocation of her speeches, self-characterization as soldier, and her use of the topoi of battle and “lotta” (struggle) all recall rhetorical strategies used by the leader in Futurism’s heroic years.⁴³

I have traced the rhetorical continuities and ruptures in these two figures to explore one of the genealogies that have given rise to 21st century conservative feminism. Cappa is a literary example of this phenomenon that took root within a male-dominated cultural movement. Meloni has fashioned a personal narrative in contrast with the perceived passivity of the women of Italy’s Pd, a party that ostensibly places feminist issues as central to its platform. Striking off on her own and co-founding Fratelli d’Italia, she has become the most powerful woman in the history of the Italian Republic. She presents herself as having risen within Italian politics on her own merits, an exceptional woman who rejects the notion that her story could have symbolic value for others. Giorgia Meloni assumed the role of Prime Minister of Italy on October 22, 2022. Since then, she has lost the momentum of the combative “lotta” that defined her rise to power, as she has been forced to reckon with the

⁴¹ “Meloni: ‘Io sono un soldato. Se sarò premier non rinuncerò a nulla ciò che riguarda mia figlia.’” For more on this idea, see Monica Guerzoni’s observations in Pellizzari, Tommaso. “Elezioni 2022: Giorgia Meloni premier sarebbe una buona notizia per le donne? Il podcast.”

⁴² “No alla lobby LGBT, sì alla famiglia tradizionale: così Giorgia Meloni in Spagna conquista i militanti di Vox,” video. “Giorgia Meloni at the World Congress of Families, 2019,” YouTube video. Spackman’s study of virility as cornerstone of the rhetoric of Fascism could be useful to understanding Meloni’s self-fashioning, which plays with traditional notions of the feminine and masculine. Spackman examines Fascist women—futurist Valentine de Saint Point among them—who sought to redefine virility as a quality not exclusively associated with men, but also inherently expressed by women, in particular in their role as mothers. Spackman, “Fascist Women and the Rhetoric of Virility,” 100-120.

⁴³ “Non v’è più bellezza se non nella lotta. Nessuna opera che non abbia un carattere aggressivo può essere un capolavoro (Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has **not** an aggressive character.) “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” 11.

complexities of translating opposition rhetoric into the realities of heading Italy's government. And what will progressives, particularly female leaders, learn in the post-Meloni era? Will Democratic women—who have been in Meloni's (perhaps fair) estimation too patient in waiting for their turn to lead—shake off their glass-ceiling headaches and learn from bruises earned?⁴⁴ One thing is clear: Italy does not need a woman leader who is, according to Federica Passarella, a “*maschio tra i maschi*” (a man among men) or Antonio Polito, a woman “*brava come un uomo*” (as good as a man).⁴⁵ As Elly Schlein, rising star in Italian politics and head of the Pd, declared, “*Non ce ne facciamo nulla di una donna presidente del Consiglio che non si batte per migliorare la condizione di vita di tutte le altre donne del Paese [...] C'è differenza tra leadership femminile e leadership femminista*” (We care nothing for a female prime minister who doesn't fight to improve the living conditions of all women in the country [...]. There's a difference between female leadership and feminist leadership).⁴⁶ There is need for a leader to usher in institutional reforms and create systemic change to foster a positive impact on the lives of millions of Italian women. Today, Italy has the lowest rate of female employment in the European Union, lagging over 14 points behind other member countries (Italy's average is 55% vs. a European average of 69.4%).⁴⁷ What is more, disparities between men and women for a number of key indicators of parity continue to increase. Italian women executives earn on average salaries that are 27.8% lower than their male counterparts, while women's hourly wages average 15.2 euros compared to 16.2 euros for men.⁴⁸ They hold only 30% of leadership positions, with only 3% of companies having a female CEO.⁴⁹ In fact, in 2022—the year of Meloni's historic ascent to *presidente del Consiglio*—Italy fell 16 places to 79 in the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum.⁵⁰ The drop was due in large part to its ranking for participation and representation of women in politics (24.1%), which in 2022 was 64th (down from 40th the previous year). This is the reality, despite the fact that Italy has elected its first female prime minister. Women are underrepresented in not only Meloni's party, but within her own cabinet. Indeed, she has supported policies—which

⁴⁴ Natalia Aspesi, “Meloni e il dramma di noi sinistre.”

⁴⁵ Federica Passarella, “Femminismo di destra: la visione di Meloni.” Antonio Polito, “Giorgia Meloni: ‘Donne e diritti civili.’”

⁴⁶ *Corriere della Sera*, “Elly Schlein: ‘Non ce ne facciamo niente di una premier donna che non si batte per le donne,’” video.

⁴⁷ See Salzano, “Italy Has the Lowest Female Labor Rate in European Union” and Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT). “Rapporto BES 2022: Il benessere equo e sostenibile in Italia.” “Nonostante il maggiore investimento delle donne in Istruzione e formazione, sul mercato del lavoro le donne vivono ancora una condizione di forte svantaggio. Non solo è più basso il tasso di occupazione (nella classe 20-64 anni è 55,0% per le donne e 74,7% per gli uomini) ed è più elevato il tasso di mancata partecipazione al mercato del lavoro (19,6% vs 13,5%), ma anche gli aspetti qualitativi della condizione occupazionale denotano un persistente squilibrio di genere ed una situazione peggiore per le lavoratrici. Tra le occupate è infatti più elevata l'incidenza delle lavoratrici a termine da almeno 5 anni (16,5% vs 17,4%), in part time involontario (16,5% vs 5,6%), di dipendenti con bassa retribuzione (12,1% vs 8,5% nel 2020), delle occupate sovrastruite (28,1% vs 24,4%) e di quante percepiscono una precarietà lavorativa, ritenendo probabile perdere il lavoro nei successivi 6 mesi e al contempo improbabile trovarne un altro simile (5,5% vs 4,4%).” Despite women's greater education and training, they still have a strong disadvantage on the labor market. Not only is their employment rate lower (in the 20-64 age group it is 55.0% for women and 74.7% for men) and their rate of non-participation in the labor market higher (19.6% vs 13.5%), but also qualitative aspects of their employment show a persistent gender imbalance, with worse outcomes for female workers. Indeed, among those employed there are higher occurrences of short-term employment (at least 5 years) (16.5% vs 17.4%), involuntary part-time employment (16.5% vs 5.6%), low-earning employment (12.1% vs 8.5% in 2020), underemployment (28.1% vs 24.4%), and job insecurity, those likely to lose their job in 6 months with little likelihood of finding another similar one, 5.5% vs 4.4%.

⁴⁸ Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT). “La struttura delle retribuzioni in Italia.”

⁴⁹ European Women on Boards. “Gender Diversity Index 2021.”

⁵⁰ The Global Gender Gap Report, instituted in 2006, measures the evolution of gender equality around the world according to four benchmarks: economic participation and opportunities; education; health and life expectancy; political empowerment. In 2022, Italy was ranked 63 and fell to 79 out of 146 countries in 2023. *World Economic Forum*. “Global Gender Gap Report 2023.”

include cuts to unemployment benefits and opposition to a minimum wage—that have a disproportionately negative impact on low-income women, in particular mothers, and—despite her assurances to the contrary—many fear she will support attempts to weaken constitutional provisions for abortion. What Italian women need—what Italy needs—is a woman, not an exception. *Una donna tra le donne*.

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