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Between Word and Image: Women Futurists and *Parole in Libert * 1914-1924

By

Janaya Sandra Lasker-Ferretti

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Italian Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2012

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Abstract

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After F.T. Marinetti, the leader of futurism, theorized *parole in libert * (or “words-in-freedom”) in his manifestoes, numerous futurists participated in this verbo-visual practice. Although *paroliberismo* was a characteristic form of expression that dominated futurist poetics preceding, during, and after World War I, little scholarly work has been done on the “words-in-freedom” authored by women and how they might differ from those created by their male counterparts. Women, outcast as they were by futurism both in theory and often in practice, participated nevertheless in the avant-garde movement known for announcing its “disdain for women” in its “Founding Manifesto” of 1909. This dissertation takes an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing the position of the female futurist and her mixed-media contributions during the years in which *paroliberismo* was carried out in futurist circles. I examine rare and under-studied verbo-visual works done by women between 1914 and 1924. My readings seek to understand the in-between position of women futurists, which, I argue, stems from the word-image duality they employ and goes on to include other intermediary positions such as intertextuality, intermittent autobiography, and concomitant futurist and non-futurist allegiances. In chapter one, I analyze the two-volume narrative entitled *Diario d’una giovane donna futurista*, penned by a certain Flora Bonheur, believed by many to be a pseudonym. I argue that the first volume is a parody of futurism, whereas the second volume is a parody of *passatismo*. *Diario* is therefore structured around a chiasmus and contributes to both futurism and “passatism.” Chapter two analyzes the *parole in libert * and the illustrations that accompany *Diario*. Both the “words-in-freedom” and the illustrations function in a similar way and stray from standard futurist practices. Furthermore, the illustrations of *Diario*, executed by Luigi Bignami, are all in dialogue with the iconography of the popular erotic postcard and are often in conflict with Bonheur’s text. In chapter three I look at two examples of women’s handwritten *parole in libert *—Benedetta’s “Spicologia di 1 uomo” (1919) and Rosa Ros ’s “Ricevimento—th —signore—nessun uomo” (1917). I contend that some women futurists employed handwriting instead of creative typography to execute their “free-word” works in order to reinsert a tie to the literary “I” that Marinetti had banned from futurism. In chapter four, I look at Benedetta’s illustrated novel, *Le forze umane* (1924), and situate it intertextually with Piet

Mondrian's writings on neoplasticism. I claim that Benedetta appropriates Mondrian's art theory both thematically and structurally in her first novel in attempts to alter futurism. The dissertation uncovers the word-image strategies women futurists employ in order to find subject positions for themselves in a misogynistic and anti-feminist avant-garde movement. In so doing, the contributions of women futurists are finally, after years of being anthologized, examined on their own terms and shed light on the "paradoxical" position of the woman futurist.

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Introduction

On February 20, 1909 in *Le Figaro*, F.T. Marinetti published his scandalous “Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo” thus founding the first European avant-garde movement of the twentieth century: futurism. In it, he broke with the artistic movements of the past to extol a culture of velocity, automobiles, technology, and disdain for women.¹ Even though futurism was based on misogynistic principles, numerous women artists and writers subscribed to the movement, creating what art historian and futurist scholar Christine Poggi has called “the paradox of the futurist woman” (“The Paradox of the Futurist Woman” 23). The position of the woman futurist is, to say the least, a complex one; it has yet to be fully studied and understood. In fact, although futurism was the precursor for subsequent avant-garde movements, scholarship on female futurists pales in comparison to that, for example, on the women of surrealism and dada.² Literary criticism on the corpus of futurist women is scant in the relatively young body of futurist scholarship.³ Only within the past thirty-five years have critics brought to light prominent female futurists such as Valentine de Saint Point, Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, and Enif Robert, to name just a few.⁴ Faced as they were with the difficult task of unearthing the female participants in a movement known for its anti-feminism and misogyny, scholars in this first phase tended to produce accounts that were largely biographical, descriptive, and anthological. This contribution has been crucial in providing invaluable basic information for futurist research, but it is no longer a fruitful project. The women of futurism have already been saved from historical oblivion thanks to the work of Lea Vergine (1980), Claudia Salaris (1982), Barry M. Katz (1987), Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli (1997, 2008), Cecilia Bello Minciocchi (2007) and Giancarlo Carpi (2009).

The centennial anniversary in 2009 of the “Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo” was a significant cultural event in Italy and abroad.⁵ It offered an opportunity to reevaluate the

¹ This hatred of women has been interpreted by many to be associated with the way in which women were sentimentalized and put on a pedestal by men, especially in literature. Although this may be a factor in the futurists’ disdain toward women, it remains that in principle (and also at times in practice) the movement was misogynistic.

² This is especially the case for texts on women and futurism in English, for there are very few of them; however, there are many on women and surrealism and dada. For some influential texts on women and surrealism and dada see Suleiman; Chadwick; Caws, Kuenzli, and Raaberg; Sawelson-Gorse; Rosemont; Lusty; Orenstein; Allmer; Hubert; Conley; Hemus.

³ Due to futurism’s infamous alliance with fascism, scholars were hesitant to turn a critical eye to the literature of the movement after World War II. It was only in the late 1960s and early 1970s that literary criticism on the futurist movement began. Luciano De Maria was critical to literary futurist criticism, especially with his anthology of Marinetti’s writings, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, see Marinetti in the bibliography.

⁴ Valentine de Saint Point, with her two manifestoes “Manifeste de la femme futuriste” (1912) and “Manifeste futuriste de la luxure” (1913) has been considered the first female futurist. Other women futurists include: Marietta Angelini, Giannina Censi, Regina, Barbara, Maria Ferrero Gussago, Flora Bonheur, Maria D’Arezzo, Fiammetta, Mina della Pergola, Elda Norchi, Fanny Dini, Fulvia Giuliani, Rougena Zatkova, Wanda Wulz, Alma Fidora, Adriana Bisi Fabbri, Rosa Rosà, Leandra Angelucci Cominazzini, Marisa Mori, Maria Ginanni, Irma Valeria, Emma Marpillero, Adele Gloria, Enrica Piubellini, Magamal, Alzira Braga, Rosetta Depero, Gigia Corona, Giuseppina Bragaglia, Maria Rizzo, Rosita Lo Jacono, Dina Cucini and Maria Goretti. See Salaris, Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, and Bello Minciocchi for more biographical information on these women futurists.

⁵ Some noteworthy exhibitions were: “Futurismo 1909-2009 Velocità + Arte + Azione,” and “Simultaneità” at the Palazzo reale in Milan, and “F.T. Marinetti= Futurismo” at the Fondazione Stelline, also in Milan; “Astrazioni” at the Correr Museum in Venice; “Illuminazione—avanguardia a confronto Italia—Germania—Russia” at MART in Rovereto; “Futurismo avanguardia avanguardie” curated by Ester Coen in Rome at the Scuderie del Quirinale,

movement, and also women's place within it. The exhibitions and conferences that were organized in 2009 acknowledged women futurists and incorporated their works along with the production of their male counterparts, recognizing their work as part of the movement. There have also been critical studies done on the works of women futurists in recent years.⁶ These analyses to some extent have sought to understand how and why women adhered to and participated in a movement that was largely dominated by men and that had declared its *disprezzo per la donna*. The responses to these questions focus largely on historically contextualizing women's involvement in the movement and pointing out to what degree Marinetti supported women. This latter position always perceives women through the lens of Marinetti. The women of futurism are, for the most part, spoken of in general terms and lumped together; only occasionally have their narrative and artistic works become actual objects of detailed study. While women futurists included artists, writers, dancers, weavers, photographers, essayists, and actresses, for example, most of the critical attention on the *futuriste* has focused on their narrative or their visual works. What is more, even though futurism was particularly known for its verbo-visual aesthetics, such as their typographical *parole in libertà*, the mixed-media work of women has received hardly any scholarly criticism.⁷ The scholarship on women futurists has come to a fork in the road. On one hand, it can continue to go in the general biographical, descriptive and anthological direction, or it can head in a more critical path, looking at women's futurist production analytically and as integral to the movement. Albert R. Ascoli and Randolph Starn recently noted in the introduction to *California Italian Studies* that "female futurists...are just now beginning to get the attention they deserve." It is true that women futurists are receiving long overdue consideration, but not all of it is as productive as others, as the plethora of female futurist anthologies that came out in honor of futurism's centennial in 2009 attest. In order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the entire futurist movement and women's participation in it, we must move forward in current scholarship on female futurists and analyze women futurists' work in specific terms. My dissertation takes precisely this direction: I seek to understand how female futurists employ word and image in their work and I claim that the verbo-visual dynamic of futurist aesthetics aided women in claiming subject positions for themselves.

which then went on to travel to the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Tate Museum in London. Also, the MoMA featured "'Words-in-freedom' Futurismo@ 100" in New York.

⁶See Adamson; Berghaus, "Futurism and Women" and "Marinetti's Volte-Face;" Blum, "Benedetta's Empathic Journey" and "The Scarred Womb;" Brezzi, "Donne eppur futuriste;" Cigliana, "Il seme e la rosa" and "Benedetta e la forma dei sentimenti;" Conaty, "Benedetta Cappa Marinetti" and *Italian Futurism, Gender, Culture, and Power*; Giachero, "Benedetta nel clima del futurismo romano," "...Grands étalages," "I capricci," "Identità femminile," "Mani 'palpatrici,'" "Seduced by Fascism," "Senza preoccupazione plastica;" Contarini, "Guerre maschili/guerre femminili" and *La femme futuriste*; Desideri; Guerricchio; Larkin; Lasker-Ferretti; Mosco; Nozzoli 41-64, Orban; Panzera, *Benedetta Cappa Marinetti* and "La Futurista;" Parati, "The Transparent Woman;" Pickering-Iazzi 202-217; Poggi, "The Paradox of the Futurist Woman;" Re, "Fascist Theories," "Futurism and Fascism," "Futurism and Feminism," "Impure Abstraction," Maria Ginanni, "Rosa Rosà's Futurist-Feminist Short Novel;" "Valentine de Saint-Point;" Salaris, "Benedetta fra le donne;" Sica, "Una donna con tre anime," "Maria Ginanni," "Regenerating Life and Art," "Il testo, il corpo e la cultura futurista;" Spackman 37-40.

⁷ Verbo-visual artist and historian of women futurists, Mirella Bentivoglio, is the only one to have paid attention to these types of works by women futurists. Her writing on the subject remains descriptive and biographical, and not critical. See Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, and Bentivoglio.

One of the defining characteristics of futurism is the porous relationship between the arts that it posits. In this dissertation, I trace one side of this relationship: the marriage of the verbal and the visual.⁸ Central to making the literary page verbo-visual, was the leader of futurism. Marinetti theorized and promoted experimental literature which broke down the barriers between the verbal and the visual through experimental typography.⁹ The introduction of artistic typography to the literary text made poetry and prose visual and initiated the futurist practice of *paroliberismo*, which first included *parole in libertà* (or “words-in-freedom”) done by futurist poets and then went on to comprise the *tavole parolibere* (or “free-word” tables) created by futurist artists. Marinetti coined the term *parole in libertà* to describe poems and words that were expressed through several different fonts, sizes, letters, and colors, which were created by the letterpress. He claimed that in playing with typography and changing the format of the literary page, one could “raddoppiare la forza espressiva delle parole” (“Distruzione della sintassi Immaginazione senza fili Parole in libertà” 77).¹⁰ The founder’s literary manifestoes such as “Manifesto della letteratura futurista” (1912), “Risposte alle obiezioni” (1912), “Distruzione della sintassi Immaginazione senza fili Parole in libertà” (1913), and “Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico e la sensibilità numerica” (1914) outline this futurist genre, while his *Zang Tumb Tuum* (1912) and *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (1919) offer models of *parole in libertà*.

In addition to promoting artistic typography, Marinetti also aimed to revolutionize literature by destroying syntax, banning the literary “I,” adjectives, adverbs, and punctuation; he also encouraged the use of mathematical signs, musical notations, double nouns, infinitive verbs, bizarre analogies, and the introduction of noise, weight, and smell to literature. Despite these revolutionary aspects of Marinetti’s poetics, artistic typography was the most characteristic of all futurist literature because it changed the way the literary work was read and viewed. No longer were readers responsible merely for interpreting the words on the page, they were also made accountable for viewing them and seeing them as art. Literary critic Antonella Ansani explains that “Poetry, which may be considered predominantly acoustic in nature, was thus transformed by the Futurist conception of typography into a visual rather than an auditory message. In its most creative moments, then, poetry would acquire the additional status of visual art” (51). This new kind of literary text made the verbal visual, and the visual verbal, and it created a new language which seeped into all the other literary and artistic fields and genres of futurism. Indeed, *paroliberismo* made all verbo-visual futurist experimentation possible, such as the collages of Carlo Carrà and Ardengo Soffici, Fortunato Depero’s bolted book, Tullio D’Albisola

⁸ The futurist experimentation with the two media came upon the heels of a long, and at times, conflicted relationship between the two arts. The relationship between the verbal and visual has taken on various forms since antiquity. Horace’s dictum *ut pictura poeisis* created a sisterhood of the arts, whereas the Renaissance thrived in comparing the two by way of the *paragone*. Lessing’s seminal *Laocoon* separated them in the eighteenth century, assigning temporality and masculinity to the verbal arts and spatiality and femininity to the visual ones. These figured relationships tended to either focus on the two arts’ similarities or differences. At the heart of this bringing together and pulling apart of the arts are the politics of cultural representation. As W.J.T. Mitchell explains in *Picture Theory* “‘Word and Image’ is the name of a commonplace distinction between types of representation, a shorthand way of dividing, mapping, and organizing the field of representation” (3). Since culture and its ideals of representation are constantly in flux, so too has the relationship between word and image changed throughout history.

⁹ Marinetti was influenced by Stéphane Mallarmé in his creation of *parole in libertà*, see Bartram for more on the history of “words-in-freedom.”

¹⁰ All Marinetti quotes in this dissertation come from *Teoria e invenzione futurista*.

and Marinetti's "words-in-freedom" book made out of tin, the *tavole parolibere* of the futurist painters, Giacomo Balla's typographical scenes for the theater, and the co-existence of word and image in other fields such as theater, dance, photography, and culinary arts.

The futurist verbo-visual dynamic altered the traditional relationship between word and image. Instead of looking at the two arts as either similar or drastically different, it fused them together in futurist works, forcing futurist authors to be both artists and writers, and readers to be both visually and verbally literate at the same time. From this fusion, a new verbo-visual language came into existence. This new language opened the page up to the canvas and the canvas to the word, in addition to allowing writers and artists to express themselves in multiple ways. "The 'differences' between images and language," writes word-image scholar W.J.T. Mitchell, "are not merely formal matters: they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between 'hearsay' and 'eyewitness' testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects or actions (seen, depicted, described); between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience" (5). From Mitchell's account, we can conclude that the merging of words and images doubles the narrative possibilities and allows for both showing and telling.

The opportunity to express oneself in different ways at the same time could have been especially attractive to marginalized figures such as women in the beginning of the twentieth century, because it potentially set up a mechanism whereby one can expand, subvert, and change the terms of representation to fit one's own agenda. The female futurist oeuvre is particularly rich in verbal and visual experimentation. Besides creating *parole-in-libertà* and *tavole parolibere*, women futurists experimented with typography in their novels and poetry, described colors and shapes at length in their works, and illustrated books, recipes, and poems. My research acknowledges that the dual use of word and image in the works of women allows them to go both with and against the principles of the futurist movement. I argue, in fact, that the verbo-visual experimentation that futurism promoted aided *le futuriste* in changing the terms of representation so that, in some cases, a new female subjectivity might be brought into existence.

I look at female futurism through the particular lens of *paroliberismo* because it is an important futurist practice that defined the movement. It is the most revolutionary way in which futurism challenged the literary page. By concentrating on the way in which women took on this specific futurist practice, the bigger questions that other critics have posed generally, such as how *le futuriste* participated in a misogynistic movement, are put more clearly into focus. The criticism on the work of women futurists has not been able to advance adequately because too many "big" questions have had to be answered about which women contributed to futurism, and why and how they did. Only in turning our attention to their work and posing specific questions about representational strategies can we begin to understand and illustrate the stakes in female futurism. This dissertation begins to bridge these gaps by taking an interdisciplinary approach. I do close textual and visual analysis on a select number of rare and under-studied women futurists' works within the particular framework of *paroliberismo*. In so doing, we can begin to grasp more closely how women utilized one of futurism's particular aesthetic practices to express themselves.

To delimit the scope of my project, I have singled out verbo-visual strategies and alternate types of *parole in libertà* in mixed-media works by futurist women from 1914 to 1924. These works include illustrated novellas, a novel, and "words-in-freedom." The time period of

the works that I am examining coincides with the years directly following the publication of Marinetti's manifestoes on "words-in-freedom" and the years in which *paroliberismo* came to fruition and dominated futurist art and literature. Additionally, this tenure also overlaps with the second phase of futurism, which is marked by its significant female participation.¹¹ The Florentine journal, *L'Italia futurista* and the Roman journal *Roma futurista*, for example, featured numerous contributions by women. Women's involvement in futurism during these years is due, in part, to its correlation with World War I. With men away at war, many women were able to obtain more freedom and find new roles for themselves, such as writers and artists.¹²

The position of the futurist woman from 1914 to 1924 was an intermediary one and it is indicative of the historical period in which the verbo-visual pieces in this dissertation were produced. In Italy, before the *Grande Guerra*, the initial waves of feminism began to hit Italy, belatedly compared, for example, to Great Britain. During the war women obtained a new-found freedom with the men away at the front. Women took charge in the public and social spheres and in doing so, they found new agency. As female futurist Rosa Rosà explains in her 1917 protofeminist article "Le donne del posdomani" in *L'Italia futurista*: "La Guerra ci ha scosse come gli uomini. Inutile ripetere che in questo istante milioni di donne hanno assunto—al posto di uomini—lavori che fin ora si credeva solo uomini potessero eseguire, riscuotendo salari che fin ora il lavoro *onesto* della donna non aveva mai saputo ottenere. Sono utili ora, le donne, utilissime" (*Una donna con tre anime* 113). After World War I, women, as Rosà explains, both saw themselves and were seen, in a different, more productive and valuable light. Nevertheless, before, during, and after the war, women still had not obtained rights or independence, and therefore they were between their old, traditional position and a new one that had yet to be defined.

The futurist movement died along with Marinetti in 1944, therefore from Benedetta's publication of *Le forze umane* in 1924, which I will examine in chapter four, until the movement's end there were still twenty years of futurism left. This period is definitively marked by fascism and futurism's relationship to it and convergence, to some extent, with it. The latter years of futurism were not as richly marked by women's participation, even though there were still women who called themselves *futuriste*, such as the visual artists Regina, Barbara and Leandra Angelucci Cominazzini, and poets and writers such as Benedetta, Laura Serra and Maria Goretti. Many of these women contributed to futurism's new aesthetic practices—*aeropoesia* and *aeropittura*, types of literary and painterly practices that were to reproduce the sensations of flying. This new futurist mode replaced *paroliberismo*, fusing painting and literature (independently) with the effects of flight and the airplane. No longer did words and images join and allow women to express themselves in both media. At the same time, fascism had relegated women back into the home and their identity was no longer intermediary, but positioned firmly once again as wife and mother.¹³

¹¹ The first phase of futurism is known as the "heroic phase" and lasts approximately, until the death of Boccioni in the war, in 1916. In the latter part of the 1920s *paroliberismo* began to die out as futurism took on politics and as fascism began to dominate the cultural and political scene.

¹² For more on World War I and women see Molinari, Belzer, and Mondello.

¹³ Just how the women expressed this condition in their futurist works is a new line of research that has yet to be addressed.

This study explores the various verbo-visual strategies women futurists employ in their work and how they concomitantly challenge and support the movement. I pay close attention to the way in which *le futuriste* took advantage of the word-image dynamic to find a place for themselves within futurism on their own terms. I am particularly interested in the slippery in-between places in which we find women futurists' work—not only between words and images, but also between texts, and genres and between futurism and non-futurism. This gray area represents much of the futurist women's work I examine, for it is never truly for or against futurism, but somewhere in the middle. In the mixed-media works of women futurists from 1914 to 1924, I see three dominant trends. The first strategy is parody, which is the topic of chapters one and two; the second is handwriting and the focus of chapter three; and the third is appropriation, the subject of the fourth chapter. More specifically, chapter one discusses the textual parody in Flora Bonheur's *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista* and chapter two illustrates the visual effects of that same parodic text. Chapter three examines the handwritten "words-in-freedom" produced by Benedetta and Rosa Rosà, and chapter four the literary appropriation of art theory in Benedetta's novel *Le forze umane*. The chapters are organized in chronological order so that the development of women's employment and adaptation of *paroliberismo* can be highlighted. Throughout the dissertation, I employ textual and visual analysis in order to better understand the complexity of the female futurists' work and how they used word and image.

In chapter one, "The Chiastic Parodies of *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*: For the Love of *passatismo* or *futurismo*?" I examine Flora Bonheur's two-volume narrative, *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*. This hard-to-find and rarely-analyzed work is unique because it mixes first-person narrative with "words-in-freedom" and illustrations. The two volumes of *Diario*, entitled *L'amore per il marito* and *L'amore per l'amante*, detail the relationships that Albina Folgore, the protagonist, has with her husband and her futurist lover. The volumes parody both futurism and *passatismo*, or "passatism," the term coined by the futurists to express traditional culture. I argue that the volumes are structured by a chiasmus, making *L'amore per il marito* a parody of futurism, and *L'amore per l'amante* a parody of "passatism." In the chapter I discuss the theoretical implications of parody and illustrate how it can reinforce and honor that which it parodies. *Diario*, I claim, promotes both literary styles and allows Bonheur to contribute to both "movements," from which, as a female subject, she has been excluded. This chapter advances my overall argument by illustrating parody as a narrative strategy and the way in which *Diario* goes both with and against futurism.

I analyze the visual elements of Bonheur's text in chapter two, "The Visual Constants of *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*." I take into consideration the "words-in-freedom," book and graphic design, and the illustrations that are central to the piece. I explain how the *parole in libertà* function as *fin de siècle* illustrations do and how they, along with the frontispieces, were produced through lithography, not a typical futurist technique for creating "words-in-freedom." In the section on the illustrations, I employ the iconography of the erotic postcard—a highly popular medium in the early twentieth century—to inform my readings of the drawings executed by Luigi Bignami for Flora Bonheur. This iconography goes against the verbal narrative and makes the protagonist of *Diario* an object to-be-looked at rather than a sexual agent as she portrays herself in the narrative. The "words-in-freedom" and the illustrations are extensions and representative of the parodied literary styles discussed in chapter one and are consistent within

the text, making them a stable feature in a text that, because of its chiasmic parodies, is unstable. This chapter shows how “words-in-freedom” are used in a non-futurist way and how the illustrations lure men into an autobiographical text that is typically associated with the feminine.

In chapter three, “Leaving Their Mark: Women Futurists’ Handwritten *Parole in Libert *,” I examine women’s production of handwritten “words-in-freedom.” During the second phase of futurism, several women created *parole in libert *. Notably, a large percentage of them produced them by hand rather than employing the letterpress or creative typography. After addressing the historical and cultural contexts of the early twentieth century which associated handwriting with human psychology and the body, I argue that handwriting allowed women to reinsert a tie to the literary “I” that Marinetti banned from futurist literature. It provided an alternative to typography and gave them the possibility to leave a trace of themselves in their work. In this chapter I analyze two of the most often-cited yet rarely-analyzed “free-word” compositions done by women that were both done by hand: Benedetta’s “Spicologia di 1 uomo” (sic) (1919) and Rosa Ros ’s “Ricevimento—th —signore—nessun uomo” (1917). In the former I sift through the esoteric and personal meanings of the piece, and highlight how Benedetta gives herself pseudo-religious agency by signing her piece as “Benedetta fra le donne.” In the latter, I focus on the way in which Ros  takes on a misogynist and classist position against Italian bourgeois women in order to differentiate herself from them. This chapter advances the idea that women used handwriting as a “free-word” strategy to distinguish themselves while also adhering to futurist principles.

Chapter four, “Appropriating the Abstract: Benedetta’s *Le forze umane* and Mondrian’s Neoplasticism” analyzes Benedetta’s first novel, *Le forze umane* (1924). The novel is an especially rich site for analyzing word and image in female futurism because it juxtaposes drawings with narrative. Benedetta calls these drawings *sintesi grafiche* and claims that they are “sviluppi del paroliberismo” (*I tre romanzi* 118). As such, Benedetta’s verbo-visual project attempts to surpass futurism’s *parole in libert *. In this chapter, I focus on the juxtaposition of word to image and argue that it serves to appropriate Piet Mondrian’s theory of abstraction, neoplasticism. Upon publication of the novel, Benedetta’s contemporaries were quick to question its adherence to futurism because of its philosophical density, focus on romantic love, first-person narrative, unflattering portrait of war, and its puzzling drawings. The recent, yet scant, critical scholarship on *Le forze umane* tends to focus on three main aspects of the text: the word-image relationship, the reason for which Benedetta defines her novel abstract, and the dialectical motion on which the text is based. All of these issues, along with the text’s questionable loyalty to futurism are resolved when *Le forze umane* is read intertextually with several of Piet Mondrian’s articles on abstraction that were printed in the Dutch art journal *De Stijl*. Throughout the novel, Benedetta appropriates the concepts of Mondrian’s abstraction, neoplasticism, in two different ways—both structurally and thematically. In recreating neoplasticism in literature, Benedetta tries to amend futurism through an avant-garde model within the visual arts that was less harsh and more spiritual and assigned women a role in the production of art. The inclusion of a futurist-like manifesto at the end of the novel allows Benedetta to slap on the futurist label and hide its ideological underpinnings while at the same time it reproduces the tenets of neoplasticism—a gesture which signals an act of appropriation and which microcosmically represents Benedetta’s project throughout *Le forze umane*. The novel aims to alter futurism through the appropriation of a different avant-garde movement. Not only does this move suggest

a fraternity and fluidity among the avant-garde movements, it also indicates a new strategy of the futurist woman. Benedetta tries to change futurism from the outside in: she brings the concepts from neoplasticism into futurism. In this way, the chapter further illustrates another verbo-visual strategy used by a woman futurist.

While chapters one and four focus more on literary strategies and the function of images, chapters two and three highlight the visual qualities of the works. Apart from the verbo-visual dynamic, throughout my study I pay particular attention to autobiography, subjectivity, intertextuality, and conversion narratives. Each is a leitmotif that runs throughout the dissertation and their connection to verbo-visuality will be explored more fully in the conclusion. Together, the four chapters work together to illustrate alternatives to “words-in-freedom” and how women used *paroliberismo* to go both with and against the futurist grain, creating an intermediary position for themselves.

Chapter I: The Chiastic Parodies of *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*:

For the Love of *Passatismo* or *Futurismo*?

According to established literary criticism on futurism, there is a gap in female futurist production between the publication of Valentine de Saint Point's manifestoes—"Manifeste de la femme futuriste" (1912) and "Manifeste de la luxure" (1913)—and Marietta Angelini's *parole in libertà* compositions in *Vela latina*—"Ritratto di Marinetti" and "Ritratto di Cangiullo"—published in 1916. Women's participation in futurism during its early stages was sporadic and limited to projects that were sponsored or directed by men.¹⁴ *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, apparently written by a woman and dating from approximately the same time period as the works of de Saint Point and Angelini, stands as an exception to the assumed role of female writers in early futurist literature.

Diario is an illustrated work comprised of two independently titled volumes: *L'amore per il marito*, and *L'amore per l'amante*. The two volumes are concise (twenty nine and thirty pages in length, respectively) first-person accounts of the life of Albina Folgore, a young, audacious, newly-married, middle-class woman. In *L'amore per il marito*, Albina nostalgically recounts her promiscuous adolescence, and laments her troubled initial years of marriage to Ildebrando Martelli. The second volume, *L'amore per l'amante*, offers a titillating description of the author's affair with a futurist poet, Enrico Del Tramonto. Together the volumes depict Albina's bourgeois lifestyle and her discontent with it. This narrative of Albina Folgore is accompanied by illustrations done by Luigi Bignami and *parole in libertà*, which are peppered throughout the volumes to create a unique mélange of words and images.¹⁵ The text is signed by a certain Flora Bonheur, believed by many to be a pseudonym; no one has yet conjectured who the real Flora Bonheur could be. The text posits a first-person female writing subject, and yet it remains that *Diario* could have been written by either a man or a woman. Similarly unidentifiable is the text's date of publication.¹⁶ Two futurist scholars have hypothesized possible publication dates for

¹⁴ Valentine de Saint Point was supported by Marinetti and her first manifesto is a response to the "scorn for women" addressed in his "Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo." Larkin explains that Marinetti "solicited Valentine de Saint Point, a poet whose symbolist works he had published in his review *Poesia*, to write the first manifesto on women and futurism. Her manifestos... were not only published by the *Direzione del Movimento Futurista*, they were even promoted by Marinetti himself..." (8). And as we shall see in chapter three, in the case of Marietta Angelini, she was introduced to the futurist world by Francesco Cangiullo in *Vela Latina* in 1916. Later, in 1919, Enif Robert co-wrote her novel *Un ventre di donna: Romanzo chirurgico* with Marinetti.

¹⁵ I will address the illustrations and the "words-in-freedom" of *Diario* in chapter two.

¹⁶ *Diario* was published in Bologna, by the Stabilimento poligrafico emiliano (which seems to have been renamed Stabilimento poligrafico Riuniti shortly thereafter and therefore it could have been associated with the same group that published the *Resto del Carlino* in Bologna, which it later became). French scholar Barbara Meazzi writes of the publisher: "Je pense que l'éditeur... particulièrement actif dans les années Diz et Vingt dans le domaine scientifique, n'avait pas dû s'affairer beaucoup autour de la distribution de ces deux ouvrages qui, au milieu de tous les autres titres (130 environ), constituent une véritable exception éditoriale" (203 n37). In his *Taccuini (1915-1921)*, Marinetti calls it an "opuscolo commerciale" (266), which, in light of the publisher's possible connection to the *Resto del Carlino*, would suggest that it was a piece produced for the masses, perhaps in coordination with the newspaper. For more on *Il resto del Carlino* in this time period, see Malatesta. The two volumes are, in fact, quite brief and in line with the length of journalistic writing or with the genre of the novella. In *Il Dizionario del futurismo*, Cammorata calls it a "romanzetto erotico-sentimentale" (154). On the back of each volume the price was printed and at the time a volume cost .50 *lire*. The volumes could also have been independently published, for, as Johanna Drucker notes

Diario. Claudia Salaris speculates that the work was published in 1914, and Domenico Cammarota suggests 1917, yet neither of these critics substantially supports the dates they propose.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is certain that *Diario* predates June 1918, when, Marinetti briefly noted in his *Taccuini* that a “bella barbiera” in Thiene gave him “un opuscolo commerciale...con caricatura semi oscena di parole in libertà” (266).¹⁸ While significant to the study of women futurists, Flora Bonheur’s text is nonetheless shrouded in mystery.

The criticism on *Diario* is scant, which could be due to the fact that it is hard-to-find and that there are lacunae in its literary history.¹⁹ However, many scholars, such as Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, Hulten, Cammarota, Pickering-Iazzi, Salaris, Burke, Cassinelli, Cossetta, Contarini, and Mosco do briefly mention *Diario* in their accounts of futurism.²⁰ Only recently have two literary critics, Erin Larkin and Barbara Meazzi, taken the work more seriously and have written more extensively about it. Larkin, in her dissertation, “‘Il mio futurismo’: Appropriation, Dissent, and the ‘questione della donna’ in the Works of Women of Italian Futurism,” comments on it briefly, doing a few close readings of the first volume and arguing that Albina is “the female counterpart to the multiplied man” (56), who criticizes the bourgeoisie and mirrors her childhood on Marinetti’s.²¹ Meazzi’s article, “Flora Bonheur et l’amour futuriste,” includes less textual analysis and is more of a philological study and description of the work. Meazzi posits that *Diario* was published sometime between May 1, 1913 and June 1914. She also hypothesizes that the author of *Diario* is somehow tied to the Florentine futurist group and suggests that the volumes “pourraient constituer, involontairement sans doute, les prodromes d’une production Romanesque à venir, dont on n’aurait, à cette époque d’avant la guerre, que des signes

“Literary publications, independently produced and serving to showcase artwork and writing unpublishable in a commercial framework or in trade book form, were a well established genre by the turn of the century” (103).

¹⁷ Certainly, the difference between 1914 and 1917 is significant, for the first positions *Diario* within pre-war Italy and the later places it in a war-torn Italy, when many women assumed new social roles while men were away at the frontlines of World War I.

¹⁸ In his *Taccuini* entry dated June 21 and 22, 1918, Marinetti writes “Vado a Thiene. Trovo la bella barbiera che mi saluta affettuosamente e mi dà un opuscolo commerciale Rosa [Flora] Bonheur donna futurista con caricatura semi oscena di *parole in libertà*.” Unfortunately, Marinetti does not clarify which volume of *Diario* he read or if he read both. It is unknown whether or not the volumes were published together or separately and if they were indeed published separately, we are also unaware of the difference in publication dates between the two.

¹⁹ There are very few copies of Bonheur’s volumes in circulation. In Italy, they are available at the University of Milan’s Centro Apice and the Biblioteca Passerini-Landi in Piacenza. In the United States, a copy of the first volume can be found at Yale’s Beinecke library. Luckily, both volumes are now accessible to anyone from anywhere in the world thanks to the University of Milan’s Centro Apice and its Fondo Sergio Reggi; the works have been scanned and can be easily downloaded. In order to see and download the volumes, go to <http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/>. One must first install the DjVu viewer program before downloading, which can be done from Centro Apice’s website. The works are listed in alphabetical order and can be found under “Amore per il marito (L’)” and “Amore per l’amante (L’).” All the images from *Diario d’una giovane donna futurista* in the list of figures have been provided by Centro Apice. Thank you to Valentina Zanchin for her help and guidance at Centro Apice.

²⁰ Notably, many of the new female futurist anthologies which were published in 2009 around the centennial of futurism, such as those by Bello Minciocchi and Carpi, do not mention Bonheur at all.

²¹ Larkin does not fully take into consideration the effects of parody in *Diario* and also admits to not having read the second volume of *Diario* because she was unable to locate it. For her analysis and commentary on *Diario*, see Larkin 51-57, 60.

prémonitoires” (205). These commentaries are a promising sign of new scholarly interest in *Diario*, yet they do not get to the heart of the text.

Most critics, with the exception of Larkin and Meazzi, do not consider *Diario* part of the futurist oeuvre because they understand it to be a parody of futurism. Parody is a literary mode that can imitate a genre, literary movement, author, or style while poking fun and critiquing what it emulates in a humorous way. Another reason scholars have been reluctant to incorporate *Diario* into futurism is because they have been unable to locate both volumes, which gives them an incomplete knowledge of *Diario*.²² *L'amore per il marito*, the more prevalent of the two volumes, parodies elements of futurism, yet it only tells half of *Diario*'s story.²³ Further creating confusion around an already slippery and mysterious text, critics of *Diario* do not make a clear distinction between parody and satire. Satire differs from parody in that it imitates in order to denounce, whereas parody emulates, but does not necessarily condemn what it mimics. For example, Salaris writes “Flora Bonheur...oscilla tra un uso satirico degli strumenti linguistici del futurismo e l'adesione scherzosa alle tematiche del movimento. Non avendo però alcuna notizia ufficiale della Bonheur, bisogna immaginare che il suo fu un *exploit* determinato più da un gusto del gioco che non da una vera e propria convinzione...” (*Le futuriste* 29). And visual artist and historian of female futurists Mirella Bentivoglio claims that *Diario* is “Una parodia; che non può fare notizia, poiché l'uso ironico della pratica parolibera vi si sommava a uno scherzoso impiego delle tematiche futuriste” (*Le futuriste italiane* 25).²⁴ While Meazzi argues “il me semble que les deux parties du journal de Flora Bonheur peuvent—et devraient—être lues, certes, comme une sorte de *scherzo*...” (205).²⁵ Scholar Carolyn Burke simply says “the work of the mysterious Flora Bonheur was undoubtedly meant as a satire” (161). And finally, Larkin writes that the volumes are “more than simply satire...they appropriate futurist techniques to parody issues of gender and society” (51). In these accounts, the critics blend the terms of parody and satire and some even use the excuse of parody and/or satire to justify not analyzing *Diario* further or not considering it within the futurist context. Prior to this study, *Diario* has been overlooked by many on the assumption that it is a parody, instead, I want to now open it up with a better,

²² Salaris writes of *Diario* in her 1982 publication, *Le futuriste*, hypothesizing that “Probabilmente erano previsti altri fascicoli del <<diario>> riguardanti altri argomenti, lo lascerebbe intendere il numero 1 stampato in copertina, ma per ora non se ne ha alcuna traccia” (257). For Salaris, then, in 1982, *Diario* included only one volume.

²³ Only Meazzi seems to have read both volumes. Salaris, as previously mentioned, notes that there is only one but that there could have been more. Bentivoglio hypothesizes in a footnote that there might be two, as per the suggestion of Mario Verdone (*Women Artists of Italian Futurism* 171). *Il Dizionario del futurismo* does, however, claim that there are two volumes and lists the titles. And Larkin writes that “despite exhaustive efforts” (52) she was unable to find the second volume of *Diario* for her study.

²⁴ This quote comes from Bentivoglio and Zoccoli's seminal anthology and commentary *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive*. However, I only credit Bentivoglio for this quote because their book is divided into two sections. Bentivoglio writes on women futurists' “free-word” tables, dance, and literary pieces whereas Zoccoli focuses instead on the visual artists. Their first book, *The Women Artists of Italian Futurism*, published in English in 1997, is essentially the same text as their 2008 Italian book. I prefer the Italian version and quote mostly from it in this dissertation.

²⁵ Meazzi also argues that *Diario* should be considered futurist. She writes “Il me semble judicieux de constater phénoménologiquement que les deux textes de la dénommée Flora Bonheur pourraient parfaitement être considérés comme futuriste aussi à cause de la prise de position *proto-futur-féministe* de la narratrice et malgré leur contenu ironique, si on les compare à d'autres romans futuristes” (205).

clearer understanding of this complex and sophisticated literary mode and how it works in Bonheur's text.

I would like to suggest, having gained access to both volumes of *Diario* in the Fondo Sergio Reggi at the University of Milan's Centro Apice, that while the first volume may be a parody of futurism, the second volume is a parody of *passatismo*, a term coined by the futurists to describe traditional culture and literature. In employing a dual parody, Bonheur participates in and critiques both futurism and "passatism." Furthermore, the entire work is structured by a chiasmus, a figure of speech that inverts words, clauses, sentences, and in the case of *Diario*, volumes. In organizing her text in this way, Bonheur intimates that the strict boundary futurism established between itself and traditional culture does not exist. This was especially so for women writers, for whom the "passatists" made very little room and whom the futurists openly abhorred. *Diario*'s chiasmic parodies suggest that for the female writing subject, the two literary movements were similar because they both offered her limited entry. The apparently black and white options that were offered to women at the time—either futurism or "passatism"—both made access into the literary world difficult for women and were thus two sides of the same coin. As such, parody was one of the few literary choices for those women who could not, or did not want to choose one literary style over the other.²⁶

In this chapter, I will first give a brief theoretical overview of parody and explain how it works and what it does. With a delineation of the effects and purpose of parody, we can better understand what is at stake in parodic representation. I will illustrate, using several textual examples, how Bonheur's text provides evidence of the ways in which women were marginalized in the literary world and society at large. In light of the examples I have strategically chosen, it will become evident why Bonheur employs parody in *Diario*: as a mode of resistance to established literary and social traditions. In the latter part of this chapter, I show how the female writing subject in *Diario* waivers in her mode of self-presentation. For example, throughout the text, Albina asks the readers whether it is appropriate to use futurist or "passatist" terms to express herself. The examples I point to serve as proof that Bonheur's text grapples with the futurist-"passatist" binary and show the ways in which the female writing subject, at the advent of futurism, struggles to reconcile a new literary world that was altered by futurist ideologies. The remainder of the chapter details several textual analyses of inversions, both within and between the two volumes of *Diario*. These analyses will make a strong case for the chiasmic structure of the text. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the parodies of *Diario* are not strictly against futurism or "passatism," but are, actually, in favor of them and moreover, a part of them. With my analysis—the first comprehensive and analytical one on this rare text—I show how parody is a strategy with which the female writing subject initially approaches futurism and finds her place, albeit a liminal one, within modernism. *Diario* shows, perhaps more than any other text within this time period and in the Italian context, how a female writing subject dealt with the changes that futurism gave rise to in the literary world.

An Overview of Parody

²⁶ I define "passatism" as both a literary movement and a "literary style," but "passatism" includes various types of texts and movements. *Diario*, I believe, is defining things from a futurist point of view and therefore I use these two terms exclusively, but I do realize that there are several nuances that the term "passatism" does not reflect.

Parody is a literary mode that is constantly changing. In its simplest form, parody overtly mimics a discourse, text, or style by recontextualizing it ironically; creating a new text that closely resembles the original, but never completely duplicates it. A close relative to several other slippery literary modes (such as satire, travesty, burlesque, caricature, allusion, and pastiche) parody is inherently intertextual. In *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, literary critic and theorist Linda Hutcheon defines parody in more general terms as “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (6). This definition of parody accommodates its ever-changing nature and highlights the ways in which modern and postmodern parody can easily assume a wide range of attitudes. For this study, the work of Hutcheon is most useful. Hutcheon writes that parody can range “from the ironic and playful to the scornful and ridiculing” (6). Hutcheon’s work on parody is most suitable for discussing the way the literary mode functions in *Diario* because it focuses on forms of parody in the twentieth century.²⁷ Moreover, Hutcheon posits that parody does not necessarily mock what it imitates. In fact, for Hutcheon, the employment of parody can instead honor and reinforce. This view of parody goes well with *Diario*, because I contend that it does not ridicule “passatism” or futurism, but it instead opens them up and strengthens each of them, even if it does so in a sometimes humorous way.

Parody has a tendency to go hand in hand with humor; however, comedy is an inconsistent feature of *Diario*. Italian literary critic Gino Tellini, in *Rifare il verso* explains “Il parodista modifica e trasforma ma lascia intravedere le fattezze dell’originale...con intenti per lo più (non sempre) dilettevoli: comici, faceti, burleschi, senza—almeno intenzionalmente—il sottofondo puntuto e moralistico che è proprio della satira” (5). In discussing the comical side of parody, Tellini draws an important distinction between parody and satire, which are considered by many literary theorists to be the most closely related of literary modes. Scholar of satire Charles A. Knight writes that “The satiric practice of imitating, parodying, and borrowing other forms is undertaken as definers of satire agree, in the interests of attacking not only evil but the actual, historical individuals who perpetrate it” (22). Based on Tellini and Knight’s assertions we can conclude that satire intentionally attacks. The difference between satire and parody is that the former mimics in order to solely bring down and place judgment on its target whereas the latter can imitate it for a number of reasons—to critique, to honor, or to play, for example. Returning to Hutcheon, we see that satire is “extramural” and parody is “intramural.” In *A Theory of Parody* she contends:

Both satire and parody imply critical distancing and therefore value judgments, but satire generally uses that distance to make a negative statement about that which is satirized—“to distort, to belittle, to wound” (Hight 1962, 69). In modern parody, however, we have found that no such negative judgment is necessarily suggested in the ironic contrasting of texts. Parodic art both deviates from an aesthetic norm and includes that norm within itself as backgrounded material. Any real attack would be self-destructive. (44-45)

²⁷ For more on parody see Bakhtin; Genette; Hutcheon; Rose, *Parody/Metafiction and Parody*; Denith; Chatman; Mack; Harries; Phiddian.

Based on Hutcheon, we can presume that parody always depends on the text it imitates whereas satire can exist independently of the text it seeks to satirize. Satire can employ parody to bring down what it despises. However, satire can never be a tool of parody. Hutcheon's idea that parodic art strays from an "aesthetic norm" while also making it a part of the work is essential to my analysis of *Diario*. Novelist Vladimir Nabokov also sums up the relationship between satire and parody well when he writes "Satire is a lesson; parody is a game" (75). Indeed, *Diario* is playing a game, not giving a lesson. Flora Bonheur's text in no way seeks to wound futurism or "passatism," but instead seeks to upset the presumed framework of the two literary schools by criticizing their structure, language, and tenets and thus open them up to a female point of view.

Having examined how parody differs from satire, I would like to now focus on how parody works—chiefly through self-reflexivity and irony. Margaret Rose, an important voice on parody, has been key in discussing the metafictional nature of parody. In *Parody//Metafiction*, Rose defines "the metafiction that some parody provides" as "a mirror to fiction, in the ironic form of the imitation of art in art, as well as by more direct references...to authors, books, and readers" (65). While it is true that parody does tend to be self-referential, not all metafiction is parody and not all parody is metaliterary. *Diario* is aware of itself when it addresses its readers, comments on itself, and exhibits a *mise-en-abyme* pattern.²⁸ This self-reflexivity serves parody well because it helps writers to encode the text as parodic and readers to decode it.²⁹ Nevertheless, parody often resembles an original text so well that it can risk not being read as a parody. Additionally, if the reader is unfamiliar with the parodied text or style, the parodic nature may also be lost on him. This instability of parody encourages metaliterariness. In parodic texts therefore, metaliterariness functions "either to orient or to disorient the reader" (*A Theory of Parody* 92).³⁰ *Diario* is particularly concerned with the reader in *L'amore per il marito*. However, in *L'amore per l'amante* it is not aware of its readers, but is, instead, noticeably self-aware of its status as diary and frequently refers to that status. This self-reflexiveness is key in making the parodic nature of *Diario* easily identifiable to its readers.

Parody works closely with irony. Indeed the "distance" to which Hutcheon refers to in her definition of parody, comes precisely from irony.³¹ In the simplest definition of dramatic irony, irony results from saying one thing and meaning another. Parody works like irony in that it imitates an original text, it "says" it, but at the same time, it "means" something else because it is, as theorist Mikhail Bakhtin writes in *The Dialogic Imagination*, "double-voiced." What is being parodied can no longer "mean" what it originally said when it is ironically repositioned

²⁸ This *mise-en-abyme* pattern is beyond the scope of this paper, but it can be seen, for example, when Albina talks of mimicking Filippo Derblay, a character from Georges Ohnet's novel *Maître des forges*, in front of the mirror as an adolescent in *L'amore per il marito* (6). The first step to creating parody is by learning, not only the discourses of a literary school or text, but its line of reasoning, and its logic. Albina claims to have first learned the rhetoric of *Maître des forges* by heart and then she acted "come aveva dovuto agire Filippo" in front of the mirror. Tellingly, she did not act exactly *like* Filippo, but as she thought he *should* act, creating the repetition with difference of which Hutcheon speaks. Albina here calls attention to the liberty she takes in recreating a scene from *Maître des forges*, just as Bonheur takes liberty with "passatism" and futurism in *Diario*, pointing to the work's *mise-en-abyme*.

²⁹ See Hutcheon's chapter "Encoding and Decoding" in *A Theory of Parody* (84-99).

³⁰ Importantly, Hutcheon notes that modern parodic texts are less metaliterary than postmodern texts and wonders if this is due to the fact that modernist writers had more confidence in their readers' ability to decode parody (98).

³¹ After having written *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon wrote about irony in *Irony's Edge*, which she calls the sequel to her book on parody, it is listed in the bibliography. All the quotations from Hutcheon in this dissertation come from *A Theory of Parody* however.

and when there is a second voice competing with it. For example, *Diario* positions futurism incongruently with “passatism” both within and between the volumes, making it unable to “say” and “mean” futurism or “passatism” at the same time. Incongruity is a key ironic strategy, especially in *Diario*, because it makes something “say” the opposite of what it “means.” Parody scholar Robert Phiddian, writes “Parody is crooked, reflexive writing, with the instability of irony inscribed deep in its structure” (683). Irony, then, is part of parody’s DNA.

I want to briefly discuss why and when parody comes to be employed because it will help us better understand what is at stake in *Diario*. Parody has existed since the times of Ancient Greece.³² However, some claim that it appears more often in times of literary stagnation or renewal. Literary critic Lorna Sage calls parody “an internal check that literature keeps on itself” (167). Parody is, in fact, a form of literary criticism that can either encourage rejuvenation or conservation. Usually, parody takes over an “old” style, text, or language, and brings it into the present, such as when *Don Quixote* parodies chivalric romance and revitalizes it. However, it can also assume a conservative nature and criticize a new literary mode. Hutcheon describes this latter effect: “From Chaucer to Ben Jonson, through to the nineteenth-century Smith Brothers, parodies were used in English literature as a means of control of excesses in literary fashion; the rise of avant-garde forms, in particular, gave these writers something upon which to exercise their parodic conservatism” (77). Uniquely, the result of *Diario* is both conservative and reviving because it first parodies futurism in *L’amore per il marito* and then “passatism” in *L’amore per l’amante*. These two forces—of both revival and conservatism—present in *Diario*, show, in no uncertain terms, the way in which the text struggles to come to terms with a literary world changed by futurism’s presence. Existing in a changing modern world from which she is always already excluded, Bonheur is unwilling to go in just one literary direction so she concomitantly tries to revitalize and conserve the two most prevalent forms of literature.³³

Parody can be subversive, but it can also honor a parodied text. As rhetorician Seymour Chatman claims “No one can deny the claim that parody is at once ridicule and *homage*. Indeed the term’s ambivalence is built into its very etymology, since *para* can mean either ‘against’ or ‘alongside of’ Certainly we all know and accept good-natured teasing, and in many cases that’s all that parodies do” (33). In other words, parody can at times “laugh at you,” but it can also “laugh with you,” and in the latter kind of laughter there can be affection, respect, and loyalty. *Diario*, in fact, laughs with futurism and “passatism,” revealing its admiration for them both. As Hutcheon claims, this type of tribute is an “authorized transgression.” “Parody’s transgressions,” writes Hutcheon, “ultimately remain authorized—authorized by the very norm it seeks to subvert. Even in mocking, parody reinforces; in formal terms, it inscribes the mocked conventions onto itself, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence” (75). This aspect of parody is important in analyzing *Diario* because it parodies both futurism and “passatism,” and therefore it does not judiciously denounce either of them, but it actually honors both by repeating and strengthening them.

Parody has been especially useful to feminist, queer and postcolonial theorists because it has allowed these marginalized groups to rebel against, poke fun at, and challenge the hegemonic

³² See Denith’s chapter “Parody in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds.”

³³ I am referring to those two forms of literature that are most prevalent for the futurists—“passatism” and futurism.

culture.³⁴ Ella Shohat writes that “Parody is especially appropriate for the discussion of ‘centre’ and ‘margins’ since—due to its historical marginalization, as well as its capacity for appropriating and critically transforming existing discourses—parody becomes a means of renewal and demystification, a way of laughing away outmoded forms of thinking” (238). Parody has, in fact, been especially instrumental for women writers. As literary critic Robert Mack explains “The palimpsestic nature of women’s literary endeavour—its continued attempts to rewrite a male culture—only naturally employed parody as one of the central tools in the redefinition of female writing (35).³⁵ Bonheur’s text is not just a response to and critique of dominant male culture, but also of woman’s place, or more specifically, her non-place within the multi-facetedness of that culture. Albina’s insecurity in expressing herself in “passatist” or futurist terms, as we will later explore, illustrates this inability to find a place for herself. With a delineation of the effects and nature of parody, I would now like to look at the way in which the text highlights women’s secondary position in male-dominated society. This explicit articulation of the lack of agency, evident in both volumes of *Diario*, makes clear why parody became an effective mode of critique for Bonheur.

The Text’s Knowledge of the Marginalization of Women

I understand the text to be very well aware of the subordination of women and it highlights this control. The text’s knowledge of women’s marginalization explains the reason for the double parody and the chiasmic structure in *Diario*—for within the dominant male literary culture (both that of “passatism” and futurism) Bonheur had to find a meaningful way to participate. I would like to examine a few key passages from the volumes that illustrate how the text makes the reader understand the ways in which women were oppressed by both futurism and “passatism” at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *L’amore per il marito*, the protagonist, Albina, reminisces about a boyfriend she once had. She recounts that he:

³⁴ See for example, Luce Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, and Homi Bhabha’s “Of Mimicry and Man.”

³⁵ Mack nicely summarizes the connection between women and parody in the introduction of his book *The Genius of Parody*. He writes “Pioneering feminist critics, such as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, examined the role of parody in the formation of female discourse of the novel. Such critics indicated that women writers—both individually and as a self-conscious group of authors ultimately working against the aesthetic assumptions of a dominant male culture—often moved through a phase or period of parody *towards* that dominant, male, aesthetic style. The palimpsestic nature of women’s literary endeavour—its continued attempts to rewrite a male culture—only naturally employed parody as one of the central tools in the redefinition of female writing. The strategies of parody could on occasion seem self-defeating. Showalter, for example, found ‘parody’ and ‘whimsy’ in Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) evasive and dishonest. Elsewhere, however (and one might point here to innumerable reappropriations of patriarchal forms by nineteenth and twentieth century women writers) parody can be an enabling step on the way to the development of a truly female literary voice. A great many subsequent critics working in the traditions of feminism have frequently had reason to note the parodic techniques employed by a wide range of women writers in English from at least the seventeenth century onwards. Nor was this attention to parody limited to the Anglo-American school of socio-historical feminists’ criticism. Luce Irigaray, for instance, in a similar fashion seems to have found a place for imitative parody and mimicry not only in the quest for feminine language (for Irigaray the distinguishing feature of women’s language was, like the distinguishing feature of parody, one of contiguity), but in her own writing style as well. Irigaray’s original doctoral thesis, as Toril Moi pointed out, was essentially a ‘parody of patriarchal modes of argument.’ Women under patriarchy, feminists such as Irigaray argued, had no choice but to imitate—‘to play with mimesis’ and of parody male discourse” (35).

ripeveta sempre, incitandomi a sottrarmi al giogo della schiavitù paterna, che (futurismo, naturalmente a parte), siccome i suoi antenati avevano combattuto e sparso tanto e tanto rosso sangue e vino per redimere l'Italia dal giogo straniero, nessuna ragione al mondo poteva e doveva impedire a me, giovinetta di buoni costumi, di approfittarne....(4)

Here, the text acknowledges that women are constrained by dominant male culture by calling Albina's lack of freedom a "schiavitù paterna." Bonheur uses parentheses to add that futurism has nothing to do with this paternal slavery. Instead of being a mere parenthetical side note that can serve as clarification, comment, or explanation, the contents between the parentheses actually underline what the text wants to say but cannot declare in a parodically styled futurist text: it maintains the futurist norm of claiming that futurism is different from "passatism" in that it lies somewhere outside of traditional "paternal slavery." However, it subverts that very same norm by calling attention to it in parentheses, especially when futurism is not the direct topic at hand. Within the parodic *Diario*, parentheses typically signal something the text means to communicate to the reader indirectly. Yet, because of the parodic form of *Diario*, the message is communicated in a whisper of double speak, bracketed in parentheses to suggest it is akin to an afterthought, or something secondary. This strategy of whispered double speak underscores the ways in which the author of *Diario* interjects the opposite of what is meant as a way of ironically subverting the norm she seeks to imitate. In negating and then highlighting that which she seeks to express, Bonheur draws overt attention to the fact that futurism has just as much to do with paternal slavery as Albina's traditional relationship with her father does. The parenthetical clause in this passage thus suggests that Albina sees futurism as an integral part of women's enslavement to men.

Strikingly different from "passatist" culture, futurism supported (often hypocritically) women's suffrage and championed women's liberation from social constraints, such as marriage and child rearing.³⁶ Literary scholar Barbara Spackman aptly explains that "*tutte le belle libertà* that futurism has to offer women are designed not only to liberate women from slavery to men and to the bourgeois family, but also to safeguard virility and ensure the future of the nation and of the race" (7). In upholding virility and encouraging procreation, women were hardly free from patriarchal slavery and the text makes this clear all too well. For example, the repetition of the word "giogo" in the passage quoted above aligns the patriarchal yoke that Albina bears to the one that held Italy to foreign rule before and during the Risorgimento. This comparison suggests that male hegemony is as constricting to women as foreign rule was to Italy. Thus the text intimates that women should free themselves from the reigns of men, just as Italy freed itself from foreign rule. This passage makes a compelling proto-feminist plea and explains why futurism could not offer women freedom: because it too tied them to the family, to marriage, and to their secondary position in society.

Women's rank in early twentieth-century Italian society did not allow them to actively participate and be completely involved in the literary world. Albina's literary awareness, as it is written in *Diario*, is consistently shaped by the men in her life. One particularly traumatic example of her father controlling her is recounted by Albina in the first volume, when she reflects on her adolescence and on the books that influenced her during that time. The scene

³⁶ See Marinetti's manifestoes "Contro il matrimonio" and "Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo."

explicitly describes what occurs when Albina's father caught her with Émile Zola's *Nana* (1880), a popular French novel about a prostitute.³⁷ Albina explains:

mio padre mi sorprese col volume in mano, mi sculacciò, mi mandò a letto all'ora delle galline e....si portò in camera il libro. La cameriera spiò dal buco della serratura e venne a riferirmi che egli lesse tutto il romanzo quella notte istessa e lo fece leggere anche alla mia genitrice inorridita e sorridente. Io ne fui desolata: chè avevo potuto leggere soltanto le prime cinquanta pagine del romanzo proibito, ed in me persisteva vivo e perturbante, il ricordo di Nanà [Nana] seminuda [...] (5)³⁸

Not only does *Nana* incite homoerotic tendencies in Albina, but it also is a “romanzo proibito.”³⁹ Albina's father controls what his wife and daughter read as he prohibits Albina from reading the novel, but makes his wife read it. As such, the paternal figure of Albina's adolescence censors her reading material. Similarly, in *L'amore per l'amante*, Enrico, Albina's lover, limits her own poetic agency by dismissing the way in which she defines poetry. Albina's poetic vision is a naïve and romanticized idea of poetry (“per me, la poesia consisteva in tutto quello che di dolce, di indeterminato, di imponderabile, vi era tra la nostra conoscenza della vita e quello che avremmo desiderato essere—o, forse meglio, sognavamo di essere” (16)), yet this view is understood by the reader to be a unique representation of her own literary agency and activity. In response to Albina's definition, Enrico tells her that what she thinks “non era vero e non era giusto” (16). In this way, Enrico disregards and reprimands Albina for her thoughts on poetry. The interaction between Albina and Enrico on the issue of literary agency is a second example of how *Diario* depicts the ways in which men consistently correct or control what Albina reads and thinks about literature. This control is exercised both by her “passatist” father and her futurist lover, clarifying that both “passatism” and futurism make it difficult for women to gain literary agency.

Another way in which *Diario* highlights the secondary role of women in early twentieth-century Italian society is through a critique of the institution of marriage, and the way it inherently puts women “on the market.”⁴⁰ In *L'amore per il marito*, for example, Albina addresses her “amiche” directly, communicating to them that both inside and outside of futurism there is the “necessità di prendere marito” in order to escape one's “proprio parente” (13).

³⁷ Mosco discusses the way in which the women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were viewed by men as a type of Nana: “Tra fine Ottocento e inizio Novecento donne sofisticate affollano i locali e le vie di Parigi, Londra, Milano, e Venezia in un *tourbillon* variopinto, eclettico e mondano in cui si alternano aristocratiche intellettuali e letterate spregiudicate, frivole *coquettes*, morfinomani, frequentatrici di casinò, dive dello spettacolo: sono le ‘fatali’ descritte da D'Annunzio, passionali e spregiudicate nella loro condotta sessuale, sono le donne di piacere come Nanà [Nana] di Zola” (33).

³⁸ Bonheur's employs an excessive number of ellipses throughout the two volumes. When quoting from *Diario*, all ellipses are by Bonheur in my quotations, unless they are placed in brackets, then they are mine.

³⁹ Larkin makes a connection between this passage and Marinetti's biography: “Indeed, Albina is a kind of female analog to Marinetti, with Bonheur paralleling various key details of her life to mirror his (her adolescent passion for Zola, for example, which had equally punitive consequences for Marinetti in his youth)” (53-54). The topos of the *quaderno proibito* is significant in Italian women's writing, especially considering De Cespedes' 1952 novel entitled *Quaderno proibito*.

⁴⁰ See Irigaray's chapter “Women on the Market” in *This Sex Which Is Not One*.

Marriage is therefore understood by Albina to be an escape from the bourgeois family, not an institution a woman willingly chooses to be part of. Furthermore, even though futurism was against marriage for precisely this same reason (to escape from the bourgeois family), marriage was nonetheless considered a necessary evil in futurism as much as it had been in “passatism.” Albina sees through the futurists’ superficial stance on marriage and interprets it as a sign of continued support of male superiority. In *L’amore per l’amante*, Albina further dissects the inner workings of male control in marriage when she writes:

Ma ciò che è indiscutibile, si è che non è possibile stabilire nè meno il più lontano paragone tra l’amore—sia pure amore fisico soltanto—che vi dà un amante che avete scelto, che vi piace, che sappia amarvi e un marito che “qualcuno” vi ha costretto a prendere nella perfetta ignoranza di tutto quello che sono i misteri dell’amore. (14)

In this passage the reader is made privy to the delight with which Albina *chooses* her sexual partner, and comes to understand that more than enjoying the fact that she has a lover, Albina enjoys the act of choosing whom she takes as a lover. It is telling that *qualcuno* is set off by quotation marks in this passage. Considering the context in which Albina employs the quotation marks, it appears that she is seeking distance from what she is saying rather than quoting someone directly. In this way, Albina brings to light that marriage is an institution made for, and controlled by men, yet she also, through the quotations, makes it clear that she sees through marriage and the power dynamic it establishes. The *qualcuno* to which Albina refers seems to indicate that whoever is responsible for forcing marriage onto women cannot be named, but everyone knows who this *qualcuno* is. Albina perhaps does not have the vocabulary to express the societal, cultural, and sexual control under which she lives, and therefore refers to this force simply as *qualcuno*. Nevertheless, it is someone who has more power than she does.

The scenarios written by Bonheur in both volumes of *Diario*, through the character of Albina, illustrate the fact that despite futurist claims to break from the past, in order to establish a new literary consciousness, female authors experienced very little change in their status. Furthermore, the futurist-“passatist” binary provided limited artistic and social options for women writers, which made parody an obvious choice for women who sought entry into a literary world dominated by male voices. *Diario* thus stands as a text that both illustrates the repression of women under both “passatism” and futurism, and Bonheur’s conscious choice to use parody as a way to meaningfully participate in social and literary worlds that did little to make room for her voice.

The Female Writing Subject That Experiments with Futurism and “Passatism”

Albina, the female writing subject who is attempting to assert her voice in the dominant male modern world, is uncertain about which literary path to follow. *Diario* explicitly illustrates Albina’s experimentation with “passatism” and futurism, calling into question the stability of the “passatist”-futurist binary. The text demonstrates traces of Albina’s anxiety in choosing one style over the other. As the first volume comes to a close, Albina interrogates her readers directly about the style she should employ. For example, just prior to recounting the events of her wedding night, she asks the reader:

Come devo descriverla?
Col futurismo?
Col passatismo?
Ecco....
Non so....
Vorrei.....” (16-17)

With these words, the reader senses Albina’s uncertainty regarding the appropriate literary style to describe her wedding night. She ultimately chooses to follow neither futurism nor “passatism,” but employs a style that has identifiable characteristics of the two. Albina recounts the events using a rhythmic language that is characteristic of traditional poetry, while it is also futurist-like in its brevity and curt lines. The direct juxtaposition of futurism and “passatism” in this example not only alludes to the change in style that occurs in the second volume, but it also accentuates the unease with which the female writing subject adopts one style over another.

At the end of the first volume Albina directly calls into questions the distinction between “passatism” and futurism. She deeply laments her unhappy marriage and asks her readers to define it as either futurist or “passatist.” Albina writes:

Così così la vita coniugale mia.
Futurista?
Passatista?
A voi il responso.” (29)

However, this is an impossible request for what Albina asks her readers to define—a miserable union—resists both “passatist” and futurist definitions. Unhappy marriages are topoi of both “passatism” (the 19th century novel), and futurism (Marinetti’s manifesto “Contro il matrimonio,” for example). In leaving her conjugal situation for to her readers to define, Albina suggests that a “passatist” or futurist definition is inconsequential because marriage, as delineated by both literary styles and cultures, is an institution dictated by men. It can thus be argued, that the advent of futurism, which, in reality, offered women no new literary or social freedoms, continued the repression of women that was characteristic of “passatism.” The two examples I have highlighted bear witness of Albina’s struggle to come to terms with a new literary world that was sharply divided by futurism. In both of these examples, Albina is unsatisfied with her options and after questioning futurist and “passatist” styles, she leaves the situation unresolved. In the first, example she writes “Non so, vorrei,” and in the second she leaves it up to her readers to answer. I argue that Albina is not interested in defining things in futurist or “passatist” terms, rather she uses the terms in so much as they may offer her a point of entry, ultimately dismissing them because of their mainstreamness.

To better understand the chiasmic structure of Bonheur’s parodies, I will now look at the slipperiness that occurs within the volumes (making them parodies) and the inversions between them (revealing the structuring chiasmus). I see many different ways in which the volumes invert each other in their themes, structure, and narrative style. For clarity, I have assembled these various reversals into three sections entitled “Inverting Themes, Tones, Names and Styles,” “The Use of the Diary as Genre and the Impossible Conversion Narrative,” and “Sexualizing and

Desexualizing ‘Words-in-Freedom.’” In the discussion of the first section, I explore how the volumes contrast with each other in their openings, in tone, in cultural awareness, and in the characters’ names. In the second, I examine the way in which each volume takes on the diary function and how each reveals a different aspect of a conversion narrative. In the third, I focus on the way in which the “words-in-freedom” function as a tool to express women’s sexuality in the first volume yet diminish men’s sexual desire in the second volume. These examples will show how the chiasmus structures the volumes and through them I will make a case for *Diario*’s contribution to both “passatism” and futurism.

Inverting Themes, Tones, Names and Styles

A specific tone is clearly discernible from the beginning of each of Bonheur’s volume. *L’amore per il marito* sets a distinctive futurist tone through its style, topoi, and poetics. On the other hand, *L’amore per l’amante* is distinguishable from the onset as a traditional diaristic narrative. The first volume begins with a mathematical equation that announces Albina’s bourgeois identity in grand futurist fashion: “Albina Folgore + Ildebrando Martelli = coniugi = casa = pareti domestiche = figli futuri + serva o fantesca – furto sulla spesa + lettere ferme posta.....” (3). Even though the conjugal status and social class she communicates is decisively anti-futurist, the form in which she expresses it—a mathematical equation—is the invention of futurism and sets the tone of the volume.⁴¹ This futurist style continues throughout the volume and also appears at the end of it as well in order to both open and close the text futuristically. For example, after alluding to having separated from her husband at the end of *L’amore per il marito*, Albina employs onomatopoeia, also characteristic of futurism. Albina shouts:

Vittoria!
 Brrrr! Brrrr! Ssstt! Ssstt!... Psss! Psss!...
 Crrr....crrr....crrr.... crrr.... Flut flutt flutt...
 Ciacc....ciacc....ciacc....[...]
 Auff.....auff.....auff..... cecch cecch cecch.....
 oì oì oì oì oì oì.....
 Ciacc..... ciacc..... patatrac..... (30)

Many of these sounds are employed directly by Marinetti in *Zang Tumb Tuumb* and by numerous futurists in their *parole in libertà*. In opening and closing the first volume in ways characteristic of futurism, Bonheur aligns her text with futurism.

Except for the consistent “words-in-freedom” peppered throughout both volumes, there are no signs of futurist poetics in the second volume. *L’amore per l’amante* begins in a traditional diaristic fashion by recounting the day’s events according to dates, a pattern that continues throughout the second volume. The prose is likewise traditional in its subdued tone and its diaristic self-referentiality. Surprisingly, the second volume of *Diario* also ends on a futurist note when Albina suddenly states “chiudo questa parte del mio diario con questa semplice formula futuristica” (29). She then employs “words-in-freedom” to express a possible

⁴¹ Marinetti famously prescribes using mathematical equations in literature in his “Tecnico manifesto della letteratura futurista.”

rekindling with the futurist lover she has just left (see fig. 1). Even though the tone, style, and topoi make the second volume *passatista* the author's choice to end with "words-in-freedom" suggests that *Diario* promotes futurism's typographical revolution, honors it, and is also a part of it. The first volume of *Diario* appropriates futurism, while the second volume appropriates "passatism." This distinction reinforces the chiasmic structure while also contributing to and strengthening the two literary schools.

Another futurist-"passatist" distinction between the two volumes can be made in examining the names of the characters. In the first volume, the reader is introduced to Albina Folgore and her husband, Ildebrando Martelli. The second volume, however, only identifies by name Albina's futurist lover, Enrico Del Tramonto. While Ildebrando Martelli is a common name and does not stand out, the name Albina Folgore is especially significant when seen through a futurist lens.⁴² Albina is the diminutive of "Alba" which means "dawn," the birth of the new day. Futurism modeled itself as a new beginning after the long and dark period of "passatist" decadence. In his "Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo" of 1909, Marinetti, in fact, announced futurism as a rebirth. Similarly, the first name "Albina" suggests a new beginning, which marks the first volume as a work of futurist literature and implies that the female protagonist in the text is a futurist as well.

Even more suggestive of futurism is Albina's last name, Folgore, which means "lightning bolt" evoking not only futurist power and light, but also the last name of the futurist Luciano Folgore. The first volume draws a connection between Albina and Luciano Folgore when Albina directly addresses three well-known futurists in the text, one of them being Folgore. Albina promises her reader that she will focus on the past for one last time, and then she directs her attention to her imagined readers, writing "caro Tavolato, caro Folgore, caro Boccioni" (5).⁴³ With this address, the reader is made explicitly aware that there is a direct connection between her and one of the futurists she calls out to. Additionally, the use of the name Folgore is a strategic move by Bonheur because Luciano Folgore was known for writing parodies. Luciano Folgore was active during the first phase of futurism but he abandoned the movement in 1920. He is the author of a collection of poetry entitled *Il canto dei motori* (1912) and the "words-in-freedom" poetry collection *Ponti sull'oceano* (1914). His parodic works include *Poeti controluce* (1922) and *Poeti allo specchio* (1926).⁴⁴ While it is true that Folgore's parodic works were produced after the supposed publication date of *Diario*, Folgore was known for parodying and playing among the futurists, even before his parodies were published. Literary scholar Gloria

⁴² The last name of Albina's husband, Martelli, could possibly be reminiscent of Marinetti's because it too begins with "Mar," ends in "I," and features double consonants. However, this association is not as direct as the futurist significance of Albina's first and last name.

⁴³ Boccioni died in the war in 1916. The fact that Albina calls out to him could signal that she thought he was still alive and that the volume precedes 1916.

⁴⁴ Meazzi also posits a connection between Albina Folgore and Luciano Folgore but she does not mention that he was also known for his parodies. She writes "est-ce une allusion à Luciano Folgore, l'auteur de *Il canto dei motori* ou bien un clin d'oeil au procureur Emilio Albino, l'accusateur de Tavolato au procès?" (195). Meazzi does not notice that the text underlines the connection between Albina and Luciano Folgore when it calls out to Folgore in the text. Furthermore, she does not acknowledge that Folgore's oeuvre features many parodies and "words-in-freedom." In fact, she only lists him as the author of *Canto dei motori* (1912), when in reality he published other futurist works as well. Folgore's reputation as a parodist is well known. Tellini, for example, claims that the twentieth century was a "grande secolo della parodia" (10), because there are professional parodists at work such as Luciano Folgore.

Manghetti writes, for example, that “la componente ironico-parodistica costituirà il fulcro dell’opera di F.[olgore]” (1210).⁴⁵ It may be tempting to hypothesize Luciano Folgore as the real author of *Diario*, but to date there has been no documentation supporting such a claim. I believe that Bonheur draws a parallel between her protagonist and Luciano Folgore in order to make the reader aware of the parodic nature of her volumes.

As opposed to the futuristically named protagonist in volume one, in *L’amore per l’amante* the only named character is Enrico Del Tramonto, whose name is reminiscent of “passatism.”⁴⁶ Enrico was the name of Marinetti’s father, recalling the generation prior to futurism. Furthermore, Enrico’s last name means “of the dusk,” evoking the *fin de siècle*, *decadentismo*, and *crepuscolarismo*. Albina’s first name and Enrico’s last name create an inversion—one a beginning and the other an end—Albina is the “new dawn” and Enrico is “of the dusk.” The difference in the meaning of the names shows how Bonheur plays with both “passatism” and futurism and inverts them in her volumes.

In this section I have been analyzing the way in which each volume styles itself according to “passatist” or futurist norms in order to show how *Diario* is structured around a chiasmus. I have so far shown proof of this chiasmic structure in the opening and tone of each volume and in the names of the characters in each. Now I want to direct my attention to the way in which Albina takes on an aggressive and violent stance, especially towards her husband in the first volume and a romantic and sentimentalized tone towards her both her lover and her husband in the second volume. Futurism was known to be characteristically violent and aggressive, not only toward the past, but also in relation to the bourgeoisie and women. In *L’amore per il marito*, these futurist characteristics of violence and aggression are present, yet in the first volume they are directed uncharacteristically toward Albina’s husband and acted out in the private domestic sphere. In contrast, the very public futurist *serate* were infamously known for their violence, during which the futurists would take their aggression out on their audience by throwing food, spitting, and inciting the crowd to fight with them.⁴⁷ Spitting, a derogatory gesture, was often used in futurist contexts to show disdain for “passatist” culture and it was also a topos in Marinetti’s writings. Similarly, when Albina simultaneously attacks and upholds her own lines of “passatist” poetry in *L’amore per il marito*, she says she is ready to spit in the face of anyone who does not find them “schifosissimi” (7). This passage evokes Marinetti, who famously exclaims “Bisogna sputare ogni giorno sull’*Altare dell’Arte!*” (“Tecnico manifesto della letteratura” 54; italics by Marinetti). The violence reserved for the “passatist” crowds at the futurist *serate* has, however, been notably transferred to Albina’s husband in *L’amore per il marito*. Albina imitates the spitting gesture again when she remembers the day in which she first met her husband. She admits that “certe volte mio marito mi fa schifo” and then writes:

Ricordo le sue prime parole:

⁴⁵ Notably, the name Luciano Folgore is a pseudonym; he was born as Omero Vecchi. Folgore changed his name in order to appear less *passatista* in light of his adhesion to futurism. What is most striking here, however, is the fact that Albina Folgore’s last name is a pseudonym of a pseudonym and Folgore’s name lays this bare.

⁴⁶ Even though Albina is not called directly by name in the second volume the reader can be certain she remains the same female writing subject as in the first volume. I would like to suggest that the reason for which Albina is not named in the second volume is in order to give weight to her lover’s typical “passatist” name.

⁴⁷ For more on the futurist crowd, see Poggi, “Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd.”

- Signorina, sono lieto....
- ...di fare la mia conoscenza?
- Sicuro! Non gli sputai sul volto, chè c'era gente [...]" (15)

This is a poignant example that demonstrates how the first volume is a parody of futurism because it imitates the spitting typical of futurism yet it distances itself from it and changes it at the same time. Whereas spitting on people publicly at a futurist *serata* would be typical and encouraged, in *L'amore per il marito* Albina's bourgeois manners prevent her from spitting on her future husband in public and indicates that such aggression and violence are reserved for her husband only in the private, domestic space.⁴⁸

Bonheur inverts the futurists' disdain of women in volume one, when aggression and disgust are directed towards Albina's husband and particularly, towards his body. Albina claims that Ildebrando is "un ignorantone, una bestia, un cretino, tutto quello che di più imbecille, di più lurido si può immaginare[...]" (14-15). She also confesses "Io odio, prima di tutto, i rossi di capelli. Egli ha, poi, un neo sulla coscia destra: sembra un baffo. Mi fa ribrezzo. L'altra notte pensai di vomitare" (24). It is her husband's physical particularities that make Albina uncomfortable. Nevertheless, there is a consistent desire, on Albina's part, to describe Ildebrando's physical appearance in order to criticize it. Albina points out Ildebrando's physical flaws and her reaction to them several times throughout the first volume.

For example, when Albina begins to write with "words-in-freedom" in the text, she tells the reader that she will start off using the futurist style to describe her husband:

Fronte alta + naso lungo + bocca larga + gota rossa + mento acuto + narici
aperte + orecchie
lunghe + torace maschio + braccia raiceviciane + spalle di toro + gambe erculee +
mani enormi + ventre gonfio + = Ildebrando Martelli.
Ildebrando Martelli = coniuge = marito = sfortunato. (14)

From this unflattering description, we interpret everything about Albina's husband's body to be exaggerated and large, as if he were grossly disfigured.⁴⁹ This distortion denies Ildebrando subjectivity by focusing only on his physical appearance. In this way, he becomes an object, not of sexual desire, but of physical disgust. Albina goes to painstaking lengths to illustrate Ildebrando's unattractiveness in *L'amore per il marito*. In fact, there is a total of three unfavorable depictions of Ildebrando. In the second, Albina explains that her husband is "Caprone. Becco. Cervo. Daino. Camoscio. Stambecco. Bue. Toro. Coniuge. Ildebrando. Martelli" (15). Albina includes Ildebrando in a long list of male mammals, all of whom are

⁴⁸ Erin Larkin comments on this passage and argues that "In her married life, we see an inversion of the Marinettian *disprezzo* she harbors for her husband. Their positions are reversed: it is he whose *perbenismo* and bourgeois hypocrisy she finds worthy of contempt" (54). While I agree with Larkin that the disdain for women is transferred onto the husband in *L'amore per il marito*, I would argue that Albina is just as invested in the same *perbenismo* as her husband is when she claims to have refrained from spitting on him in public.

⁴⁹ Larkin comments on this description: "While Ildebrando's torso and hands hold strength, his body is puffy from disuse. The almost bovine image concludes with his enormous hands and puffy belly; this is followed by ellipses, which allude to the power of his sexual organs. Moreover, his features, which are disproportionate, give the impression of a slow animal" (55).

cornuti, suggesting that he too is not only animal-like but also *cornuto*. In the third physical description, Albina compares Ildebrando in various ways to different historical, cultural, and artistic characters. Albina writes:

Ildebrando Martelli. Rosso di capelli: Somiglia al profeta della scuola
d'Atene. Orrido, quindi.
Nudo somiglia al giovane fuggente dall'*Incendio di Borgo*.
Vestito, sembra un diplomatico della terza Italia.
In veste da camera somiglia ad un sotto-segretario dell'Agricoltura.
Nel bagno penso di scorgere un tritone tradito dalla moglie.
Ed ecco dove il paragone, futurista o passatista che sia, calza a pennello. (15-
16)

Albina compares her husband to known cultural references and images so that her readers can easily conjure up an image of him in their minds. Therefore, the futurist disdain for women's sentimental place within the hearts of men has become, in the first volume, a woman's contempt for the male body. The numerous descriptions and comparisons of her husband reveal her fervent disdain for her husband's physical body which is also coupled with Albina's hostility toward her husband.

Through Albina's aggression towards Ildebrando, the first volume turns the futurist hatred towards women into a loathing of the male body. The text further illustrates this aggression in the turbulent relationship between Albina and her husband. Both Albina and her husband insult one another continuously, suggesting verbal abuse. Additionally, husband and wife hit each other, indicating that there is physical abuse within the marriage. During a fight between the two, there is a "scambio di ingiurie" (29). And then the hitting begins:

Cazzotto primo sul grugno.
Cazzotto secondo sul grugno.
Cazzotto terzo sul grugno.
Quarto, quinto, sesto, settimo!
Così così la vita coniugale mia. (29)

While it is unclear who is the perpetrator and who is the victim, the word "grugno" suggests that Albina is the one striking her husband. According to Tullio De Mauro's *Grande dizionario italiano dell'uso*, "grugno" means both "muso del maiale o del cinghiale" and "volto, faccia di una persona." It is important to recall that Ildebrando was previously figured as an animal by Albina in the descriptions of his body. We can thus determine that the choice of the word "grugno" implies that he is the one being beaten. Bonheur's text paints marriage as an unhappy institution wrought with tension and violence. However, the text also reverses the agent of futurist violence in depicting Albina as the perpetrator and Ildebrando as the victim of domestic abuse. *L'amore per il marito* effectively directs the futurist disdain towards women onto men, and transfers the aggression that occurs in the public sphere during the futurist evenings to the private sphere of the home and makes a woman the agent of such aggression and violence. These changes—a man's body being an object of physical disgust and violence carried out by a wife

onto a husband—give women agency and make the text appear to be a feminist version of futurism.

If *L'amore per il marito* implies that Albina is a physically abusive wife who finds her husband repulsive, then the chiasmus structuring the text makes her become a romantic and sentimental wife and lover in *L'amore per l'amante*. In “Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo” Marinetti explains what he and the futurists think of love: “Noi siamo convinti che l'amore—sentimentalismo e lussuria—sia la cosa meno naturale del mondo. Non vi è naturale d'importante che il coito il quale ha per scopo il futurismo della specie. L'amore—ossessione romantica e voluttà—non è altro che un'invenzione dei poeti, i quali la regalarono all'umanità” (293). The themes of romantic love and sentimentality are nonexistent in the first volume, but they abound in the second. For example, when Albina accepts Enrico Del Tramonto's offer to go to his house for the first time, she reflects romantically: “Non so se le altre donne hanno provato mai qualcosa di simile a quello che ho provato io accettando da un uomo il primo appuntamento” (6). Although Albina does not clearly explain her feelings in writing, the sentence suggests that she feels excitement, novelty, and happiness at accepting Del Tramonto's invitation, feelings which seem characteristically “passatist” in the eyes of futurism. This meaning is further enforced when it is framed by the style of a traditional, diaristic narrative.

After her first meeting with Enrico, Albina writes “Enrico, evidentemente, è il mio amore, l'amore con l'A maiuscola, quello che mi possiede tutta, anima e corpo” (8). Albina's *amore* with “a capital A” recalls Marinetti's manifestoes in which he talks about art with “a capital A;” it also changes the context from art to love.⁵⁰ If in Marinetti's world there is a distinction between “art” and “Art,” then in the “passatist” world of the second volume, there is a difference between *amore* and *Amore*. As such, the deviation from the futurist norm is inserted within the “passatist” norm that lauds love, as Hutcheon's theoretical model explains.

Whereas the first volume seeks to expose the institution of marriage and romantic love negatively as the futurists did, the second volume is concerned with portraying romantic love in a positive light as the “passatists” were. Albina posits her affair with Enrico as a personal renaissance. After her first sexual encounter with Enrico, she records her feelings in her diary: “Enrico mi dava, in quel giorno di primavera, in quell'ambiente tiepido, fra quelle parole carezzevoli, tra quelle carezze che parevano parole, il senso di qualcosa che dovesse giungermi inaspettatato, meravigliosamente [meravigliosamente] nuovo” (13).⁵¹ Albina's feelings, like *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista* itself, are structured by a chiasmus since Enrico's words are “carezzevoli” and his caresses seemed like “parole.” Enrico's presence in Albina's life makes her play the part of the enamored woman who stands in sharp contrast to the aggressive and unsentimental Albina of *L'amore per il marito*.

L'amore per l'amante also employs flowery, drawn-out, and complex sentences, typical of the *fin de siècle* and in opposition to the succinct style of futurism. For example, after making

⁵⁰ In “Distruzione della sintassi Immaginazione senza fili Parole in libertà” Marinetti further makes a distinction between “art” and “Art.” He writes “Quando io dissi che ‘bisogna sputare ogni giorno sull'Altare dell'Arte’ incitai i futuristi a liberare il lirismo dall'atmosfera solenne piena di compunzione e d'incensi che si usa chiamare l'Arte coll'A maiuscolo. L'arte coll'A maiuscolo costituisce il clericalismo dello spirito creativo” (76).

⁵¹ *Diario* features numerous grammatical and typographical mistakes. It is uncertain whether this is due to a poor editing job, a limited amount of time, or if it was done on purpose. I have corrected these mistakes in brackets when necessary.

love to Enrico, Albina writes “Tutto quello che è stato normale, nel nostro primo incontro, non ha avuto, per me, maggiori conseguenze di una notte d’amore coniugale, in un albergo di provincia: gli effetti materiali del mio primo adulterio, sono stati gli stessi della seconda o terza notte di nozze” (14). The form—a “passatist” aesthetic norm of a diaristic narrative and a comma-heavy hypotactic sentence—suggests, at first glance, that Albina has found freedom and novelty in the commonplace relationship between two lovers that the futurists so widely despised.⁵² However, the content diverges from this “passatist” norm and features, instead, a futurist ideal. Albina does not clarify what the “normal” activity is, but it is presumably sex. While adultery’s “effetti materiali” are also unclear, they are the same as those of the second or third night of marriage. If the sexual relationship with a lover is the same as that with a husband, then sex is sex, no matter with whom you have it.⁵³ Due to the fact that this volume presents itself as a traditional, popular story of betrayal, one expects the foreseeable response that the lover will bring a new-found happiness and pleasure to the married woman. This effect, in combination with the syntactical style of the sentences manipulates *L’amore per l’amante*’s readers by setting them up to read a typically “passatist” narrative. Yet the content of the passage is clear and futurist: Enrico Del Tramonto is not a better lover than Albina’s husband and the physical pleasure she receives from their union is equivalent to what she experienced with her husband. In this way, the “passatist” literary topos of taking a lover is subverted by the futurist message that both men and women should be able to openly and freely engage in sexual acts without having to label them according to marital or extra-marital norms. We can see, therefore, the way the parodic text is working in this case: it deviates from a “passatist” norm by suggesting the quality of lovemaking with Albina’s lover is similar to that with her husband, yet it also includes the “passatist” topos of taking on a lover and its benefits within the narrative.

Albina continues to adhere to “passatism” while deviating from it when she states “Se io dicessi che prima di Enrico—anzi prima dell’amore di Enrico—io non conoscevo l’amore nella sua forma più alta e più sincera, l’amore che ci dà tutta la gioia e per mezzo del quale noi diamo tutta la gioia all’uomo che amiamo—non sarei sincera” (15). The two parts of the hypothetical phrase here (“Se io dicessi che prima di Enrico” and “non sarei sincera”) are broken up and now serve as bookends within the sentence. The separated main and dependent clauses enclose sentimental, “passatist” content that states that Albina did not know “real” love until meeting her lover. Nevertheless, this overly sentimental and predictable statement is canceled out by the *periodo ipotetico* that frames it. The elaborate and complex sentence, which is broken up several times also by dashes, makes this meaning further hard to decipher. Albina tries to deceive her readers by using a drawn out and choppy linguistic structure in order to give the idea that Enrico is the love of her life, but with the hypothetical structure she deviously denies that very same idea. This slipperiness, along with the exaggerated lauding of love (“l’amore nella sua forma più alta e più sincera, l’amore che ci dà tutta la gioia e per mezzo del quale noi diamo tutta la gioia

⁵² In “Distruzione della sintassi Immaginazione senza fili Parole in libertà,” Marinetti argues for the “Deprezzamento dell’amore (sentimentalismo o lussuria), prodotto della maggiore libertà e facilità erotica nella donna e dall’esagerazione universale del lusso femminile... *L’amante ha perso ogni prestigio* l’Amore ha perso il suo valore assoluto” (67 italics mine).

⁵³ The futurists argued for men and women to love freely, without the constraints of marriage, and without the rebellion of taking a lover. For the futurists, love and/or sex could be found and experienced with multiple partners and without commitment.

all'uomo che amiamo”), make for the presence of both the “passatist” norm (exaltation of love), and the subversion of that norm (the futurist belief that the extra-conjugal lover is nothing special and should be abolished). The form that Albina employs makes the reader think she is claiming that Enrico was a great lover, but the content does not match up with the form. Since the text is written in a traditional and typical style of novels about women who take lovers, such as *Madame Bovary*, the superfluous clauses (“anzi prima dell’amore di Enrico” and “l’amore che ci dà tutta la gioia e per mezzo del quale noi diamo tutta la gioia all’uomo che amiamo”) create a detour around what Albina actually says—that she has had better lovers and that she has known love both before and outside of marriage.

Another way in which the chiasmus structures *Diario* is evident in the first volume’s denunciation of literary and cultural figures and the absence of any mention of them in the second volume. Futurism thrived on denouncing “passatism” and sought to create an inner-circle of futurist writers, poets and artists that very much excluded “passatists.” In line with this futurist practice, in *L’amore per il marito* Albina lauds and refers to other futurists by name, such as F.T. Marinetti, Italo Tavolato, Luciano Folgore, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo. Furthermore, the first volume denounces passatist artists and authors such as Giovanni Boccaccio, Alessandro Manzoni, Dante Alighieri, Torquato Tasso, Pietro Mascagni, Raffaello Sanzio, Émile Zola, Georges Ohnet, Charles Paul De Kock and Richard Wagner. This type of “name-dropping” can be read as both condemnation and adoration for certain futurists and “passatists.” The first volume employs the futurist norm of deploring the past, yet it deviates from it at the same time when it also affectionately recalls and gives attention to those artists of the past. Albina further strays from the avant-garde movement when she falls victim to what Harold Bloom would call the “anxiety of influence,” not in relation to her “fellow” futurists, but in connection to the past Italian literary greats that the futurists deplored.⁵⁴ On the first page of *L’amore per il marito*, Albina asks Marinetti to forgive her for using standard Italian, or more precisely “la lingua vilissima di Giovanni Boccaccio e di Alessandro Manzoni” (3). Here Albina denounces the “vilissima” language of two of the most influential prose writers of the Italian literary tradition. The change in Albina’s language—from futurist “words-in-freedom” to standard Italian—prompts hesitation, which causes Albina to question her ability to adopt the Italian language. Albina writes that a little voice inside her tells her “magari tu fossi capace di adoprarla!” (3). Albina responds to this voice “con qualche timidezza e paura che qualcuno possa andarlo a riferire al Maestro” (3). The fear and anxiety that Albina feels in adopting Italian as her own language come from a problematic relationship she maintains with the literary precedents of the Italian tradition, not with the futurists.⁵⁵ In first denouncing the language of Boccaccio and Manzoni yet intimating her fear of inadequately appropriating that very same language, Albina critiques, on “passatist” terms, the futurist aesthetic and deviates from the futurist norm she first establishes in *L’amore per il marito*.

In *L’amore per il marito*, Albina is nostalgic for the literary texts of her childhood, specifically the popular novels of Georges Ohnet, the parodies of Charles Paul De Kock, and *Nana* by Émile Zola. Albina particularly recalls her admiration for Ohnet’s *Maître des forges*. As an adolescent, Albina claims to have loved Ohnet’s novel so much that she wrote a poem about

⁵⁴ See Bloom.

⁵⁵ See Gilbert and Gubar’s account of how women deal with Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” in the twentieth century in *Madwoman in the Attic*.

the protagonists, Philippe and Claire, but, she says that in her “sopravvenuta qualità di futurista ad oltranza” she now has to call the novel she loved so much “bestiale, porco, schifoso, analfabeta, miserabile odioso, ladro, truffatore, mercenario, abietto, lurido, puzzolente, fetido ecc. ecc. ecc. ecc.” (7). Albina’s excessive use of insulting adjectives mirrors futurism’s brazen aggression of the past, but at the same time it goes against the avant-garde movement. There are too many adjectives in Albina’s description—adjectives that Marinetti famously banned from literature in his “Tecnico manifesto della letteratura futurista.” By employing them widely, Albina insults futurism while at the same time she supports it in denouncing Ohnet’s “passatist” novel. Despite Albina’s condemnation of *Maître des forges*, she still reproduces her own lines of poetry inspired by the novel. Albina explains that she includes her poetry because she believes she was “imbecille ed iconoclasta” and that Ohnet “meritasse e meriti tuttavia, di andare a finire in galera per i suoi reati contro il buon costume della letteratura” (7).⁵⁶ Albina’s criticism of her past self and Ohnet’s literature is cloaked in irony. The inclusion of her “passatist” poetry in her “diary” speaks more of her allegiance to “passatism” than to futurism. The reprinting of her brief poem strays from futurist norms while the words denouncing it maintain them. Similarly, Albina reminisces about her favorite “passatist” authors and their texts when she addresses her readers and exclaims:

Perdonate un ricordo, ancora: un ricordo lirico e sentimentale della mia
 adolescenza quando leggevo Giorgio Ohnet e Carlo Paolo De Kock: *Dottore
 Rameau e La signorina del quinto piano, Sergio Panine e L'uomo dai tre calzoni*.
 Ah, l'uomo dai tre calzoni!
 Quanta gioia!
 Quante trepidazioni
 in tutti quei calzoni!
 Ora...ora quando i calzoni sono assenti...il futurismo trionfa!” (16)

In this passage Albina asks her readers for forgiveness for going back and recalling the past because the text is written, even if parodically, according to futurist aesthetic norms. In asking for forgiveness, however, Albina calls attention to the fact that she is transgressing the very norms she purports to uphold. After lauding popular French literature of the nineteenth century, Albina once again switches her position, upholding futurist principles by exclaiming: “il futurismo trionfa!” Just as Albina insults Ohnet in the previous example yet continues to transcribe her poem based on his work all the same, here Albina mixes a futurist norm (describing the movement as triumphant) with praise for “passatism” (in lauding Ohnet).⁵⁷

Albina continues to concomitantly insult and praise various “passatist” cultural figures in *L'amore per il marito*. She criticizes harshly, for example, her own lines of poetry, claiming, “Naturalmente, con Riccardo Wagner, musicista miserando, io rinnego quella lirica” (7). Also, when she tells a joke to her aviator-cousin, she asks her readers “Carina, non è vero? –come

⁵⁶ Interestingly, Albina uses both the past and the present tense in speaking about Georges Ohnet. She writes that he “meritasse e meriti tuttavia...di andare a finire in galera” (7). The fact that she speaks of Ohnet in the present tense means that at the time in which Bonheur wrote the first volume, she believed that he was still alive. Ohnet died in May 1918, which could suggest that *Diario* was written before that time.

⁵⁷ Albina does a similar rhetorical gesture when she refers to the works of Charles Paul De Kock in the first volume.

direbbe Pietro Mascagni, autore di quella schifosissima opera che si intitola *Cavalleria rusticana*” (10). This gratuitous condemnation of Mascagni and his most popular opera seeks to denounce “passatism” as the futurists did, yet it is Mascagni, she claims, who would tell the same witty joke she has. Furthermore, after announcing and implementing her use of “words-in-freedom” in the first volume, Albina writes “Neppure Emilio Zola ve lo guiro io, in nessuno di quei romanzi che gli analfabeti del giorno d’oggi amino chiamare capolavori è riuscito mai, io penso, a descrivere uno stato d’animo come quello cui io soggiacqui nella limpida notte....” (12). In the former two examples, Albina aligns herself with Wagner and Mascagni by drawing comparisons between her and them, but she also insults them, for Wagner is a “musicista miserando” and Mascagni’s opera is “schifosissima.” And in the third example, even though she claims that Zola would not have been able to describe her feelings as well as she does, those who deem him a literary genius, claims Albina, are “illiterate,” and therefore they cannot truly judge works of literary art.

In *L’amore per l’amante* the “anxiety of influence” that afflicted Albina in *L’amore per il marito* is gone and instead, Albina claims to be a *tabula rasa* when it comes to literature. For example, after Enrico describes a few principles of futurist poetry to her, Albina comments in her diary that “Questa breve e pur precisa lezione di una scuola nuova, della quale non potevo apprezzare a pieno il valore, dato che le scuole vecchie o antiche—*passatiste*, in ogni modo, per usare il linguaggio che predilige Enrico—mi erano e mi sono sconosciute [...]” (17; italics by Bonheur). Albina here acknowledges that she is oblivious to both “passatism” and futurism and cannot appreciate them. As a female writing subject who has been excluded from both literary movements, we can interpret Albina’s admission to be one, not of ignorance on her part, but of rejection. Albina acknowledges that she does not know “passatism” or futurism, or even value them because she has never been able to participate in them. This declaration contrasts with Albina’s literary and cultural awareness in the first volume, which is a parody of futurism, precisely because the birth of futurism depended on its divorce from the past. In order to parody “passatism” in *L’amore per l’amante*, no such separation is essential to highlight and this allows Bonheur to comment on women’s exclusion from the literary canon.

The Use of Diary as Genre and the Impossible Conversion Narrative

The title of the work as a whole, *Diario d’una giovane donna futurista*, positions the volumes within women’s first-person autobiographical writing, which was the female genre *par excellence* at the beginning of the twentieth century. As literary critic Robin Pickering-Iazzi explains:

the poetics formulated by such authors as Sibilla Aleramo and Amalia Guglielminetti, which called for fellow women artists to write their lives from their own particular experiences in new expressive forms in order to create a richer, more nuanced, and perhaps more veracious range of cultural images of femininity, became so widespread that critics of their time invariably read women’s prose and poetry through the interpretative category of autobiography, in its broadest sense. (57)

The format of the diary fits within this category of autobiography. This structure invokes women's writing and also ironically goes against futurism which forbids the literary "I" in literature. I contend that the genre of the diary, as autobiography, is parodied along with futurism and "passatism" throughout *Diario*. This parodying of multiple discourses is common in parody, as Robert Phiddian notes: "A complex parody can involve not just a particular aesthetic object, but many kinds of discourse within its own structure. In *Gulliver's Travels* there are travel books, biography, children's stories, philosophical arguments, topical satire, and much more in the intertextual soup" (683). In *Diario*, the parodying of futurism and "passatism" feeds the parody of women's autobiographical writing. The result is the parodying of multiple genres and literary styles that criticize women's place in literature. *Diario* comments on women's exclusion from literature just as much as it speaks of women's participation in it. Through the variety of its parodies, *Diario* seeks to change not only the way in which women are banned from futurism and "passatism," but also to encourage women to make non-autobiographical contributions to literature.

Each volume parodies the diary function in a different way. The first volume superficially imitates the structure of the diary by sectioning off the text with dated entries. *L'amore per il marito* begins in a clichéd manner, on 1 January (with the year substituted by ellipses). The rest of the entries are spaced out chronologically throughout the year, and are dated 15 January, 31 August, 15 September, and 1 December. What is written under these dates gives the reader a sweeping glance at a year in the life of Albina Folgore. The entries occur only at the beginning, middle, or end of the month with a precision that seems contrived. Only by sectioning off the entries is the first volume faithful to the diaristic genre, for in everything else (especially in its addressing multiple readers and its futurist tone) it betrays the format of the diary.

One way in which the first volume undermines the diary function is in addressing many different readers, not just one. Diaries can address a reader, as H. Porter Abbott explains, in his book on the genre of the diary, *Diary Fiction*. Abbott writes that "Fictive diarists commonly address their remarks to someone—friend, lover, God, the diary itself" (10). In contrast to selecting a singular someone to recount her secrets to, Albina speaks openly to several readers; for example, she addresses "la ragazza che mi legge," the futurists Boccioni, Folgore, and Carrà, "voi," "noi," and "amici ed amiche," to name just a few.⁵⁸ Not only does Albina call out and speak to her readers, but she above all plays with them and tests them. The issue here is not the fact that the text addresses a reader(s), but how much the text makes the reader(s) participate in the narrative. As Abbott claims, in marking the fine line between diary fiction and the epistolary novel: "The crucial issue is not the existence or nonexistence of an addressee but the degree to which the addressee is given an independent life and an active textual role in the work" (10). Albina calls upon her readers to decipher, define, and co-create the parodic meaning in the text. This transforms the reader from passive listener into active participant in the retelling of Albina's life. Due to this direct involvement of the reader, *L'amore per il marito* is fashioned more as a *serata futurista* than a piece of diary fiction.

⁵⁸ The second volume only addresses the readers once, which is striking because it is so faithful to the diary function throughout. When Albina does address her readers, it seems as if it were a spontaneous act, as if the author confused one volume with the other. For example, after citing her husband's poetry, she writes "Sapete di chi sono questi versi? Di mio marito" (21).

Just as the futurists incited the crowd to denounce “passatism” through violence and aggression at the futurist *serate*, so too does Albina provoke her readers. For example, before Albina includes her adolescent poem on Ohnet’s novel within the text, she writes “Ecco i versi. Belli? Brutti? Per mio conto, orrendi. E sono pronta a sputare sul volto di chiunque abbia il coraggio di non trovarli schifosissimi” (7). Before transcribing the poem, Albina engages the readers by giving them two ways to describe the poem—either “belli” or “brutti.” This good-bad dichotomy is the same one proposed by the futurists to their audience when it came to supporting futurism and condemning “passatism.” Albina tests her readers’ alliances to “passatism” or futurism, spurring them to react aggressively for or against one literary movement or another. Albina affirms the futurist position in claiming that the lines of her poem, are for her “orrendi.” In taking a firm, futurist stance, Albina allows her readers only two options—to react against futurism or be in favor of it—but always confrontationally. This type of rhetorical play was also employed at the futurist *serate*. In the entry on the *serate futuriste* in *Il dizionario del futurismo*, Giambattista Nazario explains that “È nello scontro, infatti, che i futuristi scoprono il senso della vitalità barbarica e primitiva, il senso di una attestazione immediata fra i convocati al rito. Le serate finiscono coll’essere, perciò, anche delle palestre ove la violenza si esercita e viene legittimata... In siffatte situazioni, il pubblico è diviso, contrapposto in due schieramenti” (1057). Similar to the *serate futuriste*, Albina breaks up her readers into two groups, one in favor of futurism, and the other in favor of “passatism.”

The diary entries in *L’amore per l’amante* are more frequent and take place within a shorter period of time; they are dated 10 June, 15 June, 18 June, 22 June, 26 June, and 26 June in the evening. The difference between the succession of these dates and those in the first volume makes the diary function in *L’amore per l’amante* seem less constructed and more natural to the genre of diary fiction. In her second volume, unlike the first, Albina always relates her writing to time. For example, in the entry dated 15 June Albina writes “Torno proprio in questo momento da via.....n. 14.....” (8 italics mine). And in the entry dated 18 June she writes “Ma forse questo che io dico, *stasera*, scrivendo queste parole nel mio diario è l’effetto di un pò di nervoso” (17 italics mine). Scholar of comparative literature Lorna Martens claims that “The diary novel... emphasizes the time of writing...” (4). Albina records the events of her daily life and chronologically relates them to her writing, strengthening and underlining the traditional diary function in order to style it in a “passatist” way.

The diary element in the second volume is also emphasized when Albina comments explicitly on the diary function. She opens her 22 June entry by writing “Oggi (bisogna che lo confidi a questo mio diario che certamente mai nessuno leggerà)” (19). This statement is ironic because it points to what the text demonstrates it is not—a diary that no one will read. Rather the text illustrates all too well, especially in light of the first volume, that it knows it will be read and that it does not adhere to the model of a diary in a true sense of the genre. On the one hand, this sentence draws attention to the superficiality of the diaristic function within the text ironically, but on the other, it can be taken at face value and can contribute to the apparent diaristic form. The entry made by Albina on 26 June continues to underscore the exploitation of the diaristic function when Albina notes that a conversation she had with her lover must be recorded in her diary (26). Albina draws attention to the economy of diary fiction by saying that the conversation she had with Enrico “vale veramente la pena di essere consegnata in un diario.” What Albina wishes to recount—the break up with her lover—is classic fodder for diary fiction. Albina also

implicitly lets her readers know that she is familiar with the conventions of the diary genre because she implies that a hierarchy exists and that some entries are “worth” more than others. Albina explains that she recognizes what is appropriate within a diary, making the chiasmic structure yet again evident because she is oblivious to these conventions in *L'amore per il marito*. The first volume therefore hollows out the diary function whereas the second volume emphasizes it.

The first volume disregards the diaristic function, thus motivating the reader to assume an active role in the text, yet it also resembles an autobiographical conversion narrative because it goes back to past memories and alludes to a conversion from “passatism” to futurism. Conversion narratives are traditionally organized according to a transformation from ignorance to knowledge and are narrated by a first-person subject who writes from the point of view of the converted “I.” This characteristic makes narratives of conversion focus on the “before” and “after” moments of the transformation in addition to explaining the rationale of the conversion. The narrator typically prepares her readers for an understanding of that change, inherently producing retrospection in the narrative. The first volume, with its adoption of several futurist aesthetic norms (denunciation of “passatist” figures, an aggressive tone, sexual liberation, etc.) suggests that “passatism” is “ignorance” and that futurism is “knowledge.” We can point to precise moments in the text that openly anticipate the moment of conversion within the narrative. For example, Albina writes “è necessario ch'io, prima di penetrare nell'ambiente futurista, ricordi brevemente la mia giovinezza e la mia adolescenza” (4). In stating that it is necessary that her past to be known to the reader, Albina intimates that through it, we will come to understand her conversion to futurism. Indicating an eventual moment of conversion, Albina writes that her female reader “deve comprendere ciò che io lascio nella penna, avvertendo che ancora non uso le parole in libertà [...] Le ricorderò, caso mai, quando userò lo stile futurista” (5). In these passages, Albina does not *yet* use “words-in-freedom” but warns that she will use them later, anticipating a conversion. She indicates that the reasoning behind the use of the “words-in-freedom” will be explained to the reader in time for her to use this futurist method.⁵⁹ Additionally hinting at a conversion moment, Albina addresses the futurists stating “Ma non sorvoliamo, prima del tempo sul futurismo e restiamo, per l'ultima volta, per l'ultima volta caro Tavolato, caro Folgore, caro Boccioni nell'odioso ed odiato passatismo” (4-5). In declaring that this is the last moment in which we will linger on the past, Albina sets up the expectation that we will find out what allows for the move from the past to the present/future. However much the tension of an impending conversion is implied, there is no conversion moment in the first volume; we never find out why Albina has become a futurist, the text merely tells us that she is one even though she speaks nostalgically about the past. This gesture—of anticipating a conversion that never occurs—implies that Albina is not a true futurist, which coincides with the parodic narrative that adopts a futurist norm and gives a “passatist” critique of it at the same time.

The chiasmic structure allows *L'amore per l'amante* to feature a conversion moment without leading up to one. As the second volume comes to a close, Albina declares that she has suddenly become a *passatista*. However, *L'amore per l'amante* does not prepare us for a conversion as the first volume does, nor does it refer back to *L'amore per il marito*; therefore,

⁵⁹Marinetti's “Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo” of 1909 is also a conversion narrative.

the moment of conversion does not have any impact within the second volume. It is Enrico's visit to Albina's home at the end of the volume that incites Albina to convert to "passatism." She writes "non so perché, sono diventata ad un tratto passatista [...]" (28).⁶⁰ This statement, when read in conjunction with the first volume, appears to be the conversion moment that the first volume had anticipated even though the two volumes are incongruent. However, Albina declares that her conversion is one to "passatism" from futurism, not to futurism from "passatism" as *L'amore per il marito* had alluded to. Hence, the first volume prepares the readers for a move from "passatism" to futurism, but the second volume, without preparing or reminding the readers, explicitly makes a move from futurism to "passatism."⁶¹ This reversal illustrates the structure of the chiasmus and it undoes the conversion narrative. If *L'amore per il marito* instructs us to expect a move from "passatism" to futurism and *L'amore per il marito* does not train us for the move from futurism to "passatism," then the narrative of conversion that is embedded within *Diario* is negated, for there is no conversion in going from "passatism" to "passatism." I interpret *Diario* to be undoing the conversion narrative in order to suggest that for Albina, conversion from one of these literary movements to the other is impossible. Women cannot "convert" from *passatismo* to *futurismo* or vice versa because they have been excluded from both of them.

Sexualizing and Desexualizing "Words-in-Freedom"

The chiasmic structure of the text is also laid bare in looking at the way in which "words-in-freedom" are figured in each volume. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the "words-in-freedom" dispersed throughout *Diario*'s two volumes are one of two visual constants in the text—the other being the illustrations. However, within the text itself, the concept of *paroliberismo* changes between the two volumes. In *L'amore per il marito*, "words-in-freedom" allow women to express sexual desire, whereas in *L'amore per l'amante*, "words-in-freedom" preclude men's sexual desire. *Paroliberismo* thus makes space for women's sexuality and prohibits that of men in *Diario*.

The text figures "words-in-freedom" as a tool with which women can express their sexuality openly in the first volume. At the beginning of *L'amore per il marito*, Albina recounts how devastated she was when her father took away her borrowed copy of Zola's *Nana* when she was an adolescent. The image of Nana half-naked lingers on in Albina's mind and she is left to cope with her unsatisfied homoerotic desires. Albina informs her readers that because she does not employ futurist "words-in-freedom," she is unable to tell them exactly how she handled those desires, yet she writes that "se la fanciulla che mi legge è intelligente, deve comprendere ciò che io lascio nella penna, avvertendo che ancora non uso le parole in libertà, e che, quindi, certe

⁶⁰ This identification with "passatism" also mirrors Albina's declaration of futurism in the first volume when she says to her husband on their wedding night "Non sai, anima trista ch'io sono futurista? E ch'io con passione ho letto del gran Tavolato l'Elogio della Prostituzione?!!" (22). The chiasmus that structures the two volumes is clear when looking at these declarations, for in the first volume Albina declares herself a futurist and identifies with futurism through the tone and style of the text. In the second volume, Albina openly declares her adhesion to "passatism" both directly and through the way in which the second volume is written.

⁶¹ The conversion moment in the second volume is, in fact, all smoke and mirrors because despite having declared herself a *passatista*, Albina ends her diary self-reflexively drawing attention to futurism when she writes "Chiudo questa parte del mio diario con questa semplice formula futuristica" (29). Albina continues to employ "words-in-freedom," and calls attention to her doing so, disavowing the conversion to "passatism."

intimità non debbono oltrepassare le pareti della stanza dove esse vengono compiute” (5). Albina alludes to pleasuring herself in her bedroom and believes that her female reader, if intuitive, can understand her desire to do so even though she cannot express it explicitly with traditional language. The text presumes that standard Italian does not allow for women’s sexuality whereas futurist “words-in-freedom” do. Additionally, in calling out to her perceptive, female reader, Albina further intimates her same-sex desire and indicates that other women, familiar with dominant male society that does not accept women masturbating (unless of course, a man is allowed to watch), can understand her sexuality and desire to masturbate.⁶² Albina directly addresses her female reader again shortly thereafter stating: “Le ricorderò, caso mai, quando userò lo stile futurista. Allora il Procuratore del Re non potrà far nulla: chè l’arte e la letteratura mi serviranno di scusa” (6). According to Albina, futurist poetics allow for women’s sexual desire so much so that not even the “Procuratore del Re” can interfere and regulate women’s sexuality when it is articulated in *parole in libertà*.⁶³ By evoking the “Procuratore del Re,” the text highlights the way in which society represses women’s sexuality. For Albina, futurist poetics validate and allow for her sexuality whereas traditional language cannot. “Words-in-freedom” then, are a tool with which women can communicate their sexuality openly and gain new-found freedom, for as Albina asserts at the beginning of the first volume “molte parole in libertà esporrò in arguta e sovrana teoria: avvegnachè io non abbia paura della libertà, in qualunque forma essa si presenti a me” (3-4). *L’amore per il marito* takes “words-in-freedom” literally in that it uses them in order to express women’s sexuality openly.

In the first volume, “words-in-freedom” encourage or open up sexuality for women, but in *L’amore per l’amante* they make men less virile.⁶⁴ In her book, *Fascist Virilities*, Spackman has cogently shown how futurism and fascism employ the rhetoric of virility. In the second volume of *Diario*, however, virility is taken out of the futurist equation all together. Enrico Del Tramonto is more interested in futurist poetry than in having sex with Albina. After spending the afternoon with Enrico during their first *rendez-vous*, Albina describes Enrico and his sexual performance “Enrico è stato veramente futurista: mi ha detto molte, forse anche troppe parole in libertà ad [ed] ho capito benissimo che me ne avrebbe dette anche di più se non lo avessi pregato di essere meno poeta e più sincero nei—come dire?—momenti lirici MENO PAROLE PIÙ FATTI” (14, see fig. 2). Albina claims that if she had not begged Enrico to stop reciting his futurist poetry, then they would not have made love. As such, Albina paints herself as the initiator of sex and a sexually desiring subject. Enrico’s *paroliberismo* consumes him and makes him less virile and less interested in sex. While futurism relied on a misogynistic and virile

⁶² Valentina Mosco explains this element more: “È Krafft-Ebing che spiega come l’ordine dei ruoli e della società si sovverta quando l’uomo tende a perdere il controllo della sessualità delle donne, quando la donna finisce per trovare il piacere in modo autonomo (la condannata masturbazione) o con un’altra donna. È la donna autoerotica che fa tremare l’uomo, la donna che si guarda allo specchio e si compiace della propria bellezza e della propria forza, che potrà, una volta riafferrate le redini della propria autonoma sessualità, manovrare l’uomo a piacimento, sostituendolo con un altro oggetto di desiderio o un partner del suo stesso sesso, all’occorrenza...” (44-45).

⁶³The concern for authority in mentioning the “Procuratore del Re,” could be understood within the context of the futurist court trials which were going on at the time. Marinetti had been tried for pornography after having published *Mafarka* and Tavolato was similarly tried for his *L’Elogio della prostituzione* (which is explicitly mentioned in *L’amore per il marito*), see Meazzi 194-5. Even though the futurists were brought to trial for these provocative gestures, the text seems to think that futurism allows for sexual explicitness.

⁶⁴Valentine de Saint Point also championed virility in her “Manifeste de la femme futuriste” of 1912.

rhetoric, it was colored with homoerotic undertones and parthenogenetic fantasies, which excluded women altogether.⁶⁵ The futurist vision merged man with the machine, making the homoerotic tendencies less obvious while still upholding virility. *L'amore per l'amante* makes the futurist poet's object of his affection his own poetry rather than a woman, a man, or a machine. In fact, the futurist poet plays the game of love with Albina, but he lacks real sexual desire. In this way, the text castrates the futurist poet and undoes his virility. When Albina and Enrico meet to pursue their "sexual" affair, Enrico is constantly distracted by his own futurist poetry, which he tries to explain to Albina by giving her a lesson on poetry. Albina laments Enrico's lack of sexual desire and writes "io rimasi e rimango con l'impressione che egli non avesse eccessivo temperamento per dedicarsi ad altro che non fosse la critica poetica nelle nostre ore d'intimità" (20). When Enrico is presented with the opportunity to have sex with Albina, he chooses to think about and create "words-in-freedom" instead. Thus, *paroliberismo* averts male sexual desire, whereas in the first volume, it creates a central space for female sexuality and gives women a voice with which they can voice their sexual experiences. This inversion works off of gender and sexual desire, for it makes "words-in-freedom" either a catalyst or block of sexuality. Additionally, the open sexuality in *L'amore per il marito* echoes futurism, which encouraged women and men to seek sex rather than love, while the non-virile man in *L'amore per l'amante* recalls a D'Annunzian figure or a nineteenth-century dandy, further highlighting the chiasmic structure.

While we may never know who Flora Bonheur really was or the years in which *L'amore per il marito* and *L'amore per l'amante* were published, *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista* is an incredible example of how a subject, writing as a woman, comes to terms with futurism and its break from the past. In this chapter, I have analyzed what is at work in *Diario* (e.g. parody, chiasmus, "passatist"-futurist binary, women's sexuality, and women's restricted position in society and in literature). I have given a theoretical overview of parody which helps us to understand that parody, different from satire, can play different roles, which do not perforce condemn. Parody can critique, honor, subvert, play with, and open up what it mimics. As such, Bonheur's chiasmic parodies contribute to both "passatism" and futurism. In this chapter I have also pointed to the moments in which the text seeks to communicate women's subordinate position. This inferiority, along with the cultural trauma caused by the birth of futurism, explains why Bonheur employs parody, for it allows her to participate in two literary worlds that exclude her. For Bonheur, parody is a strategy that she utilizes in order to gain agency in the modern world. The examples of textual analysis in this chapter show how Bonheur's parodic strategy is structured by a chiasmus. Instead of simply parodying futurism in the first volume, Bonheur turns that parody upside down and makes her second volume a parody of "passatism." Integral to neither "passatism" nor futurism, the female writing subject attempts to overcome her marginalization by parodying both literary worlds. In this sense, *Diario* is both a site of resistance and of opening—resistance to a modernism that does not incorporate women and an opening to let them in. While we may not be able to put a distinct futurist label on *Diario*, it is, nonetheless, essential to understanding female futurism. Furthermore, we may not be able to exclude that it was written by a man. If a man were, in fact, the author of *Diario*, it would introduce yet another layer of parody to the mix and change my reading of the text. Until there is

⁶⁵ See Spackman's chapter "Mafarka and Son: Marinetti's Homophobic Economics" in *Fascist Virilities*.

proof of a man authoring *Diario*, I believe it is best to read it as a part of, and as a way to understand, female futurism. The text posits itself as having been written by a female subject and that, I contend, makes my argument possible. Not only is *Diario* presented as being written by a woman during the first phase of futurism that is not sponsored by a man, but it illustrates, more than the work of Valentine de Saint Point and Marietta Angelini, known for being the first female futurists, just how traumatic the advent of futurism was for women. In understanding *Diario* as a female subject's coming to terms with futurism and the modern world, we can better interpret, and put into perspective, the other strategies that women employed to be a part of futurism.

Chapter II: The Visual Constants of *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*

Although each volume of *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista* parodies a different literary style as we examined in chapter one, they both share a commonality: the incorporation of illustrations and *parole in libertà*. No matter what each respective volume parodies, “words-in-freedom” are consistently scattered throughout the volumes and the illustrations appear with regularity—on the frontispiece and at approximately one-third and two-thirds of the way through each work. As such, I refer to the visual elements of *Diario* as visual constants because they are the only stable features in a text made slippery by its employment of parody and its use of the rhetorical figure of chiasmus. The illustrations were drawn and signed by Luigi Bignami, not by Bonheur, and it is unclear who produced the “words-in-freedom.” Therefore, the text is the product of two, if not three, different agents.⁶⁶ The visual constants in the text make *Diario* a unique, mixed-media project because it brings together three different art forms: textual narrative, illustration, and artistic typography. As such, it creates a new word-image experience for its readers. This verbo-visual relationship also enhances the parodies of *Diario* because it mirrors the hybridity of the doubled-voiced parodic text. The illustrations recall the popular “passatist” illustrated novels—chiefly the Victorian and *fin de siècle* novels—and the “words-in-freedom” represent the influence of futurism.⁶⁷ I would like to suggest that both the “words-in-freedom” and the illustrations are visual manifestations and representations of the literary styles Bonheur parodies. The regular presence of both visual elements in each volume highlights the way in which *Diario* constantly works with and critiques the futurist-“passatist” binary. Notably, while the illustrations and the “words-in-freedom” are in dialogue with the written word, there is no active relationship between the “words-in-freedom” and the drawings other than their juxtaposition and representation of “passatism” and futurism. In this way, the visual manifestations are both grounded in the verbal narrative. Although they are two different kinds of visual art engaging with the text, I argue that the illustrations and the “words-in-freedom” work in a similar manner. In this chapter, I analyze the way in which each respective visual component works in coordination with futurism or “passatism,” but I also examine the relationship between the verbal and the visual in *Diario*. I argue that both the “words-in-freedom” and the illustrations visually quote, answer, and give us impressions of the verbal narrative, sometimes making Bonheur’s text more instable because the visual constants question and change the narrative. In the case of the illustrations, I posit that they make Albina, the female desiring subject of the text, into a female object to be looked at by employing the iconography of the erotic postcard. This reversal is yet another chiasmic characteristic of *Diario*, which, in this case, is not expressed within one volume to the next, but from the verbal to the visual of the whole text. In order to give a thorough picture of the visual in *Diario*, I begin with a discussion on the *parole in libertà*, then a brief examination of the book design and typography on the volumes’ covers, and finally I will consider the illustrations in relation to the erotic postcard.

⁶⁶ Luigi Bignami was known in futurist circles and illustrated Emilio Settemelli’s *I capricci della duchessa Pallore* and Mari Annetta’s *Come si seducono gli uomini*, which is a parody of Marinetti’s 1917 *Come si seducono le donne* (Meazzi 204). Although it is beyond the scope of this project, it would be productive to look at Mari Annetta’s *Come si seducono gli uomini* and compare it to the way in which *Diario* parodies futurism.

⁶⁷ The “passatist” novels that Albina praises in *L’amore per il marito*, those of Georges Ohnet and Charles Paul De Kock, were also illustrated. For criticism on illustrated novels see Harvey for the Victorian era and Kooistra and McGann for modernism.

“Words-in-Freedom” That Function as Illustration

Even though the “words-in-freedom” and the illustrations are examples of two different kinds of visuality in *Diario*, they both function similarly by interacting with the verbal narrative. In this way, the “words-in-freedom” in *Diario* differ from the way *parole in libertà* typically function in futurist works because they interact with the text, whereas in futurism they constitute the text. As such, the “words-in-freedom” and the drawings both function as classic illustrations do. The work of literary critic and theorist Lorraine Janzen Kooistra in *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* is helpful in understanding the visual in *Diario*. Illustrated novels create a complex dynamic, a type of textuality that Kooistra calls, working with a sexual metaphor “bitextuality.” Going with Kooistra’s metaphor, we might say that more than “bitextual,” *Diario* is “tritextual” because three different kinds of “texts” make up the narrative: “words-in-freedom,” illustrations, and verbal narrative. Kooistra’s use of the sexual metaphor is relevant to *Diario* because each type of text—whether it be verbal or visual—reflects sexuality. Moreover, Kooistra provides different dialogic relations that describe the way in which illustrations respond to and critique the text in which they are embedded: quotation, impression, answering.⁶⁸ When an illustrator quotes the text visually, for example, he or she is faithful to the narrative, yet in the act of quoting, the artist employs quotes to make a larger point about the work at hand, just as a literary critic does (Kooistra 15). In giving an impression, the illustrator can sway from the text as he interprets it with artistic license. In answering the narrative, illustrations can also respond and be faithful, yet remain independent, trying ultimately to achieve visual-textual harmony. Although distinct, these relationships may overlap and unite in the text. The relationships that Kooistra sketches are relevant to the way in which the illustrations and “words-in-freedom” interact with *Diario*. I understand them to be interacting with the text through quotation, impression, and answering as Kooistra posits. Kooistra also argues that illustrators, in particular those of illustrated first-editions (as is *Diario*), are the first critics of illustrated-texts. She claims that “In first-edition illustrated books the artist is the first public reader of the author’s words. The artist’s illustrations constitute a pictorial reading, or criticism, of the text. In this sense, illustrated books are composed of two texts—a verbal/creative text and a visual/critical text” (4). This element of Kooistra’s argument helps us to understand Bignami’s illustrations as a visual critique of Bonheur’s verbal narrative. Kooistra’s bitextual theory, which is based on *fin de siècle* texts, is appropriate for many types of word-image relations, but especially for those fashioned around and after the time of the *fin de siècle*, as those in *Diario* are.

As I discussed in chapter one, *Diario* connects “words-in-freedom” to sex and sexual desire along gender lines when it figures them as a way for women to express sexual desire in the first volume and reveals that they make men less virile in the second volume. This gender-specific model of “words-in-freedom” goes against futurist norms, just as the way in which *parole in libertà* function as illustrations do in *Diario*. Marinetti theorized *paroliberismo* in order

⁶⁸ Kooistra provides five dialogic relationships, but I describe only three of them here because they are the most relevant to *Diario*. Kooistra’s other two relationships are parody and cross-dressing. Parodic illustrations, just as textual parodies, mimic the text yet exaggerate it and create distance between it and them. Perhaps surprisingly, the visual aspects of *Diario* do not parody the already parodic text. Kooistra’s definition of the cross-dressing relation pertains to texts whose author has been both writer and illustrator; she refers to this type of text as a hermaphrodite (21).

to simplify language and to “raddoppiare la forza espressiva delle parole” (“Distruzione della sintassi” 77). When words were made artistic through typography, they became more expressive on the literary page and guided the speaker who read them. In futurism, “words-in-freedom” make up the verbal, literary page in addition to acquiring “the additional status of visual art” (Ansani 51), whereas in *Diario*, they relate to the verbal narrative, but never constitute it.

Meazzi discusses Flora Bonheur’s use of “words-in-freedom” and claims “Car Flora Bonheur connaît parfaitement ses sources et à bien des égards, elle paraît plus *d’avant-garde* que beaucoup d’autre futurists actifs à la meme époque. Il faut le reconnaître, ses mots en liberté *fonctionnent* parfaitement au-delà de l’ironie et des intentions caricaturales manifestes” (203; italics by Meazzi). Bonheur’s *paroliberismo* could appear textbook-like because she follows some of Marinetti’s prescriptions for “words-in-freedom.” She uses, for example, mathematical signs, onomatopoeia and various fonts and sizes, yet she does not utilize musical notations, double nouns, infinitive verbs, analogies, colored fonts, weight or smell, as Marinetti recommended. Moreover, she uses numerous adjectives and adverbs and even the occasional first-person subject pronoun “Io,” which are contrary to Marinetti’s directions in his manifestoes. Bonheur’s “words-in-freedom,” diverging from what Meazzi claims, therefore, do not work “perfectly.” Indeed, no “words-in-freedom” work “perfectly” as even Marinetti failed to follow the rules he set out in his manifestoes. Marinetti often encouraged futurists to make the page chaotic and in fact, Marinetti’s *paroliberismo* is typically much more frenzied and complex than Bonheur’s (see fig. 3). Not adhering to Marinetti’s rules, *Diario*’s “words-in-freedom” often showcase conjugated verbs and give a sense of movement to the word, which do not help in guiding the reader-speaker to declaim them as one would at a *serata futurista*. It is possible that what gives Meazzi the impression of perfect *paroliberismo* is the simplicity with which Bonheur constructs her “words-in-freedom” as they mostly involve ascending and descending letters that form words.⁶⁹ This minimalism, however, cannot be labeled as futurist. The “words-in-freedom” in *Diario* are far from typically futurist by any means. They stray from futurist standards because of their simplicity and because, above all, they answer, give an impression, and quote the verbal narrative instead of forming it. I want to now turn to examples of “words-in-freedom” that illustrate this function.

One of these key examples can be seen when Albina describes her first sexual encounter with her “cousin” in *L’amore per il marito*.⁷⁰ Even if excited and aroused by her first sexual experience, Albina is hesitant to tell her readers what happened. She wonders and worries about what the representatives of the State might think and/or do in revealing the details of her sexual encounter. She asks:

Debbo dirlo?
Si?
No?

⁶⁹ Ascending and descending letters in words can also be found in Marinetti’s *Zang Tumb Tuuum*.

⁷⁰ Albina claims that her adolescent sexual relationships were with “cousins.” The sexual relationship between cousins was a common “passatist” literary topos, as many novels feature a romantic liaison with a cousin. However, futurists also condemned bourgeois love and sex as “between cousins,” so the text could be pointing to either a theme of “passatism” or the way in which futurists defined middle-class love. While Albina could really be claiming that she had sexual relations with members of her extended family, she could also be using the term “cousin” to cover up sexual experience with men in general.

E il Procuratore del Re?
 E il magistrato?
 E il Cancelliere?
 E l'Usciere?
 E la sentenza?
 E il mandato di cattura?
 E l'arresto?
 E *Regina Coeli*?
 E la reclusione?
 E il connubio coi delinquenti.... passatisti? (11)

After presenting her array of questions and preoccupations, there is a lengthy set of “words-in-freedom” which indirectly answers the first question she poses (see fig. 4). These *parole in libertà* describe the foreplay and the sexual act that Albina engages in with her “cousin” and in so doing, they respond to the question Albina poses in the text and answers to it that yes, she should, in fact, divulge her sexual relationship.

This series of “words-in-freedom” echoes the text when expressing, in descending letters the word “Pontelevatoio” and the ascending word “scala,” in the first line. Here, Albina exaggerates the conditions of her childhood to parody futurism’s hatred of the past. She tells us that as a young girl she lived in a castle as in the Middle Ages where “il ponte levatoio scricchiolava sulle catene arrugginite” (4). She used to dream of a lover singing to her from underneath the drawbridge and imagined throwing him “dalla finestra una scala di seta” to help him up into her room. The words “pontelevatoio” and “scala,” which ascend and descend in height, mimic the closing of the drawbridge and the lifting of the lover into Albina’s room in addition to echoing this initial part of the text and suggesting that her childhood fantasy has come true. This set of “words-in-freedom” employs the letterpress typeface used throughout the text and a bold sans serif font whose letters get gradually bigger or smaller according to the significance of the word. For example, the words used to describe the foreplay between the cousins, such as “Cugino Cugina bacio bocca bocca labbra labbra mano mano toccamente epidermide” are in the typeface of the text, but the actions and feelings evoked by the sexual act are expressed in a, bold ascending and descending sans serif font. “Trasalimento,” meaning emotion, starts off in small letters but gradually gets bigger to express the increasing intensity of the moment. The letters of the word “voluttà,” which expresses sexual pleasure, descend in height the first time and then ascend when it is repeated the second time. This gesturing of up and down imitates the movement involved in the sexual act. Albina and her “cousin” indulge in this sexual relationship several times, as is conveyed by the repetition of “bis bis BIS.” The largest letters of this set are reserved for representing orgasm. The letters in the word “TRIONFO” neither ascend nor descend yet boldly suggest a climax. Following “trionfo” there is the word “VITTORIA” which begins on the right-hand side of the page and is broken up by a dash, but finishes on the line below. As the couple’s (or Albina’s or her cousin’s) sexual pleasure reaches a climax, the letters become smaller, and the series ends with the descending word “esaurimento,” reflecting physical fatigue.

The “words-in-freedom” are in conversation with the text as they echo certain prevalent words and answer the questions it poses. Furthermore, they do not describe a part of the verbal narrative, but respond to what it suggests. In fact, in response to the “words-in-freedom,” Albina

declares in the verbal narrative, as I previously cited in chapter one, that “Neppure Emilio Zola [...] è riuscito mai, io penso, a descrivere uno stato d’animo come quello cui [in cui] io soggiacqui nella limpida notte...” (12). The text comments on the “words-in-freedom” and vice versa; they are both fully aware of each other, yet separate and distinct. If we borrow from Kooistra the idea that all illustration is a critique of the verbal narrative and if we understand the “words-in-freedom” to function as illustration and not literary text, then we can say that the “words-in-freedom” critique the text’s unwillingness and/or inability to be direct. It is telling, that the “words-in-freedom” and the images as well, as we shall see, are able to be sexually explicit whereas the text alludes to sexual desire, but refuses to, or cannot, express it directly.

Another example of a dialogic relationship between text and “words-in-freedom” can be found in *L’amore per l’amante* (see fig. 5). Albina tells us that Enrico, after calling her “Mia piccola Frine” and after having read his poetry to her yet another time, offers to read her his verses “ancora, sempre, quando vorrai, dove vorrai...” (15). Albina remarks that Enrico exaggerates in offering up his poetry at any hour, but she notes that perhaps this “mancanza di limite” is what poetry truly is (15). The text, therefore, is focused on poetry, however, the “words-in-freedom” pick up on the word with a sexual denotation: “frine,” which means “prostitute.” The diary entry ends with the *congiuntivo esortativo* “E sia Frine” fashioned as “words-in-freedom.” The first word-letter *e*, is capitalized, and the two other words (sia FRINE”) ascend gradually. The last letter in the word “frine,” the *e*, matches the height and length of the first “e” and closes the “words-in-freedom.” The *congiuntivo esortativo* can convey a suggestion or a command, and here it seems to encourage Albina’s lasciviousness. Although the “words-in-freedom” echo the word “frine” used in the paragraph above, they work against the text and distract the reader by suggesting Albina is sexually available at a critical moment in which she is expressing her ideas about poetry. This type of relationship is what Kooistra would call an impression, as she explains: “In *impression*, the authority for the picture moves out of the word-as-ground and into the body of the artist who sees and reads, thinks, and feels, and responds to the text in a process of reception and reproduction” (18). The producer of the “words-in-freedom” is not interested in Albina’s views on poetry, but rather in Albina’s sexual availability. The “words-in-freedom” take one element of the text and turn it around to reflect sexual meaning. In the diary entry Albina makes immediately following these “words-in-freedom,” she writes “A proposito di quest’ultima parola che chiude la pagina scritta a metà del mio diario, ho avuto ieri da Enrico la spiegazione del suo vero significato” (16). Having read the previous page and the “words-in-freedom,” we imagine Albina is referring to the provocative word “frine,” which has been highlighted by the “words-in-freedom.” However, in her entry, Albina clarifies that she is referring to the word “poesia.” *Diario* is obviously playing with us here (as is often the case), yet Albina’s clarification tells us how the text sees its *paroliberismo*. “E sia frine” is not part of the “pagina scritta,” and herein lies the difference between futurism’s *parole in libertà* and Bonheur’s: for futurism, “words-in-freedom” became the literary page. Instead, for Bonheur, *paroliberismo* is separate from the verbal text. Notably, however, the text, in acknowledging the difference between the “pagina scritta” and the “words-in-freedom,” also reveals the type of relationship between the two. The text purposely ignores the “words-in-freedom” on the previous page, and in so doing reveals a fraught relationship between them. On the one hand, the verbal text disregards the “words-in-freedom” perhaps for the sake of comedy and to play with its

reader, but on the other, it admits that there is distinct disjointedness between “words-in-freedom” and the verbal narrative.

The relationship of quotation is also evident between the “words-in-freedom” and the narrative in *Diario*. Kooistra states that in this dialogic relation “The artist produces a picture which is a visual double for the word. . . . The image, like the critic’s citation, is a quotation which works both as evidence for a particular reading of the text, and as a reference which shows the context in which the critic’s interpretation is to be evaluated” (15). A set of “words-in-freedom” from *L’amore per il marito* quotes directly from the narrative (see fig. 6). When Albina explains the numerous sexual encounters she had with various “cousins,” she writes “Aggiungerò che al primo cugino un secondo seguì: e al secondo un terzo: e al terzo un quarto” (13). In this way, Albina curtly describes her succession of cousin-lovers. Following this description, Albina announces: “Ecco rappresentata graficamente la breve teoria delle mie avventure adolescenti” (13). What Albina considers a graphic representation of what she has just claimed is, in reality, a visual quotation of the text. This quotation, however, also interprets the verbal narrative in a way that creates new meaning. The “words-in-freedom” present the idea of her cousin-lovers with ordinal numbers and the word “cousin” in increasingly smaller sized typeface. The first three cousins comprise the first line, whereas the fourth is represented in very small print at the beginning of the left margin of the second row. This “graphic representation” quotes the text and allows us to understand what the verbal narrative does not: that the sexual relations Albina engaged in became increasingly less exciting, pleasurable, and important for her than how she had first described them to the reader. In fact, the verbal narrative acknowledges that the “graphic representation” explains something Albina does not in the verbal text because immediately following the “words-in-freedom,” Albina writes “Ecco perchè, amiche mie, in futurismo ed anche fuori del futurismo io pensai che nulla è [fosse] più nocivo alla natura umana del proprio parente e di qui la necessità di prendere marito!” (13). The verbal text relies on the visual text to explain why marriage is necessary: with the nuanced visual quotation in mind, Albina’s desire to marry stems from her willingness to escape the bourgeois familial trap that permits these increasingly less pleasurable “incestuous” relationships to continue. This example not only illustrates that the verbal text relates to the visual one, but also demonstrates the loyalty with which the “words-in-freedom” mirror the verbal text and interpret it. Hence, the “words-in-freedom” in *Diario* continuously relate to the verbal narrative in the same way that *fin de siècle* book illustrations do with their texts because they respond to, echo, and answer Bonheur’s narrative.

The “words-in-freedom” in *Diario* are also constructed differently than those of the futurists. The lettering of *the parole in libertà* in Bonheur’s work gives the impression of the letterpress because it is fairly precise and uniform, yet there are small imperfections on the page which allow us to hypothesize that the letters were made by hand and not by a mechanical process. More specifically, I believe they were created using lithographic techniques. As a low-cost and popular printing process, lithography requires artists to render hand-drawn or handwritten words or images onto a stone plate using a special wax pencil or crayon. The plate is then coated with a chemical solution that helps to deter or attract ink. Afterwards, the entire plate is covered with ink and reproduced on paper.⁷¹ Literary scholar and visual artist Johanna Drucker

⁷¹ For more on lithography, see Ouellette and Jones 6-10 and Drucker 92, 96, 102.

explains the use of lithography in the early twentieth century and the avant-garde in *The Visible Word*:

The lithographic productions of such artists as Toulouse-Lautrec, Theophile Steinlen, and Pierre Bonnard provided direct evidence of the effect of freehand drawing on the forms of written language. Mass production of lithography promoted freeform production, released from the comparative limitations of either letterpress type or engraved imagery. The effects of lithography and its much expanded range of visual letterforms are not an integral part of the typographic experiments of avant-garde poets, who restricted themselves, by and large, to letterpress technology—though one major exception to this trend is found among the artists of the Russian avant-garde, who made frequent and skillful use of cheap means of lithographic reproduction for their handdrawn artists' books. (92)

Lithography gives the artist more freedom and closeness to the work than the letterpress. Drucker further claims that “Lithography...provided much greater flexibility than metal type for the visual manipulation of the text” (102). The futurists' use of a machine in their *paroliberismo* distanced the author from their work. The distance between maker and object was further mediated not only by the letterpress, but also by the work of the typesetter. Marinetti would often draft his “words-in-freedom” by hand, but his proximity to the work was erased when he would hand it over to the typesetter. While most avant-garde artists did not utilize lithography, many other artists did, especially the creators of postcards because it provided a cheap, easy and flexible way to reproduce images and text. The “words-in-freedom” that are positioned within the printed page and the lettering on the frontispieces in Bonheur's volumes appear in a different font than the type-set text. This seems to imply that certain parts of the page had been purposely left blank and then filled in later with a lithographic plate. The imperfection of the human hand can be seen in the “words-in-freedom” throughout *Diario*. The *parole in libertà* in figure 7, for example, illustrate this difference well. The accent on the letter *o* in the verb “levò” resembles an acute accent because it leans to the right. The accent is angled at forty five degrees and is well spaced. The same *o* in the next verb, “riabbassò,” however, is modeled differently. More than an accent, it appears to be a dash above the small *o*. Although both *o*'s should have grave accents, the way in which they are constructed differs, revealing human error rather than the precision of a machine.

Another, more explicit example, can be seen in a set of “words-in-freedom” from the second volume (see fig. 8). Styled as a mathematical equation, the words read “PASSATISTA + FUTURISTA = SBADIGLIO, SBADIGLIO SBADIGLIO.” The stem of the letter *A* in “passatista” flies upward and to the right with a slight curve. The elongated stem of the *A* in “futurista,” however, shoots straight out and contrasts with the *A* in “passatista.” The stem of the *A* is exaggerated in both the words “passatista” and “futurista,” as we can see by comparing the “standard” stem of the first *A* in “passatista.” The difference in detail seems, in fact, deliberate, especially considering the proximity of the same letters. I would like to argue that these noticeable differences in the fonts and between letters constitute yet another different type of *paroliberismo*, one which resembles more the art of calligraphy than the futurists' type-set creations made with declamation in mind. Typography is different from calligraphy in that it styles established fonts in mechanical ways, whereas calligraphy is spontaneous. The spontaneity

that occurs throughout Bonheur's "words-in-freedom" reveals that they resist mechanics and want to be imperfect, raw, and handmade. Although subtle, these, and other imperfections draw attention to themselves within the text, especially when they are brought together so closely, as in the examples above.

The "words-in-freedom" in *Diario* are unmediated and imperfect, yet they still maintain a certain order, unlike most of the chaotic examples of the futurists. As a result, they are evidence of a different kind of *paroliberismo*, one that draws the author into the work and allows her to leave her mark. Although we cannot be sure who the true agent of the "words-in-freedom" in *Diario* was, I would like to suggest that they could have been done by the mysterious Flora Bonheur herself. Luigi Bignami, the artist of the illustrations, signed every image he created in the text so it would seem improbable that he would not take credit for the "words-in-freedom" as well.⁷² Going on the premise that Bonheur, writing as a female subject, created and manually made her own "words-in-freedom," we can then conclude that this early example of women's *paroliberismo* signals spontaneity and expressivity (whether or not it was a spontaneous act) and a divergence from typical futurist "words-in-freedom."

Book and Graphic Design in Diario

Before moving on to discuss the second visual constant, the illustrations, I want to address elements of book design and further point to the way in which *Diario* was crafted. The typographical and graphic design elements on the frontispieces of *L'amore per il marito* and *L'amore per l'amante*, like the "words-in-freedom," appear to have been made by lithography and also juxtapose "passatism" to futurism. These design components are important because they draw the reader in and set the tone for Bonheur's narrative. The two covers of *Diario* feature erotic drawings of Albina (see figures 9 and 10), which I will discuss more in detail when I analyze the illustrations. Both frontispieces employ the same types of lettering yet differ in their illustration and in their color scheme. On the cover of the first volume, Albina sits on a bed playing solitaire in intimate apparel; she is illustrated in black and white. In addition to these colors, the color red is used as a backdrop for the figure and for the first volume's title. On the cover of the second volume Albina also appears in her undergarments and leans over to adjust her stocking and garter. This volume also employs black and white, but uses green as an accent color.⁷³ In the first volume, the red appears behind Albina in the background whereas the green in the second volume emerges in the foreground and in the lettering. The volume title *L'amore per il marito* appears in red, whereas the author's name and the title of the entire work, *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, appear in green on the second frontispiece (see figures 11 and 12). If the volumes had been sold or positioned together, the colors would have evoked the *tricolore*, the Italian flag, and could have suggested a nationalist stance which would have been

⁷² Although it is also possible that Bignami did the "words-in-freedom" and the lettering on the frontispieces because Kooistra notes that the illustrator of books during the *fin de siècle* "frequently...not only produced illustrations for the text, but also designed its entire architecture, including binding, cover design, endpapers, title pages and page layout" (3).

⁷³ In the images reproduced in this chapter the second volume seems more yellow than white, which is certainly due to aging and exposure.

most significant if the text had indeed been written during World War I.⁷⁴ The simplicity of the color scheme indicates that the frontispieces were most likely made through the process of chromolithography. Chromolithography, which is based on the lithographic process, is used to add color to a lithographic print. Additional stone plates placed on top of the black and white lithographic print can be used to add color in the chromolithographic process. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when done well, chromolithography was very expensive, and some prints could require the production of over twenty different additional color plates (Ouellette and Jones 9). Each of *Diario*'s frontispieces features just one color in addition to black and white, indicating a simple and low-cost way to embellish the text.

The fonts on the frontispieces also reveal more about Bonheur's project. There are three different fonts employed on each cover: a natural inspired art nouveau typeface, a sans serif font, and lastly, a calligraphic font. Similar to the "words-in-freedom," I understand the fonts to have been executed by hand and reproduced through lithography. Each font is used to convey a particular piece of information on the volume covers. For example, the author's name is spelled out in a decorative, bold, serif font similar to the *Metropolitaine* font that the artist and architect Hector Guimard created around 1905 and that was employed in the signs for the Paris metro entrances (see fig. 13). This font is characteristically identifiable as Parisian design, which emphasizes the author's French pseudonym and brings to mind the *passatismo* parodied in the text because it is tied to art nouveau.⁷⁵ On the first frontispiece Flora Bonheur's name appears mid-page on the left hand side. On the second, it appears in the top right corner of the page (see figures 9 and 10). Underneath Bonheur's name on both covers, the title of the entire work appears in a modern, sans-serif font in all capital letters. This lettering, simple in comparison to the *Metropolitaine* font in which the author's name appears, is slightly angled (see, for example, the way in which the *D* in "Diario" becomes triangular) with clean and tall lines and echoes in its simplicity futurism's objective to simplify language. An ornamental character follows the title of the work; it is composed of a central straight line sandwiched between two squiggly lines (see figures 11 and 12).⁷⁶ This decoration is typical of a more elaborate turn-of-the-century style, such as that advanced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. Drucker explains Morris's influence on the look of the book:

The volumes of William Morris, for instance, transformed the book from a transparent vehicle for text into an art object, reviving the artisanal techniques of binding, illuminating, and so forth which had been part of the manuscript tradition. In the process, he made intense investigation of every element of the book as an object—type, ink, paper, threads, illustrations, etc. Evident influence

⁷⁴ The Italian flag as we know it today features these three colors, but so did earlier versions of it, even before Italy became a republic in 1946.

⁷⁵ Futurist scholars who have taken Bonheur's *Diario* into consideration often comment on her pseudonym's likeness to the French realist artist, Rosa Bonheur (see, for example, Meazzi 192-3). This observation stems, in part, from an error Marinetti made in his *Taccuini* by referring to the author of *Diario* as Rosa Bonheur, rather than Flora Bonheur. Rosa Bonheur (b. 1822 d. 1899) was a French realist artist well known for her depictions of animals and for dressing as a man and living with a woman. Her work does not have anything in common with the images illustrated by Luigi Bignami.

⁷⁶ In fact, further recalling "passatism," the *Metropolitaine* font reappears underneath the title, to the right, to indicate the volume number.

of this work could be seen ... on the covers and title pages of literary journals, which broke out in a turn-of-the century rash of floral borders, vines, and heavy chapter headings aping the initial-letter illuminations of more labor-intensive originals. This was precisely the aesthetic attack by the Futurist and Dada artists whose typography and design distinctly attempted a “modern” look—streamlined, reduced, nondecorative even when busy and collaged in quality. (97-98)

The decorative aspects of the frontispieces all reflect the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, even though the simple font reminiscent of futurism does not. Lastly, the specific title of the volume takes up the bottom quarter of the page and is rendered in a calligraphic style (see figures 14 and 15). To the right of the volume’s title on both frontispieces there is another decorative element which is composed of two parallel straight lines beneath a line with four upward swooping decorative swirls. These three distinct fonts and ornaments represent in typographical terms, the project of *Diario*. In employing distinct “passatist” and futurist fonts, the frontispiece foreshadows the parodies of both. Moreover, in using a calligraphic font, it implies a personal and spontaneous form of writing. Calligraphy leaves a personal mark on the cover—whether or not it is Bonheur’s—because it is not a standard typeset. This last font reveals its handmadeness as the letters within each title and between the two volumes differ significantly. For example, the letter *o* in the first volume’s “L’amore” has a serif that extends to the left side. The serif of the *o* in *marito*, however comes out to the right side of the letter. Additionally, the three letter *r*’s in the first volume’s title all differ slightly in the placement of their serifs and form. Furthermore, the swirled-head of the capital *L* in “L’amore per il marito” is larger and more spaced out than the capital *L* in the second volume’s title. These examples reveal a laborious, slow, and imperfect process while also leaving a trace of the artist’s hand. Although it is likely that the first two fonts, which represent futurism and “passatism,” were also done by hand, they are standardized fonts and do not waver as much as the calligraphic font does. In fact, the calligraphic font of the volumes’ titles contrasts with the other two fonts and especially exposes the work of the hand. Similarly, Bonheur employs standard topoi of futurism and “passatism” in her verbal text, yet creates her own twist on them by including their norms and diverging from them at the same time in parodic fashion. In this way, the personal calligraphic font could represent a departure from “passatism” and futurism in the work and could foreshadow Bonheur’s parody. Along with the connection to the futurist-“passatist” binary in the volumes, the book design elements reveal non-futurist aesthetic practices and the trace of the human hand instead of the letterpress.

Bignami’s Illustrations and the Erotic Postcard

Now that I have established that the “words-in-freedom” in *Diario* function as illustrations and are lithographically produced, as many elements of the book’s design are, I want to turn to the other visual constant in the text—the illustrations. The images by Luigi Bignami embedded in the text are in dialogue with the verbal narrative in much the same way that the “words-in-freedom” are—by answering, giving an impression, and quoting. However, Bignami develops a common theme in all of the illustrations, for they all recall the iconography of the erotic postcard, a popular form of early pornography that was produced from 1900 to 1925. The illustrations all highlight, exaggerate, and change the terms of the eroticism and sexuality posited

in the volumes by Bonheur. Kooistra explains that “Illustrators inevitably take up a critical/interpretive stance to a text by producing their own narrative sequences and developing their own themes and motifs” (18). Since Bignami’s images all mimic popular types of the erotic postcard, we can understand this common denominator to be a critical approach to the verbal narrative. Bignami’s response to Bonheur’s parodies is to objectify the female body for the reader-viewer and to criticize Albina’s sexual desire. Whereas the narrative may not openly discuss sexuality, Albina alludes to it and herself as a sexual desiring subject. In reaction to this provocative stance, Bignami, the male reader and illustrator, incorporates the iconography of the erotic postcard that made women to be looked at by men. Albina thus visually becomes an object of men’s sexual desire. In this way, Bignami negatively critiques Bonheur’s narrative by taking away Albina’s sexual agency and giving the male reader-viewer power over her instead. The illustrations remind the reader-viewer that the woman in *Diario*, the woman figured as the one who writes, is there chiefly for his viewing pleasure. This position draws the male reader-viewer in to *Diario*, encouraging him to not take Bonheur’s parodies seriously.

The themes, poses, and style of Bignami’s illustrations constantly refer back to erotic postcards.⁷⁷ Unlike a typical postcard that was mailed as a souvenir or as a greeting to friends and family, the erotic postcard was usually kept for private use.⁷⁸ It might be best described in contemporary terms as a mix between a baseball card and a Playboy magazine. Although these postcards were most often not mailed, if they were, the vendor provided an envelope to hide their sexually explicit content. The erotic postcard was sometimes referred to as the “French” postcard because many of the most provocative ones were produced in Paris. It can be considered to be one of the first types of visual pornography available to the masses. The postcard allowed for photographic and chromolithographic images to be mass produced and easily consumed. Erotic postcards often featured scantily clad or naked women in innocent or compromising positions either alone, with men and/or with women. Erotic postcards were also often censored by the authorities.⁷⁹ The photographers and illustrators of these cards fashioned the sexualized contents on many of the salon paintings of the nineteenth century, which frequently depicted classically styled female nude bodies.⁸⁰ The erotic postcard took on various visual tropes, some of which were: smoking, bicycles, horses, vamps, colonized women, Sapphic love, mirrors, lingerie, sexual encounters, flirting, undressing, etc. Many of the postcards also fetishized certain body parts, such as the legs, butt, and breasts by focusing only on them and isolating them from the rest of the human body. Some postcards were also produced in series and created picture

⁷⁷ For more on the erotic postcard see Ouellette and Jones, Nørgaard, Hammond, Lebeck, and Kyrou. For a discussion of the erotic postcard in Italian see Farina.

⁷⁸ Ironically, postcard collecting and writing was initially associated with women. It was common for families to have a postcard album in their homes which they would look at often. Naomi Schor writes “The association of femininity with postcard writing lends weight to the gradualist school of postcard historians, for what we have here is a transfer of the traditional association of femininity with letter writing to a new mode of written communication, further reinforced by the association of the feminine with the trivial, the picturesque, the ephemeral” (211).

⁷⁹ Germany, Austria, and Switzerland were the countries that excelled in postcard production because there were fewer regulations (Ouellette and Jones 7). Many famous photographers started their careers by producing postcards, even though many of them refused to sign their work in the fear of being found out and getting into trouble with the authorities.

⁸⁰ Many of the images of erotic postcards were photographed and then copied, but many were also drawn as well, and some were first photographed and then filled in by hand with color.

narratives. The postcards provided a way for male viewers to indulge in the female body privately and in recalling the iconography of the postcard, so too do the illustrations in *Diario*.⁸¹ Made to be hidden, consumed, and looked-at, the erotic postcard opened up society to sexuality in a new way.⁸² In recalling these sexually explicit images, *Diario* draws men in.

Each volume of *Diario* incorporates three drawings (including the frontispiece), for a total of six in the entire work; all six of them are different yet each takes on a similar erotic theme. The type and placement of the drawings in both volumes follow what seems to be a strategic order to lure the male reader in and to keep him reading despite Bonheur's subversive parodies. The illustrations in each volume follow a pattern: the frontispieces feature Albina in her undergarments alone, followed by another image one-third of the way through (around page 10) which shows Albina's denuded breasts; and a third image is positioned two-thirds of the way through (around page 20) portraying Albina with her husband. In the following section I will discuss the illustrations according to their relationship with the verbal text. I will first analyze the frontispieces which are not associated with any part of the narrative, and then I will analyze the images embedded within the verbal text that relate directly to it.

The illustrations on the volumes' covers are meant to attract the male reader by portraying a woman alone in an intimate setting (see figures 9 and 10). Dressed only in her undergarments, Albina is presented in an erotic light similar to that in an erotic postcard. The erotic appeal of the images would have been a decisive factor in attracting men because the titles of the work and volumes, *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, *L'amore per il marito*, and *L'amore per l'amante*, are modeled after texts that were typically written for a female audience.⁸³ While certainly a controversial text with elements of eroticism and pornography, *Diario*, unlike several pornographic products, demands real readership. The erotically charged image on the frontispiece might entice a male reader at the *edicola*, but he must keep reading the text to get to the erotic images which are dispersed sparsely in the narrative. Although it could also be that the male reader could simply leaf through the narrative as one could with a Playboy magazine, there are not enough images in *Diario* to convince him to buy it solely for the images. Precisely because the illustrations do not abound in the text, they may function as bait for male readership. Thus, the illustration on the books' covers may be a visual marketing tool that is meant to draw in readers, especially male readers. The illustrations of the frontispieces highlight and foreshadow the provocative contents of *Diario*, even though these specific images do not mirror the textual context as the illustrations embedded within the text do. Strategically, both covers present Albina alone and scantily dressed. Film scholar Annette Kuhn explains that "In softcore pornography, the woman is usually on her own. The relationship between her and the spectator is private, one-to-one. If the photo says that the solitary woman is caught up in her own pleasure, it also puts that pleasure on display for the benefit of the spectator" (31-32). While these images are not explicit enough to suggest that Albina is pleasuring herself as some erotic

⁸¹ Although men appeared in erotic postcards at times, they were hardly ever nude or eroticized as women were.

⁸² Hammond notes that "It just so happened that as Freud, and other sexologists of the period like Krafft-Ebing, Moll, and Ellis, were building their theories of sexual symbolism the lowly picture postcard was merrily and consciously proposing its pictorial usage" (8).

⁸³ The popular, classic, erotic-pornographic novel *The Memoirs of Josefina Mutzenbacher*, is also a first-person narrative styled as a text for women. It too was published under a pseudonym (Mutzenbacher) although it was later discovered that Felix Salten, the author of *Bambi*, had actually penned the text. It was first published in Vienna in 1906, see Salten in the bibliography.

postcards of the day did, Albina is certainly being put on display in an erotic and intimate way for the male reader. Whether she is in a domestic and private space as she is on the frontispiece of *L'amore per il marito*, or engaging in a private activity such as adjusting her stocking as she is on the cover of *L'amore per l'amante*, we get the impression that we are spying on her, that we are voyeurs. This special vantage point is displayed precisely for us, so we can enjoy looking at her without feeling the guilt of the voyeur. In fact, a common theme of the erotic postcard was the vantage point of the keyhole (see fig. 16).⁸⁴ Although these images do not explicitly illustrate this keyhole perspective, they allude to it. In both illustrations Albina is unaware of being looked at, yet the clothing she wears (and does not wear) eroticizes her and shows her in an intimate way.

The frontispiece of *L'amore per il marito* (see fig. 9) shows Albina perched on a bed playing solitaire. A common element of the iconography of the erotic postcard was the woman in bed or undressing to go to bed (Nørgaard 58). This kind of sexually charged iconography is mimicked explicitly on the frontispieces of the first and second volumes and elicits sexual availability. For example, in the two postcards in figure 17 (which are part of a series of postcards), the woman in the left-hand postcard sits on her bed while she smiles flirtatiously into the camera as she takes off one of her stockings. Her foot rests on the chair beside her and her camisole falls gently off her shoulders to highlight the act of her undressing. To her left, we see a fluffy pillow with a decorative case, which will, in the next postcard, be used to prop the woman up in order to give the viewer a peek at her bosom. Once in bed, in the second postcard, the woman holds on to a love letter in her left hand and looks at a picture in the other (Nørgaard 58). Her gaze this time is directed toward an object and not at the viewer, yet she is there to be seen by him. The proximity of the bed, the undergarments, and the intimate setting suggest that the woman is willing and ready to engage in sex.

The frontispiece of *L'amore per il marito* presents itself to the reader-viewer as a scenario similar to the woman undressing and getting into bed. Supported by a pillow behind her, Albina sits on her bed and gazes down at the playing cards, just as the woman in the postcard looks down at a photograph. Similar to the postcard as well, the shoulder strap from Albina's camisole has fallen down and hangs as if it were a sleeve on her upper arm as she rests the side of her face on her hands. This casualness consequently invites the reader-viewer to envision the rest of Albina's clothes slipping off her body, which is furthered by the nonchalance with which she wears her other articles of clothing. Albina wears black stockings which have been identified by scholars as connoting eroticism and prostitution.⁸⁵ The garter no longer holds Albina's right stocking up and it hangs down lower on the leg than the left stocking, which is firmly in place. Additionally, one of Albina's high-heel slip-on shoes lies on the floor next to her. It seems as though she has kicked it off in order to rest her right leg on the side of the bed, rather than on the floor. These asymmetries in Albina's clothing and shoes, along with the fact that she is in her undergarments, suggest that she is relaxed, alone, and in her own private, domestic space. The disorderliness of the scene also suggests eroticism, as historian Jill Field notes that disarray is "a long-noted heightener of erotic suggestion" (34). In portraying Albina playing solitaire, the illustration confirms that she is not only alone, but lonely, which invites the male viewer to fantasize a possible encounter with her. These details, along with the proximity of the bed, the

⁸⁴ Often, this type of keyhole postcard also reveals the woman's surprise at being spied on.

⁸⁵ For more on the history of women's intimate apparel and clothing see Fields and Steele.

place where most sexual encounters tend to occur, further sexualize Albina for the reader-viewer and visually communicate her sexual availability.

The illustration on the frontispiece of *L'amore per l'amante* shares a similar iconography with the illustration on the cover of the first volume in that it, too, shows Albina intimately dressed and unaware of the reader-viewer, giving us the impression that we are spying on her (see fig. 10). Albina is centrally positioned on the page. Her back is to us, but she turns at a forty-five degree angle so that the reader-viewer is awarded the view of her breasts, her face, her elongated arms, and especially her long, lean, legs. She wears a tight-fitted chemise with a bow on the front along with decorative closed-back drawers.⁸⁶ Albina's hair is held back in place as was typical of women who were out in public, yet a tendril falls down on the right hand side of her face, hinting at messiness and suggesting a previous frolic in bed. Albina appears to be in the process either of dressing or undressing. She stands with her back to us and bends down to adjust her stocking, fastening it to her garter using both hands. On her right arm, she wears three bangle bracelets and on her feet she has on black, high-heel pumps, items which, in contrast to the intimate apparel she wears, can also suggest a public façade. When worn outside the home they are fashionable accessories, but within the privacy of the home and paired with lingerie, they can be transformed into erotic accoutrements. As Albina bends down to adjust her stocking, her buttocks become the focal point of the frontispiece, echoing a common element of the iconography of the erotic postcard. This illustration recalls, along with the topos of the woman undressing/dressing, two other recurrent elements of the erotic postcard that focus on body parts—the *derrière* and the legs.

In the erotic postcards focusing on women's buttocks, their backs are often to the viewer (see figures 18 and 19) and sometimes only the buttocks are shown, as if they had been disconnected from the upper part of the body (see fig. 20). No matter how the *derrière* is shown, it is an object of sexual fantasy which the postcard of the early twentieth century fetishizes and offers up for men's consumption. The legs, along with the butt and breasts, were also iconic of the erotic postcard, especially when they were covered by stockings held up by a garter or garter belt. Nørgaard observes that stockinged legs were particularly attractive because "Man's erotic attention was primarily centred around what was hidden but could nevertheless be glimpsed" (43). In the frontispiece of the second volume, Albina's adjustment of her stocking directs the reader-viewer's attention to her legs and her stockings. The drooping stocking on the frontispiece of the first volume also pointed to the legs, which are fetishized in several of the illustrations. In the examples of erotic postcards featuring legs and stockings, we see that some legs have been isolated from the body and that one stocking hangs lower than the other (see fig. 21). In figure 22, the fully-dressed woman adjusts her stocking and reveals a glimpse of her leg despite her long dress, and in figure 23, the postcard takes on a comic tone, but nevertheless the woman teasingly lifts up her right leg to pull up her stocking to give the onlooker a view of her undergarments. The focus on the butt, legs, stockings, and the undergarments in both of the frontispieces of *Diario* show that they share the iconography of the images of women on the popular and readily available postcards of the day. These images share a similar erotic theme

⁸⁶ Women's underwear was first designed with an open back which allowed them to more easily manage using the bathroom with long, layered skirts. Underwear became closed-back around the turn of the century, yet open-back drawers were often used as an erotically charged garment in postcards. See Fields' chapter exclusively on drawers (18-46).

with the illustrations within the volumes, but they are different from them because they do not directly relate to the verbal narrative as the others do. Hence, I would suggest that they are indeed images employed to attract men to the text because they borrow from a well-established visual language of the erotic postcard.

I would now like to analyze the illustrations that are inserted within the text and follow a strategic order to lure the male reader. If the frontispieces serve to entice the male reader, then the first image within the text is there to keep him reading. The first illustration in *L'amore per il marito* emerges on page nine. After reading one-third of the volume, the average reader could be able to discern its parodic and subversive nature and could possibly turn away from the text because of it. Perhaps for this reason, the first embedded illustration is the most suggestive of them all. Albina, dressed yet again in her undergarments, bares her breasts in front of a full-length mirror (see fig. 24). This image may serve to placate the male reader who might find Bonheur's text threatening and reassures him that the woman in the image and the woman writing is a sexual object on display for him. The male reader is assured of this objectification of women precisely because the drawing recalls the iconography of the sorts of erotic postcards we have been examining, in this case the bare-breasted or naked woman looking in the mirror. Postcard critics and collectors William Ouellette and Barbara Jones explain that the mirror, "As used in these postcards... is also an erotic prop cleverly revealing two views of the same subject" (12). Of all the topoi of erotic postcards, the woman in the mirror is one of the most prevalent not only because it shows her in a private and intimate setting, but most of all because the mirror could be positioned in order to reveal something more than the photographer or artist's vantage point could. In these mirror-themed postcards, the women and the mirrors are positioned strategically in order to expose as many body parts as possible (see figures 25-34). Most of these examples feature the woman in the foreground with her back to the viewer looking into the mirror which then reflects the front part of her body for her viewing and that of the male viewer. In others, such as in figure 32, the woman is in front of the mirror, yet we cannot see her image reflected, we see only her, but are left to fantasize about what we know must be visible in the mirror. The seductive and revealing mirror iconography employed in the first embedded image helps the male reader to disregard Bonheur's rebellion against dominant male culture in the narrative.

Bignami's first illustration in *L'amore per il marito* is grounded in this visual vocabulary that puts women on display both for themselves in the mirror and for men as a sexual object (see fig. 24). An entire page is dedicated to Bignami's illustration, yet it does not take up all of it because it is framed by a border that is approximately 4 ½ by 6 ½ inches. The framing, along with the dimensions of the image, could further support the idea that the erotic postcard is a foundation for these images. When framed within the page, Bignami's sexually explicit drawings look exactly like a postcard.⁸⁷ In the foreground of the image there is a small table on which a perfume bottle, a box of powder, and a powder puff sit indicating that Albina is at her dressing table. In the illustration's background, Bignami shows a wall of Albina's bedroom which is covered by striped wallpaper and on which a painting depicting mountains hangs. To the right of the table in the foreground there is a black, high-heel shoe with a bow that has been slipped off and lies on its side. This isolated shoe suggests disarray, a theme we have seen that indicates a

⁸⁷ All of the drawings embedded in the text are framed similar to the size of a postcard except for the second illustration in *L'amore per il marito* which is fashioned as a mirror.

reprieve from rigid morals. The isolated shoe is positioned between the table and the full-length mirror, which takes up most of the right hand side of the illustration. Slanting slightly forward, the mirror reveals the image of a woman we imagine is Albina and a bed in the background. With her arms spread out to emphasize her bosom and to indicate sexual availability, Albina's chin slightly lifts yet her gaze is directed downward and away from her reflection. Once again her chemise has fallen off her shoulder, yet this time her breasts and nipples are completely exposed. Albina's drawers cover her body from the waist down to the upper thigh. Albina wears thigh-high stockings and just as they are on the frontispiece of the first volume, one of them has slid down and lays low on her knee. The reflection in the mirror does not allow us to see her left foot, but it does permit a glance of Albina's right foot which is clad in a high-heel, slip-on shoe. Notably, this shoe is different from the one that lies on the floor in front of the mirror, further suggesting disarray and sexual frolicking. In fact, as we shall see, the illustration does not correspond completely with the verbal narrative and the shoe could be an indicator of this incongruity.

The narrative scene to which the illustration loosely relates is Albina's description of the night in which she loses her virginity to her "cousin." Albina sets this scene:

Io mi accartocciavo i capelli sulla pallid fronte. C'era la luna. i platani i
frassini stormivano al vento.
Lo specchio mi rifletteva tutta.
La camicia mi era discesa sulle spalle.
Avevo le braccia alzate.
Mi contemplavo tutta!
Ardevo!
Mi lambivo le labbra.
Rabbrividivo!
Balbettavo!
Arrossivo!
Impallidivo!
Tremavo!
Ed ecco, un sussulto formidabile mi percorre le vene.
Mi si drizzano i capelli sul cuoio capelluto.
Esterrefatta non mi riconosco nello specchio.
Sono io?
Non sono io? (10)

Bignami remains faithful to only a part of the verbal narrative. In the image Albina is indeed in front of the mirror, her chemise has fallen down on her shoulders and she raises her arms, but the nervous emotions she feels and her inability to decipher whether or not she is the one in the mirror are conspicuously not depicted in the drawing. The illustration is grounded in the text, yet it is more Bignami's reaction to it, constituting the dialogic relation of impression. The verbal text expresses a personal moment of insecurity and fear that Albina goes through before having sex, yet the visual text represents her as always already ready to have sex, just as the women in the erotic postcards are modeled. This image however differs in an important way from the postcards presented above. In those images, the mirror is a prop that makes different perspectives

possible. In Bignami's illustration, though, we only see Albina's reflection in the mirror. Bignami denies us the usual dual perspective so widespread in the erotic postcard. In only portraying Albina's reflection in the mirror, Bignami further suggests to the reader-viewer that he is a voyeur; he is the one who can see, but not be seen. If the reader-viewer were enabled to view Albina's body and not a reflection of it, it would imply his presence within the room. In observing only the mirror, the reader-viewer has a privileged position that does not make his presence known. In turn, this position gives the reader-viewer agency over Albina's sexual prowess.

The second drawing in *L'amore per il marito* depicts Albina and her husband in the bedroom on their wedding night (see fig. 35). The mirror theme returns in this illustration, but it does not appear *in* it as it does in the previous one, rather the illustration is framed to suggest that it is itself a mirror. The circular frame around the image is decorated with decorative tassels and flowers, which unmistakably characterize it as a mirror. This mirror also reinforces the reader-viewer's voyeurism in that it suggests that he is sneaking a peak and could be off at an angle, unseen by Albina. Furthermore, the fact that the mirror is presented frontally to the reader-viewer suggests that this image is being offered to him directly, giving him a privileged position to look into the private, sexual life of *Diario's* protagonist. Albina lies in bed and buries her face in the pillow as her husband begins to undress (or dress) by the bed, by first taking off (or putting on) his suspenders. To the side of the bed there is a nightstand on which a bedside water carafe set sits; above the nightstand there is a reading lamp attached to the wall. Albina is positioned tightly underneath the covers of the bed. We can see the outline of her lower body which gives the impression of an upside-down *L*: her rear-end and upper thighs create the bottom part of the *L* whereas her lower legs—from the knee down—could make up the upper part of the letter. In positioning Albina this way, her *derrière* becomes the focal point of the drawing, just as it is on the frontispiece of *L'amore per l'amante*. Albina's upper body is not enveloped by the covers, leaving her upper back and left arm fully in view. She wears what we can only imagine to be a nightgown or an undergarment, whose shoulder strap has fallen down once again onto her upper arm. Albina hugs the pillow to her face in a gesture of repulsion, shame, or modesty, we can only guess. Her husband Ildebrando looks down upon Albina with a look of indifference as he continues to undress (or dress). Conjugal bedroom scenes such as this one were often found on postcards (see figures 36-38). The theme of the wedding night, in particular, was a popular image because it provoked men's fantasy of deflowering a woman.

The illustration seems to correspond to the narrative's account of Albina's wedding night, but in reality it diverges drastically from it, once again exemplifying the impression relationship between the visual and verbal texts. The wedding night already stands out in the text because it is described in poetic verse rather than prose. Albina describes this momentous night:

Mio marito
si leva i pantaloni
la cravatta
il colletto.
Ho un prurito
nel petto.
Mi affretto
a ridere

a guardarmi
nello specchio
a contemplarmi
e la contemplazione dura parecchio. (17-18)

The verbal narrative coincides with Bignami's portrayal of Ildebrando undressing and the presence of a mirror, but it does not fit completely. Albina's poetic description of her wedding night is rather lengthy, so it is impossible to quote all of it. In brief, she describes the following scenario: her husband wants to consummate the marriage and proceeds to take the steps to do so: "Mio marito/mi toglie/ il corpetto/io aspetto/io balbetto" (18). She is nervous, yet excited for her first sexual encounter with her husband and not afraid:

mi metto
in atto
col patto
che il male
non mi venga.
Che egli mi tenga
per mano,
lontano
sul breve
sul lieve
cammino. (18)

Excited by the foreplay, Albina happily wants to have sex with her new husband:

Parlando
stringendo, abbracciando
mio marito si leva le mutande.
Oh istante!
l'amante
mio cuore pel troppo
palpitare
galoppare
io sento: il galoppo
è rapido, forte.
La sorte
felice mi attende. (20)

The sexual act between Albina and Ildebrando then begins:

Io casco sulle piume
del materasso.....
--Più piano
più forte....
--Così?

--No....si!
Balbetto!
Mi affretto!
--Ti affretta
tu pure! (21-22)

Finally, in having sex with Albina for the first time, Ildebrando discovers she is not a virgin:

--Ah! ladra!
È questo
il grido
maledetto
del povero Ildebrando Martelli!
--Non eri? Non eri?
L'atroce domanda ripete.
E dire che il prete
t'ha fatto
dir sì!" (22)

Bignami's visual narrative is strikingly different from the verbal narrative in its representation of Albina, who, in the illustration seems to hide from sexual relations with her husband, yet in the verbal depiction of her wedding night, she anticipates them. This difference in the verbal and visual narrative exemplifies the way in which Bignami assigns sexual agency to the male reader-viewer-voyeur and takes it away from Albina. In the narrative's account, Albina specifically directs her husband on how to please her by telling him to go "più piano/più forte," highlighting the knowledge she has of her body and her own sexual pleasure. In response, Bignami fashions Albina into a shameful, timid, or perhaps repulsed woman about to have sex (or having just had sex) with her husband for the first time. Bignami therefore gives us the impression of what he thinks the text should represent, and therefore corrects Albina's lasciviousness. The images interspersed within the first volume position the reader-viewer as a voyeur as they both feature a mirror and allow him to guiltlessly enjoy Albina's sexuality while at the same time the illustrations take away the sexuality she expresses in the verbal narrative away from her.

The second volume positions and spaces out its illustrations in a similar way to *L'amore per il marito*—at one-third and two-thirds of the way through—and they appear on pages eleven and twenty three. Perhaps meant to be sold separately, the second volume employs the same marketing strategies as the first to entice a specific type of reader. Therefore, the frontispiece featuring a scantily dressed Albina attracts the male reader to a text that is, because of its title, labeled as feminine. If the most daring illustration of the first volume shows Albina's denuded breasts in order to keep the male reader interested in a female subject's parody of male-dominated culture, then this type of "training" also continues in the second volume. Most readers of the first volume would expect this same kind of appeasement. Although the first volume parodies futurism and the second volume parodies "passatism," the type of images remains the same—they all evoke the erotic postcard and interact with the text. Different from the first volume in which there is always a mirror in the images, the interspersed illustrations in *L'amore*

per l'amante feature Albina with men—the first one with her lover and the second one with her husband. In this way, the reader-viewer is permitted to see Albina intimately involved with men.

In the first illustration of the second volume (see fig. 39), Enrico and Albina are involved in foreplay at the former's apartment. The couple is positioned in front of a sofa bed and an excess of pillows surrounds them. The pillows, each of which is differently designed—with checkerboards, stripes, ruffles, flowers, and tassels—are an erotic prop and characterize a “passatist” ambiance. Similarly, the postcard featured pillows to suggest a bedroom scene (see fig. 40). Albina wears black bloomers, which were knee-length pants and a revolutionary fashion trend for the women of the early twentieth century.⁸⁸ Underneath the bloomers, Albina sports black stockings and on her feet she wears closed, black, high-heel shoes. Dressed in a smoking jacket, Enrico lunges forward with his right leg in front of the sofa bed and lifts Albina up onto his knee, holds her at the waist, and plants a kiss on her at the same time. In an acrobatic move similar to Enrico's lunge, Albina leans her right knee on Enrico's right knee and places her right foot against his upper left thigh while simultaneously balancing her weight on her left leg. Such a scene is decisively theatrical. This balancing act, meant to maximize the bodies' exposure for the viewer, reads as an erotic show. Acrobatic erotic scenes such as this one were commonplace in the erotic postcard industry (see figures 41 and 42). Once again topless in this illustration, Albina draws further attention to her denuded breasts by outstretching her arms. Her chemise hangs at her waist and she wears a string of beads around her neck and three bangle bracelets on her left arm (the same ones apparent in the frontispiece of this volume). In an ironic gesture, she leans her cheek on her left shoulder and gazes down and across at her left hand, which makes the horned hand and signals that she is cuckolding her husband, a gesture also apparent in many postcards of the day (see figures 43 and 44). In figure 43, for example, the horns of a stag appear in the window on the right side, next to the dog, signaling that the couple is embarking upon an adulterous relationship, whereas in figure 44 the cuckold iconography is more apparent. This postcard seems to have been made with *Diario* in mind. Not only is it labeled “Porte-Bonheur,” but sweeping through the central number 69, there is a disembodied arm that makes the same horned hand that Albina makes in the illustration. This postcard informs the illustration in *Diario* and speaks to it, as if it were to say “Porte Bonheur aux femmes adulteres!”⁸⁹

This first interspersed illustration of *L'amore per l'amante* relates to Albina's visit to Enrico Del Tramonto's apartment for their first date. Albina describes what she encounters at Enrico's:

Un interno, veramente fatto per sedurre non solo una piccola borghese quale sono io, ma anche una donna veramente superiore [...] Enrico indossava una veste da camera *quasi* viola con i rivolti rosa: non so come, dopo tutte le piccole emozioni provate al portone e lungo le scale, mi sono trovata *quasi* sdraiata su di un divanetto costituito da un numero straordinario di cuscini di piume. Il poeta futurista era *quasi* ai miei ginocchi e mi baciava le mani, lentamente, pianamente sì che più che baci mi parevano carezze lievi che mi sfiorassero la pelle senza posa. (9 italics mine)

⁸⁸ Pants were not widely acceptable for women to wear at the time. Bloomers, which at first were baggy like skirts, evolved to have a more pants-like look.

⁸⁹ Thank you to Barbara Spackman for suggesting this pun.

What is most striking about this passage, and those surrounding it, is the repetitive and excessive use of the adverb “quasi,” meaning “approximately, about, almost.”⁹⁰ *L'amore per l'amante* is fashioned as a “passatist” literary text and therefore the use of adverbs, which futurism denounced, is standard, but here it is exaggerated and becomes part of the volume’s parody of “passatism.” Furthermore, Albina makes use of “quasi” in order to allude to the eroticization of the moment. This allusion carries erotic suspense and goes along with the verbal narrative that is highly charged erotically yet does not want to, or cannot—for whatever reason—make explicit this eroticism. The adverb “quasi” renders what Albina tries to express hard to describe and indefinite, for Enrico’s “veste” is “almost” purple with pink “rivolti.”⁹¹ Albina finds herself “almost” lying down, and Enrico was “almost” at her knees. These descriptions leave the sexual details of their encounter open to interpretation, further eroticizing the scene. Albina cannot divulge everything in her “private” diary, which not only makes fun of the diary genre itself, but also further incites distrust between her and her readers. Bignami’s drawing picks up on this reluctance to be open and purposely exaggerates and sexualizes the scene. Bignami’s impression of Bonheur’s verbal narrative is overtly erotic and over-the-top considering the constructed and acrobatic positioning of the couple.⁹² While this iconography is in line with the popular erotic postcard images, it remains that it makes direct what Albina wishes to remain indirect in the verbal narrative. Bignami therefore continues to give us his impression of the verbal text by illustrating erotic images and mapping them onto the more purposely elusive verbal text.

The final illustration in *L'amore per l'amante* (see fig. 45) recalls another iconographic element of the erotic postcard in which the woman is provocatively positioned while interacting with a man (see fig. 46). While the previous illustration also featured a man, it belongs within the group of postcards that recalls acrobatic sexual positions. In this illustration, however, Albina is portrayed as the pursuer of sexual pleasure and therefore it evokes those postcards in which women seduce men. Dressed in a modern, low-cut, portrait collar dress, Albina stands in black high-heel shoes by a chair in the foreground.⁹³ In the background, her husband sits in his arm chair smoking a cigar. As Albina rests her left foot on the stretcher of the chair, her legs spread open, exposing her lower legs and parts of her thighs. This erotically charged position accentuates Albina’s curves and suggests that she is available for sex. Albina clings to an impossibly long rosary around her neck which hangs straight down in front of her body. The cross of the rosary ends at Albina’s crotch, further hinting at sexual arousal and directing the viewer’s gaze there. The rosary, a sacred Catholic object, contrasts with the “profane” moral behavior of Albina who tries to seduce her husband and consequently also the reader-viewer

⁹⁰ “Quasi” appears numerous times both before and after this paragraph, on pages 8 and 9.

⁹¹ The pink and purple color combination of Enrico’s dress is more indicative of “passatism” than of futurism, which appreciated bold, primary colors.

⁹² The illustration also recalls an intimate moment between Albina and Enrico that is described after the image, on page 16. Albina says that while Enrico was describing the meaning of poetry to her, they were “sdraiati seminudi sul piccolo divano ed egli non stava fermo un minuto” (16). Only Albina, not Enrico, is portrayed “seminuda” in the illustration because often male nudity was not acceptable. In fact, the postcards featuring male nudes are almost non-existent. Bignami could also be fusing the two textual moments together and opting for the most risqué version of the two.

⁹³ Both the lingerie and the clothing in the drawings correspond to the popular fashion trends from 1915 on. Thus, even though the form of the illustrations represents *passatismo*, the content within the form would seem to be contemporary to the writing of the text.

aggressively.⁹⁴ Albina has her back to her husband and boldly displays her rear end in front of him in order to get his attention. Her gaze, as in all of the illustrations, is cast downward and she looks to her right side, but neither at her husband nor at the reader-viewer. Albina's husband, dressed in a black suit and white shirt, looks uninterested in Albina's *spettacolo*. Hunched forward, yet sitting comfortably in his chair, he clasps his hands as if he were bored.

This illustration seems to correspond in general to the recurring displeasure that Albina's husband causes her by sitting in his arm chair, smoking a cigar, and falling asleep after dinner. Furthermore, it highlights her husband's lack of interest in sex, for Albina tells us that "mio marito crede che l'amore fra un maschio ed una femina si debba, secondo i dettami dell'igiene, limitare al puro necessario[...]" (15). Albina's sexual appetite for her husband in this illustration seems to match a different moment in the verbal narrative that is preceded by her lamentation of his sitting in his chair and smoking after dinner. In thinking about the poetic formula her lover Enrico had taught her earlier in the day, Albina seems to be sexually excited and wonders "Enrico [...] sentirà prepotente, lancinante, travolgente, questa volontà di godere, come io la sento in questo momento, di fronte a questo uomo che russa?" (18). Albina's words suggest that she, in fact, desires her husband, and not Enrico in that moment, which is then confirmed by the "words-in-freedom" that follow which declare "marito russante marito infelice" (see fig. 47). The passage and the "words-in-freedom" indicate that her husband is missing out on an opportunity for sex with his wife. However, in this illustration Ildebrando is not asleep, just disinterested in sex, as is Enrico often portrayed in the verbal narrative. Bignami's illustration is a composite and an impression of several moments from the verbal text. The impression the visual text gives, in relation to the verbal one, is that of Albina being so wanton that she desperately sexually desires the husband whom she openly dislikes in the narrative, not because she loves *him*, but because she longs for sex. In this image, she is the pursuer of sex with her own husband and even within the confines of marriage, her sexuality is seen as extreme. Concomitantly, the image makes the sexual activity of a married couple appear sinful, which is supported by the rosary around Albina's neck. Notably, the rosary is never mentioned in the verbal narrative and has been inserted into the image by Bignami alone. The rosary is a symbol of the Catholic church which blesses and encourages the sexual union of married couples for reproductive purposes, yet the very same rosary is used as an erotic prop in the illustration, making what is sanctified by the church also a sinful matter. I would like to argue that the rosary could be evidence of Bignami morally judging Albina who, in the verbal narrative, expresses a desire and need for sexual interaction that is never fulfilled, either by her husband or her lover. Therefore, what Bignami may be condemning through the Catholic relic could be, what in his eyes, appears to be Albina's "excessive" sexual desire, even if it is directed toward her husband. As such, this second embedded illustration of *L'amore per l'amante*, like the first, highlights and exaggerates Albina's lasciviousness.

The illustrations in *Diario* follow a strategic order. In the frontispieces, Albina is consistently figured alone and sexually available for men. Furthermore, on the covers, as in the illustrations of *L'amore per il marito*, the images of Albina are offered to the reader-viewer from a special vantage point that positions him as a voyeur. Bignami's illustrations reveal his impressions of the verbal narrative and the illustrations throughout *Diario* go from making

⁹⁴ The rosary beads might also indicate that Albina repents her marital transgression and seeks forgiveness.

sexually explicit what Albina leaves implicit, such as in the images of her in an acrobatic position with her lover or the image of her in the mirror, to hiding her sexual agency and knowledge in the illustration of her on her wedding night, to judging her sexual desire excessive in the illustration with the rosary. These images not only tempt men to read *Diario*, they also change the terms of Bonheur's text. The images make the first-person female writing subject into a female object to be looked at and as a result, there is yet another chiasmus in the text.

In this chapter on the visual elements in *Diario*, I have suggested that the "words-in-freedom" and illustrations are visual representations of "passatism" and futurism that are parodied in the narrative. While these two forms of visibility do not interact with each other, they do function similarly in that they both work as illustrations do and quote, give an impression, and answer the narrative. As such, the *parole in libertà* do not function as typical futurist "words-in-freedom" do, which commonly constitute the literary page. *Diario*'s "words-in-freedom" suggest instead a relationship to narrative and the trace of the hand by the way in which they are constructed. The illustrations done by Luigi Bignami employ the iconography of the erotic postcard and in so doing, market *Diario* to men and offer Albina up as a sexual object to be looked at by the reader-viewer. Bignami's images encourage the reader to not trust the text and to disregard its parodies and any proto-feminist message they may suggest. Yet, it is this same seductive visual narrative that draws readers in to a text that may not have attracted many (male) readers, rendering it a strategic tool. The illustrations, furthermore, often go against the verbal narrative, creating a chiasmic structure between the verbal and the visual. Thus, even though the presence of illustrations and "words-in-freedom" is continuous, it changes the terms of an-ever-slippery text. Once again, *Diario* leads its reader-viewer to make constant detours in and around the visual and the verbal, and futurism and "passatism," asserting itself in contradictory ways in order to make itself be heard. In the end, the only stability in *Diario* is perhaps its own instability.

Chapter III: Leaving Their Mark: Women Futurists' Handwritten *Parole in libertà*

Parole in libertà were characteristically known for their creative use of typography. Expressive typography, in fact, was one of the central principles of Marinetti's literary revolution. As we saw in chapter two, in *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, the "words-in-freedom" were atypically produced through lithography, yet they simulate the look of typography. Some of the women in the second phase of futurism who created *parole in libertà*—Marietta Angelini, Emma Marpillero, Rosa Rosà, Irma Valeria, Alzira Braga, Benedetta, Enif Robert, Magamal, and Enrica Piubellini—also produced them in an uncharacteristic way: by hand.⁹⁵ Although there are only about ten known published "free-word" works by women that we know of, about half of them, notably, were handwritten.⁹⁶ This ratio is striking and suggests that there could be a rationale behind women's use of handwriting over typography. It is true that some male futurists also published "words-in-freedom" made by hand, but the majority of them produced "free-word" compositions through typography, with the aid of a typesetter.⁹⁷ Graphic design scholar Ellen Lupton explains this rejection of the hand claiming that "Like the popular printers of the nineteenth century, avant-garde designers rejected the quest for essential letters grounded in the human hand and body, but they offered austere, theoretical alternatives in place of the solicitous novelty of mainstream advertising" (27). Many futurists began drafting "words-in-freedom" by hand, but they would then hand them over to a typesetter, who would finish producing the work and eliminate the trace of the human hand. Evidence of this hand to type process can be seen, for example, in the numerous drafts that Marinetti composed by hand of his "words-in-freedom."⁹⁸ In publishing "words-in-freedom" that were done by hand, futurists eliminated the help of a typesetter altogether, giving them more control over their own work.⁹⁹ Although it is possible that futurist women did not easily have access to typesetters as their male

⁹⁵ Those who composed "free-word" compositions by hand (at least those that we know of) include: Rosa Rosà, Benedetta, Irma Valeria, Alzira Braga. See Bentivoglio, *Le futuriste italiane* 32-44. Bentivoglio in "Futuriste italiane tra linguaggio e immagine" explains why so few "free-word" compositions by women exist: "Ci restano pochi esempi di tavole parolibere realizzate da donne. Iniziò lo scorso decennio a studiarle analiticamente per un'editrice americana... poiché mancava di esse una ravvicinata decodifica. Gli originali di quelle opere sono in gran parte perduti, come forse anche appunti e progetti per composizioni rimaste inedite. Lo scarso appoggio che la donna riceveva dall'esterno, nelle sue ardue incursioni in quell'area allora trasgressiva, e la mancanza di un'abitudine a proteggere il proprio lavoro, determinarono probabilmente una dispersione di documenti che oggi risulterebbero preziosi. Difficilmente un dipinto sfugge alla conservazione, ma un foglio, soprattutto nella sua fase progettuale di bozzetto per la stampa, può venire facilmente smarrito. E forse quelle sperimentatrici distrussero in vecchiaia le prove del loro momento creativo giovanile per proteggerlo da ulteriori incomprensioni, o per fatalismo, per una innata, purtroppo ben allenata, attitudine della donna all'autocancellazione" (34-5).

⁹⁶ Reproductions of the existing "free-word" poetry done by women can be found in Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, *The Women Artists of Italian Futurism* and *Le futuriste italiane*, and Bentivoglio *Da pagina a spazio* and "Futuriste italiane tra linguaggio e immagine." Those *futuriste* that followed typical futurist practice and used typography include Marietta Angelini, Emma Marpillero, Enif Robert, Magamal, and Enrica Piubellini.

⁹⁷ Francesco Cangiullo is a key example of a male futurist who produced "words-in-freedom" by hand. See, for example, his "Alfabeto a sorpresa" (1918).

⁹⁸ I saw several of these drafts at the "F.T. Marinetti= Futurism" exhibit in Milan in February 2009.

⁹⁹ Marinetti also mixed handwriting with typography at times, such as in the "words-in-freedom" composition inspired by Irma Valeria's poetry collection *Morbidezze in agguato*, entitled "Morbidezze in agguato + bombarde italiane;" it was published in *L'Italia futurista* on 9 September 1917. Drucker claims that "These works are collage pieces whose elements combine fragments of typographic text with calligraphic markings and this represents a condition of 'liberty' from technical constraints" (137).

counterparts did, and for that reason created their works by hand, I want to offer some historical, literary, and cultural explanations for which handwriting could be so prevalent in their “free-word” compositions. I want to propose that women employed handwriting as an alternative to typography and that it reinserted a tie to the literary “I” banned by F.T. Marinetti. Male futurists initially encouraged women to create *parole in libertà* and do away with the autobiographical mode in which they often expressed themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century. Creating “words-in-freedom” thus meant abandoning personal narrative. Literary scholar Barbara Garbin describes women’s association with autobiography in the early twentieth century, writing that “women writers were mostly concerned with giving voice to their own experience, an objective they had only recently achieved...” (2). While futurism rejected first-person narratives, as more women began to contribute to futurism, they began to find alternative ways to express their subjectivity without explicitly writing in the first person. Handwritten “words-in-freedom” hint at autobiography while simultaneously supporting and straying from futurism.

In 1916, Francesco Cangiullo introduced Marietta Angelini, Marinetti’s maid, as the first female creator of “words-in-freedom” in the futurist journal *Vela latina*. Similar to *Diario d’una giovane donna futurista*, Angelini’s entrance into futurism is cloaked in irony as Cangiullo underlines her mere status as Marinetti’s maid, yet lauds her “free-word” genius. His way of presenting her to the public takes the form of a “lettera aperta” addressed to the most popular women writers of the age: Matilde Serao, Annie Vivanti, Ada Negri, Grazia Deledda, Térésah, and Amalia Guglielminetti. Cangiullo challenges these popular female writers to produce “words-in-freedom” and dares them to pen works that are better than those of Angelini. He explains that Angelini’s production of “free-word” compositions “dovrebbe allarmare il mondo letterario” and that “era necessario, era fatale che, come noi paroliberi futuristi abbiamo buttati a mare, in massa i celebri scrittori, scoppiasse una donna parolibera e facesse particolarmente altrettanto con le celebri scrittrici” (37). Here, Cangiullo notes the specific gender division in literature, for he claims only male futurists took down famous writers, just as now only a female “free-word” poet could do the same with women writers. For Cangiullo, male and female writers differ and cannot compete with each other. Cangiullo’s rhetorical strategy in his letter is to pit Marietta Angelini against women writers, seeking to create tension between women. Cangiullo lauds Angelini’s “free-word” compositions, which are entitled “Ritratto di Marinetti” and “Ritratto di Cangiullo” (see figures 48 and 49). He writes that they “danno delle emozioni immediate, profonde” and that they “sintetizzano, sono la quintessenza di 2 buoni volumi, dando in 2 serrate ‘tavole’ sensazioni liriche, pittoriche, orchestrali, di calore, di energie, di fascino, di splendore” (37). In contrast, Cangiullo claims that “i volumi delle signore...oggi non danno nessunissima emozione” (37). Marietta Angelini’s work is deemed superior in every way to the other women writers and Cangiullo adds that “le sopraccitate celebri scrittrici non riusciranno mai a capire” (37) the emotion and ability that was used in creating the “free-word” portraits of him and Marinetti. Cangiullo encourages the women writers to create “un libro di parole in libertà,” for economic and popularity reasons, as he explains that in writing such a book “voi fareste più danari e otterreste maggior successo del solito, poiché, data la vostra celebrità, ci sarebbe maggior curiosità” (37). Cangiullo closes his letter once again praising Angelini and denouncing the women writers by expressing, in bold-face type, that “**La signorina Marietta Angelini, 1.^a cameriera di Marinetti, vale infinitamente più di tutte voialtre e vi à [ha] massacrate tutte.**”

Cangiullo consistently sets Angelini in opposition to popular women writers. Silvia Contarini explains Cangiullo's letter and Angelini's "free-word" portraits claiming "Qu'il s'agisse d'une opération de manipulation et de provocation, cela ne saurait faire de doute" (220). While it is possible that Angelini was coerced into creating these first "words-in-freedom" or was aided by other futurists in making them, there is no documentation to back this claim. It is striking, however, that Marietta Angelini was believed to have been illiterate, certainly making it more of a challenge to compose "free-word" tables alone.¹⁰⁰

Whether or not Marietta Angelini's "free-word" compositions were truly penned by her or not, the way in which female *paroliberismo* officially began is significant because it positions itself against popular women's writing, which was associated with autobiography. During the interwar years, Pickering-Iazzi writes that "critically renowned women authors claimed the illustrious space of autobiography to tell their stories about how they fashioned unconventional yet successful lives as women of literary culture" (57). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sibilla Aleramo's famous autobiographical narrative, *Una donna* (1906), became extremely popular and paved the way for more autobiographical women writers, such as those to which Cangiullo addresses his letter. Literary scholar Graziella Parati, writing of women's autobiography, also explains that "Autobiography is a hybrid malleable genre that partakes of other genres and becomes a literary space where a woman can experiment with the construction of a female 'I' and, sometimes, a feminist identity" (2). The autobiographical genre was in direct contrast to the literary tenet set by Marinetti regarding the literary "I." Traditional autobiography gave women the opportunity to develop their subjectivity in literature, whereas futurist literature took it away altogether. Women approaching futurism, who may have wanted to express themselves in the first person, might have had to find alternate ways to do so. I posit that handwriting is one such way. If we go back to Cangiullo's open letter and Angelini's compositions we can understand the development of women's *paroliberismo*. We see, for example, that Cangiullo does not directly address the autobiographical nature of women's writing at the time, but his choice of addressing popular autobiographical writers and the type of "free-word" composition he promotes, indirectly does.

Marietta Angelini's "free-word" compositions are *ritratti*, or portraits, of Cangiullo and of F.T. Marinetti. A portrait is a genre that is shared by painting, photography, and literature. In painting and photography, the *ritratto* usually takes as its object a single person and focuses on his or her facial features and clothing. The portrait can easily represent social class, religious beliefs, gender politics, historical and political issues through the way in which the person is posed and his style of dress. Similarly, literature also features the *ritratto*, which briefly sketches lives of well-known people, or it can also refer to a verbal character description. Angelini's "free-word" portraits are faithful to the verbal and visual genres as they "Celebrano le qualità mentali e il fascino dei due personaggi con metafore semplici di derivazione domestica e, soprattutto nel secondo ritratto, esaltano le qualità fisiche: baffi, occhi, capelli" (Bentivoglio, *Le*

¹⁰⁰ Bentivoglio calls Angelini "l'illeterata Marietta" (*Le futuriste italiane* 27) and the title of an impossibly hard article to find on Angelini is remarkably entitled "L'illeterata prima parolibera d'Italia. Donne futuriste in Lombardia" in *La Martinella di Milano*, vol XXX, n.1-2, gennaio-febbraio 1976 (qtd. in *Le futuriste italiane* 27-28). Additionally, Mosco also calls Angelini "illiterate" (276). A fundamental text on Angelini, which I was never able to access, is entitled *Le vestali del futurismo*, see Bono.

futuriste italiane 26). The portrait is a genre that differs from autobiography because it takes as its subject someone else, and is similar to biography.

In “Ritratto di Marinetti” there is a central, phallic, number one that represents Marinetti’s body (see fig. 48). Angelini notes at the bottom of the page that this number should be “stampato in ROOOOSSO,” in order to stand out. Above the central number, Angelini has formed a crown out of random letters and the words “vesuviano cervello,” expressing, in typical futurist fashion, Marinetti’s explosive ideas, and crowning him the king of futurism. Flanking the number one in bold-face print to the left Angelini has positioned “LUOMO” [L’uomo] and to the right, “ROSSO,” further pointing to the color red. To the left, Angelini has also described Marinetti’s qualities: “carne di fuoco,” “spirito acceso,” “sangue che bolle.” To the right, she describes that his words are “pioggia di lava” and that he has a “cuore di soole” and “muscoli di acciaio rovente.” In this “free-word” portrait, Angelini represents Marinetti as all-powerful, dynamic, intelligent, and important. In “Ritratto di Cangiullo,” the body of the futurist comprises the words typographically designed in bold: “LUOMO [L’uomo] DI VELUTO [velluto]” (see fig. 49).¹⁰¹ As in Marinetti’s portrait, the word “LUOMO” appears centrally, pointing again to the gender of men. In this portrait, “LUOMO” represents the head and arms of Cangiullo while “DI VELUTO” represents the rest of the body. Around Cangiullo’s head, there are “capelli neri” and to the left and right of his head she has arranged the phrases “Abbraccia con lo sguardo e bacia co gli [con gli] occhi neri.” Along his arms, Angelini has further described Cangiullo: “accarezza coi capelli.” And his neck is made up of the words “viso cangiante baffi neri.” He has “labbra di raso;” is “esile” and “agilissimo” and “bacia con le palpebre.” Angelini employs verbs such as “abbracciare,” “baciare” and “accarezzare” in relation to his look, his eyes, hair, and eyelids. These verbs are associated with affection and she ties them to Cangiullo’s facial features suggesting that his presence is a benevolent and loving one. In each of Angelini’s portraits, the futurist man she depicts is portrayed in a positive, non-critical light.

In contrast to popular women’s autobiography which told the story of a woman’s life from her own point of view, Angelini describes and praises two important men of futurism—its leader, and the man who presents her and her work publicly. Cangiullo promotes a woman who does not write about herself, therefore, but one who represents men—futurist men—in an affirmative light. Furthermore, Angelini represents herself in terms of her relationship to Marinetti when, in the bottom right corner of each portrait, in small print, she has had her name printed as “Marietta Angelini, 1.^a Cameriera di Marinetti” (37). If we understand Cangiullo’s presentation of Angelini to be the official introduction of women into *paroliberismo*, then we can interpret his example of her to be guiding women away from not only traditional literature, but especially autobiography.

Years after Angelini’s *ritratti* were published in *Vela latina*, Marinetti laments the course that women’s literature had taken in the 1931 preface to Benedetta’s second novel, *Viaggio di Gararà*. Marinetti writes explicitly about the relation between women’s writing and autobiography. Lauding Benedetta, Marinetti explains:

Si sale con lei nelle atmosphere inebriate della più alta poesia astratta. Le donne vi salgono raramente. Quasi tutte, perché donne, quando scrivono, narrano minuziosamente

¹⁰¹ The word “veluto” is missing an “l” which could be due to the fact that Marinetti encouraged creative forms of spelling, or perhaps because Marietta Angelini was illiterate she was unable to spell correctly.

le vicende grandi o piccole, spirituali o materiali della loro esistenza quotidiana (amore rettilineo, eccentricità sessuali, marito amante figli lusso feste rivalità carriera). Fra le scrittrici più geniali Ada Negri, la contessa de Noailles e Colette sono autobiografiche. Giorgio Sand, Rachilde, Matilde Serao, Annie Vivanti, Grazia Deledda hanno spesso tentato di sconfinare fuori dal ricordo e dal diario. (124)

Although Marinetti's preface was composed fifteen years after Cangiullo's provocation and presentation of Angelini, he cites many of the same popular women writers such as Serao, Vivanti, Negri, and Deledda (none of whom ever responded to Cangiullo's letter). He claims that some of these women have tried to escape the autobiographical mode, but he suggests that they were not able to. Marinetti also mentions French women writers—Georges Sand, Colette, the Countess of Noailles, and Rachilde—in order to cite numerous examples of women writers who are unable to escape autobiographism. According to Marinetti, women writers produce autobiography solely because they are women, as if they were unable to write about anything other than themselves, and for this reason he praises his wife's novel—because it is not autobiographical—even though her first novel, *Le forze umane*, was a veiled autobiography, as we shall see in chapter four. Together, Cangiullo's open letter and Marinetti's comments on women's writing give us an idea of how male futurists viewed women's approach to writing; they perceived it as principally autobiographical, secondary to their own, and while they may have encouraged women to write non-autobiographically, they had little hope that they would. I cite these two examples of male futurists who discuss women's writing because they illustrate the cultural and literary milieu in which women futurists found themselves and how they might have faced the challenge of meeting the futurist literary demands while at the same time expressing themselves in their own way.

Marinetti and his futurist cohorts were against the autobiographical genre—independent of women's active participation in it or not—because it was considered *passatista* and because it required the use of the first-person which Marinetti condemned at length in his numerous manifestoes on *parole in libertà*. “Words-in-freedom” were to purge literature of first-person narratives. For example, in “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista, Marinetti demands that one must “Distruggere nella letteratura l'io, cioè tutta la psicologia” (*Teoria e invenzione* 50). Futurist literature sought to focus on matter and not the mind, therefore making psychology a futurist adversary. In “Distruzione della sintassi” Marinetti recalls that his “manifesto tecnico combatteva l'ossessione dell'io” che i poeti hanno descritto, cantato, analizzato e vomitato fino ad oggi” (*Teoria e invenzione* 73). Here, the leader of futurism laments the “passatists” use and overuse of the first-person in literature. He adds as well that “Per sbarazzarsi di questo ‘io’ ossessionante, bisogna abbandonare l'abitudine di umanizzare la natura attribuendo passioni e preoccupazioni umane agli animali, alle piante, alle acque, alle pietre e alle nuvole” (*Teoria e invenzione* 73). In this passage, Marinetti advises putting an end to anthropomorphism in order to discontinue using the first-person in literature. Moreover, Marinetti writes in “Splendore geometrico” that “Noi distruggiamo sistematicamente l'Io letterario perché si sparpagli nella vibrazione universale, e giungiamo ad esprimere l'infinitamente piccolo e le agitazioni molecolari...” (*Teoria e invenzione* 100). Marinetti claims to destroy the literary “I” so that humans can become part of a dynamic world, rather than experience it through their own psychological makeup. Marinetti therefore demands that literature support narratives that incorporate the dynamic, material world rather than ones based on personal experience.

Two key principles that Marinetti set forth in his manifestoes—a ban on writing in the first person and the employment of creative typography—go hand in hand as experimental typography aided Marinetti in removing any autobiographical trace from literary works because it did away with the classic letter-pressed page which supported any and all types of narrative and instead promoted a chaotic literary page which was created with the help of someone else—a typesetter. While the introduction of the printing press had already made the publication process less personal, the typesetter had to work one-on-one with the futurist poet, making futurist creative typography more the fruit of collaboration than individual endeavor. The typesetter would often translate in typographical terms a work that was drafted often by hand by the futurist, making the former’s work just as important as the latter. Certainly, one can imagine that communication between the artist and typesetter resulted, but it was ultimately the printer’s job to transform and sculpt a “free-word” piece with creative typography. Alan Bartram, in *Futurist Typography and the Liberated Text*, hypothesizes about the importance of the typesetter in avant-garde works asking “how much did the final success of such work depend upon the typesetter? Clearly, a lot” (9). In enlisting the help of someone else to produce a literary work per one’s creative directions, the work becomes less personal. Additionally, “free-word” poetry made the author more like a reporter or witness, as can be seen in Marinetti’s “words-in-freedom” in *Zang Tumb Tuum* in which he recounts the horrors of war from a disengaged position.¹⁰² Marinetti referred to his use of typography in literature as a “typographical revolution” because it was the most evident change to literature—it altered the way literature was viewed and read. In “Distruzione della sintassi” Marinetti writes that

La mia rivoluzione è diretta contro la così detta armonia tipografica della pagina, che è contraria al flusso e riflusso, ai sobbalzi e agli scoppi dello stile che scorre nella pagina stessa. Noi useremo perciò, in una medesima pagina, tre o quattro colori diversi d’inchiostro, e anche 20 caratteri tipografici diversi, se occorre. Per esempio: *corsivo* per una serie di sensazioni simili o veloci, grassetto tondo per le onomatopее violente, ecc. Con questa rivoluzione tipografica e questa varietà multicolore di caratteri io mi propongo di raddoppiare la forza espressiva delle parole. (*Teoria e invenzione* 77)

The doubling of the “expressive force of words” came at the cost of the literary subject because the more expressive words became, the less important the figure behind the words was.

Futurist expressive typography took away the focus on the psychology of the author, but it inserted, according to Marinetti, elements of the body into literature. In this way, futurist literature promotes matter over mind. In “Splendore geometrico” Marinetti writes :

L'ortografia e la tipografia libere espressive servono inoltre ad esprimere la mimica facciale e la gesticolazione del narratore. Così le parole in libertà giungono ad utilizzare (rendendola completamente) quella parte di esuberanza comunicativa e di genialità epidermica che è una delle caratteristiche delle razze meridionali. Questa energia d'accento, di voce e di mimica che finora si rivelava soltanto in tenori commoventi e in conversatori brillanti, trova la sua espressione naturale nelle

¹⁰² See Schnapp, “Politics and Poetics,” for more on Marinetti’s position and war in *Zang Tumb Tuum*.

sproporzioni dei caratteri tipografici che riproducono le smorfie del viso e la forza scultoria cesellante dei gesti. Le parole in libertà diventano così il prolungamento lirico e trasfigurato del nostro magnetismo animale. (*Teoria e invenzione* 104)

In discussing typography here, Marinetti maintains that it can reproduce corporeal aspects of human conversation. He claims that creative typography mirrors gesticulation, accent, voice, and facial expression. “Words-in-freedom” are thus able to incorporate corporeality, but not psychology. This same type of corporeality that Marinetti advances is evident in handwritten “words-in-freedom” as well. Literary critic Lucia Re, for example, in discussing Benedetta’s handwritten “free-word” composition “Spicologia di 1 uomo” writes that “Benedetta’s handwriting evokes the gesture of the hand, and the connection of the body to writing” (“Impure Abstraction” 35). Handwriting and Marinetti’s typography then, have something in common even though they appear to be divergent: they both maintain a tie to the body.

Around the same time in which futurist women were handcrafting their *parole in libertà*, another group of Italian women preferred handwriting over print and produced a handwritten magazine called *Lucciola*.¹⁰³ This all-female enterprise supports the idea that women of the period were drawn to the handwritten and handmade in literary and visual works. *Lucciola* was a “rivista scritta a mano” by a collaboration of women from all over Italy; it was produced from 1908-1926.¹⁰⁴ Many women worked together to create the magazine by contributing to it and mailing it to each other. The women who comprised the group were simultaneously editors, writers, illustrators, and readers. Lina Caico, an English-educated young woman who lived in Sicily founded the magazine to which the women involved would contribute short stories, literary criticism and drawings. It was truly a collaborative effort as they all would comment on and critique each other’s work. The title *Lucciola* was a direct translation of a similar English production called *Firefly* that Lina Caico had heard of while studying in London. Scholar of *Lucciola* Paola Azzolini writes that “Nel 1908 l’usanza di queste riviste era diffusa” (“Leggere le voci” 12), and that a German and French model existed along with the English one. Caico spoke specifically about the handwritten element of the journal:

L’essere manoscritto dapprima fa senso ai nostri occhi moderni, così abituati alla stampa: ma a lungo andare ci si affeziona a vedere ogni lavoro colla scrittura dell’autrice; le diverse scritture ci danno un pò l’impressione di sentire la voce, di vedere l’espressione di ciascuna autrice; sicché quello che può parere un difetto finisce coll’essere considerato come un pregio.” (qtd. in Azzolini and Brunelli: xii)

For Caico, handwriting does what Marinetti believed expressive typography could do: imitate voice and facial gestures. Therefore, both handwriting and creative typography can be different means to the same end. It could be possible that women futurists also found handwriting to be as expressive as the women of *Lucciola* did and that their use of it in *parole in libertà* is an alternative way to achieve the same effect Marinetti desired. While *Lucciola* has no direct connection to the women of futurism, it is telling that other women, who were interested in art

¹⁰³ I would like to thank Professor Francesco Ascoli for drawing my attention to *Lucciola* and for his help and kindness while at the Fondazione per Leggere where the Fondo Ascoli di storia della scrittura is located.

¹⁰⁴ See Azzolini and Brunelli for reproductions of the handwritten journal *Lucciola*.

and literature, were also invested in using handwriting as a means of expression during the same time period.

Marinetti would have never approved of a “rivista scritta a mano” such as *Lucciola* because he was against the old-fashioned book, both its look and its contents, as he explains in “Distruzione della sintassi”: “Io inizio una rivoluzione tipografica diretta contro la bestiale e nauseante concezione del libro di versi passatista e dannunziana, la carta a mano seicentesca, fregiata di galee, minerve e apolli, di iniziali rosse a ghirigori, ortaggi, mitologici nastri da messale, epigrafi e numeri romani” (*Teoria e invenzione* 77). Marinetti renounces the traditional printing style, its decorative embellishments, and handmade paper which were synonymous at the time with the popular Arts and Crafts movement. Led by William Morris, the art movement was a reaction against industrially produced art and design. It believed in craftsmanship and valued the way in which the hand was visible in the production of art. The movement began in the middle of the nineteenth century and continued to be an influence into the 1930s. It was particularly influential in book design and illustration, but it also dominated all other forms of art. The handmade paper that Marinetti mentions could allude to his dislike of the handmade or to the Arts and Crafts movement. While handwriting is not necessarily tied to the Arts and Crafts movement, it shares with it the mark of the hand.

Although handwriting may share a characteristic with Marinetti’s expressive typography, it also differs tremendously from it. Typography can be seen as mechanical, whereas handwriting was considered anything but mechanical at the time because of graphology. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century society saw handwriting in a new light following the studies of graphology, a pseudo-science that tied handwriting to individuality. Jean-Hippolyte Michon first coined the term *graphologie* in 1875 to describe the study of the ways in which handwriting was connected to individual traits.¹⁰⁵ Graphology began in France, but it soon spread to all major European countries. Other individuals changed and nuanced the principles of graphology throughout the years, but the underlining principle of it remained: handwriting reflected the individual and could function as a mirror to the personality and soul of the writer. Graphology often sat along the fine line between psychology and some esoteric belief, yet it increasingly gained the attention of doctors and scientists. In 1895, the Italian criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso published his *Grafologia*, a manual to interpreting the handwriting of both the “normal” and the “non-normal” (criminals, mentally ill people, and geniuses).¹⁰⁶ Historian Roxanne Panchasi, writes of graphology that “Fundamental to graphology’s system was the insistence on the uniqueness of the individual. That this uniqueness can be recognized in each individual’s unique handwriting was also regarded as a well-established truth about which everyone has a certain intuition and instinct” (19). Although graphology was considered a science by some (in 1886 the Scientific Congress of the Sorbonne determined that it was a legitimate science), the idea was that anyone, and not only graphology experts, could try to interpret the graphic signs of people to better understand them. This ability not only empowered

¹⁰⁵ Michon is the most well-known precursor of graphology, but there were others early precursors, such as Francois Demelle and the Italian Camillo Baldi. See Panchasi for a history of graphology.

¹⁰⁶ Suzanne Stewart Steinberg writes of Lombroso’s *Grafologia* and comments: “What is particularly striking in this text is the extent to which Lombroso’s own language falls progressively silent and cedes its place to the signatures of ‘normal people,’ ‘geniuses’ and ‘deviants;’ the book has no conclusion, but simply the telling writing of the Other” (246).

the interpreter, but also the person who was being interpreted. The proposition that everyone left a trace of themselves in writing supported an ideology of uniqueness in a society that was increasingly more industrial, technological, populated and threatened by new theories of science and relativity. Panchasi further explains this point when she writes:

Graphology emerged as a hybrid science of the individual that combined a fascination with written communication and the presentation of self. The psychology of handwriting responded to impulses to distinguish between individuals, and to the desire to understand the essence of each unique "soul," straddling intensely rational and seemingly irrational explanatory frames and positions. (29)

Considering the advent of graphology and the effects of a culture of individuality and uniqueness, then perhaps women found handwriting to be a "free-word" tool which enabled them to integrate the corporeality advanced by Marinetti while also reinserting a tie to the literary "I" he had abolished.

Although the Italian futurists chose expressive typography to revolutionize literature, their early Russian counterparts employed handwriting and the handmade in order to revolutionize literary and poetic expression.¹⁰⁷ Russian literary scholar Ian Chesley writes that in the Russian futurist handmade aesthetic "Every act of writing by hand becomes a sort of signature, a direct expression of ideality between the writer and the written" (2). Although the Italian and Russian futurists share the same name, they expressed the avant-garde in dramatically different ways. Russian futurists, especially the early groups such as Hylaea and the Cubo-futurists, were interested in reinventing language through a return to the primitive. As such, handwriting, phonetics, letters, and drawings were the focus of the early Russian futurists' oeuvre. For example, two influential Russian futurists, Victor Khlebnikov and Alexey Kruchynyk composed a manifesto in 1913 entitled "The Letter as Such" in which they stress the importance of handwriting and the way that mood affects it. They write:

Our handwriting, distinctively altered by our mood, conveys that mood to the reader independently of the words. We must therefore consider the question of written signs—visible, or simply palpable, that a blind man could touch. It's clearly not necessary that the author himself should be the one who writes a handwritten book; indeed, it would probably be better for him to entrust the task to an artist. (236)

For Khlebnikov and Kruchynyk, it does not matter whether or not the book is handwritten by the author; it is enough that it is handwritten because handwriting reveals more than just the meaning of words. For the early Russian futurists, handwriting, not typography, allowed for the doubling "la forza espressiva delle parole" (Marinetti, "Distruzione della sintassi" 77). Therefore, not only for women was handwriting an alternative to achieving the same effects of typography, it was also one for the Russian futurists.

Handwriting was a substitute for expressive typography and was able to achieve the same effect: enhance words and the way we read them. Johanna Drucker, who has been influential in

¹⁰⁷ For more on the handmade and handwritten in Russian futurism see Greve, Chesley, and Janecek.

illustrating the materiality of visual language in the avant-garde, writes “I believe that the issue of visual materiality pertains in the case of all written forms of language” (3). Indeed, both handwriting and typography draw attention to the way in which language can function visually, verbally, and auditorily, and can both represent corporeality. Nevertheless, the two forms of communication differ tremendously because handwriting was seen as more personal due to graphology and provided therefore a view of the psychology of human subject, which could represent a type of autobiography. Charlotte Greve, a literary critic of the Russian avant-garde, writes that the handwritten mark “can reflect the individuality of the writing subject, and it can present a ‘subject’ in the written mark” (1). Through the textual and visual readings in this chapter, I want to show how the handwriting of *le futuriste* leaves a trace of the literary “I” into futurist “words-in-freedom.” Handwriting allows for a kind of a literary “I,” without technically writing in the first person. Hillary Chute, a scholar of comics, a medium in which handwriting also plays a substantial role, claims that handwriting “carries, whether or not the narrative is autobiographical, what we may think of as a trace of autobiography in the mark of its maker” (10). Women who approached futurism, accustomed to the works of their female predecessors and contemporaries who were autobiographical writers, did not have to completely do away with autobiography by employing handwriting. Cangiullo’s open letter and presentation of Marietta Angelini, along with Marinetti’s comments on autobiography, may have initiated women’s *paroliberismo* against mainstream women’s writing, yet as more women contributed to the movement and created “words-in-freedom,” they tailored the genre to suit themselves. Women futurists may have chosen to execute their “words-in-freedom” by hand because it simultaneously went with and against futurism. It added a corporeal aspect to the work, yet it also reinserted a tie to the literary “I” which was used by women writers at the time yet banished by futurism. I want to look at two representative and often-cited “free-word” works that were done by hand: Benedetta’s “Spicologia di 1 uomo” (1919) and Rosa Rosà’s “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo” (1917). While none of these examples is autobiographical, the women point to themselves in their works through their handwriting.

Benedetta’s “Spicologia di 1 uomo”

The “free-word” composition “Spicologia (sic) di 1 uomo” by Benedetta Cappa Marinetti was first published in the futurist Roman journal *Dinamo* in 1919; it was Benedetta’s first contribution to futurism and her only “free-word” poem.¹⁰⁸ At the time of the publication of “Spicologia,” Benedetta was not yet either an influential woman futurist or the wife of F.T. Marinetti; she was a student of Giacomo Balla and had met Marinetti in 1918. After this initial approach to futurism, Benedetta went on to author novels, paint, and advocate futurism but only years later, beginning in 1924.¹⁰⁹ The “free-word” piece is entirely done by hand in black ink on white paper; its central image is a decagram, or a ten-point star, which is framed and detailed in Benedetta’s handwriting (see fig. 50). “Spicologia,” Re claims, “anticipates some of the themes

¹⁰⁸ Re writes of the journal: “*Dinamo*, published by Ugoletti under the auspices of the famous Casa d’Arte Bragaglia... was only one of a myriad of experimental and avant-garde periodicals and activities that, fusing aesthetics and poetics, animated the Roman cultural and political avant-garde scene in the teens and twenties—a scene whose vibrancy and creativity have remained unmatched” (“Impure Abstraction” 35).

¹⁰⁹ See chapter four for more on Benedetta’s literary and visual works.

of *Le forze umane* and beyond” (“Impure Abstraction” 33). As we shall see in chapter four, Benedetta’s first novel, *Le forze umane*, does, in fact, echo the gender and esoteric themes in “Spicologia;” it also mirrors the way in which Benedetta posits herself as a spiritually superior human being in relation to a man. Despite Benedetta’s importance in futurism, “Spicologia” has received little critical attention.¹¹⁰ One reason for this lacuna could be that Benedetta’s composition is hard to decipher because it is done by hand. Re, in fact, writes that it is executed in a “somewhat childish and irregular cursive” (“Impure Abstraction” 35).¹¹¹ The cursive handwriting Benedetta employs varies within the piece (in angle, slant, and spacing) yet it is in line with the *ronde* and English cursive scripts typically taught in Italian schools at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.¹¹² Benedetta varies her handwriting in the piece, making the reader-viewer work to decode obscure parts of her verbo-visual composition. I argue that Benedetta, employing occult and ancient symbolism, critiques some man in particular in “Spicologia di 1 uomo,” and gives herself pseudo-religious agency. Although Benedetta’s composition takes as its subject a man, as Marietta Angelini’s “free-word” portraits do, she critiques him negatively and at the same time points to herself positively at the same time, unlike Angelini.

Benedetta’s “Spicologia” features a large decagram in which words are interspersed throughout. It is framed by its title, above the 10-point star, and Benedetta’s signature, below the star. As such, “Spicologia” comprises only three parts: the title, the star and its content, and the closing signature. Since I understand the opening title and the closing signature to function as a verbo-visual frame that introduces a male-female juxtaposition, I will first examine the exterior of the composition (the title and the closing) and then the interior (the decagram). The title, “Spicologia di 1 uomo,” shows the influence of Marinetti in that it employs creative orthography (“spicologia” instead of “psicologia”) and the number one to express the indefinite article “un.”¹¹³ Scholars have generally understood the title to be poking fun at futurism’s dislike of psychology and the focus on the individual.¹¹⁴ Benedetta thus represents something that the futurists disapproved of in a characteristically futurist way, adhering on one hand to futurism, while at the same time diverging from it, similar to Bonheur’s operation in *Diario*. I want to suggest that the word *spicologia* in the title does not make reference to the scientific study of the mind, but rather to the “psychology” of a person—the way in which he may believe or act and the characteristics that define his behavior.¹¹⁵ In fact, within the decagram there are several

¹¹⁰ Some scholars of futurism do mention the work and give a brief outline of it. See Zoccoli, *Queen of Futurism* 39-40, 82 n. 3; Bentivoglio, *Le futuriste italiane* 45-46; Re, “Impure Abstraction;” Giachero, “Senza preoccupazione plastica;” Panzera, *Donna Generatrice* 76-7; Larkin 202-04; Berghaus “Volte-Face” 50-62.

¹¹¹ Having seen Benedetta’s handwriting in various drafts and documents at the Getty Archives where her work is preserved, the handwriting in “Spicologia” seems very similar to her regular script.

¹¹² Benedetta studied to become a teacher according to the Montessori method, which placed importance on handwriting. See Sassoon 82-85 on Montessori and handwriting. For examples of handwriting taught in Italy see Sassoon (165, 179) and her chapter “Handwriting around Europe” (161-182).

¹¹³ Marinetti encourages creative spelling in his “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista” and also promotes the use of mathematical symbols. Although “1” is a number and not a symbol, it still recalls mathematics. The number 1 was also used to describe Marinetti in Angelini’s “Ritratto di Marinetti.”

¹¹⁴ Re writes “Psychology was also notoriously despised by futurism, insofar as it was associated with the bourgeois novel” (“Impure Abstraction” 33).

¹¹⁵ Re has a different view on the word *spicologia*. She writes “It pretends to change the word into something else which sounds like *spigolo*, an angular geometric form reminiscent of some of the more proverbial futurist topoi—for

nouns (e.g. *sensualità, materialismo, orgoglio, ambizione*) that are the traits Benedetta associates with a man.

Below the decagram, Benedetta closes her “free-word” composition by signing “Benedetta fra le donne,” citing a part of the “Hail Mary,” a well-known Catholic prayer.”¹¹⁶ The prayer includes a line from Luke 1:28 in which the angel appears to Mary and tells her that she will bear a child.¹¹⁷ The part of the prayer that Benedetta repeats and uses as her own signature conveys that Mary is a chosen one of God. As such, Benedetta suggests that she, like Mary, has been chosen and carries spiritual agency.¹¹⁸ The phrase comes as something of a surprise in the futurist context, since it is well known that the futurists were anti-clerical because the church maintained the traditional values futurists abhorred.¹¹⁹ Although she respected Catholicism, Benedetta was interested in other forms of spirituality, especially theosophy.¹²⁰ Benedetta once again simultaneously goes with and against futurism in that she recalls the Catholic tradition yet goes against it by sacrilegiously representing herself as important as the central figure of Catholicism. Benedetta ties herself to the Virgin Mary through her very own signature, which marks presence and identity in handwriting. Greve writes that a signature “is interpreted as a gesture, as a certain person’s individual mark, as a means by which he or she can assert his or her self in the world” (14). As such, Benedetta asserts herself in pseudo-religious terms and suggests authority. The closing signature contrasts with the opening title as it is the psychology of “l uomo,” yet it is signed by a specific woman who names herself as Benedetta, and infers that she is “blessed among many,” comparing the indefinite with the definite. One could infer, perhaps, considering that Benedetta had met Marinetti a year prior to “Spicologia,” that she is referring to

instance, the famous wedgelike triangle that organizes the space of Carlo Carrà’s 1915 *Sintesi futurista della guerra...* (“Impure Abstraction” 33). Zoccoli, instead, claims “in Latin *spica* means ‘point,’ but also ‘the brightest star of the Virgo constellation’” (*Queen of Futurism* 40). Berghaus further expands on and adds to Zoccoli’s point arguing that “In Italian, *spiccare*, transitive, means: jump; to leap; to spread one’s wings, to take flight; as an intransitive verb: to stand out (be different), to stick out. These are certainly characteristics that could be applied to the leader of Futurism. But the star-shape of the image suggests other meanings, too. In Latin, *spica* is a point; hence, it is used for things that have a spiky shape, e.g. an ear of wheat or a hair-pin. The astronomical treatises of Germanicus Aratea and Marcus Manilius also use the term for the brightest star in the constellation Virgo” (“Volte-Face” 54).

¹¹⁶ The words to the whole prayer are: “Ave, o Maria, piena di grazia, il Signore è con Te. Tu sei benedetta fra le donne e benedetto è il frutto del tuo seno, Gesù. Santa Maria, Madre di Dio, prega per noi peccatori, adesso e nell’ora della nostra morte. Amen.”

¹¹⁷ Benedetta also mentions this prayer in her first novel, *Le forze umane*. In the chapter entitled “Diversità raggiunte” the protagonist, Luciana, and her friend, Maria, hear church bells and a congregation reciting the prayer. At this point, Benedetta writes that “Si inginocchiò, mormorando: *Ave Maria, gratia plena...* Noi non sapevamo preghiere; ma ci inginocchiammo” (*I tre romanzi* 50). Considering her use of the prayer in “Spicologia,” it is not far-fetched to think that in her novel it may also carry personal significance.

¹¹⁸ Re writes “The phrase is an ironic allusion to the Virgin Mary, ‘blessed among women,’ and to the origin of the name given to her by her parents, but it also alludes obliquely to the fact that Benedetta is one of the few women ‘blessed’ with the privilege of becoming a futurist—one of the few women, that is, in an essentially male movement” (“Impure Abstraction” 33).

¹¹⁹ Berghaus writes “Marinetti embraced Benedetta’s spiritual leanings as they offered an alternative to institutionalized religion which he had come to loathe ever since his school years in a Jesuit college” (“Volte-Face” 52).

¹²⁰ Berghaus comments that “Benedetta was a woman with strong spiritual leanings. Some of this she had inherited from her mother, who was a devotee of the Waldensian movement; further inspiration she received from Giacomo Balla, her teacher and fatherly friend, who regularly held mediumistic séances in his house...” (“Volte-Face” 52).

Marinetti.¹²¹ If this is the case, she notably asserts her own identity in powerful religious terms yet diminishes the importance of the futurist founder, which is contrary to what Marietta Angelini does in “Ritratto di Marinetti.” “Spicologia” juxtaposes a man, an “everyman,” if you will, to one special woman. Therefore, the opening and closing are gendered and introduce two different spheres—one male and one female—to “Spicologia.”

Underneath Benedetta’s signature, in what seems to be her own handwriting, the words “parolibera futurista” appear. I will not here include this part of “Spicologia” in my analysis because of archival proof that it was not meant to be included. Benedetta scholar, Siobhan M. Conaty, has divulged a letter showing that this exclusively futurist label was added to the piece without Benedetta’s knowledge.¹²² In a letter to Marinetti, Benedetta writes to the leader of futurism: “I was troubled ... to see my name written as ‘parolibera futurista.’ I am too free and rebellious—I do not want to be constricted. I want only to be me.” (qtd. in Conaty, “Benedetta Cappa Marinetti”: 20). Marinetti responded to Benedetta’s objection, writing: “I call you this because I was convinced that you could understand my mind and my sensibility. Parolibera futurista means precisely this: to be oneself. It is a key point which separates us definitively from the multitudes who are all yesterday and nothing. It is a motto that keeps us united in the cause.” (qtd. in Conaty, “Benedetta Cappa Marinetti”: 20). From this correspondence, we can perceive a manipulative hand involved in Benedetta’s first “free-word” poem and perhaps for this reason Benedetta took five years to contribute once again to futurism.¹²³ Even though Benedetta did not enlist the help of a typesetter by creating “Spicologia” by hand, Marinetti nonetheless played the part of the typesetter and took the liberty to change her original *parole in libertà* and force a futurist label on her and her work.

The decagram is the central feature of Benedetta’s “free-word” composition and it ties together the opening title and the closing signature. The geometric shape is formed by ten open angles that intersect imperfectly with each other. The angles vary in size and give the piece a spontaneous, casual look. Although the decagram is a geometric figure, which should be formed by regular lines and shapes, Benedetta challenges this precision in her unstructured version of it. Benedetta’s handwriting also gives the piece a look of impulsiveness and pairs well with this unconstrained form. A decagram is a Masonic symbol and can take on numerous meanings according to its relationship to different secret societies and cultures. Historian Günter Berghaus claims that the decagram is also used in Kabbalah “where it describes the sacred geometry of the universe” (“Volte-Face” 55).¹²⁴ In general, it has been considered to symbolize unity, spiritual

¹²¹ Many critics automatically presume that “Spicologia” is about Marinetti. Lia Giachero claims that “La prima opera futurista di Benedetta, ‘Spicologia di un uomo’, è un *hommage* a Marinetti, ma non la si può certo stigmatizzare per eccessiva tenerezza.” (“Riflessioni” 142-3). Berghaus automatically presumes that “Spicologia” is about Marinetti, writings “Benedetta’s star portrait of Marinetti gives us even more insight into their relationship” (“Volte-Face” 55). While it may be possible that Benedetta speaks of Marinetti in her “free-word” composition, I am hesitant to claim so since the title is left particularly vague (“1 uomo”).

¹²² This exchange of letters between Marinetti and Benedetta is also mentioned by Zoccoli, Bentivoglio, and Panzera. See Zoccoli, *Queen of Futurism* 40, 82 n. 3; Bentivoglio, *Le futuriste italiane* 47; Panzera, *Donna Generatrice* 23-24.

¹²³ At the end of her 1924 novel, *Le forze umane*, Benedetta, in fact, mentions the publication of “Spicologia” and indirectly “corrects” the label “parolibera futurista” that she was given at its publication. She writes that “Spicologia” is an example of *sintesi grafiche*, not *parolibberismo*. See chapter four for more on this explanation.

¹²⁴ Berghaus argues that Benedetta was interested in Kabbalah in general, which I agree with since she briefly mentions Kabbalah in her first novel, *Le forze umane*.

achievement, totality, or yin-yang. A ten-point star is particularly rich in occult symbolism because it is known as the combination of two pentagrams, or five-point stars, which in itself is one of the most well-known occult symbols. The pentagram is known as a theosophical, freemasonry, witchcraft, and Wiccan symbol. It has also been associated with the elements of the earth, the five wounds of Jesus, the planet of Venus, the Devil, the union of the male, and the female, and the androgen. Furthermore, Berghaus writes that “The geometry of the universe is represented in the form of the Decagram, or ten-pointed star, composed of two interlocking Pentagrams, or as a Tree of Life, consisting of three columns or pillars, and ten interlocking spheres or emanations” (“Volte-Face” 57). These copious associations of both the pentagram and the decagram make it difficult to pinpoint and define the way in which Benedetta utilizes it. However, we can infer that the decagram marks a connection to the occult and represents the combination of two forces because it is best known as the union of two pentagrams. In discussing “Spicologia,” Berghaus writes of Benedetta and Marinetti explaining that “I am not sure whether they were familiar with the terms ‘yin’ and ‘yang’ but they will have known the concept of a dynamic equilibrium achieved by mutually complementary opposites from occult traditions in the West. The dualism of forces in astrology and the interplay of feminine and masculine in numerology...are but two examples” (“Volte-Face” 55). I want to suggest that the decagram could be representative of the combination of masculinity and femininity because of the way the opening and closing juxtapose these two genders and because the decagram can symbolize union. As such, the ten-point star central to “Spicologia” could imply the pairing of Benedetta and a man.

The union inferred by the decagram is enhanced by enigmatic letters placed by the points at the top of each of the ten angles.¹²⁵ Re claims that in these letters “no pattern or meaning is discernible” and that “They resemble the mysterious symbols of a hermetic message” (“Impure Abstraction” 35). However, art historian and commentator on women futurists Franca Zoccoli argues that the letters make up two words, one being “uomini” and the other being “vita” (*Queen of Futurism* 39). I agree with Zoccoli, who has helpfully deciphered Benedetta’s cryptic writing. Differently from Zoccoli, however, I see a crucial distinction due to the placement of these two words. The first letter in “uomini” begins at the top of the star and is within the same plane in which the title, “Spicologia di 1 uomo” is placed (see fig. 50). The word can be read in a clockwise position and goes from the upper left hand side to the lower right hand side of the decagram. The word “vita,” however, must be read counter-clockwise and goes from the lower left hand side of the piece to the bottom right hand side. The positioning of this word correlates with the geometric plane of Benedetta’s closing signature. Not only are these two words read in different directions, but the letters of each respective word are also placed dissimilarly. The letters of “uomini” are located directly above the points that Benedetta has marked at the top of the angles. Conversely, the letters of “vita” are placed to the left of the dots of their angles. The direction of these words and the difference in the placement of their letters divide the decagram into two. This division is not even, as “uomini” takes up six angles and “vita” takes up four, but it nevertheless could suggest a duality and a combining of two separate entities, such as male and female. With these spatial associations, Benedetta could be suggesting different things. Similar

¹²⁵ The first *i* in the word “uomini” or the one in “vita” look more like *v*’s or *t*’s than the letter *i*. Moreover, the tails on the cursive letters are exaggeratedly elongated.

to the Virgin Mary, Benedetta could bring life to men, either in a literal or figurative sense. Benedetta might be indicating that she can give birth and therefore give life, or that she, once again similar to the narrative description of Mary in the Bible, can save men and give them new life. The connection of “uomini” to the title “Spicologia di 1 uomo” also mirrors a tension between the singular and plural that is played out in the opening and closing titles. In pairing “1 uomo” to many “uomini,” Benedetta might be indicating that the everyman of the title represents all men.

Moving toward the inside of the decagram, we can make out several words: “sensualità,” “materialismo,” “orgoglio,” “ambizione,” “ideali,” and “vuoto.” The first four of these words are nouns that could represent Benedetta’s version of the psychology of a man. In this case, sensuality, materialism, pride, and ambition are the characteristics that Benedetta claims dictate a man’s behavior. The word “IDEALI” also appears within this mix of nouns, but it stands out because it is the only word to be written out in all capital block letters, in contrast to the other nouns scripted in Benedetta’s cursive handwriting. Bentivoglio understands “IDEALI” to be in capitals because she sees it as the only flattering noun among uncomplimentary ones (*Le futuriste italiane* 46), however I suggest that it stands out because it categorizes the other nouns. Sensuality, materialism, pride, and ambition are the values, the “ideali” of a man according to “Spicologia.” While I do not interpret this set of values to be necessarily negative, as the representative nouns of a man’s moral code, this group of words does not flatter the particular man Benedetta seeks to depict.

The same words that make up a man’s set of ethics form another figure rich in symbolism and connected to several ancient and occult traditions: the eye of Providence (see fig. 51). When looked at from a glance, we can discern this all-seeing eye that further informs our reading of “Spicologia” (see fig. 52). The eye of Providence has been used as a symbol of secret societies, in Ancient and contemporary cultures, in religions, and as a symbol of superstition.¹²⁶ It is generally considered to be linked to the divine and the way in which a divine presence can judge and protect. Often, the eye is figured in combination with the sun, a feature of the image that refers to divinity and the heavens. This image can be made out by envisioning the word “sensualità,” positioned between the upper points of the star and the center, as an eyebrow. The word “ideali” in capital letters curves around the center of the piece to form the top half of an eye, while “materialismo” shapes the bottom half. The central nucleus of the composition, which is a circle encompassing the word “vuoto” forms the pupil while the words “orgoglio” and “ambizione” outline the iris. The pupil-like focal point within the decagram creates the core of a sun. Extending out from the focal point labeled as “vuoto,” there are six sun rays depicted with undulating lines, furthering the connection to the eye of Providence. The nouns describing the moral code of a man make up the symbolic eye of Providence, making a connection between man and the position he assumes. If a man’s questionable ethics form the figure of the all-seeing eye, then Benedetta may be suggesting that man is in a dominant position and that all things are judged from his own (flawed) set of principles. In labeling the center focal point as “vuoto,” Benedetta implies that, because of man’s principles, he cannot truly see. In this way, Benedetta may be using the eye of Providence as a symbol to denote male vigilance, judgment, and power that is distorted and unjust.

¹²⁶ Thank you to Barbara Spackman for pointing out the eye of Providence. A well-known use of this symbol can be found on the American dollar bill.

Embedded within the diagram there are more puzzling elements—the Greek letters lambda, Λ , and chi, χ .¹²⁷ These two letters appear in the lower right part of the decagram and coincide with two particular sun rays and the words “uomini” and “vita” (see fig. 53). Two of the six sun rays that extend out from the central point appear to have hooks attached to them. They expand out but then loop inward in a hook-like way as if they were pointing out something. The first hooked sun ray appears between the angles labeled *n* and *i*, the penultimate and last letters of the word “uomini.” The sun ray extends out between these two angles and then hooks inward and stops right above a figure that resembles the Greek letter χ . The chi, χ , is the twenty second letter of the Greek alphabet and can take on a K-sound, such as /kai/. It can symbolize Christ (as in x-mas), and represents the rhetorical figure of the chiasmus. The second hooked sun ray also appears between angles that correspond with the penultimate and last letters, but this time, of the word “vita.” The inward loop of the ray stops short of the *r* in “materialismo,” above which, and to the left, one can discern the Greek letter lambda, Λ . The lambda is the eleventh letter of the Greek alphabet and in astronomy it is known as the eleventh star in a constellation. In physics, it denotes wavelength. The lambda has also been considered to represent unity. Several things are striking about the presence of these two Greek letters. First of all, they are highlighted by the hooked sun rays. Secondly, they coincide with the words “uomini” and “vita.” Thirdly, they are respectively the eleventh and twenty second letters of the Greek alphabet which could carry specific meanings.¹²⁸ Berghaus notes that “Benedetta was introduced to the occult science of numerology by her mother and thus shared an interest with Marinetti, for whom numbers possessed supreme significance...” (“Volte-Face” 59). The number eleven was Marinetti’s favorite and he referred to it often in his writings.¹²⁹ The lambda, in this case, could be an obscure reference to Marinetti. Furthermore, the chi, the twenty second letter of the Greek alphabet can also denote a *k* sound, which could be a reference to Benedetta, whose maiden name was Cappa. Additionally, the numerical difference between eleven and twenty two is eleven, possibly further suggesting some kind of tie to Marinetti. The positioning of the lambda with the word “vita” and the chi with “uomini” may also intimate an overlapping and union between man and woman, Marinetti and Benedetta. Again, the symbols Benedetta employs are cryptic and could take on a number of meanings so it is difficult to say with certainty how they are being used. What becomes evident is that “Spicologia” is meant to be puzzling and hard to read and is laden with esoteric and personal significance.

“Spicologia” is a layered verbo-visual composition in which Benedetta simultaneously asserts herself yet leaves the content of her message hidden. “Spicologia,” I argue, wants to puzzle its readers by utilizing various symbols, handwriting, and remaining indefinite. It recalls occult symbols such as the decagram, pentagram, and the eye of Providence. Additionally, it features Greek letters that may contain personal symbolism for Benedetta. These symbols are, in and of themselves, multi-layered because they can take on a number of meanings, and when

¹²⁷ No scholar to date has taken note of these Greek letters in “Spicologia.” I want to thank Claudio Ferretti for pointing them out to me.

¹²⁸ According to classical Greek, these letters have their own numerical value. The chi is equal to 600 and lambda represents the number 30.

¹²⁹ Berghaus claims that “In numerological readings of an individual, as in astrology, various factors are considered, including date of birth, time of birth, place of birth, parents, etc. Marinetti’s personal number was eleven, which in numerology follows the Decad and signifies rebirth, a new beginning of a time cycle” (“Volte-Face” 59).

combined in “Spicologia” they create a sense of disorientation in the reader-viewer. Benedetta’s own handwriting is also a source of obscurity, as one’s handwriting can often be for others. She employs not one, but three different kinds of handwriting in executing the piece: cursive, block letters, and italicized print lettering. There are layers of scripts in “Spicologia” which make it challenging because one has to decipher not one, but three different styles. Lina Caico, founder of *Lucciola*, claimed that in seeing the handwriting of the various authors who contributed to the handwritten manuscript, one had the impression of hearing their voice and their facial expressions. This impression was probably made possible by the authors’ consistent handwriting style. In “Spicologia,” however, we cannot become completely accustomed to Benedetta’s writing because it varies throughout the piece, contributing to its ambiguity. For example, the spacing between the words in the decagram is different from the rest of the piece, most likely to allow space for the angles of the ten-point star. The block letters which form “IDEALI” stand out in capital letters in order to define the other elements of the piece. Moreover, Benedetta’s signature and quoting of the “Hail Mary” is executed in a tight cursive font which leans even more to the right than the other words in the image. Interestingly, while the title “Spicologia di 1 uomo” leans to the left, “Benedetta fra le donne” leans to the right. This contrast further highlights the juxtaposition of these two planes within the composition. Additionally, the word in the middle of the central sun, “vuoto,” is the only word that is expressed in cursive other than Benedetta’s closing signature.

With these variations in script, Benedetta concomitantly asserts and denies her identity through inconsistent handwriting. The different scripts may largely be recognizable as Benedetta’s own handwriting, yet they do not give us a clear enough image of the defining characteristics of her hand. This aspect of the work may be seeking to achieve the typographical variations in one single work that Marinetti encouraged in his manifestoes, but it also renders “Spicologia” more cryptic. In a handwritten work, the reader expects that the writing will have to be deciphered. In this case, however, this work is tripled for the reader when Benedetta utilizes three different scripts, contributing to the overall puzzle of the piece. Nevertheless, by executing “Spicologia” by hand, the mark of Benedetta as maker remains.

Another way in which the “free-word” composition seeks to obscure and assert is in the way it teases the reader-viewer with its indefiniteness and specificity. Perhaps the most well-defined part of “Spicologia” is Benedetta’s signature and reference to the Virgin Mary. In the closing part of the piece, Benedetta proclaims her identity and aligns herself with a spiritual power, which, when read in conjunction with the placement of the eye of Providence, could imply that she is usurping the divine power of a man that she puts into question through the composition. “Spicologia” marks with certainty Benedetta as the maker and as a pseudo-religious agent, yet she states this identity in relation to what is male, uncertain, and indefinite: “1 uomo.” In this way, Benedetta declares herself as powerful in relation to someone unknown. In boldly identifying herself in spiritual terms through her signature and creating the “free-word” poem by hand, Benedetta asserts herself. However, this strong declaration is made against elements of mystery, which might indicate that maybe Benedetta could not completely express herself in her “free-word” poem. “Spicologia” remains enigmatic in several respects yet it also straightforwardly draws attention to Benedetta’s spiritual agency and her position as creator.

Rosa Rosà’s “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo”

Rosa Rosà was born as Edyth von Haynau to an aristocratic Austrian family.¹³⁰ She studied to become an artist and eventually met and married the Italian writer Ulrico Arnaldi; she later moved to Italy and started a family.¹³¹ While her husband was away at war, Rosà was in contact with the futurists. From 1917-1919 she was a regular contributor of articles to the journal *L'Italia futurista*; she was also an illustrator, a painter, a novelist, and the creator of one “free-word” composition, “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo.” Re considers her “one of the most interesting and explicitly feminist women futurists” (46) and historian Valentina Mosco writes that “Rosa Rosà è senz’altro la futurista che ha portato il dibattito sulla questione femminile su un piano più profondo” (116). In her article contributions to *L'Italia futurista*, such as “Le donne del postdomani,” “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa,” and “Risposta a Jean-Jacques,” the Austrian-born futurist lays out her ideas on maternity, women’s rights, and the bourgeoisie.¹³² In many of her articles, there is a vein of protofeminism, but in the case we will analyze here, “Ricevimento— thè—signore—nessun uomo,” she takes up a misogynist stance, mobilizing all too familiar stereotypes in what is presented as a critique of the Italian bourgeoisie. Notably, in her “Risposta a Jean-Jacques” Rosà explicitly states “non sono femminista, sono un ‘ista,’ per cui la prima parte della parola ancora non è trovata” (116). With this comment, Rosà does not fully commit to being a futurist, or a feminist, leaving her identity open.

While much of the criticism on Rosà’s work deals with her novel *Una donna con tre anime*, there is very little on her only “free-word” composition “Ricevimento— thè—signore—nessun uomo,” published in *L'Italia futurista* in 1917 (see fig. 54).¹³³ Most critics who analyze her longer works mention the “free-word” piece, but to date there has not been an in-depth critical analysis of the composition.¹³⁴ “Ricevimento” lacks critical interpretations not only because it is part of the oeuvre of a minor futurist figure, but also because it is extremely hard to interpret Rosà’s nearly illegible handwriting.¹³⁵ The composition spatially maps out the floor plan of an all-women’s afternoon tea in a bourgeois living room, while various bits and pieces of women’s conversations are transcribed by Rosà. The strands of the women’s discussions are placed around several different curved lines that appear to make up groups of tentacles. At first glance, the undulating lines and the small, illegible handwritten words that accompany them, seem monstrous and may allude to Medusa’s head, which has often symbolized female rage. There are three clusters of tentacles in the composition—one in the upper left hand side, one on

¹³⁰ Some other futurist women used pseudonyms instead of their real names (Magamal, Flora Bonheur). Another common option among futurist women was to employ only their first name (Barbara, Benedetta, Regina, Irma Valeria, etc.).

¹³¹ For biographical information on Rosà see Bentivoglio, *Le futuriste italiane* 39-40; Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane* 146-55; Salaris, *Una donna con tre anime* 7-25 and *Le futuriste* 264; Bello Minciocchi 159-63; Della Colletta 360-67; Mosco 293-95; Re “Rosà’s Futurist-Feminist Short Novel.”

¹³² All of Rosà’s articles, drawings, and creative texts can be found in *Una donna con tre anime*, ed. Salaris (1982). The quotes from Rosà’s articles and work in this dissertation all come from this text.

¹³³ Re has recently published an English translation of *Una donna con tre anime* and a helpful critical introduction to it. See Re “Rosà’s Futurist-Feminist Short Novel” and Re and Siracusa “Rosa Rosà’s ‘A Woman with Three Souls.’”

¹³⁴ For brief readings of “Ricevimento” see Bentivoglio, *Le futuriste* 39-40, and Larkin 100-101.

¹³⁵ Bentivoglio comments in “Futuriste italiane tra linguaggio e immagine” that Rosà’s piece is “Priva di preoccupazioni estetiche come si presenta, ha molti punti di contatto con le scritture automatiche surrealiste, e le percorre...” (42).

the upper right, and the other on the lower right hand side. The grouping together of different tentacles and conversations represents the various cliques of women and types of discussions they have. Importantly, each of these groups is organized according to a well-known misogynist topos. The three clusters represent women as seen from a misogynist point of view. In the first cluster, the discussion centers around children, husbands, fashion and vacations: typical “women’s things.” While in the second women gossip about other women, and in the third, women suffragettes and feminists complain about men. In “Ricevimento,” therefore, women are represented in stereotypical ways, validating misogynist beliefs about them. Further marking the difference between these groups of women, Rosà has labeled two of the three groups. The one on the upper left hand side is entitled “noia,” (which has been underlined twice) and the one on the upper right is called “maldicenza,” because it has to do with gossip. While the third group remains unnamed, around it Rosà has written “fluidi ostili” representing the hostility of angry women.¹³⁶

Each cluster is also festooned by different geometric shapes (triangles, stars, squares and circles) that denote a difference in the types of groups and conversations among women. Lines with arrows attach to each of these shapes as they move inward towards the central focal point, a circle that represents a serving table. Next to it, Rosà has written “tavolino, sandwiches, paste, bibite.” The arrowed lines pointing to the table from each cluster are flanked with the word “golosità,” suggesting women’s sweet tooth or greediness. To the left hand side of the table, Rosà also indicates a “brutto quadro di famiglia,” condemning a symbol of the bourgeois family. In the lower left hand corner of the piece, Rosà has also drawn a door and a star and marked herself in the piece with the first-person subject pronoun “io.” Adjacent to the star that represents herself she has written “mi pare che ne ho [abbia avuto] abbastanza,” revealing her desire to leave the social gathering and her differentiation from the other women. This unique “free-word” composition critiques the way in which middle-class women act and relate to one another and it separates Rosà from these women. I want to look at this piece against the background of one of Rosà’s other articles in *L’Italia futurista*, “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa,” because it is intertextually related to the “free-word” composition and can inform the way in which we read “Ricevimento.”¹³⁷ “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa” appeared in *L’Italia futurista* on August 12th, 1917, just four months before “Ricevimento” was published, suggesting that Rosà was working out her views on women and the bourgeoisie during the latter half of 1917.¹³⁸

“Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa” is a brief, three-page diatribe against the Italian middle class. Just as futurism makes the object of its disdain the bourgeoisie, so too does Rosà. However, more than just condemning the middle class, Rosà also explains what she sees as its weaknesses and proposes ways in which it can be improved. Rosà may be suggesting that the bourgeoisie change because it makes up most of the Italian population and in helping to improve it, perhaps she believes that all of Italy will change as well. Rosà proposes a middle class

¹³⁶ “Fluidi ostili” has been penned between the upper right and lower right clusters so it may not refer only to the third cluster. Also, around the tentacles, and to the left hand side of the piece Rosà has written “Noia sbadigli repressi” and “Impertinenza.”

¹³⁷ Erin Larkin writes that “The parole in libertà Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo... ironically dramatizes the same problem” in ‘Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa’ (100). I would argue that it is not exactly the same problem. The “free-word” composition focuses only on women, whereas the article addresses the entire bourgeoisie.

¹³⁸ “Ricevimento” was published on December 9, 1917, in *L’Italia futurista*.

overhaul by comparing the bourgeoisie to the aristocracy and by illustrating the differences between middle class men and women. The Italian bourgeoisie is *noiosa* according to Rosà because of its “povertà di fantasia—della *scarsezza* di formazioni colorite, varie, che rende le grandi città d’Italia relativamente semplici e che fanno le piccole città d’Italia addirittura delle tombe” (117). Rosà finds the *borghesia* monotonous and believes that it makes Italy provincial. The middle class dominates Italy with its large numbers and it is becoming more powerful, as “la sua giovane e sana vitalità si sta manifestando in successi positivi palpabili, materiali, sorgente viva di ricchezza, destinata a gareggiare nell’avvenire con le industrie estere” (117). In this way, the bourgeoisie’s cultural dominance could pose a particular threat to the aristocracy, of which Rosà was part.¹³⁹ Rosà finds the bourgeoisie’s lack of spirituality disturbing and laments that “la maggior parte della borghesia vive, lavora e muore senza avere acquistata la sensazione dei *valori astratti*...” (117; ellipses by Rosà). The *valori astratti* that Rosà refers to remain undefined, yet considering her and *Italia futurista*’s interest in spiritual and pseudo-sciences, they probably refer to the occult. For Rosà, the middle class needs an overhaul and she proceeds to cite examples of the bourgeoisie’s negative behavior, especially along gender lines.

Rosà first discusses the conduct of middle class men. She writes that “Conosco uomini che si son fatti da soli, con tenace energia e con iniziativa coraggiosa...ma che si limitano all’interessamento per la loro professione ignorando la spinta frenetica per arricchire la propria personalità” (117). Rosà underlines that she knows these men personally. Even though they might not live up to her expectations, they are lauded in that “si son fatti da soli, con tenace energia e con iniziativa coraggiosa.” Rosà continues to criticize these men, but with a sympathetic eye, as they:

vivono placidamente senza essere mai tormentati dai molteplici problemi che fanno vibrare l’Universo, unilateralmente assorbiti dalla giusta ambizione di riuscire nei loro affari, ma serenamente infischendosi di tutto ciò che va al di là delle loro zone materiali. Vivono onestamente, valorosamente, materialmente, ma non aspirano a coltivare tra di loro individui prismatici. (118)

Rosà characterizes the men of the bourgeoisie in a standard way: they are too involved in their business adventures to go further in life, yet they are not to be blamed for this. The men of the

¹³⁹ In her book *Donna e futurismo, fra virilismo e riscatto*, Valentina Mosco explains the social make-up of the women futurists: “La ‘pattuglia rosa’ del Futurismo è composta da donne che provengono in buona parte da *milieu* artistici e culturali borghesi o alto borghesi, aristocratici, persino (è il caso di Rosa Rosa’)...L’appartenenza al movimento futurista è per loro un privilegio e insieme un onore; queste donne si considerano ‘diverse’ perché sono entrate a far parte di un gruppo intenzionato a ‘rompere gli schemi’ a ogni costo, caratterizzato da un altissimo tasso di anticonformismo e di avanguardismo, e perché il vangelo futurista dà loro modo di uscire dagli stereotipi del conformismo Borghese e della famiglia. In questo senso sono delle ‘aristocratiche’, donne contornate da un’aura di aristocraticismo che impedirà loro di farsi portavoce dei bisogni più urgenti e concreti delle donne del popolo e di unire le forze in un gruppo femminile futurista strutturato (progetto che, per ben due volte, naufragherà). Il loro sguardo sulla questione della donna è quindi filtrate da un’appartenenza a un movimento di *élite* culturalmente e socialmente evoluto, anche se sarà, soprattutto nella ‘protofemminista’ del gruppo Rosa Rosà, uno sguardo acuto, capace di interpretare i mutamenti in atto nella società, come si evince da un suo interessante intervento in cui inneggia alle ‘Donne del posdomani’” (28-29).

bourgeoisie live “placidamente” and they “serenamente” ignore everything that does not have material value. In Rosà’s typical (positive) account of men, they are tranquil and non-threatening. Silvia Contarini explains that “En somme, les femmes futuristes, même celles qui envisagent une hypothétique femme nouvelle, expriment très peu d’estime pour les femmes, aucune pour le féminin, alors que leur admiration pour les hommes demeure intacte” (222). Indeed, in her article, Rosà has more respect for bourgeois men than she does for bourgeois women. As such, they are not Rosà’s worst middle class enemy, for that position is reserved for women.

Between describing middle class men and women, Rosà continues to lament the bourgeoisie in general terms and compares them to the aristocracy even though she opened her article writing “Dico che la borghesia è *noiosa* non per mettere in rilievo i pregi di un altro ceto” (117; italics by Rosà). For Rosà, two bourgeois traits can be corrected by following the example of the aristocracy. Rosà writes “Non si è destata ancora la coscienza del dovere astratto di *consumare* ciò che alcuni valorosi cervelli creano. E non si è svegliato il gusto e il bisogno di manifestarsi su grande scala. Per questo unico lato bisogna che la borghesia vada ancora per un pò ad imparare dall’aristocrazia...” (118; ellipses by Rosà). Rosà seems to be suggesting that the bourgeoisie needs to follow the aristocracy’s example because it is not living as boldly as it could. Despite Rosà’s declaration that she does not want to praise one social class at the expense of another, she does so nevertheless and uses her own privileged social class to denounce the Italian bourgeoisie.

In the last section of the article, Rosà conflates bourgeois women and their homes, consistently describing both in terms of lack and negation. For example, Rosà states “Se vi sono iniziative di beneficenza in grande stile, ornate da qualche trovata geniale di organizzazione che dà valore artistico alla festa: di solito non sono le donne della borghesia che ne hanno il merito” (118-9). Further using negations, Rosà writes that “Se vi è qualche avvenimento mondano che sappia radunare nel suo sfarzo tutti gli elementi eccentrici dell’epoca... non è la casa borghese che ne è il palcoscenico” (119). The middle class women and their beloved homes (for Rosà defines the *trinità* of the *borghesia* as “la casa—i figli—gli affari” (118)) are spoken of only in terms of what they cannot do.

These negative assertions contrast not only with the sympathetic way in which the middle class men are described, but also with the way in which the aristocratic woman is defined in terms of what she can do, not in terms of what she cannot. For example, Rosà writes “Chi sa trovare nuove linee di stilizzazione anatomico nella moda, che si sta allargando sempre di più verso l’Arte, trasformando il corpo femminile, il suo vestiario e gli oggetti che lo circondano, in centri di nuovi valori decorativi—è la donna dell’aristocrazia perché ha del coraggio novatore” (119). Notably, *la donna aristocratica* is praised for innovation in stereotypical feminine work such as fashion and interior design. In Rosà’s descriptions of both men and women, she consistently maintains stereotypes, for men are interested in money and careers and women are associated with the house, parties, fashion, etc. Mosco notes that despite Rosà’s predominant profeminist stance in many of her articles in *L’Italia futurista*, there are other works of hers in which “il maschile è ancora considerato modello di riferimento e valore superiore” (120). “Ricevimento” would thus be an example of one of Rosà’s non-profeminist works. At the end of the article Rosà summons all the women of Italy, not the men, to make the bourgeoisie better, writing “A voi, donne italiane, il creare una nuova borghesia intelligente, disinvolta, raffinata—e

non più noiosa” (119). Rosà only holds women accountable for social change implying that they are, in large part, to blame for the bourgeoisie’s conditions. Going on the premise that Rosà wants to encourage the bourgeoisie to change so that Italy can change, then Rosà sees Italian women as responsible for Italy’s provincialism and backwardness.

The seeds for “Ricevimento— thè—signore—nessun uomo” lie in “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa” because the “free-word” composition brings up similar gender and class themes and also integrates some of the article’s specific sentences. The title of the “free-word” composition states that there is “nessun uomo,” therefore Rosà excludes men from her critique, similar to the way in which she withholds them from her call to arms at the end of “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa.” In her article, Rosà criticizes the bourgeois women directly claiming that “Vi sono donne borghesi, che portano collane di perle di centomila franchi al collo e che vogliono potere indugiare a lungo sul tema ‘e dove è stato in villeggiatura quest’anno?’ ‘E come stanno i suoi bambini?’” (119). Wearing expensive necklaces and discussing vacations and children reveal an emptiness and superficiality of the *alta borghesia*. Notably, Rosà includes these very same threads of conversation in “Ricevimento” in the first tentacle structure where she has penned “villeggiature care” and “e come stanno i suoi bambini?” Rosà suggests that these topics of conversation are banal and that in changing these standard topics of women’s conversations the middle class can be transformed. Although the aristocratic preference is not made explicit in “Ricevimento” as it is in “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa,” Rosà may allude to her own privileged aristocratic position when she distances herself spatially from the other women in the “free-word” piece. Rosà’s article in *L’Italia futurista* lays out her agenda for a bourgeois class renovation while “Ricevimento” focuses specifically on the problem that Rosà sees with middle class women.

The tentacle cluster in the upper left hand side of “Ricevimento” represents typical “women’s things” (see fig. 55). The fragments of conversation concentrate on fashion, giving birth, children, husbands, vacations, etc. Above the first line on the right, there are the words “sarte ultimi modelli caro [cari] prezzi,” and underneath this line Rosà writes “però carini.” Here, Rosà draws attention to the bourgeois mentality that pays close attention to the way money is spent. On top of the second line to the right, “incinta partorire operazione” is written, and underneath it Rosà declares “ahimé destino della donna.” The latter line suggests a complacency regarding motherhood and the former recalls the physical sacrifices women have to make to become mothers. At the end of the first line the word “bambini” emerges with a question mark. Although thematically this word goes along with the rest of the ones on this tentacle, it is actually part of the question “E come stanno i suoi bambini?” that Rosà has scripted at the base of the entire cluster, as if to tie all the pieces together. Importantly, this is the same question Rosà mentions in “Perché la borghesia sia noiosa,” proving that the two pieces are intertextually related. The third line to the right is difficult to decipher. Above the curved line, Rosà has transcribed “infamia,” followed by something else that I am, unfortunately, unable to make out. Below this line, however, “non si sa come fare” comes into view. The fourth line is also challenging to decode, but it seems Rosà recalls the vacation topic she lamented in her article and has transcribed “villeggiature care” along with another word which appears to be “bene” or perhaps “bar.” Below this line, there is a word resembling “monete.” The final line contains “mariti poverini buoni” and beneath it, “debbo andare a casa.” Bringing these five lines of conversation to a close, there are five triangles at the end of each line. The outer two triangles are

also attached to arrows leading toward the central table with refreshments, creating an upside down bottle figure in which Rosà has written and underlined twice the word “noia,” recalling the title of her article “Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa” and expressing her boredom with these types of conversations, just as a misogynist would.¹⁴⁰ In this grouping of conversation fragments, Rosà records the middle class women’s most stereotypical concerns: family, vacation, and money.

Separated from the previous cluster and positioned in the upper right hand corner and labeled by the word “impertinenza,” there is the second cluster. The word “impertinenza” could refer to the cluster to the right because it records conversations in which women are gossiping. Instead of marking this group with triangles, Rosà distinguishes this cluster with three stars that are attached to a spiraled circle and the word “maldicenza” (see fig. 56). Going outward from the circle that spirals inward, two arrows point to the table; one is labeled “curiosità” and the other “golosità,” indicating women’s prying into the lives of others and their overeating. The first line on the left hand side is framed by a conversation fragment alluding to gossip. It appears that one woman says “ho sentito dire anche” and another replies “lei? È proprio vero.” The second line continues this conversation, as above it Rosà has provocatively written “un amante? Ne ha dieci” and below it “non si dice ancora fra altro.” The conversations fragments around the third tentacle run together and seem to express “Lei, signora, sarà certamente bene informata.” The topic of conversation in this cluster is distinct from the previous one and is more uniform because all the snippets of conversation are typical of gossip. In line with a long-standing misogynist topos about women’s gossiping and idle chatter, Rosà suggests that women bond together by speaking poorly about others and alludes that they can be callous and mean.

In the third cluster, positioned on the lower right-hand side of the piece, Rosà records the conversation of women who are suffragettes and/or feminists (see fig. 57). There are four undulating lines that make up this cluster and they are brought together by three circles and three squares. In the first line to the right, Rosà has penned “noi intellettuale [intellettuali].” This fragment is followed by a word written in letters so small that it is impossible to make out, followed by “non ammettiamo.” Below the line Rosà has also transcribed an equally hard to read line that goes along the lines of “certe cose—? ?—severi!” Due to the difficulty in deciphering the handwriting, it is impossible to grasp the true sense of these words. The next two lines deal with another misogynistic and stereotypical classification of women’s conversations: women’s complaints about men when they gossip together. One line records “gli uomini sono bestie,” and “puramente materiali.” The other states: “Dico e ripeto: bestia” and “però.” From a typical misogynist’s point of view, all women who seek to obtain rights, such as suffragettes or feminists, automatically scorn men and Rosà mobilizes this misogynist topos in this cluster. The last line of the cluster is an allusion to female suffragettes when Rosà writes “Ah! quando finalmente otteremo.” This cluster depicts women who are socially and politically active, and different from the other groups, may not blindly follow dominant male culture. Rosà nonetheless makes them the target of her disdain as she, like her male futurist counterparts, also takes up the rhetoric of misogyny. In fact, around this group of tentacles, Rosà has penned “fluidi ostili,” implying that their negative energy contaminates their environment.

¹⁴⁰ Larkin gives her interpretation of Rosà’s use of the word “noia”: “Here (in *Non c’è che te!*), as in ‘Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa,’ to be ‘boring’ means to be unaware of what Rosà calls the ‘purely cerebral’ world that pulsates underneath the surface of the city depicted in prose poem ‘Moltitudine’” (101).

These three types of conversations at an afternoon tea represent a slice of women's society in the early twentieth century. Rosà's "free-word" composition is a critique of an all-female bourgeois society, for as the title claims, there is "nessun uomo." Remarkably, Rosà's rant is against women and not men. She takes up a misogynist stance by illustrating stereotypical conversations and behavior that take place among women when they are together and judges them negatively. This portrayal diminishes the power of women, especially groups of women. I would like to suggest that a possible reason for which Rosà speaks from a misogynist point of view is in order to differentiate herself from other women, especially in terms of class. In so doing, Rosà could be more accepted in the eyes of men. In "Ricevimento," in fact, Rosà has marked herself as away from the women in these groups. In the bottom left-hand corner she has labeled a door ("porta") and next to it, an asterisk with the first-person pronoun "io." To differentiate herself, Rosà refers to herself as "io," not by her own name, and she thereby reinserts a tie to the literary first-person that futurism sought to destroy. "Ricevimento" is not an autobiographical work, in that she is not retelling her story, yet she tells the story of herself against the background of a group of women she finds repugnant. To position herself within this piece (away from the women) and through the first-person pronoun signifies a verbal and visual desire to be marked as Other, and perhaps as a man. Rosà explains her positioning by the exit in writing "mi pare che ne ho abbastanza." Rosà can no longer handle being around these groups of middle class women that discuss typical women things, women's rights or that gossip and bash men. Therefore, she distinguishes herself spatially from the groups of women in the piece.

If Rosà positioning suggests that she is about to inhabit a "room of her own," far away from the stereotypical bourgeois women, then what space is she to occupy? In *Fascist Virilities*, Spackman has shown how a common strategy of women is to employ the rhetoric of virility to erase sexual difference and become "honorary men."¹⁴¹ Spackman explains: "Beyond their sex, but still firmly implanted within phallogocentric discourse, for their suggestion is that the only subject is a virile one and that equality can be attained only at the price of the erasure of sexual difference" (38). In becoming "men," women automatically differentiate themselves from other women. What Rosà does in "Ricevimento" is similar, yet different. Rosà does not differentiate herself by erasing her sex and becoming a man. Instead, Rosà deploys class to separate herself from other women and misogynist topoi to show that she can think "like a man." Rosà becomes an "exceptional woman" even though she does not erase her sex in order to do so. These two factors, in any case, position her outside of the bourgeoisie and outside of the group of women, inferring, nevertheless that she belongs with another group, perhaps a group of men.

Handwriting, a main feature of "Ricevimento," also distinguishes Rosà. Different handwriting styles were taught throughout Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Italy, for example, the ronde and English scripts were commonly taught to school aged children (see fig. 58). In Austria, Rosà's home country, as in Germany, however, the Gothic script prevailed and therefore Rosà's handwriting looks different from the handwriting of native Italians (see fig. 59). Furthermore, as handwriting historian Rosemary Sassoon remarks

¹⁴¹ Spackman speaks of this strategy in the work of Valentine de Saint Point, the first woman futurist. In discussing de Saint Point's "Manifeste de la femme futuriste" (1912), she notes that de Saint Point promotes "a mixing and matching of gender and sex that makes possibile a virilization of women" (37) and further explains that "while Marinetti argued that men had become too feminine and women too masculine, de Saint Point finds women not virile enough..." (38).

“Differences in education and social standing... have also been reflected in written forms and ensured variety” (161). As such, Rosà’s handwriting may have also pointed to her aristocratic social class. Notably, whether intentionally or not, the words of the women that Rosà transcribes are much more difficult to read than the words she uses to label and judge the women. For example, the words that are placed outside of the clusters, such as “Noia sbadigli repressi,” “brutto quadro di famiglia,” “Fluidi ostili,” “Impertinenza,” “Noia,” “golosità,” “curiosità,” “maldicenza” and “io, mi pare che ne ho abbastanza,” are all written in larger handwriting that is easier to read than the small words that surround the tentacles. This change in handwriting might suggest that Rosà makes her positioning in the piece and her judgments of the women’s discussion decipherable, whereas she could be making the words of the other women difficult to decode in order to further differentiate her words and ideas from theirs. So difficult to read, in fact, are Rosà’s *parole in libertà*, that declaiming them, a common futurist practice, especially at the *serate futuriste*, would have been almost impossible. The words that make up the “free-word” composition are spatially contained in a room which has a door, as if to suggest that these women’s words should be confined and should not come out. Rosà’s handwriting both distinguishes her from others and renders their words hard to decipher and to read.

“Ricevimento” presents itself as an attack on female bourgeois culture and on how women in this social class relate to each other. Rosà takes up misogyny and recreates stereotypical representations of women in order to isolate and differentiate herself from other women. It is always in relation to this social class of women that Rosà asserts her own individuality and difference. Although Rosà is known as one of the most profeminist of all the women futurists, her “free-word” composition, in fact, functions as a platform to separate herself from other women visually, verbally, socially, and graphically through her handwriting. Mosco claims that “Per essere integrate nell’universo futurista c’è un’unica redenzione: virilizzarsi e differenziarsi dalle altre donne, ovviamente non futuriste” (126). Thus, Rosà may distinguish herself from other women in “Ricevimento” in order to blend in more with the futurists, even if she does so by employing the first person subject and using handwriting instead of typography. This example of a “free-word” composition to assert oneself in relation to other women is not unique. As we saw in “Spicologia di 1 uomo,” Benedetta also makes reference to herself in comparison to other women when she signs her “free-word” poem “Benedetta fra le donne.” Furthermore, Cangiullo seeks to initiate female rivalry by elevating Marietta Angelini against popular women writers. Female “words-in-freedom” may therefore also function as a tool for asserting one’s subjectivity, in relation not only to men, but perhaps principally in relation to other women.

While there were numerous women who contributed to futurism and found in it a way to express themselves, the women of futurism never joined forces and united as a group. In contrast, the men of futurism were often unified. They collaborated to write manifestoes, organize futurist *serate*, and more. The first-person plural subject pronoun “noi” that is ubiquitous in the manifestoes (even in the “Fondazione e manifesto del Futurismo” of 1909, before Marinetti had gathered other futurist cohorts) is not to be found in women’s futurist production. Women rarely signed futurist manifestoes and many were not considered integral to the movement.¹⁴² Without the possibility to write from the point of view of a “noi,” the first-

¹⁴² This is not the case of Maria Ginanni, however, who acted as the editor of *L’Italia futurista* during the war. Additionally, Benedetta signed the manifesto of *aeropittura* along with other (male) futurists, for example.

person subject position could have been necessary for futurist women. They may not have employed the traditional literary “I” of autobiography, but they did find, through handwriting, another way of leaving their mark, however problematically

Chapter IV: Appropriating the Abstract: Benedetta's *Le forze umane* and Mondrian's Neoplasticism¹⁴³

The year 1924 marks Benedetta Cappa Marinetti's official entrance into futurism. Just one year after her marriage to F.T. Marinetti, her husband publicly presented her novel *Le forze umane: romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche* at the Sorbonne in Paris. In that same year, Cappa Marinetti, who penned her name simply Benedetta, participated in the futurist congress in Milan and produced her first futurist paintings *Luce + rumori di treno notturno* and *Velocità di motoscafo*.¹⁴⁴ Although her privileged entrance was unique, she was, as we have seen, not the first woman to gain access to the movement. Benedetta joined the ranks of other women who had already identified themselves with futurism, such as Valentine de Saint Point, Enif Robert, Rosa Rosà, and Maria Ginanni, to name just a few. Regardless of this already notable female presence, Benedetta, especially with her novel, *Le forze umane*, stands apart from them, their work, and the futurist canon.

Le forze umane is singular within the futurist corpus for the ways in which it goes against key tenets of futurism and experiments with literature in a new way. At the same time, it is an elusive and difficult text. The novel is a first-person *Künstlerroman* divided into three parts, and is, to a certain extent, a concealed autobiography.¹⁴⁵ It traces the spiritual, emotional, and artistic development of Luciana, the protagonist. Such a genre requires the employment of the abolished literary "I." Furthermore, the familial, spiritual, and amorous themes complicate futurism's original premises of misogyny, glorification of war, and the disapproval of love and family. Although it is a personal story, the dense philosophical, scientific, and religious lexicons that Benedetta utilizes make the text esoteric and opaque.

What most notably makes *Le forze umane* stand out, however, are the black and white abstract drawings to which the text is juxtaposed, and which Benedetta calls "sintesi grafiche." These drawings share the titles of the chapters and are indeed perplexing (see figures 60-66). In the manifesto-epilogue of the novel, Benedetta explains her *sintesi grafiche*:

Sono l'espressione diretta delle forze dell'universo senza nessuna preoccupazione plastica. Pubblicai una prima sintesi grafica ne la rivista Dinamo (1919). Tentativi simili furono chiamati precipitati lirici da Giuseppe Steiner, o stati d'animo o

¹⁴³ A shorter version of this chapter was previously published as an article in *Annali d'Italianistica*, see Lasker-Ferretti. I would like to thank the editor of *Annali d'Italianistica*, Dino Cervigni, for allowing me to republish my work in this dissertation.

¹⁴⁴ As discussed in chapter three, in 1919, Benedetta created a *parole in libertà* composition, "Spicologia (sic) di 1 uomo" which was published in the futurist journal *Dinamo*. From 1924 on, Benedetta flourished in the futurist environment: she produced numerous paintings, including the large frescoes at the Palazzo delle Poste in Palermo, signed the manifesto of *Aeropittura*, designed theatrical sets, gave fascist propaganda talks, and wrote two other novels, *Viaggio di Gararà: romanzo cosmico per teatro* (1931) and *Astra e il sottomarino: vita trasognata* (1935). In 1944, after the death of her husband, Benedetta ceased all creative work. She dedicated herself instead to honoring futurism and saving its documents and artifacts for future generations. She died in 1977.

¹⁴⁵ Other critics have called the novel a *Bildungsroman*, but I see it rather as a *Künstlerroman* because the end of the text, especially the last chapter of Part II, "L'essenza e la sua attuazione immediata: l'arte," alludes to the protagonist having become an artist. The parallels between Benedetta's life and that of the protagonist which make the text a veiled autobiography include: both the protagonist's and Benedetta's mother were painters, both of their fathers go to war and come back mentally ill and eventually die in a hospital. Additionally, Benedetta and her protagonist also have four male siblings and both women taught school children for a short period of time.

pitture medianiche dai paroliberi come Buzzi, Rognoni, Soggetti; o dai pittori come Rougena Zàtkova, e sono state considerate come sviluppi del paroliberismo e straripamenti della pittura. (*I tre romanzi* 147)¹⁴⁶

In this passage, Benedetta not only offers us an explanation of her *sintesi grafiche*, but also of her “words-in-freedom” composition, “Spicologia di 1 uomo.” Benedetta clarifies that her first futurist work, was not an example of “words-in-freedom,” but of a “graphic synthesis.” The published version of “Spicologia” labeled Benedetta (without her consent) as a “parolibera futurista,” and here, five years later, Benedetta corrects this error, defining her work in her own terms. Secondly, Benedetta states a divergence from *paroliberismo* as she explains that her *sintesi grafiche* and the work of others constitute “sviluppi del paroliberismo.” Benedetta indicates that *sintesi grafiche*, different from *parole in libertà*, are more directly tied to “le forze dell’universo,” and that “senza nessuna preoccupazione plastica” they do not employ typography. Instead, Benedetta intimates that they are hand-drawn and spontaneously made. Importantly, Benedetta considers her work, and that of others, as surpassing the popular futurist practice of *paroliberismo*. Differing from *parole in libertà*, Benedetta’s *sintesi grafiche* are unique because they are an integral part of her novel and posit a new relationship between word and image that makes the word as important as the image. Because of the many futurist idiosyncrasies and singularities in *Le forze umane*, such as her *sintesi grafiche*, critics and readers alike have tended to shy away from Benedetta’s first novel, even though it is a rich narrative that opens itself up to numerous fields of study.

In the last fifteen years, a number of scholars have taken an interest in Benedetta’s oeuvre. Her position as Marinetti’s wife and her vast and various works have certainly led to her recuperation as *la prima donna del futurismo*. Art historians were the first to recuperate Benedetta’s work.¹⁴⁷ In 1998, there were two exhibitions that focused on Benedetta, one in the United States, and the other in Italy. The American exhibit traveled from the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia to the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis. The exhibition’s catalogue, *La futurista: Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, is one of the few initial sources in English on Benedetta. Curator Anna Maria Ruta organized the Italian exhibit in Palermo, and edited *Fughe e ritorni presenze futuristiche in Sicilia: Benedetta*, another valuable resource in Benedetta criticism. While these exhibits tended to focus on her artistic oeuvre, they also include essays from literary critics and other scholars in their exhibition catalogue. Cinzia Sartini Blum, Lia Giachero, Simona Cigliana, Lucia Re and Aldo Mastropasqua, for example, have played a part in Benedetta’s literary revival by contributing brief articles about her novels to the exhibition catalogues.

On the literary front, in the same year as the exhibitions, The Dell’Altana Publishing Company reprinted Benedetta’s three novels, *I tre romanzi*, in one volume with a preface written by Simona Cigliana. Despite these contributions, literary critics lag behind art historians in their recuperation of Benedetta, even though she produced three experimental novels, which are all

¹⁴⁶ All quotes from *Le forze umane* come from the original 1924 publication, except when I have parenthetically noted the republished version of Benedetta’s three novels, *I tre romanzi*, as I have here.

¹⁴⁷ See Vergine 139-42; Zoccoli, *Queen of Futurism, L’incantesimo della luce*; Ruta; Giachero, “...Grands étalages” and “Mani palpatrici d’orizzonti;” Conaty, “Benedetta Cappa Marinetti,” “Benedetta’s Monument to Futurism & Fascism,” and *Italian Futurism*, Panzera, *Donna Generatrice* and “La futurista;” Poggi, *Inventing Futurism* 260-65.

very different from one another.¹⁴⁸ Each of Benedetta's novels needs more scholarly attention, but only in recuperating and analyzing Benedetta's first literary work, *Le forze umane*, can one begin to build a base from which to discuss her subsequent novels.

Le forze is an elusive and difficult text. Benedetta employs a dense philosophical and scientific lexicon that cannot be easily understood, and as a result, obscures the text. Furthermore, the plot, although linear, is made unstable due to the word-image relationship, and the diverse narrative styles the text features. Even though *Le forze* is a personal story, the reader struggles to identify with the protagonist, Luciana, whose difficult jargon and self-absorbed states render her inaccessible.¹⁴⁹ These factors have certainly caused critics and readers alike to shy away from Benedetta's first novel despite the numerous critical areas of study in which it could be analyzed. To put it simply, *Le forze* perplexes its readers.

Critics have had difficulty explaining and finding a place for *Le forze umane* in the futurist canon. In *Opera letteraria di Benedetta*, one of the few commentaries on Benedetta's entire literary corpus, the Italian philosopher-critic Francesco Orestano claims that "l'appartenenza di Benedetta al Futurismo va intesa con molti grani di sale" (3). For Orestano, Benedetta was already culturally formed by the time she joined futurism and her adherence to the movement did not greatly influence her literary production. Orestano believes that her first novel highlights particularly well her "preformazione" and calls it a "documento saliente della preformazione di Benedetta scrittrice..." (4). Although he claims that Benedetta's work is not truly futurist, he does not explain who or what could have been so influential in Benedetta's development as to make her insensitive to the influence of futurism. Orestano does not stand alone in pointing out Benedetta's divergence; in the first reviews of *Le forze umane*, Benedetta's contemporaries consistently question her novel's allegiance to futurism.

A collection of all the initial reviews of *Le forze umane* can be found in Benedetta's *librone*, a scrapbook in which she conserved articles written about her and her work, located at the Getty Research Library in Los Angeles.¹⁵⁰ Many of these articles illustrate the critics' reluctance to associate the novel with futurism.¹⁵¹ For example, in an unidentified article in the *librone*, one author asks: "Romanzo futurista? Non direi. Troppo vasto e profondo palpito d'umanità è nelle parole della donna, troppa tenerezza trema nel suo cuore forte, e di troppa pena e di troppa gioia sono tormentati i suoi sogni." In another review from the *librone*, dated August 1924, in *I libri del giorno*, Enrico Piceni writes: "Vorrebbe essere, questo di Benedetta, un libro futurista Che Benedetta possieda un fresco e vigoroso temperamento di scrittrice e che in lei gli atteggiamenti antitradizionali e futuristici siano solo una voluta e non necessaria, nel fondo,

¹⁴⁸ *Viaggio di Gararà: romanzo cosmico per teatro* tells the story of a female dwarf who goes through fantastical realms to overcome positivism. As the title indicates, it was also meant to be performed in the theater. *Astra e il sottomarino: vita trasognata*, is composed of dreams and mimics surrealist narratives. Both can be considered part of the fantastic genre.

¹⁴⁹ Simona Cigliana describes the lexicon interestingly. She writes that Benedetta "Spinta dalle proprie esigenze espressive e dall'urgenza dei propri contenuti, avverte la necessità di rimodellare il genere romanzo in una nuova forma, di plasmare il periodo secondo i propri ritmi immaginativi e di piegare il lessico ad una personale semantica" ("Il seme e la rosa" 17).

¹⁵⁰ I would like to thank the Getty Research Library for allowing me to consult the papers of F.T. Marinetti and Benedetta Cappa Marinetti.

¹⁵¹ In some cases it is impossible to determine the titles, dates, page numbers, and authors of the articles because they were cut out from the newspapers in which they were printed. Bibliographic information on the *librone* is listed under Benedetta in the bibliography.

non sentita bizzarria, ha notato anche un altro critico qualche tempo fa . . . ed è infatti, cosa evidente.” And in yet another review preserved in the *librone*, Sebastiano Sani writes: “Futurismo qui, me ne dispiace assai, se l’autrice ci teneva a mettercene, non ne trovo: ma dell’ingegno della originalità dello stile, anche, sissignori, ce n’è a dovizia.” It might be said that this general consensus on Benedetta’s first novel represents an unwillingness to accept a woman’s work as part of the futurist canon, as much as it reveals futurism’s reluctance to acknowledge other versions of itself. In fact, I claim that *Le forze umane* posits an account of futurism that is drawn intertextually from a non-futurist source.

In recent years, the criticism of the novel has been characterized by general overviews. Of the few literary critics who have studied Benedetta’s literary works, only some have actually analyzed *Le forze*. Faced with the difficult task of re-establishing Benedetta within the futurist canon, scholars have had to either write articles in which all three of her novels are generally addressed, or brief essays on specific novels for art exhibition catalogues. While these types of commentaries are fruitful in generating interest in Benedetta’s work, they do not go deep enough below the surface of the novel to question it, problematize it, and truly analyze it. Nonetheless, contemporary literary critics have started to raise key questions about *Le forze*.

Present-day critics of *Le forze*, such as Salaris, Giachero, Mastropasqua, Cigliana, and Re have focused on three main aspects of the text: the word-image relationship, the reason for which Benedetta defines her novel abstract, and the dialectical motion on which the text is seemingly based.¹⁵² Giachero, for example, believes that the inclusion of the *sintesi grafiche* is one way in which the novel may be considered abstract. She also believes that the novel is *astratto* because Benedetta seemingly abstracts scenes by first describing them at a personal level, and then objectifying them and making them universal (“Senza preoccupazione plastica” 45-58). Mastropasqua argues that the *sintesi grafiche* are responsible for “sintetizzare concettualmente il procedimento di astrazione universalizzante” (36). Re, however, believes that the *sintesi grafiche* are intentionally puzzling. She claims that they “work in several different ways, but all share an intentionally questioning, riddlelike structure in the relationship between written language and the drawn image” (“Impure Abstraction” 43). Re further posits that in *Le forze*, Benedetta asserts a kind of female abstraction that promotes the pleasure of difference.

The economy of *Le forze* values contrasts. Scholars consistently observe the dialectical character of the text, but only a few have tried to account for the novel’s intricate formal and thematic elements. Salaris, for example, notes that the novel “è una storia di grandi conflitti psicologici. . . . Ma nello scontro tra istinto e ragione Benedetta . . . finirà per additare la risoluzione di ogni contrasto proprio nella funzione dell’arte in quanto atto creativo capace di ricondurre in unità gli opposti” (“I romanzi di Benedetta” 62). Giachero further writes “*Le forze umane* è interamente giocato su un doppio binario” (“Senza preoccupazione plastica” 45-48). Re notes that “The novel is structured to produce a montagelike effect . . . through the juxtaposition of contrasting short sequences or images to evoke radically different moods, and to create an effect of dialectical tension or conflict” (“Impure Abstraction” 37). In the novel, Cigliana sees a dominant struggle between good and evil in the novel and writes of a

¹⁵² For criticism on Benedetta, see Sanzin; Orestano; Ruta; Zoccoli; Bentivoglio and Zoccoli; Poggi, “The Paradox;” Blum, “Benedetta’s Empathic Journey;” Giachero; Garbin; Berghaus, “Volte-Face;” Conaty; Larkin; Mastropasqua; Contarini; Cigliana, “Il seme e la rosa” and “Benedetta e la forma dei sentimenti;” Panzera; Salaris, “I tre romanzi” and “Benedetta fra le donne;” Re, “Impure Abstraction” and “Fascist Theories.”

“contrapposizione netta, quasi manichea, tra Bene e Male, tra spirito e materia . . .” (“Il seme e la rosa” 21). Even with these insights at hand, one cannot explain the purpose of the dialectic in *Le forze*. The critics gravitate toward the same questions, yet do not provide sufficient answers. The inability to find solid answers to *Le forze*’s most obvious patterns indicates a lacuna.

Towards a New Theory

The atypical characteristics of the novel make critics grasp at intertextual straws, for—as Michael Riffaterre claims in speaking of intertextuality, “The text’s ungrammaticality is but a sign of grammaticality elsewhere, its significance a reference of meaning elsewhere” (“Syllepsis” 627). In other words, that which is initially incomprehensible in a literary work can be the sign of an intertext.¹⁵³ According to Riffaterre, only when we presume that a text is transforming an underlying text or semiotic system can we begin to make sense of its ambiguities. Riffaterre’s formulation of intertextuality invites us to look at *Le forze umane* not simply as a literary product that does not fit within the futurist oeuvre, but rather as a text whose puzzling aspects can be resolved through another text. Hence, the difficulties that futurist scholars have consistently faced in interpreting and situating *Le forze umane* could stem from a missing intertext.

In their criticism of the novel, both Giachero and Re suggest two different intertexts in passing. Giachero points to Henri Bergson’s 1896 *Matter and Memory* and claims that the novel must be “una rimediazione sulla filosofia di Bergson...” (“Senza preoccupazione plastica” 48). Giachero bases her scant intertextual reading on common themes and on the fact that Marinetti mentioned having discussed Bergson’s book with Benedetta in his *Taccuini* (48). Without textual proof, however, *Matter and Memory* does not seem to be a likely intertext. Re, on the other hand, briefly, yet concretely, connects a part of *Le forze umane* to a dialogue written by Dutch abstract artist Piet Mondrian. In her essay “Impure Abstraction: Benedetta as Visual Artist and Novelist,” Re argues that the first of two Socratic dialogues in the novel is “almost certainly a response to another famous Socratic dialogue on abstraction, Mondrian’s *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality* (1919-1920); we do not know if Benedetta was familiar with it” (37).

In her analysis of this connection, Re nevertheless pits Mondrian against Benedetta. Re claims that Mondrian’s dialogue (and theory of abstraction) “advocates the transcendence of natural reality and corporeality in the search for immutable truth and an unchangeable essence . . .” (“Impure Abstraction” 37). In contrast, according to Re, Benedetta, in her dialogue “expresses the need for a unity of the abstract and the concrete, a kind of abstraction that, in its yearning for purity and absolute harmony, may still engage the forms of the real, of perception of the body, and of temporality, however transformed and transfigured” (“Impure Abstraction” 37-39). I would like to suggest that Mondrian’s theory of abstraction is more similar to Benedetta’s than Re posits. Mondrian initially called his theory of abstraction, neoplasticism, “abstract-real” because it was based on the balanced relationship of abstraction and reality. Neoplasticism maintains that abstraction comes about, not through transcendence, but through the Hegelian dialectic which reconciles contrasting elements, including, in this case, the opposition between the corporeal and the spiritual. Mondrian explains that there is no transcendence in the neoplastic

¹⁵³ For more on Riffaterrian intertextuality, see his *Semiotics of Poetry*, “Syllepsis,” and “Intertextual Representation.” See Allen for a general survey of different theories of intertextuality, including Riffaterre’s.

artist and states “the *artist*, because he unites inward and outward, always remains *human* and cannot completely transcend the subjective” (“The New Plastic in Painting” 52; italics by Mondrian). Mondrian acknowledges, therefore, that his philosophy of abstraction is grounded in reality and humanity—exactly like the type of abstraction Re claims that Benedetta advances in *Le forze umane*. Thus, Benedetta’s dialogue can be seen not only as a “response” to Mondrian, but also as a reproduction of neoplasticism.

I am indebted to Re for having astutely made the correlation between the dialogue of the novel and the Dutch abstract painter’s dialogue. However, *Le forze umane* is not limited to this single intertextual connection, but rather engages in a more complex intertextual system of linkages. I align Benedetta with Mondrian and I argue that several of Mondrian’s writings on abstraction serve as intertexts to *Le forze umane*, not only *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality*. All but one of these intertexts were published in the Dutch avant-garde journal *De Stijl* between 1917 and 1921. The writings include the dense treatise “De nieuwe beelding in de schilderkunst” (“The New Plastic in Painting”) (1917); two Socratic dialogues: “Dialogo over de nieuwe beelding” (“Dialogue on the New Plastic”) (1919), “Natuurlijke en abstracte realiteit. Trialoog” (“Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: A Trialogue”) (1919-1920); and a pamphlet in French, *Le Néo-Plasticisme: Principe général de l’équivalence plastique* (*Neoplasticism: The General Principle of Plastic Equivalence*) (1921).¹⁵⁴

All literature can be considered intertextual, whether or not there is a specific intertext, because texts consistently draw upon others—unconsciously or not. However, there are certain types of intertextuality, such as appropriation, where knowing the intertext becomes essential to understanding the text at hand. Appropriation, a drawn-out, covert intertextual engagement, can involve a shift in medium, and is often shaped by different ideological means than those of the original text.¹⁵⁵ Appropriation can expand a text in a new and diverse way. In fact, Benedetta puts Mondrian’s art theory into literary practice by making the protagonist’s development that of a neoplastic artist, and the structure of *Le forze umane*, a formal, literary example of neoplasticism. Benedetta reinterprets and recreates Mondrian’s theory of abstraction for futurism in order to change key tenets of the movement by making it more spiritual and more accepting of love and women. In this chapter, I make the case for Benedetta’s appropriation of Mondrian’s neoplasticism both structurally and thematically in *Le forze umane*.

Before outlining Mondrian’s neoplasticism, which is fundamental to understanding *Le forze umane*, I wish to posit briefly how and why Benedetta could have been in contact with Mondrian’s writings. In 1917, Mondrian joined Theo van Doesburg and other Dutch artists to found *De Stijl*. Its publication established a new avant-garde movement and a style that would later be associated with Dutch modernism. Like most avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century, the group generated a manifesto and published it in *De Stijl* in 1918. The group’s credo was international in scope. They wished to express universal spirituality and harmony in art and Mondrian’s writings provided the theoretical foundation for the group. In 1920, van Doesburg, the ambassador and editor-in-chief of *De Stijl*, traveled extensively

¹⁵⁴ Even though the pamphlet was published in 1921 by the Galerie de l’Effort Moderne, Holtzman and James claim that it “was written mainly during the first half of 1920” (132). All of Mondrian’s writings have been translated into English and can be found in *The New Art — The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*. All of my quotations come from this volume; therefore, I will refer to Mondrian’s individual writings by their English names in this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ For more on appropriation, see Sanders.

throughout Europe to promote the periodical, and during this trip, he made contact with Italian artists (Jaffé 18).¹⁵⁶ Benedetta studied painting with the futurist artist Giacomo Balla, and regularly frequented his famous atelier in Rome. It is certainly possible that she learned of Mondrian or had access to his writings through him. If not through Balla, then perhaps Marinetti might have been involved in introducing Benedetta to Mondrian's writings because he was in contact with the *De Stijl* group. For example, in a letter from 1924, van Doesburg thanks Marinetti for his interest in neoplasticism and expresses his desire to meet and discuss several things with him on his next trip to Paris.¹⁵⁷ In *The New Art — The New Life*, editors and translators Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James claim that Mondrian was interested in futurism and that his ideas on literature were also influenced by it (132). They speculate that Mondrian, van Doesburg, and Marinetti had a “friendly meeting” around 1920 and note that Marinetti had given Mondrian an inscribed copy of his *Les mots en liberté futuriste* (124). Furthermore, Mondrian openly acknowledged the futurists in his writings: in the treatise and pamphlet, as well as in the 1921 essay entitled “The Manifestation of Neoplasticism in Music and the Italian futurists’ *Bruiteurs*.” Mondrian did not completely agree with the futurists, but he approved of them and lauded their attempts in advancing the arts. Such a model would have certainly appealed to Benedetta because it endorsed futurism, while at the same time it offered an alternative to it. Considering the evidence that the futurists knew of Mondrian and vice-versa, an intertextual reading of *Le forze umane* in relation to Mondrian's writings is indeed conceivable.

I wish to first examine two passages as proof of this intertextual relation. In the second section of Mondrian's influential 1917 treatise “The New Plastic in Painting,” he discusses the culture which produces his model of abstraction:

The new culture will be that of the mature individual; once matured, the *individual* will be open to the universal and will tend more and more to unite *with* it. The time is approaching when the majority of individuals will be capable of this. Until now periods of culture arose when a particular individual (above and beyond the people) awakened the universal in the masses. Initiates, saints, deities brought the people, as if from without, to recognize and to feel the universal; and thus to the concept of a pure style. (34)

Mondrian here prophetically proclaims that one day all men will mystically unite with the universal and will have the power to create his form of abstract art. He also suggests that only certain religious individuals previously possessed a similar power, and that they were able to awaken the universal in humankind. With these salient ideas in mind, I now turn to one of the final passages of *Le forze umane*. The excerpt comes from Benedetta's chapter “L'essenza e la sua attuazione immediata: L'arte.”¹⁵⁸ This section differs from the rest of the novel, for Benedetta does away with the protagonist, Luciana, and instead lets her own authorial voice

¹⁵⁶ See Jaffé for more on the influence and promotion of *De Stijl* in Europe.

¹⁵⁷ This letter was on display at the 2009 exhibit *Futurismo=F.T. Marinetti* at the Fondazione Stelline in Milan and it comes from a private collection.

¹⁵⁸ Simona Cigliana argues that the final chapter of the novel resembles a futurist manifesto. See Cigliana “Il seme e la Rosa” in the volume of Benedetta's reprinted novels (42). Instead, Re argues that the entire novel is Benedetta's manifesto. See “Impure Abstraction: Benedetta as Visual Artist and Novelist” (37).

come through, and speaks specifically about futurism. This passage employs a surprisingly similar vocabulary to Mondrian's:

I particolari di punti e le superfici scompaiono nel fondersi e nel trascendere delle Forze, così che fra la nostra essenza e l'Universo vi è meno densità, e la materia può divenire veggente. Questo affioramento di forze appare già in certi nuclei-individui più potenti quali i *medium*, gli artisti, i santi...Collo sbizzarsi della sensibilità umana si arriverà (e presto) a concretare le Forze fuori di noi, immediatamente, col pensiero, così come oggi il *medium* in *trance* concreta materializzazioni. (144-145)

The tone, style, theme, and syntax of the two passages are so similar that it cannot be mere coincidence. The two texts share a theoretical lexicon, a vocabulary of theosophy, and similar binary constructs (individual/universal).¹⁵⁹ Like Mondrian, Benedetta describes the joining of man with the universal “fra la nostra essenza e l'Universo vi è meno densità...;” adopts a prophetic tone: “si arriverà (e presto) a concretare le Forze;” and attributes a universal power only to three certain types of people: mediums, artists and saints.¹⁶⁰ The tenets of theosophy, a nineteenth and early twentieth-century religious trend founded by Helena P. Blavatsky in 1875, promoted universal brotherhood and embraced esotericism, comparative religions, philosophy and science. The influence of theosophy can be seen in the way in which both passages engage with mysticism and privilege enlightened individuals. Notably, Benedetta differs from Mondrian in equating the power of clairvoyants and artists to that of saints. With this variation and auto-beatifying move, Benedetta, an artist, gives herself pseudo-religious agency.

Benedetta's passage alludes to Mondrian's. She has not quoted it directly, but she has reframed it within a futurist context. For example, the *forze* of which she speaks can refer to the force lines (*linee di forze*) which Boccioni theorized and put into practice in his art to express energy in space and matter.¹⁶¹ Benedetta manipulates Mondrian words, recasting them in futurist light. This gesture signals an act of appropriation, which is indicative of Benedetta's project throughout *Le forze*.

The passages above serve to firmly position Mondrian's writing intertextually in *Le forze*. However, this example is merely one of the ways in which Benedetta engages with Mondrian. Many of Mondrian's early writings on abstraction operate as the intertext of *Le forze* and their influence can be seen throughout the novel. The incomprehensibility that scholars have consistently faced in reading *Le forze* stems precisely from this missing intertext, which in this case is not a canonical literary text, but a series of articles on abstraction. The dialectic, the word-image relationship and Benedetta's definition of the novel as abstract can all be explained in

¹⁵⁹Theosophy was a popular religious trend among the European intelligentsia and some of the futurists. For example, the writers of the Florentine futurist journal *Italia futurista* were particularly interested in it. See Cigliana, *Futurismo esoterico*, and Celant for a discussion of the futurists' interest in esotericism and occultism.

¹⁶⁰ The idea that some enlightened individuals renew and change society is most likely related to theosophy, see Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

¹⁶¹ I learned about the connection between Boccioni's *linee di forze* and the “forze” of which Benedetta mentions in her novel from a copy of Dr. Natasha Chang's unpublished talk, “Speed against the Machine: Futurism and the Female Body in Benedetta Cappa Marinetti's Writing” at Princeton in 2006. I wish to extend my gratitude to Dr. Chang for generously sending me her paper. For examples of Boccioni's paintings see *States of Mind* (1911), *Forces of a Street* (1911), and *Materia* (1912).

light of Mondrian's early writings. Hence, intertextuality, and more specifically, appropriation, provides a useful frame within which to discuss Benedetta's novel.

Le forze umane provides us with a unique example of an Italian literary appropriation of Mondrian's art theory. However, Mondrian himself had, in fact, already suggested the possibility of neoplastic literature in his pamphlet, *Neoplasticism*, after having studied the literary works of futurism and dada (*The New Art* 132). He envisioned that literature, along with the other arts, would eventually evolve into abstraction. In his opinion, though, literature would be the last art form to become abstract because it was not as open to the universal as the other arts. Mondrian believed that literature would have to struggle to break away from the constraints of form in order to reach the universal. In *Neoplasticism* Mondrian writes that "verbal art will have to destroy form *indirectly* The idea that a word signifies in our consciousness will be transformed through *a contrary plastic*, for this alone can free a word of its limitation" (141; italics by Mondrian). Mondrian thus proclaims that neoplastic literature must incorporate the visual arts. In this light, Benedetta's puzzling *sintesi grafiche* can be understood as a "contrary plastic" that breaks literature's form. Mondrian also proposes a wordless literature in saying that "The word could also be represented by image alone" (*Neoplasticism* 141). In fact, the third part of *Le forze umane* illustrates this type of literature without words because it consists of a single drawing. These comments on neoplastic literature, along with the key elements of Mondrian's general theory of abstraction in "The New Plastic," can serve as a guide in interpreting *Le forze umane*.

The writings Mondrian produced between 1918 and 1921 all reiterate the concepts he laid out in the foundational "The New Plastic in Painting." Hence, I will delineate the fundamental ideas Mondrian expressed in this 1917 treatise. More than a mere theory of painting, "The New Plastic" emerges as a guide to a utopian, international, and modern way of life that contrasts with futurism. Mondrian believed that abstract art was the result of the balance of spirituality and reality within the artist. Strongly influenced by Hegel and theosophy, Mondrian was convinced that abstraction in art anticipated a utopian society.¹⁶² Abstract art, Mondrian believed, allowed man to realize his inner and universal consciousness. He thought that figurative art had failed to truly manifest universality and harmony because it represented them in a "veiled" way: mimesis in art hid the spiritual nature of man and showed only external superficiality. Instead, Mondrian maintained that neoplasticism unveiled the natural and represented it with the universal in a pure, spiritual way through the intersection of vertical and horizontal lines to form rectangles, and the use of primary colors with black, white, and gray (see fig. 67). "The New Plastic" asserts that prior to producing this artistic symmetry, man was controlled by the following elements: the individual, the natural, the outward, and the female. According to neoplasticism, art and artists are securely grounded in these elements, but no longer dominated by them. Artists, and the abstract art they create, equilibrate those previously dominant elements within them with those that counter them, such as the universal, the spiritual, the inward, and the male. This new balance results in neoplasticism, which is seen as the product of artistic and spiritual progression. According to the treatise, abstract art is the synthesis of the real and the abstract, the inward and outward, nature and spirit, the individual and the universal, and the male and the female. In opposing these elements to one another, art is purified and represents the essence of modernity—supreme harmony and unity.

¹⁶² For an influential discussion of Mondrian's relationship with theosophy, see Welsh.

Text, Context, Intertext in Le forze umane

With Mondrian's writings and concepts in mind, several puzzling aspects of *Le forze* can be understood. Although I do not intend to give an exhaustive list of comparisons here, I would like to outline the way in which the text recreates the ideas and processes of neoplasticism at a paratextual, structural and thematic level. First of all, the unusual title and subtitle make sense in light of neoplasticism. Mondrian believed that his abstraction encompassed all that was human. He says in "The New Plastic" for example, that "For an art to be discernible as style, it has to be one with our entire human nature, and therefore also with the natural in us. Our entire humanity is expressed in life and must be reflected in art" (43). Although the union of art and life is not new, and in fact, characterizes the avant-garde as Peter Burger has argued in his influential *A Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Mondrian's words reflect the way in which his abstract art was meant to embrace all that was natural and human in conjunction with a higher power.¹⁶³ The title of the novel, *Le forze umane*, then, could make reference to the humanity of Mondrian's abstraction. The adjective "umane" is coupled with a quintessential futurist term such as *forze*, and this combination suggests a humanization of futurism.

As previously mentioned, some literary critics have understood the subtitle "romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche" to indicate Benedetta's way of abstracting personal experiences in the novel and the abstractness of the black and white drawings. However, with the understanding that comes from positing Mondrian's "The New Plastic" as an intertext, the subtitle suggests more than what scholars have previously supposed. Benedetta could define her novel as abstract because both structurally and thematically it replicates Mondrian's theory of abstraction. Therefore, the *sintesi grafiche* alone do not make the novel abstract. It is the coupling of the graphic syntheses with the narrative that instead makes it abstract. In this way, the "graphic syntheses" further the appropriation of neoplasticism. Due to the fact that "romanzo astratto" is coupled with *sintesi grafiche* in the subtitle, Benedetta makes clear from the beginning the duality necessary to recreate Mondrian's abstract art. As the subtitle reveals, *Le forze umane* consists of two oppositions—word/ image and novel/abstraction—which are both reconciled in the novel.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the adjectives Benedetta utilizes to further illustrate the word/image relationship also reveal a secondary opposition. The novel itself is defined as abstract—a term which is usually applied to visual art. Instead, the drawings are described as *sintesi grafiche*. Synthesis is typically performed through words, but here, synthesis is achieved through the graphic. The mixing and matching of word and image, and of the abstract and the graphic, is resolved in the title of the novel, for they are *Le forze umane*. This paratextual synthesis exposes the process which follows in the novel.

¹⁶³ Interestingly, futurist art, on the other hand, explored the means to go beyond human potential by uniting man with machine.

¹⁶⁴ Aldo Mastropasqua says of this pairing "Il sottotitolo scelto invece da Benedetta avvicinando il 'romanzo astratto' alle 'sintesi grafiche', stabilisce, in un certo senso, una 'formazione di compromesso', prendendo implicitamente le distanze dal paroliberoismo e dai principi di scrittura sintetica che presiedevano alla pratica letteraria futurista" (36).

The structural and textual elements of *Le forze* mirror the process of neoplasticism. The novel, a *Künstlerroman*, recounts Luciana's life from childhood to adulthood. The genre instills a forward movement that is similar to the evolution in Mondrian's theory of abstraction. Furthermore, the division of the novel into three parts recreates the neoplastic process. Part I, "Caos tragico umano," Part II, "Armonie potenziali," and Part III, "Armonia," represent the dialectic Mondrian employs. "Caos tragico umano" contrasts with "Armonie potenziali" and the fusion of the two leads to "Armonia."

The first part consists of childhood and family memories, Luciana's experiences as a school teacher, and descriptions of her father's illness and death. The autobiographical element renders this part sentimental and emotional. In turn, realistic descriptions of people Luciana observes, but does not know, are juxtaposed with personal moments, such as in the description of the funeral in the chapter "Superfici ironiche" and the peasant characterizations in the chapter entitled "Dispersione delle forze del nucleo." These scenes, along with Luciana's familial and juvenile experiences represent the most descriptive and traditional type of narration, and correspond to Mondrian's "natural" or "particular" form of art, which is realistic.¹⁶⁵ In the second part, Benedetta employs Socratic dialogues, philosophical discussions and an aesthetic manifesto in which she compares and explains her novel and drawings. Even though this section of the book does not completely do away with the first person, it is strikingly impersonal and dense. When Luciana is emotionally troubled, for example, the "forces" within her are personified and speak instead of her in the dialogue and triologue. Whereas in "Caos tragico umano" Benedetta recalls minute details of her and her family's life, in the second part, the narrative becomes so opaque and remote that the love of her life is only ever referred to as "il compagno." These different types of narrative styles that Benedetta employs in the second part contrast with that of the first, and embody the outward or the "universal" means of artistic expression of which Mondrian speaks in "The New Plastic," which is abstract.

Benedetta's surprising authorial comparison and explanation of her own work in the last chapter of the second part, "L'essenza e la sua attuazione immediata: l'arte," can also be understood from "The New Plastic." In his article, Mondrian claims that:

The contemporary artist gives explanations *about* his work but not *of* it. Clarification demands strenuous effort, but at the same time it furthers one's own development. Explaining means that one has reached clarity along the path of feeling and intellect by working and thinking about what has been achieved... Thus *explanation* about plastic expression indirectly makes it more profound and more precise. (41; italics by Mondrian)

When Benedetta describes the function of the *sintesi grafiche* at the end of her novel, she seemingly takes Mondrian's advice. In the last chapter, Benedetta also summarizes the contribution of futurism in various fields and recapitulates the futurist history of the *sintesi grafiche*. She then goes on to compare her work to that of others, once again revealing an allegiance to Mondrian. In "The New Plastic," Mondrian argues that:

¹⁶⁵ Cigliana believes the familial scenes serve a different purpose. She writes that "I 'quadri di famiglia' erano d'altronde utilizzati come punto di partenza per una libera reinterpretazione degli eventi, sui quali finiva per avere la meglio quella fortissima tendenza all'astrazione che culmina nelle 'sintesi grafiche' interpolate al testo . . ." ("Benedetta e la forma dei sentimenti" 42).

Comparison is the standard that every artist consciously or unconsciously uses and that shows him how to express (his) truth as determinately as possible. He compares each new work with a previous one in his own production or in that of others. He compares it with nature—as well as with other art. (74)

Comparison is a key part of Mondrian's artistic process and Benedetta, apparently faithful to these ideas, writes the comparison and explanation of her own work into the novel, especially when she explains her *sintesi grafiche*.

The third section of the novel "Armonia," consists simply of a large drawing, a *sintesi grafica* (see fig. 68). In ending her novel with an image, Benedetta suggests a direction for literature which Mondrian had first asserted in *Le néoplasticisme* in his discussion of the possibility of a neoplastic literature. Even though Benedetta's final part of *Le forze* outwardly suggests a preference for visual art, it can actually be understood as the final outcome of neoplasticism—a process which began with the contrary first two parts and the word-image relationship maintained throughout the novel. The coexistence of the written word and black and white drawings creates another opposition between the particular and the universal that the reader-viewer encounters continuously throughout the novel. The images embody a higher, more spiritual form of expression. In her explanation of the drawings, Benedetta contends that they manifest "creazione immediata," an unmediated, universal type of expression (*Le forze* 147). In comparison, Mondrian claims that literature is "expressed through the word, which strongly emphasizes the particular" (29), and therefore grounded in the real. Drawing, more similar to painting, emphasizes the universal; literature puts emphasis on the individual. The continuous opposition between writing and drawing results in a large full-page drawing and represents the final result of neoplasticism. The "particular" becomes inward, and not readily apparent, while the "universal" becomes visible. Therefore, the final large drawing, "Armonia," is the logical end result of a neoplastic literary work because it makes the universal visible only after it has opposed itself to the particular through narrative. In this way, the drawing can represent both writing and drawing. Thus, by organizing the narrative into three parts and making the content and style of each part distinct, Benedetta recreates Mondrian's ideas, thereby creating a neoplastic narrative structure.

Thematically, *Le forze* deals with tragedy, death, mysticism, gender difference, utopian ideals, and Luciana's emotional, spiritual and artistic development. Mondrian's writings also take on these themes. The writings of Mondrian and Benedetta share a similar philosophical vocabulary. Ubiquitous words in Benedetta's writings such as *armonia*, *unità*, *molteplicità*, *puro*, *universo*, *spirito*, *anima*, *particolare*, *individuale*, and *tragico*, to name a few, similarly appear, and are used with analogous meanings throughout Mondrian's writings.¹⁶⁶ Another parallel in their works can be seen in the exploration of a higher consciousness. In his writings, Mondrian speaks of the artist whose consciousness grows to recognize oppositions within himself. Luciana's personal development mirrors that of Mondrian's artist as she increasingly becomes more and more aware of the universal within her through a series of struggles.¹⁶⁷ In fact, the various oppositions of neoplasticism, such as abstraction and reality, and nature and spirit, are

¹⁶⁶ Words such as "anima" and "spirito," are, however, pervasive in Neo-Hegelian writings of the early twentieth century.

¹⁶⁷ Mondrian, in fact, claims that "Art . . . is a field of combat against the individual" ("The New Plastic" 52).

present within Luciana and speak directly to her in dialogue and triologue form—forms which Mondrian himself used in 1919 and 1920 to reiterate his ideas of “The New Plastic.”

Mondrian’s belief in theosophy can be seen in the utopian outcome of his style of abstraction. Mondrian often describes neoplasticism as if it were a pseudo-religion because it was influenced by the theosophical movement. Similarly, in *Le forze*, Benedetta implies that the artistic process is a religion when she describes it with Catholic rhetoric. In fact, after the death of her father, Luciana undergoes an artistic conversion, analogous with religious conversions.¹⁶⁸ Another concurrent theme of Mondrian and Benedetta’s works, is the romantic heterosexual relationship. Mondrian concludes his treatise “The New Plastic,” with a discussion on how neoplasticism can symbolize the male-female relationship. Similarly, Benedetta’s novel reaches a climax when it addresses the theme of heterosexual love. When Luciana unites with her companion she enjoys “unità suprema” and “armonia”—the result of neoplasticism. In light of the similar themes, Luciana goes through the neoplastic process, and because of it she becomes an artist, which she declares in the ending manifesto of the novel. As such, Luciana becomes an allegory for Mondrian’s theory of abstraction. Therefore, *Le forze* appropriates the neoplastic process in two different ways—formally and thematically. Luciana’s experience makes Mondrian’s abstraction a theme, and in turn, the formal features of the text recreate it structurally. I will now turn to three episodes where the text best illustrates the stages of this process thematically and structurally. First, I will discuss the “tragic” elements of the text, then the dialogue and triologue, and finally, the male-female relationship.

At the end of “Caos tragico umano,” both the text and Luciana undergo a conversion. They both break with the “tragic” and become more universal. Mondrian clarifies his concept of “the tragic”: “Where natural emotion dominates plastic expression, a work of art always emphatically expresses the tragic. It expresses the tragic whenever it stresses sorrow or joy, as in the art of Van Gogh” (“The New Plastic in Painting” 54). When Mondrian uses the term “tragic,” he does not use it in the traditional sense which evokes painful, dramatic sentiment. Rather, Mondrian means “tragic” to mean anything sentimental or emotional. Essentially, Mondrian considers any unbalanced emotion, whether positive or negative, as tragic. Tragedy, according to him, can dominate the individual lives of people or the external world. In *Le forze*, tragedy can be seen both in Luciana’s emotional instability and in the outside world she encounters. The first part of the novel is entitled “Caos tragico umano” to indicate the internal and external “tragedy” of Luciana’s life. These “tragic” aspects in and outside of Luciana’s life include her happy childhood experiences, familial conflict, the adoration she has for her friend Ala, the pity she feels for her students whose fathers are away at war, the happiness she observes in the peasants’ celebrations, the stories of her father’s painful war experiences and his eventual and drawn-out demise. Internally, Luciana struggles emotionally to find balance within her, but she often falls prey to her emotions. Dominated by her feelings, and unable to see herself in the greater

¹⁶⁸ The death of Luciana’s father and her “rebirth” is just one of many examples in the novel in which death turns into life. Interestingly, many of those deaths are of animals. For example, the novel recounts Luciana’s experience with a young girl who refuses to let go of a dead duck, and describes a fly that kills a spider, and peasants who kill animals for *Ferragosto*. Furthermore, at the end of the novel the text tells of Luciana/Benedetta coming to terms with her cat *Lacri* dying in “L’essenza e la sua attuazione: l’arte.” Mondrian’s words might be able to explain this phenomenon in the novel, for he claims that “The artist’s life is also a continual sacrifice of the material to the spiritual and the spiritual to the material” (“The New Plastic” 48).

universal scheme of life, Luciana becomes engulfed in emotionality and sentiment. She attempts to overcome this emotional pain, but alas, she is powerless to it. Luciana says, for example:

Finchè raccoglievo nella successione del tempo e dello spazio, cioè, finchè rimanevo alla superficie della realtà mi vedevo nel particolare, mi sentivo in fase evolutiva, quindi nell'imperfezione. Mi dicevo: la realtà è ciò che si vede, si tocca, non astrazione. Sentivo però che se la vita è realtà l'essere è astrazione. Scegliere e armonizzare questo dualismo sfuggiva alle potenze della mia ragione. (85)

In this passage Luciana reproduces a number of Mondrian's concepts which directly pertain to the idea of the "tragic." First of all, Mondrian uses the term "particular" to imply the individual nature that, in his opinion, must be diminished in order to give way to the universal. Here, Luciana sees herself "nel particolare" and "in fase evolutiva" because she is dominated by her own sense of emotion and individuality. As an artist gaining higher consciousness, she is in the beginning stages of the neoplastic process and therefore "in fase evolutiva." In this stage, Luciana can only see reality. Nonetheless, she senses abstraction and the duality which makes it possible.

"Caos tragico umano" culminates in the death of Luciana's father. One of the most dramatic moments of the novel, his death represents Luciana's conversion from the tragic to the universal. After Luciana receives word that her father has died, she and her family go to see his corpse. She describes the ride there: "Nella vettura eravamo stretti vicini. Se ci guardavamo, il nero dei vestiti ci annegava nel terribile simbolo del mistero, ed era tragico quel trovarci riuniti dopo tanti anni..." (102). Notably, Luciana calls "tragico,"—not her father's death—but the reunion of her family after many years. While this meaning may initially seem unusual, within the context of neoplasticism it is not. The intertext of *Le forze* explains that because positive emotion is the abundance of one single emotion, it is not balanced and therefore in Mondrian's terms it is rightly "tragic." The tragedy of the father's death and Luciana's family's reunion is overcome when Luciana "converts." The text prepares the readers for this conversion by drawing their attention to visual contrasts. For example, on her way to view her father's body, Luciana repeatedly sees the contrast between the colors black and white:

Attraversammo il giardino. Su tutto era il velo bianco del gelo La ghiaia sembrava più candida nel viale Costeggiammo il grande casamento rosso dalle inferriate nere Entrammo per una porta di noce quasi nero in un lungo corridoio bianco dalla volta curva. Il pavimento era di pietra bianca, alle pareti delle lapidi di marmo. Ogni dieci passi il soffitto scendeva stringendosi ad arco gotico, listato di nero, cosicchè proseguivamo in quel biancore Vedemmo il fondo del corridoio. Pochi gradini di marmo bianco. Entrammo sotto un arco listato di nero. A sinistra un catafalco coperto d'un lenzuolo niveo. Dietro ... un crocifisso nero.... L'infermiere scoperse il viso I lineamenti in un raggiungimento supremo erano bianca luce serena, nella bianca luce drammatica che da due alte aperture tonde senza vetri cadeva sui marmi bianchi. (102-03)

White, the color of spirituality and purity stands out against black, the color of mourning that the family wears and that frames the architecture. The repeated repetition of the contrasting colors evokes Mondrian's use of primary colors and produces a chiaroscuro effect. Not only are the colors distinct, but so too are the architectonic lines. Curved lines ("volta curva," "arco gotico," "arco listato di nero") stand out against the straight architectonic forms ("inferriate nere," "lapidi di marmo," "gradini di marmo," "catafalco"). The color opposition also reminds the readers of the contrast between life and death, and indicates Luciana's subsequent rebirth and conversion. This mixing of contrasting elements brings to the fore the relationship of opposites. Neoplasticism represents purified relationships and it forces one to see things constantly in relation to one another, never independently. In drawing out these oppositions, the text prepares the readers to view things in relation to each other. The seemingly forced contrasts are necessary to create new form, as Mondrian explains: "only the continual and repeated union of the opposites can bring about the new—progress; which is possible because new form arises through the merging of opposites into each other" ("The New Plastic" 53).

Black and white, curved and straight lines, all come together as Luciana merges with her father's soul, founding a universal element within her. Luciana describes the moment in which she sees her father's corpse:

Commozione estatica. Mi sentii dilatare all'infinito per raccogliere quell'infinito più potente della vita. Entrava in me la rivelazione del mistero nella sua verità immobile di armonia suprema. Gli involucri dell'io si squarciavano per liberare la mia individualità, tensione estrema verso l'unità-armonia Attraverso l'espressione immateriale di mio Padre nella Morte, diveniva cosciente in me la sua armonia! (103-04)

Here Luciana's individuality breaks free; she is no longer attached to the individuality that Mondrian claims must be released in order to give way to the universal. Through her father's death, Luciana reaches a higher level of consciousness and harmony, a necessary requirement to becoming an abstract artist. In fact, only in "tragic" moments can an artist, as Luciana is, able to find new forms of expression. Mondrian tells us that "The tragic in life leads to artistic creation... The new spirit can manifest itself only in the midst of the tragic" (*Le néoplasticisme* 136). Luciana can now see through the tragedy of her father's death because it brings universality to her and her life.

The death of Luciana's father marks the moment in which Luciana gains a universal and harmonious perspective. Instead of being burdened by personal pain and/or negative emotions, Luciana sees her father's death as universally and artistically significant. Benedetta describes this moment as if it were a conversion, utilizing Christian rhetoric to emphasize the religious nature of this change. *Le forze umane* is already modeled after a conversion narrative due to its tripartite structure. Such a model accommodates a move from ignorance to knowledge and mimics Christian conversion narratives such as those of St. Augustine and Dante. In fact, it is no coincidence that the conversion occurs at the end of the first part, illustrating the change formally as well as thematically. Luciana describes her father's death as if it were a religious rite of passage:

Per l'essere assurto ad armonia nulla era stato vano, nulla è vano. Ogni vibrazione ha la sua luce. Ogni fede la sua risurrezione. Amare la vita significa accettarne la crocifissione, poichè solo essa annienta tutte le misere agonie, libera le forze per l'apoteosi. Come verità religiosamente raccoglievo nel mio spirito l'estrema forza di mio padre, e l'anima andava alla sua espressione astratta con devozione riconoscente perchè aveva liberato me, in me. Ormai egli era nell'universo come l'universo, una sublimazione di forze attuate. Nella mia Umanità ancora legata ai giorni e allo spazio mi chinai umile perchè il Divino puro fosse in me e mi benedisse Fu questa la mia prima comunione. (105-06)

Benedetta employs a religious and particularly Catholic lexicon (“fede,” “crocifissione,” “apoteosi,” “religiosamente,” “devozione,” “divino,” “prima comunione”) to describe the move from the tragic to the universal. In so doing, Benedetta appropriates neoplasticism as a pseudo-religion. As we saw from Benedetta’s allusion to Mondrian, she equates the power of artists to that of saints. In fact, the entire economy of *Le forze* equates art with religion.¹⁶⁹ The covert neoplastic process in *Le forze* is first, and foremost, an artistic process; however, Benedetta renders it religious and mystical in the novel. Her father’s soul goes, not to a religious higher power, but “alla sua espressione astratta,” and he is a “sublimazione di forze attuate.” “Astrazione” and “forze attuate” are similar to Mondrian’s ideas of abstraction and reality. Mondrian’s stages of the abstract process become pseudo-religious rituals in Benedetta’s futurist appropriation of them. Her “prima comunione” initiates the neoplastic and mystical process which leads to art. The text acknowledges this mystical side when, in the trialogue, a force within Luciana named *La Femminilità* reminds her of the significance of her father’s death “Come davanti alla morte hai conquistato la vita, così nel dono di te all’umanità toccherai il divino” (120). The conversion at her father’s death is just one step in Luciana’s spiritual-artistic development, just as overcoming the tragic is but one step towards supreme unity and harmony in neoplasticism.

The second part of the novel, “Armonie potenziali,” features the previously mentioned dialogue and a trialogue which formally and thematically recall Mondrian’s writings. Formally, they allude to Mondrian because he originally used the genre to explain neoplasticism in laymen’s terms. Mondrian’s chosen genre mimics Plato’s Socratic dialogues, whose objective is ratiocination.¹⁷⁰ The interlocutors of Mondrian’s dialogue are, respectively, a singer and a painter. Instead, in the trialogue, a layman, a naturalistic painter, and an “Abstract-Real” painter converse with one another. Although the participants of the dialogues change, the subject remains the same: they all discuss the main concepts from “The New Plastic.” Thematically, the dialogues of *Le forze* evoke various writings on Mondrian’s abstraction because their interlocutors are personified oppositions of neoplasticism, and because they discuss abstraction and heterosexual union, neoplastic themes.

¹⁶⁹ In the introduction to her article “Benedetta’s Empathic Journey to Transcendence” which focuses mainly on Benedetta’s *Astra e il sottomarino*, Blum speaks of this element in *Le forze umane*. She writes that “Benedetta conceptualizes art in spiritualistic terms, as a formula for achieving ‘immediacy,’ for reducing the ‘density of matter’ between the individual and the universal” (25).

¹⁷⁰ Lucia Re calls Mondrian’s dialogues “Socratic” in “Impure Abstraction” (37).

Benedetta's use of the Socratic dialogue is also proof of her appropriation of neoplasticism. Although Mondrian's dialogue and triologue served to make his theory of abstraction more accessible, Benedetta uses them to represent different stages and oppositions of the neoplastic process. Rather than choosing people as her interlocutors as Mondrian does, Benedetta personifies the oppositions of neoplasticism, which are "forces" within Luciana. In the dialogue, *Le forze di Attuazione* contrast with *La forza di Astrazione*. In the triologue, *La Femminilità* and *Le Forze di Armonia* go against *Lo Spirito*. In "The New Plastic," Mondrian initially uses the reconciliation of reality and abstraction to theorize his style of abstraction. As he further describes the neoplastic process, this set of opposites evolves into different pairings. For example, the opposition becomes one between nature and spirit, and finally one between man and woman. In *Le forze*, the dialogue represents one initial opposition—that between reality and abstraction—and the triologue represents another—that between nature and spirit. Each type of dialogue allows Benedetta to feature a different opposition as a stage of Mondrian's abstract process. The genre of the Socratic dialogue permits Benedetta to oppose different forces without having to overrule one. In fact, the sole act of opposition purifies each of the elements and leads to harmony, according to Mondrian. Each dialogue then "purifies" Luciana and prepares her for her union with her "compagno"—the final opposition that is resolved in neoplasticism. Additionally, the rationalizing and fleshing out that the dialogue and triologue offer give Benedetta the possibility to frame Mondrian's oppositions in futurist terms. The conversational formats textually represent the change in narrative after Luciana's conversion. Luciana has now overcome her "individuality" and has gained a higher consciousness and so she no longer speaks in the first person. Instead, the "forces" within her speak, illustrating the progression from the individual and sentimental "Caos tragico umano" to the universal and objective "Armonie potenziali." I will now turn to the dialogue and then to the triologue to better illustrate how Benedetta utilizes the genre of the Socratic dialogue in the novel.

Shortly after her conversion, Luciana realizes that her new elevated state of consciousness creates discord between her individual and universal sides. Both forces are present in her, but not yet equilibrated and therefore create disharmony. Luciana declares at the beginning of "Armonie potenziali" that "In me si differenziavano Forze distinte in antagonismo" (111). The contrast between *Le Forze di Attuazione* and *La Forza di Astrazione* within Luciana generates the Socratic dialogue. *Le Forze di Attuazione* most closely represent what Mondrian would call "reality" because they have the power to put things into effect; they are the forces of actuality. *La Forza di Astrazione*, is, quite simply, abstraction. In the dialogue, *Le Forze di Attuazione* try to convince *La Forza di Astrazione* to unite with them. They tell *La forza di Astrazione* that if it were to join them, there would be movement and action, prized concepts of futurism.¹⁷¹ They say to *La Forza di Astrazione* "Da te sorgerà una nuova perfezione purchè vi siano atomi in movimento. Nell'atmosfera che trascende la stasi è opacità e vuoto, ossia morte" (112). That is to say, *Le Forze di Attuazione* offer *La Forza di Astrazione* movement.¹⁷² They claim that if *La Forza di Astrazione* does not unite with them, it will be forced to live in a stale,

¹⁷¹ In the dialogue and in the triologue, there is always one "force" that begs the other to unite with it, making one of the oppositions more willing to give up itself to the other. Interestingly, before and after Luciana unites with her companion (the final opposition and final stage to harmony and unity), she becomes the hesitant one, just as *La Forza di Astrazione* and *Lo Spirito* are in the Socratic dialogues.

¹⁷² In "The New Plastic" Mondrian considers movement and stasis to be opposites (46-47).

lifeless environment. *La Forza di Astrazione* responds by bluntly exclaiming “Non posso seguirvi! È così dolce essere ardore puro nell’atmosfera infinita di luce...” (112-13). *La Forza di Astrazione* is not tempted by movement; it strives in its own infinite and solar ambient. *La Forza di Astrazione* refuses to move, wishing instead to be static. But *Le Forze di Attuazione* proclaim “La vita è movimento e non stasi, molteplicità e non unità, azione non quiete Entri in agonia se rimani così” (113). Their declaration is a futurist one, for a life of movement and action is characteristically futurist.

While *Le forze di Attuazione* are associated with one characteristic of futurism—movement, *La Forza di Astrazione* becomes synonymous with another: *anti-passatismo*. In a final, desperate plea *Le Forze di Attuazione* ask “Non senti che devi unire la vita all’assoluto?” (113). *Le Forze di Attuazione* (“la vita”) and *La Forza di Astrazione* (“l’assoluto”), must, in their opinion, unite. However, *La Forza di Astrazione* refuses once again and responds to their question with a metaphor. It tells them:

Voi non sapete. Violento è il torrente. I sassi del fondo ne arruffano il ritmo. Atomi intensi gridano al cozzo, si lanciano fuori dall’elemento, divengono luce nella luce che li trapassa forse per assorbirli. Ma la loro massa gravita più pesante della Potenza che assurge, così che gli atomi ribelli devono cadere di nuovo nella massa che va, sempre, ancora per ancora cozzare precipitare nel ritmo arruffato dai sassi del fondo. Così volete di nuovo ricadere nell’incoscienza del ritmo? Sarebbe amaro, troppo amaro, poichè nell’uomo oltre tutto rimane il ricordo. Per non ricadere dovete abolire ogni attrazione che gravita (113)

The rocks at the bottom of the river break the current, which here represents movement and action. This interruption inspires the atoms to break away and move away from the rhythm of the tide. Soon, however, they will have to fall back into the monotonous rhythm of the current, because they are grounded in the reality of life. That is to say, *La Forza di Astrazione* tells its opposition, *Le Forze di Attuazione*, that even though they rebelliously desire to unite with abstraction, they will always be confined to the earth and to tradition. *La Forza di Astrazione* insists that they overcome gravity. In essence, *La Forza di Astrazione* wants *Le Forze di Attuazione* to become abstract like it is, in order to escape tradition. In this way, *Le Forze di Attuazione* represent not only movement but also rebellion, for they wish to break away from the group and join *La Forza di Astrazione*. In turn, *La Forza di Astrazione* pushes *Le Forze di Attuazione* to escape tradition.¹⁷³ Each force offers a futurist element. Mondrian’s model of abstraction allows for the joining of the two, without having to negate one or the other. Benedetta gives reality (*Le Forze di Attuazione*) and abstraction (*La Forza di Astrazione*) futurist characteristics and forces neoplasticism’s model of equilibrium onto *Le Forze di Attuazione* and

¹⁷³ The association between abstraction and *anti-passatismo* is Benedetta’s futuristic interpretation of Mondrian’s abstraction. Mondrian maintains that tradition is part of neoplasticism. In *The Rhetoric of Purity*, Marc Cheatham notes that Mondrian “makes clear...throughout his writings, [that] Neoplasticism does not seek to erase any aspect of the past, as Futurism did...but rather to maintain the past on one’s self, one’s art, and in the history of art by including it in purified form within the new” (55). With Benedetta’s models of *Le Forze di Attuazione* and *La Forza di Astrazione*, however, one infers a concomitant break from the past and continuation with tradition.

La Forza di Astrazione. In this way, the text combines futurism and neoplasticism, making one essential to the other.

In the triologue featuring *Lo Spirito*, *Le forze di Armonia* and *La Femminilità*, Benedetta explores and explicates one of Mondrian's key dichotomies—nature and spirit. This opposition goes hand in hand with sexual difference. Inspired by Luciana's meeting and subsequent falling in love with her "compagno," the triologue consists of an aggressive and passionate debate about heterosexual love. Mondrian claims that the more man becomes conscious of the universal within him, the more the nature-spirit duality becomes apparent in him as well. This duality is very much alive in Luciana, as we can see in the triologue. Following the Platonic tradition, Mondrian perceives nature as that which is earthly, corporeal, and feminine. Instead, he sees spirit as that which is intellectual, sacred, and masculine.¹⁷⁴ In "The New Plastic," the discussion of the nature-spirit dichotomy precedes, and then couples with, Mondrian's ideas about the male-female relationship.¹⁷⁵ Mondrian saw neoplasticism as a model for society to follow in order to maintain balanced relationships, especially between men and women. However, the relationship between the sexes in Mondrian's theory of abstraction is not equal. Art historian Mark Cheetham insightfully contends that the way in which Mondrian utilizes gender difference for his theory destabilizes his general argument that oppositions are balanced in Neoplasticism (119). Indeed, subtly inherent in Mondrian's employment of dichotomies, lies the persistent, underlying belief that the spiritual-male element is superior to the natural-female element. Mondrian clearly prefers and prizes the former over the latter. After all, it is through the natural and the feminine that the spirit and the male, express themselves outwardly in neoplasticism. In Mondrian's abstraction, the female aspect must be hidden so that the male one can thrive. In this light, a neoplastic utopia would maintain women's secondary place in society. Mondrian's writings are undoubtedly plagued by misogynistic tendencies. Nevertheless, Mondrian's misogyny is less harsh than Marinetti's. Whereas Marinetti suggested doing away with women, Mondrian includes them, even though they might stand in the shadows of men. This model of abstraction would have appealed to Benedetta even though it is misogynistic, because it made woman a necessary part of abstraction, rather than taking her out of the equation as futurism did. To Benedetta, the misogyny of neoplasticism could have been the lesser of two evils and it carved a space for woman that she could then open up and expand in *Le forze*.

¹⁷⁴ Re discusses Benedetta's acknowledgement of this aspect of the dialogue: "Benedetta is strikingly accurate in identifying the philosophical urge toward metaphysical and spiritual abstraction with an essentially misogynistic tradition. Metaphysics itself arises in Platonic thought through the gendering of corporeality and the alignment, to which Mondrian and Evola fully subscribed, of the feminine with the body, the material, the concrete, and the particular—that is, with the very dimensions that the soul must leave behind in its quest for truth" ("Impure Abstraction" 39). In interpreting Mondrian's writings as the intertext to *Le forze*, however, this line of reasoning does not come as a surprise considering that Benedetta is working from Mondrian's ideas.

¹⁷⁵ Mondrian illustrates this opposition in his own work by claiming "The duality of perpendicular opposition, we see the most extreme opposites: the natural (female) element and the spiritual (male) element. Thus we see that because the duality contains *two distinct elements*, their unity can come into being through their equal manifestation, that is the *degree of equal purity in which the two extremes are opposed*" ("The New Plastic" 57; italics by Mondrian). Nature and spirit are reconciled through Mondrian's art and it subsequently becomes a model for society to follow. In this way, Mondrian seemingly suggests equilibrium between men and women.

Further illustrating his preference for the male element, Mondrian justifies Marinetti's misogyny in the founding manifesto of futurism in "The New Plastic."¹⁷⁶ In a footnote to his words about the dominance of nature over the spirit in the past, he surmises that:

The same idea must have led the Futurists to proclaim hatred of woman in their manifesto. However, it is the dominance of the female element in man that causes disequilibrium between nature and spirit: this results in the feminine, or the natural, domination of art. The natural (or female) element absorbs development but creates no new one: it clings tenaciously to each stage of development and therefore is the element of tradition."^(57, note 1)¹⁷⁷

In this passage, Mondrian identifies with the futurists because he interprets their hatred of women to stem from the dominance of the female element in art. Although Mondrian explains that the dominance of the female element prevents abstraction, he does not suggest that it be cast out of the equation all together. This female element is fundamental to art because it "absorbs development," but he claims that the male element must combine with the female one, and then dominate it, to create abstraction. Mondrian's neoplastic model justifies futurist misogyny, yet proposes an alternative to it. Such a model would certainly have attracted Benedetta because it would have endorsed futurism, while at the same time would have offered an alternative to it by making woman necessary to man.

Benedetta, contrary to Mondrian, gives preference to the female element in her trialogue. She makes this partiality clear when she opposes *Lo Spirito*, not to nature, but to *La Femminilità* directly. Furthermore, *Lo Spirito* and *La Femminilità* in Benedetta's trialogue vehemently oppose one another, yet *Le Forze d'Armonia* align themselves with *La Femminilità* indicating that she is an ally of a higher power. *Lo Spirito* abhors love and tells Luciana "Infame, infame, ti tradisci! Tradisci la tua legge! Manchi al tuo destino! L'amore è un compromesso! La vita lo ha creato per asservire gli uomini al suo fine, e inganna il loro orgoglio mascherando il giogo con rosate trasparenze" (118). Strikingly characteristic of futurist rhetoric, *Lo Spirito* believes that heterosexual love deceives men. *Le Forze d'Armonia* respond violently to the words of *lo Spirito* and tell Luciana that "Hai guardato con piacere e stupore l'armonia subitanea sorta dall'incontro di due atmosfere che erano fino a ieri estranee fra loro! "Tutto ciò ha svegliato nel futuro echi profondi" (118). *Le Forze d'Armonia* recall the reconciliation of opposites that leads to harmony and unity in Mondrian's model of abstraction by noting the "armonia subitanea" brought forth by Luciana's meeting with her "compagno." *The Forze d'Armonia* also suggest that heterosexual love advances the future in saying that their meeting "ha svegliato nel futuro echi profondi." Whereas unity and harmony come about through the balancing of various oppositions in Mondrian's neoplasticism, in Benedetta's appropriation, it is heterosexual love that creates them.

¹⁷⁶ In *Le néo-plasticisme*, Mondrian once again justifies the futurists' misogyny: "A Futurist manifesto proclaiming hatred of woman (the feminine) is entirely justified. The woman in man is the direct cause of the domination of the tragic in art" ("The New Plastic" 137; italics by Mondrian).

¹⁷⁷ Unlike the Platonists, Mondrian here associates the feminine with tradition. Although he does not, like the futurists, hate tradition, he believes that it needs to be overcome to reach neoplastic expression.

This view of heterosexual love contrasts sharply from the premises of the first wave of futurism, which do away with woman, and instead argue for the union between man and machine.¹⁷⁸

Deeply troubled by the words of *Le Forze d'Armonia* ("torturato," writes Benedetta), *Lo Spirito* insists upon his objectivity, claiming that in giving himself up to love he will no longer be able to "amare imparzialmente la vita tutta nel suo male e nel suo bene," (119). To this comment, *La Femminilità* "si ribellava," and then attacks *Lo Spirito* reproaching him for his selfishness, for his inability to recognize love as an offering, and for his abstract logic that is "cerebrale perciò artificiale" (119). *La Femminilità* denounces pure abstraction because neoplasticism is the balanced relationship of opposites, including that between the real and the abstract. Mondrian himself claims that "The new plastic is abstract-real because it stands between the absolute-abstract and the natural or concrete-real. It is not as abstract though, and not as real as tangible reality" ("The New Plastic" 42). *La Femminilità* then tells *Lo Spirito* that it must give itself up to the Other just as nature consistently changes for the other seasons ("la rinuncia del verde per dissolversi nel bruno," "l'offerta del profumo e dei colori dei fiori all'azzurro," "il freddo cedere al caldo"(119)). For *La Femminilità*, heterosexual love simulates the pure, balanced relationship found in nature. *La Femminilità* tells Luciana that:

L'Amore è il vortice dei mondi verso i mondi, è il bagliore tagliente per lo spirito, è la tua dedizione assoluta all'Universo: Io, Femminilità, sono una tensione di grazia di sogno di luce in offerta alla forza della realtà precisa molteplice ardente individuata nel nuceo potente che hai ammirato. (120)

La Femminilità tells Luciana that it is her responsibility to convince *Lo Spirito* to give in to love. Instinctively, *La Femminilità* wishes to surrender itself to love. Like *Le Forze di Attuazione* in the first dialogue, the burden to convince the other to join forces lies with *La Femminilità*. This noticeable feature can be explained by neoplasticism which contends that the female element must always push the male element to create art. In the case of *Le forze*, the female must give in to love. Mondrian describes the female element:

Consistently viewed, the female element is hostile to all art on the one hand, while on the other it not only realizes the art-idea but reaches toward art (for outwardness reaches toward inwardness) It is precisely the female element, therefore, that constructs art, and precisely its influence that creates abstract art, for it most purely brings the male to expression. (69)

Benedetta does not appropriate all aspects of this passage because unlike Mondrian, she does not assert that the female element is hostile to art. However, she takes from him the idea that the female element is a catalyst for art, especially abstract art. The desire for art must stem from femininity and it alone makes it possible for the spirit (male) to express itself outwardly. *La Femminilità* tells Luciana that it is her responsibility to give love, concede to it, and force *Lo*

¹⁷⁸ For articles on this fusion, see Schnapp, "Propeller Talk," and Poggi "Metallized Flesh."

Spirito into it, because in doing so she will become an artist and create art.¹⁷⁹ Thus, femininity becomes necessary to art and Benedetta creates an essential role for women in futurism.

La Femminilità of the triologue, in contrast to Mondrian's female element, is associated, not with tradition, but with the future.¹⁸⁰ Benedetta says that *La Femminilità*

Si proiettava nell'attimo e nel futuro e diceva allo Spirito: 'Sii tu anche ora, anche domani. Tu devi anche attraverso l'amore essere l'armonia che trascende. Tu essendo vita e sogno, nella vita devi realizzare il sogno, e nell'astrazione pura portare la vita.' (121)

Only *La Femminilità* knows that the future, and futurism, if you will, can flourish through the union of the male and female elements and through heterosexual love. In fact, the universe confirms the wisdom of *La Femminilità* when Luciana asks nature to help her decide whether or not to give in to love ("Se il mio destino sarà un fiorire di armonie nell'amore umano, rondini sensibili, che presentite il rinnovarsi della terra, passate davanti al grande occhio di luce, in numero dispari!" (121)), eleven swallows immediately appear. The number eleven, Marinetti's favorite magic number, alludes to his and futurism's approval and reintegration of heterosexual love.¹⁸¹

The triologue paves the way for the union between Luciana and her companion. Although Luciana has reconciled herself to the fact that love be part of her life, she continues to struggle with *La Femminilità* and *Lo Spirito* within her because they are not yet balanced. Each "force" has a different reaction that creates discord. After having met her companion, Luciana says:

L'equilibrio del mio essere è rotto. La Femminilità, istintiva direzione lineare di vita, tende a scivolare nell'offerta assoluta incosciente, fino all'ultimo atomo. Ma lo Spirito, nucleo d'intelligenza-coscienza, vuol vivere gli istanti completamente anche come consapevolezza assoluta. Vuole non subirli, ma proiettarli meravigliosi da sé per donarli moltiplicati. Nell'intimo mio è tormento per la lotta fra istinto e cervello. (128)

¹⁷⁹ Throughout *Le forze*, Benedetta associates women with giving. For example, in the passage above *La Femminilità* declares that love is Luciana's "dedizione assoluta all'Universo" and Luciana defines herself as "una tensione di grazia di sogno di luce *in offerta*" (italics mine). In "Battaglia di Forze" Luciana says of herself in the role of teacher "Sono una spirale di dolcezza, *offerta* a questa infanzia triste . . ." (35-36; italics mine). She also claims that, after having been united with her companion, that "La mia sintesi è un'offerta di amore riempie l'Universo e dà luce. . . Il mio cuore è infinito. La mia Anima è troppo intensa. Straripa. Debbo *offrirla*" (131 italics mine). Moreover, as I previously mentioned in my discussion of Luciana's conversion, *La Femminilità* tells Luciana that only in giving herself to humanity she will reach the divine ("nel dono di te all'umanità toccherai il divino"). In portraying women and femininity as offerings, she suggests that they willingly sacrifice themselves, not for the sake of men, however, but for the sake of art.

¹⁸⁰ In her influential book, *The Other Modernism*, Cinzia Sartini Blum claims that "Woman, for the futurists, is a two-faced icon. One face is traditional, with static, eternal features; it looks backward, toward nature and the past, and symbolizes their fetters. The other is artificial and modern; adulterated by contemporary materialism, it looks to the future, evoking undesirable change" (85).

¹⁸¹ Marinetti used the number eleven in a variety of lists in his manifestos and in his other writings as well, such as in *Come si seducono le donne* and in his collection of short stories, *Novelle colle labbra tinte*.

Before Luciana fell in love with her “compagno,” *La Femminilità* and *Lo Spirito* lived, without conflict, within her. However, the masculine presence in her life ruins this equilibrium. *La Femminilità* makes a part of Luciana instinctive and passive. But the part of her dominated by *Lo Spirito* wishes to dominate the situation and live it to its fullest. Benedetta defines *La Femminilità* as the “instintiva direzione lineare di vita” and *Lo Spirito* as the “nucleo d’intelligenza-conoscenza.” In defining them as such, Benedetta makes the male-female dichotomy also one between intellect and instinct.¹⁸² The feminine instinct passively submits to love, while the male intellect wants to multiply itself in the new atmosphere. Benedetta’s distinctions of the female and male characteristics might seem at first to be a simple application of stereotypes, but one should keep in mind that these forces are both within Luciana. By suggesting a mutual presence within Luciana, Benedetta advocates the joint force of male and female elements within women.¹⁸³ Prior to meeting her companion, Luciana lived without the struggle between these two forces, suggesting that woman is full and complete without a man. It is only humanity that is incomplete without woman because it needs her to create art. Luciana “gives” herself to humanity by giving in to love, and in return, she is beatified and becomes an artist. Humanity has art to gain from woman and in turn, woman gains agency in offering herself to the world, according to *Le forze*.

The constant struggles between the various oppositions such as those between *Le Forze di Attuazione* and *La Forza di Astrazione*, between *Lo Spirito* and *La Femminilità*, and between instinct and intellect, represent the different stages of purification, a necessary step of neoplasticism. Mondrian says that “Unity in real life must await the equivalence of opposites. By equivalence is meant the equivalence of (relatively) pure opposites. Only after this equivalence develops are the oppositions resolved into one another and true unity really attained” (“The New Plastic” 53). The contrasting forces in the dialogue and the triologue express themselves so as to purify themselves within Luciana. To reach purification, oppositions must continually face one another and the Socratic dialogue offers the perfect forum to do so. Luciana struggles to balance abstraction and reality, femininity and spirit, and instinct and intellect. Through these struggles she has slowly purified herself. Now that she is pure, Luciana can unite with her physical opposite—man. Luciana’s companion acknowledges her purified state and tells her “Prima di venire a te sento il bisogno di purificarmi come se toccassi cosa sacra!” (129). The gradual synthesis of opposites has cleansed Luciana. In turn, her purified state encourages her companion to purify himself as well. In this process of purification, both Luciana and her companion become balanced and can finally unite.

When Luciana and her companion finally give themselves to each other physically, they experience supreme unity. Luciana feels “Gioia di ogni atomo, suprema unità tesa e dilagante, gioia gioia divina cosciente nell’essere e combaciante col mistero! ... Massima tensione nell’armonia, massima velocità nell’estasi”(132). The physical union between Luciana and her companion creates divine joy and harmony which only the balancing of opposites can create,

¹⁸² In “The New Plastic in Painting” Mondrian discusses emotion and intellect, which I believe are the basis for Benedetta’s terms. Mondrian claims that “Emotion and intellect are active between the two poles, nature and spirit, between which abstract life evolves. Where intellect is directly combined with spirit, *reason* is manifested and *universal thought* results” (“The New Plastic” 59).

¹⁸³ This duality contrasts sharply with Valentine de Saint Point’s argument that women should become more virile in “Le manifeste de la femme futuriste.”

according to Mondrian. Benedetta applies this utopian fantasy to her novel, adding, however, a futurist element: velocity. At the climax of male-female union they arrive at speed, a fundamental characteristic of futurism. In this way, Benedetta once again tailors neoplasticism for futurism.

In the penultimate chapter, “Ribellione dell’Io,” Luciana, now having achieved supreme unity with her companion, feels transformed, and unexpectedly laments her loss of self and former equilibrium. The anger, sense of displacement, and bitterness Luciana experiences strikingly resemble the final stage that mystics undergo before uniting with the divine. Mystics call this troubling and lonely period “dark night of the soul.”¹⁸⁴ Mystics go through this stage right before uniting with the divine, and usually after a particularly joyous religious experience, similar to the one Luciana experienced with her companion. Once irreverently happy to be with her companion, Luciana now laments “Odio l’Amore. Perché è entrato in me?” (136). Once again a personified force within Luciana speaks directly instead of her. This time, Luciana’s *Io* speaks and violently addresses her, her soul, and above all, her beloved “compagno.” Her *Io* threatens to no longer love Luciana because it cannot find the “armonia suprema” it once did. It blames Luciana for this *mancanza*, but it especially holds her companion responsible, whom it ridicules and to whom it says:

Sì, sì, ti concedo la donna, la dolcezza aspra delle fusioni carnali, la compagna fidata dei giorni, ma non mi ritroverai più—Io, *Armonia* suprema. Nessun essere può resistere. Tu cercherai nelle fibre della mia carne, sulle curve soavi, negli attriti divini della voluttà, la sintesi tanto sognata, da raccogliere con mani tremanti, finalmente! Spingerai in spasimi di comprensione il tuo intuito fra la rete delle parole per assimilare la mia legge di vita. Sempre ti parrà di raggiungerla e invece ti sfuggerà. Crederai di averla fra braccia convulse, e invece queste saranno vuote. (137)

Luciana’s *Io* discloses that the physical union with a woman is not enough for a man to achieve supreme harmony. A woman’s *Io* is, in and of itself, supreme harmony, illustrating once again that Benedetta privileges the female element. Luciana’s *Io* suggests that she had already possessed the highest form of harmony on her own, and did not need to give herself up to heterosexual love to find it. She sacrificed herself in the hopes of finding true harmony, only to find out that she already had it within herself all along. Man, rather, here represented by her companion, will never find supreme harmony because only women possess it. He desperately seeks it, but he will never really be able to discover it.

After her *Io* has let go of its anger, Luciana rationalizes this outburst, claiming “Ci ribelliamo perchè non vogliamo ritrovarci in un altro individuo. È l’orgoglio pazzo dell’Io che vuole essere nucleo a sè, e non ammette altro nucleo umano” (139). Strikingly, Luciana adapts the first-person plural “noi” instead of the singular first-person “io” she has used in other chapters. This distinct change suggests that Luciana refers to women and speaks for them all when she says that they rebel. In making such a statement, Luciana takes on a proto-feminist

¹⁸⁴ The expression “dark night of the soul” comes from a poem by the Roman Catholic mystic Saint John of the Cross of the sixteenth century. In the poem, Saint John of the Cross describes the dark and troubling feelings he experienced before uniting with God.

stance. This perspective soon comes to an end, however, when Luciana regains her senses and describes the new balanced parameters of her relationship with her companion. In the end, she claims that the relationship becomes a union of equals (139).¹⁸⁵

The entire episode of “Ribellione dell’Io” indicates a higher feminine power and seemingly rebukes Mondrian’s neoplasticism. Benedetta, however, maintains that this is only a fleeting “rebellion” by modeling it after the mystics’ “dark night of the soul” phase. In positioning her proto-feminist feelings in such a way, Benedetta only briefly puts into question neoplasticism. Nonetheless, it is important to consider why she does so, albeit briefly. The hesitation Luciana expresses can be read as a proto-feminist stance as much as it can be read as a strategy Benedetta employs to consciously disengage herself from neoplasticism. Only “Ribellione dell’Io” interferes with the process of neoplasticism in *Le forze*. Not coincidentally, this detachment also comes at the end of the second part of the novel, as if it were an attempt to hide a process of appropriation. In fact, I would suggest that one of the reasons for which the last chapter of the novel, “L’essenza e la sua attuazione immediata: L’arte,” resembles a manifesto and for which it is so outwardly, and forcedly futurist in theme and form, is due to the fact that Benedetta attempts to cover her appropriation “tracks.” If the novel ends on a futurist note, then perhaps no one will question the underlying ideologies driving it. The other reason for which the last chapter of a covertly neoplastic text could be so overtly futurist is because it is the end-all appropriative act. By “slapping” on the futurist *etichetta* at the end of the novel, Benedetta truly makes the neoplastic process futuristic.

When Giachero quickly surmised that Henri Bergson’s *Material and Memory* might be the intertext of *Le forze*, she perspicaciously hypothesized that Benedetta could not have openly cited him because “citare significherebbe riconoscere una *auctoritas*, gesto inconcepibile per il futurismo, teso a distruggere nell’arte e nella vita la dipendenza dal passato e dai maestri...” (“Senza preoccupazione plastica” 48). Even though Giachero’s reference to a past author does not apply to Mondrian, being a contemporary of the futurists, the same impossibility in citing or in appropriating a non-futurist work is relevant. Mondrian, an advocate of a Dutch avant-garde movement can be seen as even more of a threat than Bergson, whom the futurists openly read. Benedetta’s appropriation of Mondrian’s neoplasticism suggests an astonishing adherence to an avant-garde movement of Holland, an act that the nationalistic futurists, especially Marinetti, would not have easily condoned. Therefore, Benedetta perforce would have had to conceal her efforts of appropriation.

Thus far, I have shown textual evidence of Benedetta’s appropriation, structurally and thematically, of Mondrian’s writings in *Le forze umane*. The novel structurally illustrates neoplasticism in its tripartite division, its relationship between word and image, and its use and order of the Socratic dialogues. Thematically, *Le forze umane* reproduces the neoplastic process

¹⁸⁵ Luciana writes: “Nel nostro amore divennero verità coscienti: la dedizione del pensiero, della propria atmosfera, del limite del proprio corpo e la fusione di forze affiorate. L’esistenza di nuclei potenti capaci di realizzazioni individuali nella vita, che si cercano e si amano appunto perchè affini e separati, divenne una verità cosciente. Così pure divenne verità cosciente la suprema gioia del dono assoluto, spirito incarnato, vita del figlio, unità sorta dalla fusione capace di assurgere all’Unità Suprema.” (139) The limitations of Luciana’s relationship with her companion create balance within it. Supreme unity now becomes possible through the birth of a future child. Even this description recalls Mondrian who states that “male and female appear free of each other...the elements are determinately opposed; their conjoining in the duality of position in the universal plastic means and in composition is not an actual merging” (“The New Plastic” 69).

by first recreating, and then overcoming Mondrian's idea of the tragic in "Caos tragico umano," by opposing *Le Forze di Attuazione* and *La Forza di Astrazione* in the dialogue and *Lo Spirito* to *La Femminilità* in the trialogue, and finally by culminating in a discussion of heterosexual love. Additionally, the similarities that the passages from Mondrian and Benedetta share tie *Le forze umane* directly to "The New Plastic." I have also demonstrated how Benedetta appropriates Mondrian's writings on abstraction. She renders neoplasticism an artistic-religious process by utilizing Catholic rhetoric, and revises and integrates elements of neoplasticism by associating women with art and bringing heterosexual love to futurism. With Mondrian's writings and concepts in mind, we can now make sense of *Le forze umane* within the futurist canon. Benedetta's novel is not a weak attempt at futurist literature as the initial critics of the novel speculated. Instead, it is an attempt to modify futurism through the literary appropriation of an art theory from a different avant-garde movement. Not only does this move suggest a fraternity and fluidity among the avant-garde movements and artistic disciplines; it also indicates a new strategy of the futurist woman. Benedetta aims to change futurism by importing concepts from neoplasticism into the movement. For Benedetta, Mondrian's neoplasticism would have been, quite simply, *prêt à porter*.

Conclusion: In-betweenness

The works of futurist women from 1914 to 1924 examined in this dissertation cross the boundaries between the verbal and visual. They are hybrid texts, lying in between words and images. Bonheur's parodies of futurism and "passatism" are represented both verbally in the text and visually in the illustrations and "words-in-freedom." Rosà's and Benedetta's *parole in libertà* are visual in their spatialization, symbolism, and handwriting, yet they are composed of words. And Benedetta's *Le forze umane* makes *sintesi grafiche* as important as first-person narrative. These texts therefore inhabit the space between word and image. This place is due, in part, to futurism's aesthetics, but it is also a mode chosen by these women futurists as a viable mode to express themselves in multiple ways. This position represents an in-betweenness, a persistent characteristic in Bonheur's, Rosà's, and Benedetta's futurist contributions. The works of these *futuriste* from this period cannot only be seen through the intermediate position of word and image, but also through other intermediary states. Other overarching themes discussed in this dissertation—such as intertextuality, autobiographism and deviations from futurism—are all similar to this verbo-visuality because they too represent in-betweenness.

As we have seen, intertextuality is a common thread in the work of Bonheur, Rosà, and Benedetta. Graham Allen explains that "Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (1). Intertextuality is inherently an in-between place. In *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, parody is a form of intertextuality because it imitates the literary styles of futurism and "passatism." It borrows from them, yet changes them at the same time. *Diario* is not just between futurism and "passatism," but also between the textuality and visuality of original futurism and "passatism" and its modified version of them. Bignami's drawings in *Diario* are connected to the iconography of the postcard and therefore form an additional type of intertext. In both cases of *parole in libertà* examined in chapter three, there are also elements of intertextuality. Rosà intertextually relates her article "Perché la borghesia sia meno noiosa" to her "free-word" composition "Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo" as she incorporates several of the sentences from the former into the latter. And in "Spicologia di 1 uomo," Benedetta incorporates part of the "Hail Mary" prayer into her own signature that is based on a passage from the Bible. Furthermore, as we saw in chapter four, appropriation is another intertextual operation at play in *Le forze umane* as Benedetta appropriates Mondrian's theory of neoplasticism for futurism. The work of these women futurists consistently relate to other texts, creating a web of connections.

Another domain of in-betweenness examined in this dissertation can be found in the relation of the texts examined to autobiography. While none of the texts is truly autobiographical, they all relate in some way to the telling of the self, to autobiographism. In *Diario* there is a parody of the diary genre that places Albina's diary somewhere in the middle of diary fiction. We saw how the first volume of *Diario* superficially invokes diary fiction, whereas the second volume emphasizes it, putting into question the whole idea of the diary genre and Albina Folgore's place within it. Furthermore, the "I" within *Diario* is different from the "I" of the author, Flora Bonheur, whose identity already poses questions. In this way, the use of autobiography in *Diario* is paradoxically associated with the evasion of the first-person. In its impossibility of a conversion narrative, *Diario* also creates an in-betweenness because the first volume sets the reader-viewer up for a conversion from "passatism" to futurism, yet in the

second volume, Albina spontaneously converts to “passatism.” As such, the conversion narrative, a staple of autobiography, is left adrift between the bipolarities of “passatism” and futurism. In chapter three, we saw how handwritten *parole in libertà* can reinsert a tie to the first-person subjectivity banned by futurism. This mark of the author leaves a personal trace, but it is not a true example of first-person subjectivity. It lies, instead, somewhere between a sign of subjectivity and a trace of corporeality. Benedetta also moves in and out from autobiography in *Le forze umane*. Benedetta writes as Luciana, but the parallels to her own life are unmistakable. Moreover, *Le forze* lays bare Benedetta’s intermittent use of the first-person when, at the end of her novel, she includes a futurist manifesto and writes as herself. The women of futurism found themselves in a period in which their female predecessors and contemporaries contributed to autobiography yet in an avant-garde movement that abhorred such a genre. As such, the irregular autobiographism present in their work could be read as a way in which they find and navigate a position for themselves.

A final place where we can see women futurists and their work in the middle is in their representations of futurism and non-futurism. While the futurists examined here (except perhaps for Bonheur) were all active in the futurist movement, their way of illustrating that allegiance to futurism is fraught. *Diario* contributes both to “passatism” and to futurism as it parodies both of them. It is both futurist and non-futurist, never completely one or the other. The “words-in-freedom” by Bonheur, Rosà and Benedetta are typically futurist because they contribute to the practice of *paroliberismo*, yet they go against a key principle of it: typography. In this way, these “free-word” pieces are created in a space between futurism and non-futurism. *Le forze umane* recreates Mondrian’s neoplasticism while at the same time it reproduces a futurist manifesto and ties itself to futurism. The works studied here all occupy a gray area, for they all contribute to futurism at the same time as they deviate from it.

The works of the futurist women examined in this dissertation lie, therefore, between word and image, texts, first-person subjectivities, and futurism and non-futurism. The position that their work takes on is indicative of the situation of the *futuriste*. The futurist woman finds herself between a rock and a hard place in that there is no movement or literary style that allows her to truly express herself. Therefore, she modifies futurism and its tenets in her work while also recreating them. The first avant-garde movement of Italy may have espoused misogyny and anti-feminism, but it also offered women a way out of traditional culture and the chance to create a new identity. Even if the futurist woman did not completely embrace futurism’s stance on women, she could have used the movement to her advantage to voice herself in new ways. She may have met futurism in the middle, compromising both her voice and that of the movement, yet never completely abandoning one for the other.

Figures

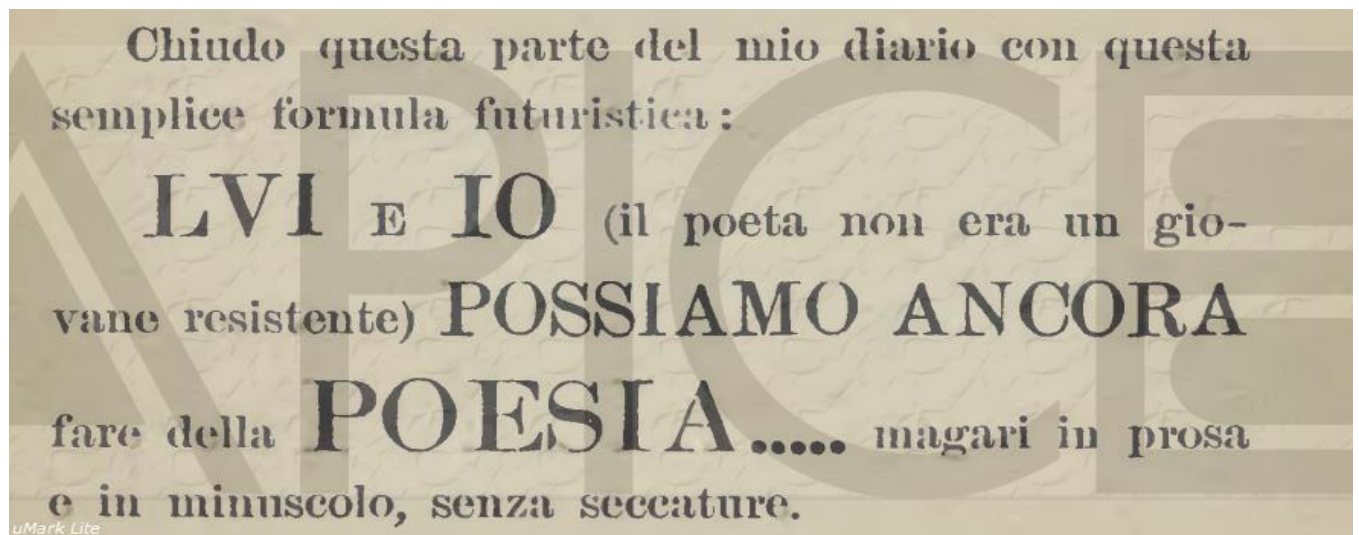


Fig. 1. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 29.

Del resto, Enrico è stato veramente futurista: mi ha detto molte, forse anche troppe parole in libertà ad ho capito benissimo che me ne avrebbe dette anche di più se non lo avessi pregato di essere meno poeta e più sincero nei — come dire? — momenti lirici MENO PAROLE

PIU' FATTI

uMark Lite

Fig. 2. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 14.



Fig. 3. “Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto;” F.T. Marinetti, *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (1919); http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/tumultuous/marinetti_marne.html; Web; 10 May 2012.

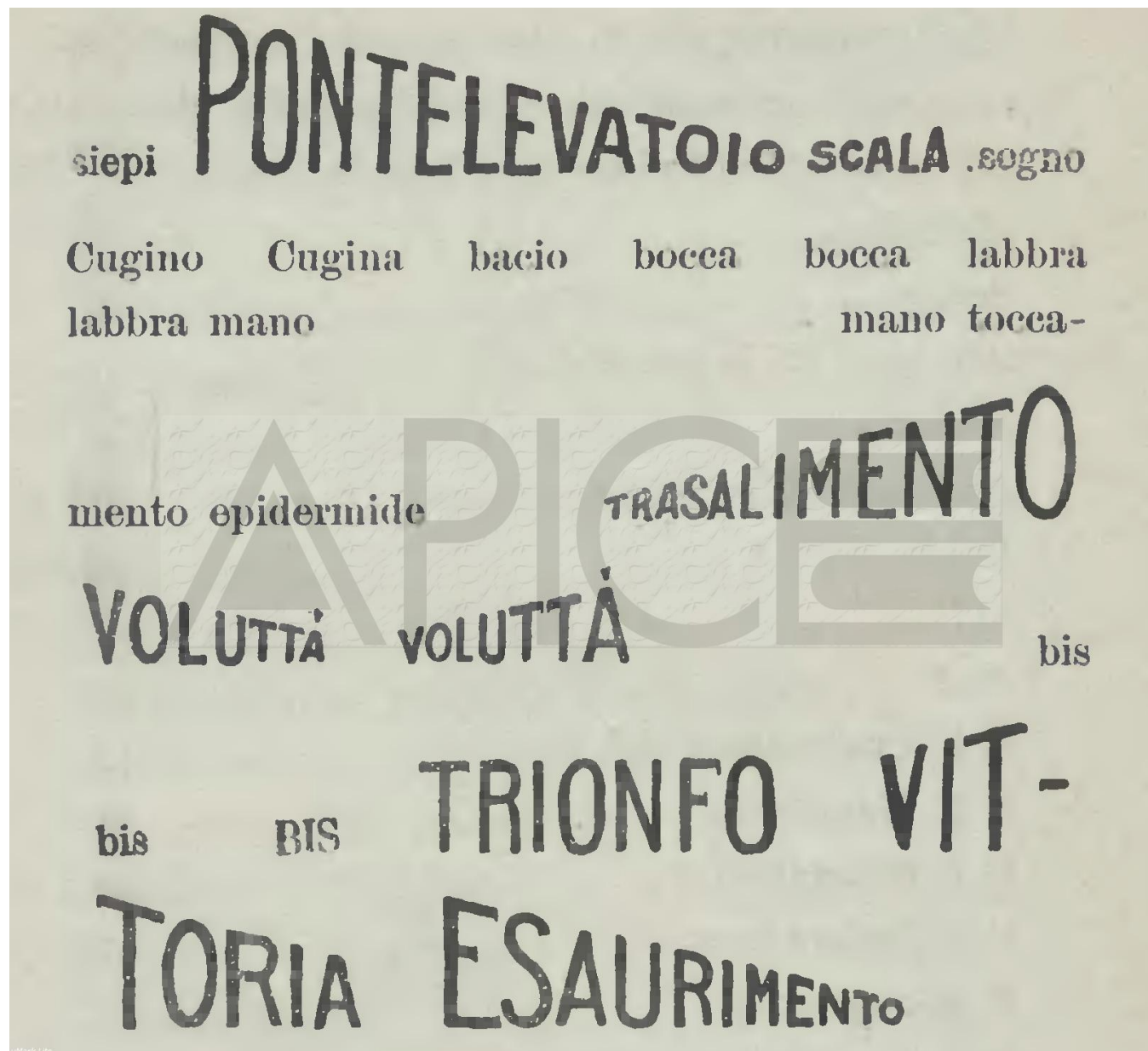


Fig. 4. Words-in-freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 12.

Enrico mi ha detto, dopo avermi letto ancora degli altri suoi versi...

— Mia piccola Frine.... ancora, sempre, quando vorrai, come vorrai, dove vorrai...

Evidentemente, c'è dell' esagerazione : ma è appunto in questa mancanza di limite, nel tempo e nello spazio, che consiste la poesia

ESIA FRINE

Fig. 5. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 15.

I° CUGINO II° CUGINO III° CUGINO
IV° CUGINO

Fig. 6. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 13.



Fig. 7. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 25.

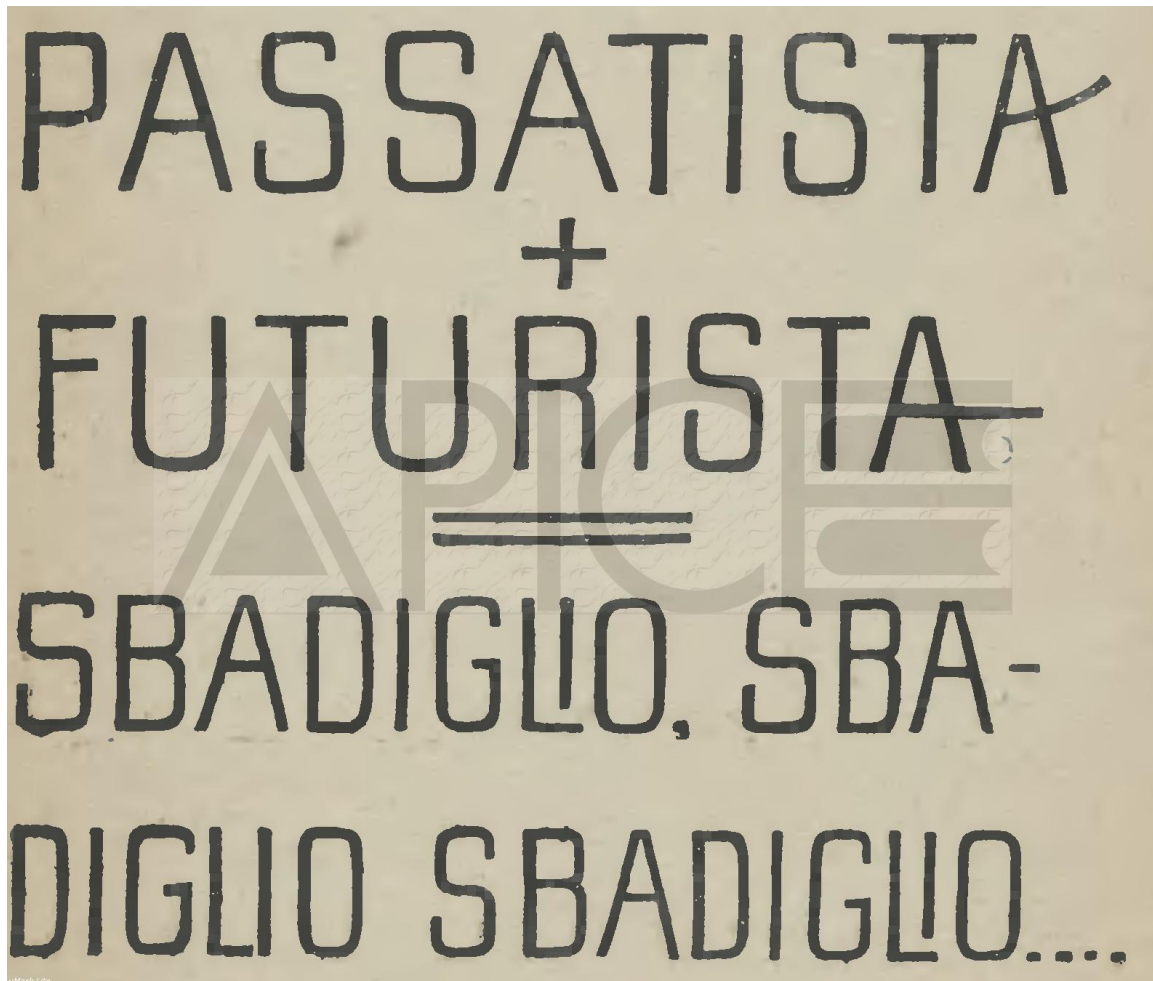


Fig. 8. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 25.



Fig. 9. Frontispiece *L'amore per il marito*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).



Fig. 10. Frontispiece *L'amore per l'amante*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).

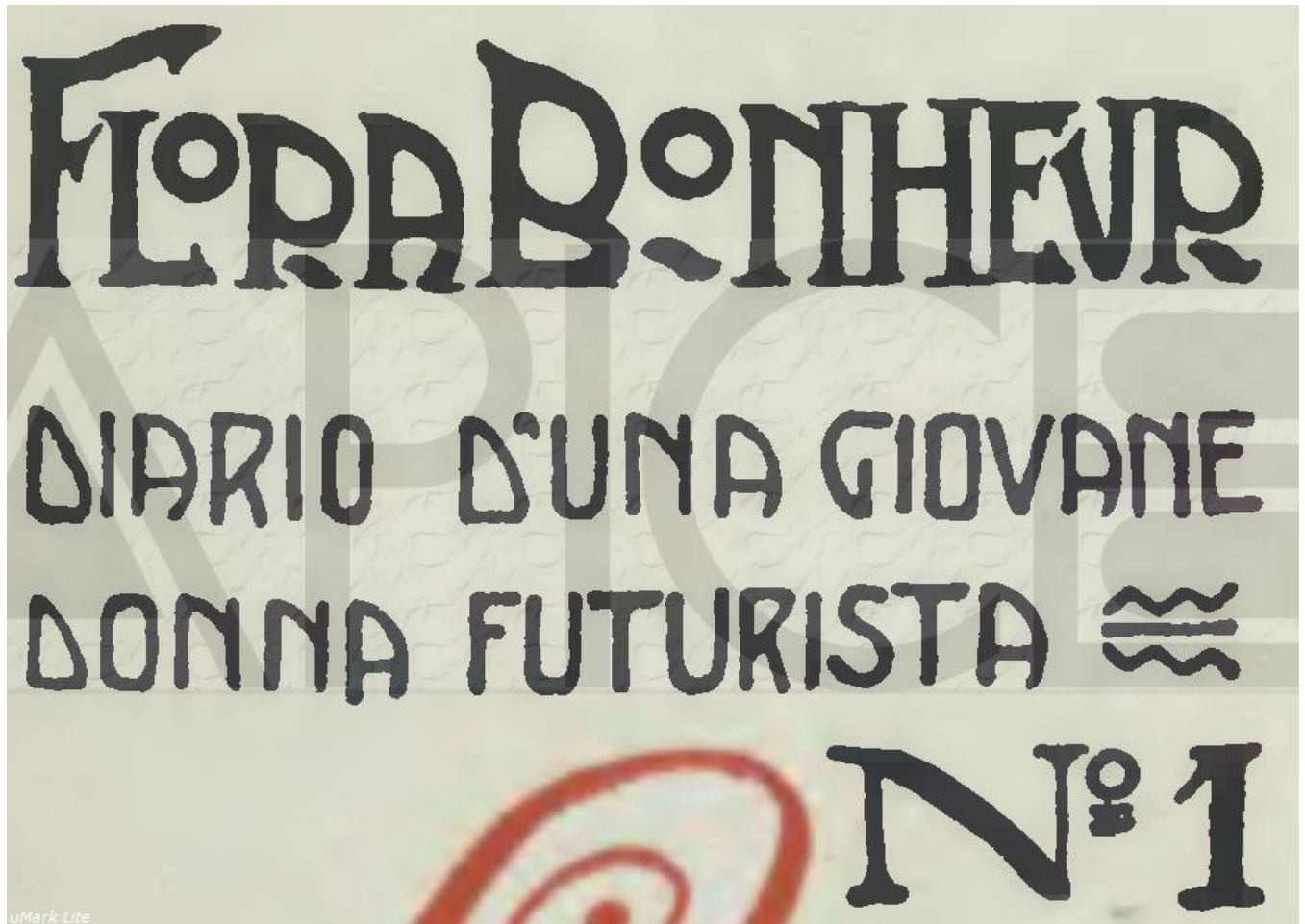


Fig. 11. Detail of Frontispiece, *L'amore per il marito; Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).



Fig. 12. Detail of Frontispiece, *L'amore per l'amante; Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).



Fig. 13. Entrance Sign to Paris Subway Station; Hector Guimard;
http://www.avenuedstereo.com/modern/guimard_metro.jpg; Web; 10 May 2012.



Fig. 14. Detail of Frontispiece, *L'amore per il marito*; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).



Fig. 15. Detail of Frontispiece, *L'amore per l'amante; Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.).



Fig. 16. Keyhole-Themed Postcard; Dott. Paolo Ferk & Co.; Milan, Italy; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones; *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 101.



Fig. 17. Bed-Themed Postcards; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 58.



Fig. 18. Drawing from *Journal Amusant* (1909); reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 44.



Fig. 19. Derrière-Themed Postcard; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones; *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 86.



Fig. 20. Derrière-Themed Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 45.



Fig. 21. Stocking-Themed Postcard; Léo Fontan; France; three-color half-tone; series nos. 171 and 169; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 105.



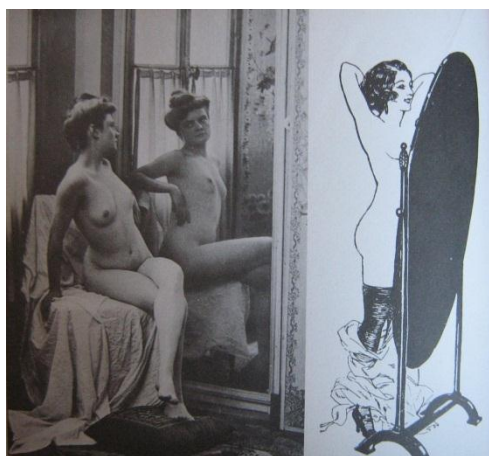
Fig. 22. Stocking-Themed Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 43.



Fig. 23. Stocking-Themed Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 34.



Fig. 24. First Illustration in *L'amore per il marito*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 9.



Figures 25 and 26. Mirror-Themed Postcards; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 66.



Figures 27 and 28. Mirror-Themed Postcards; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 67.



Fig. 29. Mirror-Themed Photograph from “La vie Parisienne,” (1924); reproduced in Erik Nørgaard; *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 99.



Fig. 30. Mirror-Themed Postcard; tinted photograph; series no. 207; J. Mandel: France; A. Noyer, Paris; 1920s; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 12.



Fig. 31. Mirror-Themed Postcard; sepia photograph (1920s); reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 12.



Fig. 32. Mirror-Themed Postcard; chromolithography; Italy; post 1906; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 119.



Fig. 33. Mirror-Themed Postcard; Paris (1910); reproduced in Ferruccio Farina, *Veneri nel cassetto* (Vicenza: Stock Libri S.p.A., 1989) 97.



Fig. 34. Mirror-Themed Postcard; Paris (1914); reproduced in Ferruccio Farina, *Veneri nel cassetto* (Vicenza: Stock Libri S.p.A., 1989) 131.

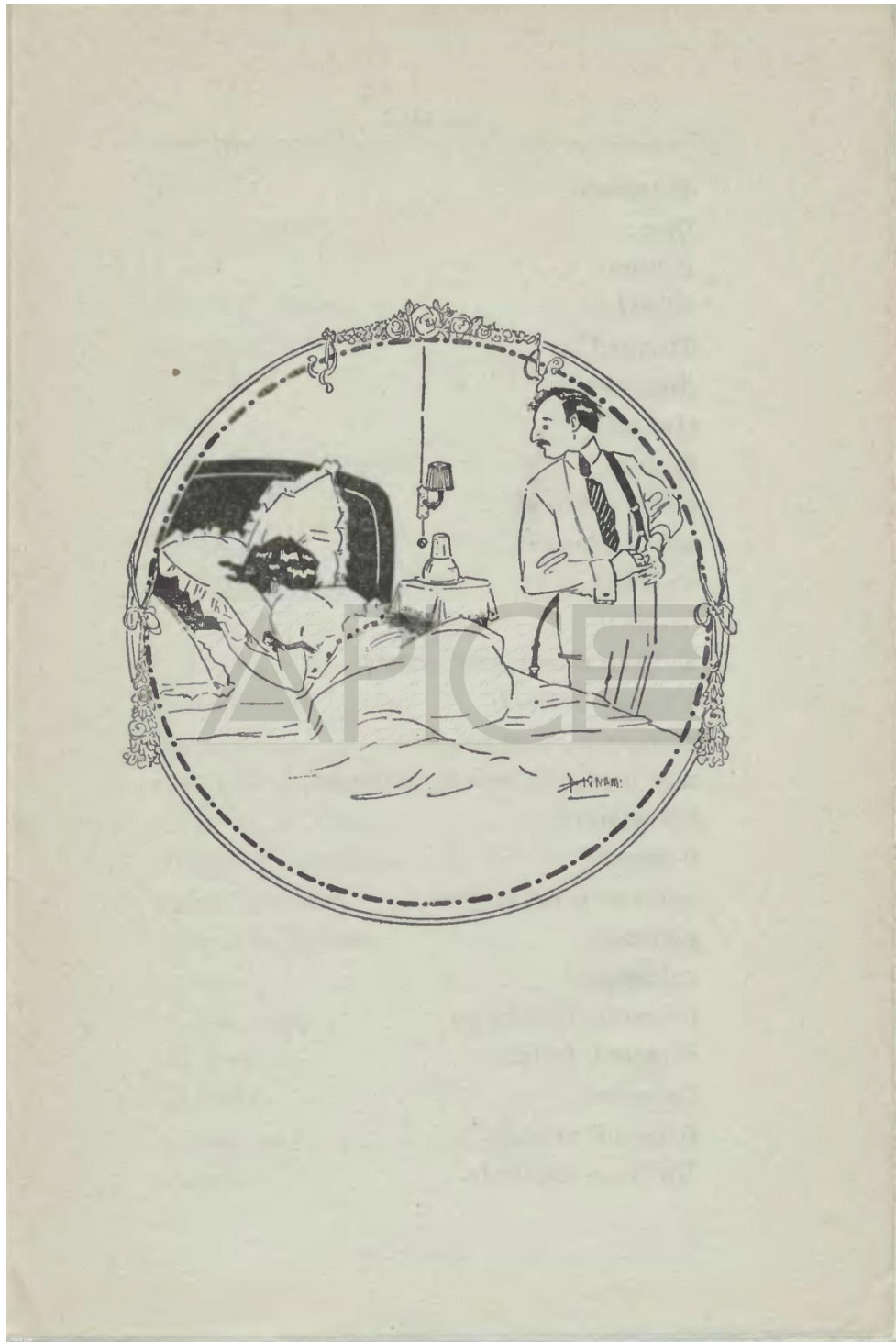


Fig. 35. Second Illustration in *L'amore per il marito*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 1; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 19.

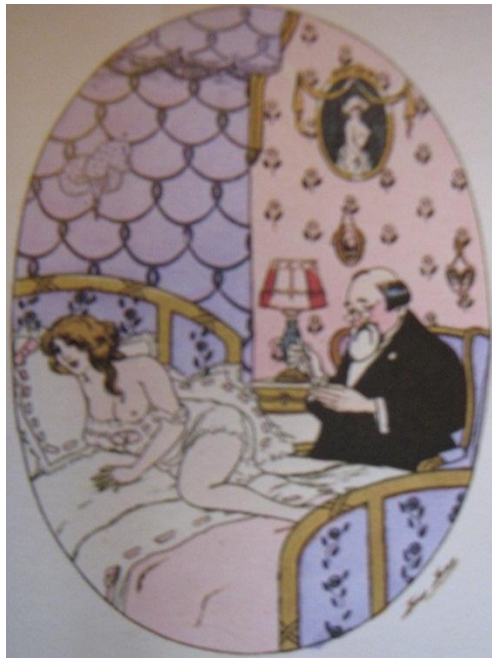


Fig. 36. Bedroom-Themed Postcard; by Sager; part of series; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 99.



Fig. 37. Wedding Night Postcard; part of series; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard, *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 107.

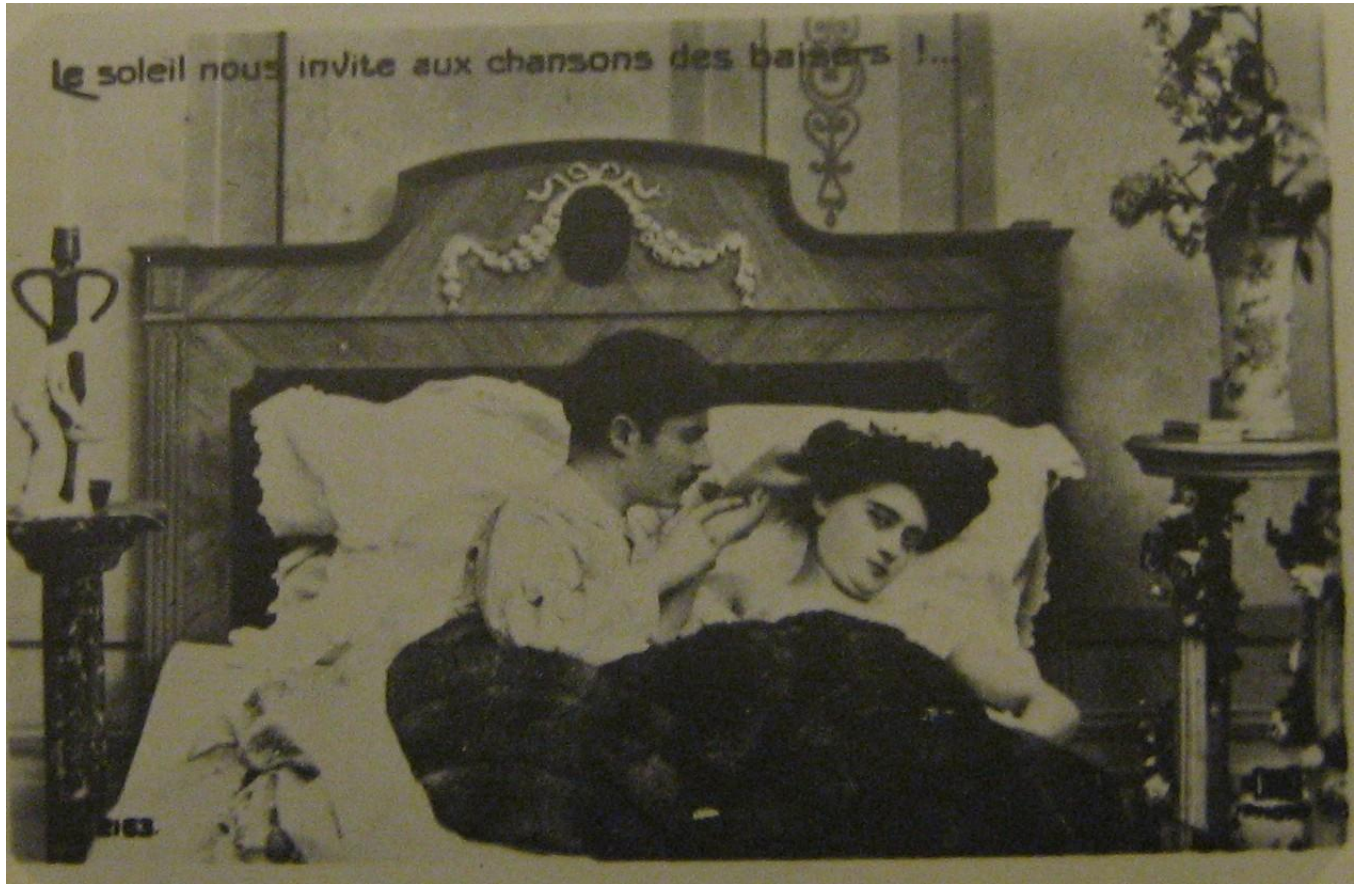


Fig. 38. Couple in Bed Postcard; part of series, reproduced in Paul Hammond, *French Undressing* (London: Jupiter Books, 1976) 46.



Fig. 39. First Illustration in *L'amore per l'amante*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 11.



Fig. 40. Pillow-Themed Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard, *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 40.



Fig. 41. Postcard of Couple in an Acrobatic Position; part of “park bench” series, reproduced in Paul Hammond, *French Undressing* (London: Jupiter Books, 1976) 39.

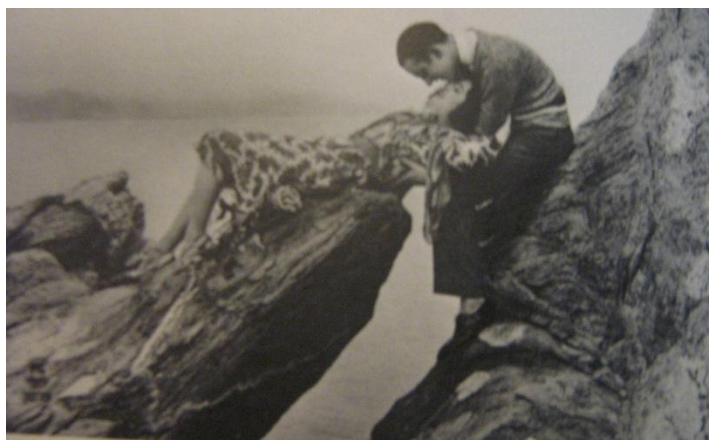


Fig. 42. Postcard of Couple in an Acrobatic Position; tinted photograph; series 3237; France; 1930s; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1976) 62.



Fig. 43. Cuckold Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard, *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 101.



Fig. 44. Horned Hand Postcard; reproduced in William Ouellette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* (New York: Excalibur Books, 1977) 18.



Fig. 45. Second Illustration in *L'amore per l'amante*; Luigi Bignami; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2; by Flora Bonheur; (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 23.



Fig. 46. Woman Seducing Man Postcard; reproduced in Erik Nørgaard, *With Love: The Erotic Postcard* (London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1969) 95.



Fig. 47. Words-in-Freedom; Flora Bonheur; *Diario d'una giovane donna futurista*, Vol. 2 (Bologna: Stabilimento poligrafico, n.d.) 18.



Fig. 48. “Ritratto di Marinetti;” Marietta Angelini; *Vela latina*, 12 February (1916); http://www.guaraldi.it/castelvetro/archfuturista/marinetti_uomorosso2.gif; Web; 10 May 2012.

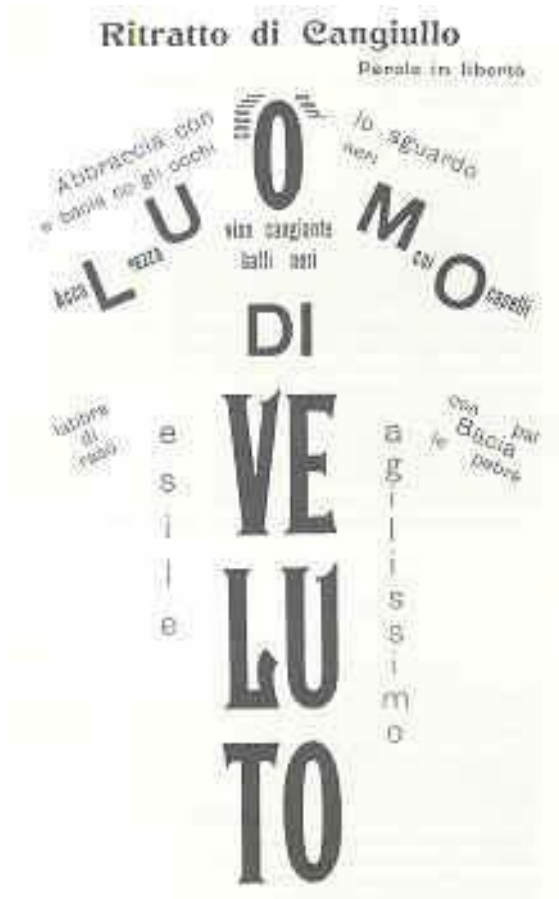


Fig. 49. "Ritratto di Cangiullo;" Marietta Angelini; *Vela latina*, 12 February (1916); <http://www.paviatricolore.org/immagini/Angelini2.jpg>; Web; 10 May 2012.

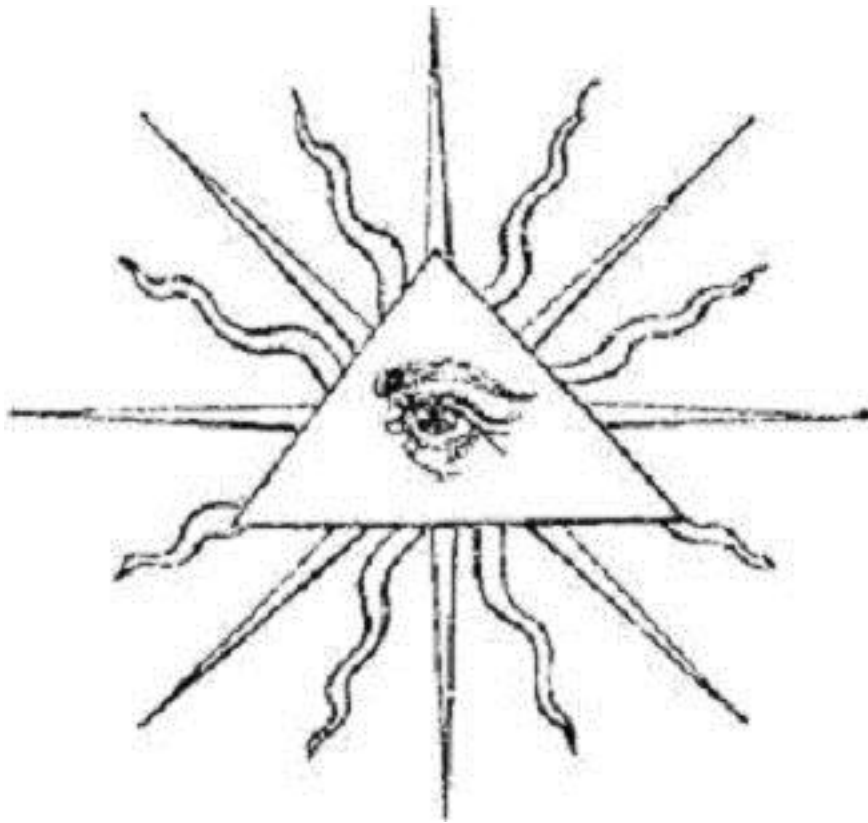


Fig.51. Eye of Providence;
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/Araldiz_Manno_263.png;
Web; 11 May 2012.

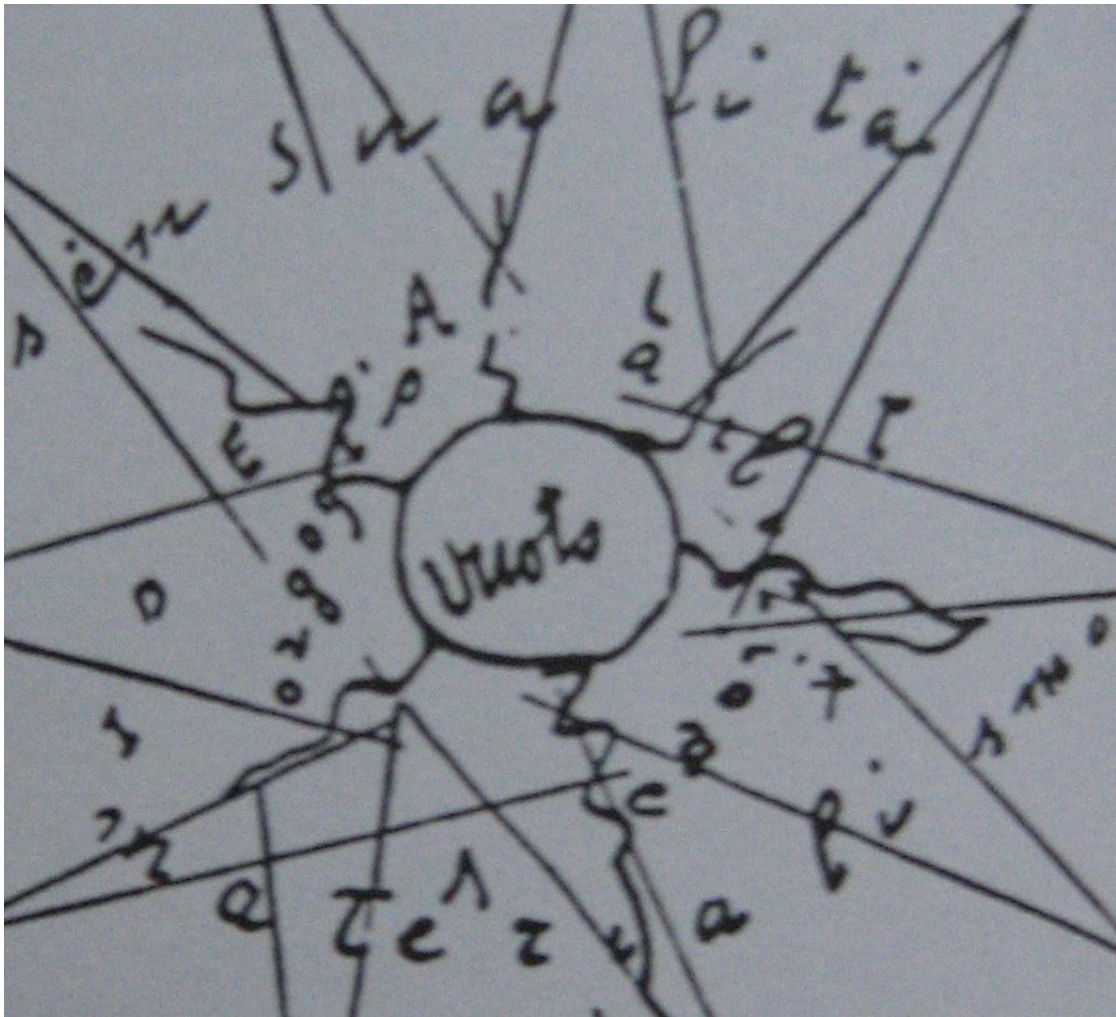


Fig.52. Detail of “Spicologia di 1 uomo;” Benedetta; *Dinamo*, I.1, February 1919; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2008) 44.

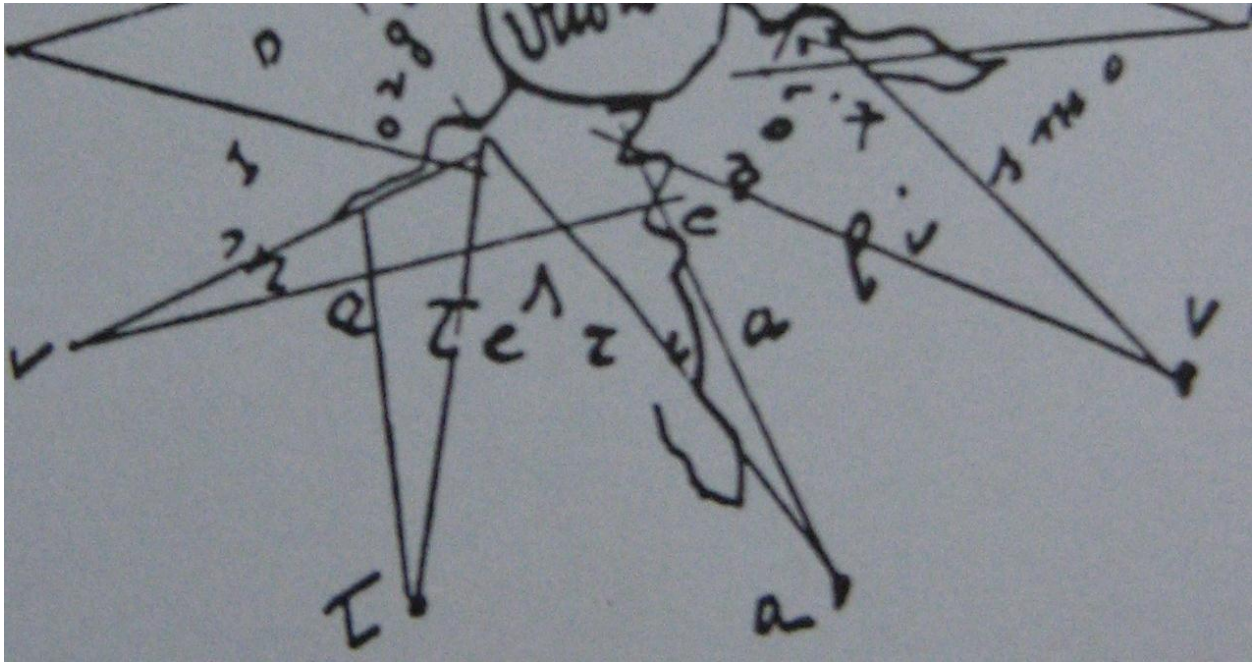


Fig. 53. Detail of “Spicologia di 1 uomo;” Benedetta; *Dinamo*, I.1, February 1919; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2008) 44.

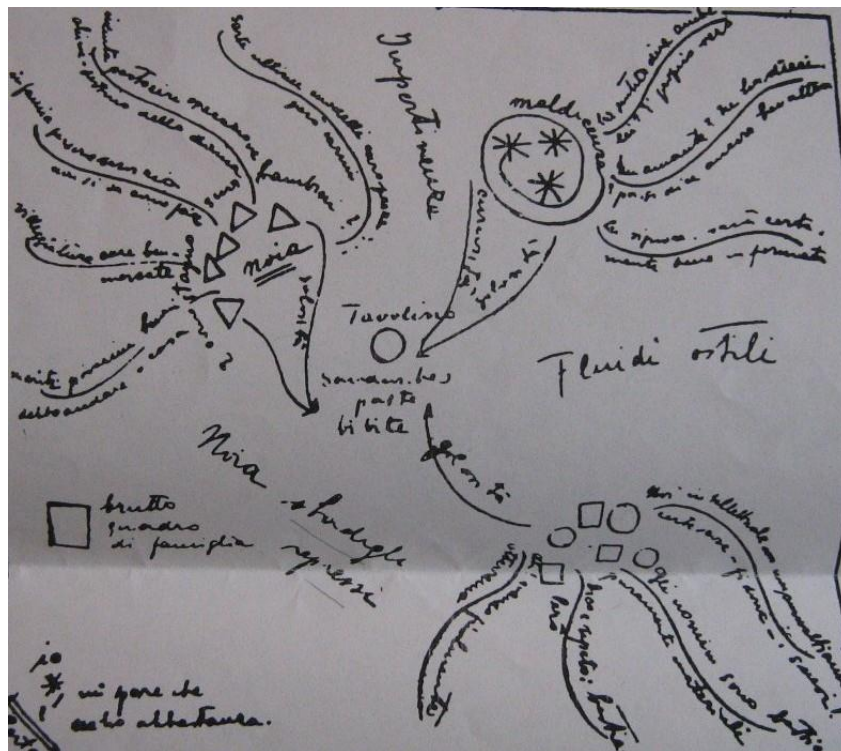


Fig. 54. "Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo;" Rosa Rosà; *L'Italia futurista*, December 9, 1917; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2008) 40.

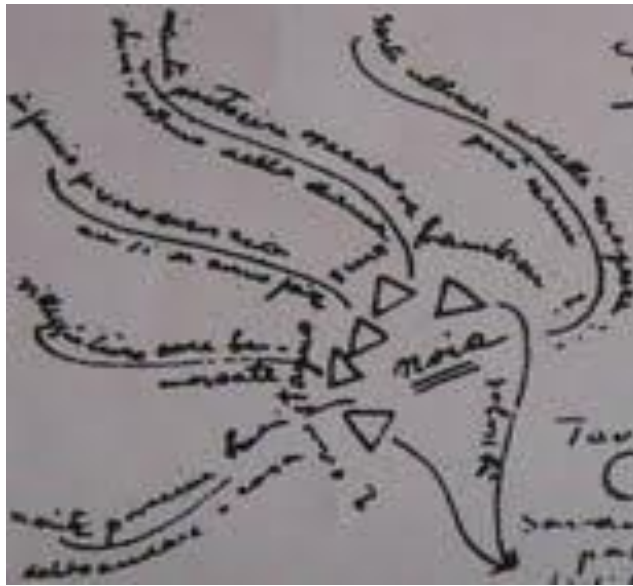


Fig. 55. Detail of “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo;” Rosa Rosà; *L’Italia futurista*, December 9, 1917; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2008) 40.

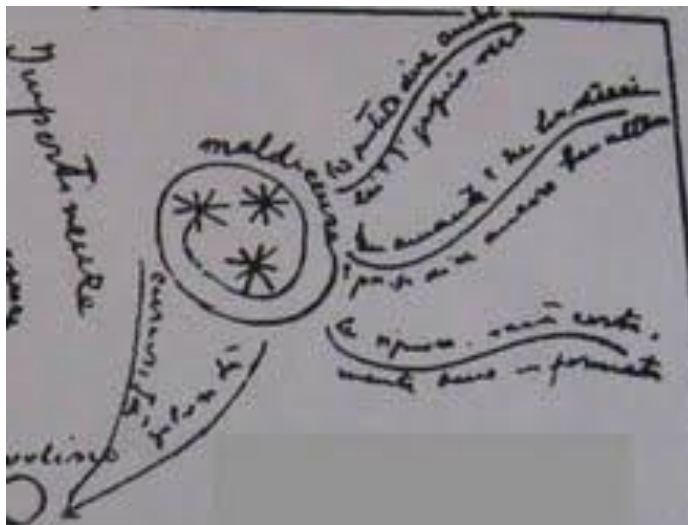


Fig. 56. Detail of “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo;” Rosa Rosà; *L’Italia futurista*, December 9, 1917; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2008) 40.



Fig. 57. Detail of “Ricevimento—thè—signore—nessun uomo;” Rosa Rosà; *L’Italia futurista*, December 9, 1917; reproduced in Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Le futuriste italiane nelle arti visive* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2008) 40.

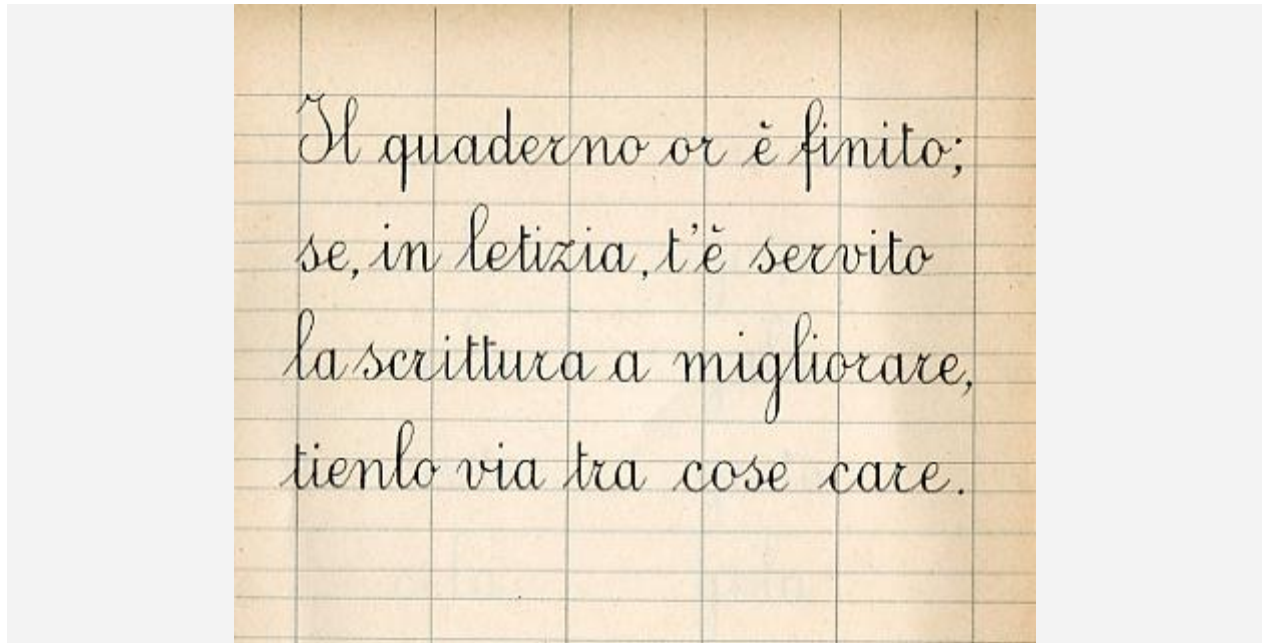


Fig. 58. Example of Italian Handwriting Taught in Schools;
<http://blog.giofugatype.com/?tag=scrittura-inglese>; Web; 4 April 2012.

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g
 H h I i J j K k L l M m N n
 O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u
 V v W w X x Y y Z z
 Special characters: A à O o U u ß

German: *Wie heißen Sie?*

English: *What is your last name?*

Fig. 59. Example of German-Austrian Script;
http://genealogy.about.com/od/paleography/ig/old_handwriting/Kurrent.htm;
 Web; 4 April 2012.

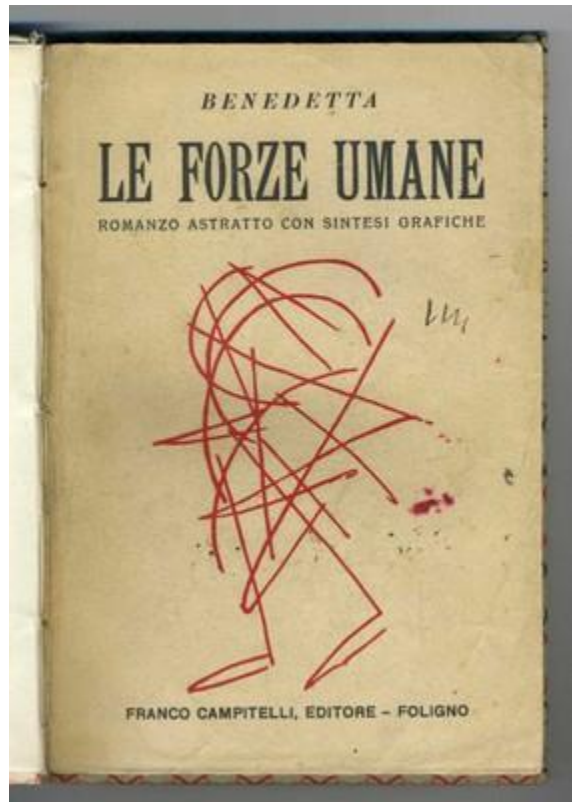


Fig. 60. Frontispiece of *Le forze umane*; Benedetta; *Le forze umane* (1924); http://expo.khi.fi.it/gallery/futurism/literature/novels/view?set_language=en; Web; 11 May 2012.

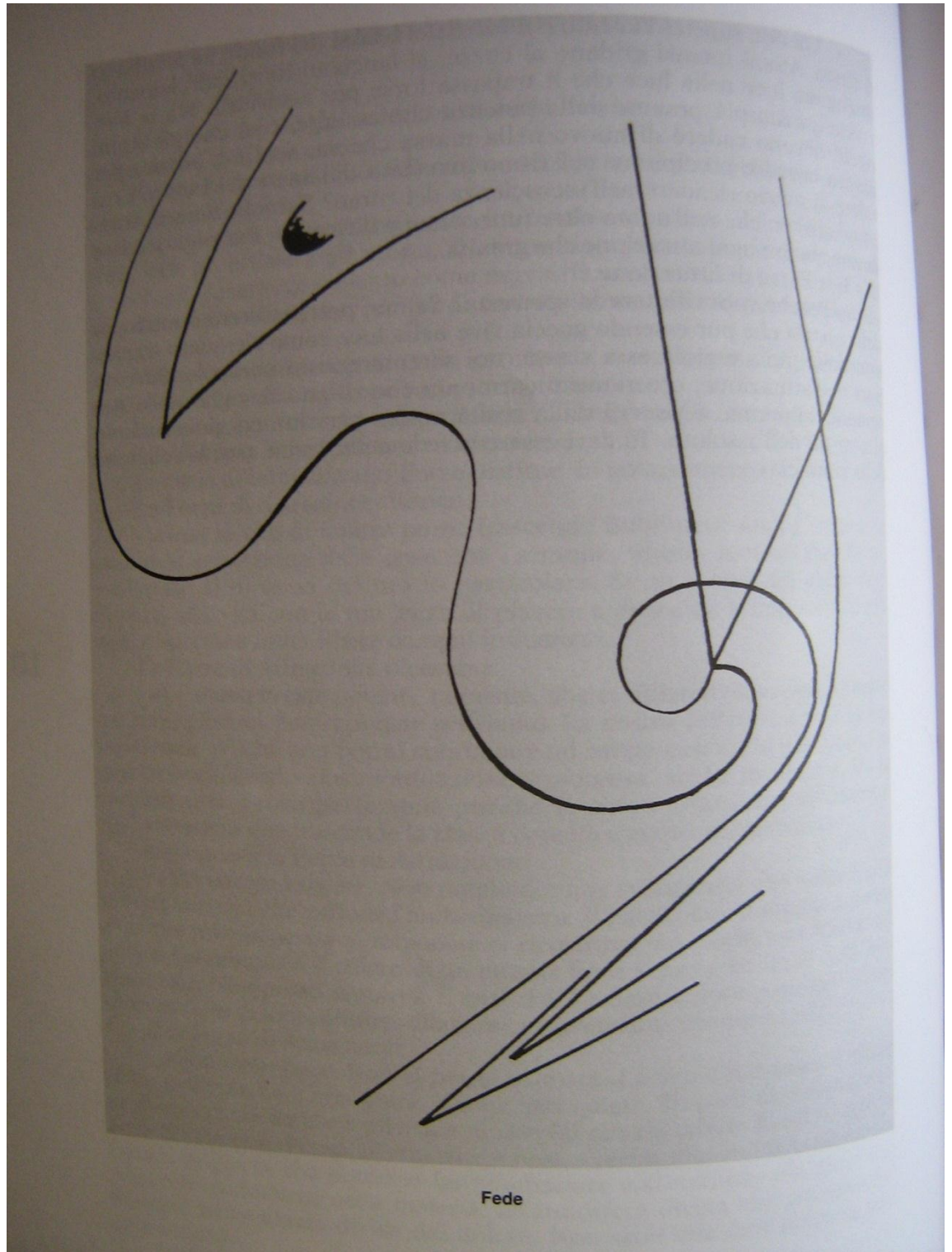


Fig. 61. *Sintesi grafica* "Fede;" Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Altana, 1998) 102.

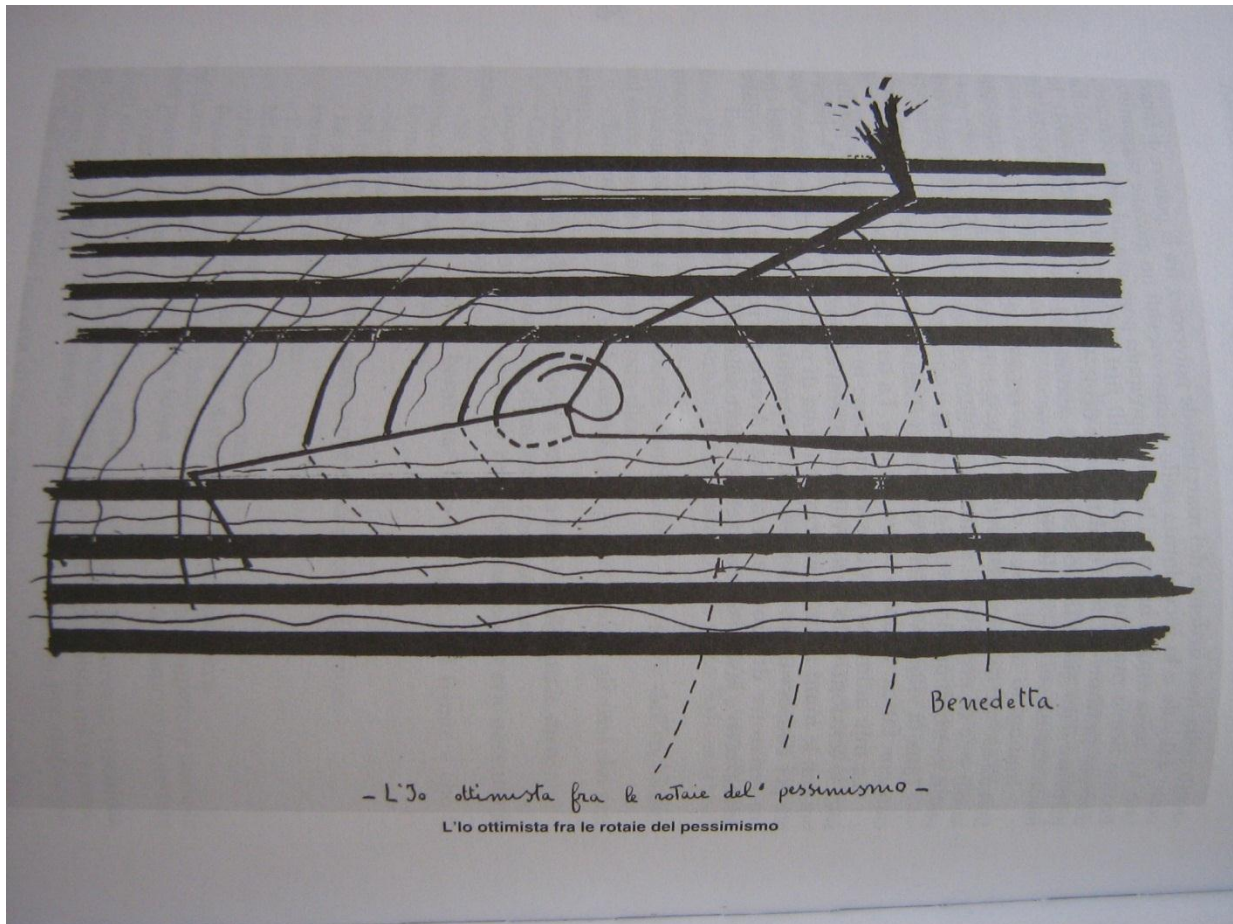


Fig. 62. *Sintesi grafica* “L’Io ottimista fra le rotaie del pessimismo;” Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998) 68.

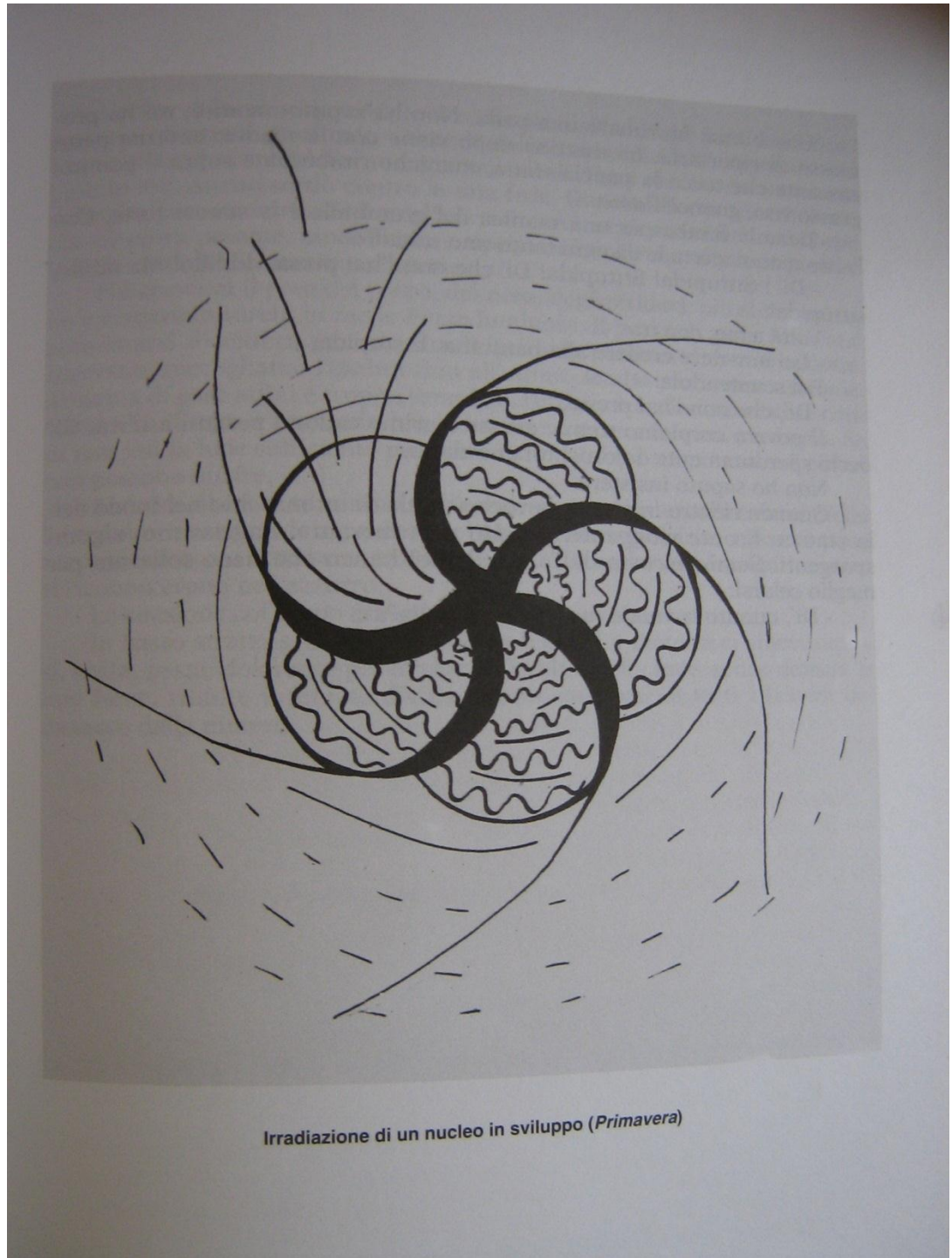


Fig. 63. *Sintesi grafica* “Irradiazione di un nucleo in sviluppo (Primavera);” Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998) 63.



Fig. 64. *Sintesi grafica* “Diversità raggiunte;” Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998) 57.

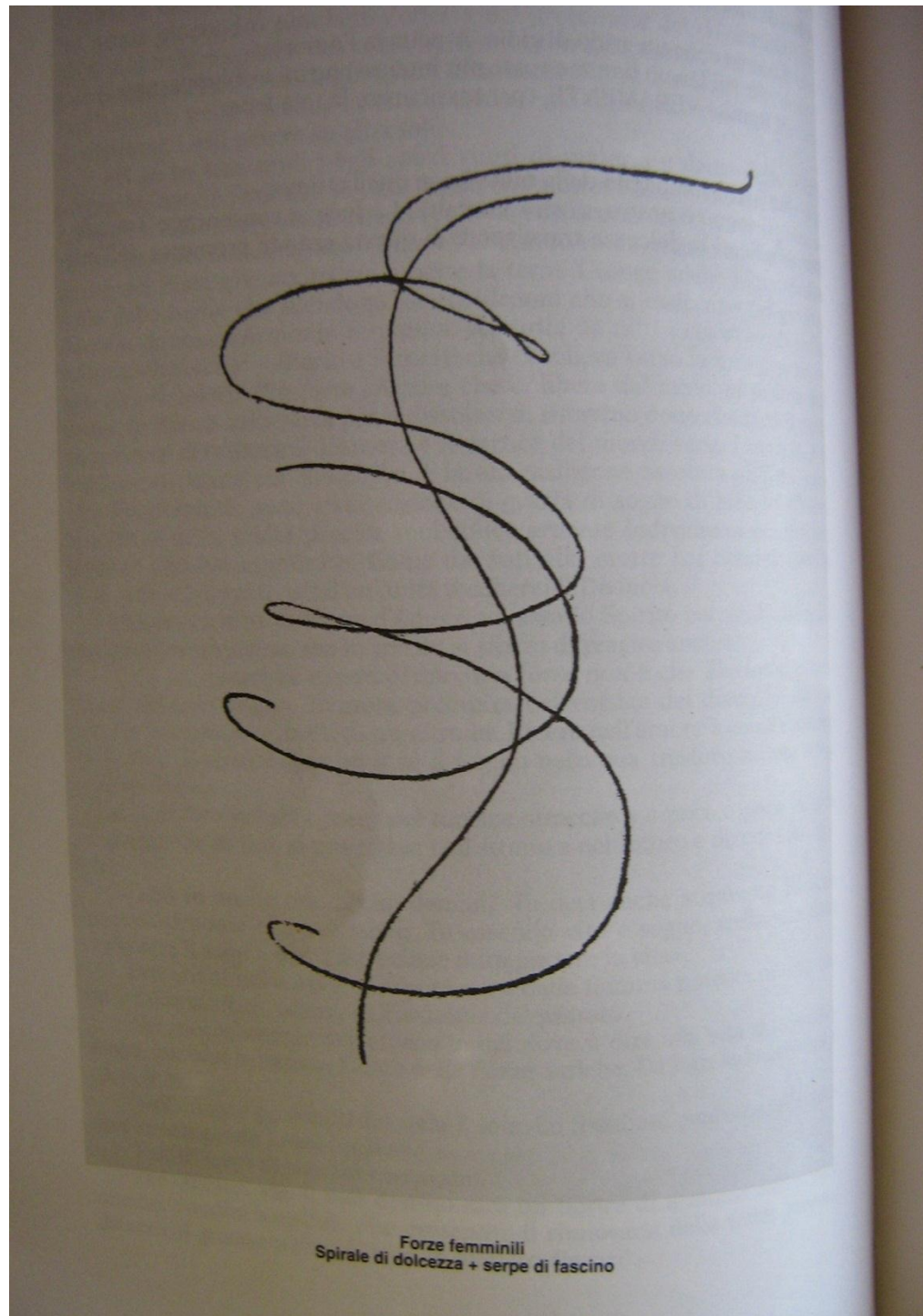


Fig. 65. *Sintesi grafica* “Forze femminili Spirale di dolcezza + serpe di fascino;” Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998) 106.

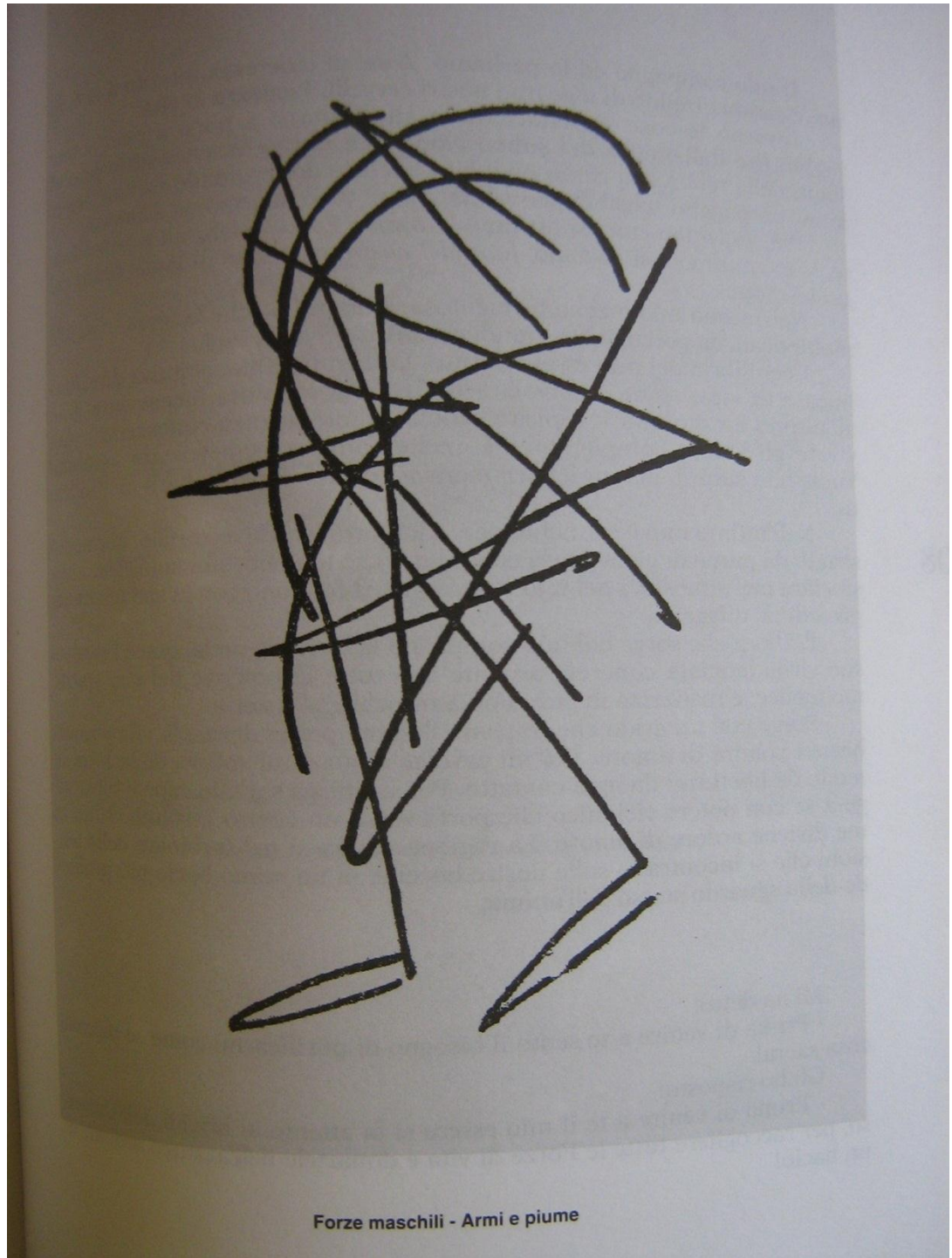


Fig. 66. *Sintesi grafica* “Forze maschili-Armi e piume;” Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998) 107.

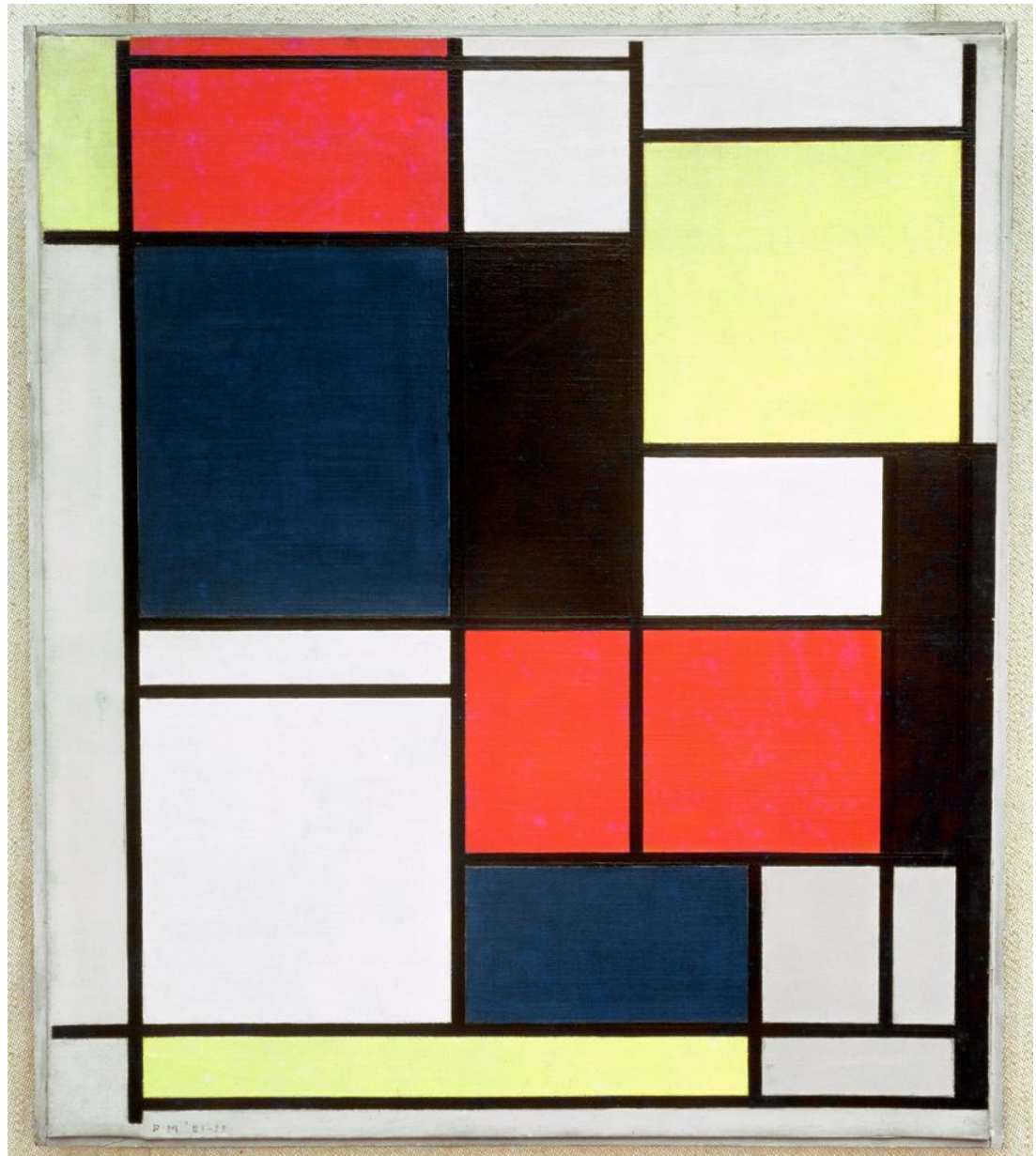


Fig. 67. Tableau No. 2 with Red, Blue, Black and Gray (1921-1925); Piet Mondrian; Oil on Canvas, 76 x 65 cm. Private Collection, Zurich; www.artstor.org; Web; 4 April 2012.

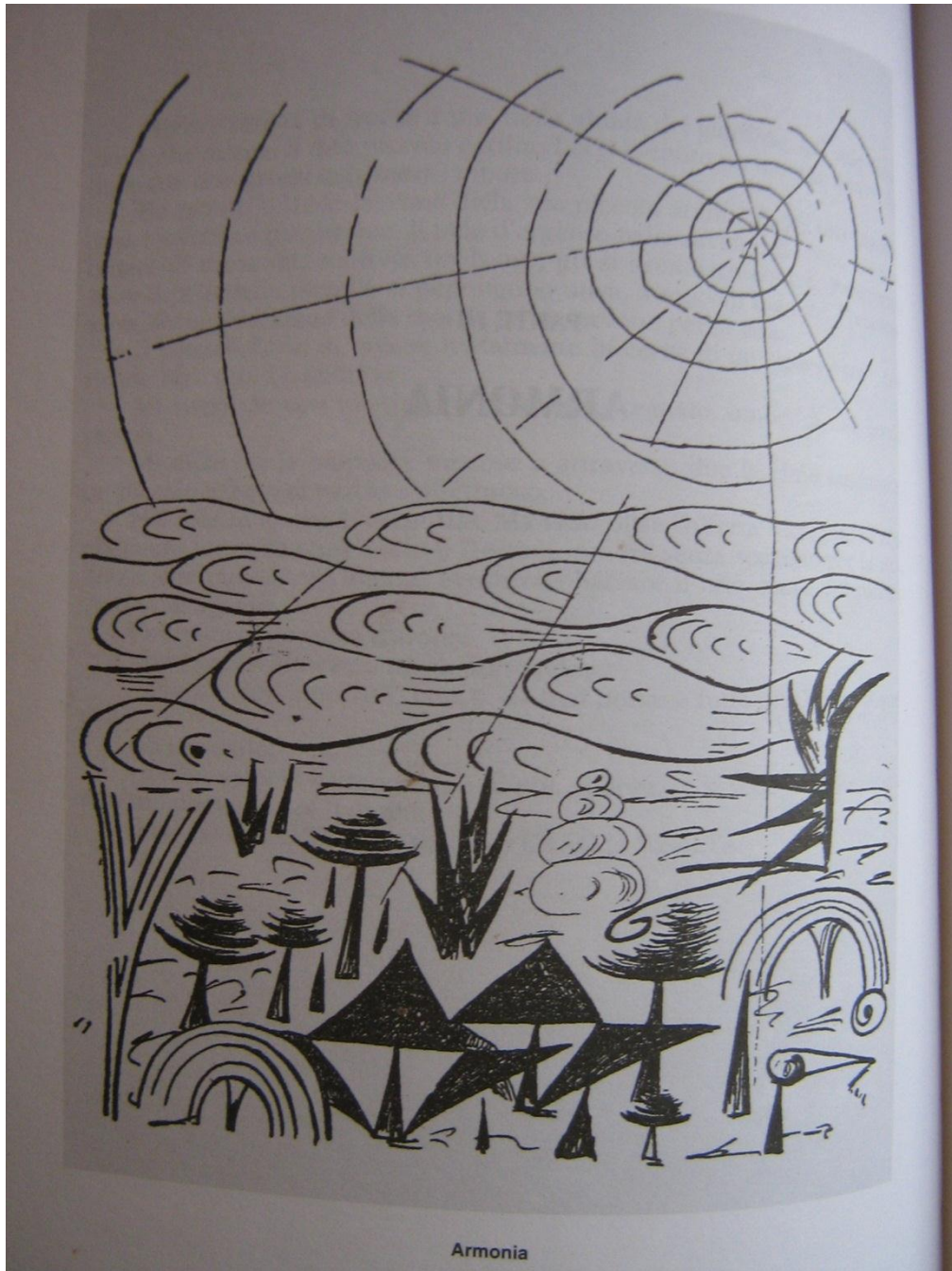


Fig. 68. *Sintesi grafica* "Armonia;" Benedetta, *Le forze umane* (1924); reprinted in *I tre romanzi* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Altana, 1998) 122.

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