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## Art from the Macchiaioli to the Futurists: Idealized Masculinity in the Art of Signorini and Balla

Melissa Ann Bush  
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Art from the Macchiaioli to the Futurists: Idealized Masculinity  
in the Art of Signorini and Balla

Melissa Ann Bush

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Art from the Macchiaioli to the Futurists: Idealized Masculinity in the Art of Signorini and Balla

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Beginning around 1850, Italians found themselves in the midst of an identity crisis. Europeans in France and England had surpassed Italians in terms of political, economic, and social progress. Italians seemed trapped in the past, clinging to their magnificent artistic heritage. However, new cultural and social movements were on the rise in Italy that attempted to throw off the domination of other European entities and forge a promising future for Italy.

The Macchiaioli, a group of Italian modern artists who painted from 1853 to 1908, were the first group to address contemporary social issues such as class struggle and national weakness. Their art called for progressive change and arguably influenced how the later Italian Futurist movement would address similar concerns beginning in 1909. One of the Macchiaioli, Telemaco Signorini, advocated the development of new technologies and industries—dominated by men—in realist paintings from 1853 to 1901. Futurist artist Giacomo Balla gained recognition for promoting similar ideas in a more radical fashion.

Most art historians believe that the Futurists were influenced by trends originating in Western Europe, specifically the French avant-garde. This thesis argues that the Futurists were significantly influenced by an Italian tradition that originated with the Macchiaioli. The Macchiaioli were animated by a nationalistic fervor and a desire to create a strong and unified Italian state. They used art and literature to advance progressive ideals based on masculine acts. The Futurists responded to similar stimuli in their day. In the absence of a powerful national identity, Signorini and Balla employed modern artistic styles to idealize masculine solutions to social problems. Both ultimately foresaw a world in which technology, mastered by men, would elevate Italian society.

Keywords: masculinity, Risorgimento, social change, Macchiaioli, Futurists, Realism

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mary Lou McNamara.  
Thank you for always believing in and encouraging me.  
I could not have done this without your support.

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## Introduction

The turn of the twentieth century was a time of identity redefinition for many nations. England, France, and other major European powers had revolutionized and established a foundation for continued progress. Europeans had anticipated the new century with excitement as new modern technologies brought seemingly endless possibilities. While parts of Europe had industrialized, Italy was just beginning to do so. The Risorgimento, a revolution that occurred in Italy throughout much of the nineteenth century, led to the nominal unification of Italy as a nation. However, because of regional, political, and cultural systems, progressive development was slow, and an Italian national identity was absent well into the twentieth century.

The Macchiaioli were the first group of modern Italian artists who used art to call attention to emerging social issues such as national weakness, class struggle, and gender roles. Working from 1853 to 1908, they painted un-romanticized subjects similar to contemporary French modern realists like Courbet, Daumier, and Millet, while experimenting with light, shade, and color. The Macchiaioli were the forebears of progressive artistic and philosophical ideas that influenced first-wave Futurists working from 1909 to 1915. This thesis asserts that the Macchiaioli capitalized on sentiments about masculinity to press for social change, and that first-wave Futurists expanded on this approach. Both groups used masculinity as a substitute for national identity during and after the Risorgimento.

Both the Macchiaioli and first-wave Futurists experienced similar stimuli in the form of specific social problems and cultural assumptions.<sup>1</sup> Each group also had similar responses through visual art and literature. Although the Macchiaioli were more realistic and the Futurists were more abstract, there is continuity between them. Both movements experimented with

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<sup>1</sup> First-wave Futurists are referred to as Futurists hereafter.



realism and impressionism, lines of force of a masculine nature, and the use of increasingly abstract artistic approaches to comment on society and promote progressive ideas. The conventional view is that French modernism influenced both the Macchiaioli and the Futurists. Some Macchiaioli are known to have maintained friendships with French impressionists like Degas. Futurist artist Carlo Carrà claimed that Futurist lineage came through Courbet, a Realist, as well as Impressionists such as Manet, Renoir, and Cezanne. While French Modern art undoubtedly influenced artistic trends in Italy, this thesis focuses on the interior influence of Italian Modernism starting with the Macchiaioli and concluding with the Futurists.<sup>2</sup>

Links between the Macchiaioli and the Futurists have not been widely recognized nor clearly established.<sup>3</sup> The Futurists liked to describe their art as a clean break from their contemporaries painting in the classical style. However, the Macchiaioli had previously declared war on classical art.<sup>4</sup> Because the Futurists were positioned at the beginning of the twentieth century and seem so different stylistically from most artists of the previous century, little existing scholarship suggests that the Futurists were ever associated with, let alone an artistic extension of, the Macchiaioli.

One of the key links between the Macchiaioli and the Futurists was an approach to art and a conception of solutions to social problems that may be characterized as masculine. The Futurists eventually developed this notion of masculinity to the extreme, depicting an idealized, excessively masculine social order. Artists in both movements perceived some backwardness

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<sup>2</sup> Hal Foster, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, and Postmodernism* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind McKeever, "Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919" (PhD diss., Kingston University, 2012), 183-184.

<sup>4</sup> Adriano Cecioni, "Artisti e Critici," 27 February 1881, reprinted in *Opere e Scritti*, ed. by Enrico Somare (Milan: Edizioni deU'Esarne, 1932), 134. Translated and quoted in Norma Broude, *The Macchiaioli: Italian Painters of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), 13.

among their countrymen and used art to criticize current realities and portray masculine ideals as a means for obtaining a better future. The Macchiaioli pressed for revolution while the Futurists advocated anarchy, but both conditions were to be brought about through masculine means. Ultimately the works produced in the two movements reflected and contributed to Italians' collective identity, substituting masculine ideals for a lack of nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

## Approach

Research conducted for this thesis builds upon previous scholarship on the Macchiaioli and the Futurists. Extensive research has been published on the Futurists, including their artistic intentions.<sup>6</sup> The Macchiaioli have not been as widely studied, and relatively few publications trace the later years of this movement. Only one scholar, Rosalind McKeever, has studied the Futurists in relation to their past. This thesis stems from and extends her suggestion that the Macchiaioli influenced the Futurists.<sup>7</sup>

To advance the argument, this thesis refers to the both movements but focuses on one emblematic member of each group. Telemaco Signorini represents the Macchiaioli and Giacomo Balla represents the Futurists. There are several reasons for highlighting these artists in particular. Each was an important figure in his respective movement and well known in his

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see Giampiero Giani, *Il Futurismo, 1910-1916* (Venice: Del Cavallino, 1950).; Enrico Falqui, *Il Futurismo Novecentismo* (Torino: Edizione Radio Italiana, 1953).; M. Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, *Archivi del Futurismo* 1 (1958), 2 (1962).; Enrico Falqui, *Bibliografia e Iconografia del Futurismo* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1959).; Rosa T. Clough, *Futurism. The Story of a Modern Art Movement, A New Appraisal* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961).; Joshua C. Taylor, *Futurism* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1961).; Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).; Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).; Pontus Hulten, *Futurism & Futurisms* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986).; Enrico Crispolti and Franco Sborgi, *Futurismo. I Grandi Temi 1904-1944* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1997).; Enrico Crispolti, *Futurismo. 1909-1944* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> McKeever, "Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919," 185. In her dissertation, she looks back to all of the movements that preceded and could have influenced Futurism, starting with ancient Rome. Her section on the Macchiaioli is a short five paragraphs, but concludes, "there are a number of comparisons to be drawn with them; the Macchiaioli can be seen as the instigators of an attitude towards artistic innovation and the academy which can be traced through to the Futurists."

lifetime. While artists in both movements painted in a variety of styles, Signorini and Balla painted in the realist and impressionist styles of the 1890s.<sup>8</sup> Although the Macchiaioli movement was fading by 1875, Signorini continued to produce political art and literature into the early twentieth century. Balla, the oldest of the Futurist group, was painting well before the Futurist movement was established. Therefore, the overlap in their life spans allows the possibility of contact and influence. Finally, both men had literary interests, and their written texts provide insight into their similar artistic intent.

The Macchiaioli and the Futurists are introduced in the first section which follows. A section exploring how Signorini could have influenced Balla appears next because tracing connections between the Macchiaioli and Futurists is central to this thesis. Then, sections on the European and Italian social contexts which gave rise to the two movements will be discussed. The next four sections draw out continuities between the two movements by focusing on common themes: social consciousness and activism; the role of women; the role of masculinity; and the extreme idealization of masculinity. A concluding section summarizes the arguments supporting this thesis.

This research draws on several theoretical models. Gender theory facilitates an understanding of male and female roles in Italy around the turn of the century. Social structural and conflict theory explain how economic and other conditions gave rise to political and social concerns in Italy. Communication and collective memory theory describe the rise of Italian national identity based on masculinity. Psychological theory provides an understanding of artistic motivations, decisions, and meaning in specific works of art. Finally, postcolonial theory gives insight into Italy's complicit role in forms of subjugation by other European powers. Together

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<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Lista, *Giacomo Balla Futuriste* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1984), 27.

these theories provide a framework for understanding why a social context of relative backwardness and male privilege in Italy resulted in similar responses by the Macchiaioli and the Futurists.

The concept of masculinity deserves particular attention because of its prominence in this thesis. Current scholarship conceives of gender as a role that is performed rather than a set of biological traits, and thus may vary by time and place.<sup>9</sup> Here, masculinity includes norms typically referenced by current academics when studying gender—norms that may or may not characterize Italian culture at the turn of the century.<sup>10</sup> These norms include decisiveness; toughness; aggressiveness; projection of confidence and capability; self reliance and the ability to shelter others; being admired, respected, and ascendant; being physically adventurous if not violent; restricting or concealing emotions other than anger; and avoiding what might be considered feminine.<sup>11</sup> Imposing a current understanding of traditional gender roles on the subject aids a modern analysis of the past.

#### Introduction to the Macchiaioli and the Futurists

The Macchiaioli were a group of Florentine artists who had participated in the Risorgimento and regularly met to discuss art and politics.<sup>12</sup> They rallied around social issues and the possibilities that industrialization seemed to offer, steadily producing realist work beginning in the 1860s. The word “macchiaioli” translates as “markers” or “stainers.” This moniker alludes to their slightly abstract and impressionistic approach to realism. The term

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<sup>9</sup> Benedetta Gennaro, “Women in Arms: Gender in the Risorgimento, 1848-1861” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2010), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Lucia Albino Gilbert and Murray Scher, *Gender and Sex in Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 32-33.

<sup>11</sup> Carole A. Beere, *Gender Roles: A Handbook of Tests and Measures* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 6-7. For a scale on measuring attitudes about masculinity, also see the Brannon Masculinity Scale as an example in Robert Brannon and Samuel Juni, *Psychological Documents* 1984, 14.

<sup>12</sup> The Risorgimento refers to a period in Italy roughly between 1848 and 1866. During this time, Italy battled against Austrian insurgents in a series of wars that included the Italian Wars of Independence.

“macchia” also connoted the clandestine activities of outlaws and revolutionaries.<sup>13</sup> Like most widely acclaimed Modernists, their art provided political commentary on society, including the lack of a positive nationalism.<sup>14</sup> The Macchiaioli sometimes portrayed Italians as old-fashioned, supporting a need to reform and progress.

Beginning in 1909, a group of Milanese artists who called themselves the Futurists formed to critique Italian society in many of the same ways as the Macchiaioli. However, their technologically-themed art was much more abstract and politically extreme.<sup>15</sup> The Futurists recognized similar challenges in society but called for more drastic changes; they promoted technology and industrialization like the Macchiaioli, but also war and anarchy as means of creating a new Italy.

Signorini advocated for a better, modernized future for Italy and he advocated for it through art and literature until the end of his life in 1901. He critiqued the existing class system in paintings from 1852 to 1901, and published political and artistic commentaries in various magazines such as *The New Europe* and *The Artistic Journal*.<sup>16</sup> He was also an art critic and a polemic voice in literary politics. In a review defending realist art at the Vienna exposition in 1873, Signorini dared people to welcome “new ideas for a new society which is still in infancy, and accept the destiny of future art, which may divorce itself with all traditions of the past.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Judith Ellen Meighan. “The Stato d’Animo Aesthetic: Gaetano Previati, Umberto Boccioni and the Development of Early Futurist Painting in Italy” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1998), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Boime, *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Elza Adamowicz, *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-garde and Its Legacy* (Manchester: University Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Silvio Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini* (Florence: Galleria d’Arte Moderna di Palazzo Pitti, 2008), 81.

<sup>17</sup> Silvio Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*, 81.; This article, titled “Cose d’Arte” published in *Il Diritto* (August 7, 1871), Signorini describes an encounter he had with an acquaintance at a museum in Florence. He describes the moment, talking with a woman while standing in front of a Rafael painting. Signorini states that her “enthusiasm and admiration” for Rafael “exploded” in front of the canvas. Continuing the conversation, Signorini asks her if she has paid a visit to the 24<sup>th</sup> Promotrice exhibition nearby that displayed modern art. He was appalled

His influence through art and literature continued up until the time of the Futurists.

Giacomo Balla, a self-proclaimed humanitarian socialist, was already an established artist by the 1890s.<sup>18</sup> He studied at the Academia Albertina in Torino, and was politically influenced by the Risorgimento hero Vittorio Emanuele II, whose father helped establish the academy. In 1895, at the age of twenty-four, Balla moved to Rome where he finished out his career. Though he travelled extensively, Balla was more widely known for his artistic production than other Futurists before he joined their movement in 1910.<sup>19</sup>

#### Signorini's Possible Influence on Balla

A connection between the Macchiaioli and the Futurists can be established because of their similar social contexts in northern Italy around the turn of the century. In addition, it is plausible that Signorini directly influenced Balla given their physical proximity, similar political agendas, and overlapping life spans. Signorini was prominent in artistic circles from the founding of the Macchiaioli movement until the time of his death. As detailed in the rest of this section, the reach of Signorini's literary work, the multiple exhibitions where their work was shown together, and the similar artistic styles, increase the likelihood of possible contact and influence.

In 1893 Signorini published a book of political satire, *Caricaturisti e Caricaturati al Caffè Michelangiolo* (Charicaturists and Charicatured at Caffè Michelangiolo). The book garnered attention from newspapers throughout the peninsula.<sup>20</sup> It would have been of particular interest to Balla, who was also drawn to politics and worked as a caricaturist early in his career.<sup>21</sup>

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when she informed him that she was unaware such an event existed.; Silvio Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 36.

<sup>19</sup> Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 73.

<sup>20</sup> Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*, 139.

<sup>21</sup> Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915*, 73.

After Balla moved to Rome he was especially likely to have been exposed to Signorini's political voice through articles published in Roman journals and newspapers. Signorini's writings called attention to his political and artistic views.

Balla was exposed to Signorini's art when they both exhibited at the Torino Promotrice held in 1895. Balla, who was born and raised in Torino, had a consistent record of attending and exhibiting at the Torino Promotrice as early as 1893.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Signorini and Balla were both in attendance at the 1899 Venice Biennale.<sup>23</sup> Balla was certainly exposed to Signorini's work at the Torino Quadriennale held in 1902 which exhibited works from both artists.<sup>24</sup> This exhibition paid homage to Signorini, who died the previous year, with a room that was dedicated to him and filled with over 250 of his works. Balla's work was exhibited only two rooms away from the Signorini gallery. Finally, the works of both artists were exhibited at the 1903 Venice Biennale, two years after Signorini's death.<sup>25</sup> Each of these exhibitions was an opportunity for Signorini, one of the last Macchiaioli, to influence Balla, one of the first Futurists.

Another reason to suppose that Signorini influenced Balla was that both painted in Realist and Impressionist styles in the 1890s. While these modes of painting were common among many artists in mid-century Europe including the Macchiaioli, Balla was the only Futurist to work in these styles. Balla actually favored realism in his early years of Futurism.<sup>26</sup> Having a similar stylistic approach increases the likelihood that Balla followed Signorini's artistic production, and it is likely that the interest was mutual. Signorini was quite gregarious and kept

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<sup>22</sup> Renato Breda, *1890-1940 Artisti e Mostre - Repertorio di Pittori e Incisori Italiani in Esposizioni Nazionali* (Roma: Nuova Galleria Campo dei Fiori, 2001), 46.

<sup>23</sup> Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 272.

<sup>24</sup> Breda, *1890-1940 Artisti e Mostre - Repertorio di Pittori e Incisori Italiani in Esposizioni Nazionali*, 444.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 508.

<sup>26</sup> Leah Reilly Sherman, "Institution Versus Individuality: Rethinking Unity in Early Italian Futurism" (Master's Thesis, The Florida State University, 2012), 24.

in close contact with friends and acquaintances as far away as Paris and London, even literary rivals.<sup>27</sup> He welcomed the opportunity to meet other artists and literati, so Signorini may have come into contact with Balla on various undocumented occasions through shared interests and mutual friends.

There is still another reason to believe that the Macchiaioli influenced the Futurists. It is not often highlighted, but certain Futurists admired the Macchiaioli. In 1914 Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni stated that the Macchiaioli were “the only glimmer of hope for modern Italian art” other than Futurism.<sup>28</sup> Another Futurist painter, Carlo Carrà, lamented the fact that critics had not paid more attention to the Macchiaioli.<sup>29</sup> In the 1920s, critic Massimo Bontempelli recognized a connection between the Macchiaioli and the Futurists, stating that these nineteenth-century Italian painters, “possessed the ability to invent new myths, fables, [and] heroes for the epoch” that the Futurists had the “task of promulgating.”<sup>30</sup> The social context of both movements beginning around the mid-nineteenth century created a link between the Macchiaioli and Futurists as noted by some artists and critics a century ago, and upon which this thesis elaborates.

### European Social Context

The nineteenth century was a time of turmoil for much of Europe. Changes in government, new philosophies, and new technologies disrupted long-standing institutions which led to further social change. For example, the French Revolution beginning in the late eighteenth century introduced new ideas about the nature of society. Throughout the French revolution, a sense of national identity was ever present even as forms of leadership changed.<sup>31</sup> France became

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<sup>27</sup> Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*, 139.

<sup>28</sup> McKeever, “Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919,” 185.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 71.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence Scheinman, “The Politics of Nationalism in Contemporary France,” *International Organization* 23, no. 4 (1969): 836-837.



more democratic and depended on national unity rather than local feudal systems to become economically and politically strong. In England, organized political parties and a parliamentary system helped bring about progressive social change as the country industrialized. Factories and commercial enterprises helped boost England's economic power by the time Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837. England and France emerged as economic leaders in Europe.<sup>32</sup> These two countries established new trends in fashion, culture, and art throughout the nineteenth century which the Italians copied. Indeed, a majority of Italians bought their clothes directly from Paris or relied on French tailors working in Italy.<sup>33</sup>

Humanities academic Leigh Coral Harris noted that an 1866 travel guide for Britons stated that Italy was “a little behind others on the Continent as regards to railway communication,” and alluded to other outmoded characteristics including a lack of national sentiment.<sup>34</sup> Harris also noted that English and Italian nineteenth-century authors alike equated Italian men with political power and Italian women with a lack thereof.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Harris observed that the country seemed feminine to outsiders, in the sense of being relatively passive and powerless, compared to other countries in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

After the Risorgimento, Italy still lacked a common Italian spoken language, and the majority of people remained illiterate.<sup>37</sup> In addition, while other European nations were developing industrialized economies, Italy's economy was overwhelmingly agrarian until after

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<sup>32</sup> Sandy Crawford, “Victorian Britain: A Century of Reform,” last modified July 27, 2012, accessed October 19, 2015, <http://www.lsrhs.net/departments/history/CrawfordS/MEHsite/IndRev/IRpdfs/VicBritaltrdg.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Eugenia Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire* (New York: City University of New York, 2014), 285.

<sup>34</sup> Leigh Coral Harris, “The Other Italian Question: Gender and the Figure of Modern Italy in British Culture: 1820-1970” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1998), 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Cento Bull, “Social and Political Culture in Italy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 35.

World War I.<sup>38</sup> These conditions were not conducive to strong nationalist sentiments that could help bring about economic development or other positive change for the country.

Philosophical interest and social consciousness increased in most European countries in the midst of political turmoil throughout the nineteenth century. Texts like Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848, encouraged social reform. Marxist ideas about means of production and future society circulated throughout Europe. Marx thought that art should be used to advance social reform. He stated, "Tradition from all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living . . . The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot create its poetry from the past but only from the future."<sup>39</sup> The socialist movement instigated by Marx was manifest in Italy with the Risorgimento.<sup>40</sup> However, various conditions in Italy made the implementation of new philosophical ideas somewhat difficult.

#### Italian Social Context

In the late nineteenth century Italy was a disjointed and antiquated country without a strong national identity.<sup>41</sup> Some Italian nationalist sentiments had emerged in response to repression as early as 1805 when Napoleon Bonaparte conquered much of Europe, including Italy, crowning himself King of Italy. However, as Napoleon's reign began to decline in 1814, he and his delegates propagated French nationalist sentiments to maintain power. At the time of Napoleon's demise, Austrians invaded and occupied Italy.<sup>42</sup> The French king of one of Italy's many nation states, Joachim Murat, issued a proclamation in 1815 for Italians to revolt against

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<sup>38</sup> Ara H. Merjian, "A Future by Design: Giacomo Balla and the Domestication of Transcendence," *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 2 (2012): 126.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," reprinted in *Eighteenth Brumaire: (Post)modern Interpretations*, (New York: Die Revolution, 1852), 19-22.

<sup>40</sup> Robert S. Dombroski, "Communism and Other "Isms," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*. (The University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 113-130.

<sup>41</sup> Scheinman, "The Politics of Nationalism in Contemporary France," 835.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Hicks, "How Napoleon Became King Of Italy." Last Modified October 23, 2012. Accessed September 3, 2015. [http://www.napoleon.org/en/reading\\_room/articles/files/hicks\\_napoleon\\_kingitaly.asp](http://www.napoleon.org/en/reading_room/articles/files/hicks_napoleon_kingitaly.asp).

Austrian occupation. The tension between disunited Italians and Austria continued for a few decades into the Italian Wars of Independence beginning in 1848 and ending in 1866. This period of turmoil, war, and nascent unification is referred to as the Risorgimento.

The rhetoric of Giuseppe Mazzini, a political activist, had strong appeal. His was a leading voice in unification efforts before and during the Risorgimento. Mazzini had a zest for verbal showmanship and a propensity for physical action. He presented an image of total self-confidence—traits of machismo, known in Italian as *gallismo*.<sup>43</sup> Historian Richard Basham has argued that machismo is related to deep fears of inadequacy.<sup>44</sup> According to him the macho man never shows fear, yet fear is the main force behind his actions. Mazzini's assertive, macho attitudes and ideas were appealing to many people throughout the Italian peninsula as a symbol of power. Many Italians who felt demoralized by Austrian repression and Italy's backwardness were bolstered by Mazzini's confidence. His revolutionary voice encouraged Italians in various city-states to revolt against Austrian domination.

Although Italian national borders were established during the Risorgimento, Italian unification efforts continued for many years.<sup>45</sup> The process of unification was nominal until at least 1871 when the capital was established in Rome. Several conditions made it difficult for Italy to develop economically and culturally and coalesce as a nation. These included regionalism, a traditional sociality based on strict gender roles in an agrarian setting, and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Before the Risorgimento, Italy had consisted of semi-autonomous city-states that spurred regional economic and political systems. Italian regionalism

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<sup>43</sup> Dominic Gavin, "Myths of the Resistance and Bernardo Bertolucci's *La Strategia del ragno* (The Spider's Strategy)," *California Italian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013):15, accessed August 21, 2015, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6c72k6h1>.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Basham, "Machismo," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 127.

<sup>45</sup> Scholars point to different dates during the nineteenth century for the unification of Italy. Some scholars believe it was achieved as early as 1815 when Italy rose up in revolt against Austria. This sparked wars which continued until 1870 with the capture of Rome by Italians which was occupied by France.

is succinctly conveyed by the word, “campanilismo,” derived from the word for bell tower. It expresses a deep affinity for one’s hometown over region, and region over nation. Such localized loyalties, reinforced by different dialects, hindered the development of a national identity. For example, the Venice Biennale was inaugurated in 1895 as an attempt to unify Italy, usher it into the modern era, and establish Italy as a cultured nation.<sup>46</sup> Venice was chosen because it did not have the “religious baggage” associated with Rome, nor had it been industrialized to the point of “chauvinistic Milan.”<sup>47</sup> However, the Venice Biennale ended up reinforcing regional identities because artists were grouped according to their region of birth, not their artistic style.

Italy’s traditional agrarian economy also delayed the country’s development. Until 1920, most Italians were peasants beholden to landowners.<sup>48</sup> The class-based agrarian structure contributed to a hyper-valuation of masculinity related to agricultural production. Gender roles were typically very traditional, supporting close family relations while oppressing women. Men performed primary economic and public roles; women were consigned to the home and other “lesser” roles such as child care and home production.<sup>49</sup> The tight family circle reinforced male and female identities so strongly, that some individuals experienced the urge to act out in negative and hostile ways—a reaction that might characterize the Futurists.<sup>50</sup> By the turn of the century, Italian parents tried to instill in their children a sense of patriotism, yet maintained the priority of family and regional identities over national identity.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Meighan, “The Stato d’Animo Aesthetic: Gaetano Previati, Umberto Boccioni and the Development of Early Futurist Painting in Italy,” 51.

<sup>47</sup> Shearer West, “National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennale 1895-1914,” *Art History* 16, no. 3 (September 1995): 405.

<sup>48</sup> John Dickie, “The Notion of Italy,” In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*. (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>49</sup> Elisabetta Ruspini, “Italian Forms of Masculinity between Familism and Social Change,” *Culture, Society and Masculinities* 1, no. 2 (2009): 122.

<sup>50</sup> Ruspini, “Italian Forms of Masculinity between Familism and Social Change,” 122.

<sup>51</sup> Gennaro, “Women in Arms: Gender in the Risorgimento, 1848-1861,” 50.

Historian Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum noted that women's rights in Northern Italy became extremely restricted with the introduction of a single legal system in 1860:

Girls in Lombardy forfeited the right to a free and compulsory primary education and could no longer be educated at the same teacher training schools as young men. Post-Risorgimento wives were legally placed under their husband's authority, a law that remained in effect until 1919. Women, though encouraged to be the primary caretakers of children, remained constrained legally from being the primary decision makers for the family, even after the death of the father.<sup>52</sup>

Birnbaum noted that women were assigned to domestic roles such as educating children, yet children were believed to ultimately be an "extension of their father's personality." The narrow role of women was affirmed in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII issued the first encyclical on the condition of labor, the *Rerum Novarum*. It defined Church ideals stating, "Women, again, are not suited for certain trades; for a woman is by nature fitted for home-work, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty, and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family."<sup>53</sup>

Gender roles were constricted more narrowly in Italy than in other parts of Europe.<sup>54</sup> European women had participated in the French Revolution, England was ruled by a queen, and women leaders in other nations were highly involved in politics. Italy was still rooted in an old-fashioned way of life based on traditional gender roles in localized economic and political systems. Restrictions on women after the Risorgimento parallel the rise of a cult of masculinity in Italy that reached its full expression with the Futurists.

Catholicism also played a significant role in Italy's relatively slow development around the turn of the century. As an institution, the Catholic Church encouraged tolerance for and

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<sup>52</sup> Meighan, "The Stato d'Animo Aesthetic: Gaetano Previati, Umberto Boccioni and the Development of Early Futurist Painting in Italy," 52-54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>54</sup> Tavanti, "The Cultural Dimensions of Italian leadership: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity from an American Perspective," 293.

submission to power hierarchies.<sup>55</sup> The Church also encouraged a preference for structured roles that minimize risk and uncertainty. Although Catholicism was practiced in several countries in Europe, the Church had a particularly profound influence on Italian culture because of the proximity of the papacy. The ideological basis for the new country of Italy was contested between the Catholic Church and the state, slowing formation of a national identity. Ecclesiastical and secular leaders both believed Italy should be the central bearer of world civilization as perhaps it once was, but neither wanted to concede power to the other.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, secularism increased as science, philosophy, and technology provided answers to what had previously been religious questions.<sup>57</sup> The constant tension between church and state was apparent in a contest for symbolic ownership of the country's new capitol, Rome, between 1870 and 1929. As the Catholic Church erected grand churches and obelisks, the government erected statues of Risorgimento heroes in rivalry.<sup>58</sup> The identity of the country remained uncertain.

After the Risorgimento, oppressive regimes due to regionalism, traditional roles defined by class and gender, and the influence of the Church continued to operate within Italy.<sup>59</sup> Italy was also oppressed in relation to Europe. Popular European literature that circulated around Italy, written from a colonized imperialist perspective, raised disturbing issues for Italians by portraying them as a lesser people, or the "other."<sup>60</sup> This view placed Italy in a subordinate

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<sup>55</sup> Marco Tavanti, "The Cultural Dimensions of Italian leadership: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity from an American Perspective." *Leadership* 8, no. 3: 290.

<sup>56</sup> Oliver Logan, "Italian Identity: Catholic Responses to Secularist Definition, c. 1910-48," *Modern Italy* 13 (April 2008): 53, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cmit20>.

<sup>57</sup> Guido Cimino and Renato Foschi, "Northerners Versus Southerners: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced with the 'Southern Question,'" *History of Psychology* 17, no. 4 (2014): 283.

<sup>58</sup> Todd Courtenay, "The International Exposition in Rome: Architecture, Archaeology, and National Identity," *Journal of Historical Geography* 37 (2011): 443.

<sup>59</sup> Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy*, 24

<sup>60</sup> Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature Comparative Literature* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 300.

position relative to Europe because Italy acceded economic and political power and had an identity considered to be “primitive.” The continued creation of classical art in Italy reinforced this primitive identity. According to language scholar John Champagne, Hegel’s dialectic helps explain Italians’ participation in a master-slave relationship.<sup>61</sup> In Hegel’s dialectic, an entity may become self-conscious through objectification. Such master-slave relationships were familiar to Italians as subjects to kings in the political system, laborers in the economic system, and commoners in the religious system. Some intellectuals believed that redress was possible through social consciousness and activism.

#### Social Consciousness and Activism in Art

The dominant artistic style in Italy during the Risorgimento was Neoclassicism, with popular artists like Antonio Canova drawing on the classical past for inspiration during these tumultuous years.<sup>62</sup> While most contemporary Italian artists continued to paint idyllic scenes of beauty and tranquility, Signorini and Balla were informed by a social consciousness that made such art seem irrelevant. Signorini’s father was the painter for the Austrian Duke in Tuscany, Leopold II, who represented the oppressive Austrian regime in Italy.<sup>63</sup> This undoubtedly made questions of political power and governance salient in the Signorini household as tension between Italy and Austria increasingly led towards revolution. In *Greeting Tuscan Artillery in Montechiaro by French Soldiers Wounded in the battle at Solferino* (1854) (Figure 1), 19-year-old Signorini displayed an interest in contemporary events. This Risorgimento battle at Montechiaro was a decisive step towards Italian political and geographical unification. Italian

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<sup>61</sup> Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> McKeever, “Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919,” 237.

<sup>63</sup> Giuliano Matteucci and Erich Steingraber, *The Macchiaioli: Tuscan Painters of the Sunlight: [exhibition] Stair Sainty Matthiesen* (New York: Stair Sainty Matthiesen in Association with Matthiesen, London, 1984), 115.

men are the obvious heroes. As Signorini described to his friend, art critic Diego Martelli, wounded French soldiers are depicted taking refuge in a church while the Italian men fought the battle until the end.<sup>64</sup> The French soldiers have come out of the church to congratulate the victorious Italian soldiers. This image is an assertion of Italian dominance over France as well as Italian masculine prowess, generally—the fight for Italian unification was clearly a man’s fight. This painting was one of many by the Macchiaioli providing a myth-like understanding of Italian male dominance.

Signorini became a dedicated follower of activist Mazzini by age 24. Signorini joined Mazzini’s *La Giovine Italia* (Young Italy) movement, which encouraged young men to fight for Italy’s unification.<sup>65</sup> He and all the other Macchiaioli volunteered as infantrymen in the Risorgimento. Signorini later reflected on the Macchiaioli’s participation in the Risorgimento, stating their enthusiasm to “gather themselves into a fighting column, and march” to the revolution.<sup>66</sup> The same activist voice would be found in the Futurist movement a few decades later. Eventually most of the Futurists volunteered to fight in World War I which began in 1915.

In 1894, Signorini painted *Idle Hours at Riomaggiore* (1894) (Figure 2) depicting idling men and women. Every figure is at a standstill, including the figure supposedly bringing a bucket of water home. Rendered in an impressionistic and loose style, an apparent theme is the decline of Italy. In the center of the painting stand two decaying yellow doors, suggesting the fading of former glory. Balla used a similar theme in an early painting with strong social overtones, *Bankruptcy*, painted eight years later (1902) (Figure 3). The painting suggests the implications of the contemporary Italian economy in which laborers are economically disadvantaged. The faded,

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<sup>64</sup> Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*, 135.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Totten, “The Role of the Young Italy Movement in the Unification of Italy,” Last modified September 25, 2013, accessed February 9, 2015. 2015, [Http://www.humanities360.com](http://www.humanities360.com).

<sup>66</sup> Lista, “Futurism and the Avant-Garde,” 13-14, 25.



timeworn door is a remnant of the past in this urban environment, a monument to neglect.<sup>67</sup> Painted in muddy earth tones, the image reminds viewers of former glory, creeping degeneration, and Italy's rootedness in the past. In context, Balla's *Bankruptcy* reads like a clarion call to examine the present honestly and create a better future.<sup>68</sup>

Both Signorini and Balla respected the socialist ideals of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848), which argued that uneven wealth distribution in capitalist systems led to social problems. Signorini was critical of the fact that Italian society had a small group of capitalist owners and a large group of laborers who did not share that wealth. The painting portrays a class system and segregation that held Italy back from national progress.<sup>69</sup> Signorini's *The Tow Path* (1864) (figure 4) visually emphasized the separation of classes that created internal divisions and prevented a unified national vision.<sup>70</sup> The viewer's gaze is drawn to a group of workers in the foreground who dominate the composition, jutting into the central space.<sup>71</sup> The workers appear fettered as they mightily pull something heavy—one assumes a barge—up the Arno River in Florence, perhaps to profit people like the well-dressed man and daughter standing in the distance. Their masculine brawn appears to promise limited personal gain in an age when industrialization could replace their hard labor.

A similar narrative is found in *A Worker's Day* (1904) (figure 5) by Balla, where the

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<sup>67</sup> Meighan, "The Stato d'Animo Aesthetic: Gaetano Previati, Umberto Boccioni and the Development of Early Futurist Painting in Italy," 108.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Graham Dixon, "The Italian Job," last modified January 19, 1989, accessed May 14, 2015, <http://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/readArticle/730>.

<sup>69</sup> Silvio Balloni, *Lo Zibaldone di Telemaco Signorini*.; McKeever, "Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919," 184-185.

<sup>70</sup> "Telemaco Signorini e la Pittura in Europa," iger.org, accessed Jan 15, 2016, <http://www.iger.org/ricerca/gruppi/voci/telemaco-signorini-la-pittura-europa/>.

<sup>71</sup> The viewer, who stands uncomfortably close to the painting's subjects, directs their gaze right on the thick of the males' bodies.

tediousness of manual labor is emphasized in a more modern setting.<sup>72</sup> The painting is a still image, with no sense of movement except for his experimental, divisionist brush strokes. The quick, bursting strokes could be read as a force disrupting the mysteriously serene scene. Originally called *They Work, They Eat, They Return Home*, Balla's interests as a humanitarian socialist led him to highlight how changes from the solar day to a 24-hour day affected workers.<sup>73</sup> The proletariat worked longer hours when lamps were introduced in Milan and the surrounding areas.<sup>74</sup> In this painting, the lamp is benign as vivid glimmers of light seem to fade around it. However, as a social critique, the invention of the lamp is shown to have created a problem: the exploitation of labor. Modernization had merely given a different look to the prospects for labor 40 years after Signorini's painting.

Risorgimento fighting concluded by 1870 but the Risorgimento continued to be a source of influence and inspiration for decades. Thus, both the Macchiaioli and Futurists were strongly influenced by the Risorgimento. Some contemporary writers suggested that the lack of unity in Italy after the Risorgimento meant that the revolution was never fully completed. Others concluded that the Risorgimento had failed as a revolution because Italy was not united.<sup>75</sup> Both Signorini and Balla seem to have adopted the view that the Risorgimento was not completed. The Risorgimento encouraged them to take what may be called a masculine approach to societal problems and become activists, enlisting to fight, and calling attention to the need for change through artistic production. Art historians Giovanni Lista and Scott Sheridan stated that "Historically, Futurism sprang from the will to bring the Risorgimento to its completion."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> McKeever, "Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919," 41.

<sup>73</sup> Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, 36.

<sup>74</sup> McKeever, "Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919," 46.

<sup>75</sup> These were common ideas among Mazzini and Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce.

<sup>76</sup> Lista, "Futurism and the Avant-Garde," 19.

## Activism through Literature

Signorini and Balla were not only activists through their art, but through political cartoons and published writings, including manifestos. Manifestos are usually created in response to political conflicts.<sup>77</sup> According to Helene Millot, a literary historian, a manifesto author sees himself or herself as an inventor whose revolutionary idea in the face of rupture gives cause to create the manifesto.<sup>78</sup> As such, manifestos are an excellent genre for expressing masculinity. Literary academic Hubert van den Berg concluded that manifestos do not have to contain the term “manifesto,” and they can take many forms.<sup>79</sup> Certainly Signorini and Balla qualify as manifesto writers according to these criteria. It has been stated, “To write a manifesto is to participate symbolically in a history of struggle against dominant forces; it is to link one’s voice to the countless voices of previous revolutionary conflicts.”<sup>80</sup> By writing manifestos, Signorini and Balla identified with revolutions that came before them, while advocating for further revolution.

After the Risorgimento, Italian politician Massimo D’Azeglio posed a challenge to Italian intellectuals: “Having made Italy, now we must make Italians.”<sup>81</sup> According to Mazzini, who inspired both the Macchiaioli and the Futurists, an Italian “reawakening” could be accomplished through an emphasis and adaptation of moral virtues, including male domination.<sup>82</sup> In 1862, a year after returning from war, Signorini published an article proposing that now that Italy had

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 267-268.

<sup>78</sup> Helene Millot, “Arts Poétiques, Prefaces et Manifestes: La Legitimation de l’Ecriture par le Savoir au XIX Siecle,” in *Ecriture/savoir: Litterature et Connaissance: l’Epoque Moderne*, edited by Alain Vaillant, 205–27 (Saint-Etienne, France: Lieux Litteraires, 1996), 212-213.

<sup>79</sup> Galia Yanoshevsky, “Three Decades of Writing on Manifesto: The Making of a Genre,” *Poetics Today* 30, no. 2 (2009), 261.

<sup>80</sup> Janet Lyon, “Transforming Manifestoes: A Second-Wave Problematic,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5, no.1 (1999): 4.

<sup>81</sup> Lista, “Futurism and the Avant-Garde,” 5, 16.

<sup>82</sup> Silvana Patriarca, “Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 382.

become more politically unified, “let’s deduce the future.”<sup>83</sup> This was consistent with Mazzini’s ideas of creating a “modern nation” in which future men could supersede all present men through character development.

Signorini contributed articles to the Mazzinian journal, *The New Europe*. In 1867, Signorini founded the magazine *The Artistic Journal*. In these publications and others, Signorini boldly advanced socialist ideas and defended the artistic expression of the Macchiaioli.<sup>84</sup> Signorini’s polemic voice became a common staple in his public letters with a constant call to action to create a better future. The Macchiaioli produced pamphlets, spreading their opinions on art and society throughout Florence and the rest of Italy.<sup>85</sup> Although the Futurists are generally recognized as the first to write an artistic manifesto, manifesto rhetoric was evident in Signorini’s writings decades before.

The first Futurist manifesto was published in 1909 in *La Demolizione*, a left-wing review for working class readers.<sup>86</sup> The Futurists appealed to men to join them in creating a new social order. They stated, “We are sickened by the vile laziness that, from the sixteenth century on, has forced our artists to live on the incessant exploitation of ancient struggles. For other peoples, Italy is still a land of the dead, an immense Pompeii, white with sepulchers. Italy is instead being reborn, and an intellectual resurgence is following its political resurgence.”<sup>87</sup> These sentiments echo some expressed by Signorini in 1867, who stated “our past has killed our present. And the

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<sup>83</sup> Telemaco Signorini, “Del Fatto E del Da Farsi Nella Pittura,” *La Nuova Europa*, August 2, 1863.

<sup>84</sup> McKeever, “Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919,” 186.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, 36.

<sup>87</sup> Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, *The Manifesto of the Futurist Painters* (Milan: Poesia, 1910), February 11, 1910.

past should not be praised as the apogee of art . . . [because it] did not possess the materials and intellectual resources which we have at our disposal nowadays.”<sup>88</sup>

Balla, like Signorini, worked as a caricaturist early in his career. Although Balla did not write as extensively as Signorini nor some fellow Futurists, he wrote a manifesto in 1915, *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo*, or *The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe*, giving his opinions on politics and art. It laid out steps that the Futurists would take to lead the world into a new and superior technological age, an age of male dominance and power. The Futurists disseminated this and many other manifestos, and their magazine, *Lacerba*, at street rallies and exhibitions.<sup>89</sup> The Futurists, like the Macchiaioli, encouraged young Italian males to bring about the cultural unification that Italy still lacked by embracing modern technology and social change. In fact, from its inception, Futurism expressed a general expectancy for its own replacement by a new revolution: “When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts—we want it to happen!”<sup>90</sup>

Signorini’s literary activism was venerated by art critic and close friend Diego Martelli in a posthumous tribute. Martelli said that Signorini had fulfilled his revolutionary artistic duties by sacrificing his life for his “fatherland.” Martelli praised Signorini for always having an effective “loaded weapon,”—referring to his literary voice.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Futurists acknowledged Balla’s effective use of propaganda in his art and literature. Soon after Balla had joined the Futurist movement in 1910, Futurist leader F. T. Marinetti wrote a letter to a friend stating that he was

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<sup>88</sup> McKeever, “Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919,” 188.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>90</sup> McKeever, “Futurism and the Past: Temporalities, Avant-gardism and Tradition in Italian Art and its Histories 1901-1919,” 105.

<sup>91</sup> Baccio Maria Bacci and Telemaco Signorini, *L'800 dei Macchiaioli e Diego Martelli Telemaco Signorini: Note dei Viaggi a Londra e a Parigi, 1881-1883-1884, ed Altri Documenti* (Firenze: L. Gonnelli, 1969), 125-126.

satisfied with Balla's increasingly propagandistic style.<sup>92</sup>

The political turmoil of the Risorgimento shaped Signorini's world, and had continuing implications for Balla's generation and beyond. Both Signorini and Balla observed that the Risorgimento had not unified Italy, nor had Italy advanced in socially progressive ways to the extent of other European nations.<sup>93</sup> Through literature, Signorini and Balla called attention to what they perceived to be Italy's fruitless focus on the past, lack of material progress, and potential for becoming a modernized nation. As will be demonstrated in later sections, Signorini and Balla envisioned a future brought about by men who can improve themselves through masculine efforts. Before delving into the role they envisioned for men, it is instructive to consider the role of women as portrayed in Macchiaioli and Futurist art.

#### Women in Macchiaioli and Futurist Art

The Macchiaioli depicted Italian women as demure beings in a world controlled by men. The Futurists had a more negative view of women, obviating them in society and practically omitting them from their art. The attitudes of the Macchiaioli and the Futurists toward women had a similar basis in Italian society, though different understandings evolved during the span of the two movements.

More than other European nations, Italy had a strong, traditional model of gender roles around the time of the Risorgimento.<sup>94</sup> While various ideas about what an Italian should be began to surface before the Risorgimento, gender roles were always clearly defined and rarely questioned. When the Macchiaioli depicted the Risorgimento, both men and women were painted in the guise of idealized gender performance. *I Cannot Wait* (1867) (Figure 6), by

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<sup>92</sup> F.T. Marinetti. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti correspondence and papers, 1886-1974. The Getty Research Institution, Los Angeles. Reference number 850702.

<sup>93</sup> Scheinman, "The Politics of Nationalism in Contemporary France," 835.

<sup>94</sup> Ruspini, "Italian Forms of Masculinity between Familism and Social Change," 122.

Signorini, depicts the role of women during the Risorgimento. The subject, a woman, is waiting for her male companion to return home from fighting in the Risorgimento. She is enclosed in a claustrophobic interior space; images on the wall are her only view of the world beyond. Her role is relatively passive within her sheltered space. She apparently contributes to the Risorgimento by writing letters to her dear one and by waiting modestly and chastely, symbolic of her dependence in a society dominated by men. This portrayal is indicative of the passive role Signorini ascribed to Italian women. Most of Signorini's paintings depict women sewing or being idle. Balla expressed similar ideas about women in an early painting titled *Woman Sewing* (c. 1887) (Figure 7). A simple woman sits in a darkly shadowed room. Shrouded in clothing, she is shielded from physical stimuli and unaware of anything but what she is sewing. It appears that there is little more to her world. Dressed in the tones of the Italian flag, the woman may symbolize national ideals based on traditional gender roles. In both paintings Italian women show little selfhood, which would tend to enhance male power structures. Painting women in idealized roles avoided the political implications of portraying women as an oppressed category.<sup>95</sup>

In a country that historically represented female beauty and perfection through goddesses such as Venus and the Madonna, in these two paintings Signorini and Balla presented a different image of the current Italian woman. She is not especially beautiful to look at and contributes to society mainly through the gendered role of sewing. She has limited individual identity other than through attachment to men who provide the sheltered space to which she is confined. It has been noted that around this time, as Italy grew more secular, the Madonna became a less popular

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<sup>95</sup> Harris, "The Other Italian Question: Gender and the Figure of Modern Italy in British Culture: 1820-1970," viii.

artistic subject.<sup>96</sup> This diminished reverence for the Madonna parallels the realistic portrayal of women as passive, obedient, and patient wives.<sup>97</sup>

While at times Signorini and Balla depicted women as docile, they also depicted them as perverse and dangerous. Both artists were interested in the science of psychology, which originated around 1850. Published Italian studies argued that various psychological problems were confusing gender roles and hindering social progress.<sup>98</sup> Tramps and prostitutes were the subjects of sexology studies designed to understand physical and psychological differences between men and women, which provides insight as to why Italy was not more socially unified. Signorini and Balla chose to portray these contemporary social issues through the depiction of insane women. A painting by Signorini titled, *Department for Violent Female Mental Patients at San Bonifacio in Florence* (1865) (Figure 8) is arguably chauvinistic. The female patients manifest their jumbled psyches through inexplicable stances and actions. This painting can be compared to *The Madwomen* (1905) (Figure 9) by Balla, which also depicts an unstable and confused female psyche in a realist vein. The female subject, gesturing ambiguously, is a pitiful and off-putting cipher. Anyone seeing her would conclude that this unstable female is a weak element for developing Italian society.

The realist portrayal of women was a cause for debate among art critics in Italy in the 1860s.<sup>99</sup> As one critic argued, an artist should reproduce his platonic ideal vision of a woman,

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<sup>96</sup> Cimino, "Northerners Versus Southerners: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced with the 'Southern Question,'" 283.

<sup>97</sup> Gennaro, "Women in Arms: Gender in the Risorgimento, 1848-1861," 20. Benedetta explains that some women participated as soldiers and paid workers during the Risorgimento, but this was treated as an aberration; the only female "heroism" that was acknowledged was sewing and preserving the home as a place of respite for men. See pp. 27-51.

<sup>98</sup> Cimino, "Northerners Versus Southerners: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced with the 'Southern Question,'" 284.

<sup>99</sup> Meighan, "The Stato d'Animo Aesthetic: Gaetano Previati, Umberto Boccioni and the Development of Early Futurist Painting in Italy," 76.



not the “ugly and material external.”<sup>100</sup> Such critics believed that idealized women were appropriate artistic subjects, not women painted in a realistic fashion. Reacting against this sentiment, the Macchiaioli and the Futurists painted relatively few female nudes, a tradition which was previously common in Italian art. Once Futurism was established, those artists chose not to include women in their depiction of their idealized future. Eventually the Futurists published a direct attack against the female nude in manifesto form, deeming it to be “nauseous and tedious.”<sup>101</sup> As stated in a 1909 Futurist Manifesto, the Futurists had a “scorn for women,” which may be why women are almost non-existent in Balla’s first Futurist oeuvre.<sup>102</sup> In 1910, Balla and the Futurists banned the painting of nudes.<sup>103</sup> Futurist leader F. T. Marinetti characterized women as weak and sickly elements holding back cultural progress, and in his novel, *Marfarka il Futurista*, the male protagonist reproduces without a woman via modern technology.<sup>104</sup>

In the social world defined by Italian customs and norms, women enacted minor domestic roles in a patriarchal society. Signorini and Balla portrayed the modest role of women in their art, one in which women upheld men but were unlikely to effectuate any of the change that Italy needed. As the Macchiaioli and Futurists contemplated how to bring about societal change, women would not be notable contributors; this was a calling for men.

#### Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Italy and in Signorini’s Work

Issues around masculinity in Italy can be traced as early as the Renaissance. It was widely

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, 83.

<sup>102</sup> Adamowicz, *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-garde and Its Legacy*, 35.

<sup>103</sup> Rosalind McKeever, “Motion as Form,” Khanacademy.org, accessed October 19, 2015, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/wwI-dada/art-great-war/a/umberto-boccioni-unique-forms-of-continuity-in-space>.

<sup>104</sup> Siobhan M. Conaty, “Italian Futurism: Gender, Culture & Power” (PhD diss., Case Reserve Western, 2002), 18.

believed during the Renaissance that what parents thought while a child was in the womb would affect how the child looked and acted after birth.<sup>105</sup> Women were regarded as incapable of controlling errant thoughts, thus negatively affecting the unborn child. It was believed that men had superior minds, and needed to correct the fundamental instability and negative influence of the female mind.<sup>106</sup> Such views, which placed inordinate privilege on men, continued throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>107</sup>

Sixteenth-century Italian writer Niccolò Machiavelli addressed Italians' anxiety about masculinity.<sup>108</sup> He jokingly suggested that men might become superfluous someday.<sup>109</sup> In describing the qualities that were necessary to be a powerful prince, he suggested that if a man did not possess those qualities, he should simply pretend to embody them. This introduced the idea that masculinity was a performance, something to enact that might be different than one's actual being.<sup>110</sup> When Signorini participated at the age of 20 in the Florentine Promotrice of 1855, he exhibited paintings inspired by the works of Machiavelli, indicating his awareness of Machiavellian ideas about power and masculinity in Italy.<sup>111</sup>

Cultural historian George Mosse has argued that a shift occurred in the eighteenth century in how masculinity was socially defined.<sup>112</sup> Up until then, manhood was constructed according to clearly defined gender roles. A man was someone who headed a family and participated in the public sphere. Mosse argues that between the nineteenth and twentieth

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<sup>105</sup> Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 316.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli and Peter E. Bondanella, *The Prince* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 59.

<sup>109</sup> Matteucci, *The Macchiaioli: Tuscan Painters of the Sunlight: [exhibition] Stair Sainty Matthiesen*, 115.

<sup>110</sup> Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>111</sup> Matteucci, *The Macchiaioli: Tuscan Painters of the Sunlight: [exhibition] Stair Sainty Matthiesen*, 115.

<sup>112</sup> Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy*, 5.

centuries, the construction of *manhood* shifted to the construction of *masculinity*, which meant performing idealized “manly” behaviors such as being forceful, decisive, assertive, and honorable, as well as assuming traditional social roles. Masculinity was something that needed to be performed through repeated actions.<sup>113</sup>

Modern masculinity may have developed in part as a result of the French militarization idea of a “nation at arms” during the time of Napoleon.<sup>114</sup> This elevated the status of male citizens who could defend their fatherland. During the Risorgimento, Italy’s volunteer male soldiers were greatly honored, and they became national symbols of the rebirth of Italy.<sup>115</sup> While some women contributed to the Risorgimento by sewing flags, as depicted in Balla’s *Women Sewing* (Figure 7), some women entered the workforce in place of absent men. When the Risorgimento was over, women were expected to return to their former domestic life. They were never honored as were men for contributing to war efforts, and the thought of women continuing in the work force after the Risorgimento seemed unnatural and ridiculous to most Italians.<sup>116</sup>

A contemporary account provides a good example of how masculinity was perceived. Historian Mark Seymour described how the Italian press portrayed a trial for the death of Captain Giovanni Fadda of the Italian army in 1878.<sup>117</sup> The murder was not blamed on Fadda’s wife’s lover, who stabbed Fadda to death, but on Fadda’s estranged wife, whom Fadda had previously left for another woman. Journalists portrayed Fadda as the embodiment of masculine ideals—brave, loyal, dignified—much like politician Mazzini’s vision of the macho man. Fadda’s wife was portrayed as weak, stupid, and lustful. Based on articles covering the case,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 32-33.

<sup>114</sup> Mark Seymour, “Contesting Masculinity in Post-Unification Italy: The Murder of Captain Giovanni Fadda,” *Gender & History* 25, no. 2 (August 2013): 254. Seymour also suggests that masculinity may have developed further in response to industrialization which gave new emphasis to skilled labor performed by men.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Gennaro, “Women in Arms: Gender in the Risorgimento, 1848-1861,” 35-36.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Seymour argued that national anxieties reflected a crisis of male irrelevance and an overemphasis on Italian masculinity.<sup>118</sup> In fact, the media often portrayed the character of men and women in total opposition: feminine idleness versus masculine accomplishment.<sup>119</sup> As the trial was widely read across the country, Fadda became the embodiment of an ideal Italian male and the victim of a crime attributed to the faulty female sex.<sup>120</sup>

An evolution in cultural understanding of the nature of masculinity is shown in Signorini's 1893 book, *Caricaturisti e caricaturati al Caffè Michelangiolo*, which included contribution by the Macchiaioli and their friends. It included pen and ink characterizations of some of his Italian friends before and after the Risorgimento. Two caricatures in particular were drawn by Signorini's friends, Beppe Veraci and Angoilo Tricca (Figure 10). Regarding the first image prior to the Risorgimento, Signorini described the picture as men looking like "two conspirators, dressed in democratic garb," implying that they were engaged in political activity. The second image, taking place after the Risorgimento, shows a man dressed as a dandy with a waistcoat and top hat, and carrying a handkerchief. Signorini commented on the second image saying, "times had changed, men had changed, and tempers had been softened."<sup>121</sup> He described the man as happily walking to school in order to learn moral principles and put into practice Mazzini's solution for the post-Risorgimento unification of Italy—character development. In post-Risorgimento Italy, masculinity began to be idealized in terms of moral refinement.

Signorini's book, *Caricaturisti e caricaturati al Caffè Michelangiolo*, contained poems and sheet music as well as caricatures and musings. The range of interests and talents displayed

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Seymour, "Contesting Masculinity in Post-Unification Italy: The Murder of Captain Giovanni Fadda," 254.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Telemaco Signorini, *Charictures and characters at Caffè Michelangelo* (Firenze: Stabilimento G. Civelli, 1893), 51.

the ideals of a modern cultured man. Signorini's multi-disciplinary efforts to produce literature, poems, and music—not just visual art—set a precedent that the Futurists followed. The Futurists wrote manifestos and branched into poetry, fashion design, and architecture, exemplifying a new ideal of masculinity in developing and applying diverse talents to create a better future.

Technological developments brought new opportunities for the expression of masculinity. The Milan Exposition of 1881 was intended to celebrate national progress and propel Italy into the industrial age that had overtaken much of Europe. The tenor was reflected in the overwhelmingly successful *Ballet Excelsior*, choreographed by Luigi Manzotti, which debuted at the Exposition. It championed industrialization and positioned Italy as an “up-and-coming” player on the world's stage. The theme of the ballet was “progress versus obscurity,” and its poster expressed a spirit of excitement for machines and industrialization (1881) (Figure 11).<sup>122</sup>

Its optimistic, modernist character was described as:

A series of ornate tableaux that successively portray the arrival of the first steamboat, the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, the discovery of the electric battery by Alessandro Volta, the invention of the telegraph, the opening of the Suez Canal, the first attempt to build a canal across Panama and the tunneling under Mount Cenis that linked Italy and France in 1871. The last of 11 scenes, “Apotheosis,” is a festival of nations with flag-waving dancers decked out in symbolic costumes.<sup>123</sup>

The dances were choreographed as a series of geometric formations accompanied by sounds of telegraphs and other machines blasting across the stage. Such enthrallment with technology affected the Macchiaioli and the Futurists in turn. The origins of Futurism twenty-five years later are easy to trace back to this time when Italians eagerly looked forward to a future filled with technology.

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<sup>122</sup> Alan Riding, “Arts Abroad; In an 1881 Ballet, Optimism as It Used to Be,” *The New York Times Arts Section*, 15 January, 2002, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/15/arts/arts-abroad-in-an-1881-ballet-optimism-as-it-used-to-be.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

With a flood of new technology and inventions in the 1880s, men and machine were idealized as becoming one. Author Gabriele D'Annunzio wrote about masculine pursuits such as animal hunts and horse races in *La Tribuna*, a Roman newspaper, from 1881 to 1891. Perhaps the first intellectual to connect sports and masculinity, he coined the word “sportsman” to refer to a man who played sports, including bicycling, car racing, and airplane flying. Sports provided a place for shared experience and collective identity among males.<sup>124</sup> D'Annunzio's conception of a sportsman embodied aspects of Nietzsche's idea of a superman.<sup>125</sup> In his 1883 book, *Also Sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None), Nietzsche introduced the idea of a “Übermensch” (superman). Nietzsche advocated a proactive approach, stating that in the process of creating art, man must transform things “until they mirror his power—until they are reflections of his perfection.”<sup>126</sup>

Advertisements for new products based on technology began to appear in newspapers, magazines, and literary journals such as the *Corriere della Sera* in which Signorini occasionally published.<sup>127</sup> Advertisements capitalized on the prevailing ethos of the time. Borletti & Pezzi, a watch making company, demonstrated the masculinity of one of their watches by depicting it in the hands of a modern discus thrower, an ideal man (Figure 12).<sup>128</sup> Watches were emblematic of a new, accelerated way of life, marrying technology with modern living.<sup>129</sup>

The bicycle industry grew rapidly in the 1880s. Bikes were praised not merely as a means of transportation, but as something that could become one with man and enhance man's

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<sup>124</sup> Anthony Cardoza, “Making Italians? Cycling and National Identity in Italy: 1900-1950,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 3 (May 2010): 354.

<sup>125</sup> Luca Benedetto Cottini, “A Culture of Objects: Italy's Quest for Modernity (1878-1922)” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 105.

<sup>126</sup> Jorge E. Bonilla, “The Role of Art in Nietzsche's Philosophy,” *Jorbon Tripod Blog*, accessed 12 July, 2015, <http://jorbon.tripod.com/niet01.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Cottini, “A Culture of Objects: Italy's Quest for Modernity (1878-1922),” 5-6.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 72-73.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

capabilities.<sup>130</sup> Philosopher Mario Morasso claimed that the bike was a symbol of the modern, omnipotent man.<sup>131</sup> The Touring Club Italiano, a men's cycling club, was established in 1894. An advertisement in an issue of the club's magazine offered members a discount if they purchased a gun (Figure 13).<sup>132</sup> Advertisements like these combined concepts of the new modern, masculine man with machine technology and violence. Men began claiming commercial objects once associated with women for their expanding masculine realm:

In the gradual passage of wristwatches (once jewels), bicycles (once symbols of women's emancipation) and cigarettes (once used by prostitutes) into the tamed masculine realms of sport, action, and war, these objects envision the alluring/menacing seduction of a gendered modernity, seen as instable in its version as *femme fatale*, and as acceptable, once reconverted into a male imaginary.<sup>133</sup>

War, speed, and technology were beginning to symbolize the ideal man in Italian culture. An unusual yet revealing collage by Signorini displays his depiction of a machine man (c. 1880s) (Figure 14).<sup>134</sup> The central focus is a being who is part machine and part man, walking through a war-torn landscape while a smaller human grips his leg. In the background stand four buildings including the campanile of the Santa Maria Del Fiore Cathedral in Florence. The central figure, a man strolling while smoking a pipe, dominates the landscape. He symbolizes man's obvious ascendancy through technology. Evidence that Signorini was interested in how men might use technology and become what Futurists subsequently termed "superuomo" is indisputable in this work which prefigures that of the Futurists.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 90-91.

<sup>132</sup> "Biblioteca Digitale," Association of the Touring Club Italiano, accessed 3 February, 2015, <http://www.digitouring.it/SebinaOpac/sebinayou2.do#0>.

<sup>133</sup> Cottini, "A Culture of Objects: Italy's Quest for Modernity (1878-1922)," 18.

<sup>134</sup> Both Signorini and Balla were captivated by the possibilities the newly-invented photography machine brought to art.

## Further Idealization of Masculinity in the Art of Balla and the Futurists

The Futurists expanded on Mazzini's ideas of moral improvement among men and Nietzsche's concept of a superman.<sup>135</sup> The Futurists aspired to a superhuman state of consciousness that was superior to intellect. They called it the *superuomo*, or superman, a modern version of the Macchiaiolian Renaissance man, or morally refined man.<sup>136</sup> The Futurists claimed by way of art and literature that the key to societal advancement was through man's individual pursuit of the *superuomo*. They developed a more masculine artistic style, touted the *superuomo* based on technological achievement, and eventually developed an extreme political agenda of undermining religion and advocating anarchy.

Scholar Joshua C. Taylor has suggested that Futurism was at first a physical impulse, suggesting a masculine response to stimuli.<sup>137</sup> Such an impulse is evident in paintings by both Signorini and Balla. However, compared to Signorini, Balla developed an increasingly violent Divisionist style that actually prompted Gino Severini to invite Balla to join the Futurist movement.<sup>138</sup> Balla's *Speeding Car* (1913) (Figure 15) combined geometric shapes and repeating violent lines with forceful brush strokes, suggesting physical power and motion. The use of these aggressive elements was consistent with Balla's growing fascination with the machine man, a powerful being capable of speed, violence, and destruction. The painting illustrates a maxim of machismo, "a great macho may express his inner convictions by resorting to physical force."<sup>139</sup> However, lines of force can be seen in the work of Signorini, particularly evident in *La Diana del Lavoro* (1893) (Figure 16). This painting employs rough, angular strokes to suggest fleeting

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<sup>135</sup> Lista, "Futurism and the Avant-Garde," 23.

<sup>136</sup> Adamowicz, *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-garde and Its Legacy*, 148.

<sup>137</sup> Sherman, "Institution Versus Individuality: Rethinking Unity in Early Italian Futurism," 15.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>139</sup> Basham, "Machismo," 127.



energy and motion. The painting depicts Italian workers dully anticipating the day's labors, but Balla's artistic style seems to prod them toward social consciousness. When the painting was exhibited in Florence, sculptor Raffaele Monti stated that this painting was "the greatest union between pointillist technique and humanitarian spirit that the young socialist [Signorini] shared [in common] with Pellizza Volpedo".<sup>140</sup> Wild, energetic strokes in the art of the Macchiaioli and the Futurists can be seen as a manifestation of masculine force to shape their environment and convey modern ideas.

Whereas the Macchiaioli understood modernization to require masculine force, the Futurists significantly elevated the role of technology. Industrialization brought about the invention of trains, cars, other machines. The Futurists wanted to utilize such technological means of power not only to help man to reach his highest potential, but to create a new world.<sup>141</sup> The Futurists called for a destructive rebirth of Italian society, with technological art as the new language of modernization.<sup>142</sup> In a Futurist manifesto, they echoed Marxist ideas: "Idealists, workers of the mind, unite to show how inspiration and genius go hand in hand with the progress of the machine . . ." <sup>143</sup> To the Futurists, modernization would encourage the highest achievement of the human spirit.<sup>144</sup> The Futurists believed that masculinity, rather than traditional forms of nationalism, could unify Italians.<sup>145</sup>

Balla designed a modern and technological approach to masculine apparel with a *Futurist Suit* in 1913 (Figure 18). He considered it to be appropriate "skeleton and flesh" to attain the

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<sup>140</sup> "Biografico di Plinio Nomellini," [treccani.it](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/plinio-nomellini_(Dizionario_Biografico)/), accessed Jan 15, 2016, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/plinio-nomellini\\_\(Dizionario\\_Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/plinio-nomellini_(Dizionario_Biografico)/).

<sup>141</sup> Geroge L. Mosse, "The Political Culture of Italian Futurism: A General Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 2 (May-June 1990): 253-268.

<sup>142</sup> Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy*, 254.

<sup>143</sup> Lista, "Futurism and the Avant-Garde," 17.

<sup>144</sup> Adamowicz, *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-garde and Its Legacy*, 148.

<sup>145</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, ed. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greif (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 29.

state of *superuomo*. Balla envisioned other technological gear as well. For example, in order to teach children to embrace Futurism, Balla predicted that toys would be invented to reinforce Futurist virtues. He said that such toys would encourage the development of physical courage, fighting skills, and the ability to go to war, with even more “dangerous and aggressive toys that will work outdoors.” He stated that Futurist toys would be “very useful to adults too.” The “toys” to which Balla alluded were actually weapons.<sup>146</sup> The concept of outfitting and arming boys and men as combatants was the ultimate expression of masculine ideals in either movement.

Balla’s *Futurist Suit* is reminiscent of Signorini’s machine man. Both conceptualize an empowering armor for men. The allure of such projections of masculine power may be explained by the theory of psychic alienation. According to the theory, colonization results in psychic alienation. Those who are colonized, Italy in this case, justify the use of violence because that seems to be the language of their colonizers. In order to decolonize, the Futurists specifically believed that Italians would need to transcend their limiting national consciousness and fight for a new national consciousness—one where every man would reach his full potential through technology and violence.<sup>147</sup> For the Futurists, this was achievable only through the adoption of machine technology, a process which ironically dehumanized the individual as demonstrated in Balla’s manifesto.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps in an effort to transcend Italians’ limited national consciousness, the Futurists declared themselves anarchists.<sup>149</sup> However, a similar ideology had already been adopted by Signorini in the previous century. In a magazine publication in 1867, Signorini stated

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<sup>146</sup> Pablo Leon De La Barra, “Gioacomo Balla il Giardino Futurista and Futurist Suit, 1913-1930,” *Center for the Aesthetic Revolution blog*, 2 February, 2011, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.com/2011/02/giacomo-balla-il-giardino-futurista-and.html>.

<sup>147</sup> Eagleton, Terry, Jameson, and Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature Comparative Literature*, 300.

<sup>148</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967), 180. [http://abahlali.org/files/\\_Black\\_Skin\\_White\\_Masks\\_Pluto\\_Classics\\_.pdf](http://abahlali.org/files/_Black_Skin_White_Masks_Pluto_Classics_.pdf)

<sup>149</sup> Basham, “Machismo,” 127.

that when he was introduced to the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the “father of anarchy,” he apostatized from Mazzini’s revolutionary ideas to follow Proudhon.<sup>150</sup>

While Signorini was not particularly religious, Balla exceeded Signorini in anti-religious sentiments. The Futurists proposed the concept of “the new moral-religion of speed,” which recognized that religion failed to control man’s instincts.<sup>151</sup> For the Futurists, machines and technology directed man’s energy toward his highest potential better than religion.<sup>152</sup> The Futurists promoted war and wanted to convert people to their secular, “religion” of technology—the ultimate source of human masculine fulfillment. Futurist leader Marinetti wrote the “Futurist Speech to the English,” and the “Futurist Address to the Spaniards” in 1910—both satirically reminiscent of the epistles of Paul—to encourage Europeans to adopt a godless, machine-driven future.

An early political sketch by Balla showed his dislike for the Christian religion in a caricature titled *Ironic Satire Study* (1896) (Figure 17). A noose hangs a priest against a backdrop of music notes rising on a stanza, suggesting a fitting climax for religion. The Futurists promulgated their ideas about their new moral-religion through many conferences held in European cities such as London, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow. In each country they argued that society needed to be freed from defects such as religious thinking in order to attain the human condition that was the Futurist ideal.<sup>153</sup> Such anti-religious sentiment is consistent with ideas that religion is emasculating. Understanding that Italy’s past and present were defined by the Catholic

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<sup>150</sup> Norma Broude, “An early friend of degas in Florence: A Newly-Identified Portrait Drawing of Degas by Giovanni Fattori,” *The Burlington magazine* 115, no. 848 (1973), 730.

<sup>151</sup> Logan, “Italian Identity: Catholic Responses to Secularist Definition, c. 1910-48,” 200-201.

<sup>152</sup> Lista, “The Activist Model; or, the Avant-Garde as Italian Invention,” *South Central Review* 13, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1996): 19.

<sup>153</sup> Lista, “Futurism and the Avant-Garde,” 19.

religion, Signorini and Balla envisioned a new future for Italy that required adaptation to technology and achievement of the *superuomo*.

## Conclusion

The turn of the century in Europe was a time of dramatic social and technological change. As Europeans redefined the role of government and other social institutions, questions of national identity became relevant for nation-states throughout Europe. However, particular circumstances in Italy made the country seem less progressive and modern than other nations. The country was slow to move into the industrial age and seemed backwards to other Europeans. Well into the new century, Italy was disjointed as a country and lacked a national identity. Many Italians took pride in their classical heritage, but this may have prevented some from facing the challenges of their day. The Risorgimento was an ideological catalyst for progressive thinkers to try to bring about a better future. Revolutionary rhetoric and an impetus to create a national identity arose during the Risorgimento era.

The Risorgimento shaped two groups of Italian artists: the Macchiaioli and the Futurists. It dramatically highlighted the role of men in bringing about social change. The importance of masculinity to both the Macchiaioli and the Futurists reflected common cultural understandings and social conditions, although the later Futurists carried these masculine ideals to an extreme. Signorini of the Macchiaioli, and Balla of the Futurists, perceived similar social challenges and solutions, and used art to bring forward ideas about masculinity that could substitute for nationalist sentiments.

In many ways, the Futurists embraced and expanded upon the ideas championed by the Macchiaioli: a need for nationalism, a willingness to wage war, a recognition of the powerful and revolutionizing influence of industrialization, and the important role of masculinity in all of these

cultural aspects. Their art was similar in terms of themes as well as the use of realist styles with masculine elements. Being relatively close to each other temporally and physically, there is evidence that more tangible connections exist as well. This research suggests continuities that provide new insights into the development of Futurism and its masculine and nationalistic character.

## FIGURES



Figure 1 Telemaco Signorini. *Greeting Tuscan Artillery in Montechiaro by French Soldiers Wounded in the battle at Solferino*. 1854. Private collection.



Figure 2 Telemaco Signorini. *Idle Hours at Riomaggiore*. 1894. Private collection.



Figure 3 Giacomo Balla. *Bankruptcy*. 1902. Private collection.





Figure 4 Telemaco Signorini. *L'Alzaia (The Tow Path)*. 1864. Private collection.

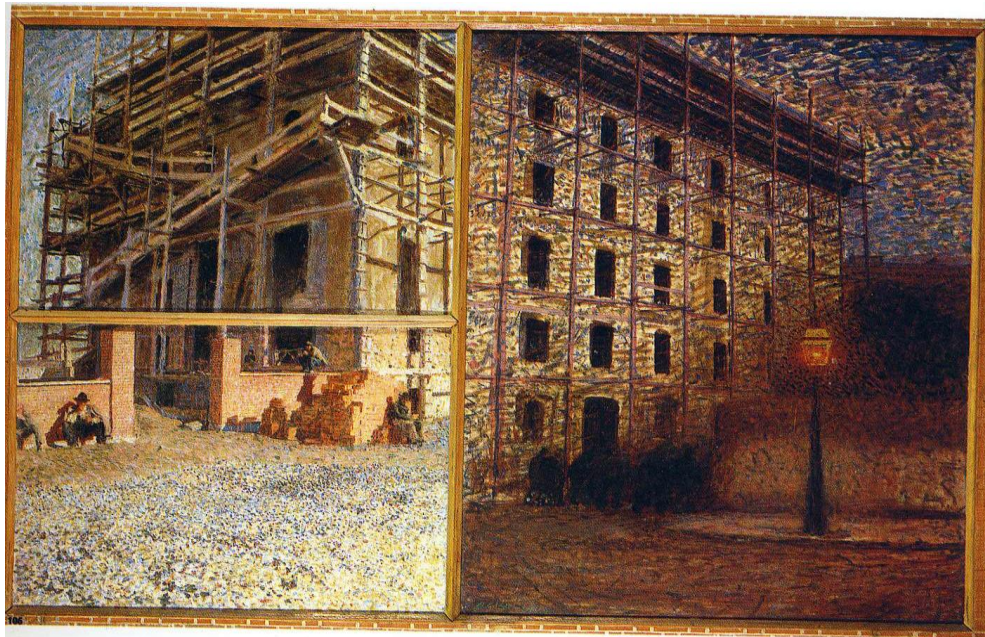


Figure 5 Giacomo Balla. *A Worker's Day*. Private Collection.



Figure 6 Telemaco Signorini. *I Cannot Wait*. 1867. Private Collection.



Figure 7 Giacomo Balla. *Woman Sewing*. c.1887. Private Collection



Figure 8 Telemaco Signorini. *La Sala delle Agitate nell'Ospedale di San Bonivacio*. 1865.  
Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna di Ca'Pesaro, Venice.



Figure 9 Giacomo Balla. *The Madwoman*. 1905. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome.

e uno dei primi che tentasse in Firenze la fotografia, si vede il barbuto Stefano Ussi parlare con Lanfredini come due cospiratori, involtati nei loro democratici



mantelli. Il Lanfredini poi si rivede acquerellato dal Tricca in quest'altra caricatura dov'è irriconoscibile. Cambiati i tempi, finita l'occupazione austriaca, an-

che gli uomini cambiarono, gli animi si addolcirono, e Lanfredini è rappresentato in elegante toelette, con fazzoletto in mano e gran cilindro in testa in atto di andare a casa Corsini a dar lezione ai principi.



Per dar maggiore incremento al comico e alla caricatura, venne col 59 anche la guardia nazionale. Gli infiniti e grotteschi episodi delle perlustrazioni notturne di questi soldati cittadini e la loro mobilitazione per le altre città italiane, doventarono i più ameni racconti delle nostre

serate al caffè Michelangiolo. Augusto Betti fra gli altri, fu piacevolissimo a raccontare i militi cittadini di Firenze, inviati per mare a Napoli o per ferrovia a Torino. Fra le nostre caricature si

Figure 10 Telemaco Signorini. *Charicatures and characters at Caffè Michelangelo*. 1893.



Figure 11 Unknown Artist. *Ballet Excelsior*. 1881. Baletto.net.

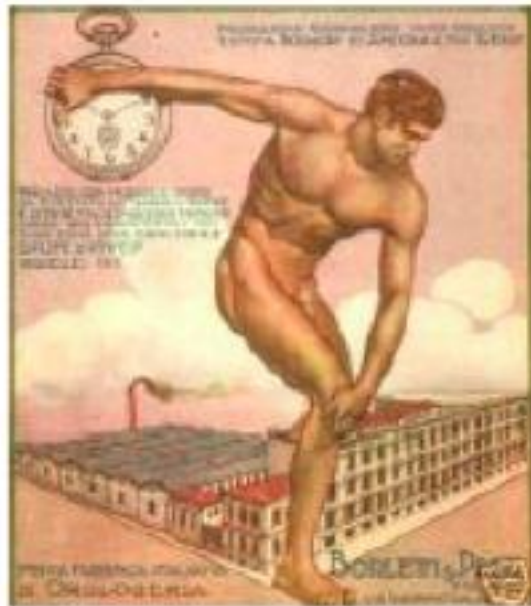


Figure 12 Unknown Artist. Commercial ads for Borletti & Pezzi, The first Italian industry of horology (Introna). Taken from *A Culture of Objects: Italy's Quest for Modernity (1878-1922)* by Luca Benedetto Cottini.

IL  
GIORNALE



**La Bicicletta**

Offre ai soli soci del T. C. C. I. un  
abbonamento collo sconto del 10 per  
cento, vale a dire al prezzo di

**Lire 17 (anzichè di L. 18,50)**

*Questo abbonamento dà diritto:*

1° Al **Giornale** da oggi a tutto il 1895 (circa 150 numeri).  
2° Al **Revolver Bulldog** a sei colpi, del peso di 300 grammi  
del calibro 320 e della grandezza dell'unito disegno. Questo revolver è  
caricabile oltrecchè a palla, anche a pallini per i cani. È comodissimo  
a tenersi in tasca. La difesa e la precisione sono garantite. Il valore di  
tale revolver è di L. 18. Esso è l'unico fabbricato per i Ciclisti. Si ri-  
prende da coloro che non lo trovano un miracolo di leggerezza, di buon  
mercato e di finitura.

2° All'**Annuario del Velocipedismo** per il 1895, splendido  
volume di 400 pagine con illustrazioni e carte ciclistiche che si pubbli-  
cherà alla fine dell'anno.

**Per abbonarsi collo sconto basterà indicare  
nella cartolina-vaglia la propria qualità di socio  
del Touring. L'Amministrazione si incaricherà di  
accertarsene direttamente alla Segreteria dell'As-  
sociazione.**

*Lettere raccomandate, cartoline-vaglia, ecc.  
devono essere inviate all'Amministrazione,  
Via Meravigli 1, Milano.*

Figure 13 Unknown Artist. 1895. Touringclub.it.





Figure 14 Telemaco Signorini. *Untitled*. c.1871. The Macchiaioli Institute Rome.

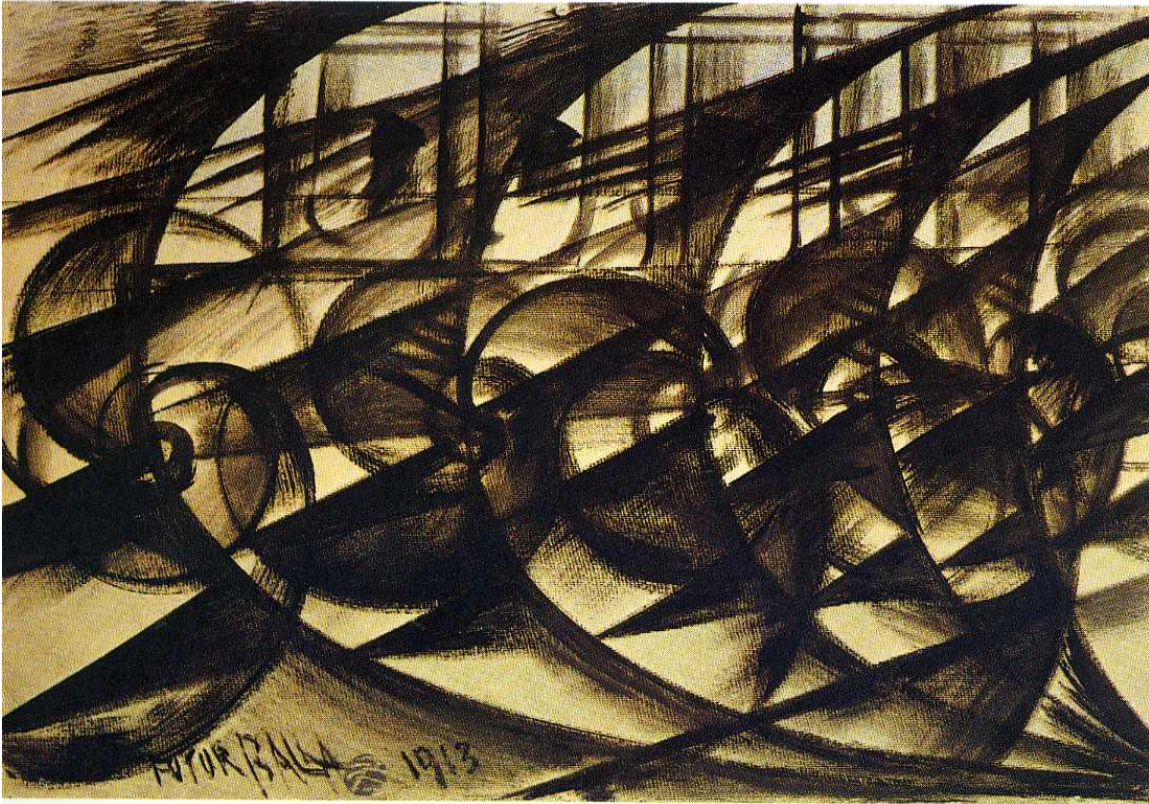


Figure 15 Giacomo Balla. *Speeding Car*. 1913. Private collection.



Figure 16 Telemaco Signorini. *La Diana del Lavoro*. 1893. Private collection

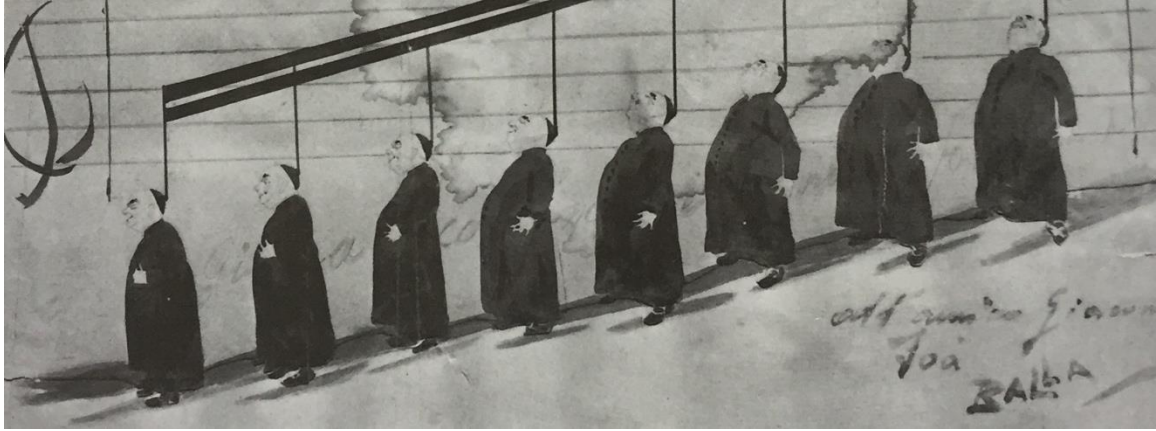


Figure 17 Giacomo Balla. *Studio Ironico Satirico (Ironic Satire Study)*. 1896. Private collection, Rome.



Figure 18 Giacomo Balla. *Futurist Suit*. 1913.

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