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Dissent in Remix Digital Culture: Subversive Humour in the Memeification of Giorgia Meloni's 2019 Discourse

Marallo, Giorgia

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Humanities

Dissent in Remix Digital Culture: Subversive Humour in the Memeification of Giorgia Meloni's 2019 Discourse

Giorgia Marallo, s4540565

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Supervisor: Dr. Henrike Jansen

2nd Reader: Dr. Ronny Boogaart

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of internet memes in the reframing and subversion of Giorgia Meloni's 2019 political speech held in Rome on November 19th, 2019. To analyse the corpus of memes that emerged from the viral #iosonogiorgia trend, a mixed-methodological framework was developed, combining Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis with both humour and subversive theories. The analysis investigates how humour functioned as a key mechanism in the memeification process that transformed Meloni's speech from an authoritative and nationalistic discourse into an artifact of collective ridicule and cultural play. The analysis revealed that the memes employed five main subversive mechanisms, namely parodic roleplay and mimicry, juxtaposition and incongruity, personal denigration, fragmentation and repetition, and decontextualisation and trivialisation. Humour in the corpus thus operates not only as a source of amusement but as a vehicle for digital participatory dissent and as a means of diluting ideological weight. By highlighting how humour and meme culture operate in a digital political environment, this thesis contributes to broadening the understanding of political memes as rhetorical and subversive tools.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Memes, Humour and Subversion.....	10
2.1 <i>Internet Memes</i>	10
2.3 <i>Humour and Memes in Politics and as Subversive Strategies</i>	19
2.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	21
3. Methodology	23
3.1 <i>Genitore 1, Genitore 2 and #iosonogiorgiachallenge: How It Started</i>	23
3.2 <i>Corpus Selection</i>	24
3.3 <i>Method of Analysis</i>	26
3.3.1 The MCDA Layer	26
3.3.2 The Humour Layer	27
3.3.3 The Subversive Layer	29
3.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	32
4. Results & Discussion.....	33
4.1 <i>Parodic Roleplay and Mimicry</i>	33
4.2 <i>Juxtaposition and Incongruity</i>	34
4.4 <i>Fragmentation and Repetition</i>	37
4.5 <i>Decontextualisation and Trivialisation</i>	38
4.6 <i>Conclusion</i>	39
5. Conclusion	41
Bibliography	43
Appendix A.....	48
Appendix B	49

1. Introduction

Contrary to popular belief, the coinage of the word “meme” did not happen on the internet but rather in academia: in fact, the first person to use it was Dawkins, in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976). The Greek μίμημα (*mimema*, “something which is imitated”), was shortened to ‘meme’ to rhyme with ‘gene’ through assonance. Dawkins’ main goal was to introduce a word that would enclose the concept of the gene to that of the environment of cultural evolution: some examples that he provides for memes are tunes, clothes-fashion and ways of making pots. Dawkins (1976) defines a meme as “a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation” (p. 171), and supposedly memes “propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation” (p. 172). Starting from the early 2000s, memes have consistently developed outside the scholarly discourse and are now commonly understood as *internet memes*, defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as “an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online, especially through social media”. As their cultural relevance grew, internet memes also started to gradually attract academic attention. Today, scholarly interpretations of internet memes in the academic context largely draw from Shifman’s work (2013, 2014):

“A group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which [...] were created with awareness of each other, and [...] were circulated, imitated and/or transformed via the Internet by many users” (2014, p. 46).

This definition clearly builds on Dawkins’ original concept of memes as units of cultural transmission but also adapts it to today’s digital age. Shifman describes internet memes as collections of digital content that share similarities in their format, tone and content, which are then edited and intentionally shared by a multitude of internet users. This passage from person to person eventually scales up to a shared social phenomenon. Although internet memes and Dawkins’ memes are similar in certain aspects (e.g., replicability), one pivotal feature that differentiates the two is mutation: while Dawkins’ memes mutate unintentionally and rather slowly, mutations in internet memes are deliberate and short-lived. In fact, while some internet memes might be more long-lasting than others, the majority of them is forgotten in a couple of days’ time (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Shifman, 2014). These rapid mutations and lifespan are probably due to a “spoiling” effect, where an internet meme transitions from being an inside joke for a selected few to becoming mainstream (Burgess, 2008), losing its appeal. Moreover, paradigmatic features such as humour are totally absent from Dawkins’ version of memes, whereas they are fundamental characteristics in internet memes (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024). Figure 1 exemplifies how humour operates in memes and can have further functions other than that of amusement. In this example, humour operates as a vehicle for critique, addressing the practice of

Figure 1

Internet Meme



Note. Retrieved from <https://i.imgflip.com/5bp2aq.jpg>

rainbow-washing, i.e., when major companies adopt rainbow-coloured logos or products during June (the internationally recognised *Pride Month*, during which the queer community is celebrated in its entirety) to appear supportive of LGBTQ+ rights, without taking meaningful action throughout the year. The meme features Squidward Tentacles, a character from the animated TV series *Spongebob Squarepants*, setting up a sunbed in the first panel, only to fold it and leave in the second. In the first panel, the sunbed is edited to be a pride flag and is labelled “Companies at June 1st”,¹ highlighting the temporary show of solidarity. The second panel, captioned “Companies at July 1st”, is a critique of how this apparent support is withdrawn once Pride Month ends. Through irony and familiar imagery, the meme uses humour not only to entertain but also to expose the superficiality of corporate allyship, which often serves as a profitable marketing strategy rather than genuine support.

Due to their virality, internet memes have been studied as tools of subversion, delegitimisation, and political participation. These internet memes are called *political memes*. As noted by several meme scholars (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Hayes, 2025; Mazzolenti & Bracciale, 2019), a defining feature of political memes is their use of humour, which is what makes them ideal and effective for social and political critique and commentary (Kulkarni, 2017; Miltner, 2018; Ross & Rivers, 2017). Moreover, evidence shows how political memes can attract and involve less educated and/or younger individuals, and it explains how, via humour, they can attract people who are normally not interested in politics (Kulkarni, 2017; Marino, 2019).

¹ The use of “at” instead of “on” in the captions “Companies at June 1st” and “Companies at July 1st” is non-standard in English. This is probably due to the fact that the creator is not an English native speaker, which is common in globally circulated memes. Nevertheless, it does not affect the intended meaning of the meme.

A notable example of a political meme's power to critique can be found in Matteo Salvini's² case against Romani communities, an episode in which Salvini wanted to dismantle Romani encampments with the use of bulldozers in 2015. His multiple declarations sparked discontent among a big part of the Italian population, and it became a source of many humorous critics. For instance, Pinguini Tattici Nucleari, a famous Italian indie rock band, even refers to it in one of their most politically charged songs, *Me Want Marò Back*. The song is structured as if it were sung by Matteo Salvini himself, exaggerating and mocking right-wing ideologies and rhetoric. It primarily addresses an international incident with India in 2012: on the 15th of February, two Italian marò (soldiers from the San Marco Marine Brigade) killed two Indian fishermen, mistaking them for pirates, and were subsequently detained by Indian authorities. This event led to a diplomatic crisis between the two countries and is satirically referenced in the song alongside Salvini's intentions for Romani encampments with the following line: "Me want Marò back, and bulldozer on campo rom" (Pinguini Tattici Nucleari, 2015), which translates to "I want Marò back, and bulldozers on Romani encampments". This line is a sarcastic commentary on Salvini's rhetoric, mocking his approach to Romani communities.

Other humorous responses and critics also spread via the use of political memes. Figure 2 shows an

Figure 2

Political Meme of Salvini



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/5zgImJGBU>

² Matteo Salvini currently serves as the party leader (Italian: segretario federale) of the Lega per Salvini Premier party, commonly shortened to Lega, and his current position within Meloni's government is Vice President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, i.e., deputy prime minister of Italy, and the Minister of the Infrastructure and Transport.

example of such memes. It depicts Salvini formally dressed, with crossed arms, in a position of authority. The caption of the meme serves as commentary on Salvini's hate propaganda against Romani communities and their dismantlement, especially in the southern parts of Italy (Associazione 21 Luglio, 2015). The meme is a wordplay of Romani communities (*rom* in Italian) and Italy's capital, Rome (*Roma*): *Roma*'s name will be changed to simply 'A'. This way, any reference to *rom* people will be eliminated.

Figure 2 is also an example of subversion of Salvini's proposal. The wordplay of *Roma* and *rom* exaggerates Salvini's anti-Romani rhetoric to a ridiculous extent, suggesting he would go as far as renaming the Italian capital to erase any association with those communities. This absurd exaggeration uses humour to ridicule and delegitimise his authority (Ross & Rivers, 2017). By turning a controversial position into something laughable, the meme weakens the seriousness of Salvini's statement and exposes its prejudice. Although subversion is traditionally understood as a concrete attempt to overthrow or undermine a political system (the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines subversion as "a systematic attempt to overthrow or undermine a government or political system by persons working secretly from within"), its meaning in meme studies is somewhat broader and less literal. In this context, subversion refers to the refusal to recognise or respect an established authority, not by stripping it of its actual power, but by challenging its moral or symbolic legitimacy, and it does so through humour, which becomes a medium for political resistance (Collado, 2024; Huntington, 2013; Ross & Rivers, 2017).

While Matteo Salvini's case provides a brief example of political memes as subversive tools, a more complex and widely circulated case can be found in Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech, which underwent one of the most prominent political memeification processes in recent years in Italy. It originated from the viral remix video by MEM & J (2019), based on a segment of Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech at 'Orgoglio Italiano' ['Italian Pride'], a right-wing manifestation held in Rome on October 19th, 2019. The political memes in question are mainly derived from MEM & J's (2019) music video remix, spawning numerous remixes and making Meloni's discourse one of the most recognised political speeches in Italy.

Focusing on this case, this thesis aims to analyse how political memes about Giorgia Meloni's discourse were used by the online community to undermine and subvert its original meaning through humour. By examining this case, this study contributes to the literature on how political messages can be recontextualised, subverted, and transformed through meme culture, ultimately serving as tools for resistance or delegitimation. Previous studies (AlAfnan, 2025; Al-Rawi, 2021; Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Beskow et al., 2020; Kulkarni, 2017; Ross & Rivers, 2017) have demonstrated how powerful internet memes can be used in persuading and arguing for a (political) ideology and narrative, but less attention has been paid to their subversive nature, and much of this research remains theoretical. This thesis addresses these gaps in the literature by investigating the remixing of Meloni's speech and by developing a three-layered methodological

framework. The first layer utilises Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which combines Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), based on Ledin & Machin (2020), with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), following Fairclough's (2001) approach. The second layer applies humour theory as outlined by Martin et al. (2003) and Meyer (2000), while the third layer constitutes an original synthesis of subversive strategies, drawing on Holmes and Marra's (2002) framework on subversive humour and integrating concepts of parody (Hutcheon, 1985), the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1965/1984), the absurd (Camus, 1942/1975), and irony (Simpson, 2003). While the first two layers build on established meme analysis approaches (e.g., Khan, 2024; Hayes, 2025), the third offers a novel analytical contribution to memetics.³ Building on this, the research question of this thesis is the following: "How is Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech remixed in memes to subvert its original political meaning through humour?"

This thesis is structured into three main chapters: the second chapter, *Memes, Humour and Subversion*, explains what internet and political memes are and how they are constructed. It explores their various genres and characteristics and discusses their humorous features, as well as their role in political critique and subversion. The third chapter, *Methodology*, explains the case here considered and the applied method of analysis. The fourth chapter, *Results and Discussion*, illustrates the findings of this study and elaborates on them. Finally, the fifth chapter, *Conclusion*, summarises the outcomes and reflects on the broader implications that can be derived.

³*Memetics* is defined by Heylighen & Chielens (2009) as "the theoretical and empirical science that studies the replication, spread and evolution of memes" (p. 3205).

2. Memes, Humour and Subversion

This chapter delves into internet and political memes and how they operate. Firstly, it explains internet memes' components, strategies and functions, and it looks at their genres, characteristics and key components. Secondly, the functions and characteristics of political memes are presented, delving into their role in political participation. Lastly, the chapter explores the role of humour and memes in political expression and subversion, underlining how it resists and challenges authority while enhancing political engagement. All figures included in this chapter have been selected by the author⁴ to visually illustrate the theoretical concepts hereby discussed.

2.1 Internet Memes

As previously mentioned in the introduction, internet memes evolved from Dawkins' conceptualisation of memes as cultural units. While this concept initially developed in evolutionary theory, it quickly evolved, outgrowing its original biological definition. Today, memes are widely understood as per Shifman's (2014) definition, i.e., as groups of digital items collectively and intentionally created, altered, and shared across the internet (Rogers & Giorgi, 2024), or, as Gal (2018) describes them:

“Internet memes are digital texts—verbal, visual, or audial—that share common attributes and undergo variations by multiple users. They are created with awareness of one another, and they require prior acquaintance for proper production and consumption, as the repetitive (or memetic) element of the text often incorporates coded cultural information essential for proper interpretation. [...] This practice facilitates, on the one hand, the expression of originality and creativity, and, on the other, a sense of belonging to a cultural collective. In this sense, the memetic practice meets both the demand for individualism and the yearning to belong characteristic of participatory culture.” (pp. 529-530)

As the focus of this thesis is on internet memes, the term *memes* will henceforth refer exclusively to *internet memes*, digital texts (whether audial, visual or verbal) that are edited and spread through the internet. Gal's definition is an expansion of Shifman's, and it emphasises the fundamental characteristics of intertextuality, participation and cultural decoding. Therefore, memes are not simply humorous and funny images, videos or other online content, but they are artifacts that possess virtual physicality, i.e., artifacts that exist not only in the human mind but also in the digital environment (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015).

The first of these characteristics, intertextuality, is derived from the juxtaposition of the visual and textual components of memes, the elements that create the meme itself (Molina et al., 2020). The visual

⁴ The selection occurred via Pinterest due to its visual search functionality, which facilitated the research of suitable examples.

format can be an image, a video, a GIF,⁵ etc., and it does not directly communicate the meme's meaning, but rather the cultural value that the overlaid text embeds (Molina et al., 2020). This combination of visual and textual elements is what produces meaning (Huntington, 2013) and clarifies the communicative intent. This interplay is referred to as the meme's intertextuality. Shifman (2013, 2014) identifies three crucial dimensions that help understand how intertextuality operates in memes: *content*, *form* and *stance*, exemplified in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6.

A meme's content is directly related to its textual element and its meaning, that is, the idea and ideology it conveys. Figure 3 shows the template, i.e., the starting point (the image) from which the meme is built. Figure 4 adds the first dimension, content, by adding two texts onto the highway exit signs: the direction for continuing straight typically represents the more socially accepted (or mainstream) option, while the exit sign indicates what the meme's creators do. The car's sudden and exaggerated swerving indicates the creator's preferred option, visually signalling both a conscious departure from the expected and awareness that the choice may not be ideal, although the reasons behind it remain undisclosed. In the case of Figure 4, instead of dealing with their emotions in a healthy way (i.e., feeling them and talking about them), the creator decides to cope by making fun of their personal struggles.

The second dimension, the form, refers to "the physical incarnation of the message" (Shifman, 2014, p. 40). It is perceived through the senses, and it includes the meme's visual and/or auditory qualities. In Figure 5, the template (Figure 3) has been recreated using *Lego Worlds*, an online game that allows for

Figure 3

Template



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/2OxY7He2D>

Figure 4

Content



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/56adGLUvr>

⁵ Graphic Interchange Formats are short, looping images or videos used as online reactions.

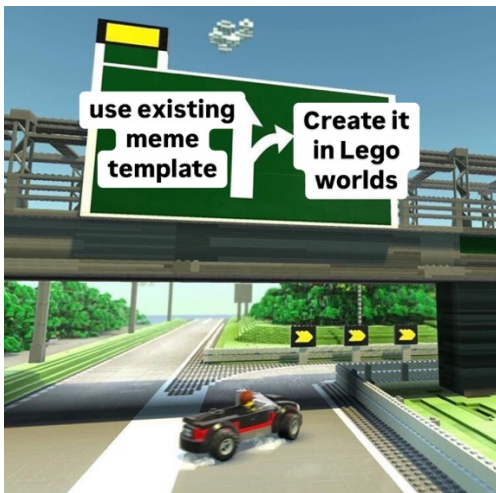
environmental customisation. Albeit changed in appearance, the key characteristics of the template are maintained. The creator even comments on their choice by creating a meme about recreating the original picture from scratch in *Lego Worlds*, a more time-consuming and apparently unnecessary method compared to simply using the existing template (i.e., the “better” or easiest option).

The third and final dimension, stance, is communication-related: it refers to how the creator positions themselves in relation to the audience, the linguistic style of the text, and the content itself. While the content is the message of the meme, stance is the modality in which said message is communicated, i.e., the attitude, tone, or position it takes toward the content itself and the audience. Overall, stance reflects the values, beliefs and ideologies embedded in the meme. For example, Figure 6 repropose the same template but in a political key. The directions propose two extremists’ political ideologies: straight on, a symbol associated with groups or organisations tending to anarcho-communism, on the far-left side of the spectrum, whilst on the exit there is a symbol used by far-right wing parties in Italy. The car swerving right could suggest either a commentary on the recent political trajectory in Italy or the creator’s own preference for a far-right ideology over a far-left one.

These dimensions are not only essential for understanding intertextuality in memes but are also closely connected to another key feature of internet culture: replicability. Replicability is central to memes’ circulation and evolution, and it plays a pivotal role in fostering participation and sustaining participatory culture. Memes thrive on variation and remixes: internet users intentionally modify and reinvent them, and this very capacity for mutation significantly contributes to a meme’s success and longevity (Shifman, 2014). Furthermore, replicability is closely related to *imitation*, which functions as a key mechanism enabling their

Figure 5

Form



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/4qGxHgajD>

Figure 6

Stance



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/fAjLKCcHQ>

spread (Molina et al., 2020). Through imitation, users recreate or adapt existing formats, allowing memes to evolve across different contexts and communities.

Molina et al.'s concept of imitation is what Shifman (2013, 2014) refers to as *mimicry*, defined by the latter as one of the two main repackaging strategies of memes, alongside *remix*. Mimicry refers to the direct replication of a meme, and it involves the practice of recreating a specific image, text or video. A clear example of this practice is illustrated in Figures 7 and 8: Figure 7 depicts Kermit the Frog, a character from *The Muppet Show*, drinking tea in front of a window. He is possibly facing a companion, positioned with the window on his right. The caption “But that’s none of my business” completes the image. Figure 8 mimics the meme: it shows a girl dressed in green, drinking from a red cup (reminiscent of the colour of the tea) and facing her right. Around her neck is a sign that reads “... BUT THAT’S NONE OF MY BUSINESS”. Figure 8 is a clear mimicry of Figure 7, in which a famous meme is recreated in real life with explicit references to the original. Remixing seems to be a more recent repackaging strategy in comparison to mimicry, and it involves a more interpretative transformation of an existing meme, as it typically consists of editing a meme to convey a personalised or context-specific message. Unlike mimicry, which largely preserves the structure and intent of the original, remixing introduces creative edits that shift the meme’s meaning or tone. This practice is deeply rooted in the Web 2.0 user-focus: the easier it is for users to download, re-edit and share, the more likely they are to do so. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate this practice.

Figure 9 shows a young girl turning toward the camera with a slight smile, while in the background, a

Figure 7

Template



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/yyJNDeMuc>

Figure 8

Mimicry



Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/ivioFszbj>

Figure 9*Template*

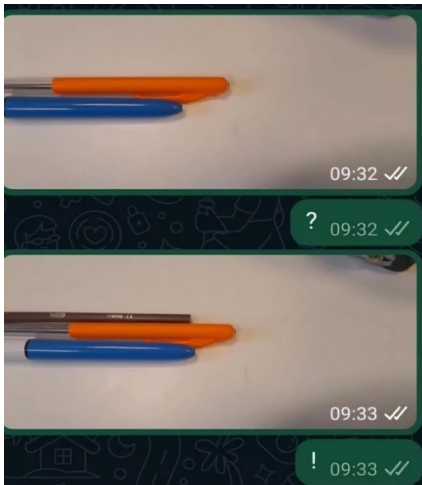
Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/3BvJshcx3>

Figure 10*Remix*

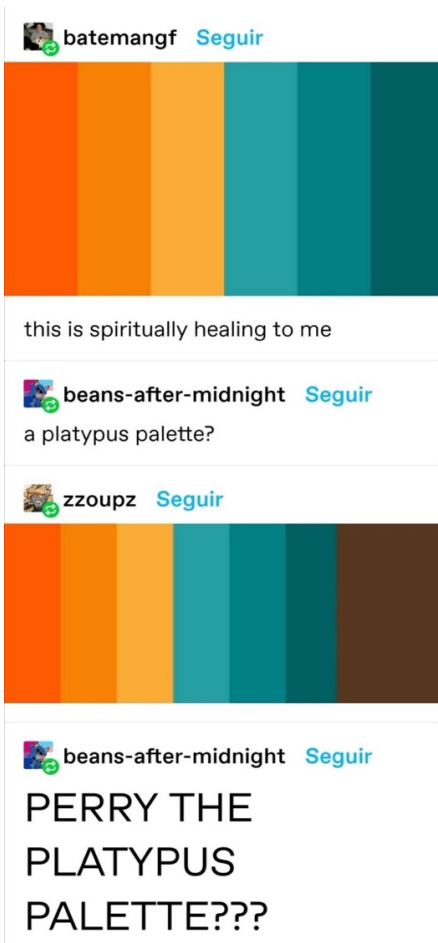
Note. Retrieved from
<https://pin.it/2OpxhYgYW>

house burns as a fire truck and yellow hose attempt to control the fire. Figure 10 presents the same house on fire in the background, but the smiling young girl has been replaced by a woman in pink. She is finishing putting on lipstick while holding a make-up mirror, and faces the camera as well, representing the creator's hypothetical behaviour in the case of something like this happening. This is a clear example of a remix, as certain characteristics of the meme have been kept the same, but some others were changed, therefore personalising the meme to represent the creator's opinion or point of view.

Gal's (2018) cultural decoding is what Molina et al. (2020) name *cultural component*, and Milner (2012) calls *meme literacy*, i.e., the knowledge needed to understand a meme's meaning. This cultural component is connected to Dawkins' conceptualisation of memes as cultural artifacts: memes can be understood only when a person knows the sociocultural environment the meme was created within. Thus, while most memes can be easily understood by simply reading a caption or listening to the accompanying audio or song played in the background, some memes are almost incomprehensible without specific contextual knowledge. For instance, Figures 15, 16 and 17 may appear to an unfamiliar viewer as nothing more than images of pens, colour palettes and a freshly done manicure. However, to those with the correct meme literacy, these are instantly recognisable memes referencing a specific character from the animated TV show

Figure 15*Platypus Pens? Perry the Platypus Pens?!*

Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8DSzEuNjFn/?igsh=MTVpdG4zcTdzMG9scg==>

Figure 16*A Platypus Palette? Perry the Platypus Palette?!*

Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/7J37V5JtY>

Figure 17*A Platypus Manicure? Perry the Platypus Manicure?!*

Note. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/phineasandferb/comments/remfgsx/_/

Figure 18*A Platypus Named Perry*

Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/6EQsXQ5sV>

Figure 19*Perry the Platypus*

Note. Retrieved from <https://pin.it/2LmaXS5tS>

Phineas and Ferb. To understand them, the audience must be familiar with the show and know that it features a platypus, Perry, who appears to be an ordinary pet to his owners but is actually a secret agent for the O.W.C.A. (Organisation Without a Cool Acronym), an animal espionage agency. Perry regularly battles Dr. Doofenshmirtz, an evil scientist who fails to recognise Perry (Figure 17) as Perry the Platypus when he is not wearing his signature spy hat (Figure 18). The meme originated from a recurring gag in the show, where Dr. Doofenshmirtz initially exclaims “A platypus?” when seeing Perry without his hat, only to follow up with “Perry the Platypus!” once Perry puts his hat on. The humour lies in the absurdity of such minimal transformation being enough to fool someone. Over time, this joke evolved increasingly into abstraction, to the point of being recognisable simply by the right association of colours.

Having shown that meme literacy varies according to the complexity and abstraction involved, it is then evident that memes exist on a spectrum of accessibility, from being immediately recognised formats to requiring deep cultural context. However, this accessibility is not purely cognitive, but it also carries social and communicative weight. One way to understand this is through the concept of *stance*, as defined by Molina et al. (2000) and not to be confused with Shifman’s (2014), which refers to the meme’s social positioning, i.e., whether it expresses a positive or negative valence or whether it aims to raise awareness about a social issue. In this sense, stance plays a role in shaping how a meme is received, interpreted, and shared, intersecting with both literacy and its ability to be relatable.

To further understand how memes operate within digital culture, it is important to consider their spreading and evolution processes. Molina et al.’s (2020) concept of *virality*, identified as another key component of memes, consists in the meme’s propagation ability, which can be measured by the number of *likes*, *shares* or other statistical modalities, although it lacks a fixed threshold. Shifman’s (2014) classification of memes as *viral*, *founder-based* or *egalitarian* aids understanding the circulation and evolution of memes.

A viral refers to a widely recognised image or video shared rapidly across platforms, often with minimal or no edits, and it may or may not have derivatives. Figure 11 is a screenshot from a viral, a video posted by Recess Therapy on August 4th, 2022, featuring a child named Tariq who professes his love for corn. Its virality surged when TikTok user @doingthings reposted it, earning over 3.4 million likes in three weeks. The video’s popularity increased further when @schmoyoho remixed Tariq’s words into a song (*It’s Corn*) on August 19th, quickly gaining 3.5 million likes (KnowYourMeme, n.d.). The official track,⁶ launched in collaboration with The Gregory Brothers, was released on August 29th. As of May 2025, the video has gained circa 52 million views across Instagram (31.7 million), YouTube (13.3 million) and TikTok (6.9 million).

⁶ Available at https://open.spotify.com/track/15iXvMt4bYvpixflscveRW?si=hedFRh7CT7S_MWlucaPULg.

Figure 11*Viral**Note.* Retrieved from

https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cg14y_1llqo/?igsh=c2IjNnZlN2Z4MjBx

Figure 12*Founder-based meme**Note.* Retrieved from <https://pin.it/3pGzhPFUU>**Figure 13***Egalitarian meme**Note.* Retrieved from <https://pin.it/1z7VUxuUy>

A founder-based meme originates from a specific image, video or text (often a viral) that becomes the recognisable starting point of a meme format. This means that a founder-based meme is the created or shared first version of a meme. *Woman Yelling at a Cat* (Figure 12) is a clear example. It combines a screenshot from *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* (season 2, episode 14), showing Taylor Armstrong yelling, next to an image of a confused-looking cat sitting at a dinner table. Similarly to the *It's Corn* meme, its rise in popularity is traceable to a specific, popularly known post. On May 1st, 2019, Twitter (now X) user @MISSINGEGIRL, first paired the two images, commenting on its comedic effect. The post gained over 78.900 retweets and 276.800 likes in two months. By May 2nd, the format had begun spreading widely across other platforms (KnowYourMeme, n.d.).

The last category, egalitarian memes, comprises many versions of a meme the origin of which cannot be pinpointed, i.e., it seems that multiple versions of the meme started to spread simultaneously. These memes are often based on certain patterns or genres. *Distracted Boyfriend* (Figure 13) is a prime example: the image, depicting a man turning to look at a passing woman when in the presence of his girlfriend, has been

adapted countless times to represent scenarios of temptation or distraction, without having a specific version overshadowing the others or a clear origin point (KnowYourMeme, n.d.).

2.2 Political Memes

The function of memes is not limited to amusement: as Rahardi & Amalia (2019) conclude, memes can be used as a medium for political criticism. Political memes can be understood as a form of critique succeeding political cartoons, with the difference that politics and humour overlap in a more fluid way, making it harder to discern them. Given the fact that they are created by anonymous users as part of participatory culture, political memes mostly emerge outside institutional contexts (Collado, 2024; Mortesen & Neumayer, 2021). Anderau & Barbarrusa (2024) identify memes as “low-risk, high-reward communicative acts, especially within political discourse” (p. 1539) and propose eight key functions that make memes an effective medium for political discourse and divide them into three macro-categories: *humour-related functions*, *conditions of production-spread*, and *conditions of reception*. This categorisation provides useful insights, but the naming of their functions raises some conceptual issues. While the authors remain consistent in their terminology, the categorisation could benefit from more nuanced labelling that avoids overlaps.

The first humour-related function is, somehow tautologically, *humour*. Sălcudean (2020) understands memes as *visual jokes*: understanding a meme’s humour is similar to understanding a joke (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024), since the audience must share the same background knowledge as the speaker to be able to laugh. Successful joke-telling involves the risk that this shared knowledge may be absent, a risk the speaker must take, as attempting to explicitly verify the audience’s understanding beforehand would ruin the joke. If the joke is successful, it creates a sense of intimacy between the audience and the speaker (Cohen, 1999). Anderau & Barbarrusa (2024) align Cohen’s (1999) arguments within the meme framework, as memes also rely on shared background knowledge and create a feeling of intimacy.

The second humour-related function is that of fostering *in-group identity* within a target audience. This feature is heavily connected to the meme’s ability to enhance intimacy among a community: by being able to understand and relate to a meme, one can rapidly feel included. The ability to create rapid in/out-group dynamics is what makes memes a valuable medium for political discussions.

Caricature is the last of the humour-related functions identified in Anderau & Barbaarrusa (2024). Political memes often act as caricatures by simplifying complex, possibly opposite, views for a rapid and impactful message. Although this lack of nuance is extremely satirically effective, it risks distorting the original discourse and enhancing polarisation.

Replicability is the first identified condition for production-spread. The meme’s quality of high replicability, combined with the social media’s design, enables quick and broad distribution. For the majority

of the time, memes' impact relies on mass repetition rather than single instances, thus reinforcing the same message through its volume.

The last condition for production-spread is *context collapse*. There are two types of context collapse: one is related to the meme's structure, where unrelated elements are combined, and the other is in their reception, where diverse audiences interpret them differently. The humour and meaning arise from exaggeration and recontextualisation.

The first condition for reception is *hermeneutical resources*, i.e., a medium to understand one's experience. Through relatable formats, political memes are able to interpret and share both everyday and deeper experiences.

Low reputational cost is the second condition of reception. Memes require less accountability due to their built-in plausible deniability: unlike direct assertions, they allow creators to (at least partly) evade accountability by framing controversial content as "simply a meme".

The last condition of reception is memes' *signaling* function. Instead of asserting factual claims, memes are powerful tools to signal one's political sympathies via humour and exaggeration. This last function, along with plausible deniability and humour, is what makes them "great candidates to function as dog whistles" (p. 1538). Dog whistles are defined by Quaranto (2022) as speeches apparently ordinary but that send covert and often derogatory messages to a specific subset of the audience.

Given these functions, political memes have positive and negative effects. On one hand, they reach a broader audience by making politics less selective and enhance in-group identity in marginalised communities, with humour used to establish new connections (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Mazzolenti & Bracciale, 2019). On the other hand, the fostering of in-group identity also enhances the exclusion of those same minorities from a broader part of society, and the removal of nuance for the sake of a more direct humorous reaction risks ubiquity in complex political debates (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Sălcudean, 2020). This usually leads to polarisation effects and confirmation bias (Marino, 2019). Moreover, because of their plausible deniability, memes can be (and are) used to create extreme content and serve it to mainstream audiences in a less straightforward way with the risk of going unnoticed, becoming an effective way to communicate to a target audience (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Beskow et al., 2020; Mortensen & Neumayer, 2021).

2.3 Humour and Memes in Politics and as Subversive Strategies

Since the beginning of the study of internet memes, humour has been identified as a major component of successful memes, whether it takes the form of a "quirky and situational" irony or more of a "biting social commentary" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). In fact, while humour is often associated with light-heartedness,

it can also convey deeper ideological meanings, acting as a discursive tool that both reflects and constructs the political identities and affiliations of its speakers. As seen, memes are particularly effective as humorous tools because of their short-liveness, remixability and context-specificity. Humour in memes often functions dialogically; that is, it refers to past memes, political events and/or social issues, creating meaning through intertextual layers.

Humour frameworks, such as Meyer's (2000) and Martin et al.'s (2003), while not specifically developed for memes, have been used to analyse them in recent research (such as Hayes, 2025, on meme commentary on the COVID-19 pandemic). Therefore, these frameworks, while originally intended for broader contexts, are nonetheless valuable within memetics to identify formation and collective participation, where humour becomes a medium for social commentary. As previously discussed, meme literacy plays an essential role in understanding memes, which includes symbols processing and recognition to perceive humour (Meyer, 2000). Since humour often relies on subtle references and specific symbols, meme literacy is crucial in correctly interpreting and engaging with the presented and intended humour. Furthermore, this connection between meme literacy and humour underlines how memes reflect the interplay between collective identity and the digital culture. The themes of humour and in-group identity are central to understanding how memes function within the digital sphere, and they are two of the eight key characteristics identified by Anderau & Barbarrusa (2024) in their taxonomy of memes. Furthermore, the social and interactional nature of memes is built on the act of remixing, which enhances humour's function as a trigger factor for social dialogue, especially in multi-directional communication contexts (Esteves & Meikle, 2015; Sălcudean, 2020).

This positions humour as a kind of social mechanism for signalling in-group affiliation and shared ideological positions within digital communities (Meyer, 2000). However, this unifying, positive function can also produce negative effects: when humour unifies, it can, at the same time, divide the communicators (or audience) by creating distance from others, reinforcing boundaries between different social or political groups (Anderau & Barbarrusa, 2024; Meyer, 2000). Graham et al. (1992) add a third, more neutral factor to this dynamic, i.e., humour as a means of expressiveness, rather than alignment or opposition. This duality gets even more complicated and nuanced when one takes into consideration that humour, when used with a dividing function, fortifies a group by divorcing it from another.

Moreover, humour had always had the role of a "soft critical instance" (Sălcudean, 2020, p. 95), serving as a subtle but effective medium for critique, commentary and resistance (Kulkarni, 2017; Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). Humour engages citizens who are not particularly interested in politics, enhancing political awareness and engagement in younger, disengaged or less educated demographics (Kulkarni, 2017; Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). As Meyer (2000) notes, politicians often use humour strategically, as it fosters a sense of

unity with the audience while simultaneously setting boundaries between allied and opposing groups. This dual function can reinforce political identity by accentuating either segregation or unity among communities (Sălcudean, 2020).

Moreover, humour can serve as a tool of resistance. Parody, while understood as a lighter form of criticism, can sharpen into *Juvenalian satire*, with the goal to expose, criticise and shame inconsistencies and hypocrisies (Dagnes, 2012; Hill, 2013, as cited in Moussa et al., 2020). According to Schmidt (2016, as cited in Collado, 2024), humour functions as a form of participation that can disrupt both the ritualism and the solemnity of political authority, resulting in a loss of respect and obedience for politics. Thus, humour can be seen as a tool to challenge narratives and reclaim differences from those in power (Collado, 2024).

On this matter, Holmes & Marra (2002) distinguish two types of humour, namely the reinforcing and the subversive type. Reinforcing humour is the kind of humour that maintains the status quo, as opposed to the subversive one, which aims to challenge or subvert it. Although their study is situated in a workplace environment, the mechanisms they identify (such as challenging authority, renegotiation of power dynamics and softening resistance) appear to find space in a political environment as well. Through (apparently) playful means, subversive humour enables speakers to critique dominant (or imposed) ideologies and resist hierarchies. If extended to the political sphere, it suggests how humour functions as a socially acceptable means of dissent by allowing speakers to criticise a dominant position without an overt confrontation. Subversive humour thus functions as a strategy to distance oneself from power, whether that power lies in individuals, organisations or ideologies, while softening the “attack” with the playfulness of the delivery (Holmes & Marra, 2002).

While the literature has explored the persuasive and identity-forming power of memes, particularly for political ideologies and narratives, their subversive potential has often remained underdeveloped, usually touched upon but rarely expanded beyond theory and abstraction. Furthermore, the literature often lacks clear and explicit definitions, taking for granted that the audience will know the nuanced difference between typologies of humour. This thesis attempts to concretise this abstraction with the developed methodological framework, complete with definitions when necessary, and delineated in the next chapter.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter it was established how memes do more than simply entertain; they signal, include, exclude, replicate, remix, and resist. Their power lies not only in their humour but in how this humour is used: to connect insiders, to mark outsiders, or to critique avoiding direct confrontation. By explaining their intertextuality and the other mechanisms they operate with, it was shown how memes express complex political ideologies and commentary into accessible images, tools that allow high plausible deniability. This

chapter sets the background for exploring how political memes not only reflect political discourse but actively shape it, often in subtle and surprising ways.

3. Methodology

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first one outlines the context in which Meloni's speech was delivered, as well as its impact and cultural aftermaths. The second section explains the corpus selection process, describing how the data collection was carried out. Finally, the third and final section delved into the methodological framework used to analyse the corpus, drawing from previous uses of MCDA in meme studies (e.g., Khan, 2024), as well as humour theories frameworks by Martin et al. (2003) and Meyer (2000). It also incorporates selected subversive strategies on the basis of Holmes & Marra's (2002) work on subversive humour, Hutcheon's (1985) concept of parody, Bakhtin's (1965/1984) notion of carnivalesque, Camus' (1942/1975) concept of the absurd, and Simpson's (2003) model of irony. While the first two layers build on frameworks previously applied to meme studies (e.g., Khan, 2024; Hayes, 2025), the third layer constitutes an original contribution. To the best of this study's knowledge, Holmes & Marra's (2002) framework on subversive humour has not yet been applied to memes. Moreover, the grouping of parody (Hutcheon, 1985), carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1965/1984), absurdity (Camus, 1942/1975), and irony (Simpson, 2003) into a brief subversive strategies typology is the author's own synthesis.

3.1 Genitore 1, Genitore 2 and #iosonogiorgiachallenge: How It Started

As previously explained, the memes under investigation arise from Meloni's discourse in Rome during Lega's political rally on November 19th, 2019. This rally opposed the so-called "Governo Conte II", Conte's second mandate (September 5th, 2019–February 13th, 2021), a coalition of centre and centre-left parties. Although organised by Lega, the event included other (centre-)right parties and organisations such as Forza Italia, Fratelli D'Italia, and CasaPound, a known neofascist movement. The estimated turnout was 70.000 people, with political actors from each participating party, including Meloni, delivering speeches.

In her discourse,⁷ Meloni employs framing⁸ elements identified by Entman (1993) as "key-words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (p. 52), reinforcing opinions on migration, inclusive language and Italian identity, central themes for Fratelli d'Italia (Aglioti Colombini, 2023). In an intense part of her speech, Meloni states, echoing Marine Le Pen's 2017 discourse⁹ (Aglioti Colombini, 2023): "I am Giorgia, I am a

⁷ Full version available at <https://www.giorgiameloni.it/2019/10/19/il-discorso-integrale-di-giorgia-meloni-in-piazza-san-giovanni-a-roma/>.

⁸ Entman (1993) understands the concept of *framing* as one that "consistently offers a way to describe the power of communicating text" (p. 51), and, drawing on Kahneman & Tversky's experiments (1984, as cited in Entman, 1993), he highlights how frames select and draw attention to certain aspects described, therefore directing the audience's attention away from others.

⁹ "Je suis en femme [...]. Je suis en mère [...]. Je suis en avocate [...]. [J]e suis intensément, fièrement, fidèlement, évidemment française" which translates to "I am a woman. I am a mother. I am a lawyer. I am intensely, proudly, faithfully, obviously French". Retrieved from Front National's 2017 official presidential campaign, available at <https://youtu.be/FYWnuQc5mYA>.

woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian. You will not take that away from me! You will not take that away from me!”¹⁰ (see Appendix A). These simple words encapsulate the identity Meloni and her party promote, contrasting with other topics like LGBTQ+ rights, immigration, and the Muslim community (Agloti Colombini, 2023).

Among many, this discourse caught the attention of Tommaso Zorzi, a well-known social media figure. On October 20th, 2019, Zorzi posted Instagram *stories* simulating a conversation with Meloni, repeatedly saying “I am Giorgia”, ending with him screaming it out a window, sparking the #iosonogiorgiachallenge and encouraging audience participation. On November 27th, MEM & J (2019) released on YouTube *Io sono Giorgia (Giorgia Meloni Remix)*, an EDM¹¹ remix of Meloni’s speech that quickly gained over 3 million views in three weeks (Agloti Colombini, 2023). The song became an “earworm,” appearing at concerts like MYSS KETA’s¹² and inspiring covers such as Riccardo Zanotti’s,¹³ Pinguini Tattici Nucleari’s singer. MEM & J’s remix helped embed phrases from her speech (such as “Io sono Giorgia” and “Genitore 1, Genitore 2” [“Parent 1”, “Parent 2”], which are repeated in loop in the chorus) in popular culture; they are still referenced today, for instance, in Stefano Disegni’s (2024) satirical book *L’importanza di chiamarsi Giorgia* [“The Importance of Being Giorgia”] and in fanfictions¹⁴ on Archive of Our Own (AO3). Meloni also titled her autobiography *Io sono Giorgia* (Meloni, 2021), using the remix’s famous phrases as chapter titles: “Sono una donna”, “Sono una madre”, “Sono cristiana” and “Sono italiana”. She also credits the track as the reason why she wrote the book, stating it revealed how distant public portrayals were from her true life (Meloni, 2021).

This transformation (from political discourse to remixed song, from social media challenge to book titles) highlights the profound impact this episode had on Italian popular culture.

3.2 Corpus Selection

To address the research question, a selection of 10 memes was compiled. Data collection was carried out on Instagram, where the #iosonogiorgiachallenge originated. The hashtags #iosonogiorgiachallenge and #iosonogiorgia were used to identify memes related to Meloni’s discourse, selecting the most widely circulated examples. Following Aglioti Colombini’s (2023) findings, the collection timeframe was set between October 20th, the day after the rally, and November 20th, with the highest meme activity between

¹⁰ “Io sono Giorgia, sono una donna, sono una madre, sono italiana, sono cristiana. Non me lo toglierete! Non me lo toglierete!”.

¹¹ Electronic Dance Music.

¹² Part of the performance was made available, among many, by user @satih on YouTube. Consulted in May 2025 at <https://youtu.be/o7LSWpW58D8?feature=shared>.

¹³ Originally posted on his Instagram *stories*, reposted by many users, among which @sfondi_indie on Instagram. Consulted in May 2025 at <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4hqapciF86/?igsh=bzBta2hjb2ZsbnAi>.

¹⁴ “Luisa: Genitore uno e genitore due stanno litigando” [“Luisa: Parent one and parent two are fighting”]. In *Dio perdona, Carla no* by @mavatutobene, published on March 10th, 2024. Retrieved from: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/54387028>.

November 3rd and 8th. The peak day for posts under these hashtags was November 7th, when Meloni herself shared a selfie with #iosonogiorgia (Figure 19), acknowledging MEM & J's remix and gaining over 41.000 likes. Her caption read: "Good news: one is that the '#iosonogiorgia' hit ranks first on social media, the other is that polls show Fratelli d'Italia at 10%. Everything is really encouraging 😊". She engaged further with the meme on November 11th, posting another selfie wearing an "I am Giorgia" t-shirt with the caption "Look what they gave me 😂" (Figure 20).

The final corpus includes 10 memes posted between October 27th and November 16th, allowing for in-depth qualitative analysis. Efforts were made to include a variety of formats beyond the most widely circulated memes. Although Instagram was the main source, attempts were made to trace memes to their original posts; in three cases, the final source was YouTube. All memes remix Meloni's discourse, including MEM & J's "Io sono Giorgia". Three are songs, two are audio-based and five are image- and text-based. Appendix B lists all memes discussed with their analyses, the methodology of which is explained in the following section.

Figure 19

Meloni's Selfie on November 7th



Figure 20

Meloni's Selfie on November 11th



3.3 Method of Analysis

To the best of this study's knowledge, there is still no widely established method in academia for the analysis of internet memes. For this reason, this thesis's framework merges different methodologies that have been used in memetics to analyse different aspects of memes, and it will incorporate one framework that has not been used in memetics yet to attempt to provide a more comprehensive analysis of all the aspects here investigated. Following studies such as Khan (2024), this thesis will use MCDA to investigate the visual and textual elements of the corpus; following Hayes (2025), this thesis will investigate the humorous elements of the corpus on the basis of humour theories, namely Meyer (2000) and Martin et al.'s (2003), while the subversive strategies and techniques will be studied following Holmes & Marra's (2002) framework, which has not been applied in memetics yet, and it will be based on the concepts of Hutcheon's (1985) parody, Bakhtin's (1965/1984) carnivalesque, Camus's (1942/1975) absurdism, and Simpson's (2003) irony. This thesis analyses the corpus on the basis of three layers of analysis, namely the MCDA layer, the humour layer, and the subversive layer. This layering allows a more structural and focused investigation of how the corpus communicates meaning and elicits humour, resulting in subversiveness while ensuring appropriate attention to each analytical dimension.

3.3.1 The MCDA Layer

In recent years, there has been an emerging trend in adopting MCDA as a framework for the investigation of memes. As Moussa et al. (2020) write, MCDA is an approach that "lends itself very well to the examination of both the multimodal and heterogeneous nature of Internet memes, and that attends to the social criticism inherent in them" (p. 5923). MCDA's emphasis on the social design of culture and on the empiricisms and the connections between texts, images and discourse is what renders it fit for the investigation and analysis of mediated cultural participation (Milner, 2012). This thesis adopts the second of the two main interrelated orientations in MCDA, as identified by Djonov & Zhao (2013), namely the focus on interactions among multiple semiotic resources in multimodal communication. The methodological framework is thus composed by both MDA and CDA, selecting specific approaches that best suit the characteristics of the corpus and the aims of the study.

The visual elements of the corpus will be analysed on the basis of Ledin & Machin's (2020) principles of MDA. This includes an investigation of visual design features such as symbolism, gaze, composition, facial expressions and colour not only in their denotative level (what is depicted) but also in their connotative level (how ideology, values and meaning are visually constructed). Attention will be paid to how techniques such as parody, juxtaposition, gestures and positioning contribute to the communication of ideologies, social commentary or humour.

The textual aspects of the memes will be analysed both linguistically and stylistically, focusing on tone, intertextual references and cultural codes. This part of the analysis draws from Fairclough's (2001) approach to CDA, which allows not only to interpret the text itself but also its socio-cultural positioning, including the economic, political or ideological perspectives that are not directly stated but nonetheless embedded in the corpus.

Additionally, where present, audio elements in the memes will be considered as another medium that transmits meaning. These will be analysed in terms of their contribution to humour, tone, and emotional framing, considering how music or sound effects support and/or contradict the visual and textual messages.

3.3.2 The Humour Layer

The second layer examined in the corpus is the humour layer and has the goal of investigating the memes' tone and communicative intention and their relation with political critique. This layer draws its framework from the literature of humour theories, specifically Meyer's (2000) and Martin et al.'s (2003), whose frameworks have already been applied in previous memes studies (e.g., Hayes, 2025). The analysis draws from Meyer's (2000) four humour functions to help establish the purpose of the humour and its relationship with political critique or identity and from Martin et al.'s (2003) humour typology to investigate the meme's tone and communicative intention.

Meyer (2000) identified four humour functions, each based on one of the three main humour theories in the literature (relief, incongruity and superiority¹⁵) each contributing to the four identified functions of humour, namely *identification*, *clarification*, *differentiation*, and *enforcement*.

Identification connects the speaker with the audience, fostering group cohesiveness and strengthening the speaker's credibility (all sources as cited in Meyer, 2000). For example, a creator expressing frustration with bureaucracy through a joke connects with others who relate, creating a sense of community. Memes in the corpus will be classified as having identification humour when they express shared emotions or experiences and use empathetic or inclusive language, such as referencing common challenges or evoking a sense of belonging.

Clarification unites the speaker and audience by using humour to clarify a possible issue or position. Its humour often arises from an unexpected or surprising statement. For example, irony can expose contradictions or hypocrisy in a politician's speech, helping the audience recognise it. To identify this function in the corpus, the analysis will focus on humour that emphasises contradictions or issues in a

¹⁵ Three humour theories emerge in the literature: relief, incongruity, and superiority. Relief theory involves laughter as stress relief; incongruity theory centres on surprise and recognising unexpected changes; superiority theory is understood as laughing inwardly (or outwardly) when experiencing a sense of superiority over others (Meyer, 2000). Based on these theories, Meyer (2000) identifies four humour functions, aimed at explaining its effects rather than its mechanisms.

situation. Markers include the use of exaggeration, juxtaposition or humorous surprise to clarify a position or critique a viewpoint.

These first two functions serve to unify the communicators (in this case, the creators and their audience) “through mutual identification and clarification of positions and values” (Meyer, 2000, p. 310). In contrast, the next two functions (differentiation and enforcement) divide the communicators and create distance by reinforcing societal rules through humorous critique of those who evade them.

Differentiation is a function used by communicators to contrast themselves and their views with their opponents, creating both alliances and distinctions. For instance, a meme mocking supporters of an opposing political party draws attention to the divide between “us” and “them”. To identify this function in the corpus, the analysis will examine whether the meme’s humour emphasises division or opposition. This includes memes that ridicule out-groups, undermine opposing ideologies or use exaggeration and contrast to highlight differences. Memes that position the creator and audience against another group will be classified as expressing differentiation humour.

The last humour function discussed is enforcement, which allows the communicator to criticise and enforce norms while maintaining identification with the audience. For example, a joke ridiculing politicians who broke ethical codes enforces social norms on ethics. To identify this function in the corpus, the analysis will examine whether the meme uses humour to criticise or condemn behaviours that contradict the creator’s accepted standards. Memes highlighting wrongdoings while reinforcing communal values, such as mocking public figures, institutions, or behaviours seen as inappropriate or unethical, will be classified as having an enforcement humour function.

To understand which type of humour the memes in the corpus utilise, Martin et al.’s (2003) classification of four humour types – *affiliative*, *self-enhancing*, *aggressive* and *self-defeating* – will be applied to analyse the memes’ stylistic features and underlying communicative intentions.

Affiliative humour is a type of humour that facilitates relationships and minimises tension by engaging in humorous activities such as banter or witty jokes to amuse others. An example is friendly teasing between friends or political allies that strengthens their relationship without causing offence, thus solidifying social bonds. To identify this humour type in the corpus, the analysis will focus on memes that foster positive social interactions, group cohesion and shared humour or enjoyment. Memes that broadly amuse, have a friendly tone and lack overt and sharp offence will be considered examples of affiliative humour.

Self-enhancing humour relates to maintaining a humorous perspective on life and is closely allied to coping humour, where humour is used as an emotion-regulating mechanism. For instance, when an individual jokes about their own mistakes, they project relatability and cope with stressful consequences by maintaining a positive attitude toward difficulties. This function will be identified in the corpus when creators show a

humorous and positive attitude toward their own misfortunes or challenges. The memes serve as a medium to cope with adversity by making fun of the unfortunate situation itself. Examples include self-referential jokes and humour used as a stress-relief or perspective-taking tool.

Aggressive humour relates to sarcasm, teasing and derision, often implying ridicule with manipulative intent. It is mostly used when the communicator shows little regard for its effect on others. This humour can harm relationships and weaken social bonds, as sarcasm can harshly mock or belittle individuals. To investigate this type, the analysis will focus on memes involving ridicule and teasing directed at specific individuals, groups, or ideologies. This includes humour that belittles, mocks, or undermines, with indicators such as exaggerated stereotypes, provocative visuals, and derogatory language.

The last type of humour described by Martin et al. (2003) is self-defeating humour. It aims to amuse others at the communicator's expense to integrate or gain approval. For example, a politician or public figure making fun of themselves may win the audience's favour (all sources as cited in Martin et al., 2003). To identify this humour in the corpus, the analysis will focus on jokes targeting the creator themselves, especially when the humour ridicules or belittles to enhance social acceptance. Markers include exaggerated self-deprecation and jokes portraying the creator as inadequate or foolish. Memes using humour at the creator's own expense to gain favour will be considered examples of self-defeating humour.

3.3.3 The Subversive Layer

The third and last layer analysed is that of the subversive techniques, strategies and targets. Firstly, the corpus will be classified according to which subversive technique the meme employs, based on a brief typology drawn from previous literature on subversion. Here, the analysis will classify memes as using either parody, carnivalesque, absurd and irony grounded in established cultural theories (Bakhtin, 1965/1984; Camus, 1942/1975; Hutcheon, 1985; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Simpson, 2003) to address this study's research question by showing how the Giorgia Meloni's discourse and the values and ideologies there promoted are recontextualised and undermined in the corpus. Since the available literature does not provide clear definitions for the addressed terminology, the *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* were consulted to clarify these labels.

The concept of parody and its subversive power is drawn from Hutcheon (1985). The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines parody as "writing, music, art, speech, etc. that intentionally copies the style of someone famous or copies a particular situation, making the features or qualities of the original more noticeable in a way that is humorous". This means that parody a form of mimicry that maintains a critical distance from the original message, allowing it not only to imitate but also to interrogate or undermine authority and values through humour and contrast. The 2021 film *Don't Look Up* is a clear example of parodic subversion: it

critiques global political and media responses to the climate crisis, through the fictional premise of a comet destined to destroy Earth. By mimicking the structure of a disaster film and exaggerating real-world denialism and inaction toward urgent, assured threats, the film constructs a parody reflecting Hutcheon's (1984) view of parody as both imitative and critical. Memes in the corpus will be identified as parodic when they imitate a recognisable visual, textual or audial form combined with humour and exaggeration, making the meme critical and subversive.

The concept of carnivalesque is drawn from Bakhtin (1965/1984), where exaggeration, grotesque and inversion of authority function as subversive tools. The *Marriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the carnivalesque as "marked by an often mocking or satirical challenge to authority and the traditional social hierarchy". It originates from traditional carnival forms, where destabilisation and reversal of power structures occurs temporarily, and these aspects characterise the writing defined as "carnivalesque" by Bakhtin (1965/1984). This thesis recognises as carnivalesque those memes that use exaggeration, ridicule and grotesque to mock authoritarian figures or invert dominant social norms in a humorous and provocative way.

Although sometimes overlapping, carnivalesque is distinct from the absurd: while carnivalesque primarily relies on collective laughter and inversion of roles, the absurd concerns existential disorientation and lack of logic or meaning (Camus, 1942/1975). The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines absurd as "stupid and unreasonable, or silly in a humorous way" and "ridiculous or completely unreasonable". Here, absurdity will be identified in memes relying on illogical or surreal combinations of imagery and text, highlighting the breakdown of meaning and irrationality of certain ideologies or statements. Its subversive power lies in exposing contradictions and meaninglessness of dominant discourses or institutions, provoking critical reflection through humour rooted in confusion.

Irony is defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "the use of words that are the opposite of what you mean, as a way of being funny". In line with Simpson's (2003) stylistic model, this thesis does not treat irony and satire as separate categories. Instead, satire is understood as a discursive function of irony, i.e., a communicative intention using ironic structures to critique its target. Treating irony as the broader mechanism avoid overlaps in analysis, while still addressing satire's subversive potential. In the corpus, irony will be identified through contrasts between the literal and the intended meaning.

Within this third analytical layer, Holmes & Marra's (2002) framework on subversive humour provides a basis to recognise humour challenging institutional power. Their model identifies four humorous strategies to mock or resist authority and social hierarchies, namely *quips*, *jocular abuse*, *roleplay* and *terms of address and reference*.

Quips are "short, sometimes witty, and often ironic comments about the on-going action, or the topic under discussion" (p. 75), often involving exaggeration. Quips' subversiveness arises from their subtlety in

criticising and challenging others. Examples include understatements and stating of the obvious. Holmes & Marra (2002) provide this example:

“Callum: although we’ve agreed Eric’s just got to go [smiling voice] :squiggly wiggly: on the document” (p. 76)

Here, Callum challenges Eric’s authority by minimising his role using wording such as “squiggly wiggly” instead of “sign off”, describing Eric’s action as insignificant.

In contrast, jocular abuse is unsubtle and overtly subversive. It involves a negative, put-down remark or insult directed at someone present, usually of highest status. Holmes & Marra (2002) provides this example:

“Context: Dudley insults Barry by commenting critically on his lack of concentration
Dudley: [smiling voice] the heart was there but the mind wasn’t” (p. 77)

Here, Dudley mocks Barry’s intellectual engagement clearly and overtly. While softened by humour, the critique is explicit and shared as a group joke.

Roleplay is a discourse strategy where the speaker quotes another, usually using paralinguistic signals to mimic their linguistic style. The target’s values and attitudes are parodied, implicitly criticised and subverted. For example:

“Barry: I’ve sent an e-mail to Josh as well so it’ll be interesting to see what I get back from Josh
[laughs]
Eric: Josh’ll look at it going ‘uh I can’t sell anything’” (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 78)

Eric mimics Josh’s predictable mindset by quoting, and thus parodying, Josh’s response, Eric mocks and critiques his capitalist market-driven approach while maintaining a light tone.

The last subversive strategy identified by Holmes & Marra (2002) is the speaker’s choice of names or pronouns, for example, the choice of explicitly mentioning someone’s name when a personal pronoun would suffice and be more appropriate. This linguistic strategy creates distance between speaker and discourse object:

“Context: Barry, the team manager, has let one of his team take the blame for not picking up on a particular point near the end of a long report.
Eric: [smiling voice] Barry sees those sorts of things too by the way notice that”
(Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 79)

By criticising his superior in this way, Eric reduces the face attack via humour but still points out that Barry also missed that point. Using Berry's name as a distancing device eases expression of humorous subversion.

Though originally used in duologues, these fur strategies will be analysed if similar discursive patterns appear visually or textually, as they would help illustrate how humour functions subversively.

Lastly, this study investigates the level of subversion, understood as the social scope humour operates within. Drawing on Holmes & Marra's (2002) framework, this layer categorises the corpus by the meme's primary critique target—whether it is individual (Giorgia Meloni herself), organisational (the political party or institution), or societal (broader ideological norms). Individual-level humour usually mocks the most integrated person or the meeting's leader, while the group/organisation-level humour emphasises in/out-group boundaries. Societal-level targets broader ideologies or the power hierarchies. Identifying the subversion level reveals not only what is ridiculed, but also why, shedding light on the meme's ideological positioning and the upheld or rejected values, demonstrating how political humour functions as dissent and resistance.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the cultural impact of Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech and explained the selection of the memes that comprise the final corpus. It then presented a three-layered analytical framework combining MCDA, humour theories, and subversive strategies. While the first two layers are based on previously applied approaches in meme analysis, the third — focused on subversion — was developed specifically for this thesis. It applies Holmes & Marra's (2002) framework to memes for the first time and brings together parody, carnivalesque, absurdity, and irony based on their shared subversive potential. This analysis provides a structured way to explore the multimodal, humorous, and ideological mechanisms at play in the corpus. The next chapter provides the results of the analysis and examine how the selected memes subvert the original speech's political meaning.

4. Results & Discussion

This chapter thematically discusses the analysis (available in Appendix B) examining how Meloni's speech is transformed through humorous strategies. The analysis identified four recurring mechanisms through which humour is used to reframe, exaggerate, or strip down the original discourse: parodic roleplay and mimicry, juxtaposition and incongruity, personal denigration, and decontextualisation and trivialisation. Each theme is here illustrated with the most salient examples from the corpus, and they are not mutually exclusive. The memes showed different intensities of subversiveness, with some delivering sharp critiques and others relying on more subtle forms of dissent. This is probably due to the process of decontextualisation the speech underwent, likely due to a diluting process of the speech's political weight.

4.1 Parodic Roleplay and Mimicry

The majority of the corpus employed parodic roleplay and mimicry to imitate Giorgia Meloni's speech patterns, gestures, and public persona in ways that both entertain and critique. Drawing on Hutcheon's (1985) concept of parody as simultaneously imitative and critical, these memes exaggerate key features of Meloni's discourse to expose inconsistencies or highlight ideological flaws. One notable strategy identified in the corpus is the replacement of Meloni's ideologies and discourse with exaggerated or stereotyped fictional characters. Creators imitate her speech style, gestures, and syntactical structures to highlight dissent and the perceived absurdities or contradictions. The memes focus on reproposing not only textual references to her discourse, but they also humorously replicate her physical presence and mannerisms, intensifying the parodic effect.

For instance, Meme 1 depicts a stereotypical Italian grandmother, Rosetta, singing in the kitchen to a remixed version of MEM & J's track, with lyrics adapted to fit a domestic setting. The parody relies on sentences that echo Meloni's syntactic structures, such as "You can take away everything we have, but only when we won't have a wooden spoon, we won't have pots, we won't be able to ask you: 'Have you eaten?'", clearly mirroring Meloni's: "They must strip us of everything we are, because when we will have no more identity and no more roots, we will be devoid of awareness and incapable of defending our rights". This parodic take transforms Meloni's nationalistic ideologies into a celebration of Italian domesticity, suggesting that true cultural identity lies in shared, heartwarming cultural experiences. This parody is subversive in a light, covert way, mocking right-wing values by proposing a humorous alternative to traditional Italian identity.

Meme 2 juxtaposes Meloni with Pdor, a fictional character from one of *Aldo, Giovanni e Giacomo's* comedy sketches. This meme aligns Meloni's posture and syntactic structures with those of Pdor, a theatrical

Meme 1**Meme 2**

warrior-god with a hilarious presentation reminding Meloni's self-identifications: "I am Pdor, son of Kmer, of the Instar tribe". The creator exposes Meloni's theatricality by visual and textual symmetry, with both figures performing solemn declarations with inflated self-importance, thus aligning Meloni's performance with Pdor's over-the-top roleplay.

This mechanism aligns with Meyer's (2000) identification humour function, where humour reinforces communal boundaries. The memes oscillate between aggressive and affiliative humour (Martin et al., 2003), where the shared joke builds solidarity among critics. By performing Meloni's persona with exaggeration and mimicry, these memes draw clear boundaries between 'us' (critics) and 'them' (Meloni and her supporters), reflecting the differentiation humour function (Meyer, 2000) and reinforcing social divisions.

In sum, parodic roleplay and mimicry result not only in engagement but also subvert Meloni's credibility and seriousness. By recasting her speech in comedic characters, the memes minimise her credibility, authority and ideological weight.

4.2 Juxtaposition and Incongruity

Another recurrent mechanism in the corpus involves pairing Meloni's speech with incongruous visual and/or auditory elements, thereby diminishing her gravitas and personal authority. These memes often insert emotionally charged rhetoric into trivial or culturally light-hearted contexts such as children's media or pop culture, generating humour through dissonance. This contrast serves the clarification humour function (Meyer, 2000), enabling audiences to identify contradictions or hypocrisies within the original message. The

clash between registers and genres produces humour while undermining the speech's coherence and legitimacy.

Meme 3 creates visual and textual juxtapositions. On one hand, it proposes a picture with heightened emotional intensity, Meloni depicted mid-speech, completed with bright colours that amplify the dramaticism of the picture. The visual format alludes to a formal manifesto, one which could be used for election campaigns or similar events. The text humorously quotes Meloni shouting “Ohana means family!”, a line lifted from Disney’s *Lilo & Stitch*. This line represents an inclusive, non-traditional notion of family that values chosen bonds over biological ties, directly contrasting Meloni’s conservative, heteronormative, and exclusive family ideology. By substituting Meloni’s actual policies with the warm and inclusive concept of “ohana”, the meme humorously recasts Meloni as a childlike figure delivering a heartwarming moral lesson. The subversiveness arises from this ironic replacement, visually and textually destabilising her political stance.

Meme 4 inserts Meloni’s self-identification speech into a sequence from the anime *Sailor Moon*, replacing part of the magical girl’s transformation monologue with a clip of her discourse. The edit transitions between Sailor Moon’s line, “I’m the defender of the law, I’m a fighter who dresses in sailor fashion,” and Meloni’s self-introduction, “I am Giorgia, I’m a mother [...]” before returning to Sailor Moon’s iconic phrase, “And I’ve come here to punish you in the name of the moon”. The humour arises from the incongruity of the genres and content: Meloni’s solemnity is placed next to that of a fictional, adolescent empowerment, presenting her as a fictional heroine fighting for justice. The meme visually and narratively devalues Meloni’s political seriousness through genre and content clash.

In both cases subversion operates through visual, textual and auditory mismatch that implicitly critiques Meloni’s persona and values, avoiding an explicit attack. The tension between political statements

Meme 3



Meme 4



paired with ludicrous images encourages critical reflections, raging between affiliative and mild aggressive humour (Martin et al., 2003) in fostering community while mocking Meloni and her policies.

4.3 Personal Denigration

In this theme, memes target Giorgia Meloni herself with humour that belittles or ridicules her character, appearance, or actions, mostly reflecting an aggressive humour type (Martin et al., 2003). The subversiveness in much of the corpus was targeted at an individual level, focusing attacks on Meloni herself in order to critique the speech and its communicated values. Some memes were sharper in their personal critiques, to the point of reaching personal denigration and dehumanisation in an ad hominem attack.

For example, Meme 5 depicts a clownfish asking a jellyfish, “How do you survive without a brain?”, with the jellyfish replying, “I am Giorgia”. The humour is built on the biological analogy of Meloni being a jellyfish, i.e., cognitively lacking. The meme does not offer an ideological rebuttal, but it delegitimises Meloni’s persona by suggesting that her identity claims are devoid of rationality.

Similarly, Meme 6 portrays Meloni as intellectually and evolutionarily inferior by comparing her to a non-human primate. The meme shows five human skulls labelled “man”, “woman”, “gay”, “lesbian”, and “Jewish woman”, visually communicating shared humanity despite their diverse identities. In contrast, the sixth skull, possibly that of a macaque, bears Meloni’s self-descriptions: “I’m a woman, mother, Christian, and I defend the traditional family”. The meme implies that Meloni falls outside the shared human identity, portraying her as intellectually regressive and evolutionarily inferior. This form of dehumanisation aims to discredit her as a political figure worthy of respect or admiration, and its subversive force lies in denying her a place within a shared human identity.

Meme 5



Meme 6



The humour in these memes functions according to Meyer's (2000) differentiation mechanism, drawing a sharp boundary between the in-group of critics and Meloni as the out-group target. By exaggerating perceived personal flaws and employing derogatory language, the memes seek to diminish her public figure and influence. Subversive strategies such as jocular abuse (Holmes & Marra, 2002) are prevalent, offering overt and direct criticism disguised as humour.

While these memes function as forms of resistance, they also exemplify the previously discussed negative side of meme culture. In their most extreme forms, they fall into a reductive mode of discourse, where humour sacrifices nuance for emotional or ideological impact. As Anderau & Barbarrusa (2024) and Sălcudean (2020) note, the simplicity and virality of memes often flatten complex political issues. The aggressive tone may foster in-group bonding, but it also intensifies out-group exclusion, thus impeding constructive dialogue. The subversiveness here does not engage with Meloni's political ideas but instead undermines her legitimacy through personal and moral attack.

4.4 Fragmentation and Repetition

Another recurrent mechanism in the corpus to deconstruct and destabilise Meloni's discourse is the use of fragmentation and repetition. By breaking down her speech into isolated segments and words, continuously remixed across meme formats, creators highlight contradictions and absurdities. This process reflects Bakhtin's (1965/1984) concept of carnivalesque, where exaggerations and temporarily inversions undermine authority and disrupt narratives. Fragmentation breaks the coherence of Meloni's message, while repetition focuses the audience on the repeated items. When combined, the process leads to semantic exhaustion of the original content.

Meme 7, here a screenshot from MEM & J's remix, uses auditive, textual and visual repetitions to trigger humour. Key phrases like "Io sono Giorgia" and "Genitore 1, Genitore 2" are distorted, looped in the chorus and repeatedly emphasised throughout the song. The video editing matches the rhythm and beats of

Meme 7



Meme 8



the remix, visually reinforcing the repetition and playing a role in making her look unserious. Her gravitas is displaced by repositioning her as a performer, engaged in an involuntary roleplay that rescripts her identity and the force of her speech.

Building on this, Meme 8 incorporates physical mimicry alongside textual repetition in a parody of a live television performance. It starts by echoing Meloni's iconic phrasing but soon diverges into incoherence and incongruity by placing the speech's syntactic structures within a consumeristic, pop cultural context ("I drink Coke", "I'm not a [FIAT] Panda¹⁶"). This exaggeration turns the textual repetitions into a parody of ideological fixation, suggesting the triviality and emptiness of Meloni's discourse.

Through repetition and fragmentation, the memes parody both Meloni's speech and the values it conveys, reclaiming her discourse through a progressive counter-narrative; in doing so, repeated ridicule not only sustains political dissent and community bonding but also leads to a semantic exhaustion that strips the speech of its ideological force, rendering it effectively meaningless with its constant looping.

4.5 Decontextualisation and Trivialisation

Most of the corpus employs decontextualisation and trivialisation to heighten ideological contrast or critique, although these techniques might highlight a subtler subversion. Rather than opposing Meloni's discourse, these memes extract her words from the original context and embed them into unrelated or mundane settings. This shift weakens the ideological weight of her statements, transforming them into cultural jokes. For example, Meme 9 is a video of Catholic officials line-dancing, set to MEM & J's remix. The mismatch between the religious figures and the upbeat EDM song generates humour through visual and audial incongruity and shared cultural recognition. By stripping Meloni's words of their original context and aligning them with dancing religious figures, the video undermines the authority of both the political and religious institutions, rendering them trivial and meaningless. Meloni's political identity is here portrayed less as a serious ideological stance and more as a digital spectacle open to mockery.

Similarly, Meme 10 employs a typical online dating questionnaire format, asking "I am... ☐ Single ☐ Taken ☒ Giorgia, I'm a mother, I'm Italian". By inserting Meloni's identity statements into a frivolous context, the meme trivialises her speech, stripping it of emotional and ideological urgency. Instead of inviting serious engagement, the content becomes a simple joke option, further distancing the audience from the gravity of her speech.

From a subversive perspective, decontextualisation and trivialisation function as erosion of Meloni's authority by reframing her discourse as absurd (reflected in the surprising irony of the memes) and

¹⁶ A famous and beloved Italian car model produced by FIAT.

Meme 9**Meme 10**

insignificant. Unlike direct confrontation and personal attacks, this approach relies on playful distortion and displacement to subvert the seriousness of the original message. It often appeals to affiliative humour, fostering a collective sense of irony in the audience. At the same time, this mechanism follows Holmes & Marra's (2002) model of humour as a socially acceptable means of dissent, since it allows critiques in a socially palatable and widely shareable format. Compared to other memes, such as Memes 6 and 7, this kind of subversiveness is situated in a line between subtle political engagement and the reduction of serious topics to mere entertainment.

In sum, the memes' use of decontextualisation and trivialisation reveals how subversive power can emerge from the depoliticising of discourse. By detaching Meloni's speech from its political frame, the creators invite the audience not to debate Meloni's statements but to laugh at them, effectively diminishing her words' political weight and authority.

4.6 Conclusion

Across the corpus, Meloni's speech is transformed from a political declaration into a cultural artefact remixed through humour, exaggeration, and parodic play. Through mimicry, genre collision, repetition, and visual irony, the memes minimise the seriousness of the original message while amplifying its performative and rhetorical traits. This leads not only to a rejection of content but also to a reframing of tone, identity, and values. In displacing the speech into playful, absurd, or trivial contexts, the memes reframe its meaning, inviting laughter where there was once intensity and substituting authority with ridicule. In this way, subversion takes shape through a collective transformation of political discourse into highly recognisable

cultural humour. Ultimately, these memes represent a form of dissent embedded in pop culture, where political and ideological critique is achieved via humour, remixability and collective irony.

5. Conclusion

This thesis investigated how Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech was reframed and subverted through internet memes by developing and applying a mixed-methodology framework combining MCDA with humour and subversive theories. The analysis of the corpus, composed of ten memes, revealed how Meloni's political discourse was deconstructed, reframed and stripped of its original political content through its memeification process.

This study addressed its research question, "How is Giorgia Meloni's 2019 speech remixed in memes to subvert its original political meaning through humour?", by identifying four main mechanisms through which humour operates to subvert and reframe Meloni's discourse. First, parodic roleplay and mimicry exaggerate Meloni's syntactic patterns, gestures and ideological statements to express dissent and to mock her seriousness. Second, juxtaposition and incongruity place her rhetoric into unlikely and absurd contexts, generating visual, textual and contextual dissonance that undermine her authority. Third, personal denigration targets Meloni herself, portrayed as cognitively or morally inferior, to delegitimise her persona through sharp humour. Finally, decontextualisation and trivialisation extract her words from their original setting and embed them in digital and pop-cultural formats, stripping them of their political weight through semantic exhaustion.

This study's main contribution lies in its methodology, which combines Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, humour theory, and a synthesis of subversive strategies into a three-layered analytical framework. While the first two layers have precedent in meme analysis, the third offers a novel perspective through the application of Holmes & Marra's subversive strategies and the grouping of parody, irony, absurdity, and the carnivalesque. Although this methodological approach is not without its limitations, it was developed as a response to the abstract nature of much of the existing literature, which often lacks concreteness in its analyses and conceptualisations. This framework should be seen as an initial attempt to investigate the modalities in which memes operate as subversive tools in a more structured and replicable way.

While subversion in memes does not equate to a literal overthrow of political systems, it does undermine symbolic authority. These memes mock and refute political and ideological messages, offering alternative readings that spread just as widely, if not more, as the original. This way, meme culture becomes a form of grassroots political discourse, challenging dominant narratives through remix digital culture.

Future research could extend this approach by applying the proposed framework to other political figures, exploring whether similar patterns of subversive humour arise and how cultural or linguistic differences shape them.

In sum, this thesis shows memes as functional subversive tools that recontextualise official political discourses and ideologies into humorous participatory critique. They reframe Giorgia Meloni's discourse from a serious and intense political discourse to a widely circulated artefact of pop-cultural mockery, underlining how digital humour delegitimises political messages and undermines authority through collective reinterpretation and remixing.

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Appendix A

Giorgia Meloni's 2019 Partial Speech and English Translation

A1. Giorgia Meloni's Original Speech (Partial)

Speaker: Giorgia Meloni

Date: October 19th, 2019

Source: La Repubblica [@repubblica], 2019

“Adesso chiaramente riparlano di togliere la dicitura “padre” e “madre” dai documenti. Perché la famiglia è un nemico, perché l'identità nazionale è un nemico, l'identità di genere è un nemico. Tutto ciò che ci definisce, per loro, è un nemico. È il gioco del pensiero unico. Ci devono togliere tutto quello che siamo, perché quando non avremo più un'identità e non avremo più radici noi saremo privi di consapevolezza e incapaci di difendere i nostri diritti. È il loro gioco. Vogliono che siamo “genitore 1”, “genitore 2”, genere “LGBT”, “cittadini x”, dei codici! Ma noi non siamo dei codici, noi siamo persone e difenderemo la nostra identità. Io sono Giorgia, sono una donna, sono una madre, sono italiana, sono cristiana. Non me lo toglierete! Non me lo toglierete!”

A2. English Translation

Translated by: Author

“Now they are clearly talking again about removing the wording ‘father’ and ‘mother’ from documents. Because family is an enemy, national identity is an enemy, gender identity is an enemy. Everything that defines us is for them an enemy. It's the game of uniform thinking: they must strip us of everything we are, because when we will have no more identity and no more roots, we will be devoid of awareness and incapable of defending our rights. It's their game. They want us to be ‘Parent 1’, ‘Parent 2’, ‘LGBT’ gender, ‘Citizen X’, some codes! But we are not codes, we are people, and we will defend our identity. I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian. You will not take that away from me! You will not take that away from me!”

Appendix B

Memes Analysis

B1. Analysis Meme 1



Note. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/F7q6e6JH1Ss?feature=shared>

Io sono Rosetta	I am Rosetta
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Sono una nonna	I'm a grandma
Sono cristiana (una persona)	I'm Christian (a person)
Ogni giorno	Every day
Un pensiero unico	Only one thought
Ci potete togliere tutto quello che teniamo	You can take away everything we have
Ma solo quando non avremo più una cucciarella	But only when we won't have a wooden spoon
Non avremo più tielle	We won't have pots
Saremo incapaci di chiedervi: "Hai mangiato?"	We won't be able to ask you: "Have you eaten?"
Vogliono che siate	They want you to be
O sciupato 1, o sciupato 2	Worn-out 1, worn-out 2
Uno, uno e due	One, one and two
Uno, uno, uno e due	One, one, one and two

Stai sciupato 1, stai sciupato 2	You're worn-out 1, you're worn-out 2
Uno, uno e due	One, one and two
Uno, uno, uno e due	One, one, one and two
Sono Rosetta	I'm Rosetta
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Sono una nonna	I'm a grandma
Sono cristiana (una persona)	I'm Christian (a person)
Non ci senti?	You can't hear me?
Ripeto? E ripeto!	Shall I repeat? I'll repeat!
Favorisci?	Would you like some?
Duedue più duedue?	Twotwo plus twotwo?
Quattroquattro!	Fourfour!
L'hai capita?	Did you get it?
È pronto a tavola!	It's ready to eat!
Decidi tu: mangi? o lo zoccolo?	You decide: will you eat? Or the wooden clog?
La proposta l'ho portata io	I was the one to bring the proposal
Fratelli di tavola	Table brothers
Tutti parenti di tavola	All table relatives
Viva l'Itavola	Long live Itable
È pronto a tavola!	It's ready to eat!

Bl.1 MCDA Layer

The figure is a screenshot of Casa Surace's parody song. Its melody, rhythm, and sound are based on MEM & J's remix, and the lyrics are structurally similar but modified to suit the new setting. The video opens with a close-up of nonna Rosetta ["Grandma Rosetta"], who delivers the line "Io am Rosetta" in the same rhythm and tone as Meloni's "I am Giorgia". The video adopts the format of the original remix both musically and in the editing but replaces overt political ideology with domestic references. Rosetta's humorous and affectionate listing juxtaposes nationalistic ideals with comforting symbols of Italian domesticity. There are also clear references to Giorgia Meloni's discourse, the most evident in the chorus, where Rosetta repeats the politician's lines while adding her own traits, such as being a grandmother.

Bl.2 Humour Layer

The humour lies in the intertextual irony and incongruity of the video. By replacing an intense political tone with that of a loving grandmother, the video constructs a comic confrontation between patriotic self-definition

and food-based identity. The editing time is key here, as the beats of the original remix video are precisely followed and repropounded, reinforcing the parodic imitation. This comedic contrast does not overtly mock Meloni herself but reframes the gravity of her message as exaggerated and not in line with Casa Surace's ideological beliefs by replacing it in a funny, domestic setting.

The humour in this meme is affiliative and self-enhancing, as it uses a shared cultural background and the celebration of inclusive identity to create amusement and solidarity. The humour functions are clarification and identification: the video builds connection with the audience through shared experiences while clarifying an opposite stance in regards of Meloni's views, by proposing an alternative side of being traditionally Italian, one that does not exclude categories of people but rather includes them all through shared experiences.

B1.3 Subversive Layer

The parody employs both carnivalesque and parodic subversion. Casa Surace clearly signals its opposing political view by adding "(a person)" in parentheses to the official lyrics when Rosetta sings she is Christian, playing on the double meaning of "Christian" in Italian, understood both as religious belief or simply "a person". Casa Surace reclaims Italian pride, replacing racism and homophobia with a caring, unifying cultural identity. The video transforms Meloni's speech into an ode to grandmothers' authority, creating a carnivalesque inversion of authority that invites laughter and softens nationalistic pride. The subversion operates at a societal level, critiquing exclusionary nationalism in favour of inclusivity and domestic warmth. It also relies on roleplay, as Rosetta imitates Meloni's self-presentation while embodying a familiar cultural archetype.

B2. Analysis Meme 2



Note. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B4w3dhki_VX/?igsh=MXhtMTUob3liYzBscA==

B2.1 MCDA Layer

Meme 2 is composed of two stacked panels. The first shows Giorgia Meloni mid-speech, arm raised for emphasis, standing at a podium adorned with the Italian flag. The caption reads: “I am Giorgia. I’m a woman, I’m a mother, I’m Christian”. The second panel shows comedian Giovanni Storti, from the comedy trio *Aldo, Giovanni e Giacomo*, impersonating Pdor, “Lord of the Desert”, in a theatrical sketch. Pdor, atop a mountain, demands a scribe to engrave on a stone tablet: “I am Pdor, son of Kmer, of the Instar tribe [...]”, a quote reproduced on the meme that echoes Meloni’s structure. The tone of the performance is deliberately theatrical, absurd and grandiose. Like Meloni, Pdor’s proclamation happens from an elevated stage, with his arms raised to infuse solemnity into a ridiculous-sounding, pretentious god. He is dressed as an epic and mythological warrior-god, imbuing the scene with a caricatural tone.

B2.2 Humour Layer

The humour in this meme is affiliative, relying on its playfulness and shared cultural knowledge to foster in-group identity and recognition. It serves an identification function, uniting the audience through a beloved national comedy trio. The meme undermines the seriousness and solemnity of Meloni’s speech by comparing it to a ridiculous-sounding fictional character renowned for his absurdity.

B2.3 Subversive Layer

The meme uses both parodic and absurd subversion, with the exaggerating and mocking nature of the sketch used as a ridiculing tool for Meloni’s authority. By contrasting her discourse to Pdor’s, the meme turns the speech into theatrical nonsense. The subversion is focused on the individual level, undermining her persona by comparing Meloni’s passionate delivery to that of a ridiculous fictional character. Roleplay is used as a strategy, juxtaposing Meloni’s structures and visuals to a similar, absurd counterpart.

B3. Analysis Meme 3



Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4edijSIrYc/?igsh=MWp6NmFxaml2aDEtZW==>

B3.1 MCDA Layer

Meme 3 is split into two parts. On the right, a close-up of Giorgia Meloni mid-speech shows an intense expression, with her mouth open as if shouting, with her facial expression indicating a poignant moment. The black-and-white image is overlaid with bright pink, dominating the colour and emphasising the theatrical tone. The left panel blends the bright pink with an intense blue, amplifying the visual energy. Overall, the composition communicates ideological intensity and drama.

The only text, formatted as a Meloni quote, reads, “Ohana means family!”. This is a well-known line from Disney’s *Lilo & Stitch* (2002), where “ohana” expresses the idea that family is inclusive, chosen and imperfect, but emotionally bound. The humour lies in the ironic contrast between Meloni’s traditional, biological definition of family and the quote’s message of emotional and chosen kinship. The meme subverts her intensity by applying it to an opposing family ideal.

B3.2 Humour Layer

The meme uses affiliative humour, juxtaposing pop culture of a globally loved animated film with Meloni’s harsh views on family. The dramatic contrast between the propagandistic aesthetic and the childhood setting of the quote implies a sharp critique of her persona by making her appear childish-like, degrading her political figure. For this reason, one might think of its humour also as mild-aggressive. Moreover, its functions are that of identification and enforcement: given the popularity of the film and its being a well-loved Disney classic, the creator knew the majority of the people would identify with it, while the visual intensity allowed a sharper criticism to coexist.

B3.3 Subversive Layer

This meme uses ironic and parodic subversion, connecting Meloni’s political figure to a childhood-linked, more progressive definition of family. Through roleplay, it visually mimics propaganda design, which clashes with the message proposed in the quote, suggesting a passionate defence of the opposite of her traditional family values. Through this contradiction, the meme reframes her political rhetoric as overly theatrical and unnecessary. The subversion level here is societal, as it contrasts rigid traditionalist ideologies about family with more inclusive ones by the use of a pop-culture reference, thus outlining right-wingers’ conceptualisation of family as unrepresentative and undesirable.

B₄. Analysis Meme 4



Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4EfisEIsru/?igsh=MWN1aGxmM2FnaTdZg==>

Sono la paladina della legge	I'm the defender of the law
Sono una combattente che veste alla marinara	I'm a fighter who dresses in sailor fashion
Io sono Giorgia	I am Giorgia
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Sono una madre	I'm a mother
Sono italiana	I'm Italian
Sono cristiana	I'm Christian
E sono venuta qui per punirti in nome della luna	And I've come here to punish you in the name of the moon

B_{4.1} MCDA Layer

Meme 4 is a screenshot of a short video that merges footage from the anime *Sailor Moon* and an excerpt from Meloni's discourse, when she says the iconic line. The meme opens with Sailor Moon declaring her classic catchphrase (here literally translated from Italian), "I'm the defender of the law, I'm a fighter who dresses in sailor fashion". At this point, the video cuts to Meloni's official video, mid-speech, where she delivers her line: "I'm Giorgia, I'm a woman, I'm a mother, I'm Italian, I'm Christian". The video then cuts back to Sailor Moon, who finishes her transformation uttering, "And I've come here to punish you in the name of the moon".

B_{4.2} Humour Layer

The humour relies on the intertextuality and incongruity. By substituting part of a magical anime girl with a real, politically intense speech, the meme creates an absurd equivalence between Meloni's nationalistic view and Sailor Moon's magical transformation. The timing of the editing serves as parody of Meloni's discourse

by reimagining it as part of Sailor Moon's transformation. This mismatch of genres and registers, and the fact that Sailor Moon defines herself as the "defender of the law" who punished the villain "in the name of the moon", does not directly insult Meloni but creates a humorous comparison and (possibly) impersonation.

The humour is affiliative in the intended amusement through a pop culture reference, but that has a slight tendency towards the aggressive type given the derision of the comparison. Its humour functions are both identification and differentiation. The former creates a connection between the creator and the audience through a pop culture reference, and the latter contrasts the creator's view with Meloni's through her direct comparison with Sailor Moon.

B4.3 Subversive Layer

The meme uses parody and carnivalesque as subversive strategies. It mocks the politician's pathos by placing it in a magical transformation context, a very theatrical setting. The effect is that of deflating the ideological principles contained in the speech, reframing it as fictional and performative. The return at the end of the clip to Sailor Moon's "I've come here to punish you in the name of the moon" further ridicules Meloni, suggesting that her seriousness is equivalent to that of a fictional heroine and implying that she might see herself as righteous in her racist and homophobic views. The meme uses both roleplay (as it present Meloni as Sailor Moon) and jocular abuse (as it denigrates Meloni by describing her as self-righteous) as subversive strategies. Furthermore, its subversion lies at the individual level, targeting Meloni's speech and self-presentation by merging it with a fictional parallel.

B5. Analysis Meme 5



Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B474fbpoPaQ/?igsh=aXdtddRybWMzODAz>

B5.1 MCDA Layer

Meme 5 is structured as a two-panel cartoon strip, one on top of the other. In the first panel a clownfish asks a jellyfish: “How do you survive without a brain?”, to which the jellyfish answers, in the second panel, “I am Giorgia”. The jellyfish’s answer is a direct quotation of the most iconic sentence in Giorgia Meloni’s speech, and it connects the jellyfish to the politician’s persona by the uttering of the same sentence.

B5.2 Humour Layer

The humour arises from decontextualisation by an unexpected intertextual shift: what begins as a possible biology joke takes a political turn, understandable only with the right sociopolitical background. By associating Meloni’s self-identification with a jellyfish (a creature known for its lack of brain) the meme ridicules not only her political ideas but also her persona, and it expresses the creator’s disagreement with what she represents. The meme uses aggressive humour, as it mocks and belittles Meloni through a visual juxtaposition, and it has both a differentiating (separating Meloni’s views and opinions from the creator’s) and an enforcement function, which allows the creator to critique her by claiming cognitive deficiency.

B5.3 Subversive Layer

The meme employs parodic subversion by the use of mimicry and animal analogies to weaken and compromise the seriousness and pathos of Meloni’s discourse. Through humour, the meme reframes the phrase “I am Giorgia” as performative and ridicule. Moreover, it uses jocular abuse as a subversive strategy by implying that Meloni’s cognitive abilities are no better than a jellyfish’s, and it operates on the individual level of subversion, using said comparison to delegitimise Meloni’s intelligence and credibility.

B6. Analysis Meme 6



Note. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/B4YB7axo5_5/?igsh=N3d2Z2xtNGQzNnZl

B6.1 MCDA Layer

Meme 6 depicts six skulls arranged in two horizontal rows. Each of the first five skulls has a label indicating different identity categories: “man”, “woman”, “gay”, “lesbian” and “Jewish woman”. These skulls are all apparently human and visually identical, implying that despite the ethnic, gender or social differences, all individuals are fundamentally the same and that they should not be treated differently. The sixth skull breaks this pattern: it is a non-human primate skull, possibly that of a macaque, labelled with a famous quotation from Meloni’s 2019 speech: “I’m a woman, mother, Christian and I defend the traditional family”.

B6.2 Humour Layer

The humour emerges from its visual irony and absurd juxtaposition. By placing Meloni’s self-identification alongside visibly human skulls but assigning her that of a primate, the meme undermines her emphasis on identity and tradition, as well as her own persona. It suggests that her values not only divide her from those same groups she criticises and defines as problematic, but it also dehumanises her in return. Her possible implication of having a “better” and more authentic identity is visually contradicted by the implication that she is actually intellectually less evolved, retrograded.

The meme’s humour is aggressive, using sarcasm and visual denigration to target her political figure, and its function is that of differentiation, as it clearly draws a line between the meme’s creator and Meloni’s ideological position. Moreover, the meme counter-positions her by expressing inclusivity to be more “human” in comparison to her imposed traditionalism.

B6.3 Subversive Layer

In terms of subversive strategy, the meme uses parodic subversion by reusing Meloni’s identitarian self-definition in a context that compromises its seriousness and meaning. At the same time, the usage of a primate skull introduces a carnivalesque element that inverts power relations and mocks Meloni’s attempt to call for a “superior” moral and cultural identity. By counteracting her rhetoric as ridiculous, the meme reframes her discourse as regressive and obnoxious, and it uses jocular abuse as a subversive strategy. The level of subversion of this meme is the individual one, as it depicts Meloni as intellectually inferior using her own phrasing, attacking her credibility and authority.

B7. Analysis Meme 7



Io sono Giorgia

Sono una donna

Sono una madre

Sono cristiana

È il gioco del pensiero unico

Ci devono togliere quello che siamo perché
quando non avremo più un'identità e non avremo
più radici, noi saremo privi di consapevolezza e
incapaci di difendere i nostri diritti.

Vogliono che siamo genitore 1, genitore 2

Genitore uno, genitore due

Uno, uno e due

Uno, uno, uno e due

Io sono Giorgia

Sono una donna

Sono una madre

Sono cristiana

I am Giorgia

I'm a woman

I'm a mother

I'm Christian

It's the game of the uniform thinking

They must strip us of everything we are, because
when we will have no more identity and no more
roots, we will be devoid of awareness and
incapable of defending our rights

They want us to be Parent 1, Parent 2

Parent one, parent two

One, one and two

One, one, one and two

I am Giorgia

I'm a woman

I'm a mother

I'm Christian

Ma noi non siamo persone	But we are not people
Noi siamo LGBT e difenderemo la nostra identità	We are LGBT and we will defend our identity
voglio dire che non credo in uno stato che mette il	I want to say that I don't believe in a state that puts
desiderio di Giorgia di fronte al diritto di un	Giorgia's desires before the rights of a
omosessuale	homosexual
Uno stato giusto si occupa del più debole, di	A just state that takes care of its weakest, of the
quello che non si può difendere da solo	one that cannot defend themselves on their own
Uno stato giusto si occupa del più debole	A just state that takes care of its weakest
Giorgia	Giorgia
LGBT è il gioco	LGBT Is the game
Giorgia	Giorgia
È il gioco sessuale	It's the sexual game
È il loro gioco	It's their game
Giorgia	Giorgia
Cristiana	Christian
La proposta l'ha portata Fratelli d'Italia	The proposal was brought by Fratelli d'Italia
Giorgia (Giorgia, Giorgia, Giorgia, Giorgia)	Giorgia (Giorgia, Giorgia, Giorgia, Giorgia)

B7.1 MCDA Layer

The figure is a screenshot from the viral “Io sono Giorgia” remix song by MEM & J. Visually, the video uses official footage of Meloni’s speech, edited with visual loops of expressive moments synchronised with an EDM beat. Her voice is auto-tuned and restructured to match the music, flipping her original message: rather than rejecting LGBTQ+ rights or gender-neutral language, the remix makes her affirm them (e.g., “We are LGBT and we will defend our identity”). Her speech is reworked to mock her own positions, suggesting that Meloni’s government prioritises her own agenda over human rights (“I want to say that I don’t believe in a state that puts Giorgia’s desires before the rights of a homosexual”). Using EDM, a genre linked to leisure and nightlife, adds to the subversion. While it aligns with the typical style of the Milanese DJs, it reframes Meloni’s political rhetoric as entertainment, potentially diluting its seriousness. This creates a dual effect: casual listeners may focus on the rhythm and overlook the critique, while more attentive audiences recognise the DJs’ clear critique and position on Meloni’s discourse.

B7.2 Humour Layer

The humour operates through incongruity by placing a nationalist political speech into an EDM track. The humour arises from a mismatch of genre, where a heavily nationalist speech is transformed into a danceable beat with a sharp pro-left rhetoric. The humour is primarily aggressive, using Meloni's own voice to make her say the opposite of her beliefs and framing her as a techno singer rather than a political leader. At the same time, it is partly self-defeating, as the critique relies on amplifying her voice, making her both the target and vehicle of the parody.

The meme uses differentiation and identification humour to distance the creators from Meloni's values and for identification while creating a shared space of amusement for those with opposing views.

B7.3 Subversive Layer

The meme employs subversive strategies through musicalisation and inversion of authority. By transforming Meloni into the voice of a dance track, it undermines her status and satirises her values. This subversion operates through parody (repurposing her own words and using official footage) and through the carnivalesque, as it flips power dynamics by casting a political figure as an EDM performer. The remix also stages an involuntary roleplay, making her appear to endorse the very identities and rights she publicly opposes. The subversion works at a societal level, as it reframes traditionalist discourses and ideologies into a more inclusive, queer-safe speech.

B8. Analysis Meme 8



Note. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/BwftuZtPg3Y?feature=shared>

Sono Luciana	I'm Luciana
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Sono una madre	I'm a mother
Sono pisquana	I'm a pipsqueak
Questo è il gioco del Freccero unico: ci devono togliere tutto quello che siamo per farci perdere la nostra identità!	This is the game of the uniform Freccero: they must take everything we are to make us lose our identity!
Vogliono che siamo Fazio su Rai 1, Fazio su Rai 2	They want us to be Fazio on Rai 1, Fazio on Rai 2
Fazio su Rai 1, Fazio su Rai 2	Fazio on Rai 1, Fazio on Rai 2
Uno uno uno, che due	One, one what two
Difendiamo la nostra identità	We defend our identity
Difendiamo la nostra qualità	We defend our quality
Poltrone e Sofà!	Poltrone e Sofà!
Vogliono che siamo conduttore 1 e conduttore 2	They want us to be presenter 1, presenter 2
Conduttore 1 e conduttore 2	Presenter 1, presenter 2
Uno, uno, uno, e due	One, one, one and two
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Non sono una santa	I'm not a saint
Bevo la Coca	I drink coke
Bevo la Fanta	I drink Fanta
Sono una donna	I'm a woman
Non sono una Panda	I'm not a Panda
Bevo la Coca	I drink coke
Bevo la Fanta	I drink Fanta

B8.1 MCDA Layer

The figure is a screenshot from “Io sono Luciana”, a comedic musical number performed by Luciana Littizzetto on the talk show *Che Tempo Che Fa*, hosted by Fabio Fazio. The performance is a remix of the original MEM & J's song and a direct parody of Meloni's speech. Littizzetto's gestures mimic Meloni's, standing with arms raised while dancing to the rhythm. The lyrics initially follow Meloni's phrasing (“I'm a woman, I'm a mother”) but then deflate the tone with the unexpected and ridiculous “I'm a pipsqueak”. This parody reaches absurdity by referencing Carlo Freccero's (the then Rai executive) programming decisions, where he moved Fazio's program to a different channel than the one he usually aired in, repeating “Fazio su

Rai 1, Fazio su Rai 2” in a chant-like loop, mirroring the original meme’s rhythmic repetition. More absurdity appears in the phrase “Poltrone e Sofà” [lit. “Armchairs and Sofas”], tied to the furniture brand’s slogan, “Poltrone e Sofà, artigiani della qualità” [“Armchairs and Sofas, artisans of quality”]. This absurd juxtaposition between non-sense and politics is further enhanced at the end of the song, with lines such as “I drink Coke” and “I’m not a [FIAT] Panda”, heightening absurdism and trivialisation. It mocks the gravity of Meloni’s original speech and places it into a nonsensical consumerist register.

B8.2 Humour Layer

The humour relies on parody and ironic inversion, reversing statements or forms to mock both Meloni’s discourse and its remix format. The skit blurs the boundary between politics and the ridiculous, placing national identity in dialogue with fizzy drinks and commercial catchphrases. It is both affiliative and self-defeating, as Littizzetto builds a bond with the audience by mocking herself and introduces political or salient topics through shared cultural references. By positioning herself as powerless and ridiculous (“I’m a pipsqueak”, “I’m not a [FIAT] Panda”), she undercuts seriousness and asserts a self-deprecating tone while targeting both Freccero and Meloni.

The humour’s function is that of clarification and identification: Littizzetto introduces two issues (Meloni’s discourse and Freccero’s decision) to be further criticised later in the episode, using a tone that invites critical engagement through laughter while also connecting with the audience through shared cultural elements and contexts.

B8.3 Subversive Layer

The video parodies both the remix and Meloni’s speech, exaggerating and distorting them for comic effect. It maintains the structural and musical elements of MEM & J’s meme while replacing its ideological content with trivial and absurd references like sodas and commercial slogans. Catchphrases like “Poltrone e Sofà” strip the original political weight, thus implying the ridicule of Meloni’s statements. This use of absurdism through incoherent rhymes and random associations destabilises the seriousness of Meloni’s claims and renders her discourse ridiculous.

The subversion targets individuals. Rather than criticising institutions or ideologies, Littizzetto undermines Meloni’s authority by mocking her and her speech content. Moreover, her lyrics include roleplay, quoting and reshaping Meloni’s speech to fit her double critique (“This is the game of the uniform, Freccero: they must take everything we are to make us lose our identity!”), technique which also amplifies the parodic quality of the video.

B9. Analysis Meme 9



Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4b-wPdo7F/?igsh=YmI4YmtzMXI2Mjcw>

B9.1 MCDA Layer

The figure is a screenshot of a short video clip of Catholic officials line dancing in a choreographed group, possibly at a religious celebration or event. The original audio has been replaced by MEM & J's remix song, namely during the chorus, when it says, "I am Giorgia, I'm a mother, I'm a mother, I'm Christian". The humorous effect rises from the incongruity between the visual and the audio: a remix associated with political identity and satire is paired with a joyful video clip of religious figures dancing in sync and having fun. This juxtaposition creates a humorous contrast.

B9.2 Humour Layer

The humour is affiliative, and it relies on shared cultural recognition and light-hearted contrast. It serves an identification function, inviting the audience to enjoy the absurdity of the remix's diffusion, which was "able" to reach more traditionally orientated conservative spaces such as the Catholic Church and its officials.

B9.3 Subversive Layer

By remixing concepts that one might tend to keep separate (namely, a parodic political remix and Catholic Church officials), the meme subverts the original meaning of the discourse by both the use of the remix and by the contextual reappropriation. The irony of the juxtaposition leads to cultural repurposing, in which it loses part of its political nuance to gain identity as a digital spectacle. This meme subversion is lighter and more subdued, and it operates on the organisational level, as it proposes religious imagery to mock Meloni's values. By the juxtaposition of the dancing church officials to the techno remix, it undermines the authority of both religious and political organisations.

B10. Analysis Meme 10



Note. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B4f6LT1Ietp/?igsh=MXFoeWczcHJocWtoeA==>

B10.1 MCDA Layer

Meme 10 shows a questionnaire-like query that reads: “I am... ○ Single ○ Taken X Giorgia, I’m a mother, I’m Italian”. The font’s different dimensions create a visual hierarchy that draws attention to the word “Giorgia”, which appears in a larger size, and to the heading “I am...”, clearly linking the format of the meme to the phrasing of Giorgia Meloni’s speech. The first two options of the query are linked to the audience’s relationship status, while the third option inserts a recognisable political identity claim and merges it to a recurring meme trope.

B10.2 Humour Layer

The humour is affiliative, as it builds a sense of in-group identity and lacks the sharp critique that could be seen in previous memes; it aims at being reliable and light-hearted, recontextualising a political discourse into an everyday setting, thus fostering amusement through contrast. Depending on how the meme is intended and framed, it can also include elements of self-enhancing humour (if the irony reflects playful empowerment) or self-defeating humour (if interpreted as self-mocking). Given the ambiguity of the creator’s intent, a definitive categorisation is not possible, and both readings remain plausible. Here, the function of humour is that of differentiation, since the meme uses humour to reframe Meloni’s identity as an unserious joke.

B10.3 Subversive Layer

In regard to its subversive strategy, the meme can be understood as a mild form of parody, reusing Meloni’s sentence in a banal and decontextualised setting that weakens its original rhetorical power. Instead of a direct

attack or critique of Meloni's views, this meme contextually displaces Meloni's speech: her emotionally charged wording is used in a playful context, stripped of its political meaning by contrasting it with trivial internet culture. Here, humour can be identified to be operating on a light individual level of subversion, as it lacks overt hostility but still undermines Meloni's authority by using her discourse as a fun and light joke.