Futurist Performance and Marketing

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Performance, as a central feature of the Italian futurist movement's artistic output, has been the subject of significant scholarly research, most notably since the late 1970s through the work of Michael Kirby, Günter Berghaus and Claudia Salaris, among others.

Prior to the 1970s, the movement's political interactions with Italian fascism had come under repeated scrutiny, often obfuscating futurism's artistic merits. Despite a re-evaluation of the futurist oeuvre instigated by the recent centenary of the movement's inception, little existing research examines the futurists' marketing practice. Specifically, no research focuses on the way futurist performance interacted with the movement's marketing practices. Seeking to address this lacuna, this study centres on primary sources unearthed in the Getty Research Institute's Italian Futurism archive, Rovereto's MART Museum and the Casa Depero, together with a wide range of secondary sources.

The main objective of the present study is to explore the ways futurist performance and marketing developed symbiotically.

The historical nature of this discussion demands an exploration of the relevant contexts surrounding futurism. These include the political, aesthetic and commercial environments within which the movement operated. Futurism emerges as a significantly influential avant-garde that shook the European artistic status quo and heralded the advent of modernism while displaying many characteristics of postmodernism. Most surprising is the speed of the rise in popularity of futurism in early 20th-century Europe, the causes of which lie in the futurists' obsession with self-promotion and propagation.

This study emphasises the typically commercial nature of the collaboration between exponents of futurism and the advertising industry of the time. This continuous interaction deeply influenced the futurist aesthetic, right through from manifesto writing to the visual arts and performance. The research identifies a series of strategies that taken together constituted futurist marketing practice. Analysis of these strategies reveals that the futurists understood the propagatory power of performativity and injurious speech acts.

The most noteworthy examples of futurist marketing occur in conjunction with their performance art, particularly futurist *serate* and futurist variety theatre. In reconstructing these types of performances, this inquiry points to the importance of the futurists' developments in site-specific performance and audience theory. Futurist performance presents itself as a commodity in its own right, one that repositions spectators as consumers.

Finally, the branding practice of the futurist movement is brought to light. By drawing upon recent developments in branding theory, this thesis ascertains the extent to which the futurists' practice anticipated today's brand management processes. In their choice of name, of their logo design and in their development of a brand identity, the futurists are seen to practice several characteristics of contemporary brand management. The research pin-points worship of the machine as the central motif of the futurist brand, and then follows the wide-ranging sub-branding of this core symbol in the artistic output of the movement.

The conclusion argues that the futurists grasped the growing importance of attention itself in modern metropolitan societies. This understanding was far-sighted, and was realised through their artistic practices, and most prominently through their performance.

The main thrust of this thesis is, therefore, a re-appreciation of futurism as an early precursor, and perhaps even an instigator, of the late capitalist Western cultures we recognise as today.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: 

Date: 20/2/18

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INTRODUCTION

Aims and Scope

The centenary of the inception of futurism has triggered a renewed appreciation of the importance of the Italian cultural movement. The opinions that futurism elicited across the 20th century, however, varied considerably, and were frequently negative in their judgement. Criticism of futurism has focused, over time, on its political associations with Italian fascism, its ties with Russian Bolshevism, its avant-garde aesthetic, its regressive gender politics and its wide-ranging artistic legacy. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), the founder and leading voice of futurism, had a well-documented and complex personal relationship with Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). This has often muddied the perspective of many among the movement's critics, who have assessed futurism from an antifascist perspective (Ponte 2015).

There is good reason for a degree of political aversion towards futurism. Federico Luisetti and Luca Somigli are right to point out that futurism espoused a "shameless cult of war […] sexism and alliance with fascism" (2009, p. 13). These perspectives resulted in critical neglect of the futurist movement. As Luisetti and Somigli put it, "while scholars do not exclusively reduce Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of life […] or Ezra Pound's literary achievements to their political beliefs, Futurism is still predominantly understood as a crypto-Fascist artistic ideology" (2009, p. 13). It is only since the 1970s, through the careful efforts of Michael Kirby (1971), Luciano De Maria (1973), Christiana Taylor (1979) and Günter Berghaus (1996, 2005, 2006) that, gradually, the futurists' work has come to be recognised.

The legacy of futurism is most evident and celebrated in the visual and performing arts. Yet the futurists' repertoire left a mark on a wide range of cultural endeavours, including photography and cinematography, cuisine, costume design, scenography, poetry, speech-writing, architecture and interior design, typography, music and marketing. So wide was the scope of the futurist project that a proper understanding of how futurism influenced the broader cultural spectrum of early 20th-

century Europe touches on contexts beyond the merely aesthetic. It follows that this enquiry takes a multi-disciplinary approach to the subject.

This study contributes to knowledge by exploring how the futurists' theatrical performances developed innovative strategies in market research, publicity, advertising, product delivery, public relations and branding (all processes encapsulated within the broad discipline of marketing). Proof of the futurists' effectiveness in marketing is the rapid rise in popularity of the movement in the second decade of the 20th century. Futurism went from being entirely unknown to being one of Europe's most significant artistic movements within the space of a few years. The term futurism, in the context of this thesis, first appeared in *Le Figaro* in February 1909, and by 1912 not only was the movement touring Italy's principal theatres, but offshoots of futurism had emerged in Russia, France and England.

So how did the futurists achieve this speedy success? Performance (rather than just theatre: an important distinction that will be explained below) was largely responsible for the movement's popularity. When the futurists planned their performances, they did so with marketing in mind. This is evident in the way they perceived their audience, presented their cultural products and the way they used performance sites. Futurist performance was a gesture towards a mass society, produced for a mass culture that fed mass audiences.

The marketing developments of futurism have hitherto eluded the sustained attention of scholars, whose scrutiny has, for the most part, remained within the bounds of a typically aesthetic perspective. Despite Claudia Salaris' research into Marinetti's editorial techniques (1990), MART's[1] research into Depero's advertising posters (2007); and Luca Somigli's research into what led Marinetti to creating futurism (2009), a comprehensive investigation of how the futurists jointly re-imagined performance and marketing is still unavailable. The aim of this study is therefore to help understand the role futurism played in the the rise of marketing's impact on early 20th-century European societies.

[1] Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto

Methodology

The challenges involved in combining research in the social sciences and the arts include the difficulties of trying to marry different epistemological contexts. When at their most disparate, the disciplines of social science and the arts ask different questions and investigate them in different ways. Nevertheless, it is also true that there are many occasions where arts scholarship and social science scholarship do overlap in their methodology. Art historian Ernst Gombrich reminds us that "what we call disciplines are, at best, matters for organizational convenience in academic life. Each of them must be able to look out of the window, for if we draw the blinds and close the shutters, we shall see precisely nothing" (cited in Woodfield 1996, p. 260).

The interdisciplinary approach of this thesis seeks to bridge the separation between drama and marketing, and relies on aspects of scholarship that both disciplines share. For instance, both fields utilise critical theory for the successful interpretation of their artefacts. An eclectic range of theoretical frameworks, including Marxist theory, audience theory, the theory of performativity, semiotic theory and post-structuralist theory inform this study. Such a broad range of theoretical perspectives can challenge cohesion, but when handled carefully can assist with the juxtaposition of how performance and marketing interact.

When engaged in historical study, both performance and marketing generally abide by similar principles of historicity, including the importance of primary sources and of their wider contexts. The focus of this enquiry is in fact historical, and can thus draw upon congruent methodologies between the two disciplines.

A useful starting point is a brief exploration of the broad categories of literature produced by marketing research and scholarship. The available theories of advertising and marketing are often categorised by polarised views, interpretation and advocacy. Analysis of the motivations, processes and outcomes of advertising and marketing is often highly critical. From Walter Benjamin (1936) to Guy Debord (1967) and Michael Taussig (1980), scrutiny of marketing practices leads to strong criticism of its central role in the development of capitalist societies.

However, not all criticism highlights the socio-political implications of advertising. When considering criticism's assessments of the social impact of marketing, Richard Ohmann reminds us that "tens of thousands of books and articles [are] trying – openly or implicitly – to evaluate mass

culture or some part of it: 'Is it good or bad for society'?" (1996, p. 11). Ohmann questions the validity of this kind of enquiry, comparing it to making "the central question of physiology [as] whether the mind is good or bad for the body" (p. 11). Indeed, whilst such a physiological question (and consequently its sociological equivalent) is fundamental to understanding the human body, it is hard to imagine detaching the mind from the body. Marketing is so intrinsic to the functioning of late capitalist societies that using its analysis to imagine a society without it seems gratuitous. Gradually, the centrality of marketing to the modern and then postmodern condition has encouraged an approach to marketing that evaluates it on its own terms, rather than fighting against them.

A second and larger category emerging from the range of texts published on advertising and marketing may be classified as practical literature. These books and journals offer guides to improving advertising and marketing praxis, and are intended to assist readers in their practical use of advertising methods. This seems to be the purpose of, among others, the electronic *Journal of Advertising* and *Journal of Brand Management*. Such publications gear themselves towards a readership of researchers and practitioners of marketing, offering specialist refinements to the modes and effects of various promotional practices, such as *Examining the Influence of Telepresence on Spectator and Player Processing on Real and Fictitious Brands in a Computer Game* (Nelson et al 2006, p. 87). The journals' monthly publications give the impression of an industry in the process of speedy and continuous renewal, with which the publications strive to keep up to date.

Much advice is also offered in practical textbooks about the best approaches to conducting market research. Guides such as *Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations* (Iacobucci & Churchill 2009) cover topics such as the legality and efficacy of various data-collection tools, or the most seamless combinations of data-mining and data-analysis methodologies, typically with substantiating case-studies. Such textbooks, by and large, explore the 'hows' of marketing, but rarely asks why it should be carried out in the first place. In this respect, they bear no resemblance to the first critical category, which instead often questions whether a marketing industry should exist at all.

The contemporary, practical category of literature on marketing is often rich in primary source material, and is helpful in determining what is considered contemporary marketing practice. This study draws upon the case-studies themselves, rather than the procedural advice offered in these textbooks and journals. In doing so, it becomes possible to determine to what extent contemporary marketing practices bear similarities with the marketing practised by the futurists a century ago.

What is left, in terms of broad categories defining the range of works addressing advertising and marketing, is the historical category. Such texts concern themselves with detailing and analysing past events in advertising and marketing, often to conduct an evaluation of the significance of certain developments within the field. The most relevant literature, clearly, focuses on late 19th-century and early 20th-century developments in advertising and marketing, such as Adam Arvidsson's *Marketing Modernity* (2003) and MART's *Depero pubblicitario* (2007). So while the net is cast wide, the study's criterion for relevance is narrow.

Marinetti himself saw performance as the art of choice for propagation of futurism. Theatre, to Marinetti, was the ideal medium for publicity, exploiting its high degree of audience interaction as a platform for the elevation and expansion of the movement he led (De Maria 1973, p. 65). The distinction between performance and theatre is methodologically important for the purposes of this enquiry. The threshold for an event to meet the requirements of performance art is explicitly lower than that posed by a theatre of scripted dramas in recognised venues with fixed-seat auditoria. The distinction between performance and theatre, however, eluded the futurists, who tended to define all their performance art as theatrical. This is not helpful, as it may give the impression that the futurists only staged scripted, managed events in theatres, whereas most of their work avoided scripts, disrupted audience expectations and ended up spilling outside their chosen venues.

The ways in which performance events were produced and marketed by the futurists meet our contemporary understanding of performance art, as they crossed pre-established borders which segregated art and practical or business life, and encouraged futurism to interact with various disciplines. Although the futurists made concerted efforts at distinguishing between the different forms of their drama (such as variety theatre, synthetic theatre, *serate* etc.), there was little recognition among the futurists of the fact that their off-stage demonstrations, proclamations,

publicity stunts, orchestrated riots and other such events were what we now can and do describe as performance. This study will therefore define the futurists' drama as performance.

Performance and history are not easy bedfellows. The transience of performance before the days of audio-visual recording leaves, at best, static visual or written records as primary sources, which belie the mode of performance. Even recorded performances struggle to convey the full affective impact of a live event. Methodologically, then, creating a history of performance even from primary sources is vexing, and so is establishing a history of performance innovations.

Theatre historians have approached this difficult terrain with caution, and have offered a range of methodological approaches to understanding past performances. Widrich Mechtild warns of the complexity of the latent "relationship between an event and its future, and the means by which we are granted access to the past" (2014, p. 57), thus highlighting the potential gulf between the way a performance is understood in its live moment and the way it is understood in the future. To assuage this discrepancy, Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier posit that historical researchers should consider whether "the source was intentionally or unintentionally created; whether it presents data of a social bookkeeping kind that have a certain reliability" (2001, p. 74), and whether a range of sources of data are coherent. Similarly, Mara Tadajewski and D. G. Brian Jones, in focusing on the historical research into marketing, assert that "collecting different sources, both within and across categories, is highly desirable" (2016, p. 76). By asking for evidence-triangulation, this historical methodology (rightly) expects historians to research thoroughly, but also sets a high bar. Such a set of stringent criteria reduces the number of even primary sources which may be considered admissible in any discussion of especially past performance.

The research that informs this study has unearthed primary sources (some as yet unpublished) and secondary sources that exist across conceptual, as well as geographical and linguistic, boundaries. The materials used are drawn from repositories of futurist works (including Fondazione Mondadori, Fondazione Primo Conti, MART, Centro Internazionale di Studi and the Getty Research Institute). The Italian Futurism archive at the Getty Research Institute, in particular, revealed materials of relevance to this study.

Analysis and interpretation of this data navigates complex contexts, so the study undergoes, in R. A. Fullerton's words, a "process of synthesis through which the researcher interprets the evidence to provide a coherent re-creation of what actually happened in the past" (1988, p. 109). In interpreting futurist performance and futurist marketing, events are connected both chronologically and topically, in an approach described by Tadajewski and Jones as "context-driven periodization" (2016, p. 77).

A useful historical approach to the study of performance has been offered by Rebecca Schneider in *Theatre & History* (2014). Schneider argues that the transience of performance is no reason for history to be overly sceptical of it as a legitimate field of study. Indeed, of the three words in the title of her book, Schneider claims that the most significant is "&". Some of her colleagues would disagree, such as Michael Fried, who in his 1967 essay *Art and Objecthood*, pits what is theatrical against what is artistic or historical: "art history degenerates as it approaches the conditions of theatre" (cited by Perloff 1986, p. 109). To Schneider, such anti-theatrical prejudice also summarily excludes oral histories, and no history can live on exclusively in artefacts or writing. Schneider argues that performance, as a product of its time (even if in rebellion against it), is a form of historical re-enactment, positing that "we are reading the archive as an act" (2014, p. 15). She sees the "remains" of a performance, or what society chooses to remember of it, as its relation to history. Performance scholarship therefore deals with sources that are neither ephemeral nor document-based, but rather "cross-temporal and cross-geographical" (2014, p. 22) in their ability to document numerous eras at once. Schneider details how we can, in reconstructing a performance through its historical referents, reactivate the event and "imagine the past audience: crucial in claiming an *imaginary presence* at the event – a mental act, to be sure, but in no way opposed to our sensual, corporeal, fleshy existence" 2014, (p. 59-60). Schneider's own italics above home in on a key conceptual step that history requires, namely imagining one's presence there. Without this, history fails its readers, but performance history is especially open to this imaginative process. Schneider's observations are methodologically relevant to this study, which aims to place our imaginary presence in historical situ.

In the development of this thesis, a number of linguistic questions have arisen. Firstly, in this study, futurism without the capitalised initial that other scholars (Günter Berghaus and Luca

Somigli, for instance) have preferred to use. This is because, although Marinetti often wrote the noun in its proper form, the capital 'F' appears inconsistently beyond its presence in titles of futurist literature. Furthermore, futurism was not an official organisation with a regulated and documented membership. Indeed, many futurists (such as Aldo Palazzeschi and Enrico Prampolini) left and re-joined the movement, with which they had a fractious, complex relationship. The movement's exponents, however much they identified themselves as such, were never officially members, but rather were futurist through their relationships, their writings and their art. The artists we recognise as belonging to this movement, therefore, were not strictly-speaking Futurist, but rather they were futurists. Furthermore, capitalising its noun implies a clarity of identity and distinction between futurism and other avant-gardes which, as will be explored in chapter 1, was far from clear-cut at the time.

Many sources cited in this enquiry were originally written in Italian. Most futurist texts, with the notable exception of the first, were also written in Italian, as was most of the personal correspondence of the futurists. As Italian is my mother tongue, I have translated both Italian futurist literature and Italian critical literature myself. In an effort to convey textuality as accurately as possible, the Italian citations are included in their original language within the body of the text, and their translation appears in a footnote (apart from short titles). This way, the diction, voice and style of the author, where it instrumental to the meaning of the text, remains prominent. All translations are therefore mine unless otherwise indicated.

A certain contextual awareness needs to be applied to the translation of the futurists' writing. The futurists wrote at a time of significant and tumultuous change in the history of the Italian language itself. As explained by Sergio Lubello in *Manuale di Linguistica Italiana* (Manual of Italian Linguistics), from the country's unification in 1861 until the mid 20th century, Italian linguists have striven to establish an official language in a land of at least 50 dialects (2016, p. 16). This homogenising effort intensified in the 1910s and 1920s (with the emergence and popularisation of radio broadcasts) and in the 1930s (through linguistic impositions set by the fascist state). Futurism contributed to the development of the Italian language by itself pursuing neologisms and new linguistic forms (as discussed in chapter 3). So placing the original Italian within the body of the text is an effort to keep the linguistic decisions made by the futurists visible.

Thesis Outline

My study follows four sections, which progressively aim to build our understanding of the development of futurist performance and marketing.

Chapter 1 seeks to establish the various relevant contexts that apply to my investigation of futurism. Its aim is to create a sufficiently detailed snapshot of where and when futurism emerged, as well as how its presence left a legacy. Contextual factors surveyed include an oversight of the role futurism held within Italian politics. While this is not central to the discussion, it helps define the relevance of politics in futurism, and identify to what extent their political agitation was actually performance. In this section, the performance of other European avant-gardes, including that of Alfred Jarry, of constructivism and dada, is considered. This is helpful in identifying not only what inspired the futurists, but also the influence the futurists had on the avant-garde movements that, in various ways, followed its lead.

The ways in which the futurists engaged with marketing practice and theory are explored in the second section, which encompasses chapters 2 and 3. Analysis of several futurist manifestoes, unveils how the futurists developed this textual form in order to make it function as advertising copy. Further research reveals how the futurists maintained an intense collaboration with a budding advertising industry, sought personal fame through conceits such as the 'fauxmance', and perfected editorial practices such as the press release. In this section, John Austin's theory of performativity helps frame the significance and impact of the futurists' marketing innovations.

The third section, which is laid out in chapters 4 and 5, focuses particularly on performance, exploring the futurist *serate* and variety theatre. Through range of primary and secondary sources, a picture of what these performances entailed – before, during and after the event – is built.

Evidence indicates that the futurists conducted demographic analysis and planned marketing practices both before and after performance events, often through the close relationships they had forged with the press. This section also maps the futurists' chosen performance venues against important urban civic sites, revealing their strategic geographic marketing techniques. The ensuing discussion explains how the futurists developed an audience

theory based on confronting spectators with affective performances, in order to draw attention to the movement through then resulting dissent and riots.

Chapters 6 and 7, the fourth section of the thesis, evaluate the relevance and implications of the findings mentioned above. Through a range of theoretical perspectives, a fresh understanding of impact that futurist performance had on the emerging mass consumer society of early 20th-century Europe is sought. Juxtaposing performance theory to both Marxist theory and marketing theory highlights surprising parallels between the audience's experience of futurist performances and of commodity fetishism. This leads to an exploration of the extent to which the futurists understood and practised branding. This is a delicate process, as it requires reading futurism retrospectively through a practice (branding) that only emerged in its articulate and mature form in the second half of the 20th century.

The conclusion aims to shine light on the relevance and significance of the findings to a contemporary readership, contributing to our understanding of the journey that Western societies have taken towards late capitalist postmodernity.

1. CONTEXTUALISING FUTURISM: POLITICS AND PERFORMANCE

One of the most important claims of this study is that futurism needs continuing re-evaluation as an innovative movement that left an influential legacy. Innovation, though, is context-dependent: you can only be innovative in relation to what pre-existed.

A thorough appreciation of the context within which futurism developed is therefore important, and will take the discussion into an exploration of the pre-existing political and aesthetic landscapes.

Italian futurism was a cultural phenomenon deeply involved in politics. In particular, the link between fascism and futurism has played a doggedly central role in any discussion of the Italian futurist movement. This discussion, especially since the Second World War, has typically harnessed an antifascist, politicised perspective, with some calling for the movement to be ignored as a form of boycott (Guerra 2014). Criticism has tended towards the simplistic and written off the movement as an aspect of Benito Mussolini's totalitarian era, pointing to the connections between the dictator and the founder of futurism: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. This vein of criticism began with Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce in the late 1930s.

Other critics have instead separated the aesthetic principles of futurist theatre from the political ideology of its exponents, perhaps to conveniently bypass any complications. Only since the late 1970s has a detailed, comprehensive study of the nature of the relationship between futurism and fascism emerged and, unsurprisingly, it has revealed a far more complicated picture than many would have imagined. Indeed, Richard Humphreys, one exponent of this trend, was right when explaining how "futurism and fascism were indissolubly linked, […] but in a subtly strained, puzzling and even comic relationship" (1999, p. 15). There was a time when Marinetti and Mussolini, otherwise allies, were rivals in regional elections, and a time when the latter placed the former under covert observation by the regime's secret service. In spite of this, however, futurism is still regarded by many academics as the artistic expression of Italian fascism and Marinetti as a

spokesman of the cultural endeavours of fascism (Buelens et al 2012). Myths, among memes, are particularly resilient.

The antifascist critique of futurism has been cause of an often unbalanced analysis of the movement's repertoire. Whilst futurist paintings and sculptures have been recognised as precursors of the best modernist tradition, the movement's writing, theatre and performance have been comparatively overlooked, in spite of the stubborn dedication of a few scholars. As Christiana Taylor stresses, futurist performance was immensely popular, both on political and artistic grounds, and "no attempt has been made to comprehend the impact of the movement as a decisive political-artistic force, a force which permeated the mass consciousness of Italy and perhaps of the world for four years before the First World War" (1974, p. 1). The different fate that futurist visual art and performance art would face in posterity is not accidental; futurist performance was the most political expression the movement devised. No aspect of futurism (or any artistic movement, for that matter) can be entirely filtered out of its context and still make sense, but least of all performance: the social art *par excellence*. It is not surprising then that futurist performance and marketing practice, and its politics intersect particularly closely, and therefore that politics needs to be raised.

Political Context

Futurism developed in the decade that preceded and incubated Italian fascism. It is easy, and often justifiable, to speak of fascism in solely negative terms, but in this discussion, at this stage, it is unhelpfully simplistic. A careful consideration of fascism is not complete without acknowledging what allowed fascism to take over the destiny of Italy so dramatically. Emily Braun is bold when defending "the now-established premise that Italian fascism was a legitimate, highly original mass politics, with its roots in the late 19th century, and as a radical revision of Marxism" (2000, p. 101). Indeed, Braun helpfully muddies the waters between fascism and socialism. Such delineations between emerging political movements were porous in the early 20th century, to the extent that exponents of different political groups were typically found to be also activists in each other movements. Braun is also right to frame the conversation back by a few decades. The protracted failure of the Italian *Risorgimento*, which crumbled in a few decades from Italy's unification in 1861

to a deep national crisis, is undoubtedly a factor in the rise of fascism. To progress with the analysis, hence, we must return to the decades that followed Italy's unification.

The 1870s, 1880s and 1890s were lived, by the government, in great apprehension of the revolutionary potential of subversive groups, including anarchists, socialists, royalists, syndicalists and nationalists. These movements pre-existed unification, but became more widespread, coordinated and later united by a newly-found national purpose instigated by the great agrarian crisis of the 1890s. The textile industry Union, *Lega di Resistenza* (Resistance League), for instance, was able to attract protesters from all over Italy when organising a series of strikes in Biella between 1861 and 1877. Anxiety grew over these impact of these movements, and over government instability (a trait which Italian politics has never truly abandoned), with alternating governments led by prime ministers: Giolitti, Crispi, di Rudini and Giolitti. In this turmoil, the country struggled to come of age since its recent inception. Not only was limited progress made with Italy's economic problems, but little effort was made to shore up a national identity and common purpose. Giolitti's *laissez-faire* foreign policy was dictated by what he called *sacro egoismo* (sacred selfishness), a sort of cunning deviousness that was going to humiliate Italy internationally for decades to come. Giolitti's first government attempted to drown the problem of the subversives by ignoring them, but the tactic backfired:

> It was not that real tendencies to disorder and rebellion existed in the great mass of the people, but that, neglected and left to go their own way, they had arrived at a state of mind where they felt action was the only effective protest.
>
> (Hentze 1939, pp. 304-5)

Crispi's and di Rudini's internal policies did not fail in the same way Giolitti's did, but in the opposite way. Rather than being too soft, they were far too hard. Successive legislation decided to hit protesters hard with new public order restrictions that criminalised public assembly and association. These directives also targeted many workers who were at that time appealing for the right to strike owing to low wages and standards of living.

The result of this uncompromising policy was a considerable swelling of the protesting groups, who were recruiting otherwise apolitical, hard-working artisans and farmers. To make matters worse, Italy was hard-hit by the 1890s global economic depression, which plunged many in the country into poverty. Strangled by the worst conditions they had known since the unification, Italians fled all over the world, beginning a migration which would continue into the 20th century. As Martin Clark points out, in the 1890s Italy provided around two thirds of Europe's emigrants to America: "Why did they go? The short answer, and a true one, is 'poverty' […] the surprising thing is not that so many went away, but that so many stayed behind" (1984, p. 32). Many of those who did stay took to the streets to voice their complaints.

When di Rudini took over from Crispi in 1893, Italy's national identity was in peril. In May 1898, legal demonstrations in Milan ended very bitterly when a few police officers shot non-violent demonstrators. Soon thereafter, organised demonstrations developed into battles with the police forces. Probably fearing a victory for the protesters who outnumbered the police, di Rudini responded in a reactionary and uncompromising way by ordering the army to intervene immediately with permission to shoot freely. This overreaction caused the deaths of over one hundred demonstrators and just under a thousand injuries within a few weeks. Di Rudini's response was criticised by most of the press and by public opinion, especially since he made no attempt to understand or negotiate any of the requests made by the protesters (who, it ought to be remembered, included vast numbers of industrial workers, farmers and artisans).

When the king promptly supported and praised di Rudini's actions, it must have appeared to the Italian people that their rulers were united against them, in what R. J. B. Bosworth describes as: "the most yawning gap between politics and society, theory and practice" (1996, p. 18).

In the late 1890s Italy was breathtakingly close to a revolution. What allowed the desperate Italian leaders to maintain their position was neither a strong and convincing government, nor an organised armed force in defence of it, but a confusing disunity amongst the revolutionary groups. Anarchists, socialists, republicans, nationalists, syndicalists… there were far too many factions to enable an organised and effective manoeuvre to overthrow the government. The missed revolution didn't silence the widespread discontent of the Italian population, discontent that intensified into a 20th century characterised by an ever-increasing urbanisation and industrialisation. Cities grew

bigger and were mainly made up of that same workforce that had been supporting opposition groups.

Urban centres became political hotbeds, especially when the workers realised that industrialisation was not synonymous with wealth: "[Italy's] per capita income for the 1910s was only just over half of Germany's, for instance, and less than one third of Britain's" (Bosworth 1996, p. 85). The serious national crisis that Italy had suffered since its unification had sunk deep into the fabric of Italian society, and it weakened Italy's position as it entered the 20th century's first global, grotesque military contest.

The First World War began with disastrous timing for Italy. On the one hand, a victorious war would have silenced all the nationalist subversive groups and satisfied a population in need of identity. On the other, however, meaningful victory was virtually impossible, as both the economic and military realities in Italy were grossly inadequate. Italy's humiliating hesitation and comic change of alliance after the war had started frustrated and angered sections of the increasingly strident nationalist voices within the country. Italy's alliance with Austria was seen by many as a perfect example of *sacro egoismo*: an expedient rather than principled choice. Then, when consistency would probably have been the lesser evil, Austria's military difficulties prompted Italy to change alliance, an act interpreted by many as cowardly. It is in this explosive context that both futurism and fascism were born. The futurist political narrative sprang particularly from the avant-garde of anarchism, whereas fascism sprang from the revolutionary wing of the socialist movement, of which Mussolini was a prominent member.

Marinetti and Mussolini

Pressure had been mounting towards a break with the ineffectual political practices and ideals had been accumulating since the 1860s, and by the 1920s it was too strong to ignore. After all, as Enrico Falqui points out, "….in the first years of this decade [the 1860s] Italy was considered by other nations the true land of the dead, the country of libraries and museums, interesting only as an historic phenomenon" (1959, p. 15). Many in Italy felt a need for a new cultural and aesthetic narrative: a way to reimagine the country with a 20th-century identity. Nascent fascism, with its myths of rebirth and renewal, had a clearly futurist imprint, advocating the violent rejection of a past

infected by pragmatic dishonesty, to be substituted by an energetic, heroic and anti-bourgeois revolt. Largely because of this characteristic, an increasing proportion of respected Italian intellectuals supported fascism as a step towards a national and intellectual renewal. By the early 1900s Mussolini had successfully branded himself as the figurehead for many subversives in Italy, drawing admiration from anarchists and nationalists – Marinetti among them. What Mussolini's supporters saw in him was the promise of change, one that so many felt was so overdue.

Exactly when Marinetti and Mussolini first met is unknown. It may well be that they first met in jail. We know that around 1914, Mussolini was very close to Milan-based radical socialist movements, and that through several violent demonstrations he had met, and been arrested with, Boccioni, Carrà, Sironi, and indeed Marinetti. These four futurists were well-known anarchic activists in these years, exchanging ideas and punches in the streets. During the rest of this decade the relationship between Marinetti and Mussolini, as they became leaders of Italian culture and politics respectively, would grow. In the 1910s, Mussolini would often make statements calling for a cultural renewal, such as: "We are a young people who want and ought to create and refuse to be the syndicate of hotel-keepers and museum guards. Our artistic past is admirable. But as for me, I couldn't have been inside a museum more than twice" (cited in Flint 1972, p. 159). This must have struck a chord with Marinetti, who called for the arson of Italian museums in the founding futurist manifesto. Mussolini's rejection of Italy's *passéism* might have been encouraged by his political need to draw important, emerging cultural figures close to him (a long list which included conductor Arturo Toscanini and poet Gabriele D'Annunzio). Whilst undoubtedly this aided his rise in Italian politics, by late 1919 Mussolini was within reach of real power and soon realised that radical connections were not always helpful in attracting support from the powerful elites he would have to befriend. Marinetti sensed Mussolini's reactionary accommodation, and in early 1919 already began moving away from the politician.

In 1919 Marinetti's view of fascism became pointedly critical. In January he called Mussolini "a megalomaniac who will little by little become a reactionary" (cited in Humphreys 1999, p. 71). That year, after a disastrous outcome in regional elections for both, Mussolini changed the tone and tactics of his politics. He weakened his ties with avant-garde exponents such as Marinetti and began developing relationships (displaying that same Italian pragmatism he had so often criticised)

with banking magnates, the government and the Vatican – all the while building a nationalist narrative. Mussolini's balancing act drove Marinetti further and further away from the fascist movement, and after several private criticisms of Mussolini's policy, in the Central Fascist Committee of May 1920, he publicly spoke his mind. Before a full audience of party delegates, Marinetti loudly and theatrically attacked Mussolini's connections with the powerful reactionary bodies that prevented change in Italy, and called for their destruction, including the Vatican. Mussolini's pragmatism was proving rewarding, and he could not afford to see it jeopardised by Marinetti's extreme demands, so he replied coldly:

> As for the issue on papacy I must be clear: the Vatican represents four hundred million people scattered all over the world and an intelligent policy should use, aiming to expand, this colossal force. I am, today, completely extraneous to religion, but political problems are political problems.
>
> (Cited in De Felice 1965, pp. 596-7)

After this public rejection, Marinetti knew that his place wasn't in the fascist party: for him political problems were moral and aesthetic problems. A few days later the futurist leader left the committee and approached other fringe radical movements with which he had had connections since 1919.

Once Mussolini was appointed to lead the government in November 1922, he had both the support of the capital of Italy's leading banks, the Vatican and that of the street violence of fascist extremist groups. Mussolini was soon able to eliminate or silence his political and cultural opponents, and despite Marinetti's earlier connections with fascism, *il Duce* always considered futurism a dangerous cultural unknown. Mussolini's mistrust was indeed justified, because Marinetti's libertarian spirit is evident in the 1918 *Manifesto del partito futurista italiano* (Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party). Within it demands were made for more civil rights, personal freedoms, relaxation of sexual laws and gender equality, laws to be implemented by the paring down of governmental and religious systems. There could hardly have been a more marked antithesis to the totalitarian statehood of fascism.

Despite its political activism, futurism was never a politically powerful force; futurists never won an election, only registering sporadic electoral failures, and never participated in any

legislative policy. The movement never dealt with political power in its real and palpable sense, perhaps wary of the conservative effect power brings. Unlike Mussolini, as Maria Rygier points out, “Marinetti is a poet and not a politician” (cited in Humphreys 1999, p. 58). Such aesthetic intransigence and political transience were foreign concepts to Mussolini, whose objective was the ever-increasing state control.

Throughout the 1920s the mistrust that Mussolini held for Marinetti resulted in a secret decision to spy on the futurist’s activities. Mussolini’s agents intercepted Marinetti’s mail and reported regularly on his private and public engagements. The 1926 file on Marinetti held by the fascist secret service was stamped *antifascista* (anti-fascist). As indicated by Clark (1984), it would meticulously record his political and artistic activities for many years to come. Not only was Marinetti’s life monitored, but his cultural and artistic efforts were often stifled by the appointed minister for popular culture. To understand the true weight of this policing, the regime’s surveillance of Marinetti is best observed within the context of fascist security procedures. Whilst Italian fascism was known for being violently and ruthlessly oppressive towards any form of political opposition (Matteotti’s murder is but one of a long list), Mussolini was never particularly strict when it came to the arts. Under Mussolini’s rule, unlike Hitler’s or Stalin’s, very few artists had to suffer the scrutiny of which Marinetti was subject. As Affron and Antiff point out, the “Mussolini dictatorship allowed artists to work and be supported without direct censorship as long as they were not explicitly antifascist” (1997, p. 207). The hostility that Marinetti suffered from fascism was precisely because he was considered to be ‘antifascist’ by the regime. Covert surveillance of artists was highly unusual in fascist Italy, and if nothing else, the focus on Marinetti proved how much animosity the dictator felt towards the futurists.

Marinetti was most likely aware of the serious risks he was taking whenever he spoke outside the fascist party line. The uncomfortable position he was in during the late 1920s is a crucial factor in understanding his engagement with fascism, and Martin Clark may be right when he says that “Marinetti’s critics have always interpreted his acceptance of membership as an act of opportunism. This was probably not the whole story. Marinetti above all hoped to secure a status for his movement […] during the Fascist period” (1984, p. 33). The same unsympathetic attitude has often been employed in relation to the appointment of Marinetti as *Reale Accademico d’Italia*

(Royal Italian Academic), a state-appointed honorific title in recognition of services to the arts. Rather than a reward in return for loyalty to the fascist regime, the offer Marinetti received in 1929 was an astute political move by Mussolini. Constantly anxious to temper Marinetti's unpredictability, Mussolini offered the futurist a poisoned chalice he could not refuse - public recognition of his artistic compliance with the regime. In reality, Marinetti faced a stark choice. A refusal, whilst being a statement of personal independence, would also have been interpreted as an antifascist snub to the regime. Marinetti had no choice, and accepted this virtually imposed membership of the Academy, which inevitably undermined futurism, now caught in fatal contradiction between its calls for constant renewal and its acquiescence in the status quo.

In any historical research, it's worth remembering, as Gombrich reminds us, that "the decision as to which question to ask will always remain with us" (cited in Woodfield 1996, p. 360). Many of futurism's historians asked questions that betrayed a degree of prejudice against the movement. An open-minded, comprehensive account of Marinetti's political actions, one that takes into account the situations within which he operated, would find his political nature to be contradictory and elusive. First and foremost, political labels such as fascism or communism, which help us understand historical groups, situations and ideologies were far from established in the era when futurism was developing, and are therefore of limited value. Marinetti was an ambiguous political figure, who helped create the context for the rise of Mussolini as a revolutionary, but who was then betrayed by a reactionary and *passéist* dictator. Unfortunately for Marinetti, he depended on Mussolini much more than Mussolini depended on him. Observing Marinetti's engagement with politics, we are able to discern that his aims were not primarily political, but rather were driven by the futurist aesthetic impulse towards continuous rejection of the past, unfettered personal liberties, restless nationalism and mechanical invention.

Performance context: the avant-gardes

The fact that futurism originated as a European artistic movement, classified itself as an 'ism' and operated during the early 20th century inevitably places it within the broad field of the avant-gardes. Scores of avant-gardes swept the continent's arts from the late 19th century to the Second World War, often defying comparison with one another. Indeed, even a superficial exploration of the

subject reveals that there were several different avant-gardes, all of which were self-proclaiming movements that occupied the artistic and theoretical landscape, at times in mutual support but often in opposition to one another. Christopher Innes, who traces the modernist avant-garde wave all the way from Alfred Jarry to Samuel Beckett, describes these unhappy marriages by explaining that exponents of "the avant-garde as a whole seem united primarily in terms of what they are against" (1993, p. 70). Thus, it is appropriate to question where, and if, futurist performance fits within the context of avant-garde performance in chronological and aesthetic terms.

Many observers have determined futurism to be a precursor among precursors, including A. L. Rees, who claims that the futurists conceived "automatic art (which led to surrealism), the painting of light in motion (which led to abstraction), art in the street (which led to performance art), art as critique (which led to dada)" (2011, p. 26). While it is reasonable and instructive to notice and evaluate trends among a range of artists' endeavours that emerged within a defined time-scale, Rees' history seems too easy to believe. It is worth pausing to question the avant-garde construct itself – a construct that aims to congregate movements as disparate as those in the list compiled by Nicola Shaughnessy:

> Russia's Blue Blouses, the Red Megaphones in Germany, the 1930s Worker's Theatre Movement in Britain and the United States, Futurism, Dada, Expressionism, Constructivism, Situationism, the Federal Theatre, Living Theatre, Group Theatre, Bread and Puppet, San Francisco Mime Troup and El Teatro Campesino" (2013, p. 15)

Would the artists in question have endorsed the movements to other *isms* to which historians have since associated them? Who delineated the parameters of avant-garde art, as outlined above? The term itself was first applied outside military contexts in 1825 by reviewers aiming to describe Henri de Saint-Simon's writings on utopian, bohemian socialism. Saint-Simon was an influential agitator, therefore displaying some key characteristics of the artistic avant-gardes. However, as James Harding objects, "it is a mistake to assume that figures like Saint-Simon set a precedent without which it is unthinkable to find Hugo Ball [Dadaist performance artists] standing rigidly onstage" (2013, p. 2). Being someone's predecessor doesn't necessarily

mean that you influenced them – nor that they'll appreciate your efforts when they discover them. In defence of their brand, most avant-gardes' manifestoes, Janet Lyon explains, were "didactic texts that sought to occlude the historical presence of competing radical groups and movements" (1999, p. 93). The extent to which we can rely on a direct line of influence through the avant-gardes may therefore be weaker than assumed. It is methodologically more acceptable to focus not just on the construct of artistic movements, but also on observations of actual artistic practice, or on confirmed encounters among avant-gardists.

In *The Culture Industry* and *Art and Culture* (first published in 1941 and 1961 respectively), Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer describe specific trends that connected movements such as futurism, expressionism, symbolism and dada. They accused the avant-gardes of insufficient artistic research and credibility – of speaking before thinking. Indeed, the avant-gardes were historically more outwardly-faced, more impulsive and more adjacent to their audiences than the more intellectualised and reflective modernist movements. Unlike the more cerebral modernism, the avant-gardes' transgression tended to push on until something practical and concrete was done. The futurists, who "turned their backs on the sheltered life of the cultured intellectual" (Tisdall & Bozzolla 1977, p. 8), were perhaps the best example of this dynamic aesthetic, and therefore vulnerable to Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique.

The full distinction between modernism and the avant-garde, and their relation to modernity, is a subtle and complex one. Modernity defines the condition of modern times (the development of which is broadly co-terminous with the second half of the 19th century), and is distinguished by encroaching urban industrialisation and unprecedented changes visited upon social, political, economic, epistemological and artistic fields. These changes instigated responses by artists ranging from denial to glorification.

The impending arrival of modernity was anticipated as early as 1865, by Baudelaire, who in *Perte D'auréole* (Loss of the Halo) marks a decisive shift in the role of the artist in society, one that put their position as the patronised sage and observer in peril. As Luca Somigli points out, the artist in the age of modernity loses patronage and, in the process, loses his 'halo'. This is expressed in Baudelaire's powerfully allegorical verse: "comme je traversais le boulevard, en grande hâte, et que je sautillais dans la boue, à travers ce chaos mouvant où la mort arrive au gallop de tous le

côtés à la fois, mon auréole, dans un movement brusque, a glissé de ma tête"[2] (cited in Somigli, 2003, p. 8). The elements of Baudelaire's description are perceptive of the characteristics of modernity. Firstly, the halo drops in a city road: the public space that experienced the most radical transformation with the arrival of the motor-vehicle. The whole tone of the scene, with its "grande hâte" and "de tours Le côtés à la fois" is one of frenetic panic, highlighting the increasing pace of urban life typical of the modern metropolis. What most stands out though is Baudelaire's visionary identification and metaphorical representation of the death of romanticism with the advent of modernity through the image of the discarded halo. Baudelaire grasped that modernity would demand different sorts of artistic responses for art to continue to be deemed relevant – a lacuna that the avant-gardes and modernism sought to fill.

Modernism is a term used retrospectively to describe the vast array of artistic responses to modernity. The avant-garde, with its dynamic, military connotations, is presumed to be the disruptive precursor of more considered modernist movements. The chronology, causality and inter-relationships between these entities, however, are far from clear-cut. One answer to whether modernity instigated modernism, and how this took place, may be provided by Antonio Gramsci, the theorist who most thoroughly applied Marxism to the cultural dimension. He at first questions: "Do elements for an art, philosophy and morality specific to the working class already exist?", explaining that it will be necessary to first "obtain positive creative results before the system of bourgeois domination has been broken up" (cited in Forgacs 1999, p. 70). Thus, Gramsci places culture at the centre of socio-economic change, and was public in his praise of the futurists, whom he suggested had been the first that "grasped sharply and clearly that our age, the age of the large proletarian city and of intense and tumultuous life, was in need of new forms of art" (p. 74). To Gramsci, "There is no doubt that futurism, culturally speaking, was an authentically revolutionary movement. It overstepped the accepted boundaries between artistic and socio-political activity and called for a drastic change in social ideology" (p. 97). So artistic movements can mobilise audiences to drill down into socio-economic conditions and thus effect palpable social change.

[2] as I crossed the road, in great haste, traversing the moving chaos where death arrives from all directions at once, my halo fell off my head

The debate which deliberates about the arts or economics are the true instigators of social change is revisited within the context of drama by Augusto Boal among others. In his attempt to define the role of the character within theatre, Boal pits the observations of philosopher and poet Georg Friedrich Hegel against those of playwright Bertolt Brecht. Boal finds that the two German luminaries are polarised on one central conundrum: does thought determine being or vice versa? Boal's focus is clear and helpful, as he points out that "throughout Hegelian poetics, the spirit is the subject […]. In Brecht's objection, social being conditions personal thought" (1979, p. 78). In other words, for Brecht the way things are determines how we think.

On the other hand, Gramsci's perspective – surprisingly considering his Marxist foundations – suggests that those who most affect culture (producers of the arts, whom he names the *new intelligentsia*) can actively instigate social change. Marcuse's translation of the writings Gramsci completed while imprisoned explains that Gramsci proposes that the intelligentsia by itself "cannot be a revolutionary class, but it can become the catalyst, and it has a defining preparatory function" (1968, p. 178). For Gramsci, the way we think precedes the way we are. This is a key premise for the development of avant-garde, the objective of which is always to destabilise the status quo and instigate disruptive change. Thus, the avant-garde's self-appointed role as precursors of social change, best exemplified by the futurists' explosive blend of art and politics, finds theoretical corroboration even in Marxist theory.

The avant-garde's militaristic etymology, signifying the first wave of military advancement, inherently affords an element of violent action. Opposed to the modernist principle of art for art's sake, the 20th-century avant-garde resorted, as it sought to destabilise the status quo, to a bellicose aesthetic. A text which can be identified as an influential force behind much of the avant-garde wave was Richard Wagner's *Art and Revolution* (1849), which was translated in Italian in 1907, just before futurism staked its claim on the European aesthetic scene. Within it, we find insightful definitions of what art constitutes from the avant-garde perspective: "L'arte vera è rivoluzionaria perchè è apertamente opposta alla corrente generale […] non è ne abituale ne pacifica"[3] (cited in De Micheli 1973, p. 23). This Nietzschian nihilism is also found in theatre, where

[3] True art is revolutionary because it is openly opposed to the general current […] it is neither habitual nor peaceful.

Jane Goodall explains that “Experimental performance often involves a confrontation with its time, and leading theatre practitioners in the 20th century were also intent on creating a confrontation with the present as a shifting and turbulent reality” (2008, p. 13). Unlike modernism, which positions itself as a response, a reflection and reframing of the perceived realities of modernity, to be avant-gardist art must precede and initiate change, coherent with Gramsci’s thinking. Its proponents must therefore conceptualise, anticipate and realise new realities, both aesthetic and social.

Not all experimental artists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries shared the futurists’ impulse for active rebellion. Amongst the first movements to formulate a new theoretical and aesthetic perspective in this period was symbolism, which announced itself, much like futurism did 23 years later, on the front page of *Le Figaro* of the 18th September 1886. Ostensibly traumatised by the accelerating changes to his surroundings instigated by modernity, Jean Moreas declared the “absolute independency of the work of art from social reality” (1973, p. 22). Modern reality, to Moreas, was no longer reliable, so he distanced himself from it, suggesting that symbolism “will never show details of nature, actions of humans, concrete phenomena” (1973, p. 50). So dislocating was the experience of modernity to Moreas and his peers that symbolist performance and poetry intentionally abstracted itself from its audiences. Mallarmé took this abstraction as far as suggesting that he sought to abstract from language itself – which for a poet is quite a feat! In his 1869 essay, *Sur l’Evolution Littéraire*, he proclaimed: “To name a thing is to destroy three-quarters of its enjoyment” (cited in Shattuck 1996, p. 120). Mallarmé’s solution was suggestion rather than description; expressing the inexpressible through symbolic codes.

Although evidently reactive, this rejection of modernity was nevertheless not reactionary; symbolists did not hark back to an imaginarily golden pre-modern age, but instead sought to develop new tools for a modern one. Still, abstraction and removal are not particularly avant-garde characteristics, and in this respect we can see that futurism is more fitting of the avant-gardist label. Futurism is decidedly a movement which, rather than reflecting or interpreting in response, helped to define modernity and its incumbent future. So it can be reliably positioned in the nascent phase of modernism, alongside other avant-garde movements such as symbolism, expressionism, constructivism, cubism and dada. The connections between these movements, although often

cursory, were also direct. Gianni Viola reminds us that "La rivista dada 'Cabaret Voltaire' ha Marinetti tra i primi collaboratori invitati"[4] (1998, p. 22).

If Marinetti admired performances that destabilised entrenched theatrical assumptions together with the social values that upheld them, he may well have found inspiration from a variety of sources in the decades that bridged the 19th and 20th centuries. The agit-prop of the suffragettes, for instance, emerged after a century of polite, well-behaved negotiations had stubbornly disappointed the suffrage movement. Hamilton and St John note how, on the cusp of the 1900s, "Women were encouraged to stop shunning publicity […] and to make nuisances of themselves" (1985, p. 8). The suffragettes' political protests, increasingly designed to shock and gather attention, were often run alongside "entertainment" which "became part of the suffrage gatherings and was enormously popular – and effective" (1985, p. 11). Such evenings, staged in England and led by Australian Inez Benusan, would combine audience-shock tactics, powerful political content and loosely scripted dramatic scenes, thereby anticipating the structure of the futurists' *serate* (which are further explored in chapter 4). We do know of a direct connection between the guerrilla art of the suffragettes and Marinetti. On his tour of England in 1910, Marinetti delivered a speech at the London Lyceum Club that was reviewed in the suffragette magazine *The Vote*. Furthermore, he joined the feminist activists' window-smashing campaign in March 1912 (Lyon 1999, p. 100). Marinetti had reason to be inspired. He shared the suffragettes' understanding of the techniques required to propagate a message in a mass audience. Still, there are important differences. The suffragettes' protests had a defined goal: the achievement of suffrage. Their performance stunts were entirely functional: they were a tool for other, political, means. Instead, for Marinetti, the product was fundamentally artistic and the stunt was often the goal in itself.

Contemporaneous to Marinetti was also the work of Oskar Kokoschka, forerunner of expressionism. His ground-breaking play *Murderer, the Hope of Women* (1907) shocked theatre-goers accustomed to the niceties and verisimilitude of naturalistic theatre. Its draft script featured predominantly stage pictures, and its brief text ignored grammatical and syntactical rules, offering a performance made of intense physical and vocal representation of emotions before striking set

[4] The dada magazine 'Cabaret Voltaire' features Marinetti as one of its first invited contributors.

designs. Semantics gave way to the pursuit of the affect – that impact which Susan Bennett derives from Kant's and Schiller's philosophy to define as the sensory, physicalised reaction to the aesthetic (1997, p. 141). Sentences were replaced by noises, rehearsed movement, set designs and costume, encompassing the full array of artistic production ahead of the technically-oriented 1915-written *Futurist Synthetic Theatre*. Kokoschka's abstract, hyper-emotive characters managed to dispel enough staid theatrical conventions to persuade the Viennese press to label him *Oberwilding* (Wild Savage) – an insult which Marinetti would no doubt have cherished. Many of Kokoschka's early concepts would be later appear in the work of constructivists, including Meyerhold, and other avant-garde directors and performers, therefore indicating a continuum of avant-gardes across the late 19th and early 20th centuries – even if they didn't directly emulate one another.

As we cannot be sure that Marinetti witnessed Kokoschka's work, the outwardly confrontational theatrical approaches that would characterise futurist performance probably began with Alfred Jarry's unforgettable *Ubu Roi* (1896), the vulgar drama depicting the king of Poland on an antiheroic path garnished with defecatory imagery, that presented a polemical allegory for the politics of its time. During his formative years in Paris, we know that Marinetti met the young Jarry and was introduced to his theatrical work. In 1896, Jarry had already developed sophisticated systems to provoke spectators into protest. Berghaus describes how during his performances, there would be frequent outbursts from spectators. Paradoxically, "actors' attempts at placating the audience were countermanded by several friends of the dramatist, who fanned the unrest by booing when spectators clapped, and vice versa" (2005, p. 26). It is worth noting that *Ubu Roi*, which had been discussed widely in artistic literature across the continent, led Marinetti to express his admiration in letters he sent to Jarry himself, thereby suggesting that Marinetti had seen the play and admired the French dramatist.

More telling still is a comparative analysis of *Ubu Roi* and Marinetti's first feature-length play, *Le Roi Bombance* (1905). Both dystopias depict the overthrowing of a kingdom through a macabre culinary degeneration of the entire social order. On the opening night of Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, the entire paying audience was presented with something that would change theatre forever. Before the curtains were raised, a table covered in muck was dragged on stage, only to be met by

a white-faced drinking Jarry when the curtains were lifted. Whilst complaints were soon heard, the riot didn't begin until a few minutes into the performance, when, after a preparative declamation, Jarry shouted the first word of his play: "Merdre". Even if veiled by the additional 'r', this ignited a violent reaction from the audience and the press. This was, for Marinetti, perhaps the first indication of the explosive power that theatre in impacting on an audience.

Marinetti's *Roi Bombance*, by sounding rather similar to Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, seems to openly admit to the latter's influence. Where Jarry started his play with Ubu bellowing defecation, Marinetti has regurgitation and disembowelling repeatedly take place on stage. Combining dietary habits with politics, Jarry has Pa Ubu start his reign by exclaiming: "I'm quite hungry, I think I'll get my teeth into this bird", only to continue with "spare ribs of Polish bison, veal, parsons' noses…" (Jarry 1968, pp. 23-24). Equally, Marinetti's protagonist's "unica intenzione è di barricarsi nelle cucine regali e riempirsi" [5] (Cesaretti 2006, p. 1). In each case, the gorging leads to a revolution which, alongside political change, involves the regurgitation of some of the consumed food.

A few years later, in the 1921 *Manifesto del teatro della sorpresa futurista* (Manifesto of the Futurist Theatre of Surprise), Marinetti and Cangiullo would declare the will to: "Provocare nel pubblico parole e atti assolutamente impreveduti, perchè ogni sorpresa partorisca nuove sorprese in platea, nei palchi e nella città la sera stessa, il giorno dopo, all'infinito" [6] (1968, p. 16). These could have been words spoken by Alfred Jarry himself. All this points to how influential the avant-garde theatrical context was to Marinetti in his formative years.

Jarry approached a theoretical definition for his bold brand of symbolist theatre, most especially in his paper, entitled *On the Absolute Uselessness of Exact Staging,* written in 1891. He boldly claims "le naturalisme, c'est-a-dire la mise en scène en oeuvre du fait particulier, du document minime et accidental, est le contraire même du théâtre"[7] (Jarry 1986, p. 141). Such a rejection of naturalism is echoed by the 1913 *Manifesto del teatro varietà futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Variety Theatre), within which the futurists expressed their "profondo schifo del teatro

[5] only goal is to barricade himself into the royal kitchens and stuff himself with food.
[6] Provoke within the spectators absolutely unpredictable words and acts, so that each surprise would give birth to other surprises within the audience, the theatre and the city the same night, the following day, infinitely.
[7] naturalism, that is to say the staging of all detailed facts, of all minimal and accidental events, is the precise opposite of theatre.

contemporaneo perchè ondeggia stupidamente fra la ricostruzione storica e la riproduzione della nostra vita quotidiana; teatro minuzioso, lento, analitico e diluito"[8] (Marinetti 1913, p. 37).

Clearly, then, the futurists were deeply influenced by figures such as Alfred Jarry, but their modus operandi involved a continuous attempt to distinguish themselves. In 1905, at the opening of a portrait exhibition in St Petersburg, choreographer Sergei Diaghilev declared that "We are witnesses of the greatest moment of summing up in history, in the name of a new and unknown culture, which will be created by us and which will also sweep us away" (cited in Goodall 2008, p. 113). This would soon be echoed by the call, within Marinetti's founding manifesto, that "younger and stronger men than we throw us in the waste paper basket like useless manuscripts" (cited in Huxley and Witts 1996, p. 291). Change was underway, and Marinetti was keen to weave continuous change through his own artistic processes, even at the expense of rendering his own previous work irrelevant. As Luca Somigli suggests, this concept became a priority for Marinetti, for whom "time becomes one of the primary targets of the futurist program", and is prevalent in his founding manifesto, in which "the fundamental opposition that structures the text [is that] between past and present" (2003, p. 113). The futurist call for never-ending renewal may have been driven by their marketing instincts. Ernst Gombrich makes the shrewd observation that, "to attract attention you must be different from the others, and therefore you must think of something new as soon as the others have caught up with you" (1996, p. 359). So Marinetti's obsession with the new could be seen as an obsession with attention.

The futurist influence

One distinguishing characteristic of the Italian futurists lies in the ways they sought to engage with modernity on every level, glorifying its sudden emergence. Whilst the very first examples of avant-garde performance predated Marinetti's endeavours, when perceived in context, much of the creative nihilism that characterised avant-gardism can be traced to the activities of the futurists. A chronological analysis of avant-garde performance may not place futurism as the first of its kind, but certainly as among the earliest, the most important and the most influential. The futurists

[8]Deep disgust with contemporary theatre because it oscillates stupidly between historical reconstruction and reproduction of daily life; theatre which is pedantic, static, analytical and diluted.

devised a range of performance modes, variously named *Teatro sintetico futurista* (Futurist Synthetic Theatre), *Complessi dinamici plastici (*Dynamic Plastic Complexes) and *Declamazioni dinamiche sinottiche* (Dynamic Synoptic Declamations) among others, which destabilised the relationship between audience and performer, undermining the reliance on script and sentimental representation, unravelling on-stage chronology, and stripping the stage bare of make-believe designs. Crucially, they sought in all of the above to instigate social change through audience involvement rather than withdraw from a changing social context. Indeed, an important difference between the avant-gardes and modernism is precisely kinetic, often politicised energy – that evident in all futurist aesthetic activity.

The wave of disruption that the futurists brought to performance art travelled far and wide in early 20th-century Europe. Among the first to be influenced by the futurist avant-garde were the early exponents of dada who, especially in the literary and theatrical fields, followed the Italian futurists' work. When one explores the origins of dada, its similarities to futurism appear surprising, especially if one tries to reconcile Richard Huelsenbeck's claim that "Dada is an insurrection of the intellect against the assault of a mechanical world" (cited in Kleinschmidt 1974, p. 76) considering the futurist obsession with the machine. Much like symbolists and expressionists, dada's initial impulse was one of rebellion against modernity, and thus holding the machine (its most representative symbol) in contempt. When Hugo Ball, founder of the movement, performed in a costume made of metal tubing, he was doing so in protest, not in admiration. Janet Lyon labels surrealists and dadaists as "anti-modern", as they opposed the "instrumentality of modernisation" (Lyon 1999, p. 40). Despite this initial reactionary approach, after Hugo Ball came across, in July 1915, futurist visual poems *parole in libertà* (words in freedom*),* he "assimilated the more radical tenets of Marinetti and his followers" (Kleinschmidt 1974, p. 135). Similar in their inception to the futurist *serate,* the dadaist *soirees* were promoted with the same provocative marketing techniques as those spearheaded by the futurists. For instance, dada also adopted "the old futurist trick of raising ticket prices by a few hundred per cent and then chiding spectators for being so stupid to pay such elevated prices" (Berghaus 2005, p. 152). The dadaist *soirees'* content and structure also emulated those of the futurists' *serate*, aiming to provoke the audience into disputing the performance itself.

Marinetti was the first among the theatrical avant-garde to systematically, strategically and explicitly focus on audience reaction, and even develop an audience theory (as explored in chapter 5). This novel concept influenced the later developments in the audience relationships developed by the dadaists and, to a lesser extent, that of the expressionists and constructivists. As Berghaus points out when discussing both dadaist *soirees* and futurist *serate*, "Such a dramaturgy of audience manipulation appears to have been the most significant factor in determining their success" (2005, p. 151). Dadaists even noted and exploited the performative iconoclasm modelled by Marinetti himself, especially through Johannes Baader, who destabilised public events to attract notoriety towards himself and dada as a whole. Known as *Überdada* (Superdada), after proclaiming himself as such outside the Reichstag, Baader in 1918 disrupted mass at Berlin cathedral to proclaim his dadaist message. He was preceded by Marinetti, who five years prior to this had burned the Austrian flag during the operatic season at Milan's La Scala theatre – it being something of a cathedral for the Italian cultural establishment. The significance of such stunts, which would at a stroke turn public spaces into auditoria and spectators into rioting crowds, is hard to over-estimate. These fundamental shifts to the way performance was conceived and presented, which actively confronted pre-existing models of theatre and the social contract that supported it, are inherent to our understanding of the avant-garde, and are attributable to the futurists' work.

The influence of the futurist re-conceptualisation of the role of the audience would reach far into the 20th century. For instance, even though he was writing firmly within the context of 1960s and 1970s radical, socialist, anti-war American street performance, Henry Lesnick's analysis of the fundamental audience theory behind guerrilla theatre reads like a playbook of futurist *serate* or even futurist variety theatre. Lesnick argues that traditional fourth-wall theatre hinders social change as it entrenches social division and audience subjugation through its very design (1973, p. 11). He calls for theatre to embody a social reality in which members of the public can influence those who form the narrative. This is a defining attribute of futurist avant-garde performance, one which is echoed in Augusto Boal's calls for the renewed humanisation of the spectator, and which the futurists first enacted in intentional, systematic ways.

Lesnick frowns upon experimental artists who seek the destabilisation of the status quo through artistic production alone. He argues that these remain dependent upon the construct of the

genius, the talented artistic individual – an élite by definition. Typically, such limitations result in abstraction from, rather than combative engagement with, the status quo: “Their strategy is to effect social change through individual change. They fail to see that social problems are systemic” (1973, p. 18). This is precisely the point of difference between, say, Moreas and Marinetti. The former absented himself from modernity into a genial ivory tower; the latter embroiled himself directly in society in order to disrupt it, and to catalyse change. Thus, despite Marinetti’s best efforts to project himself as a genius of sorts, he escapes Lesnick’s critique. The futurists turned art from a private cult to a public feast, and it is this approach to audience theory that has underpinned many waves of 20th-century experimental performance.

A further indication of the contextual significance of the futurists’ performance is their inclusion of one of the most representative symbols of modernity within the theatrical artistic process. This symbol is – as was indicated earlier – that of the machine, which is the defining image of the founding futurist manifesto, and which influenced futurist performance in countless ways (as will be seen in chapter 7). Evidence of its importance ranges from Luigi Russolo’s experimental *intonarumori* instruments, which emulated and extended the sounds of machinery, to Fortunato Depero’s costumes, set designs and acting theory, which brought machines and their aesthetic onto the stage. The futurists’ cult of the machine is noticeable in the similar developments later offered by Russian constructivism, which placed mode of production at the centre of its art.

Interestingly enough, original constructivist theory, based on principles of functionality and utility rooted in Marxism, dismissed theatre as a useless art, without specific functionality. Nevertheless, constructivism found a stronghold in the Russian theatre of the 1920s through the appointment of Vsevolod Meyerhold, who was already an established theatrical director, to head the state-funded Theatre Department in 1918. Meyerhold embraced the experimental processes of deconstructing the actor’s body in order to re-build acting through the development of specific mechanised movements to be associated with emotional states: the principles of constructivism. As Meyerhold explained, “Constructivism has forced the artist to become both artist and engineer. Art should be based on scientific principles”. More specifically, on stage, “the art of the actor consists in organising his raw material: that is, his capacity to utilise correctly his body’s means of

expression" (cited in Braun 1969, p. 198). The language Meyerhold used was technical and exact, even down to categorising and segmenting the actors' body parts as "raw material".

Despite the fact that constructivist designer Vladimir Tatlin joined a protest against Marinetti's visit in 1914, very futurist on-stage displays of mechanical apparatus and movements were evident in his designs (Israel 2015). Indeed, J. Harten, in his retrospective analysis of Tatlin's work, observes that his "early stage designs were strongly influenced by futurism" (1993, p. 205). That very same visit, incidentally, saw Meyerhold invite Marinetti to one of his acting workshops, where he participated in an improvisation exercise (Hoover 1974). Further exploring the importance of the machine as a production tool and artistic muse, constructivist designer Alexander Vesnin explicitly brought the machinery of industrialised modernity onto the stage. In 1922-3, for the production of G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Vesnin was the "engineer of an amazing 'machine' comprising of two lifts, one elevator, a crane […] a moving sidewalk with luminous advertisements" (Berghaus 2005, p. 203).

The futurist anticipation of constructivism's incorporation of the mechanical within the artistic is clear, and can be found in Depero's and Balla's 1914 *Complessi plastici dinamici* (Dynamic Plastic Complexes), produced just before Marinetti visited the Russian constructivists. First announced in *La ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* (The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe), these moving mechanical sculptures were made with colourful fabrics, paper, metal and glass, and were often sprayed with industrial chemicals to afford them an olfactory dimension. Indeed, Depero's own semiotic analysis of his Dynamic Plastic Complexes reveals how he intended to progress "da tecniche impressionistiche e incerte di rappresentazione pittoriale a costruzioni precise e tre-dimensionali che formano un totale lavoro d'Arte"[9] (cited in Crispolti 1975, p. 12). The concept realised by Depero and Balla – that of placing the apparatus of the non-fictive world at the centre of the performance – became in due course central not only to constructivism, but also to the later emergence of the Bauhaus with Lazslo Moholy-Nagy, who held machines in the highest artistic regard by declaring in his essay, *Constructivism and the Proletariat* that "they have replaced the transcendental spiritualism of past eras" (cited in Fiedler 2001, p. 12). While

[9] from vague impressionist techniques of pictorial representation to precise three-dimensional constructions that form a united and total work of Art.

both constructivism and futurism were likely responding to the common development of modernity, it is fair to suggest that futurist performance both anticipated and influenced what was to follow.

Performance context: Italian theatre

Futurist performance may have influenced some of the most significant avant-garde movements in Europe, but what of the theatre industry in Italy? Evidence of meaningful changes in Italian theatre in the 1910s beyond futurism, and owing to futurism, is hard to come by. The bulk of Italian theatre in the last few decades of the 19th century consisted mainly of *pièces-bien-faits* influenced by naturalism or melodrama. This is despite the fact that Italian theatre came from a long tradition of practice-driven performance, text and theory. As Luciana D'Arcangeli points out, leading actors have been generating scripts and dramaturgy from Angelo Beolco's farces in the 1500s to Franca Rame's autobiographical monologues of the 1970s (cited in Fischer 2013). However, in terms of theatrical developments, Italy's late 1800s were meagre years. The performances that Marinetti would have witnessed in Italy in the decades prior to the advent of futurism had been building on a century of inward-looking consensus.

As early as 1820, Italian poet Ugo Foscolo argued provocatively that theatre should "make us feel our existence more fully and intensively", but instead functioned like "history, which teaches us to lead our lives in such a way that we can enjoy the world as it is" (cited in Farrell & Puppa 2006, p. 211). This cultural consensus became more pronounced in late 19th-century theatre, often referred-to as 'post-unification' theatre (following Italy's beginnings, in 1861). Paolo Puppa observes that Italian performances in the last three decades of the 1800s were "always true to a clearly defined strategy of consent-building for the newly formed state" (2006, p. 223). Theatre sought to educate by reducing the presence and auditory effects of dialects and accents, therefore proposing an emergent standardised Italian language. Its attempts to convince the audience of its new, Italian identity also led theatre to create a positive mood, to "delight with the great popular forms of entertainment and performance genres par-excellence: melodrama […] and the *feuilleton*" (p. 223). These performance modes were imported into Italian culture from French theatre and, to a lesser extent, British traditions, and were loosely applied in an often ill-fitting mould. Their dramaturgy was typical of the "well-made plays in vogue, for example of Scribe, Dumas and Auger,

[who offer] reassurance and edification to the audience" (pp. 223-4). There were, of course, notable and significant exceptions to this trend, especially when Eleanora Duse began interpreting Henrik Ibsen under Gordon Craig's direction in the 1890s, but overall the French-inspired *pièce-bien-fait* dominated the Italian stage.

The aim of these dramas was to give the audience what it expected. Indeed, a *pièce* can only be deemed *bien-fait* if it fits pre-conceived expectations. Stock characters, predictable narrative structures, close-to-median running lengths, proscenium arch orientation, props and setting tending towards verisimilitude, and restitution to moral balance. Through the naturally pleasing process of having their social prejudices enacted before them, middle-to-upper class audiences returned time after time to theatres, thereby sustaining a self-fulfilling, and self-limiting, industry. The status quo, as Tracy Davis and Peter Holland explain, was ossified into rotating 'legitimate' or 'regular' dramas – terms actually used at the time (2007, p. 167). This classical canon was broadly characterised by sensational, hyper-emotive four-act plays depicting a moral tussle between evil forces that gain momentum before subsiding into virtuous restitution. They were typically supported by prominent musical accompaniment, aiming at heightening the emotion of each dramatic moment. Such melodramas tended to construct an extreme danger in the form of either a mystical or technologically advanced antagonist, only to defeat it. They offered "apocalypse management" (2007, p. 176), satisfying the reactionary tendencies of their typical audience, which was being continually buffeted by world-wide warnings of revolution and war. It is hardly surprising that the futurists should repudiate this theatre. Futurism sought explicitly the kind of thoroughly modern apocalypse that terrified melodramatic narratives. Nothing within the theatrical medium was representing the unprecedented changes that the 20th century had wrought on society, and on individuals' existence.

Nonetheless, both artistically and commercially, futurist performance did not develop in a vacuum. An Italian theatre reliant on the market rather than patronage already existed, and began a long time before futurism began. Indeed, futurist performance emerged towards the end of a shift from a patronage (much like futurist performance) to a market system in the arts, which had begun in the 18th century. Within Italy, this transition had already been accomplished by the well-established theatrical tradition of the *commedia dell'arte* (Nicoll 1976). A sense of the commercial

modus operandi of the *commedia dell'arte* is present in its very name. Whilst the most common interpretation leads one to believe that *arte* describes the artistic quality of the work, the correct understanding points to *arte* as a craft, or to "what was in early times a familiar connotation, as special ability or singular talent" (Nicoll 1976, p. 26). *Arte* in this context is a trade, and therefore commercial in nature, and subject to the whims of the market.

The divergent semantics that distinguish *arte* as art, and *arte* as trade, also help us understand much of the critical approach to the *commedia dell'arte* and futurist performance alike. Most criticism contemporaneous with futurist performance, it is worth remembering, was not political in nature, but aesthetic. Newspaper critic Marco Praga, curious about the emergence of futurist synthetic theatre, attended a performance only to then describe it as a "programma troppo semplice fatto per ragazzini impazienti" [10] (cited in Antonucci 1973, p. 97). The brash style and marketeering of futurist performance (rather than its interventionist, philo-fascist politics, which defined the character of post-war criticism) attracted disdain from the critics. Even Blaise Cendrars, whose poetry shared much of the futurist militaristic drive, disapproved of their commercial goals. This is discernible in the elitist tone of his critique: "I have nothing to do with the commercial agitation of M. Marinetti" (cited in Perloff 1986, p. 7). Equally, amongst the critics of the *commedia dell'arte*, a sense of superiority was being granted to the arts which funded themselves through patronage as opposed to those which operated within the market. Roberto Tessori explained that critics' disapproval of the *commedia dell'arte* was due to their:

> aderenza alle regole della retorica e concezione dell'arte come attività non contaminate da fattori economici, [che] motivano l'atteggiamento negativo verso una forma di spettacolo inedita per l'aspetto 'mercenario e ignobile'.[11]
>
> (1996, p. 4)

Alas, innovation – be it in terms of the content or the financial and marketing structure of the arts – will always have its critics. It is fair to observe that the *commedia dell'arte* eventually

[10] oversimplified program fit for use by impatient boys
[11] adherence to the laws of rhetoric and to the concept of art as an activity that has not been contaminated by economic factors, [which] motivated their negative attitude towards a form of spectacle that was new in its 'mercenary and ignoble' aspects.

became rigidly schematic and repetitive in its use of performance codes, thereby reproducing tried-and-tested models rather than conceiving new ones. Karl Marx described the commercial equation behind this process, observing that "competition for profits influences the kind of cultural production that is marketable, [with] an increasing degree of homogenised production of art and literature" (cited in Lunn 1982, p. 15). However, this did not seem to be what most attracted the ire of critics. Instead, it was its perception as a debased art, which operates outside the circles of the cultural establishment. One wonders what Pierre Bourdieu would make of criticism that inveighs against art for its ignobility, the sort that was used to judge the *commedia dell'arte* and futurist performance. Whenever he observes "the refusal of the facile as the basis for all 'pure' aesthetics", Bourdieu discerns the "variant of the master-slave dialectic through which the possessors affirm the possession of their possessions" (1984, p. 254). Such class-coded criticism did not translate well to the vast audiences of these performance modes. Despite such critique, audiences flocked to both the *commedia dell'arte's lazzi* and futurist *serate*, suggesting that Marinetti was operating within a cultural market (the Italian one) which had already accepted the notion of a performance art that was experimental in its origins and commercial in its character.

If we accept the intrinsic bonds between the arts and the socio-economic framework within which they operate, then *commedia dell'arte's* non-patronage operational model seems uniquely suited to the capitalist industrial society which developed with the onset of modernity. The shift in social influence and capital from patronage to capitalism undermined the ability of the former to attract artists in search of funding. Equally, the emergence of the masses as a recognisable urban audience, shaped by limited capital control but also by an ever-increasing population, encouraged artists to source their funding by selling tickets to as many spectators as possible, drawn from the nascent mass society. This transformation underpins the futurists' adoption of performance and advertising as tools for divulging their cultural products, aimed at meeting their self-confessed success criteria of reaching as many people as possible. Still, futurism managed to avoid the predictable, schematic performance structures that the *commedia dell'arte* developed. This is significant because one would expect its dependence on an audience to incline the movement towards developing performances that spectators had grown to accept. How could a futurist performance, which combined itself with forms of advertising, manage to resist the tendency to

become servile to its audience, upon whose consumption habits it depended? In part this may be answered by the fact that the urban mass was (due to the combustible political and social turmoil of the time) a far less stable, predictable and prescriptive audience than that of feudal societies. To me, this is a true indication of futurism's avant-garde status. The ability of the futurist performance to establish new markets and remain independent of, rather than subservient to, them is a telling qualifier to the movement's avant-gardism.

2. THE MANIFESTO AND THE PERFORMATIVE SELF

The futurists' innovative impulse, outlined in chapter 1, stems from their obsession with renewing everything they set their eyes upon. This is immediately evident in the way the futurists treated the form of expression that launched the movement itself: the manifesto.

Marinetti was first and foremost a writer, and his manifestoes constituted an integral part of his literary work; parallel to other literary forms he practised and with which he experimented. The form of the manifesto does not, of course, originate with Marinetti. The lexicon of Marinetti's manifestoes was, however, in marked contrast to the often abstract, ethereal tones of other contemporary manifestoes, which Marinetti would have deemed competition to his own. When Antonio Saccone compares the aggressive language featured in Marinetti's founding *Manifesto Futurista* with Jules Romains' 1905 manifesto, *Les Sentiments Unanimes et la Poesie* (Unanimous Feelings and Poetry), he notes that "The narrating and slowly didactic tone, finds a substitute in Marinetti's lyrical and aggressive tone" (1984, p. 37). The question of whether Saccone's observations only apply to tone or, more significantly and broadly, to style is of importance. It could be argued that Marinetti's manifestoes constitute a new stylistic development, perhaps radical enough to create a subgenre – that of the performative manifesto.

Allocating absolute originality to any cultural movement is a fraught business, particularly when such movements are especially keen to highlight their newness. Indeed, Rosalind Krauss refers to the futurist impulse towards originality with sarcasm, commenting that "Marinetti, thrown from his automobile one evening in 1909 into a factory ditch filled with water, emerges as if from amniotic fluid to be born - without ancestors – a futurist" (1985, p. 157). As a methodical structuralist, Krauss operates on the grounds of Saussure's principle of "differences without positive terms" (p. 8), which explains how meaning is formed through relational, rather than independent, processes. Saussure's theory originates in linguistics, where he observed that words have no intrinsic relation to their meaning, but only to other words. Thus idioms need each other to distinguish themselves through their differences. The consequences of this theoretical framework for futurism and its claims to novelty are patent. According to Saussure the futurist cultural identity

is only recognisable through its difference from others', hence (as much as they denied it) futurism had somehow to relate to the past. Logic binds futurism to the past, as of course there would be no future without it – a thought at which futurists would likely recoil.

While linguistic theory scrutinises the incongruities of futurism's myth of creation, perhaps a better way to frame the developments that the futurists brought to the arts is through the art history of Ernst Gombrich. Mistrusting the absolute originality claimed by successive movements in art history, Gombrich believes instead that "the history of art can be conceived in terms of technological progress, a series of technical inventions" (cited in Woodfield 1996). The futurists' sustained alignment of art and machines gave them opportunity to develop such technical inventions. Examples of futurist technological inventions abound, including an early glimpse of molecular gastronomy a century before Heston Bluementhal popularised it: Russolo's *intonarumori* mechanised instruments, Bragaglia's hand-painted photographs, and films and Depero's metallic costumes – all of which are explored in greater detail in chapter 7. As engagement with mechanical technology was at the core of futurist artistic renewal, the movement can be perceived as a macroscopic program for substitution: for the replacement of the 19th century with the 20th century.

However, the futurists' boasts, sometimes laying themselves open to ridicule, should be taken in context. Umbro Apollonio concedes that their writings may be "full of naïve visionary enthusiasm", but urges us to "distinguish how much is political coat-trailing and how much is the violent expression of feeling under the impulse of a new reality" (1973, p. 9). Moreover, renewal is a particular characteristic of the form of the manifesto. Andrew Webber, in his wide-ranging exploration of European avant-gardes, explains how "the manifesto, as a document of intent, is like the avant-garde itself, radically futural in its rhetorical disposition". As if in open confrontation with structuralism, the manifesto as text boasts of its "impossible desire for anti-historical singularity… The desire to show that they are *the* avant-garde" (2014, p. 9). Clearly, desire does not equate with accomplishment, but neither structuralism nor post-structuralism repudiate the continuum of cultural development and evolution; they work on the assumption that artistic developments and meaning change over time, and accept that trends emerge within this continuum. So futurist theory, performance and marketing can be deemed before their time, anticipating trends that would display their characteristics much later.

With this in mind, we can return to exploring the assertion that Marinetti's manifestoes constitute a stylistic innovation within the genre. It is worth remembering that the founding text of futurism was preceded by other artistic-cultural manifestoes, including (as we have seen) Jean Moren's *Manifeste du Symbolisme* (1886), Saint-George de Bouhelier's *Manifeste du Naturisme* (1897) and Fernand Gregh's *Manifeste de l'Humanisme* (1902). At a first glance, these texts seem to anticipate Marinetti's in the syntax of their titles. Marinetti's and the earlier manifestoes listed above all concern themselves with the classification of a particular theoretical framework through which culture, the arts and much more can be interpreted. Indeed, they are all distinguishable by that most modernist of suffixes: "ism". As Christopher Pike observes, "futurism was viewed by several critics as simply a new kind of symbolism" (1979, p. 2). Furthermore, revealing a well-established trend amongst budding cultural luminaries in early 20th-century Europe, all were published on the front page of Paris's most influential daily newspaper, *Le Figaro*. As Luca Somigli explains, "the editorial note of *Le Figaro* read the futurist manifesto […] as a gesture already inscribed in an established tradition" (2003, p. 155). For a text to be considered an artistic manifesto, appearing in *Le Figaro* was, if not indispensable, instrumental. It follows that Marinetti chose to publish the founding futurist manifesto in *Le Figaro* despite having already published it elsewhere. It is a little-known fact that the manifesto, without its prologue, appeared in Italian on 5/2/1909 in the provincial newspaper *La Gazzetta d'Emilia*. It is very likely that Marinetti, disappointed by his failure to impact on interested readers in Italy (let alone Europe), translated the manifesto into French and placed it on the costly front page of *Le Figaro*.

The various symbolist, humanist and naturist manifestoes that preceded the futurist one have little relevance, if we are to find evidence of what influenced Marinetti. One source that may have influenced Marinetti more than others was Gabriel Alomar I Villalonga, whose *El futurisme* (1904) called for Spain to abandon its imperial nationalism. *El futurisme* was translated in a number of languages; it appeared in the periodical *Futurisme: Revista catalan* and even on Marinetti's own *Poesia.* So there is evidence of Marinetti's knowledge of Alomar I Villalonga's work.

It is still arguable, however, that the way Marinetti reappropriated the term futurism when naming his movement renewed it through its application to a radically different context. Whereas Villalonga used the root word 'futur' to indicate how Spain should conduct its foreign policy in the

future, Marinetti built a philosophy for the future at large. Marinetti's manifesto was a totalitarian, artistic response to the future as a whole, so the context to which he applied the term futurism was significantly broader to Villalonga's. Marinetti's futurism is, therefore, a new term in its context, and naming something afresh may be regarded as linguistic creationism. As James Frieze explains, "the dynamics of naming are gestaltic […]. In naming something, the namer establishes it as a figure against a ground which is thrown into relief by the act of naming" (2009, p. 2). If anything, Marinetti wrote the founding futurist manifesto *against* his predecessors' manifestoes, so as to render them "overwritten or unwritten […], erasing what was previously in view" (p. 2). If we are to find a direct influence for Marinetti's manifesto writing, then, we have to look further afield.

Surprisingly, if there is a previous manifesto Marinetti took inspiration from, it is the seminal *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), which established the form's structural foundations, which were revisited by the futurist equivalent. In both texts, after lyrical, wide-ranging introductions, which set the scene and contextualise the text, principles are set out in numbered points; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels listed ten, Marinetti eleven. The content of the initial contextualisation is however dramatically different. Firstly, *The Communist Manifesto*'s opening is much more extended than that of the founding futurist manifesto. Also, after a metaphorical opening (the first line reads "A spirit is circulating Europe – the spirit of Communism" (1971, p. 53)), Marx and Engels delve into a methodical, detailed economic-historical analysis of Europe's preceding centuries. Marinetti's prologue is also symbolic at first, describes a car-crash in the vibrant night of an industrial city, events which become emblems of the principles of danger, energy and progress later elevated by the manifesto.

Beyond the car crash, Marinetti's manifesto becomes eminently practical, delivering a series of calls to action, much as Marx and Engels' manifesto had done. In contrast with the abstract, aloof tone that had imbued other avant-gardes' manifestoes, the futurist manifesto was particularly active and vociferous in its language and tone, and was marketed to powerful effect among the dissatisfied generations of turn-of-the-century Europe.

Marinetti's words leapt off the page, begging to be read out loud. His first manifesto, read in its translated French version, is saturated in onomatopoeic and alliterative descriptions such as the

"automobile de course avec son coffre"[12] and the "automobile rugissante, qui a l'air de courir sur de la mitraille, est plus belle que la Victoire de Samothrace"[13], where "rugissante" and "Samothrace" echo the sound of the "mitraille" (cited in De Villers,1986, p. 47). Marinetti intended to depict the cacophonous reality of the new urban landscape in its full raucousness by inviting readers to hear it rather than just understand it. Aware that the machine and the city (its natural habitat) were central conceptual and aesthetic metaphors for futurism, Marinetti chose to elevate them beyond their semantic level, making them the sensory setting for the manifesto's delivery. Whilst onomatopoeia was certainly not new to fiction and poetry, such a brash, obtrusive use of phonic features in a manifesto undoubtedly was. Beyond conventional semantic processes, onomatopoeias are also able to achieve memorability through sound. It is therefore reasonable to assume that these statements would have projected beyond their expected reach as a result of the effect of the increased presence of auditory techniques reliant on spoken declamation.

Orality was a key component of Marinetti's efforts to divulge the movement's name and its principles as widely as possible. Writing a text 'out loud' was a way of publicising, of spreading the manifesto's reach. Unsurprisingly, considering that Marinetti "interveniva sempre nella loro stesura, per imprimere in essi quella grinta pubblicitaria necessaria a suscitare l'effetto-shock"[14] (Salaris 1990, p. 166), the texts' orality was intentional and sought-after. The vast majority of Marinetti's principles start with a statement of intent, hence often with an imperative or modal verb following the collective pronoun: "We declare … We want to sing … We will sing" (Rainey et al 2009, p. 51). The rhetorical connotation of the repeated first-person plural "we" hints at their dependence on vocal proclamation – on performance. Through his manifestoes, Marinetti (and many other futurists under his influence) contnued to develop a particularly direct and vocal literary style that would later influence much of the futurists' theatrical work. Such a vocal delivery was already evident in the poetry evenings that Marinetti presented at the *Théâtre du Gymnase* and at Gustave Kahn's *Samedis populaires* in 1905, but the verse for these events did not contain as many of the literary features explored above. The manifestoes, therefore, represent a maturation of a literary style that

[12] racing car with its boot
[13] roaring car, which runs like a hail of bullets, more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace
[14] would always intervene in their drafting, to add that advertising style of emphasis required to shock the audience

would blend seamlessly into performance. Indeed, when considered to their full potential, futurist manifestoes may well represent the movement's first attempt at scripted drama, and this would represent a new step for the manifesto as a genre.

The founding futurist manifesto brilliantly achieved what Mary Ann Caws describes as the genre's fundamental deictic gesture: "Look! Now! Here! Not There!!" (2008, p. 6). Attention, to Marinetti, was of the utmost importance. The choice of manifesto as a textual form in itself is indeed a telling indication of the futurists' impulse towards marketing strategies.

One of the Italian meanings of the term 'manifesto' is 'poster' or 'billboard'. Previously only known as a *cartellone pubblicitario* ('publicity poster': a 19th-century term), the etymology of this semantic of 'manifesto' derives from the early 20th century (Macchi 2003, p. 1844). It would not be too far-fetched to attribute the emergence of this term to the success of the marketing strategies used to promote futurist manifestoes. We do know that the founding manifesto was widely read and its impact rippled its way through Europe's political and cultural activists. Marinetti's international readers included anarchists, socialists, trade unionists and nationalist groups that often shared common revolutionary ambitions rather than a common language. Such groups, often for opposing reasons, all wished to see an end to the 19th century and what it stood for. At a stroke, they became futurism's audience.

Futurist manifestoes and performative language

In many ways, when Marinetti published the famed *Manifesto Futurista*, he sketched the blueprint of futurism's earliest performance and marketing strategies. Futurist manifestoes have been read as works of fundamentally literary art in the past, but they offer a seldom-noticed performative dimension (intended in a strictly Austinian sense) worth exploring. They may appear to be a series of purely theoretical concepts and edicts, but futurist manifestoes rely on – and call for – action, as the founding manifesto exemplifies. Marinetti's language was performative not only because of its orality, but also in a specific linguistic sense. The performativity in question is that of illocutionary speech acts – a theory that originated with J. L. Austin's philosophy and was then critiqued, shaped and developed by the work of theorists such as J.R. Searle, James Loxley and Judith Butler among others. The gradual development of Austin's theory has, of late, achieved significant

outcomes in its application to performance studies. So a cursory review of the contributions of these theorists to performativity is necessary in order to fully appreciate the impact of the futurist utterance.

Austin's observations on linguistics emerge led to a paradigm shift in linguistics. He reflects on how philosophy has always examined language according to its veracity. The often fraught continuum that tracks the relationship between the signified, the signifier and the referent – the object, its meaning and its name – has been the persistent focus of analysis of linguistics, as exemplified in the work of Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure. "This view of language is termed *the descriptive fallacy*", Austin explains, "the mistaken assumption that language use is essentially constative, aimed at the production of true or false statements or descriptions" (cited in Loxley 2007, p. 7). Linguistic exploration of forms of the constative all end up in what Austin depicts as a cul-de-sac, within which all that can be ascertained is that language achieves – to an extent – description. It is Austin who first emerges from this restriction, with the liberating distinction between the locutionary (the constative, static semantic of words) and the illocutionary (the active, performative impact of words) in language. Rather than stopping at the truthfulness of language, Austin turns his attention on its effects, and found that language could, in some circumstances, be as dynamic and forceful as a physical act. By describing our reliance on the true/false dichotomy as "the descriptive fallacy" (1975, p. 15), Austin substitutes force, rather than truth, as the defining attribute of language. He maintains that speech acts should be understood as part of the same epistemological family as bodily acts, injurious acts, legal acts and so on. Through this new perspective, Austin points out, "we attend as much as possible to the illocutionary force of the utterance and abstract from the dimension of correspondence with facts" (1975, pp. 145-146). Judith Butler's explanation of Austin's analysis summarises it well: "the illocutionary act is one in which in saying something, one is at the same time doing something […] illocutionary acts produce effects" (cited in Butler 1997, p. 17). In performative language, as Loxley reminds us, "utterance is already a part, and perhaps the most important part, of the facts: there is no separation" (2007, p. 8).

Defining such a significant linguistic and epistemological transition needs to find application in relatable experience, as well as detailing criteria for definition. It is in this endeavour – that of

adding detail and practical explanations to his intuitions – that Austin would encounter most critics and revisions. First of all, he started listing a huge number of situations in which speech acts would not be successfully performative. Austin's conditions for felicitous performative speech include the requirement for "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect", for the procedure to be "executed by all participants both correctly and completely" and for the participants to "in fact have those thoughts or feelings" (cited in Loxley, 2007, p. 10) in accordance with the procedure. If not fulfilled, these criteria would deem a speech act, in Austin's own words, 'infelicitous' or 'non-serious'. These criteria included the the social, temporal, geographic, historical, political, legal and cultural contexts of the utterance; the specific identity of speaker and listener; the intention behind the spoken word; the degree to which this matches the result of the utterance; and many other criteria. By a process of elimination, Austin ends up restricting performative speech acts that did fully function (which he defined 'felicitous') to a narrow, specialist, even niche range, and therefore more or less suffocated his own analysis, reducing it to near irrelevance.

Austin's difficulties in defining what were the pre-conditions of the illocutionary were targeted by J. R. Searle's criticism. Searle agreed with Austin, in conceding that "the successfully performed illocutionary act requires all sorts of conditions not required of the locutionary act" (1983, p. 145). However, he depolarises the distinction by reminding us that no utterance can be entirely locutionary or entirely illocutionary. In what appears similar, in terms of analytical structures, to Roland Barthes' suggestion that the signified and signifier are never completely separable, Searle claims that "No sentence is completely force-neutral. Every sentence has some illocutionary force-potential, if only of a very broad kind, built into its meaning" (p. 148). Then he proceeds to help redraft and categorise Austin's conditions of performativity by simplifying them into categories that frame performative language as theatrical. His "principles of distinction" point to the "purpose of the act, […] the relative status of the speaker and hearer, […] the degree of commitment undertaken [and the] conversational placing and role of the act" (p. 152). Searle's criteria seem to come from a performance studies textbook, with their focus on purpose, audience, authorial intent, structure and character. Austin may well have seen this as a direct confrontation of his theory, as theatricality was paradoxically one of Austin's most explicit targets of performative infelicity. Austin was

uncompromising about his assertion of the incompatibility between performative utterances and performance, as he chose to single the stage out explicitly in this notorious extract:

> A performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage. […] Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use – ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolation of language.
>
> (1975, p. 22)

This intransigence has attracted much criticism by linguists, philosophers and performance theorists alike. Even at a first glance, futurist performance confronts Austin's perception of the performative invalidity of the stage. Much of the repertoire of futurist *serate* (as we shall see in detail, in chapter 4) ended up with spectators enacting futurist calls for rebellion both inside and outside the theatre building, with often violent and legal ramifications. The regularity with which this audience reaction occurred, at least empirically, implies performativity – yet the speech act came from a stage. The actuality of futurists' *serate* made their language obviously performative, yet Marinetti's speech acts do, in theory, disappoint Austin's strict criterion of 'felicity'.

The audience may not have shared the procedure's aims, but was rather inveigled into them through a discordant, rebellious process. So how can futurist performativity in practice and Austin's performativity theory coexist? Is it that, by Austin's definition, futurist *serate* were not performances and Marinetti was not a performer? This seems unlikely, as Austin's own formulation of the felicitous speech act included rituals or ceremonies, which surely invoke the conditions of performance. Indeed, legal speech – often seen as the most felicitously performative, even by Austin himself – is also reliant upon conditions that could be deemed theatrical, including a set, costumes, scripts, highly contextualised speech and so forth. From a performance theorist's perspective, however, this articulation of conditions of what constitutes theatre and performativity is itself a deeply fraught business. The fact is that the *as if* embedded into performance can far exceed its expected limits; indeed, that which we call performance merely marks the persistence of this potential. As Derrida remarks: "Is not what Austin excludes as non-serious, that is, citation, the

determined modification without which there would not even be a successful performative?" (1982, p. 325).

The peculiarity of Austin's attack on theatre through the term "etiolation" (where he deems theatre to be the death of language) is that it is a perspective held hostage by the descriptive fallacy. Ironically – given his stance on language – Austin appears to recalibrate performative 'felicity' as 'veracity': the very association he debunked.

Timothy Gould is among those who have criticised Austin's segregation of theatre from the felicitous performative by highlighting how this aspect of Austin's theory realigns him with philosophy's obsession with truth in language. To be fair, he praises Austin's new diagnosis of language as a tension between semantic locutionary vs. illocutionary performativity (rather than all locutionary, and just true vs. false). Unlike Austin, though, Gould salvages the power of the infelicitous speech act by referring to Sophocles' *Antigone* and, in particular, Creon's draconian edict regarding Antigone's brother, Polynices: "I here proclaim to the city that this man shall no one honour with a grave and none shall mourn" (1995, p. 15). Gould claims that Creon's totalitarian illocutionary edict is a linguistic equivalent of philosophy's stubborn descriptive fallacy. Instead, Gould elevates the impact of the infelicitous utterance, as it is best aligned to Antigone's most persuasive, though ultimately disregarded, plea to have her brother remembered. Antigone's words might not win the argument, but her speech is certainly the most powerful in the play. So Gould points to Austin's blindness to the power of infelicity. It might prevent an utterance from being purely performative, but it is still an act that may well have illocutionary effects. There is, in practice, a frustrating contradiction in Austin's thinking. His appreciation of language's dynamic force – over and beyond its static semantic force – is undermined by his rejection of performance as infelicitous and therefore not successfully performative.

So how, then, does Austin's understanding of performativity apply to the futurist manifesto? Firstly, the manifesto's infelicity, as Gould teaches us, makes it no less powerful, nor necessarily less illocutionary. The performativity that readers glean (and listener feel) from futurist manifestoes is, in many ways, to do with how these texts rely on orality. Marinetti's manifestoes were less oral debates than barrages of imperatives. To Janet Lyon, manifestoes are "not so much an argument that supports action, but rather the best way for action to be argued. Manifestoes invoke as they

address audiences. It's not just discourse" (1999, p. 39). Marinetti uses the performative language of his manifesto to linguistically assault his listeners; as Austin explains, a form of speech where "stating is performing an act" (cited in Loxley 2007, p. 19). Still, it is not just the orality of futurist manifestoes that makes them performative. It is also, obviously, what is actually said, in what context, and its effect.

Futurist manifestoes were performative in so far as they were textual actions; they were devised and pronounced to invoke disgust, revolt, passion, riots; anything that would mobilise the petrified social and cultural relations in which they were launched. Although produced quickly, with the impetus of inspiration (the first draft of the founding manifesto was scribbled on the corporate paper of the Grand Hotel du Paris during the night it describes), all manifestoes would later be carefully revised. Nothing could stay on a futurist manifesto if it was not incendiary and unprecedented; the effect of each word and sentence would have to be calibrated explosively. Judith Butler explains that in order to create the most incisive, performative utterance – the injurious speech act – "the saying of the unspeakable becomes part of the very 'offense'" (1997, p. 41). Marinetti's various incitements to burn libraries and violently turn one's back on millennial European cultural history was, in its context, taboo, and lurched towards an absolute provocation of readers. As Faye Ran comments, futurist manifesto "readings were fiery, loud, and obstreperous, and the content of the manifestoes, such as Marinetti's exhortations to flood museums, unspeakably inflammatory" (2009, p. 69). Indeed, in today's legal context the unspeakability of Marinetti's injurious speech act words may well be construed as hate speech and therefore illegal. As Luca Somigli points out, Marinetti's manifestoes "close the gap between the domain of writing and that of life", leaving them "in an indeterminate space between word and world, between text and act" (2003, p. 23). It is in the exploitation of performativity that the futurists achieve the most convincing renewal of this traditional form.

The founding futurist manifesto's eagerness to offend removed it from the sphere of dialectical discourse within which the manifesto had its origins, and thus dragged the form into new territory. The futurist manifesto becomes a classic case of creative destruction, because, as Butler explains, it contains the very offence that expands "the domain of linguistic survival. The resignification of speech requires opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been

legitimated, and hence producing legitimation in new and future forums" (1997, p. 41). Much of Marinetti's first manifesto is offensive speech – and in this case it becomes instrumental to language renewal. Marinetti's nationalist, politicised injurious speech acts in his manifestoes stand alongside Alfred Jarry's and Carmelo Bene's visceral, biological injurious speech acts (further explored in chapter 5).

The performative showmanship with which Marinetti's manifesto is imbued is true to the form of the text, which Webber reminds us is a "textual act of public showing, a making manifest of a challenge to historical conventions, and as such it tends towards the spectacle" (2014, p. 18). Webber argues that by establishing a "hybridity of purpose" (p. 22) between text and act – which is a way of describing performativity – Marinetti revived the manifesto itself. The revival of form achieved by the futurist manifesto, delivered through its provocative immediacy, has the effect not so much of heralding a future (maybe to Marinetti's dismay), but rather to reshaping the now. Matthew Applegate argues "that the manifesto comes to be thought of as a mode of spatial and temporal reconfiguration focused in the present, rather than as a program prophesying or determining the future" (2012, p. 1). By naming the future, the futurist manifesto aims to transform it into the present. This makes it all the more performative, as it generates a new, present context and space. In many ways, futurists map the present through the creative powers of performativity. This analysis coincides with Butler's observation that "According to the illocutionary model, hate speech constitutes its addressee the moment of its utterance" (1997, p. 18). The seismic impact of injurious speech acts is such that it redefines its recipient and victim; it creates a new context within which the listener has no pre-existing position. Being on the receiving end of an injurious speech act is to be interpellated by it – to be defined by it and to become its content. If "to be addressed injuriously is to suffer the disorientation of one's situation as the effect of such speech" (Butler 1997, p. 4), futurist *serate*, which offered Marinetti the chance to apply his declamatory skills, to deliver his manifestoes to their full effect, were utterly disorienting. They broke down their venues' cultural and spatial contexts, and the riots that ensued represented a disorientation of space, listener and speaker, resulting in the dislocation of all three through the reach of futurist injurious speech onto the surrounding streets.

Through his manifestoes and their performance, then, Marinetti didn't describe reality; he interpellated it through his performative, injurious speech. The performative attributes of the founding futurist manifesto enabled Marinetti to give birth to futurism through this text, as Somigli describes it, "to acquire the right of citizenship" (2003, p. 23). Marinetti began forging a language ideal for marketing, designed for wide masses. This was noticed by the review of the *Italian Book of the Futurist Poets*, which pointed out that Marinetti's manifestoes are "composed recklessly for immediate and wide circulation and declamation in large assemblies, frequently for purposes of propaganda. It is verse for the ear" (cited in Wees 1972, p. 98). A similar theme was echoed by De Villers, who noted that propagation was Marinetti's most significant ambition when commenting that the Italian wished to "repeter les mots des futuristes a traverses toute l'Europe, en le prenant sur loi pour interpreter les manifestes en Anglais, Italien, Allemand…"[15] (1986, p. 21). The founding futurist manifesto, therefore, is an illocutionary birth certificate: it says that futurism is, so it starts being.

The performative self

Part of the marketing strategy prosecuted by Marinetti involves the projection of his self through performative language. The way Marinetti saw his own position within the movement is particularly interesting. As founder and self-professed leader of futurism, Marinetti identified himself with the movement and never seemed to contemplate separating himself from the group to which he belonged. Whenever he spoke, he did so as representative of futurism; there was never another agenda. Indeed, he sought to apply the same principles he employed in the propagation of futurism to the propagation of his own identity.

Marinetti can be seen to make concerted efforts throughout his life at promoting himself to become an iconoclastic leader of international repute. His obsession with the self is evident in the many billboards produced for the futurists' theatrical productions. Whether these took place at the beginning or the end of the movement's lifespan, they would typically depict Marinetti's name prominently. Such was the case, for example, with the futurists' performance of Marinetti's

[15] repeat the futurist word across the whole of Europe by taking it upon himself to fund the translation of his manifestoes into English, Italian [where the original was in French], German…

Poupées Electriques (Electric Puppets) in 1909. While it was customary for authors' names to appear on performance literature, they were often in unobtrusive font among other names (such as actors' and composers'). This was not the case for Marinetti, whose name appears in large red capitalised fonts above the title of the performance. A similar design is used for theatrical performances as late as 1933, such as *Aeropoeti e aeropittori futuristi* (Futurist Aeropoets and Aeropainters), performed on 29 October in Capri[16]. Once again, "F. T. Marinetti" is printed in red capitals, this time positioned below the title, but in font twice the size of that used for the performance's title. In the former case, it is likely that Marinetti was attempting to establish himself within the theatrical community, whereas in the latter (over two decades later) he was most probably lending his fame to the performance to attract more spectators to it. In any case, even the initial efforts at self-promotion seemed to work, if Marinetti's nicknames are any indication. Referred to as "la caffeina d'Europa"[17] by Milan reporter Carlo Linati and "maestro di chiasso"[18] (cited in Salaris 1990, p. 53). Marinetti became a household name in artistic circles across Europe.

As if to prove his commitment to cultivating his fame, Marinetti pursued increasingly risky strategies. Few approaches to achieving notoriety would have been as successful as Marinetti's enthusiastic interaction with the law. After disrupting Puccini's Opera, *La Fanciulla del West*, at the Teatro dal Verme, in September 1910, by hurling futurist declamations from the boxes, Marinetti knew that the 'real' performance had just begun. He was heard challenging his opponents, who had become irate in the auditorium: "ho dato appuntamento nella vicina Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, il salotto di Milano"[19] (cited in Agnese, 1990, p. 170). This was and remains one of Milan's most visited and central locations, which would be frequented by more passers-by and attract greater public attention.

The choice of this venue for post-performance riots (though the riots' regularity suggests that they were part and parcel of the performance) was indeed purposeful and, in Marinetti's own words, the result was clear: "Una *serata* andata veramente a segno. […] Con me, Boccioni e tutti gli altri sono stati arrestati e condotti nel carcere di San Vittore. Undici arresti, che fanno notizia nei

[16] Appendix 1.
[17] Europe's caffeine
[18] master of uproar
[19] Issued an appointment in the nearby Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan's living room.

giornali"[20] (cited in Agnese, 1990, p. 170). Evidently, Marinetti relished the opportunity of imprisonment because of its likely resonance in the press and the consequent ripple effects through publication. Marinetti already had plenty of evidence that this ploy would work. Following the riots instigated by the *serata* held in Milan in March 1910 (just a few months before the incident at the Teatro dal Verme), Marinetti's overnight imprisonment catalysed a sequence of events in the media. Such was the indignation of the local press, which was keen to present itself as a law-abiding, respectable and conservative voice within the community, that representatives from most newspapers met at *l'Associazione della stampa* (The Press Association) that night. They discussed the *modus operandi* of futurist performances and realised (with some insight) that Marinetti was exploiting their newspapers in order to maximise coverage and publicity. Therefore:

> decisero di non dire mai più una parola sul futurismo, ne in bene, ne in male. Nulla. […] Appena ciascuno fu a casa, sentì il dovere di scrivere un lungo articolo per dimostrare che non bisognava mai più parlare del futurismo. Il giorno dopo, colleghi di tutta Italia risposero, trovando giusto il provvedimento. Poi qualcuno polemizzò…[21]
>
> (Cangiullo 1930, p. 34)

Cangiullo's comments demonstrate how carefully the futurists followed and documented the media's reports about them. Once again, this description highlights how marketing motivated the futurists' *modus operandi*, perhaps even their *raison d'etre*, and indeed, fundamental to their staged performances in the first place. More specifically, this case is indicative of the nature of the synergy between the press and the futurists. The editors of these newspapers were aware of, and irritated by, the futurists' manipulation of their publications. Yet the amount of coverage that newspapers gave to their rejection of futurism was a reaction to their need to fill editorial columns with topical content that their readers would find compelling. In reality, editors were exploiting futurist performances just as much as the futurists were exploiting their columns.

[20] A *serata* which truly hit the mark […] With me, Boccioni and all the others are arrested and led to San Vittore prison. Eleven arrest, which make the news in all the newspapers.
[21] they decided to never publish another word on futurism, whether in its praise or criticism. Nothing. […] As soon as they reached home, each felt the need to write a lengthy article to explain that futurism was not to be reported on any more. The next day, colleagues from the whole of Italy replied, agreeing with the decision. Then somebody disagreed…

If incarceration could prove so successful in propagating futurism and its artistic events, then one need only consider the marketing prospects of a protracted public trial. One wonders if this is what Marinetti was aspiring to when he was touring with Boccioni in England. Stationed at the Savoy Hotel, in London, for the opening of the futurist art exhibition in March 1911, the two futurists travelled to the villa of journalist Francis MacCullagh. Marinetti and MacCullagh shared a fractious history. When in Tripoli alongside the Italian forces, Marinetti met, and was interviewed by, the British journalist, who thereafter published a vitriolic and condescending report about the incongruity of artists fighting in wars. When Marinetti visited MacCullagh, he challenged him to a public duel to be carried out at the Savoy Hotel. This was a venue of status reminiscent to that of the Galleria in Milan, in terms of the marketing criterion of 'maximum visibility'. However, the challenge came to nothing: "tutto finisce in una bolla di sapone, o quasi; perchè investito dalle offese di Marinetti, il giornalista non batte ciglio […] Con disappunto, pensando che la sfida arriverà l'indomani al Savoy con il prescritto rituale, i due italiani girano i tacchi"[22] (Agnese, 1990 p. 145). The fact that Marinetti called MacCullagh to London rather than forcing a confrontation there and then at MacCullagh's property is an indication of his awareness of the publicity potential of such an event.

A duel in early 20th-century England, in central London, would be enough to excite the sensibilities of the British press – let alone the fact that one of the men involved was a member of the very press Marinetti was courting. More far-reaching still would have been the consequences had the duel occurred, as intervention by the police and a trial would almost certainly have followed. A trial would, of course, have extended the lifespan of the entire incident, with predictable repercussions throughout both the British and Italian press, which may well have capitalised on the nationalist sentiments behind the original clash between Marinetti and MacCullagh.

As far as self-promotion goes, being summoned to a lengthy court case was among Marinetti's most daring and successful strategies. Marinetti sensed the propagative potential of court action, as Mario Verdone points out, and exploited "una teatralità che verrà ricavata da

[22] it all bursts like a bubble, or nearly; because despite Marinetti's offences the journalist doesn't even blink. […] Disappointed, yet still hoping that the duel will take place the following day at the Savoy according to prescribed rules, the two Italians leave.

Marinetti dai processi: ed eccone i testi registrati nel *Processi al futurismo*"[23] (1969, p. 110). If considered as a performance-event, court cases seem made for maximum marketing exposure: a 'show trial' where the producer of the 'show' is actually the accused rather than the court. With a well-known framework and a guaranteed climax, court cases were (and still are) assiduously reported in the press, which highlights their various stages and developments. Legal trials involve characterisation, conflict, linguistic dexterity and a cathartic denouement. Indeed, as Graham Ley (2007) suggests, modern-day court cases have their structural roots in Ancient Greek drama. Therefore, suggesting that Marinetti regarded the trials he was involved in as performance opportunities is not so far-fetched.

An example of Marinetti's exploitation of trials for self-marketing was the case brought against him for *oltraggio al pudore* (indecency) in 1910 over his novel *Mafarka il futurista* (Mafarka the Futurist). Firstly, it is worth noting that the most complete, primary documentation of this event was written by Marinetti himself in his *Il processo e l'assoluzione di 'Mafarka il futurista*' (The Trial and Absolution of 'Mafarka the Futurist'), which was first published in 1911. Its prompt publication suggests that Marinetti was keen for the world to read about the trial while it was still fresh in readers' minds. As Claudia Salaris commented in *Marinetti editore*, learning quickly about the promotional wonders brought by notoriety, Marinetti stage-managed the event: "Scattava per l'occasione del processo l'operazione pubblicità, orchestrate da Marinetti con grande profusione di soffietti che informavano del sequestro delle circa cinque cento copie del romanzo incriminato"[24] (1990, p. 9).

Marinetti's marketing intentions are evident from his behaviour both before and during the trial. Prior to its commencement on 8 October 1910, Marinetti sent circular letters to those on his futurist mailing list inviting them to attend "un'occasione spettacolare futurista, quel che sia l'esito"[25] (cited in Salaris 1990, p. 10). The language in which Marinetti requested support is noteworthy. Terms such as "spectacular opportunity" belong to the field of advertising, and if we

[23] A theatricality that Marinetti sourced from the trials, the texts of which registered its events in *Trials to Futurism*.
[24] At the time of the trial, a publicity operation sprung into action, orchestrated by Marinetti through a vast distribution of flyers which informed readers of the confiscation of roughly five hundred copies of the incriminated novel.
[25] A spectacular opportunity for futurism, no matter the outcome (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 28c).

bear in mind that these words were sent through a mailing list, Marinetti's request (which, as we shall see, was successful) comes to resemble a marketing flyer. Marinetti later published the outcome of the trial, which found him culpable in some degree, in an appendix to Palazzeschi's poem *Distruzione*, printed in 1911 (Viola 1998, p. 21). The trial was never, in fact, about legal proceedings for Marinetti, but rather about marketing and performance. He envisaged the trial as a spectacle, and did his best to turn it into one.

Early signs were promising. As Marinetti himself relates, "Il giorno 8 Ottobre 1910 la grande aula della Terza Sezione del Tribunale di Milano era gremita di una enorme folla"[26] (1978, p. 1). Probably perturbed by the presence of (among numerous members of the press) the futurists: Boccioni, Carrá, Buzzi, Cavacchioli, Palazzeschi, Mazza, Russolo and several others, the judge endeavoured to have the proceedings take place behind closed doors. Clearly this would have been fatal to Marinetti's aim of exploiting this tribunal as a promotional platform from which to further expand his personal brand of theatricality. Marinetti's lawyers, Bursorio and Sarfatti, argued vehemently that the public should witness the court case, which was yet a further indication of Marinetti's intention to publicise his indictment.

Once the judge had relented, Marinetti had the chance to make the opening statement of his defence in public. This was Marinetti's opportunity to seize the marketing potential of his exposure, so he made futurism itself the focus of his speech, rather than the accusations levelled against him. Instead of defending the indicted work, *Mafarka il futurista* (which was only mentioned twice in his 2-hour address) Marinetti presented a soliloquy on futurism and on his own life. The breadth of his content is evident from his very first words: "Nacqui in Alessandria d'Egitto di padre piemontese e di madre Milanese"[27] (Marinetti 1978, p. 3). Marinetti used his legal training to ensure that the trial would be about himself and, consequently, futurism.

The agenda of the trial was hijacked by Marinetti, whose diatribe was reported nationwide by members of the press who were present in the court room. The Neapolitan newspaper, *La propaganda*, ran an interesting commentary on the court proceedings, explaining that through his

[26] On the 8th October 1910 the large hall of the Third Section of the Tribunal of Milan was bursting with an enormous crowd.
[27] I was born in Alexandria in Egypt from a Piedmontese father and a Milanese mother.

statement “Il poeta F. T. Marinetti divenne promotore del movimento futurista che va allargandosi ogni giorno più del fascino che irradia di gagliardia e temerità”[28] (1910). Milan’s primary newspaper *Il corriere della sera* explained that Marinetti “parlò per quasi due ore. Si scagliò contro tutti, contro i conservatori, contro il clericalismo, contro la presente magistratura”[29] (1910). That Marinetti was seeking maximum exposure and impact was hardly surprising, but the extent of his success perhaps is. Alongside *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Propaganda*, several newspapers across Italy reported the trial. There was even commentary in the press on Marinetti’s promotional techniques, such as that of *L’Agitatore* (The Agitator) of Bologna, which called Marinetti’s speech an “enorme sfoggio di pubblicità… quasi Americana”[30] (1910). Transcripts of these, and other, editorials were held by Marinetti’s assistant Decio Cinti, and remain in the Getty Research Institute’s Italian Futurism archive. They were the spoils of his efforts: the rewards for his energetic self-marketing strategies. By exploiting both the law and the press, Marinetti revealed the degree to which he could read the processes surrounding mass attention. While certainly not the first to use litigation as a platform for grandstanding, the extent of Marinetti’s stage-management of the trials indicates that he fully grasped the performative edge to this performance event.

The celebrity as the living artist

Marinetti’s personal endeavour in marketing futurism and his own self was fulfilled through his development of innovative promotional techniques, such as concurrent marketing; a favourite 21st-century corporate marketing. This term holds a specific meaning within the field. It is marketing characterised by the simultaneous planning, integration and deployment of a number of promotional activities (Cespedes 1995). Evidence of the futurists’ use of this advanced marketing tool, which remained without definition for more than half a century after their time, is perhaps most patent in the way Marinetti timed a series of promotional initiatives with the launch of the founding futurist manifesto. In February 1909, in the weeks surrounding the publication of the manifesto in

[28] The poet F. T. Marinetti became the promoter of the futurist movement, which is expanding every day as a result of the charm, determination and bravery it radiates. (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 21a).
[29] He talked for nearly two hours. He cast himself as being against everyone, against conservatives, against clericalism, against the present magistrates (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 21a).
[30] enormous advertising outburst … of almost American scale (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 21a).

Le Figaro, Marinetti managed to maximise the impact of the event by drawing more attention to himself through other marketing means.

Firstly, he met and dated the dancer, Isadora Duncan, who at that time was a celebrity in her own right. Duncan's name appeared regularly in the European press, not only for her artistic merits, but also for the perceived extravagance of her private life. The famed dancer was at the time performing in Paris and Marinetti had admired her revolutionary contemporary style. After being approached by him, she visited him at the Grand Hotel for one night. Clearly, Marinetti didn't intend to hide this encounter, as biographer Gino Agnese explains: "Marinetti racconta della sua notte con la Duncan ai Parigini"[31] (1990, p. 327). Marinetti leaked to the press a relationship which, though brief, was intriguing enough to arouse the interest of several Parisian gossip columnists in early February, 1909. A century before the coining of the term 'fauxmance' (which describes an arranged romance among celebrities, designed to attract media attention coinciding with artistic production releases), we see Marinetti, perhaps not faking a celebrity-relationship, but at least timing it conveniently. If only through the gossip columns, the press coverage, which had been bought for the publication of his manifesto on *Le Figaro's* front page, stretched further as a result of Marinetti's personal indiscretions.

Marinetti's obsession with self-promotion was part of a wider process of the theatricalisation of the self. He became the iconic spectacle of futurism itself and the way he embraced this role by living out his public persona suggests that he understood the performance mechanisms behind what we nowadays define as 'celebrity'. As Herbert Blau explains, ever since "the image-repertoire of Roland Barthes, spectacle seems to have become the universal category in whose aspect the world is seen" (1990, p. 2). It seems that Marinetti was already operating within this epistemological framework in the 1910s. He saw himself as a Barthesian symbol. His entire life was, in Blau's words, an "image-repertoire". Every day in Marinetti's life – every speech or act he delivered – operated on more than one plane. Beyond the personal sphere, Marinetti's life itself was in a sense a manifesto for futurism.

[31] Marinetti would tell of his night with Duncan

There is little more convincing evidence of this than what we see in the remnants of the futurists' one and only film *Vita futurista* (Futurist Life). The title of the film is in itself important, as it explicitly makes life the subject and focus of art. By the time it was produced, in 1916, it seems that the futurists had decided that their own lives were relevant content, as long as they were lived according to futurist principles. The film does, in fact, portray several futurists in everyday situations, twisted or spiced up by a futurist slant. Although it was lost in the 1940s and has never been found, the synopsis provided by director Arnaldo Ginna depicts events during a day in a group of futurists' lives, equating life with art. At first, Settimelli is shown asleep in a 'futurist', rigidly straight posture; then Marinetti and Ungari practise 'morning exercise', which consists of a boxing contest.

Vita futurista also shows futurist performers engaged in scenes with objects and machines, including a 'love affair' between chairs and a robotic 'machine dance', thus anticipating the theories of influential Russian cinematographer Dziga Vertov. In his 1922 essay, *We: Variant of a Manifesto*, Vertov called for cinema to eschew "the psychological, which prevents man from being precise", and to instead "flee out into the open" (Michelson 1984, p. 7). He also wished for cinema to depict "saws dancing at a sawmill", which would "convey to us a joy more intimate and intelligible than that on human dance floors" (1984, p. 7). Most radically, Vertov declared: "For his inability to control his movements, we temporarily exclude man as a subject foe film" (1984, p. 7). The futurists' narratively unconnected scenes in *Vita futurista*, charting events chronologically but not semantically, and their choice to position machines and objects as characters, are an early version of Vertov's avant-garde cinematography in the medium.

The available stills of *Vita futurista* allow us to draw some important conclusions about how the futurists chose to portray their life as their art. In one sequence of stills, Marinetti and Giacomo Balla are seen approaching the Florentine restaurant, La Loggia, which is busy with customers who are seemingly unaware that the futurists are about to shoot a performance. The exploitation (and possible orchestration) of the audience's surprise in this form of street-theatre is part and parcel of the futurists' attempt to drag the performance into real life.

As the film aimed to portray life in its futurist manifestations, there was a clear attempt made to reduce distracting artificialities – hence the unsuspecting audience. Balla performs a

physicalised mime of a love affair with a chair from the restaurant, which attracts visible attention and consternation from the restaurant's customers. Then Marinetti and other futurists insult an 'planted' futurist actor (Lucio Venna) in order to instigate a fight with onlookers. One screenshot reveals Marinetti sitting at a table among oblivious-seeming diners, who are variously staring at him or standing up. Another later still finds Marinetti in a brawl with a group of the men earlier pictured at the table (Antonucci 1973). Although these particular scenes were, of course, planned, and the onlookers' reactions orchestrated, the performance mode of the futurists was improvisational. Thus Marinetti performed futurism before the camera, placing the element of surprise (a key principle of futurist performance) at the centre of his scenes and coercing his audience to take part and react to futurism by embodying it in their acts of anti-social rebellion. On this street, with unsuspecting spectators, Marinetti was portraying his life and that of futurism, simultaneously. This dramatisation of the self in situ – within one's life – presents Marinetti as a manifestation of futurism. The film, with Marinetti at its centre, was a performative depiction of life as manifesto.

3. FUTURIST MARKETING

In chapter 2, we established that the futurist exponents' own lives embodied the expansionist agenda of the movement to which they contributed. In some ways, then, it is no surprise to see many of them actively collaborate with the advertising and marketing industries. We know that futurism interacted with advertising in kaleidoscopic, varied ways, such that the distinction between the movement's artistic and promotional activities seems at times irrelevant. Futurism embraced publicity to affect it deeply. Also, inversely, advertising as an art form became, within local contexts, shaped by futurism itself. The synergy between futurism and marketing is evident from the movement's birth, and while this thesis as a whole focuses on how this interaction plays out in the performance arts, this chapter aims to frame the study by exploring how marketing and the other futurist arts interacted. The affinity between futurism and publicity is already evident in the programme of art-life offered by futurist manifestoes (as examined in chapter 2), which eroded traditional barriers that separate the daily experience from the artistic experience. Indeed, futurists seemed to be consciously operating with awareness of their surrounding mass society (a relatively new reality in the ballooning European metropolis), for which a mass communication became necessary. Marinetti was willing to pay close attention to the ways he could secure the audience's interest, enough to experiment by communicating in new unconventional ways to divulge and promote the futurist ethos.

It is worth noting that advertising in the arts industry was far from new. The arts had occupied a high proportion of the advertising industry. As R. P. T. Davenport-Hines observes, in "1870 advertisements for books, sheet music and the theatre took up far more column inches than clothes, furniture or consumer goods" (1986, p. 20). Not everybody was pleased to see the growth of the advertising medium in the modern metropolis. Cultural criticism continued to eschew the artistic achievements of advertising, despite the form's ubiquity. As Luca Somigli explains, their reluctance was driven primarily by a set of ingrained values that perceives art as that which leads to a transcendent, auratic experience. The advertising poster is "the exact opposite of the auratic work of art, since […] it seeks out its audience, meeting it more than half way" (2003, p. 153).

Nonetheless, advertising was clearly here to stay, and some thinkers agreed, including notably Italian philosopher Giovanni Papini, who penned an essay in 1913 entitled *Contro il futurismo* (Against Futurism). Counter-intuitively, his discourse serves as an apology for the movement, which at the time was recipient of concerted criticism from the intelligentsia for its propensity to mix art and advertising. Papini defends the futurists' approximation of art and advertising, observing that many may think that advertising should have nothing to do with art, "ma siamo di fronte a una diversità di tempi e di temperamenti. […] La réclame è una delle potenze della vita contemporanea, una delle speciali creazioni della nostra civiltà. È uno strumento di cui tutti, più o meno nascostamente, si servono"[32] (cited in Somigli 2003, p. 151). Whether the cultural establishment was ready to accept it or not, all artists faced an audience increasingly accustomed to being advertised to – and the futurists were among the first to understand this. Advertising was not just a functional commercial tool, but in the context of the metropolis became a new language. This new language placed pressure on all those seeking to establish themselves in a market, just as the futurists were in the cultural market, to devise new strategies to attract and secure the public's attention.

The founder of futurism didn't hesitate in finding inspiration in pre-existing advertising methods, which were ubiquitously visible within the emerging industrial cities. Notable is his obsessive production of flyers, billboards and publications (often posted as gifts) – techniques already used by advertisers in Italy since the late 19th century. Still, Marinetti took publicity to new heights, not only with futurist performance, but also with commercial promotional and editorial practices. The development in promotional practices often came directly from him, as recognised by Luigi Paglia, who explains that "Il movimento futurista si diffonde per la frenetica attività del suo fondatore, che trasferisce nel campo della letteratura e del teatro i metodi pubblicitari dell'industria"[33] (1977, p. 40). Paglia is correct in describing Marinetti's marketing as frenetic, but ungenerous to imply that futurism only incorporated pre-existing methods from industry. The futurists both drew inspiration from, and inspired the marketing industry.

[32] but we are before different times and temperaments. […] The advertisement is one of the strengths of contemporary life, one of the special creations of our civilisation. It is an instrument that all of us, more or less secretly, use.
[33] The futurist movement spread due to the frenetic activity of its founder, who transfers to the fields of literature and theatre industrial methods of advertising.

An example of effective futurist marketing is their practice of having the traditional Milanese Christmas cake (*il panettone*) wrapped in a historical edition of Marinetti's journal *Poesia* in 1910. At a stroke, by offering literature as a parcel for a sought-after seasonal delicacy, Marinetti aligns futurism with the commodity it wrapped. Obviously, Marinetti was not the first to wrap products in branded paper, but this initiative took the practice further. This wrapping levelled, or, as futurists would have seen it, elevated futurism from cultural entity to commercial product. This is significant, as the process of portraying his literature within a public, commercial context meant that Marinetti by-passed any cultural barriers that may have been posed between his brand of arts and his market. As we will see in further detail with futurist performances, Marinetti was keen to turn customers into an audience, thereby somehow aligning the act of spectating to that of, literally, consuming. Readers would be able to consume the *panettone* and the text at a time of domestic family congregation. Marinetti would no doubt have hoped that this may lead to group discussions around the table.

Another example of advertising where Marinetti visibly furthered contemporary marketing practice is through the use of his beloved automobile. Marinetti's propensity to advertise on a motorcar was likely influenced by the success obtained by the British firm Rowntree, whose advertising methods had secured the company fame across Europe. As Davenport-Hines remembers, in the late 1880s "audaciously, Rowntree bought the first motorcar to be seen in York, mounted a gigantic replica Elect Cocoa tin behind the driver and made stately progress with the car round the north of England" (1986, p. 27). It is quite possible that Marinetti would have learnt of this marketing initiative, as it continued for some years and found exposure in the international press. Either way, Marinetti emulated and then furthered the use of the automobile as a marketing tool. He realised that the motorcar not only drew instant widespread attention due to its relative rarity on urban streets, but that it also embodied the futurist principles of mechanisation and progress. Therefore, it became a preferred method of advertising for anything futurist.

In line with Marinetti's ambition to affect society as a whole with his cultural-artistic programme, the futurists turned the public space into a marketed space. The promotional strategy for a Sicilian futurist *serata* saw Marinetti instruct his associates to "Porta carta di colori diversi, ma che siano brillanti […] Poi percorri in automobile […] a senso anti-orario per le strade principali di

Messina, lanciando volantini con l'energia che vi distingue"[34] (cited in Miligi 1989, p. 292). On a superficial level, the actions planned here appear to be little more than rudimentary publicity as practised by Rowntree, but the specific references to colour, motion and mode of delivery elevate the futurists' efforts to scenography. Perhaps most interesting are Marinetti's instructions relating to the desired direction of movement, which (with right-hand driving) work to widen the loop, hence attracting the attention of both sides of the street along the way. Such intricacy represents not only innovative practice, but also purposeful theory, as it reveals futurist attempts at theatricalising the public space and therefore evolving society into audience. Rather than site-specific performance, where the setting influences the performance itself, we see the futurists preparing the site to suit their marketing aims. The charting of public spaces for greater coverage is a significant development of both the futurists' marketing and performance practices, and will be further be explored in chapter 4.

Advertising and the futurist visual arts

In the 1909 autumn edition of *Poesia,* Giovanni Manca designed a humorous cartoon depicting futurists as a crew of street advertisers, holding advertising posters and billboards. This depiction, although satirical in tone, was interestingly accurate. Throughout the futurist canon, we see artistic competencies merge with publicity in what could be defined a cultural first: publicity being used as a system for producing art.

It is worth noting that advertising at the turn of the century already held a pervasive role in urbanised societies, and it became a regular source of employment for artists. Funded by a small number of industrial giants, the advertising industry was already displaying itself on city walls across Europe. Historian Frank Presbrey reminds us how the "great impetus to pictorial outdoor advertising came in 1807 with the birth of the poster deliberately designed for attention by an artist whose art was combined with advertising sense" (1968, p. 495). A notable 19th-century example of such an artist is Jules Cheret, whose paintings of decorative panels advertised the *Hotel de Ville* and the *Palais de Preferture*. Over forty years, Cheret "designed more than a thousand posters

[34] Take paper of different colours, but they must be bright […] Then take a car and make a tour […] anticlockwise through the principal streets of Messina, throwing flyers with the verve that distinguishes you.

and made for everything from cough pastilles to world expositions" (p. 496). So ubiquitous was his work that a Parisian magazine writer quipped: "It is difficult to conceive of Paris without its Cherets from the wall of every café" (p. 496).

Paris, then, was the birthplace of the modern advertising poster. It also happens to be the city where Marinetti spent his most formative years and where he first formulated the principles of the futurist movement. Cheret was, of course, not the only artist to work with the advertising industry. The 19th-century's decline in patronage saw many artists and writers lend their services to commercial pursuits. As E. S. Turner reminds us, "The 'hungry forties' offered wide, if not perhaps lucrative, employment for those poets who were prepared to twang the lyre on behalf of commerce" (1952, p. 58). It is likely that budding artists in search of a new aesthetic to represent such a vastly changed world (an identikit of those who would join futurism) would have taken note. Not only was advertising approaching the contemporary arts in its style, its content was also experiencing a modernisation. Frederick Kiesler, a German shop window decorator working is the USA, wrote that the shop window was "the true introducer of modernism to the public at large. It revealed contemporary art to American commerce" (cited in Dahlgren 2010, p. 160). Indeed, advertising played a key role in spreading the avant-garde, and of course the futurist, aesthetic.

The futurists were deeply involved in this trade. This legacy was established by the efforts of artists such as Boccioni. In the visual field, before even adhering to futurism, Umberto Boccioni – who unlike Marinetti needed to work commercially to eke an existence out of the poverty in which he grew up – illustrated seven publicity designs for ACI, Italy's automobile club (ACI 2012). Produced in 1904-1905, these paintings depict cars in a wide range of social contexts and uses, displaying early signs of Boccioni's future obsession with the aesthetic of the machine as a central motif to his art. Stylistically, it is worth observing the artist's sweeping strokes, which aimed to depict the cars in full movement. It seems that Boccioni had already identified the depiction of mechanical speed as key to his artistic endeavour, some years before Marinetti theorised these concepts in futurism's founding manifesto. Tellingly, the ACI adverts – the first documented commissioned works for Umberto Boccioni – were considered a clear success, helping to establish ACI's presence in the budding automotive service industry. For a man in dire need to make his art

pay, it is likely that this early success may have shaped the artist's propensity for merging artistic development to publicity in his future work.

Further evidence of the overlapping interests between futurism and advertising are provided by the work of futurist architect Antonio Sant'Elia, who designed skyscrapers which included publicity space as part of their outer fabric. Indeed, in his 1914 *Casa a terrazzo con ascensore esterno* (Terraced Home with External Lifts), he reserves a dominant strip at the top of the building for an enormous luminous advert (Capalbo & Godoli 1999, p. 35). Whilst advertising messages had been displayed on buildings for several years, their inclusion had not yet entered architectural praxis. Up to the 1910s, the billboard was an add-on, an accessory affixed after construction, and often one which would interfere with the edifice's design. Instead, Sant'Elia can be seen not only incorporating, but highlighting the advertisement within the design of the building, the electrical wiring of which expects a luminous billboard. The very contents of the billboard were also redefined by futurist hands. As Colizzi explains, the work of visual artist and poet Bruno Munari, who was among the first futurists to work in the advertising industry, saw "substantial coherence between advertising work and artistic work" (2011, p. 54), thus bringing the futurist aesthetic to the billboard poster. Munari's designs featured diagonal, mechanical compositions and fused text with image to symbolically represent products. His utterly modernist graphic contributions "sped up advertising design's gradual transition", one which in Italy had "remained essentially unchanged by the innovations of modernism" (Colizzi 2011, p. 55).

Even in America, the futurist interaction between art and advertising had a demonstrable impact. In 1934, New York's MOMA held a visionary exhibition entitled *Machine Art*, within which globally-sourced examples of recent mechanical aesthetics were displayed. It is considered to be the first exhibition that curated utilitarian objects and presented them as artworks, therefore raising the profile of the budding discipline of design. Futurism deeply influenced its curation. As Anna Dahlgren describes, the exhibition's literature referenced futurism to explain how it shaped the exhibition space itself. The futurist aesthetic, within MOMA, was translated into "long lines of identical products or packages of a production line in a factory" (2010, p. 166). The MOMA curators grasped that futurism was the fundamental aesthetic for mechanical art, and recognised early on the impact the Italian movement was having in the field of commercial and advertising art.

Fortunato Depero's advertising

Sant'Elia's designs likely inspired fellow futurist Fortunato Depero, whose contribution to the development of advertising within the futurist arts is widespread. In 1927, he designed the entrance for *Il Padiglione del Libro* (The Book Pavilion), the headquarters of publishing house Bestetti Tuminelli Treves. The columns of the archway are formed by the capitalised letters of the company name, which lean on each other as if they were books. Here, "Depero realizza la struttura secondo il principio che a determinare la forma debbano essere gli oggetti che essa ospita"[35] (MART 2009, p. 313). Depero's executed plans significantly developed the concept of advertising architecture, where the whole purpose of the construction is to promote its residents. As Gabriella Belli explains, this project "aroused enormous interest and placed Depero at the centre of a new and growing advertising industry in Italy and abroad. He became an advertising pioneer, creating highly original campaigns in newspapers and magazines" (1999, p. 23). The outer and inner layers of the building are merged by letters in such a way that its content is in its form, therefore pushing Sant'Elia's efforts at making buildings represent commodities much further.

The 1920s and 1930s saw futurism develop its relationship with advertising considerably, with much more defined reflections on the role of art within advertising and vice versa. Futurist painter and scenographer Fortunato Depero dedicated more thought to publicity than most, and in November 1924, took part in the "First futurist Congress in Milan […]. Depero addressed audiences on topics ranging from advertising to self-promotion, anticipating some of the most innovative thinking of the sixties" (Belli 1999, p. 21). Depero's credentials in the field of advertising stretch beyond that of any other futurist, as he is the only one to have successfully and extensively worked as an advertiser. In 1928 Depero moved to New York, where he worked for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, created posters for *Macy's* and worked with the marketing team of the American Lead Pencil Company.

Depero summarised the concepts gained by this wealth of experience in the 1931 manifesto entitled *Futurismo e l'arte della pubblicità* (Futurism and the Art of Advertising), itself first

[35] Depero completes the structure according to the principles that it must be the objects within it that determine its form.

appearing in the 1979 publication *Numero unico futurista Campari* (Unique Futurist Number Campari). Campari's seminal collection compiles marketing texts combining futurist artists' services for the Milanese liqueur company. Within it, Depero predicts that "L'arte del futuro sarà potentemente pubblicitaria" [36] (Depero 1979, p. 25), foreseeing the advent of pop art by at least two decades. There is an unassailable logic to Depero's statement, as he reminds us that "l'arte del passato, […] servì ad esaltare il passato; lo stile classico ed arcaico del passato, servì per glorificare la vita di allora"[37]. He, therefore, concludes that "gli uomini nostri, i prodotti nostri, hanno bisogno di un'arte nuova altrettanto splendente, altrettanto meccanica e veloce, esaltatrice della dinamica […] delle materie nostre" [38]. Subjects were inevitably due to shift from "una mucca al pascolo od una natura morta"[39] to Pirelli's "montagne di gomma"[40], about which Depero rhetorically questions: "non è questo un dramma? […] Una formidabile architettura della più alta poesia?"[41] (p. 25). The advertising art, which found its galleries on buildings, shop-fronts, trains and luminous projections, was, to Depero, "arte viva, moltiplicata, e non isolata e sepolta nei musei"[42] (p. 26). Clearly, such a conception of advertising demolished traditional distinctions between 'pure art' and 'applied art', unifying the two in an attempt to bring the masses closer to it. Because it is intrinsically 'applied' to a product or service, advertising is an eminently 'active' representation – even if only for its overt attempts at manipulating the targeted audience.

A fitting emblem of the futurist interpretation of applied art is Depero's extended collaboration with *Campari*, which under the management of Davide Campari was "one of the Italy's first companies to create an in-house publicity office" (Valeri 1986, p. 70), one open to experimentation through engagement with avant-garde artists. Whilst the liqueur built a brand around its name an iconic visual identity by having its marketing materials generated by a contemporary respected artist. Depero used the product's tangible presence in the commercial world to further expand the outreach of his experimental designs. It wasn't only Depero who

[36] The art of the future will be powerfully influenced by advertising.
[37] The art of the past […] exalted the past; past classic and archaic styles, glorifying the life of its times.

[38] our men, our products, all need a new art equally splendid, mechanical and fast, exalting the dynamic of […] our materials.
[39] a grazing cow or a still nature
[40] mountains of rubber
[41] is this not a drama? […] a formidable architecture of the highest poetry?
[42] living art, multiplied, and not isolated and buried within museums.

worked with Campari. Beyond Depero's illustrations, *Numero unico futurista Campari* (Unique Futurist Number Campari) included lyrics, poetry and musical scores with the contributions of futurist musician Franco Casavola and futurist poet Giovanni Gerbino, who would thereafter in 1933 publish the *Poesia pubblicitaria: Manifesto futurista della poesia della pubblicità* (Publicity Poetry: Manifesto of Futurist Poetry and Advertising) (Terzano, 2011), proving that advertising practice informed artistic theory. In 1927, clearly inspired by Sant'Elia, Depero presented a detailed architectural proposal for Campari, designing the proposed headquarters of the company that included in its walls space for moving billboards, scrolling text and sound. The interaction between the company and the movement was furthered by Depero's design for the bottle of the new product Campari Soda in 1932 (a design unchanged to date), which displays standard futurist motifs such as straight modernist lines to represent a rocket-like shape[43]. Campari also made use of futurist poet Bruno Munari, who produces the *Cantastorie di Campari* (Campari Storyteller) in 1932 (a series of rhyming narratives centred on the liqueur). This is followed by Emilio Grego's *Sintesi Parolibere* (Free-Word Syntheses), illustrated by Marcello Nizzoli – futurist author and painter respectively (Campari 2013).

What makes futurist advertising an 'applied' and 'active' art unlike other art forms is, other than its commercial connection to a commodity, its social positioning. Advertising is, most evidently in its Italian noun: *pubblicità*, public in its scope and outreach. This, for futurists, set it apart from other media, as advertising seems to embody the anti-elitist, popular tone of all futurist articulation. Populism rather than elitism was functional to the futurist expansionist scope. As early as in the founding manifesto, as De Villers reminds us, Marinetti has a "global subject as his target. The *we* found here established a group dimension […] indicating that the troops are already populous" (1986, pp. 30-31). As advertising already lives and operates within the populace, it is naturally aligned to futurism's expressive syntax. This affinity was noted by Sicilian futurist painter Pippo Rizzo who, despite emerging from the rural, insular microcosm that is the village of Corleone (more famous as the birthplace of organised mafia), saw in advertising the future of the visual arts. He affirmed that:

[43] The original Campari Soda bottle can be seen on the top row in Appendix 10.

> Solo l'enorme réclame luminosa e i tabelloni – le immagini più condizionate dal movimento della vita – costitueranno materiale da sviluppare, perchè la pubblicità è un metodo di divulgazione straodinario, che è in costante contatto con il pubblico.[44]
>
> (Cited in Ruta 1989, p. 57)

Advertising, therefore, became not simply a form suitable for artistic expression, but – in the minds of many futurists – the preferred one. This explains futurist efforts at affording advertising a degree of respect and dignity equal if not superior to that of the traditional 'major' arts. Rizzo's apology for advertising is echoed by Depero, who explained that "l'arte deve marciare di pari passo all'industria, alla scienza, alla politica, alla moda del tempo, glorificandole" [45] (1979, p. 25). Depero, writing in 1933, preferred the term "arte pubblicitaria" [46] (1980, p. 27) to advertisement, and used this terminology when displaying visual adverts alongside his futurist paintings such as *Squisito al Selz* (Delicious at Selz), displayed at the Venice Biennale in 1926. The initiative was furthered by other painters, such as Prampolini who erected *Femme au Campari* (Woman of Campari) at the Parisian Gàlerie 23 in 1929, and Diulgheroff, whose Campari poster was displayed at the Convegno Amici dell'Arte in Novara in 1931 (Campari 2013). The appropriation of publicity within the world of the arts, and it influence upon it, is spelt out by Diulgheroff himself, who stated that creating adverts

> was for us a very important experience both because we considered them fully formed paintings not destined for museums, but for street galleries, and because we were very receptive to the advertising discourse and its images, words and hybrid collages.
>
> (Cited in Fillia 1929, p. 84)

Futurism gradually developed a genuinely multi-disciplinary approach to the artistry and industry of advertising, across a wide range of aesthetic pursuits.

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[44] Only the huge luminous adverts, the placards - the illustrations most influenced by the movement of life - will have material to develop further, as advertising is an extraordinary method of divulgation because it is constantly in touch with the public.
[45] art must keep the pace of industry, science, politics and contemporary fashions, glorifying them.
[46] advertising art

Literary advertising

Applying art to advertising was not the monopoly of futurism of course. Modernist poet Blaise Cendrars had already coined the phrase “publicitè = poesie”[47] (cited in Noland 1999, p. 106). Sensing the emergence of the modern concept of a mass society and the need for art to touch it, he “praised advertising as ‘an art calling for internationalism, multilingualism, a crowd psychology’” (p. 106). His predecessor Apollinaire had already suggested that poetry would need to “enter into an apprenticeship of […] more popular forms such as the advertisement” (p. 106). Both Apollinaire and Cendrars understood that advertising was more than a response to the circumstance of a new industrial world. It shaped the image of the world itself.

Many avant-gardists had recognised the crucial role advertising was playing in the transformations they were witnessing. Even one of futurism’s principal precursors, idiosyncratic poet and celebrity Gabriele D’Annunzio, had already dabbled in the world of advertising by helping companies generate slogans and product titles, many of which are still in use today, such as La Rinascente (2016) shopping centres and the liqueur Amaro Montenegro (2013). Nonetheless, there is no discernible attempt by D’Annunzio to further his literary practice through publicity, or for that matter to use his literary verse to push the boundaries of advertising praxis. D’Annunzio’s advertising texts were, much like the liqueur’s slogan, audience-specific messages, designed to accommodate and entice the existing bourgeois establishment rather than challenge it. His advertising practice was, albeit influenced by his idiosyncratic style, a commercial endeavour, which the poet seemed to compartmentalise as separate from his literary efforts. The theoretical leap which combined the commercial and artistic functions of advertising and literature and theatre would have to wait for Marinetti.

Futurist interactions with publicity – quite unlike D’Annunzio’s – opened new ground for both the advertising industry and the arts. An obvious example of this is one of Marinetti’s most celebrated literary inventions: *parole in libertà* (words in freedom). This poetry dispensed with age-old conventions of structure, syntax, thematic motifs and treatment. Instead, Marinetti offered a

[47] Publicity = Poetry

senseless, sensory language which would use sound, typeface, colour and shape to affect readers. Marinetti's *parole in libertà* were fully theorised well after they were realised, when Marinetti published *Rovoluzione futurista delle parole in libertà e tavole sinottiche di poesia pubblicitaria* (Futurist Revolution of Words in Freedom and Synoptic Tables of Publicity Poetry) (2014), and they confronted poetry much like dada poetry would in the 1930s. Yet, whilst chance and the absurd were the inspiring forces behind dada poetry, *parole in libertà* seemed influenced by the language of advertising. Marjorie Perloff emphasises the importance of advertising by describing Marinetti's poetic aesthetic: "The poem-painting as a kind of advertising poster – here is the analogy at the heart of Marinetti's parole in libertà" (1986, p. 9). Visual poems are evidence of the influence of advertising on literature. Already in the 19th century, advertisements were relying on shape constructed by letters to express meaning. Turner comments:

> in an evil moment, the trick was discovered of building up large capital letters by grouping together small letters, in appropriate shapes, thus:
>
> TTTTTT H H EEEEE
> T H H E
> T H H H H EEEE
> T H H E
> T H H EEEEE
>
> (1952, p. 80)

It's worth questioning whether Turner's value judgment is too harsh. This linguistic experiment expresses meaning through shapes in a literal, rather than suggestive or metaphorical way. Its full artistic implementation can be seen in the poetry composed by futurist writer Ardegno Soffici, who anticipated the typographical pagination which took hold within the concrete poetry of the beat-generation, with the likes of Kenneth Patchen. Soffici added publicity items to his poetry, often in an overt commercialisation of literature. He integrated advertising designs within his lexicon, using the typographically adventurous *parole in libertà* as the form with which he combined

literature and advertising. As early as 1919, this integration is evidence of futurist assimilation of (unpaid) publicity and art – indeed of their mutual collaboration, as demonstrable in the following passage:

> F L O R I O
>
> S. M. O.
>
> IL MIGLIOR MARSALA
>
> ubriachezza rossa Sicilia […] sentinella perduta lancia lampo della vertigine
>
> viola profumo casualità calda di benzina F. I. A. T.[48]

(Soffici 2002, pp. 102-3)

The trademark futurist mechanical motif is present here, as is the typically futurist lack of punctuation. New, however, is the presence of explicit product placement. In the extract above, the content of the publicity is connected to the rest of the text thematically, in that "MARSALA" liqueur precedes "ubriachezza" (drunkenness) and "F. I. A. T." follows "benzina" (fuel). Arguably, the dominant font of the advertising text within the poem is a visual metaphor of the importance that advertising grew to have within futurist poetry. No evidence can be found that Marsala and FIAT paid for their placement in situ, and it is fair to assume that these product names were inserted on artistic impulse. So advertising can be seen to shape futurist poetry both in its structure and content, highlighting to what extent its authors were willing to trust the language of advertising to steer their own.

Further evidence of futurist interaction with advertising is the futurists' development of typography which, in the early 1910s, was among the first discernible attempts at manipulating typeface with artistic intent. In an age of often schematic, reproductive typefaces, with printers focusing on volume and speed rather than artistry, Carlo Frassinelli sought to redefine the language of fonts. A foreman in a printing factory, Frassinelli offered a plethora of new typefaces in his futurist *Trattato di architettura tipografica* (Treaty on Typographic Architecture), many of which have been since used by the advertising industry. His work influenced advertising practice enough

[48] F L O R I O / S. M. O. / THE BEST MARSALA / red Sicilian drunkenness […] / lost sentinel throws vertiginous lightning / purple perfume casualty of hot fuel / F. I. A. T.

to be deemed a "rivoluzione di grafica commerciale"[49] (1940, p. 1), and helped Frassinelli on his way to becoming one of Italy's most respected editors.

Soon after, when editing Aldo Palazzeschi's *L'Incendiario* (The Firestarter) in 1913, Marinetti delayed the publication in order to redesign "la copertina. Boccioni te ne preparerà una [con] sotto il tuo nome, in carattere piuttosto grande, la parola futurista"[50] (cited in Salaris 1990, p. 137). Similar attention to detail can be seen when preparing Luciano Folgore's *Lirismo sintetico e sensazione fisica* (Synthetic Lyricism and Physical Sensation). Within the letter addressed to Palazzeschi, Marinetti refers to previous communication he had with the printers (Armani e Stein), noting some vagueness in the arrangements with the typeface: "Ti prego di far rispondere con una conferma precisa, poichè nella lettera di Armani a te non si parla delle innovazioni tipografiche"[51] (cited in Salaris 1990, p. 177). After some more deliberation, Marinetti makes an executive decision, specifying the typeface and paper to be used in further correspondence expressed in clear terms.

By 1930, the futurists had refined their development of the book cover much further, as evidenced in the *Almanacco dell'Italia veloce* (Almanac of Fast Italy): a catalogue of futurist advertising produced by Bruno Munari. The book was published in an aluminised paper cover, featured eight types of paper, serigraph and cellophane, and experimented with metallic inks. As Colizzi explains, "the intention of the editors was that the publication's strength would lie not only in its content, but also shape the printed object itself, presented as a repertoire of the technical possibilities and creativity of futurist graphic design" (2011, p. 74). This book brought the machine (which as we shall see in chapter 7 is the central aesthetic symbol of futurism) into the very constituent material products – and onto the cover – of the publication, giving the artefact an indistinguishably futurist design.

In an age when the majority of books still lacked pictorial elements to their outer face, Marinetti grasped the importance of the book's cover. It is as if he perceived futurism as working not only on an intellectual level, but also on a more immediate affective level. Part of the message,

[49] commercial graphic revolution
[50] the front cover, Boccioni is preparing one for you [with], beneath your name, in large typeface, the word futurist.
[51] I ask that you respond to them with precise confirmations, as in Armani's letter addressed to you there is no mention of the typographic innovations.

and certainly part of the artistry, was to be delivered by the first impression, to be read with a glance rather than through in-depth study. The immediacy that Marinetti was seeking with his publications was designed to succeed in a competitive market, where futurist literature would vie for customers' consumption alongside other titles. The cover (or the medium), then, became the message in itself – much like packaging does for products on a shelf.

Editorial marketing

Marinetti the marketing manager may seem both an unusual and, depending on one's opinion of marketing practices, a reductive label. Yet an empirical observation of Marinetti's own editorial practices reveals an artist operating squarely within the marketing field. Whilst advertising is defined as "paid, non-personal communication [to] persuade members of a particular audience" (Barban & Dunn 1982, p. 7), marketing is considered a much more involved, comprehensive process. The level of attention to detail that he paid to Palazzeschi's cover for *L'Incendiario* is specific to the remit of the marketing manager. Alfred Marshall's pioneering theories on marketing, from his 1891 *Principles of Economics*, explain that "the [marketing] manager must have the power of […] seeing where there is an opportunity for supplying a new commodity [...] his primary role is that of innovator" (cited in Cunningham & Bussiere 1999, p. 18). This definition outlines a role that is close to that of a futurist artist. Marshall sees marketing as an intrinsically modernising, innovative practice – adjectives that both befit Marinetti's ethos and modus operandi. Advertising is taken to describe the direct promotion of a product or service, but marketing defines a broader, holistic approach at stimulating the market's response through processes such as consumer-analysis, pricing and branding amongst others. Barban and Dunn explain how marketing "uses a 'mix' of elements. In marketing, we look at advertising in relation to personal selling, pricing, packaging and other marketing tools to accomplish our marketing objective" (p. 9). With this in mind, it is particularly interesting to explore some of Marinetti's correspondence as editor of *Poesia*, which is also insightful in establishing how he marketed futurist products. When writing to art gallery owner and journalist Sprovieri, the futurist confided:

> A te, naturalmente, tutto è dato collo sconto eccezionale del 50% […]. Ti mando anche due collezioni complete di Poesia (divenuta rarissima), da vendere al prezzo minimo di L.150 (centocinquanta ciascuna) sul quale cinquanta lire saranno per te.[52]
>
> (Cited in Salaris 1990, p. 135)

Marinetti's hands-on approach involved personal selling, pricing, discounting and profit margins: the complete marketing package. Furthermore, it is interesting to note Marinetti adapting his language for his audience. Knowing that Sprovieri, due to his influence in the artistic field, may be a catalyst for the expansion of both futurist performances and literature, Marinetti is at pains to mollify the reader and qualify the products he intends to sell to him. Terms such as "sconto", "50%", "rarissima" all belong to a vocabulary of retail marketing. In this case, Marinetti is clearly aware of the fact that he is not only selling to potential readers, but to the middle man (Sprovieri) too, as indicated by the colloquial "naturalmente", the effect of which is to connect the reader to the writer through coded, shared social cues.

The founder and marketer-in-chief of futurism cultivated a particularly close relationship with influential members of the press. Marinetti often targeted editors with correspondence aimed at securing a mutually convenient relationship between the publication for which they worked, and futurism. To achieve this, he experimented with often effective marketing techniques. A straightforward example of Marinetti's courtship of the press involved sending his manifestoes to newspapers, prefaced by a circular letter requesting that a review be published. This is clearly a prototype of a press release, which aims to promote a product by providing publications with ready-made material, which would make an editor's responsibility of filling pages a little lighter. If Marinetti targeted newspapers with his artistic product it was only to exploit the exposure they could offer, which he sensed was a form of advertising. Marinetti rarely distinguished between journalism and publicity. Rather, he saw newspapers and magazines as advertising space, construing that they were publicising anything they reported on – including futurism.

[52] For you, naturally, everything is discounted by 50% […]. I also enclose two complete collections of *Poesia* (now extremely rare), to sell for a minimum of L. 150 (one-hundred and fifty each), of which 50 liras will be yours.

Marinetti's relationship with the press developed, affording him increasingly complex marketing ploys. Decio Cinti, Marinetti's personal assistant, reported how the futurist invited Luciano Ramo (editor of the weekly magazine *In Galleria*) for dinner and offered him a proposition: "Lei mi deve criticare, attaccare, anche calunniare: e io ogni settimana acquisterò due mila copie del suo giornale per distribuzione"[53] (cited in Agnese 1990, p. 58). Cinti's ledger verifies the purchases, therefore proving that the agreement was signed.

This telling development indicates that Marinetti preferred notoriety to fame. Marinetti may have calculated that bad press had a greater reach, more legs, than congratulatory commentary. Criticism was so important to him that if he wasn't receiving any, he was willing to pay for it. A further cornerstone of marketing seems to be at play in the agreement between Marinetti and Ramo: distribution. Indeed, although the evidence trail weakens, it is easy to envisage Marinetti sending these two thousand monthly copies to a wide network within the world of the arts and the press. This is after all what Marinetti had done at an earlier date with his futurist manifestoes and accompanying letters. His experience with mailing lists suggests that Ramo's magazines would have found their way to editors, publishers and other mass media outlets, which could thereafter broadcast or commented upon the inflammatory criticisms against Marinetti. Such distribution hoped to instigate a chain reaction. Instead of selling directly to individual consumers or remaining unsold, at least two thousand copies of *In Galleria* would have achieved their full propagative potential. Each of these copies therefore held the promise of futurism's name being kept alive in the public consciousness.

Further evidence of Marinetti's explicit ambition to seek notoriety through high-impact, negative judgements from the press comes from Russia. In preparation for the first futurist conference in Moscow, Marinetti had asked the Russian organiser, Genrikh Tasteven, to source and affix a caricature of "lui a Milano, bersagliato da ortaggi e da uova marce"[54] (Agnese 1990, p. 157) on the venue's walls and doors. The sketch was soon completed and printed in the press. His decision to depict himself as a hate-figure, which successfully flagged the conference in the media, confirms Marinetti's implicit knowledge that without the prospect of a scandal his conference would

[53] You must criticise me, attack me, even vilify me – every week I will purchase two thousand copies of your publication to distribute.
[54] Himself in Milan, targeted by vegetables and rotten eggs

not have enjoyed press coverage. Again, Marinetti sensed that scandal and criticism were the most effective form of advertising, as the consternations they instigate causes ripple effects which would further attention.

Anticipating some of the most advanced forms of 20th-century marketing strategy, Marinetti displayed outstanding skill in exploiting timing to enhance the impact of futurist releases. When the southern Italian city, Messina, was struck by a devastating earthquake on 28 December 1908, killing 83,000 people, Marinetti was in the process of publishing poetry by futurist author Gian Pietro Lucini in the journal *Poesia*. Evidence in correspondence shows how Marinetti urges the poet to quickly draft a poem that would describe and capture the enormity of the disaster[55]. The initiative was fulfilled and proved successful. As Salaris explains, "l'opuscolo, che costava una Lira, veniva subito esaurito ed i proventi andarono in beneficio delle famiglie dei disastrati. Il ricavato totale fu di tremila e cento Lire"[56] (1990, p. 79). Marinetti, therefore, conceived of the instant-book; a publication designed to be distributed instantly, themed on and in support of a defining, recent event. This is yet another marketing technique that only became established and then widespread in the second half of the 20th century, and its value is clear to see. While Marinetti didn't necessarily profit monetarily on this edition of *Poesia*, he managed to spread the title to a vastly wider readership than that he would have otherwise reached. The charitable focus of the marketing allowed both Marinetti and Lucini to escape being perceived as exploiting the tragedy, demonstrating a sensitive understanding of the audience and its moral code – an understanding which would have maximised the degree to which readers would accept the messages, tone and style of *Poesia* as a whole.

Concurrent marketing was also triggered in 1910 when he was due to write a preface for Aldo Palazzeschi's collection of poems entitled *L'Incendiario* (The Firestarter). After a very brief introductory explanation of the verse, Marinetti proceeded to narrate in grandiose, hyperbolic detail the events of a futurist *serata* held in Trieste a few weeks beforehand, and announcing a new tour in the coming year. This must have displeased Palazzeschi, as after having seen an advance-copy he commented that "La prefazione del mio libro si compose di settantacinque pagine di esclusiva

[55] Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 28a.
[56] The publication, which cost 1 Lira, sold out instantly and all profits were forwarded to the afflicted families. The total takings amounted to three thousand and a hundred Lire.

pubblicità"[57] (cited in De Maria 1986, p. 12). What Palazzeschi didn't perceive was the full scope of Marinetti's concurrent marketing, nor the effect it would have. The publication or reporting of the particular *serata* described by Marinetti, due to its provocative anti-Austrian political content, had recently been placed under a temporary ban by a Trieste magistrate (something which Florence-based Palazzeschi may have overlooked). The result of the reportage-preface achieved the aims Marinetti had intended: "il libro di Palazzeschi fu sequestrato presso tutti i librai di Trento"[58] (Salaris 1990, p. 96). This, as Marinetti likely expected, ignited feverish media interest in the book, turning *L'Incendiario* into an overnight prized cult title. In a demonstration of advanced skills in marketing, Marinetti's understanding of the mechanisms of law enforcement and the press allowed him to exploit their roles so as to maximise the exposure of the cultural products of futurism.

Marinetti's understanding of the importance of simultaneity in marketing goes further. Coinciding with the publication of his founding futurist manifesto, Marinetti's literary journal *Poesia* published a collection of futurist poet, Enrico Cavacchioli's verse in a special book format. Instead of a conventional preface outlining the merits of the book itself however, Marinetti preceded the novel with the text of the founding futurist manifesto. As Salaris explains, this decision (which caused some understandable friction between the writer and editor) indicates that "Marinetti rovesciava l'idea stessa della sacralità dell'oggetto-libro, attribuendogli appunto un carattere decisamente militante e promozionale"[59] (1990, p. 82). Marinetti's interest in applied art led him to demythologise it and exploit it for its propagative functions. Hence, by hijacking the preface of another author's book, he stretched the exposure for the concomitant publication of his own text at the same time of Cavacchioli's publication.

The performative voice of advertising

The art of declaring, of propagating orally, is at the centre of both performance and advertising. Within the futurist context, this activity ushered in particularly interesting developments in terms of performance modes. As we have seen when examining futurism's manifestoes in chapter 2,

[57] The preface to my book consisted of seventy-five pages of nothing but publicity.
[58] Palazzeschi's book was confiscated from all the bookshops in Trento (the province which Trieste is the capital of).
[59] Marinetti upturned the whole concept of the sacredness of the book, giving it instead a militant, promotional character.

futurist writing relied upon the insistent use of onomatopoeias. These were often repeated in complex rhythmic structures and introduced important aspects of both futurist performance and of its promotional practice. The oral element of this device reveals how much futurist texts depended on broadcasting, on being heard rather than read.

Broadcasting has been historically integral to advertising. As the linguist Mario Medici explains, "in Italia fino alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale il termine corrente e usuale per indicare la propaganda commerciale era il francesismo réclame" [60] (1986, p. 15). *Réclame* is a version of the Italian *richiamo*, which literally translates into 're-calling' or 'shouting out'. So it is clear, if only from an etymological perspective, that the advertising futurists were enacting was primarily a vocal, performed projection. Such was the importance of the oral element of advertising that Italian linguistic purists called for a more appropriate, direct verb to be used. The *Corriere della Sera* newspaper of 30th October 1901 launched a campaign to incite "alla violenta cacciata dalla nostra lingua del barbaro 'réclame' […] e proponeva a sostituirlo la 'grida'"[61] (cited in Medici 1986, p. 16).The preference for "grida" was not only motivated by xenophobic linguistic parochialism, but also by literary reasons. He goes on to explain that "grida" means "scream", and that its sound implies greater urgency and volume, all of which make the term more appropriate for advertising. In other words, he believed that the signifier was a better fit to the signified. Clearly, the oral, performed aspect of advertising was considered of utmost importance – indeed, perhaps advertising's most important aspect.

Historian Damiano Falchetti indicates that it was the emergence of "il primordiale Direct Marketing" that led to "un particolare sistema per fare pubblicità per le strade ottocentesche: fu l'uomo sandwich [che] portava appesi al corpo per mezzo di bretelle, dei grandi cartelloni con messaggi o manifesti pubblicitari, anche gridati a voce"[62] (2016). The specific reference to the 19th century is corroborated by Turner, who reminds us that it was Charles Dickens who invented the term 'sandwich-man'. This role was typically fulfilled by "down-and-outs rounded up and sent out in

[60] In Italy, up until the end of the second world war, the most widely used word to refer to commercial advertising was the French term réclame.
[61] the resolute elimination from the Italian language of the barbaric term 'réclame' and proposed to replace it with 'scream'.
[62] Primordial direct marketing […] a specific system to advertise on 19th-century streets: the sandwich-man [with] large billboards or manifestoes with messages hanging off his breaches, also shouted out loud.

droves carrying and shouting placards back and front" (1952, p. 74). In fact, the street-vendor's particular mode of vocal projection has been used for much longer. Historians Pasquale Amoruso and Vincenzo Bernardi refer to evidence that "Nel Medioevo esistevano i cosiddetti banditori che, elogiando a parole un prodotto, davano luogo a una semplice ma efficace forma di pubblicità. La loro funzione era essenzialmente quella di [...] decantare a squarciagola i propri messaggi"[63] (2008, p. 35). Such public projection, which has all the hallmarks of street theatre, was incorporated particularly effectively into the Italian culture, as:

> Di tali banditori è rimasta una traccia fino a tempi recenti; in Italia. Per esempio, l'arrivo di nuova merce al mercato [...] veniva annunciato, ancora negli anni Trenta e Quaranta, da banditori che richiamavano l'attenzione con il rullare di tamburi o squilli di trombetta [...] In pratica i banditori sono stati i precursori dei moderni presentatori di messaggi (o "spot") radiotelevisivi.[64]
>
> (2008, p. 25)

Antonio Marrocchesi, the Italian impresario, was a teacher of 'declamation' at the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Florence from 1811. The effect of his training was "an imperious actor, always on the verge of a fit or a swoon, reliving the tempestuous moods of his character" (Farrell & Puppa 2006, p. 217).

So when Marinetti specified the particular oral performance mode appropriate for presenting manifestoes, he had a rich context from which to draw in the retail industry. After all, as explained in chapter 2, manifestoes were as much theoretical texts as they were advertising banners for the futurists. Marinetti produced a specific manifesto in 1914 on the matter, the boldly entitled *La declamazione dinamica e sinottica* (Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation). Direct as ever, Marinetti's title is a clear hint as to how to deliver texts during futurist events, and one of the principles within relates specifically to his manifestoes' onomatopoeias. Whilst listing directions intended for performers of futurist manifestoes, point seven asks presenters to "servirsi di una

[63] In medieval times there were vendors who, whilst praising a product orally, devised simple but effective advertising. Their function was essentially to declare at the top of their lungs their messages.
[64] Of such vendors we still see traces in Italy. For instance, the arrival of new produce at markets […] was announced, even in the 1930s and 1940s, by vendors who would attract attention with drum-rolls and trumpets […] In fact these vendors were the precursors of the modern-day presenters of radio and television adverts (or 'spots').

certa quantità di strumenti elementari come martelli, […] seghe, per produrre senza fatica e con precisione le diverse onomatopee semplici o astratte e i diversi accordi onomatopeici" [65] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 178). Onomatopoeias were one of the primary devices on Marinetti's mind, and their full purpose is obviously best served orally, as he explores performance props and set design for their cacophonous effects. In the extract above, he goes to the extent of classifying onomatopoeias into three categories: simple, abstract and arranged. This displays a degree of literary and vocal complexity, even when simply theorising the delivery of the manifesto.

If sound, and its diegetic production, was integral to the manifesto, then this in itself sets the founding futurist manifesto apart from prior manifestoes, most examples of which were primarily designed, and indeed published, for reading from print. The physicalised performance of futurist declamation gives Marinetti's words a powerful performative edge, one which makes his words 'be' what they mean.

It is in 1916 that the futurists first theorise how to maximise the oral impact of their texts. Their fundamental aim is to divulge their message by using vocal techniques assimilated from both their own performance practice and the world of advertising. In *Declamazione dinamica e sinottica* (Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation) Marinetti asks performers to: "Metallizzare, liquefare, vegetalizzare, pietrificare, eletrizzare la voce, unendola alle vibrazioni della materia stessa"[66] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 178). The transformation of voice into matter is an accurate description of the effect of Marinetti's declamation. It's as if Marinetti wanted to vocalise sound that would synchronise with the resonant frequency of its physical surroundings, and of his audience's labyrinths. Certainly, that is the impression gained by recordings of Marinetti's declamation of the 1924 speech *Definizione del futurismo* (Definition of Futurism). Marinetti's full vocal range is on display for all to hear, with arresting effect (Hayward 2004, Track 1). Within this oral recording, Marinetti broadcasts the most important principles of futurism, also citing several extracts from a variety of manifestoes. His literary style is lyrical and explosive, making heavy use of hyperboles, imagery and onomatopoeias.

[65] Make use of a certain amount of basic implements such as hammers, […] saws, to produce with ease and precision the various simple or abstract onomatopoeias and the various onomatopoeic arrangements.
[66] Metallise, liquefy, vegetalise, petrify, electrify the voice, fusing it with the vibrations of mass itself.

His delivery matches – indeed elevates – the words within the text. Mechanical yet varied, rhythmic yet unpredictable, energetic yet controlled: Marinetti's voice is as powerful an instrument as his writing. It is his delivery that renders the locutionary content of the text illocutionary. The pace and pitch of his voice seems to oscillate according both to the content and the rhythmic pattern of the sentence and its punctuation. Throughout the entire length of the declamation, Marinetti employs an impressive diaphragmatic emphasis, maintaining elevated volume. Often, he chooses to elongate and luxuriate in the broadness of vowels, whilst at other times he punctuates his speech as if it was made of monosyllabic words. Most pauses in between the sentences last less than half a second. There are long passages where Marinetti cannot be heard pausing for breath, speeding up his delivery. Listening to Marinetti instils a sense of overwhelming energy and control – both of which are present in his vocal range. The overall effect is overpowering, and this adds to the performativity of his declamation.

It is most likely this performative impact that drew the attention of countless observers across Europe, including John Rodker, who witnessed a futurist declamation in London in 1913. To him, Marinetti demonstrated the "quality of vigour and strength". The futurist "spoke for more than an hour with a passion and fervour incredible, a perfect torrent of phrase and sound coming from his lips" (cited in Wees 1972, p. 98). Further evidence of the lasting impressions of these declamations among the audience comes from the performance delivered by Marinetti in March 1912 at London's Bernstein Hall. On the 19th of the month, *The Times* reported that Marinetti performed "with such an impassioned torrent of words that some of his audience begged for mercy!" (cited in Wees 1972, p. 96). Marinetti's declamation consisted of a disciplined, militaristic vocal projection that makes one announcement after another, stringing together a series of sound-bites. The sound-bite, incidentally, is a concept which only emerged since the advent of radio advertising in the 1930s and 1940s, but is present in Marinetti's idiolect. Each statement was mechanised and delivered for instant impact and memorability. When compared to the bellowing advertising callers, whose "grida allo squarciagola"[67] were designed to divulge their message, it becomes evident that Marinetti's practice is similar both in terms of skills required and desired

[67] scream at the top of their lungs

effect. Thus, the futurist use of voice was originally one designed for commercial projection. The difference is that the product for the futurists was not a consumer good, but a cultural construct: futurism itself.

The body of the advertiser

The manifesto *Declamazione dinamica e sinottica* (Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation) further explores the use of the body of the declaimer by describing the performer's mechanised movements. The specificity and accuracy with which bodily movements are delineated reinforces the suggestion, considered above, that Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation is a fully-fledged performance mode. Declamation, which Marinetti defines a "sport lirico"[68], must be performed by "una gesticolazione geometrica, dando così alle braccia delle rigidità taglienti"[69] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 177). Photographic evidence of Marinetti's declamation confirms, once again, the practical realisation of his theories. In 1924, he was photographed whilst delivering a lecture on futurism in Tunisia. Here, his right arm is jutting out absolutely rigid and linear at 45 degrees from an erect, vertical torso, thus portraying the "cutting rigidity" called for in the manifesto[70].

During a declamation delivered in the late 1930s for the fascist *Ministero dell'Aeronautica* (Ministry of Aeornautics), Marinetti was photographed in a pose which suggests symmetrical movement. His spine, again, is erect, his head forward-pointing and his arms are mirrored, spread to his side, bent to the same angle at the elbow and wrist – much like wings. The setting above and behind Marinetti depicts an enormous example of futurist *Aeropittura* (Aeropainting), though the photographed portion of the canvas is too small to confirm this beyond doubt[71].

It doesn't require a leap of imagination to deduce that Marinetti was, at that instant, embodying the form of machine that defined the content of the declamation: the aeroplane. Such mechanical connotations are particularly relevant. According to the principles of futurist declamation, the declaimer's body was to become mechanised, and incorporate the machine's traits. The 1916 manifesto dictates that "Le mani del declamatore devono manovrare i diversi

[68] lyrical sport
[69] geometric gesticulation, thereby giving arms a cutting rigidity.
[70] Appendix 8.
[71] Appendix 9.

strumenti rumoreggianti"[72] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 178). Both theory and practice hence depict a body whose limbs are busy operating mechanised appendages, which produce mechanical noises. Futurist declamation, both in its static postures and kinetic actions, aspired to witness the transformation of the body into machine — a key motif of futurism as a whole, as further explored in chapter 7.

The mechanisation of the human body, whilst central to futurist performance, was not exclusive to the Italian movement, and was found elsewhere in early modernist performance. Most notably, Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics (explored in greater detail in chapter 5) built a physical language for actors that was premised on the pursuit of clarity and efficiency in human movement. The biomechanical actor's body is not dead, but is mechanised and therefore more rational (Braun 1969). Developments such as Meryerhold's emerged in a broader context of technological progress. In her essay, *Torque: the New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century,* Hillel Schwartz points out how over a couple of decades around the turn of the century, engineering devised the rollercoaster, the escalator and the zip – all artifices involving a continuous connection and disconnection of intrinsically linked parts. The zip was originally patented as "clasp locker or unlocker for automatically engaging or disengaging an entire series of clasps by a single continuous movement" (1992, p. 8). Schwartz notes how these inventions had remarkable resonances with Delsartes' gesture theory, developed in the 1880s. Within his discourse, Delsartes envisions that "Love, fear, anger, hate, surprise, are all indicated by a movement of the shoulder, which translates itself along the arm from joint to joint until it reaches the tips of the fingers. Now these movements, from joint to joint should, as knitwear overlap each other, slide into each other" (Schwartz et al 1992, p. 89).

While Delsartes' principles of movement were influenced by developments in mechanical engineering, they were not necessarily subservient to them. As was the case with the fluid movements of his student, Isadora Duncan, whose direct connection with Marinetti was explored in chapter 2. As exemplified by performances such as her iconic 1915 dance *Redemption*, the body language of such early examples of modern dance was flowing. The performer's body was

[72] The declaimer's hands must manoeuvre the various noise-making instruments.

segmented into its various parts (as suggested by Delsartes) – mechanised enough to alienate it from conventional dance moves. Yet it maintained a connectedness that only humans could enjoy. Thus, in a way, the mechanisation of the body reasserted the performer's humanness. Instead, futurist declamation saw the performer's body yield to the machine. In this performance mode, referring back to Schwartz's observations, the clasps of the machine become the joints of the performer's body. Following this logic, the engine becomes the emotional core of the performer. What we see, in an age of increasing mechanisation of the industrialised world, is the mechanisation of the body through the performance arts.

There is a significant affinity between Delsartes' thoughts on body movement and Marinetti's dynamic, synoptic declamation. Both derive the changing qualities of the performer to the advent of the machine. It seems that within the performer's body, energy must exist according to strict Newtonian principles: force must travel to its destination; movements must be the consequence of a cause; limbs must sweep along geometric trajectories; postures should be conceived in angles; all to convey the forces traversing the body. Within the manifesto on declamation, Marinetti defines the declaimer by commenting that "Ciò che caratterizza il declamatore è l'intransigenza delle sue gambe… dà l'impressione d'un burattino"[73] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 177). Marinetti's choice of the mannequin as a metaphor is particularly interesting. Mannequins were only introduced to fashion Italian shop windows in the 1930s. One, therefore, assumes that Marinetti observed them during his formative years in Paris, where their commercial use emerged in the 1910s.

As an object with human form, the mannequin is a close relative to the mechanised performer Marinetti sought to forge, and of Edward Gordon Craig's insights into the *über-marionette*. Its principal flaw is its immobility (which contradicts the movement quality required of the declaimer), but it still functions as a useful symbol due to its fundamentally promotional purpose. A mannequin wears its merchandise much like a declaimer embodies its message. The advertised fashion shapes the mannequin's form, like the futurist message of mechanical supremacy shapes the declaimer's body. Therefore, the function of the declaimer is an advertising

[73] What distinguishes the declaimer is the intransigence of his legs […] he gives the impression of being a mannequin.

and retail one. Akin to the callers and the sandwich-men explored earlier, and indeed similarly to the mannequin, the futurist declaimer is a projection of the message being delivered.

The commodification of the human that a mannequin represents failed to escape Walter Benjamin's critical eye. As Pinkus explains:

> the style of mannequin-inspired fashion was understood by Benjamin as a form of fetishisation of the body, essentially akin to its death: 'The modern woman who allies herself with fashion's newness in a struggle against natural decay represses her own productive power, mimics the mannequin and enters history as a dead object – a gaily decked-out corpse'.
>
> (1995, p. 15)

Benjamin's contention is that with the modern mannequin, the human body ceases to exist in order to display its product. Indeed, the product itself, the object being promoted, assumes the form of the body and becomes it. Equally, through the performativity of his voice, stage positioning and body movement, Marinetti *became* the bellicose, mechanical message he delivered. By connecting Benjamin's analysis to Marinetti's discourse on the performative element of declamation, we realise that the dynamic synoptic declaimer ceases to exist as merely a human body for the duration of the performance. Through mechanised movements and projecting vocal techniques, the declaimer allows the object being presented to become the subject presenting it.

The language of advertising

The connections between marketing methods and Marinetti's 1924 *Definizione del futurismo* recording extend into the content and language used within the declamation. In what is a 3-minute manifesto on aspects of futurism, Marinetti names the movement seventeen times. This mirrors a cornerstone of advertising methodology – one which distinguished the street caller and, in future decades, radio advertising: name-repetition. Purposeful, even obstinate repetition is still a staple feature of most advertising, and its purpose is to entrench messages for greater memorability and brand development. The more a brand name is repeated, the more consumers are convinced of its existence and, since brands are fictitious constructs, that is a fundamental aim. Hence Marinetti's

regular repetition of “il futurismo” within the recording, rather than simply serving the semantic of the phrases within which the words appear, becomes an effective marketing tool.

When examining the changes that advertising and marketing have wrought upon the Italian language, Giorgio Raimondo Cardona denotes specific elements of grammatical breakdown in an otherwise hyper-regulated language. He lists eight changes which have emerged due to promotional communication and have since the 1950s pervaded the language at large. Among them is the use of repetition. He describes its function as aiming to create lexical hooks that listeners will thereafter use for easy association between word and product: “Il fatto più macroscopico è la creazione di ‘parole attaccapanni’ formate a ripetizione”[74] (1974, p. 49). Marinetti’s repetitive tautology, combined to his declamatory style, is therefore a powerful exercise in marketing. The aim of the recording, as its indicates (*Definizione del futurismo* — Definition of Futurism), was to embed and reinforce the existence of futurism itself. Ahead of the curve, Marinetti was employing techniques in his oral performance which would become widespread within the advertising industry decades later.

Cardona’s charting of the evolution of the Italian language also denoted the increasing use, from the 1940s, of foreign words in Italian (p. 49). Back in his 1924 recording, Marinetti also makes use of onomatopoeias, neologisms and words from other languages, therefore revealing another example where Marinetti anticipated later developments in the advertising field. Marinetti was unlocking the propagative potential of the Italian language just as the fascist regime was beginning a concerted campaign to lock the language down. As Gianni Viola puts it, “della lingua fascista restano solo tre caratteri meritevoli di sintetica menzione: l’antidialettismo, la lotta contro le lingue delle minoranze, il rifiuto delle parole nuove o straniere”[75] (1998, p. 51). The fascist linguistic principles were rooted in conservative nationalist politics. The regime was attempting, through these directives, to suppress divergence and reinforce the gravitational pull of a static unified culture. It is hard to think of a better antithesis to the futurists’ approach to language. The futurists were notable for the intensity of their neologisms, in the early adoption of foreign idioms and in the syntactical deconstruction of Italian. Just as fascism sought to suppress linguistic deviance, no

[74] The most significant factor was the creation of ‘coat-hanger words’, formed through repetition.
[75] of the fascist language there remain only three noteworthy characteristics: anti-dialectism, the fight against minority languages, the rejection of new or foreign words.

doubt to suppress deviant thought, futurism sought to break the equilibrium of the Italian language in order to use it as a tool for artistic experimentation.

The correlation between dynamic synoptic declamation and marketing extends further. Futurist declamation was not an exclusively vocal praxis. The 1916 manifesto explored in some detail how a declaimer should convey text visually. This included some insights into modes of staging, thus defining declamation as a form of performance, with its own audience theory. Marinetti dictates how the movement of the performer required them to "spostarsi nei differenti punti della sala […] facendo così collaborare il movimento del proprio corpo allo spargimento delle parole in libertà, e il pubblico […] non subirà staticamente la forza lirica, ma concorrerà nel voltarsi verso i diversi punti della sala"[76] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 179). The necessity for audience involvement was made explicit; the declaimer had to adapt their body and exploit the space available to them in order to break through the societal barriers separating performer and audience. For this to take place, a cornerstone of theatrical representation would have to be eliminated. Berghaus specifies how, during Futurist *serate*, "the Futurists abolished the 'fourth-wall' conventions" (2005, p. 113), and in doing so, swept aside over a century of distinct audience-performance separation, even working against the physical segregation imposed by the architecture of traditional playhouses.

This revolt against established performance conventions was, evidently, not solely made for artistic reasons. Indeed, nor was the choice of venue as a communicative medium. Performance was chosen, and re-imagined, by futurists as a promotional platform, as Marinetti's use of the term "propagation" in the above citation implies. Marinetti realised that, if he was to reach his audience on a more affective level, thus persuading them to engage with the construct he was presenting, he needed to reach beyond their expected confines. Therefore, the declaimer must use every corner of the "hall" to approach their audience.

The audience's reaction was planned and strategised, aiming to make them turn their attention to spots in the space beyond the stage. The fact that Marinetti defined the audience reaction as seeing them "concur by turning" indicates that he saw this interaction as an agreement

[76] Move to various places within the hall […] making their body's movements collaborate with the propagation of the free words, and the public […] will not receive the lyrical force statically, but will concur by turning towards the various spots in the hall.

– a concession, or nod, of sorts. A successful declamation was therefore almost coercive; a trait that also distinguishes successful marketing. This becomes clear when we note how Marinetti reacted when his audience did not react to his performances. His performance of *The Siege of Adrianopole* on 30 April 1914 at London's Doré Galleries, reported *The Times*, was "exhilarating for the audience". Yet at the conclusion Marinetti rushed back to the platform and announced: "This was a very imperfect rendering. There should be no passive listeners. Everyone should take part and act the poem" (cited in Wees 1972, pp. 104-5). The "acting" that the poem encouraged, considering its narration of an aerial bombardment, was a ruckus. The aim was, therefore, for the audience to join in and 'buy into' the experience by enhancing its performative impact. This way of conceptualising an audience is key to futurist performance theory, and is further explored in chapter 5.

Marinetti seemed more pleased when recounting the declamation he delivered at the London Coliseum, on 28th April 1914, where he described the audience's reaction thus: "Gli ascoltatori, voltandosi continuamente per seguirmi in tutte le mie evoluzioni, compravano con tutto il corpo acceso di emozione dagli effetti della violenza delle mie parole in libertà"[77] (cited in De Maria, 1973, p. 182). The consternation caused by the sheer forcefulness of the declamation is in itself evidence of the performative effect to which viewers were subjected. Marinetti's reference to a "corpo acceso di emozione" is the definition of the affect derived from an aesthetic experience: the polar opposite of anaesthesia. The wording of his analysis serves to elevate the audience member to consumer-status. The diction "compravano", even though we are referring to a performance rather than commerce, is intentional. The language of advertising which Marinetti uses here indicates that he consciously saw his declamations as a sales pitch. The importance of the performance at the Coliseum, therefore, comes into focus. Seeing as propagation was the futurists' imperative, the linguistic parallels between performance and consumption here demonstrate how central performance, among its various arts, was to futurism as a whole.

[77] The listeners, turning continuously to follow my movements, bought, with their bodies alight with emotion from the effects of the violence of my words in freedom.

4. FUTURIST *SERATE* AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CLAMOUR

As we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, Marinetti was acutely aware of the necessity for futurism to propagate itself with as much energy as possible. His art of choice (although clearly not the only one to which he contributed) for this ambition was performance, which he saw as a field of cultural combat that would allow artists to participate in social change, or, in Marinetti's words, to "introduce the punch in the artistic battle" (cited in Lapini 1997, p. 33). Within the *Manifesto del teatro sintetico futurista* (Futurist Synthetic Theatre Manifesto), Marinetti revealed a telling example of demographic analysis, stating that "solo il 10% degli italiani legge libri e riviste, ma il 90% va al teatro"[78] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 65). Marinetti's focus on the propagative powers of performance (which itself was supported by high levels of illiteracy) indicates that he saw it as the ideal tool for re-conceptualising society as audience. The transformation of the general public into audience and thereafter consumers, is a bedrock of marketing theory, and it clearly informed the theoretical framework behind early futurist theatrical practice. Futurism developed its nascent theatricality as a tool of its expansionist marketing.

The range of performance modes announced by the futurists tracked the movement's gradual development from a spontaneous, entropic avant-garde to a more structured modernist force. Over the span of three decades, futurist *serate* were followed by Variety Theatre, Synthetic Theatre and Surprise Theatre. The differences between, for instance, the futurist Synthetic Theatre and futurist *serate* are so significant that it is surprising to see both forms emerge from the same artistic principles. The *serate* (meaning soirees, or evening events) were the first, stage-managed examples of futurist performance. This is the case despite the fact that their organisational structures were porous and incomplete. The *serate*, while depending on the interaction of the audience, were nonetheless planned and devised with specific goals in mind.

The success of this performance mode early in the life of the artistic movement led to a widespread reproduction of the concept, though no two performances were exactly the same due to their characteristic improvisational content. This, therefore, positions the *serate* as key indicators

[78] only 10% of Italians read books and magazines but 90% go to the theatre

of futurism in its nascent, avant-garde state. The early onset of *serate* also identifies them as an influential form that helped define and shape futurism as a whole. As Michael Kirby suggests, “in these early *serate* lie the bases, however primitive, for almost all of the important Futurist developments in performance” (1971, p. 17). Considering the keystone positioning of the *serate* to futurism as a whole, it is interesting to not that futurist *serate* hold deep connections with the world of advertising and marketing. The primary correlation is one of motive. The foremost purpose of the *serate* was to expand the outreach of futurism. By all accounts, they succeeded. Through a series of unprecedented, even outrageous performance and marketing techniques, the futurists were remarkably effective, spreading awareness of futurism across much of Europe.

The futurist *serata* was an evening show comprising of loosely connected performances including the declamation of manifestoes and poetry, a display of visual art, improvised sketches, scripted scenes, narration and compering. Kirby describes them as “not total aesthetic entities, but a mixture of art, polemics and quasi-political action” (1971, p. 18). The performances’ structures were non-linear and, other than the common denominator of futurist content, there was often little connection between the various sections of the event. Berghaus offers a helpful definition: “As of 1910, the term ‘Futurist *serata*’ meant: presenting the key ideas of the Futurist movement in a large theatre and offering the audience examples of how these principles could be translated into performative language” (2005, p. 101). The performative language of the *serate* demonstrates the ability for the speech acts of the *serate* to not only communicate but also to instigate actions through their words. Futurist *serate* were able to, as will be seen, transform their audiences so that they would carry out actions as interpellated through the speech acts expressed to them.

Several aspects of the futurist *serata* as a performance mode have been documented and analysed, be it through the auteurs’ correspondence, critics’ reviews and commentaries or papers by academic historians or performance analysts. Interestingly, and unexpectedly, considering their importance within the canon of futurist performance, there is no specific manifesto for the *serate*. Still, the *Manifesto del teatro varietà futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Variety Theatre), which however “does not refer to the ‘evenings’ at all, can be read as a clear explanation of their basic implications for performance” (Kirby 1971, p. 18). The *serate*’s presentations would typically include props, costumes, rudimentary set design and a large number of performers (usually

futurists marshalled from the whole country, as demonstrable in Marinetti's complex web of correspondence). Through the use of these devices, Marinetti's compulsion to shock and destabilise the traditionalist bourgeois audience resulted in a series of early events that teeter on the verge between vandalism and theatre.

In truth, as we shall see later in this chapter, Marinetti's aims were not exclusively destructive. The explicit authorial ambition of the *serate* was to create clamour, which is lexically related to the French (and Italian import) *réclame* (signifying advertisement). The connection between the two words is semantic, as the consternation associated with clamour achieves the same ripple effect among the public to which a successful *réclame* aspires. The efforts futurist *serate* made to shock their audiences will be shown to coincide with futurism's expansionist ambitions and consequent advertising practice.

Surprisingly, a complete, chronological description of a futurist *serata* has never been achieved. A reason for this peculiar absence may be the lack of a continuous recording, whether it be through direct audio, film, or first-hand annotation or any other means, of a futurist *serata*. Some visual impressions still exist (mainly sketches from futurist artists or newspaper reporters) but they only depict – much like the available written documentation – a snapshot of the evening. Often without a script, these performances are particularly vulnerable to evanescence, especially as available reviews produce an incomplete picture.

Firstly, they were so divergent in tone and focus that it is often difficult to establish what actually happened on the night. So emotive was most reviewers' response that they often only cited few distinct performance elements, reserving most of their energy for commentary and opinion. The majority of reviewers were blatant in their a priori opposition to the futurists and their performances, with few notable exceptions (such as A. E. Berta in Italy, Gustave Clavel in France and Walter Sickert and Wyndham Lewis in England). This bias consistently interfered with their reporting, leading to reviews which commonly clouded facts and distorted events so as to produce contradictory recounts. It is likely that the negative reviews are themselves a telling sign of the underlying nature of the *serate*. These were frame-breaking performances, which explicitly refused to rely on what had preceded them. The cultural and analytical context upon which critics relied lacked a measure for what they had witnessed, resulting in discordant responses.

Another factor that may have led to such a piecemeal record of these events is the fragmented nature of the *serata* itself. Futurist *serate* offered little in terms of narrative chronology, logical progression and overall coherence. This may have made the act of recording events, the spoken word, actions, set design and all the other elements of performance more challenging. If an observer was seeking to document the narrative so as to recount it in other media, for instance, they may have become confused or disoriented as the scenes progressed. Indeed, the *serata* may have clashed with note-taking processes best designed for consequential events, which are still prevalent nowadays notwithstanding the different annotative systems pioneered by Tony Buzan (1996) among others.

Further aspects of futurist *serate* which may have hindered ordered, careful records may include the fact that theatres were commonly filled beyond their capacity, allowing for limited space and mobility from which to conduct the observation. Furthermore, most *serate* evolved into violent, riotous denouements, thereby causing further potential complications by placing the safety of the observer and of their findings at risk. The police were often involved, and their demand for witness statements may well have crystallised only certain aspects of the performance in the viewers' mind. Despite the improvised principles upon which *serate* were based, their success led to increasing structure in the way the events were constructed and delivered. The popularity of the futurist *serate* spawned a long list of touring events and saw key components reiterate, sometimes adapting them to the particular audience and locality. Therefore, it is possible and important to piece together the impressions offered by various sources so as to attempt to gain a comprehensive overview of the archetypal futurist *serata*. This allows us to identify an increasingly specific form to these performances, without withdrawing from their entropic nature.

Chronicle of a *serata*

Futurist *serate* would begin before the night, as *serate* were commonly planned months in advance, with evidence in Marinetti's correspondence (Salaris 1990) of a careful selection of city and venue, and of secretive arrangements designed to maintain some element of surprise for most of the audience. As we shall see, the futurist *serate* were always intended as populist events, which acted as a launching pad for the entire futurist enterprise. Logically, theatres of renown, with

central positioning and large seating areas were selected. Such was the case for the Teatro Alfieri in Turin, near the city's central square centrally and seating around 2000, which hosted a 1909 *serata*[79]. Milan's Teatro Lirico, which is near the city's epicentral Duomo cathedral, staged a *serata* which filled its 2,300 seats. Similarly, close to the cultural centre of Florence, the square containing the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore is near Teatro Verdi, which seats over 1500 people and was the site of a performance in 1912. In the context of early 20th-century theatrical performances, "the *serate* were major events, with audiences up to 5,000" (Berghaus 2005, p. 103). To put these figures in perspective, it's worth noting that on 9 March 1913, for the *serata* at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, "in the end, 4,000 people were admitted – more than Caruso [the famed tenor] ever attracted to this theatre" (Berghaus 2005, p. 105). The mass-attendance of these events was well reported. On the nights of futurist *serate*, "the theatre was indeed often overcrowded" (Berghaus 1996, p. 81).

As indicated by photography of the exterior of the theatre in Turin preceding a 1916 *serata*[80], which depicts crowds entering as well as others seemingly circulating in search of tickets, entry was denied to many aspiring spectators. Such popularity may be due to a variety of reasons, including the events' layered pricing structures. Seats in the upper galleries were as cheap as 1 Lira, a fact that was announced on various posters, which were erected outside the theatre, in cafés and restaurants, and often paraded around the town on multi-coloured cars a few days before the performance. Futurists can be seen to have made decisions to attract a diverse audience, including some spectators who would not have attended theatre for any other event. The low pricing was designed to attract lower-income earners, who would most likely have been employed in urban industrial factories.

This was a key targeted audience for the futurists. The industrial working class, who lived in Italy's largest cities and worked alongside machines, was the stratum of society most in touch with the mechanical world that futurists sang. They would also be the most likely to attend the numerous political demonstrations that swept through Italy in the years before the First World War. Among them would be communists, nationalists, anarchists and interventionists. In many ways,

[79] Appendix 2, stored in the Getty Research Institute's Italian Futurism archive, features a handwritten note on its rear, reading: "1916 – Serata Futurista – Torino".
[80] Appendix 2.

therefore, they epitomised and embodied futurist principles. Alongside the industrial working class, futurist *serate* also attracted the attention of some of Italy's social elites, including members of the royal family. Bologna's local newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino* (with no by-line) commented on 21 January 1914 that "La fioritura del teatro si fa intanto sempre più variopinta ed eterogenea"[81]. Students and workers "erano affianco a gente perbene"[82] (cited in Antonucci 1975, p. 58), who occupied the 5-10 Lire seats in the stalls, circle or boxes (p. 103).

Spectators of futurist *serate* would have been faced by an orchestra in the pit, and curtains hiding a barren stage, often with no decorative scenery. After the curtains opened, futurists would walk on stage in groups (numbers varied, though it seems that up to a dozen stage performers would enter together at first), all wearing formal dinner suits. Most of the time, music would be playing during the audience's entrance; music penned by a futurist composer, as was Pratella's symphony, which opened the *serata* at Teatro Costanzi in Rome (Berghaus 2005, p. 104). In later *serate*, the music could be performed by Luigi Russolo's mechanical *intonarumori*. The entrance would soon be followed by the declamation of a futurist manifesto – most commonly the founding one – delivered as an opening.

Before the *serata* at Teatro Costanzi, the local newspaper *La Tribuna* previewed the performance, describing the orchestral opening, to be followed by: manifesto declamations by Marinetti, Aldo Palazzeschi and Luciano Folgore; painting exhibitions by Boccioni (with easels wheeled on stage) accompanied by a reading of manifestoes on visual art; and the final *Consiglio per i Romani* (Advice for Romans) to be recited by Marinetti. The oral delivery championed by Marinetti during these readings often saw him perform a wide vocal range with dramatically varying pace, tone, volume and inflection. These often interfered with the usual semantics of the words and sentences, and instead followed the onomatopoeic composition of the manifestoes themselves (analysed in chapter 2). As Gigi Livio noted, the declamation of the manifestoes depicted "l'enfasi oratoria che li pervade: scritti sotto l'impulso di una volontà fortemente proiettata all'esterno, che intende usare la parola scritta come un'eco di quella detta"[83] (1976, p. 27). These early

[81] The floral composition of the theatre is increasingly varied and heterogeneous.
[82] Were side-by-side with 'well-off people'
[83] The oratory emphasis which pervades them: written in an outward-looking impulse, which intended to use the written word as an echo of the spoken one.

performances inspired the Futurist Synoptic Declamation, a new form of futurist speech, associated with gestured presentation of poetic and dramatic texts, as explored in chapter 3. Later, in 1916, this practice would itself be described by Marinetti in a specific manifesto by the same name.

At various intervals during these presentations, there is evidence of the disruptive intervention of futurist performers planted among the audience. A review of *La donna é mobile* within the weekly publication *Il Momento*, cited how "dobbiamo anche constatare che fecero sul pubblico cattiva impressione […] gli applausi troppo rumorosamente imposti da una parte degli spettatori"[84] (Livio 1976, p. 13). This orchestrated disruption, which is also referred to in other *serate*, saw scattered audience members erupt into applause and vocal cheers at random, irrational occasions throughout the performance.

The repeated interference was designed to irritate the audience – a feat easily achieved according to reviewers. Such was the disruption that Berta, writing for the *Gazzetta del popolo* the following day, was compelled to recognise that, "entrati in teatro per riportarne la redazione di un dramma, ne siamo usciti parlando con noi per la cronaca di un uragano"[85] (Livio 1976, p. 11). Berta's metaphorical hurricane often materialised in the form of raucous vocal protest, fruit and other food being thrown onto stage (though in later years, as the *serate* became increasingly well-known, spectators planned more complex stunts such as flag-burnings). The pencil sketch by Garardo Dottori, completed in 1914 at a *serata* in Perugia[86], presents futurist performers on stage being targeted by a veritable torrent of projectiles from the audience. Although ostensibly participating in a protest action, the five futurists (four of whom are seen wearing their characteristic formal suits) are depicted with props that identify the structure and content of the *serata* itself. One is seen standing by an easel displaying a painting, representing the visual art on show on stage during these events. Two more are holding a pot of ink and a pen by a desk which is itself supporting two piles of paper, indicative of the poetry and manifesto recitations central to the performance. These four figures are all cowering from the barrage: one holding his arm; the

[84] It's worth noting that the public held in contempt the applause which was too noisily imposed by a section of the spectators.
[85] Having attended theatre to report and review a play, we left discussing a report on a hurricane.
[86] Appendix 11.

other covering his face; one sitting behind the desk amongst a littered stage; another with his back turned away from the audience[87].

Finally, centre-stage, a fifth figure, identifiable as Marinetti through his profile, is the only one facing the audience. He is ostensibly performing a futurist declamation, as suggested by the rigid geometries of his limbs, while being pelted by missiles from spectators. He appears to have turned his head directly towards the boxes stage-right, from where the most projectiles seem to be originating. Marinetti's positioning, in which he is the only futurist facing the barrage rather than hiding from it, is probably more to do with the way he interacted with an uncontrollable audience than it is to do with personal bravery. The man who famously bellowed, "lancia un'idea, non un a patata, idiota!"[88] (cited in Goldberg 2001, p. 23), had an unrivalled relationship with an audience on the verge of revolt, both in terms of inciting protest at will and of quelling it when required. During the *serata* in Naples on 20 April 2010, he is reported to have caught an orange that had been thrown at him, I methodically peel it and eat it smugly before a dissenting audience (Bruccoli Clark Layman 1993, p. 263). Marinetti managed to turn whistles and boos into cheers, proving himself in control of not only his performance, but also the audience's.

It is worth questioning what, beyond curiosity, drew the upper classes to futurist performances, the content of which could hardly be described as the performances such audiences would have been used to. At first, it is fair to say that they were somewhat tricked into attending. Such was the case for the futurists' infamous *La donna è mobile* on 15 January 1909. Even though the performance took place over a month before the publication of the founding manifesto of futurism, the characteristics of this event make it an early prototype for the *serate*; this indicates how influential *serate* and like performances were to futurism's inception. At the grandiose Teatro Alfieri in Turin, the futurists decided to name their event after Giuseppe Verdi's well-known opera, enticing the opera-going public to attend. Interestingly, there is evidence that the marketing in this case didn't immediately produce the required results. During the futurist performance, so polite was the audience that, despite not being presented with the show they had expected, they were acquiescent and relatively quiet. A. E. Berta, in the Turin daily *La gazzetta del*

[87] Appendix 11.
[88] throw an idea, not a potato, you idiot!

popolo of 16 January 1909, reported how the spectators only offered some whistling at the onset of the second act. Disappointed, Marinetti still had not managed to persuade them to protest and emulate his rebellious impulse. So Marinetti took the opportunity to inflame the situation by stepping onto the stage and declaring: "Ringrazio gli organizzatori di questa fischiata che profondamente mi onora"[89] (1909). This is reminiscent of Pissaro's agent Duchet, who in 1874, in search of new galleries and customers for the artist's paintings, advised the painter: "I urge you strongly to exhibit; you must succeed in making a noise, in defying and attracting criticism, coming face to face with the big public" (cited in Jensen 1994, p. 82). As RoseLee Goldberg clarified, Marinetti would maintain that "Booing assured the actor that the audience was alive, not simply blinded by 'intellectual intoxication'" (1988, p. 16).

Finally provoked into action, Berta testifies that "il pubblico si propose lì per lì di far suo l'ultimo atto. […] Ed infatti, appena aperto il velario, cominciò una specie di ostruzionismo assai clamoroso"[90] (cited in Antonucci 1975, p. 37). Berta uses the terms 'obstructionism' (meant as rebellion) and 'clamour' to describe the audience's actions – defining the fundamental processes and aims of the futurist *serata* at its first appearance. At last, Marinetti had ensured that the contents of the event would stretch far beyond the theatre. Indeed, he was clearly keen to quantify the publicity gained by the fracas, as he repeated his message at the beginning of act two in his review of the performance on the pages of *Poesia* magazine. Marinetti gloated: "Confermo con piacere le parole di legittimo disprezzo, dopo aver letto ben 468 articoli di commenti e di critica al mio gesto. Invito gli stessi fischiatori di Torino al Theatre de l'Œuvre, a Parigi"[91] (cited in Livio 1976, p. 12). The Turin stunt was precisely what the futurists needed at the onset of their *serate*, and its impact was soon repeated.

In Milan in September 1914, at the Teatro Dal Verme, the futurists interfered with opera once again by encroaching onto the first performance of Puccini's *Fanciulla del west*. The events that followed, as Cangiullo reports, are thus: "nel fondo del palco Mazza patrorisce una bandiera

[89] I thank the authors of this whistling, which deeply honours me (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 28a).
[90] The public decided at that point to make the last act theirs. In fact, as soon as the curtains opened, a truly clamorous obstructionism began.
[91] I am pleased to accept the words of legitimate displeasure, after having read as many as 468 articles commenting on and critiquing my gesture. I invite the same complainants of Turin to the Teatre de L'Ouvre, in Paris.

tricolore di 8 metri quadrati. L'attacchiamo all'asta di 2 bastoni legati. Mi sporgo agitandola: 'Abbasso l'Austriaaaaa!'"[92] (1930, pp. 145-146). Marinetti was determined that bourgeois spectators would be subjected to futurist disruption by repeatedly invading the performance mode which most represented the survival of sheltered 19th-century art form: the opera. Furthermore, there is evidence that certain members of the elite saw the *serate* as a way of making their own voice heard – of airing their opinion before a wide public. At the *serata* held in the Teatro Costanzi on 9 March 1913, Prince Alfieri reportedly stood and bellowed an anti-futurist rant at Marinetti, whilst throwing pieces of coal onto the stage (Berghaus 2005, p. 106). Of course, Marinetti pounced on the opportunity, escalating the situation until his incarceration (on which more was said in chapter 2).

The combination of various social, political and cultural identities within the same audience was clearly conducive to the aims of futurist *serate*. The reactions of the various strata of society to the performance and its cultural and political content varied depending on who was in attendance. Irredentist attitudes would be met by disdain by the Germano-phile political establishment, which had close connections to Austria. On the other hand, supporters of Italy's royalty (politically closer to France) would most probably endorse interventionist attitudes. Working class manufacturers, disgruntled by their harsh living conditions and engaged in union militancy, would echo and emulate the rebellious anti-establishment depicted by the futurists. Clearly, the audience make-up was a recipe for conflict, which opened up for futurists a range of possible triggers with which to catalyse riots. As Claudio Vicentini explained, "le serate, come le dimostrazioni, scaturiscono situazioni di conflitto per tutti i coinvolti […] la rappresentazione ha la stessa efficacia politica della dimostrazione"[93] (1981, p. 71). Indeed, the futurists achieved this aim, and it can be assumed that the unique composition of their spectators, which was assembled by design, was instrumental in their success. Clearly, mass society was the audience futurists had set their sights on. Theatre-goers didn't suffice. Instead, they were used as a platform to divulge the futurist message to the real audience: society itself.

[92] At the Teatro Dal Verme, the first showing of Puccini's *Fanciulla del West*. At the back of the balconies, Mazza gives birth to an 8 square-metre Italian flag. We attach it to two sticks. I lean over and wave it: 'Down with Austriaaaaa!'
[93] The *serate*, just like rallies, instigate conflict for all involved […] the representation has the same political efficacy as the demonstration.

Site-specific performance for maximum exposure

A key indication of how futurist performance was intrinsically tied to principles of marketing – to the extent that it became a form of marketing for the movement as a whole – is evident in the futurists' choices of venue for their performances. The futurists selected the theatres for their *serate* and other performances with careful consideration of the site itself. Such was the case, for instance, with the *serata* at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan on 15th September 1914, which was followed by riots. Seeing as futurists aspired to catalyse confrontations, it is no surprise that Cangiullo's first-hand account should remember the events in recognisably futurist exultant terms:

> Eravamo soltanto 11, la Galleria gonfia di folla. Dichiara Boccioni, 'Gridate forte tutti: Abbasso San Giuliano! Abbasso l'Austria!' Subito la squadra della polizia politica si scaglia contro noi. Pugilato furente 10 20 50 studenti s'aggrappano a me per liberarmi. […] La dimostrazione si gonfia, dilaga. 200 carabinieri. Ammanettati tutti 11 a San Vittore.[94]
>
> (1930, pp. 146-148)

The dismay reported in the press following this event included an editorial in *La Tribuna* describing the auditorium as "rigurgitando di pubblico, che voleva reagire all'atteggiamento 'outre' dei futuristi, e aveva numeri e armi a sua disposizione"[95] (Viola 1998, p. 67). The fracas described above was celebrated by the futurists, who instantly recognised the propagative value of widespread criticism and the benefit of 'bad' publicity. Indeed, *La Tribuna* returned three times to the futurist *serata*, entitling its series of contributions: "Agitazioni futuriste"[96] (p. 62). Cangiullo confirms the futurists' intention in attracting criticism by remembering that just before their arrest, in the epicentre of the clamour, "Marinetti, Mazza e Cangiullo scarmigliati e fiammanti in testa alla

[94] There were only 11 of us, the Gallery bloated with the crowd. Boccioni declared, 'Shout out loud everyone: Down with Saint Giuliano! Down with Austria!' Immediately the squadron of the political police assaults us. Furious boxing 10 20 50 students hang onto me to free me. […] The demonstration swells, expands. 200 carabinieri. All 11 handcuffed to San Vittore.
[95] vomiting spectators who wanted to react to the 'out there' attitude of the futurists, and had numbers and weapons at their disposal.
[96] Futurist agitations

rivolta […] dopo cinquanta passi precipitate per strada, il primo e l'ultimo sorridono e si ammicano soddisfatti"[97] (p. 255). It's clear that the futurist *serate*, through the application of performative speech acts, strategically led the audience into riots. The spectators' rioting may well have come from a reactionary impulse, rebelling against that which had been presented to them in an overall attempt to restore the cultural status quo. Regardless of its motivation, the rioting was and remained anarchic in its unpredictability; its very presence spreading the futurists' disruptive ethos.

Based upon their success, futurists engaged in continued rioting outside theatres. After the event at Rome's Teatro Costanzi, Cangiullo recounts the fracas that Marinetti led: "All'uscita, battaglia più feroce. Boccioni mi mostra Altieri. Mi scaglio. […] Mi volta la schiena, e gl'inculo nel deretano un tremendo calcio. Perdo lo scarpino, e mi trovo stretto fra sei carabinieri colossali. Bueno!"[98] (p. 58). Evidently, Marinetti wanted the police involved, and knew how to persuade them to join in. His motivations were hardly hidden: "Vittoria! Roma intera […] parlò animatamente di futurismo"[99] (cited in Cangiullo 1930, p. 59). In a further stroke of marketing genius, Marinetti capitalised on the occasion by then offering a monetary prize for the first to find his lost shoe. This persuaded all of Rome's newspapers to announce the competition to their readers and send reporters in search of the footwear… and, of course, the story. An event which would otherwise have attracted a day or two of press coverage ended up returning to newspapers' pages for over a week. This was not an isolated incident. After the 1911 *serata* at the Teatro Lirico in Milan, which ended with the customary revolt and spillage onto the street, Marinetti sprang into action. In a letter written to Cangiullo, he remembers: "Dopo un inferno che dura mezz'ora, siamo arrestati. La folla ci segue in corteo, in Galleria e alla Questura. […] Me ne onoro"[100] (cited in Cangiullo 1930, p. 93).

Rioting became part and parcel of a futurist *serata*. Through riots, as Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner comment, "the futurists were taking performance to the next logical step — to dissolve the walls of the theatre so that the urban environment itself *was* the theatre" (2006, p. 32). Rioting became part of the ritual of the event – a particularly liminal ritual that allows its actors to

[97] Marinetti, Mazza and Cangiullo, scattered like flames at the head of a revolt, are in a bellicose march […] after fifty rushed steps, from the first to the last, they smile and congratulate each other.
[98] At the exit, ferocious battle. Boccioni points out Altieri. I attack him. He turns his back to me and I plant in his backside a tremendous kick. I lose my shoe and find myself caught between six colossal *Carabinieri*. Good!
[99] Victory! The whole of Rome spoke with interest about futurism.
[100] After half an hour of hell, we're arrested. The crowd follows us in protest through the Galleria and to the police station. […] I take pride in this.

cross boundaries that ordinary social interactions would forbid. Loxley explains the mechanisms of this concept well: “Ritual is liminal because it takes place across the ‘limen’, or threshold, from one status or identity to another (2007, p. 155). Ritual, in this sense, is transformative. It instigates a quasi-cathartic liberation, and catharsis, as Gould, Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick remind us, “involves a disturbing oscillation between seeing and feeling” (1995, p. 153). The most evident and relevant liminal oscillation of futurist performance was that experienced by the audience itself, whose very identity shifted through the ritual of the riot. It’s as if spectators became futurist (in deed if not intentionally) through a liminal phase: “a moment of fluidity, associated therefore with the possibility of creativity, of invention or innovation” (Loxley 2007, p. 156). Relevant to the theory of performativity (which has found a home in futurist performance within this thesis), liminality expresses the point at which people or events change status. Loxley explains that “The liminal moment is the moment of ‘anti-structure’, when the past is momentarily negated, suspended or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance” (2007, 156).

The extent of the liminality of futurist performance is brought into question by the useful distinction introduced by Richard Schechner, “who has traced out what he calls the ‘efficacy entertainment braid’” (cited in Loxley 2007, p. 157). Through this, Schechner separates the efficacious liminal from the less entertaining liminoid, “where ‘efficacy’ denotes the power of the performance to make a difference, and ‘entertainment’ by contrast indicates performances whose primary purpose is to be enjoyed as some kind of spectacle” (cited in Loxley 2007, p. 157). Setting aside justifiable questions about the reliability of this distinction, where would a futurist *serata* lie on Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment continuum?

Ostensibly, *serate* are more than the latter, and not quite fully the former. The repeated reality of the riots on public streets, with their legal consequences applying as they would to any other public disturbance, seems to testify to futurist liminality. This is especially the case when one considers, as Loxley wisely did, that “no performance is purely efficacious or purely entertainment” (p. 157). Much of futurism’s emphasis on the transformative potential of its performative speech acts also points, empirically, to them being liminal rather than liminoid. It is this liminality that made

futurist *serate*, and their customary yet unpredictable riots, so potent in expanding the performance's presence beyond the theatre and into the spheres of media and broader society.

Concerned with making the greatest liminal impact, and achieving the furthest reach through their performances, the futurists often selected premium venues (both in terms of size of auditoria, specific location and local profile) in the towns within which they toured their *serate*. Because of the central situation of their chosen theatres, the futurists were often within walking distance of the cities' main squares. These were and remain Italian cities' most obvious demonstration and protest sites, a fact which in turn, in many Italian cities, led to the establishment of police headquarters nearby. Therefore, we can find how, with unflinching regularity, the futurists opted to display their performances within easy reach of police intervention.

For instance, the Teatro dal Verme, site of many futurist performances, in the 1910s (just as today) lay just one hundred metres from Milan's nearest police station. Trieste's and Turin's central police stations are (as they were in the 1910s) less than five hundred metres from the Teatro Lirico and the Teatro Alfieri respectively – perhaps the futurists' preferred venues in those two cities. Rome's Teatro Costanzi is less than two hundred metres from the police headquarters by the presidential palace in Piazza Viminale. As for Florence, the futurist favourite Teatro Verdi was and remains around two hundred metres from the central police station[101]. Even if only on foot, it is clear that police intervention in any disturbance would have been imminent. Through a process of location-scouting, the futurists had devised a method of almost always involving law enforcement in their events. Such was the police force's routine involvement that (as the photograph taken outside the Turin theatre, before a futurist *serata*, demonstrates, with uniformed law-enforcement visible centre-left) sometimes the police arrived in anticipation of unrest[102].

It is worth exploring why the futurists seemed to abide by this geographical policy. Considering their glorification of the aesthetics of violence, it is unlikely that the futurists were inviting police intervention so as to minimise public disorder, or to seek protection. A more credible reasoning lies within the relationship between the press and the police. With the absence of instant mass communication media, newspapers in the 1910s and 1920s often needed to send their

[101] Appendix 17.
[102] Appendix 2.

correspondents directly to the source of the story so as to ascertain its details. Filling the pages dedicated to crime and public order usually entailed stationing reporters within a city's central police station, which in effect became the press' main information source: day and night. Thus, the police involvement the futurists orchestrated so carefully coincided with media coverage – an opportunity the futurists could not miss.

This geographical research into the mapping of futurist performances reveals how the futurists' actions could be deemed so convention-breaking that they redefine the term 'site-specific', or environmental, performance itself. Environmental performance is devised specifically for a particular site and performed on location to exploit the place as a basis for the production. Therefore, the genre has us expect narratives, characters and the whole apparatus of performance that incorporate the setting within their performance language.

The futurists' interpretation of site-specific performance is quite different. The openings of the *serate*, which often delivered explosive attacks on the host town and its inhabitants, offer a performative connection to their environment. The sites picked by the futurists, due to their proximity to police intervention and consequent press reportage, offered the potential of further propagation. By their very location, the venues allowed the futurists to turn speeches into speech acts; to turn auditoria into performative space. In futurist performances, as Albini explains, "lo spazio è reso come elemento attivo"[103] (2003, p. 11). Indeed, what constitutes the site-specific nature of the futurist performances is the relationship between the location and its repercussions into the wider media space. By exploiting the incendiary impact of their site-specific performativity, the futurists interpreted the venues themselves, and the streets that surrounded them, as advertising space. The futurists saw place as a way of being rather than just a location. Place is not an extraneous 'there', rather it is constructed by its inhabitants. Shaping space therefore requires, as Pollock explains, "a philosophical and phenomenological understanding of place as perspective – an idea, an attitude and above all, a way of being in an environment" (cited in Shaughnessy 2013, p. 112). Site, to the futurists, was a marketing landscape. This is a key conceptual step, which indicates the extent to which the futurists had merged their marketing and

[103] Space is turned into an active element.

artistic thinking, blurring the demarcation between the place of performance, performativity and promotion.

Through their manipulation of the law enforcement authorities, the futurists indicated an early understanding of key principles of modern-day marketing: that society is a collection of consumer bodies, and that even public agencies are open to marketing leverage. So established was the sometimes fractious yet mutually convenient relationship between the press and the futurists, that both parties started settling into a routine; a set of expectations developed through experience. For much of the press, futurist performance became synonymous with unrest and scandal. This would often see newspapers anticipating a futurist performance with pre-emptive concerns and expectation of trouble. For Marinetti, this constituted free advertising emerging with optimal timing; before a performance and, therefore, at the crucial stages of ticket sales. For the newspaper, it constituted a feature imbued with currency, which spread across the topics of law and order and the arts, and allowed the editorial voice to express itself with its preferred, default tone: alarmism. That Marinetti knew of and valued this synergy between the press and futurist theatre is demonstrated by the fact that he kept cut-outs of any such coverage, many of which remain visible in the Getty Research Institute's Italian Futurism archive.

One illustrative example is the sketch entitled *Il pericolo futurista* (Futurist Danger), printed in a local newspaper in Pavia with no by-line[104]. Depicting two men in conversation in the foreground, the drawing seeks to capture the impact that the reputation of futurist theatre has on the townspeople about to host the event. In the distance, placards bearing the names of futurist plays are emerging from behind a hill. In reaction to this sight, one of the two figures is visibly frightened, with his hands lifted and hat flying off his head as if propelled by his hair, which is standing erect. His terrified facial expression is quoted as asking: "Vengono qui?". The other replies with: "No, tranquillizzati! Siamo salvi!… Le loro serate andranno a tenerle a Bologna e a Firenze"[105]. The exaggerated features of the caricature indicate a degree of satire, but rather than being targeted at the futurists (who don't directly appear in the sketch), the satirical tone seems to be aimed at the public and its panic at the thought of a futurist *serata*. This treatment of the event,

[104] Appendix 12.
[105] Are they coming here? … No, relax! We're safe!... Their *serate* will take place in Bologna and Florence.

therefore, hints at a significant level of alarm within Pavia in preparation for a futurist *serata*. Obtaining this level of press coverage (which also gave explicit geographical instructions to any interested consumer as to where to view the *serate*) was, and would have been viewed by futurists as an excellent public relations exercise for the futurists. Having built expectation of riotous clamour is surely the best confirmation of the futurists' success in their own terms.

Marinetti's marketing ploys demonstrate how he understood the significance of the emerging urban consumer. Moving away from the 19th-century marketing system which mainly targeted local or specialised consumers of the arts, Marinetti openly focused on the mass. He sought to occupy the space which attracted the most attention, rather than the best attention: in other words, Marinetti's marketing attracted quantitative attention rather than qualitative attention. This anticipates an important principle of modern marketing, as defined by Bernardo Huberman and Fang Wu, which determines that "the subject of collective attention is central to an information age where millions of people can be reached with daily messages" (2007, p. 1). In describing the distribution of consumer responses regarding content published on the internet, Huberman and Wu arrive at the conclusion that the main online currency is "collective attention". Marinetti's actions indicate that he understood (though perhaps was not yet able to give words to) this transformation as early as the 1910s. His contemporary society was also one where messages could be conveyed to masses (albeit not to the extent of the digital age, of course). Hence, every time he exploited the press to further enhance the reach of his and futurism's name, Marinetti recognised how the sheer magnitude of consumer society would turn the attention of the public into a most prized marketing asset.

Injurious speech travels further

The political tinder-box audience-mix that futurists attracted was crucial to the success of the *serate*, because futurists could leverage the nationalist-political historicity of their speech to powerful, injurious effect. The propagative marketing force of the futurist *serate* worked best when they could instigate spectators' revolts through performative, injurious speech acts. Marinetti's calculating promotional techniques before the *serate* prove that there was a strong element of design even behind the violence involved in the aftermath of so many futurist performances. The

function of the violence was evident, as it would transport the presentation outside the theatre and onto Marinetti's preferred stage, the street, and thereafter onto the press (as the fracas in Turin demonstrated).

There would be no moral opposition to generating violence, which would often spread beyond the futurists' control, as the movement's founding principles included the edict that "il pericolo […] il coraggio, l'audacità e la ribellione saranno elementi essenziali della nostra poesia"[106] (cited in De Maria 1973, p. 5). Unrest was sought, time after time, by futurist theatrical movements, using "political street actions … complemented by spectacular stunts in public spaces and open air arenas" (Berghaus 2005, p. 97). Thus, before staging the *serate* in Milan and Venice, futurists climbed onto the Duomo and the San Marco tower respectively, dropping "una consegna imbottita dei volantini del manifesto in questione"[107] (Prestigiacomo 1978, p. 17). These publicity stunts, which would precede shows, were often meticulously planned, and the extent to which futurists saw the street as their primary stage is revealed by the detail they put into preparing it for their performance. Manifestoes printed on leaflets, delivered in the weeks before performances across urban centres, primed audiences and became advertisements, competing against other billboards by selling ideas rather than products.

At the performative climax of the *serate*, Marinetti would deliver a manifesto written specifically for the audience of the city within which the *serata* was taking place. Berghaus explains how "depending on where performances took place, a different composition of the program ensured that nobody in the auditorium remained unaffected" (2005, p. 103). This site-specific manifesto saw Marinetti attack the location he was performing in and its inhabitants for what they represented, thus instigating the ire of any who took the provocation to heart.

This characteristic was aso common in other futurist interventions and performances that would not, technically be classed as serate, but which demonstrated such a degree of overlap tht they reveal the reach that serate had on other futurist performance events. For instance, at the Politeama Rossetti, in Trieste on 12 January 1910 (then firmly Austro-Hungarian territory) Marinetti crafted the content of his final speech to contain irredentist nationalist declarations. Indeed, much

[106] danger […] courage, audacity and rebellion will be essential elements of our poetry
[107] a wealthy delivery of leaflets displaying the manifesto in question

of this performance was imbued with anti-Austrian, pro-Italian patriotism. By the same token, in Venice, Marinetti delivered a speech entitled *Contro Venezia passatista* (Against Passéist Venice) towards the end of the *serata* in the Teatro La Fenice in August 1910, after having cast a hyperbolic "800,000 volantini con il manifesto dalla cima della torre di Piazza San Marco su una folla in ritorno dal Lido"[108] (Marinetti 1972, p. 57). It followed a symbolic performance representing the funeral of moonlight, which to futurists represented a muse to romanticism. The declamation's text reads:

> Quando gridammo: Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna! Pensavamo a voi, Veneziani, pensavamo a te, Venezia, fradicia di romanticismo. […] Non posso forse paragonare i vostri gondolieri a dei becchini che scavino in cadenza delle fosse puzzolenti in un cimitero inondato? Ma voi non vi offendete, perchè la vostra umiltà è incommensurabile… Si sa, d'altronde, che voi […] oggi non siete più che camerieri d'albergo.[109]
>
> (Marinetti 1965, pp. 231-2)

When, in Milan's La Scala in February 1911, Marinetti tried to overhaul the musical performance of Austrian composer Johann Strauss, his intention was to stage an anti-Austrian *serata* during an Austrian event! He launched scores of leaflets from the stands and then stood on stage, supported by several other futurists, to declare:

> Noi futuristi esigiamo che La Scala non sia più la Pompeii del teatro italiano e il palco dei grandi scrittori. Invece, ogni stagione dovrebbe proporre tre opere sperimentali scritte da musicisti italiani giovani, sconosciuti e audaciamente innovatori.[110]
>
> (Cited in Berghaus 2005, p. 98)

[108] leaflets containing this manifesto from the top of the Clock Tower in Piazza San Marco onto a crowd returning from the Lido

[109] When we screamed: *Kill the Moonlight!* we were thinking of you, Venetians, we were thinking of you, Venice soaked in romanticism. […] Could I not compare your gondoliers to undertakers who dig in rhythm smelly pits in your flooded cemetery? But you won't get offended, as your humility if immeasurable… We know, in fact, that […] today you're nothing but hotel waiters.

[110] We futurists demand that *La Scala* should cease to be the Pompeii of the Italian theatre and the showcase for great writers. Instead, every season it ought to present three experimental opera productions of young, unknown and audaciously innovatory Italian composers.

Again, in 1913, this time in Rome, Marinetti ended the *serata* at the Teatro Costanzi with an inflammatorily entitled *Consiglio per i romani*. Within it, he refers to "Romani inzuccherati di polvere archaeologica […] del Colosseo decapitato"[111]. He accuses "Roma, con le sue botteghe che si chiudono quando partono gli Americani"[112], describing tourism as "una industria immonda che trasforma i due terzi della popolazione in probabili alleati del nemico di domani"[113] (Marinetti 1965, pp. 146-7). An analysis of all three extract reveals how Marinetti relied on literary, performative and site-specific instruments to exact his control over the audience and incite them into riot just as the *serata* was due to finish. We know how much focus Marinetti placed on the auditory, performative element of his declamations. Thus it is not surprising to find him rely on alliterations in each of his speeches, which he would have undoubtedly exploited to their full consonance.

Several characteristics of the manifesto as a genre appear in these declamations, including the plural first person pronoun "we" to strengthen the futurist presence and the hyperbolic tone. Particularly interesting in the three extracts above is the similarity of Marinetti's use of moribund metaphors to describe relics of the past. So, whereas Venetian gondoliers are "dei becchini che scavino", Milan's opera theatre is a "Pompeii del teatro italiano" and Rome's ancient jewel is the "Colosseo decapitato". The imagery of Italy invoked by Marinetti is one of dusty, archaeological torpor, and the only way for the cities to extricate themselves from their ruins is through the destructive force of futurism. The relevance of his comment aligning La Scala to Pompeii is particularly significant, as a few weeks before his declamation, the Scala museum had just opened within the building, giving Marinetti (who famously asked for museums to be burned) further reason to despise this venue. Further to attacking the site itself, Marinetti also criticised archetypal trades of the local population. This is the case for Venetians, who are dismissively referred to as servile gondoliers and hoteliers, much like Romans who are accused of treason for pandering to American tourists' whims. This would have struck a chord with Romans, as the declamation took place in September, just weeks after the end of the summer tourist season, just as Rome's shops packed up, leaving residents to face their closed façades.

[111] Romans enamoured by the archaeological powder of a decapitated Colosseum.
[112] Rome, with its shops that close once the Americans have left.
[113] a disgusting industry which transforms two thirds of the population into likely allies of tomorrow's enemy

These affronts worked not because they were merely offensive, but because they were personal. Marinetti's vitriol was relevant and specific; the result of research and of paying attention to what is salient. The evidence points to the pivotal role of performativity in Marinetti's writing. It connects his earliest manifestoes with futurism's first stage-managed performances. Just as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between what is art and what is politics in the content of the movement's manifestoes, it becomes increasingly challenging to tease out clear differences between the theatrical events and the demonstrations orchestrated by futurism. Vicentini's analysis of this hybrid composition is particularly insightful:

> the theatrical performance is the twin brother of the political demonstration … both have been constructed according to the same model of action; both develop in a discordant situation which involves all people present; and both evoke each other in turn. The demonstration has the theatrical quality of the performance, and the performance the political efficacy of a demonstration.
>
> (1981, p. 71)

Perhaps the most significant example of this took place in Rome, on 9 and 11 December 1914. Half way through a lecture by Cesare de Lollis (professor at the *La sapienza* University of Rome who had a reputation for being a Germano-phile), Marinetti and others invaded the lesson, fought him away and began lecturing on futurist principles. Significantly, this was the first time Marinetti found support within his audience, as the majority of students inveighed against the *passèist* minority in the room. Soon enough, the growing group of futurist supporters marauded the whole university, causing widespread disruption, and giving the futurists further proof of how much support for them lay in the young generation.

Organised to be a performance event, this riot witnessed the first futurist anti-neutralist costumes. Originally designed by Giacomo Balla following his manifesto of *I vestiti anti-neutralisti* (Anti-Neutralist Clothing), these costumes aimed to be everything that ordinary, neutral clothing found unacceptable. Explosively colourful and visually shocking, Balla's costumes represented the opposite to the linear cuts of formal wear, and similarly opposed the cultural context within which

socially coded clothing developed. Cangiullo (1930) mentions that the event in the Roman university displayed one of Balla's costume designs: the only one the tailor had finished on time.

The overabundant imagery of Balla's costumes went hand in hand with the expansionist spirit that fuelled futurist thought, as well as with principles of visibility that underpin advertising billboards. Covered in the tricolour of the Italian flag, the costume was originally going to be brandished by Balla himself, but it would only fit Cangiullo, who consequently wore it and revealed it on campus: "strappo l'imperneabile, tiro fuori il berretto: dalla buccia del loden esco bandiera umanizzata. Il pandemonio […] accorre il cronistico"[114] (Cangiullo 1930, p. 215). The costume aroused such passionate interest and disgust that it inspired another irruption in the same university a few days later. In an effort to create a coordinated branding, and a more coherent corporate visual code, Marinetti, Depero and Cangiullo delivered futurist pamphlets on 12 December that were all in tri-colour, much like the costume described above. This time the law enforcement forces were prepared and impatient: a perfect combination for Marinetti in search of further confrontation:

> Il famoso capitano Cassetta non ne voleva proprio più sentire di me e di Depero. […] Ci ricordammo di avere in tasca alcune cartoline futuriste tricolore. Le mettemmo fuori [e] ci fecero esultare. Il Capitano Cassetta abboccava all'amo. Ancora una volta, ci arrestò.[115]
>
> (Cangiullo 1930, p. 219)

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this confession is the reference to Captain Cassetta being figuratively hooked by bait (a term often used to describe the process of successful advertising) into intervening against the futurists. This demonstrates how ingenious the futurists were, and how they were able to manipulate a range of stakeholders in order to propel the event to a much wider audience. As was hoped, the clamour caused by this event was significant enough to involve the police, which in turn led to press coverage. The *Corriere della Sera* newspaper reported

[114] I rip the waterproof coat, pull my hat out, escape the skin of the Loden coat and exit as a human flag. Pandemonium […] the reporters rush to the scene.
[115] The well-known Captain Cassetta had had enough of Depero and myself […] We remembered that we had some tri-colour cards in our pockets. We threw them and cheered. Captain Cassetta swallowed the bait and, once again, arrested us.

"Nuovi disordini all'Università di Roma provocati dai futuristi l'11 Dicembre fino a notte"[116] (Cangiullo 1930, p. 216). For the futurists, who as we have seen orchestrated and manipulated venues, spectators, the police and the press in the name of publicity, this was a free ride.

A felicitous example of Marinetti's injurious speech can be found in the *serata* held in Palermo, regional capital of Sicily, on 26 April 1911. Marinetti started the second half of the performance (which ensued into street riots), by declaiming: "Abbasso San Giuliano terrone austriaco!"[117] (cited in Cangiullo 1930, p. 146). The site-specific relevance of this insult gave it particular potency. Not only is San Giuliano Palermo's patron saint, but at the time Marquis Antonio San Giuliano (born Antonio Paternò-Castello) was Italy's foreign minister, whose efforts to exclude Italy from the increasing militarisation of the years that preceded the First World War roused Marinetti's fury. Crucially, San Giuliano was Italy's first Sicilian foreign minister, born in Catania, Sicily's second city. To most of his Palermo audience, San Giuliano would have been the local politician who had done himself, and the island of Sicily (often derided by northern, more wealthy regions), proud. The line's adjectival phrase is as oxymoronic as it is insulting. Marinetti makes blatant use of the offensive *terrone*, a disparaging noun used predominantly by northern Italians to describe a person from southern Italy, which makes disrespectful use of a cluster of clichés about southern Italy. He then oddly followed it with the geographically and culturally displaced *austriaco*. What Marinetti was alluding to, hence, was how in San Giuliano he saw simultaneously a politician whom he criticised as an Austro-Hungarian sympathiser, and also as a Sicilian. Both these qualities were expressed with a denigration that southern Italians have long have to suffer at the hands of northern Italians.

Marinetti's words exploit the power of their historicity, a power accrued through time and triggered through intentionally injurious words. As Judith Butler explains: "Truly injurious names have a historicity; the sedimentation of their usages gives the names their force. […] An effect of historicity is then that force works in part and through an encoded memory or a trauma" (1997, p. 36). The futurist declamation, pronounced by a Milanese, denies San Giuliano – and by cultural and geographic extension the audience – the right to their identity. The complex stigma suffered by

[116] New unrest at the University of Rome provoked by futurists continued late into the night of 11 December.
[117] Down with San Giuliano Austrian southerner!

southern Italians makes Marinetti's pronouncements performative because “history/textuality sees itself in the mirror and suddenly sees double; it is the disorientating, the disruptive” (Shaughnessy 2013, p. 10). The victims of injurious speech, as explained by Butler, “suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are. Indeed, it may be that what is unanticipated about the injurious speech is what constitutes its injury, the sense of putting its addressee out of control” (1997, p. 4). Marinetti’s words would have had an irresistibly injurious impact of the audience, due to the complex geographical, cultural and political misappropriations that they encapsulate. Indeed, historical baggage is what elevates mere insults to injurious speech.

If we are to define Marinetti’s *serate* as injurious speech acts, it is only fair to consider how they would stack up against laws that nowadays protect against such acts. Would the Palermo *serata*, for instance, meet the criteria for prosecution? How injurious, and illegal, would such speech and any audience reaction to it be deemed today by the law? An interesting point of comparison is the case: Wisconsin vs. Mitchell, cited by Judith Butler in order to discuss the impact of performance on injurious speech. Todd Mitchell, after viewing the film *Mississippi Burning*, chose to “move on some white people” (2008, pp. 214-215), and assaulted a young white man on the street. The Justice Department in this case makes a finding against Mitchell but also “goes on to link the street violence to the offending representation” (p. 216). So, legally, the event following a performance occurring outside a venue can be drawn to its origins within the performance itself. The performativity of the film was deemed to constitute an injurious act which contributed to the violence, and should be counted proportionately responsible. The parallels between this case and the riots that followed Marinetti’s *serata* in Palermo are evident. If anything, the direct relevance of Marinetti’s address makes his speech act more intentionally injurious than that of Mississippi Burning. So, hypothetically, the threshold of illegality would, one presumes, be met by futurist *serate* today, though of course the legal framework around injurious speech acts had not yet been developed in the 1910s.

What, then, was the extent of Marinetti’s responsibility? This question may be too hypothetical to answer, but an aspect that indemnifies Marinetti from legal blame of his injurious speech is that, as Butler explains, “the speech act is always to some extent unknowing about what it performs, that it always says something that it does not intend” (1997, p. 10). So, as much as a

riot may have been sought and premeditated, Marinetti's injurious speech was not exactly a stage direction for spectators. Rather, it was an instigation of entropic ritual. The riots went 'places' that the futurists no longer controlled, neither geographically nor qualitatively. But, of course, they went there – and the riots' mere existence was important for the marketing reach of the *serate*.

The *serata* as stunt

The form of advertising which most closely matches the astonishment that futurist *serate* achieved is the stunt – a form of publicity which was hardly new even in the early 20th century. Indeed, some impresarios experimented with advertising through stunts in the 19th century. A noteworthy example is British magician John Henry Anderson, who pushed his conjuring shows to broader audiences than any of his contemporary rivals, such that Simon During judged him to be "more inventive in marketing than in either performance or production" (2002, p. 115). Anderson took magic shows away from small-scale, niche venues to larger theatres with a gallery ticket price starting at sixpence, which opened up the show to a cross-section of society. To attract the public's attention, he ingeniously devised Conundrum Contests, where puzzles published in newspapers called for solutions among the readers. Winning responses were then also published (through paid advertising space) and rewarded with tickets to his upcoming shows. He also conceived of publicity stunts in order to fill the auditorium, including advertising for 200 beautiful women to be cast in his show, without actually responding to applications. The deceit, as Simon During reveals, was enough to fill Covent Garden in 1846.

Advertising stunts seek to shock the public into paying attention, thereafter finding a (albeit loosely connected) way to introduce the product or brand. They traditionally rely on a sensory, rather than intellectual, approach. The onlooker (who is at first just a surprised spectator but – if the stunt is successful – is soon to become a consumer) is alerted by a commotion presented to them through sensory representations. Rather than promotional, the advertising stunt's aims are principally propagative. Their first purpose is to achieve clamour, to cause a sensation which will lead the witnesses to relate the event to others. Secondly, the advertising stunt needs to convince spectators that they have witnessed a distinct, out-of-the-ordinary event, inducing a sense of

participation and consequent lasting memorability. When attached to a product or brand, these two effects can be powerful in expanding and maintaining its consumer base.

The stunt remains popular in advertising, as the T-Mobile advertisement from 2005 filmed in London's Liverpool Street station demonstrates. This event, screened on television and digitally, saw dancers dressed in everyday clothes, 'camouflaged' in the commuting crowds, burst into dance to a loudly-played recognisable song in the middle of the large station foyer. Gradually, more dancers, posing as passers-by, gradually join the dance, which follows a simple repeated 8-bar choreography. Increasingly, the cameras spot some 'true' onlookers stopping, some joining in and others starting conversations on mobile phones or using their devices to record the event. It is soon difficult to distinguish between cast and viewers, and the sense of wider participation in the event is evident. The stunt culminates at the end of the song, when the hundreds of dancers that have been employed abruptly scatter and disperse into the wider crowd. While a relevant product (the mobile phone) was in clear view as it was being used, the only correlation to the specific brand being advertised (T-Mobile, a communications services provider) is quite tenuous. It is encapsulated in a final line appearing in small font on screen alongside an unobtrusive, cornered T-Mobile logo. The line reads: "Life's for sharing" (Sweney 2010). T-Mobile's flashmob is particularly interesting as it involves a devised performance, with evident decisions being made in terms of staging, costume, music, movement etc.

In this situation, the boundary between the advertising stunt and the performance was imperceptible. T-Mobile produced a sensory experience that relied more on emotive interaction than semantic analysis. They staged what Kirby would define a 'concrete' performance, "concrete to the extent that it maximises the sensory dimensions and minimises or eliminates the intellectual aspects" (1971, p. 21). It is interesting that this description should apply so accurately to this advertising stunt, as it was actually first written to define the futurist *serata*. Often *serate* would include physical realities that involved the audience, like Marinetti's mock funeral set up for the death of a critic, where "In order to overcome the putrid stench of the decaying body, he lit a cigarette and asked the spectators, who, of course, were noisily demonstrative throughout, to do the same" (Kirby 1971, p. 30). This 'concrete' assault of the senses befits the typical composition of the advertising stunt.

The fault line between concrete and representative performance travels the same ruptures that exist between locutionary and illocutionary speech. Just as representation and locution are bound to *describe*, illocution and concrete performance actually *do*. According to Loxton, all theatre avant-gardes are performative speech acts in so far as they refuse to depict, and therefore obstruct the descriptive fallacy in the context of theatre. This applies from Brecht to Kaprow, in whose happenings nothing "was being represented or imitated: there was no illusion" (Loxley 2007, p. 147). Such concrete performances become performative, in the Austinian sense, in that what they say is what they do – not anything else. In stunts, much like Marinetti's *serate*, performance is made of speech acts where "there is a notable lack of what might be imagined to be a secure distinction between theatre and life, between performance onstage and a reality subsiding beyond it" (p. 149). The blurring (sometimes to the point of imperceptibility) of the distinction between performance and life; stage and street; fictionality and actuality, are all hallmarks of futurist *serate* and well-executed publicity stunts.

Futurist *serate* can be perceived as an excuse for the propagation of futurism, which placed the spectator at the centre of the action, and therefore of the propagation itself. During the *serate*, "il pubblico è parte viva dello spettacolo, essenziale diventa la sua reazione […] che entra a far parte dello spettacolo"[118] (Livio 1976, p. 31). The stage-audience relationships established by the *serate* were a precursor of what 20th-century radical audience theatre would achieve: direct contact between the audience and the show, and between actors and audience. As Artaud was to admit himself, the unprecedented involvement the audiences were forced to undertake in futurist theatre was to become a crucial element in his productions. He wasn't the only one to follow in the futurists' steps:

> Dada, Futurism and Surrealism demand an intellectual, mental/nervous and also physical attack on the spectator. The fundamental shift from work to event was momentous for theatre aesthetics. It is true that the 'responses' of the spectators had always been an essential factor of theatrical reality. Now, however, they became an active component of the event.
>
> (Lehmann 2006, p. 205)

[118] The audience is a living part of the show, its reaction is essential and becomes part of the spectacle.

5. FUTURIST VARIETY THEATRE AND AUDIENCE THEORY

If there is one concept that unites performance and marketing it is that of audience. Indeed, for marketing and for the futurists, audience is far more than a concept. Far from being an abstract theory operating behind the scenes of performance-making and product-marketing, audience-relations are the bread and butter of both activities. Albeit in different ways, both performance and marketing attempt to define and affect their audiences in accordance with a pre-conceived strategy. Clearly, different products – and different performance genres – attract different audiences. This will become evident through a comparison of the kinds of audience relationships established by the futurist *serate* (explored in chapter 4) and those developed by what can be loosely defined as futurist variety theatre. It is worth highlighting that the futurist variety theatre was never a coherent and well-defined form in itself, but rather a cluster of various performance elements that have been organised (by both futurists and scholars, albeit retrospectively) under a common category. Not every variety theatre performance would predictably feature its conventions, and, therefore, not every audience reaction to such shows would bear similarities. Indeed, not every kind of audience is the same, and its make-up is determined by a range of moving parts, including the key contextual elements of spatiality and expectation. It is therefore instructive to explore how the futurists aggregated, manipulated and marketed their audience through their performance.

Both performance and marketing rely on creating a context for an audience. The extent of this dependence, however, is different in interesting and nuanced ways. Traditionally, commercial, ticketed theatre sees the audience's attendance as an outcome of the presentation of a certain product – it is its reward. The audience is targeted and attracted by the performance product, which is presented following well-established procedures. During most performances (though notably not avant-garde forms) the content is presented to, but kept separate from the audience. Performance is typically one of cultural product, on the one hand, and attention, on the other.

Marketing, on the other hand, makes of the audience not so much its outcome, but its content. While, of course, a marketing campaign operates in order to sell a product, the act of

marketing consists of the study and manipulation of the audience itself, rather than the fabrication of the product. Marketing stands separate from, and consequent on, the product it serves. It creates the context where it becomes possible to apply the product to an audience. Unlike a performance – a product in itself – marketing, as it were, floats between the product and its audience, overlapping with both. Performance, in general, typically presents a cultural product clearly and overtly; yet marketing is most successful when it hides behind the product and the targeted audience, and becomes the lubricant for the application of the former to the latter. At its best, marketing comes to know the audience and the product so deeply that it acts as a coagulant between the two. So, even though marketing and performance share audience as their most fundamental common denominator, the way they interact with audiences can differ greatly.

Nonetheless, the futurists' performance art, unorthodox as it was, became a sophisticated marketing tool. Marinetti can be deemed to have foregrounded elements central to marketing over the content of his performances. These included: communication strategies, demographic analysis, consumer behaviour analysis, strategic cognitive dissonance, and the development of *pro-sumers* (a term used to define consumers who create content that assists a marketing campaign, as will be explained further in chapter 7). Such is the judgment of Alessandro Del Puppo, in his comprehensive analysis of Marinetti's editorial strategies, in the journal, *Lacerba*:

> sopra ogni cosa, quel che aveva distinto l'azione marinettiana costituendola come formidabile macchina, fu la precisa, puntuale strategia comunicativa; l'intuizione fondamentale, che valeva da sola più di ogni realizzazione pittorica o parolibera, delle potenzialità implicite nella nascente società dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa; lo sfruttamento cinico e paradossale delle risorse pubblicitarie; la volontà disincantata nel proporre un progetto di modernità sempre in anticipo sul proprio tempo; l'ostentazione compiaciuta di giocare e di rischiare.[119]
>
> (2000, p. 31)

[119] Above all, that which distinguished the Marinettian output, making it into a formidable machine, was its precise, punctual, communicative strategy. His was the fundamental intuition which, by itself, was more important than any painting or poem, of the inherent potential of the mass media society. His was the cynical and paradoxical exploitation of advertising platforms, the calculated determination to propose modernity before its time, the ostentatious pleasure inherent within playing, and taking risks.

What stands out in the futurists' artistic output is their strategic impulse. Ostensibly, for each new art form to which they turned their attention, the futurists triggered a concerted set of considerations. These involved: the generation of a manifesto; the development of the art form's aims and processes in line with the brand meaning of futurism; the concomitant release of publications and performances or exhibitions; and a defined tactic for audience engagement and the generation of publicity. Such a project-management approach to the arts was unique among avant-gardes contemporaneous with futurism, and suggests how central the marketing of its art and audience was for the futurists.

Futurism and the audience: a totalitarian approach

For Marinetti, performance was first and foremost communication. It was the primary tool, the medium, the loudspeaker and billboard through which futurism was to be delivered. This makes futurism's performance style often more important than the content being bellowed through it. Of the forms of performance that pre-existed futurism, Marinetti became interested in and inspired by one operating at the fringes of Europe's theatrical cultural canon, the variety theatre. Attended by socially broad, though often mainly working-class audiences, marketed with lower ticket pricing, and using less prominent theatrical venues, the variety theatre was not an obvious source of inspiration for performers with avant-garde ambitions. After all, the variety theatre operated within predictable strictures. Its conventions were inherited, and in a loose mix, from 19th-century cabaret, music hall and circus, offering a disjointed structure that didn't conform to any conventional penta-partite narrative sequence (Freytag 2008). While this structural entropy of variety theatre attracted the futurists' attention, it is the variety theatre's approach to audience theory that most fascinated Marinetti and his peers.

Indeed, such was Marinetti's interest that he launched a re-branded, futurist version of the variety theatre in a manifesto entitled "The Meaning of the Music-Hall, By the Only Intelligible Futurist, F.T. Marinetti" in the *Daily Mail*, on 21 November 1913. As Susan Bennett, in her work on audience theory *Theatre Audiences*, explains: "The title of the 1913 manifesto came from Marinetti's admiration for the variety theatre because its spectators actively responded during the

performance" (1997, p. 5). Bennett was exploring both practice and theory when admiring how futurists were among the first to make this happen. Their *Manifesto del teatro varietà futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Variety Theatre) cites, in its third point, "la necessità d'agire fra gli spettatori"[120] (Marinetti 1972). This identifies performance as the key instrument through which to achieve that futurist strategic impulse to reach an ever-greater audience. It is notable that the first words a reader would have spotted in the text of the manifesto, beyond its title, would most likely have been the capitalised: "TUTTO CIÒ CHE HA VAOLRE È TEATRALE"[121] (Marinetti 1972).

The futurist variety theatre manifesto – the first ever dedicated exclusively to performance – represented a further landmark in futurist theatre. While the form itself was not wholly original (including tiered pricing to encourage a broad audience-base), other aspects of the futurist variety theatre broke down traditional modes of audience interaction. Point eight of its manifesto explicitly states this as its intention: "Il Teatro Varietà è il solo che utilizzi la collaborazione del pubblico. Questo non vi rimane statico come uno stupido voyeur ma partecipa rumorosamente all'azione"[122] (Marinetti 1972). The succession of unconnected, entertaining scenes, typical of variety theatre in general, also marks the preamble of what Kirby regards the core of futurist theatrical innovation: "The single most important aspect of Futurist performance was to be its establishment of the concept of the *concrete* or the *alogical* in theatre" (1971, p. 20). By "concrete", Kirby is referring to a sense of performative presence that denies all illusion and make-believe; an illocutionary act that becomes itself in its utterance, rather than signifying anything else. No fictional place is superimposed onto the stage and no fictional persona is forced onto the performer. The place is here, the time is now, and the person is 'me'. This aggressive simplicity was a key feature of the futurist variety theatre. Its performers were denied their usual context and therefore, like jugglers and acrobats, for example, never appeared in a circus-like environment, but rather delivered their entertainment as an affront to the audience's expectations.

Obstinately bare and barren in its scenography, a variety theatre production had entertainers perform basic tasks, such as moving furniture on stage, as opposed to taking part in a

[120] The necessity to act among the spectators
[121] ALL THAT HAS VALUE IS THEATRICAL.
[122] The Variety Theatre is alone in seeking the audience's collaboration. It doesn't remain static like a stupid *voyeur*, but joins noisily in the action.

coordinated show. This disconnected stagecraft, instrumental in the genre's alogicality (which is distinguished from illogicality because of its voluntary nature) is supported by the simple, yet important, lack of connection between the scenes themselves. No general superstructure was organised for the succession of entertaining segments, so the performance was frankly presented as a disorganised bundle. With loose order of appearance, or thread to weave a narrative into the performance, the individual spectacles appearing in the variety theatre existed in and of themselves, with no thought of what preceded or followed them. This lack of design, by design, was a key factor in provoking the reaction the futurists sought from their audiences. Each unexpected segment, with its lack of cohesion with the whole, created gaps, offering space and time for audience disputation. Indeed, spectators of the variety theatre were given much cause and opportunity for interruption, precisely because of its disjointed structure.

The audience of futurist variety theatre were not expected to simply absorb and assent, but to react, to actively respond with agency. This is quite unlike the dynamic witnessed in the 19th-century traditional English Music Hall form of variety theatre, which offered singing, dancing, juggling and other forms of entertainment all in one show. In these performances, the audience was repeatedly invited to participate in a range of act, but they only intervened when directly invited to do so. Instead, in the futurist variety theatre the audience intervened in response to provocation, but still out of its own volition. Confronted by a performance at odds with their expectations, the audience of the futurist variety theatre started expressing and performing their own dissent, therefore in some ways becoming *pro-sumers* of the futurist performance.

It is worth noting that, even beyond the rioting at Alfred Jarry's performances, brawls in theatres were hardly new, as the Boxing Day riots remind us. Much of the 19th century saw new pantomimes premiered at London' Drury Lane Theatre every Boxing Day. This annual event was regularly sold out, and attracted an audience of mainly young adults. Over time, and well-documented between the 1840s and the 1880s, the Boxing Day Drury Lane pantomime developed a reputation for rioting audiences. In the 1840s George Cruikshank illustrated the event for *The Comic Almanack*, depicting an auditorium in full-blown riot, with punches being thrown in every direction by nearly everyone (Davis & Holland 2007, p. 17). However exaggerated his interpretation may have been, it seems to have been the same story at the same theatre in 1880,

according to reports in *The Era*: “how they pelted the pitties far down with orange-peel and nut-shells and any missiles that happened to be at hand!” (Davis & Holland 2007, p. 16). The report then describes the orchestra conductor’s attempts, and failure, to quell the misbehaviour, as well as the audience’s wilful, roaring participation in the singing of *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the Queen*.

What emerges is an image of a performance that attracted tribalised, male behaviour from its spectators, who were most likely primed by the event’s reputation, rather than its content. Clearly, the melee was – for the audience at least – part (or the bulk) of the entertainment. A fixture in London’s entertainment calendar for over 40 years, the Boxing Day Drury Lane pantomime seems to bear, in its audience participation, many of the hallmarks of futurist *serate* and variety theatre, which also evidently attracted spectators with fracas in mind. The fundamental difference, of course, is intent. There is no indication that any of the pantomimes deliberately sought this reaction. They didn’t, after all, play the French National Anthem, for example! Indeed, there is evidence in *The Era*’s report of the performers’ attempts at pacification. What was a dangerous distraction for the Drury Lane performers was the prime objective of futurist variety theatre. The bodily, visceral qualities of audience-reaction that were among the aims of the variety theatre helped futurists “andare alla radice stessa dell’elemento teatrale e cioè allo suo scardinamento totale nel tentativo di instaurare un nuovo rapporto con il pubblico”[123] (Livio 1976, p. 49).

Describing the 1914 season of variety theatre in Milan, Gino Agnese explained that “Il pubblico è fotto, vociante, eccitato e diventa poco per volta il vero protagonista dell’improvvisata *pièce*, di cui l’indomani racconteranno i giornali”[124] (1990, p. 125). The physicality of Agnese’s adjectives points to a mass hysteria in which the audience becomes the performance’s most defining and unstoppable character. Agnese infers that the audience’s reaction has the power to inform the newspapers’ reporting. If this is the case, the spectators became the principal authors of the performance’s legacy.

[123] The public is dense, vocal, excited and becomes bit by bit the real protagonist of the improvised piece, of which tomorrow the newspapers will write.
[124] The public is packed, vociferous and excited and it becomes bit by bit the true protagonist of the improvised piece, about which newspapers will report tomorrow.

On a practical level, the fact that newspapers would have been able to report on the events of the performance the following day indicates that reporters were either inside the auditorium, or that the performance made its way to them. We know that a number of variety theatre shows erupted into loud-mouthed disputes – even riots – in the streets surrounding the theatre. This was specifically requested by the variety theatre manifesto, which would ask for performers to "colpire di sorpresa gioconda la sensibilità del pubblico, in pieno. […] provocare nel pubblico parole e atti assolutamente impreveduti, perchè ogni sorpresa partorisca nuove sorprese in platea, nei palchi e nelle città la sera stessa, il giorno dopo, all'infinito"[125] (cited in Verdone 1969, p. 152). The manifesto details the precise mode of audience interaction the futurists preferred – one which involved provocation and instigation of spectator-action both in the auditorium and onto the wider stage of the metropolitan streets.

These events prompted new layers of audience theory that were to be echoed later by the performer-audience relationships we find in Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre, and in 1960s and 70s agit-prop among others. Henry Lesnick, for example, points out that fourth-wall theatre "shows the structure of society and the unfolding of social events (represented on the stage) as incapable of being influenced by society (the audience)". He maintains, however, that guerrilla, agit-prop theatre models show how "social reality can be influenced and even determined by the members of society through collective action" (1973, pp. 12-13). Such an observation is indeed fitting for the futurist variety theatre, with its exhortations towards audience involvement. Marinetti would doubtless have agreed with Boal's view that: "Spectator is a very bad word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanise him, to restore to him his capacity for action in all its fullness" (1979, p. 22). I expect that Marinetti would probably rue not being the first to conceive of Boal's neologism: *spectactor*.

The connections between variety theatre and marketing are, if not self-evident, deep and significant. When marketing is carried out directly by designers, manufacturers or authors, the product gains the privilege of direct exposure to the market. Avoiding layers of mediation both

[125] Hit the sensibility of the public in full […] to provoke among the public acts and words of absolute unpredictability, so that each surprise can lead to further ones in the auditorium, the stands, in the city that same night, the next day, infinitely…

reduces costs and liberates designers' creative range. This is common across industries, and has become increasingly widespread practice since the advent of television advertising and, more significantly, the internet, which has undermined (if not democratised) the retail cartel. In their exploration of historical marketing practice, Harold Livesay and Glenn Porter note that it is not until the middle of the 20th century that "The manufacturing firm began to go directly to the consumer via advertising". With direct advertising to the consumer, "The significance of the middleman declines" (1971, p. 213). This development resonates with the performance of the futurists, which was able to transfer the movement's cultural product directly to the audience, without editors and other intermediaries of the cultural apparatus getting in the way. Also, by encouraging public disorder to secure media coverage, the futurists circumvented the arts critic, whose reviews would otherwise be the only reporting their performances would enjoy – or suffer. For the most part, critics belonged precisely to the cultural establishment the futurists were intent on demolishing, so they took the most effective action against them: ignoring them. The audience became the first point of contact – and it was their evaluations and comments to others in their circles that replaced those of the critic. The secondary reporting was made by news reporters, who would often lack the cultural baggage and prejudices of the critic, and thus described the performances without the *passéist's* (as Marinetti branded most critics) perspective.

The futurists' decision to outmanoeuvre the intelligentsia applied to all of their arts – from painting to poetry. Much futurist output would be, in the first instance, published in their own journals, such as *Poesia* or *Lacerba*, leap-frogging the hold that established editors and publishers had on the cultural industry. As Claudia Salaris observes, traditional models of cultural journals were "destinate a un pubblico alto, formato da addetti ai lavori, cultori d'arte o bibliofili […] I volumi futuristi, al contrario, possedevano una veste decisamente più militante, erano infatti abbastanza economici ed ambivano a raggiungere il più vasto pubblico"[126] (1990, p. 254). Futurism recognised that it needed to drag culture into the emerging realm of mass consumption.

The context devised by the futurists was built on betrayed promises. Variety shows and magic shows in the 19th century often staged stunts in order to attract greater audience numbers,

[126] destined for a highly-cultures audience, composed of insiders, thespians or bibliophiles […] The futurist volumes, on the contrary, appeared decidedly more militant, were quite affordable and aspired to reach a mass readership.

best exemplified by the activities of magician John Henry Anderson (During 2002), first mentioned in chapter 4. The affront to the audience on display in Anderson's stunts is similar in some ways to futurist practice and consistent with Marinetti's audience theory, but the fact that there was no reported dissent at Anderson's shows indicates that Anderson was not aiming to achieve dissent among his audience. Indeed, it would have been easy to instigate a dispute once spectators realised the false pretences under which they attended Anderson's shows, unless the onstage offerings provided reasons not to. Perhaps Anderson sought to pacify disgruntled expectations, but his aim – to sell tickets – was achieved.

When we compare Marinetti's goals to those of previous stunts we can determine the difference between their respective marketing strategies. Marinetti's aims went significantly further than ticket sales. His performances were not just an end in themselves, but rather instruments through which he sought to transform society, so he aimed to not just draw an audience in, but also to mobilise it into displaying disruptive, rebellious (i.e. futurist) behaviours. Previous, 19th-century stunts were tricks, ploys that may have led to audience disquiet that could very likely have been foreseen, but were not explicitly sought. Marinetti's various stunts were instead part and parcel of the concerted plan to turn passive, *passéist* spectators onto the streets in riot. Whereas for most performers the stunt in defiance of the audience was a risky punt, for Marinetti it was a strategy.

By all accounts, the strategy worked. Goaded by the provocative presentation of the futurist variety theatre, Marinetti's audiences expressed their frustrations in public. They did so often outside the theatre venue, perhaps unaware that their protests were embodying precisely the principles of variety theatre itself. Disruptive, unstructured and unpredictable experience – a 'performative experience' in Judith Butler's terms – was at the core of the futurists' variety theatre, and by reacting the way they did, spectators continued the show through town. Herbert Blau, in his seminal text *The Audience*, was referring to the late 20th-century media-saturated society when stating that "in this world, we're not entirely sure whether we are spectators or participants" (1990, p. 2). It is remarkable, then, to realise how apposite this statement is to the world devised by futurist theatre for its multiple audiences. The performer/audience exchange is one of breached boundaries – futurist performers encroached onto spaces which spectators regarded as their own. The spectators, in rebellion, fought back and escaped the site, only to encroach themselves onto

the civic space of nearby streets. Verdone describes this interaction aptly: “In molti lavori teatrali futuristi emerge il procedimento dell’*intrusione*. Una situazione si altera per l’irruzione di un elemento estraneo, il quale […] distrugge una passata situazione, ora falsa. Il contrasto si esprime in forma aggressiva”[127] (1969, pp. 114-115). So the aggressive, intrusive, illocutionary tone of the performance was reflected in the riotous reaction of spectators – both within and without the theatre buildings.

The futurists ’frame-breaking’ achievements in this field are the climax of developments, that began in the 1800s, developments that gradually reduced the separation between the audience and the performers. Europe-wide, 19th-century theatres were heavily influenced by Italian Opera. The auditoria were segmented to reflect “in their very decoration, the organisation of society along strict hierarchical lines […] the ultimate fashionable locations where one went to be seen to advantage” (Bablet 1982, p. 10). The 1876 Wagner production at the *Bayereuth Festspielhaus* redesigned the auditorium through its levelling–out of seats, which were all aligned in a slightly-tiered bank. This development was furthered by Adolphe Appia, who sought to reduce the intended artificiality of the proscenium arch, stratified auditoria and stylised settings. He had “decried the architecture that effected the separation” between actor and spectator, and at the *Theatre populaire du Jorat* in Mezieres, Switzerland, worked to “connect the auditorium and the conventional stage with a large stairway” (p. 15). Appia aspired, in an ideal design, to join spectators and actors in “halls of syntheses”, in which “no one will any longer be willing to remain a passive spectator” (pp. 15-16). These gradual, yet important, steps moved even further forward as a result of futurist performance. As Anna Barsotti explains, such performances “manifestano, già nella loro particolare struttura, una concezione della teatralità ‘in piedi’ e aperta in ogni direzione: spettacolo-spettatore […] e quindi attore-pubblico”[128] (1990, p. 13).

Interestingly, the experiments evident in futurist performance also led to developments in futurist visual arts. Seeking increasing proximity between their art and audience, futurist painters questioned the hindrance posed by the frame. This is a natural extension of the way that variety

[127] In many futurist theatrical works we see the emergence of *intrusion*. A situation is altered as a result of the intrusion of an extraneous element, which itself destroys a past configuration, which then becomes false. The opposition is expressed in aggressive form.
[128] In their very structure, the Futurist *serate* manifest a concept of theatricality, which was wide open in every direction, that of the spectacle-spectator and […], therefore, of the actor-public.

theatre and *serate* destabilised the theatrical frame of the proscenium arch and drew the audience onto the stage (through their vociferous complaints and colourful throwing of vegetables). The *Manifesto tecnico della pittura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting), penned in 1910 by the luminaries of futurist painting, Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini, makes important connections, with regard to audience theory, between performance and visual art. The painters remember how "i pittori ci hanno sempre mostrato cose e persone poste davanti a noi"[129] (cited in Barsotti 1990, p. 33). Clearly, futurist painting sought to reject this divisive distinction, instead declaring: "Noi porremmo lo spettatore al centro del quadro"[130] (cited in Barsotti 1990, p. 33). The audience is positioned as the subject, not the detached observer. They make direct connections across different art forms, declaring – in line with their visual art – that "nel mondo teatrale, ogni limite convenzionale fra cornice e testo, fra scenografia ed azione drammatica, dev'essere abolito"[131] (p. 33). In both futurist *serate* and futurist variety theatre, the involvement required for a spectator to become a *spectactor* is evident in the visual art of all three futurist artists above. Giacomo Balla's *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio* (Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash) depicts, in a quasi-scientific analysis of movement, all of the phases of a woman's walk (we only see her from the knees down) and a dog's trot. Crucially, in terms of audience-framing, the only scenery is the ground of an urban street, without any distinguishing features or three-dimensional perspective lines. Furthermore, the point of view – the audience's entrance into the image – is parallel with the woman's legs, from a rear-left perspective and angled at 45° towards the floor. The absence of any external reference to location, such as a wall, or of identifiable foci such as a face, eliminates distancing and distracting factors which could keep the audience detached from the image. All that is left is an experience of the movement, with the audience encased within the framing of the image.

But it is one of Umberto Boccioni's early masterpieces which probably best portrays the futurists' total involvement of an audience in their art *La città che sale* (The City Rises), completed as early as 1910, shortly after the first wave of futurist *serate*. The painting preceded most futurist

[129] Painters have always depicted things and people in front of us.
[130] We will place the spectator at the centre of the painting.
[131] In the theatrical world, every conventional barrier between frame and text, between scenery and dramatic act, has been abolished.

variety theatre and anticipated the axioms detailed in the *Manifesto tecnico della pittura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting), thus suggesting that the presence of these principles of audience theory emerged in Boccioni's practice before they did in his theory. While the point of view is more frontal and there are discernible human and animal figures as well as a distinguishable background and foreground, audience involvement is still immersive. The violence and intensity of the strokes extends beyond the confines of the painting, creating a sense of continuity from its right border to its left border. All of the human figures over-reach the edge of the painting, as do the buildings being erected in the distance. The composite effect is to place the viewer within the tumultuous city that rises around them. In situ, the image therefore surrounds the audience's perception, placing them within the irresistible movement and making them part of its creation. Thus, the similarities between the audience theory which emerged from futurist performance and that evident in futurist painting centre on the re-positioning of the spectator as a subject.

This audience theory applies in some degree to most of the futurist canon, which suggests its importance to futurism as a whole. It is clear from the very outset of his writing career that Marinetti conceived of the audience as much more than mere recipients. Marinetti's early, pre-futurist plays (as explained in chapter 2) seem in many ways to have acted as precursors of the founding manifesto of futurism itself. Marinetti's *Le Roi Bombance* (King Bombance), first performed in 1906, attracted similar outrage in audience reaction to that received years later by his and his colleagues' futurist performances. With open shock-tactics and visceral, multi-sensory events written into its text even before they were carried out on stage, *Le Roi Bombance* won the approval of its muse, Alfred Jarry, whose *Ubu Roi* inspired Marinetti and his play's title. Although he never saw the 1909 performances at the Théâtre Marigny, Jarry read unpublished manuscripts of *Le Roi Bombance* and called the piece an "extraordinary […] admirable novelty" (Berghaus 1996, p. 35), and no doubt was inspired by how its audience reacted to it, as reported in detail by the popular cultural journal *L'Intransigeant* (The Intransigent). In its description of the night's events, the reporter explained how actors "performed as much in the auditorium as on stage" (Berghaus 2005, p. 101). The performers merged with the audience, encouraging the spectators to

perform by reacting within the stalls. Then, with the ensuing raucous dissatisfaction and exodus, the audience carried the performance outside the theatre… and onto the pages of the press.

The customer is always wrong

The first method Marinetti used to achieve broad penetration among his theatre audience was that of aggressive obstructionism. Perhaps plotting to ignite his spectators into rebellion, and therefore both publicise and embody a futurist trademark, Marinetti chose to attack his audience. This was the case from the early stages of his performance – even before establishing futurism. While treading the stages of Parisian cafés and small-scale theatres, Marinetti created and honed the form of the *comizio poetico*, a type of political poetry characterised by inflammatory content and onomatopoeic, syntactically fragmented grammatical structures. As Marinetti himself explains in his type-written observations entitled *Le Poesie Futuriste* (Futurist Poetry), his 1905-1907 Parisian poetry evenings sought to antagonise spectators as a way of forcing them into paying attention: "La poesia futurista viene portata a contatto di tutto il pubblico. Ma, ed è qui la vera novità; non in accordo con il pubblico, ma in disaccordo. Come se la poesia *passasse al contrattacco*. Il grosso pubblico non legge la poesia? I poeti futuristi lo costringeranno a sentirla"[132]. It is clear, from his own analysis, that Marinetti shaped his poetic form with the goal of securing reader attention, which he valued above all else. If the quality of the attention was negative and critical, so much the better – as its impact was more likely to expand in breadth and penetration.

This principle, which expects criticism to travel faster and further than praise, is substantiated by empirical evidence. Indeed, the psychological theory of negativity bias, which is underpinned and borne out by principles of Darwinian evolution and by brain scans (Rozin & Rozyman 2001), shows that negative thoughts have a well-documented, lasting impact on memory. Boston College psychologist, Elizabeth Kensinger, explains in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, how emotion is likely to reduce the inconsistencies in our memories. Her research shows that "whether an event is pleasurable or aversive seems to be a critical

[132] Futurist poetry is brought into contact with the whole public. Yet, and this is the true innovation, it does so not in accordance with the public's expectations, but against them. It's as if poetry went on the counter-attack. The mass public doesn't read poetry? Futurist poets will force them to listen to it (Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 1, Folder 2).

determinant of the accuracy with which the event is remembered, with negative events being remembered in greater detail than positive ones" (2007, p. 213). If memory, accuracy and longevity are most closely associated with negative events, then Marinetti's intuitive antagonisation of his audience with the objective of further promulgating his message is nothing short of brilliant. It seems that futurists had pre-conceived a marketing concept which only emerged in the USA after the First World War, defined by Leon Festinger as the theory of cognitive dissonance. Its central hypothesis is relatively simple: "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance" (cited in Qualter 1991, p. 99). The cognitive dissonance at the centre of futurist audience theory continued and developed between the 1910s and the 1930s, highlighting its importance in the movement's praxis.

Most pre-existing theatrical forms, whether melodrama, emerging naturalism or comedies, operated on a series of tacit understandings between audience and performers. Each prepared for the event by fabricating emotive and intellectual contexts that would make the exchange agreeable. Performers would implicitly promise not to offend spectators and not to intrude into their space, and the audience would agree to sit and pay attention. Canadian theorist Susan Bennett argues that the audience in traditional theatre enters into a "social contract" (1997, p. 213) in which it agrees to be compliant in its behaviour but open in its acceptance and decoding of the signs presented to it. This social contract is not unconditional though, and rests upon the ability or willingness of performers to fulfil the audience's expectations by decoding signs. It also depends on spatiality, insofar as certain spaces, like a theatre, carry complex clusters of codes that those in attendance are expected to follow.

So Marinetti's refusal to accommodate his audience's expectations was a significant development. It is also clear that Marinetti was at least toying with – at best predicting – the audience's reaction to their own expectations being disappointed. A telling example in evidence of this is the segment entitled *Luce*, written by Marinetti in 1915 and classified variously as an example of of variety theatre and also of theatre of surprise (for instance, by Mario Verdone, 2005, p. 29). After several minutes of the drama, futurist performers planted in the auditorium would start calling the same word with increasing volume and urgency, reaching a shrill climax followed by silence and darkness. The drama would then resume, but darkness would however continue until

the performers finished with: “Ancora buio!”[133], at which point the lights were switched on. The significance of this disorienting opening is remarkable. Firstly, it establishes the cognitive dissonance that lies at the foundation of the variety theatre, because the stage produced the opposite of what the *spectactors* called for. Secondly, it explored the deep, emotive power of sightlessness.

Speaking of sight, Martin Welton argues that because of “its alliance with reason as the sense of perspicacity and objectifying distance, vision is often believed to blunt the efficacy of more ‘bodily’ senses” (2012, p. 55). Therefore, by removing the possibility of sight from the audience, Marinetti was engaging precisely the more visceral instincts of his spectators, and creating the corporeal context for their eventual disruption. Welton notes how, in an effort to engage their audiences in deeper, more memorable ways, an increasing range of performances from the late 1990s have used darkness as a dramatic instrument. He speaks of them as a “rhetoric of shocks and jolts […] an effort to give bodily substance to the performance experience” (p. 55). A more accurate description could hardly have been written for futurist variety theatre which, 80 years prior to Welton’s case studies, was already trying to get into spectators’ bodies as well as their minds.

So as not to overstate the futurists’ achievements, it is likely that the specific characteristics of the audience’s reactions escaped their predictions. Other than being generally negative, it is hard to envision the futurists being able to foretell what specific complaints and reactions spectators would present them with. Indeed, Marinetti’s celebrated ability to improvise by exploiting the audience’s criticisms is testament to this; improvisation and its effects are not predictable. What Marinetti can however be seen to orchestrate is an affective audience reaction. Marinetti’s theatre was designed – almost across the board – to instigate the affect among his audience.

Nicola Shaughnessy’s definition of affective practice is extremely precise in its choice of words: “kinaesthetic, participatory performance is used to ‘effect’ change through its ‘affect’ on participants” (2013, p. 6). A physical and impulsive reaction, rather than a rationally motivated, interpreted action, the affect propels audiences to cross boundaries they had previously set themselves or had tacitly agreed with performers.

[133] Dark again!

The concept of the affected audience comes to the surface in many avant-garde performance modes, from Meyerhold's constructivist focus on biomechanical bodily movement, to Grotowski's exhaustion of the body and Artaud's firing up of visceral impulses. As Alexsandr Galdkov (with whom Meyerhold worked closely) explains, Meyerhold's audience theory involved "waking up the audience's senses through unbounded imagination delivered with striking precision" (1997, p. 80). He famously, and ultimately fatally, branched off from the Moscow State Theatre, shunning the intellectualisation and politicisation of his art, for the more "physical impact of experimentation" on his spectators. This would, in time, be criticised by the Soviet authorities as suffering from "formalism" and "Meyerholditis" (p. 80). The affect that Meyerhold sought instigates audience involvement – whether as acquiescence or protest.

Susan Bennett celebrates these developments in theatre, calling for a "liberated performance" with the "emancipation of the spectator […] which allows for a more active role for the audience" (1997, p. 213). Bennett's is a development of concepts raised by Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation*. Sontag famously declared that, in our obsession with analysis, we are forgetting the sensory aesthetic experience. The problem with intellectual engagement is the way it overrides sensory perception. In her view, it dulls aesthesia, leading to anaesthesia. As Sontag explains, "Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted, now" (cited in Jumonville 2007, p. 252). Sontag proceeds to champion a less mediated, more immediate engagement with art. Forget what it means, she argues, focus on what it feels like. The connection between Sontag's critique of hermeneutics and Bennett's affect comes into focus in the following words: "What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more" (p. 252). If it wasn't anachronistic to say so, Marinetti's theatre seems almost designed according to Sontag's and Bennett's concept of a sensory audience driven by the affect, rather than an intellectual audience driven by interpretation.

In his variety theatre, as Christiana Taylor's commentary explains, "the audience was not to be permitted to proceed in its accustomed manner of putting together information in a logical sequence. The new Futurist Theatre […] would teach the audience to intuit information and sensation" (1974, p. 35). 'Intuit' and 'sensation' are the key words here. Not only do they link

closely to Bennett's affect and Sontag's aesthesia, they mirror them to such an extent that it might not be unreasonable to suggest that both Sontag and Bennett were influenced, in some degree, by Marinetti's audience theory.

Legacy

Marinetti's achievements in this field are significant, as they also anticipate structuralist and semiotic movements, whose audience-reception theories have helped shape the way audiences have interacted with theatre in the past five decades. The impact of semiotics on theatre has come to stress the importance of audience reception; Pavis, for example, notes "the general trend of theatre semiotics is reorienting its objectives in the light of a theory of reception" (cited in Fortier 2002, p. 33). In the context of performance, this theory is in evidence through the work of Grotowski and Artaud among others. For Grotowski, as revealed by Thomas Richards (one of the actors closest to his practice), the focus was on "inner actions, the process of doing, [which are] not at all a matter of looking for the approval of someone from outside". These outsiders – the audience – are left to appreciate (or not) the value of the work, with no particular persuasion towards approval. At best, spectators are "witnesses" (2008, p. 12). This abstract audience theory was more visceral for Artaud, whose audience was not to be told how to think or feel, but had to be made to feel. Artaud reminds us that "Theatre is the only place in the world, the last means we still possess of directly affecting the anatomy" (1978, p. 58).

Marinetti's *serate* and variety theatre operated firmly within an audience-reception theory – one with strong Artaudian flavours. Marinetti's efforts were focused on making sure that his audiences were not just recipients, but also creators, whose reaction would inculcate new meaning. This focus on the physical element of performance is similar to the principles that Meyerhold applied to acting theory, theorised as biomechanics. Its precepts translated into *études* (training exercises) that expected actors to be "conversant in the laws of mechanics and 'proxemics'" (Pitches 2003, p. 70) and their relationship to the audience. This emphasis on the physical dimension of audience theory, most effective in catalysing the affect, has a long history in performance, from shamanic rituals onwards, and indeed continues to thrive, especially in postmodern, experimental performance.

Futurist *serate* and variety theatre, as explained above, eschewed carefully constructed meaning, preferring instead to call intuition into play. They side-lined the rational in order to shift their focus onto the emotive. This shift in audience expectations doesn't only have an impact on who authors the performance, or, for that matter, the marketing material, but also how this is understood. That meaning is made in an often complex and imperceptible trade-off between author and consumer (and vice-versa) has been an established part of cultural analysis ever since the advent of post-structuralism (Lewis 2008, p. 119). This in turn opens a sphere of analysis that allows critics to explore to what degree a text leads, or submits its meaning to, its consumers. Indeed, certain texts seem to dictate meaning and form, permitting only minimal audience participation in the semantic exchange, whereas other texts achieve quite the opposite effect. The same, of course, can be said of performance. Mark Fortier summarises this distinction by exploring Roland Barthes' definitions of "readerly and writerly text: the readerly text leads the reader along by limiting and imposing its meaning; the writerly text is open to, and encourages, the readers re-writing and recreating the text in the joy of open reading" (2002, p. 133). The futurists' variety theatre – and indeed much of futurist performance – were significantly forthright and imposing, with a strong emphasis on the declamatory propulsion of the content. This would indicate a text imbued with 'readerly' characteristics. Yet much of what this chapter has discussed – namely the futurist performances' involvement of their audiences as a marketing tool – denotes an audience theory underpinned by 'writerly' properties. Indeed, audiences were tricked and urged to interact, and furthermore, their reaction wasn't limited to a fixed interpretative frame of cultural content. Whilst the tone of the reaction (incendiary, riotous, breaching) was orchestrated, its content was uncontrolled and often discordant with the futurist themselves.

Such an emphasis on the spectators' physical presence brings with it almost irresistible power, which may be channelled into the way we perceive biologically. In their association of performance and the body's anatomy, Elizabeth Hart and Bruce McConachie draw upon the importance of engaging an audience's senses before their minds. They remind us that "The defining difference between the book and all perception-based media is that the book has no analogue in direct biological perception" (2006, p. 198). The futurists opted for theatre over the page as their preferred medium, realising that the book would not spread their message beyond

the individual reader. Indeed, as was seen in chapter 2, even their written manifestoes were spoken, performance texts in their very form, structure and language.

The senses come before the mind; indeed, they are the mind's portals to its surroundings. Most of us will recognise some truth in Hart and McConachie 's observations: "We readily acknowledge the power of actual visual perception. […] In any one-on-one competition for attention a percept will always win out over a mental image. Vision is the most powerful – the most vivid – sensory system human beings have" (p. 199). The futurists' predilection for theatre over page suggests that they sensed the above. It also indicates that they encouraged spectators to perceive physiologically rather than intellectually. The visual stimuli of futurist theatre (such as the Italian flag in the anti-Austrian *serata* of 15th September 1914, at the Teatro dal Verme, which incited marauding riots throughout the night), appealed to the spectators' biological, sensory impulses. The result was an uncontainable reaction, the riot. When the futurists' audience theory works as intended, the audience is turned into bodies of the performance itself; as improvising actors, able to promulgate their energies far beyond the insufficient confines of the theatre itself.

Whilst Marinetti's forays into audience theory were important from the perspective of performance theory, it was the practical outcomes, the publicity achieved, that interested him most. The innovations of futurist theatre, therefore, were not merely abstract, but were acted out. The manifesto for the futurist variety theatre, mentioned above, is an action list of strategies for audience provocation:

> mettere della colla forte su alcune poltrone, perchè lo spettatore, uomo o donna, che rimane incollato, susciti l'ilarità generale (il frack o la toilette danneggiati saranno naturalmente pagati all'uscita). — Vendere lo stesso posto a dieci persone: quindi ingombro, battibecchi e alterchi. — Offrire posti gratuiti a signori e signore notoriamente pazzoidi, irritabili o eccentrici, che abbiano a provocare chiassate, con gesti osceni, pizzicotti alle donne, o altre bizzarrie. Cospargere le poltrone di polveri che provochino il prurito, lo starnuto ecc.[134]

[134] spreading super-glue on certain seats so that spectators become the butt of general ridicule (any damage to clothing to be reimbursed at the exit). Selling tickets for the same seat to ten people, causing bottlenecks and arguments. Offering free tickets to locals known to be crazy, irritable or eccentric, so that they may cause scenes with obscene gestures or other unusual behaviours. Sprinkling seats with itching or sneezing powder etc.

(Marinetti 1913, p. 1)

The extent of physical intervention and interference announced here is extraordinary. The audience's physical presence is invaded on multiple levels. Their movement is impeded through glue; their personal space is breached by ticket over-selling; their sense of security is threatened by actively marketing the performance to community members as one likely to cause a disturbance; even their respiratory system is assaulted. As Michael Kirby explains, futurist variety theatre "created a dangerous environment for the performers" (1971, p. 16). Due to these characteristics, the futurist variety theatre joined the ranks of other avant-garde performances that ended in a riotous fashion. These include Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Victor Hugo's *Hernani* and, perhaps most relevantly, Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (which was also well known to Marinetti). As Giovanni Antonucci explained, "Il teatro era per essi, prima di tutto, spettacolo […] l'inscindibile rapporto tra lo spettacolare e il pubblico"[135] (1975, p. 11). The *serate* were evidence of Marinetti's recognition of the value of notoriety, as opposed to mere positive publicity.

Arguably avant-garde theatre operates, in general, in opposition to its audience's expectations of receiving it in a conventionally established form. At whatever stage of development or chronological placement, avant-garde theatre openly challenges conventional semiotics and the Enlightenment assumption that meaning must be present – and understood. The futurists' contribution in this field – and in our understanding of how the avant-garde functions, is significant. Many have attributed some of the most significant developments of 20th-century avant-garde theatre to the futurists' early performances. Mario Verdone, for instance, saw in the futurist *Teatro della Sorpresa* very similar audience theory precepts to a Happening, which followed futurism almost half a century later: "cambia radicalmente la concezione stessa del teatro, il quale non e più se stesso, ma diventa una forma combinata, mista, aperta a tutte le esperienze di comunicazione e di espressione, di scatenata improvvisazione. Siamo, insomma, in presenza dell'antenato dello

[135] Theatre was to them first of all spectacle […] the unbreakable relationship between the spectacular and the audience.

happening.[136] (1969, p. 153). These observations add to the parallels we have already encountered between futurist variety theatre and agit-prop, forum theatre and the theatre of cruelty.

Within the Italian context, further evidence of a legacy of futurism in audience theory is the work of post-war experimental Italian actor, author and dramaturge, Carmelo Bene, whose performances delighted and disgusted European theatre-goers for decades. Allen Weiss defined him as "one of the major avatars of Artaud" (2002, p. 2). Mark Fortier's analysis of Bene's career highlights him as, alongside Dario Fo, Italy's most important actor of the 20th century. Fortier synthesises some common traits of Bene's performance art. Most interestingly, he notes how Bene "wants to create a crisis or impasse, a disarticulation whereby the performance would 'stop making text'. This is accomplished by perpetual turbulence and excess in light, sound, movement and speech, whose purpose is not to clarify but to create a 'congestion of signs' and a breakdown in communication" (2002, p. 34).

The influence of Marinetti's multi-sensory attack on his audience is clearly in evidence in Bene's disconcerting use of lights and sounds, particularly in his *Opere* performances. Franco Vazzoler describes how the stagecraft of these performances complemented Bene's texts and oral delivery so as to produce "un mondo diverso in cui la 'voce scritta' si manifesta in un'emissione sconcertante"[137] (cited in Fischer 2013, pp. 147-8). Bene's remarkable voice effectively defined the actor. It was the central feature of his performances, to such a degree that he was considered an "autore per eccellenza attraverso il proprio corpo voce"[138] (p. 146). It was a voice so extraordinary that it superseded text and, in Weiss' words, "effectively disarticulates the sound, sense, space and time of speech, so as to establish an abject orality" (2002, p. 2).

Echoes of futurist performance can be found in much of Bene's performance art. Although no doubt developed much further, Bene's legendary orality can be seen emerging in the diction of Marinetti's manifestoes, and importantly the futurists' declamatory performance style. Additionally, the futurists' refusal to concede to spectators' learned desire for linear narratives and semantics is

[136] It radically changes the concept of theatre itself, which is no longer itself, but becomes a combined form of mixed elements, open to any communicative or expressional experience and to unleashed improvisation. We are, therefore, witnessing the ancestor of the happening.
[137] a different world in which the 'written voice' manifests itself in a disconcerting emission.
[138] author par excellence through his body voice.

found in Bene's rejection of text and coherent communication. The futurists' variety theatre, like Bene's, resisted interpretation, and even semiotics, preferring instead a more impulsive, physical relationship with their audiences.

Both Marinetti and Bene seem to pursue a phenomenological audience reaction, which acts at an unconscious rather than a rational level. Marinetti was an early Bene; an iconoclast who articulated "like a troglodyte, so as to become not a source of meaning but a disruptively intolerable presence" (Fortier 2002, p. 34). It was precisely this intolerable energy that propelled futurist performance beyond the enclosed venue and out onto the wider sphere of the urban cultural landscape. Just like advertising, which levers the impulses and subconscious desires of consumers, whose behaviour then furthers the sale of a product, futurist performance succeeded in turning respectable spectators into riotous rebels, that is, citizens into futurists.

6. FUTURIST PERFORMANCE AND THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE COMMODITY

As we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, both performance and advertising experienced unprecedented development with the advent of modernity. There are common denominators between the two expressive forms, underpinned by the new social and economic realities that swept Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These realities revolve around the experience of living in the commercial environment of the metropolis, where the product provides the content and the citizen acts as the spectator. As cultural historian, Joe Kember, observed, "the substance of modernity is articulated as a series of attractions that accost the urban subject on every street, in every arcade, at every shop window" (2009, p. 17). Extending the metaphor a little further, we can say that in consumerist societies the street becomes a theatre, the shop window becomes a stage and the consumers become an audience.

As Colin Campbell explains in his seminal book, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, the emergence of the modern consumer, defined as one who displays an endlessly renewed desire for consumption of goods and services, originated as far back as in the 16th and 17th centuries. He identifies this as the era when European cultures experienced a gradual internalisation and prioritisation of emotions. In pre-modern times, he points out, emotions lived outside us, and impacted us from there. Medieval cultures identified spirits in the environment and ascribed emotional states to them. The transition to modern times witnessed a disenchantment with the the mystic properties of outside world, which was explained instead by the Enlightenment's increasingly convincing, but impersonal and unemotional, scientific demonstrations. So emotions, Campbell quips, "moved in" to produce a way of being that is "poised between the internal and the outside world" (p. 73). Shakespeare's psychological characterisation and Coleridge's coining of the term "self-consciousness", both from early modern times, are cited by Campbell as examples of literature revealing this transition.

Campbell argues that the precondition for the sustainability of consumerism is "modern hedonism" (2005, p. 19), a state of being which he first perceives in the 18th century. Modern

hedonism encourages one to identify in objects the potential for ongoing emotional fulfilment, and to continuously "seek an imaginative pleasure-seeking to which the product lends itself" (p. 89). The spectacular success of the novel as a narrative construct, which expanded in the 17th and 18th centuries, is to Campbell a direct consequence of consumerist culture's growing desire to find ways to internalise emotions. Emotional needs, unlike subsistence, sensory or even social ones, are intrinsically not finite. It is therefore only through the medium of emotions, as Helena Grehan explains, that a "process of amassing (objects, information, ideas etc.) can be made to continue unrelentingly" (2009, p. 9). By the late 19th century and the early 20th century, Campbell's modern hedonists became sufficiently numerous to bring about the phenomenon of mass consumption and consumerist societies.

Campbell's history of consumerism is compelling because it ascribes the emergence of modern consumption habits onto consumers themselves. The advent of consumerism had otherwise simply been attributed to the rise of industrial production methods. Modern production methods, inspired by the *Principles of Scientific Management* by F. W. Taylor, and most pervasive in America, could not have instigated mass consumption independently. If anything, they responded to it. Since the 19th century, the driving principles developed by Taylor had streamlined factories, encouraging the specialisation, repetition and automation of labour. Despite the criticism of intellectuals and politicians, who bemoaned its dehumanising impact, industrialism spread across Europe, including Italy. Indeed, Italy seemed to adopt the ethos of the modern factory with some enthusiasm, especially in he Northern regions surrounding Milan and Turin.

In defence of Taylor's scientific production principles, in 1910 Milanese industrialist, Bottoni, complained that "there are already too many lawyers and literati. Italy needs engineers, physicists, chemists, mathematicians" (cited in Arvidsson 2003, p. 31). Bottoni's insistence on the sciences rather than the humanities or arts fits Taylor's application of mathematical concepts to labor relations. Like Taylor, Bottoni envisages a system that is intended to produce the most goods using the least resources: a system of total efficiency.

For consumerism to flourish, then, modern societies had to witness the combined rise of systematised production and emotionalised consumption. The result is, as Hans-Thies Lehmann puts it, a society that "enters into a more or less total dependence on precisely this perpetual

growth" (2006, p. 183). As Theodor Adorno observed, the avant-garde's close relationship with modernity also involved its assimilation of modernity's economic structures. He explained that "the new art is the aesthetic counterpart to the expanding reproduction of capital in society. Both hold out the promise of undiminished plenitude" (1984, p. 31). Unabated expansionism is part of the futurist ethos, which demanded constant renewal of itself. The movement released at least two manifestoes per year between 1909 and 1918, peaking at an extraordinary 12 manifestoes in 1913 (Apollonio 1973). The movement's frenzied productivity is indicative of more than just a group of artists with a lot to say. The sheer quantity and frequency of futurist manifestoes denotes an industrialised cultural production process. Moreover, as shall be explained below, the affective impact of the futurist aesthetic targets the modern hedonist's repeated pursuit of emotional engagement. Futurism is therefore optimally shaped for the increasingly consumerist society within which they operated.

Futurist typography and the commodity

There is an affinity between futurist artefacts and commodities, and understanding how this could be the case relies on an understanding of how Marxist theory has been applied to studies of culture. The Marxist concept of the commodity and its fetishism is based on a logical, quasi-scientific, analytical framework (Eastman 1935, p. 159). In order to explain the burgeoning industrial, consumer societies that surrounded him, Marx delved into the ways that capitalism constructs 'appearance forms'. 'Appearance' is a term which Marx uses continuously, and which holds particular importance within his theories (Wayne 2003, p. 190). It encapsulates the workings of the commodity; it refers to the perceived qualities and characteristics of products which, in various ways, repress the real relations on which they are founded. The contrast between a product's appearance and essence is central to Marx's analysis of the commodity and its fetishism. Every product is the result of raw materials and labour processes, the result of which are equated with a utility value. The utility value, according to Marx, is hence a product's true essence, and it reveals visible relationships with its producers and consumers.

However, in the process of becoming commodities, products assume a surplus value, an appearance, that is driven by consumers' desire to obtain them for reasons beyond the product's

utility. Marx's thinking suggests that the consumer's mind perceives the fetish not as trickery, but more like a mirage; not an optical illusion, but a phenomenological reality. He assumes that consumers repress the projection of surplus value onto products through a false consciousness, which prevents them from observing the process at work.

There are interesting parallels between the process of commodity fetishism and the processes of language and meaning. Paul J. Thibault explains this relation when exploring linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's observation of the arbitrariness that connects the sign and its value:

> Signification, as Saussure points out, could not occur without commodity relations among values in the system. That is, a given act of signification or sign token cannot be its own equivalent. A given term in the system of pure values is compelled to choose some other commodity for its equivalent. (1997, p. 205)

Both the sign and the commodity rely on the imposition of values onto a form, the original value of which becomes obfuscated. Just as a product's utility value is erased and replaced by a surplus value when it becomes a commodity, a signifier 'becomes' its meaning through the overlaying of the signified. Linguistics has its own analytical framework, which allows it to decipher the way the signifier and the signified interact. It is named semiotics, which Umberto Eco explains "is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign… as significantly substituting for something else" (1976, p. 7).

The mechanisms of linguistics and semiotics are useful analytical tools that will be engaged below, but it is worth being wary of the excesses of this theory. Even Marx, who variously defines as "enigmatical" and "fantastic" the form of the commodity, which must therefore be "a mysterious thing: within it is the social character of the labour [which] appears to them as an objective character" (2007, p. 83), admits to not fully understanding why consumers project surplus value onto products. It is this lacuna that Colin Campbell fills, by suggesting that consumers are not oblivious to the process, but rather are participants. It's not that consumers don't see the product's utility value, but rather that their "interest is primarily focused on the meanings and images which can be imputed to a product" (2005, p. 203). Campbell's theory, which will be explored in greater

detail below, explains that engaging with the surplus value is more fulfilling, as it instigates emotive impulses and imagination.

If the way we interpret language is akin to the way we interpret commodities, it is because both processes witness the fusion of form and content, or at least the masking of the content by form. The exploration of form and its relation to meaning was an over-arching ambition of the modernist arts. From cubism's reconfiguration of multiple perspectives to Pirandello's sub-division of dramatic characters, modernist artists sought to dissect, distort, display and re-interpret the relationship between form and content – often by subverting the traditional associations inherited from previous paradigms.

The futurists also investigated the arbitrary tension between that which is displayed and what is meant in language and the arts. Marinetti seemed to make this the central motif of his poetry with *Zang Tumb Tumb*, written in 1913 and subsequently published in book form. This text explores meaning and form to such an extent that it defies classification. It is a kind of war reportage of the 1912 battle of Adrianopolis which also contains *parolibero* prose and some concrete poetry. The importance of *Zang Tumb Tumb* to Marinetti's oeuvre is highlighted by the fact that he cites it in the latest draft of his *Manifesto futurista dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica* (Futurist Manifesto of Advertising and Typographic Art). While the original manifesto refers to but does not feature the poem, the redrafted manifesto describes *Zang Tumb Tumb* as "uno dei primi esempi decisivi della rivoluzione tipografica"[139] and details the literary impressions of the explosions in their full sensory impact.

In this poem, not only is the meaning expressed primarily through onomatopoeias, but the verse's plot is also displayed graphically. The poem's various sections are expressed in a range of typefaces. Produced in a variety of sizes, positions and angles, some typefaces and characters were effected through mechanical casts and imprints, while others were individually drawn by hand, yet identically to one another, mimicking the mechanisation of the other characters. Ostensibly, these typefaces were designed to enhance the way the poem's shape related to its content. For instance, a section that describes a Turkish hot-air balloon is depicted in an arc which

[139] One of the first decisive examples of the typographical revolution (Appendix 3).

traces a circle, mimicking the crescent, the Turkish national symbol. A more sophisticated example sees Marinetti express the boom of successive explosions: “Tumb tumb tumb”, in increasingly large font, angled in such a way that the words appear to embody sound waves as they rise into the sky.

Marinetti’s decision to revise the theoretical manifesto on advertising art by homing in on this *parolibera* (freeword: the neologism Marinetti used to describe the poetic form) suggests how important he felt the *parolibera* to be. The implications of a semiotic analysis of *Zang Tumb Tumb* reveal a concerted effort to visualise meaning. As Briosi said of *Zang Tumb Tumb*, Marinetti had:

> la necessità di immagini nettissime, che assorbono e annullano in sé il significato – ove vive l’espressione analogica – l‘apertura tra il primo ed il secondo termine di paragone, che costituiscono l’analogia tra il ‘signas’ e il ‘signatum’. [La sua] espressione non serve più a ‘rendere’ una realtà mediante l’immagine di una realtà diversa, ma ad annullare la prima nella seconda. […] L’annullamento del significato nel significante.[140]
>
> (1969, p. 9)

The merging of the *signas* and the *signatum* that Briosi describes is later further developed in several futurists’ works. The futurists continued working on the form of the *parole in libertà*, later renaming them *parolibere*, in an abbreviation which assimilates its words in one – embodying the principles of the poetry’s expression by absorbing the ‘signatum’ within the ‘signas’. So Marinetti’s 1919 work, *Scoppio*[141] (Explosion), displays a wider spectrum of typographical variation in its effort to represent a shell explosion. The *parolibera* also presents the scene of a bombing. Similarly to *Zang Tumb Tumb*, the sound of the bombardment is represented through onomatopoeic combinations of letters and the suggested volume of the explosion is depicted by the font size used. Yet, unlike its predecessor, this time the writing forms the precise trajectory of the projectile, even to the extent of abandoning the word format and becoming strings of letters. The

[140] The necessity of images of the utmost clarity, which absorb and nullify the meaning they represent and their analogical expression – the distance between the first and the second term of comparison, or between the ‘signas’ and the ‘signatum’. [His] expression is no longer needed to render a reality through the image of a different entity, instead it is designed to eliminate the former within the latter. […] The annihilation of the signified within the signifier.
[141] Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

onomatopoeic sounds of the strings of letters which form the flight of the shell change as the whine of its flight deepens. After the explosion, the sounds are shattered in a broken maze of capitalised letters. In this text Marinetti radically manipulates the form to extend the meaning, both by the changing size of the chosen typeface and the disintegrating letters after the explosion. Despite the complexity of the semantic construction within the text, the explosion is instantly recognised at first glance in *Scoppio*. This mirrors the way that meaning is conveyed by the mirage of the commodity, which instantaneously presents its form as meaning. The instantaneity of the way the image is perceived by the reader is key to this affinity.

Marinetti's *parolibere*, by bringing together the signified, the referent and the signifier, follow a similar mechanism to that of the commodity. The way the visual explosion is the most immediately evident meaning in *Scoppio* is similar to the way the surplus value is the most instantaneous image of the commodity. In both cases, the material constituents disappear within – or are, at least, hidden by – the image. Marinetti's *parolibere* demonstrate, as David McNally suggests, that "language is a form and not a substance, just as a commodity transcends its product in the capitalist market" (2001, p. 54).

Marinetti reinforces his linguistic experimentation in his theoretical documents, especially his revised *Manifesto dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica*, where he hails the invention of the *parole in libertà* as a typographical revolution. Specifically, in his, as yet, unpublished handwritten changes for his last draft, he takes pride in the development of an expression which is "il complesso sostanziale simultaneo e compenetrato della forma e soggetto"[142]. It is worth dwelling on the importance of this addendum. Marinetti's additional notes, penned several years after the composition of both the poetry and the original manifesto, act as a theoretical synthesis of his literary achievements. These comments were thought-through, made with the benefit of hindsight. They therefore indicate that Marinetti seems to be aware that his fusion of signifier, referent and signified is akin to the commodity, where the "concrete" is the "combination of the form and subject".

[142] the concrete and simultaneous combination of the combination of the form and subject (Appendix 4).

Further examples of the futurists' efforts to merge the image with its constituents are provided by their own signatures. As mentioned in chapter 2, the futurists devised and revised several designs for their signatures. They clearly saw their signatures as part and parcel of their brand and wished to express their identity in a way that represented them. In short, they wished the form of their name to embody their self: their content. There is evidence that Marinetti's signature changed and developed over time. As collated in Carlo Belloli's interesting collection (1982), Marinetti's early signatures display a stick-man figure[143] where the "a" of his name forms the head and moustache, the "i" becomes the neck, the "n" the torso and the double "t" represents legs. Thus, the figure of a man is made by Marinetti's name, with the moustache ostensibly identifying the figure as Marinetti himself.

More interesting and sophisticated later examples include a design by Giacomo Balla of a profile of a man's face which is drawn by assembling alphabetical letters in various angles and font sizes[144]. This design is reminiscent of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's 16th-century portraits which compose human faces with the use of vegetables or objects. Here, however, the face is assembled from letters, a characteristic announced in the *Manifesto futurista dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica*, where Marinetti suggested that "La tipografia libera espressiva serve inoltre ad esprimere la mimica facciale"[145]. The text here depicts a face, where one reads "FT" in the head, "Marinetti" as the nose and forehead, "Futuri" acting as the cheeks and the ear (which is the dot on the "i") and "smo" completing the face as its jaw. The year "1909", futurism's foundation year, is the mouth or tongue, visually indicating when the futurist voice first emerged. The very meaning of futurism and its identifying head (quite literally) is represented through the letters of Marinetti's name. Futurism is depicted as being Marinetti's head and name – not representing it.

The implications of trying to represent one's self through a signature in such a way that personhood is expressed by the design of the sign are significant. The word "Marinetti" depicted as a 'body of letters' or a 'head of words' assumes multiple semantic layers. Not only is "Marinetti" a proper noun shown in a signature, it is also visibly and explicitly the person for whom the name acts as a sign (as the person's face or body are represented). Furthermore, especially in the case

[143] Appendix 5.
[144] Appendix 6.
[145] Free, expressive typography serves to mimic facial expressions (Appendix 14).

of the signature designs, which also incorporate futurism, the signature both depicts the word, the person and the cultural movement, blurring the distinction between the three. In these typographical signatures, we find the object appropriating the qualities of the producer. In a way, these complex signatures represent an early step towards the commodification of the self, as the name of the artist embodies the qualities of the art.

Avant-gardes and consumerism: an unlikely alliance

If anyone still finds the combination of commerce and the arts incongruous – a forced marriage of philosophies that pull in different directions – their perceptions are most likely perched on layers of assumptions that polarise consumerism as the opposite of creativity and originality. Yet innovative art forms and commercialism have often coexisted and been well-documented. One need only think of the commercial, even capitalist approach to theatre practised by Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's men (Thompson 1999) and, in a strictly Italian context, of the *commedia dell'arte*.

If parallels can be drawn between the commercialism of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and that of the futurist arts in modern times, it may be interesting to note that, despite the centuries between them, the criticism they attracted had similar lines of attack. Just as the *commedia dell'arte* is accused of over-predictability and commercialism for its "mercenary" and "ignoble" funding models (Smith, 2010 p. 21), the futurists' expansionist targeting of mass audiences attracts the criticism of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who (as mentioned in chapter 1) sarcastically berate the art of modern capitalist Western societies as one that "can pride itself on having energetically executed the previously clumsy degeneration of art into the sphere of consumption" (1972, pp. 134-5). The crux of the criticism is that, by adopting the model of the commodity, which hides the true exchange value of items, art devalues itself, compromises its authenticity and abandons its customary role as observer and critic of society. According to this point of view, futurist performance, with its desire to attract mass audiences, and its exploitation of the language of advertising and of the commodity, hardly deserves to be deemed revolutionary, let alone as an avant-garde.

While there is much to be learned from Marxist analysis of the mechanisms of commodification, as the preceding linguistic analysis of Marinetti's *parolibere* demonstrates, it is

worth questioning the negativity bias that permeates much Marxist theory. Theodor Adorno's criticism is part of a wide-ranging narrative of disillusionment with modernity, which, ever since the emergence of Marxist theory, has had a decisive impact on 20th-century criticism. It is most likely this very narrative, perhaps mixed with the die-hard romanticism of nostalgia, which led D. J. Boorstin to reduce the phenomenon of the modern mass society to these terms:

> In the United States we have in a word, witnessed the decline of the 'folk' and the rise of the 'mass'. The usually illiterate folk, while unself-conscious, was creative in its own special ways. Its characteristic products were the spoken word, the gesture, the song: folk lore, folk dance, folk song. The folk expressed itself. Its products are still gathered by scholars, antiquarians, and patriots; it was a voice. But the mass, in our world of mass media and mass circulation, is the target and not the arrow. It is the ear and not the voice. The mass is what others aim to reach and influence – by print, photograph, image and sound […] It is waiting to be shown and to be told.
>
> (1961, p. 596)

The tendency for culture theory is to characterise consumers as having been somewhat muted and enslaved into submissive consumption. This narrative is described by Colin Campbell as "the hypodermic model", which suggests that marketing injects the public with "want for particular products and services, and attributes a passive role to the consumer" (2005, p. 46). This model of a subdued, duped consumer certainly does not describe the typical spectator of futurist performances. Instead, in futurist performance we find a cultural product that was driven by the desire to obtain a mass audience, yet affective enough to instigate unpredictable audience reactions. The audience may have been the target (in Boorstin's words) of the futurists, but they were certainly not there to be told, or to passively absorb a message. The futurists' audience was positioned, first and foremost, to react, as so many did, time and time again, at the futurist *serate*. Just as consumers' reaction to a product can be unpredictable, the mass audience, whose attention is the object of fierce competition, remains aleatory. It is the volatile aspect of the mass-consumer audience that allowed the futurists to instigate such riotous reactions to many of their performances.

Perhaps, then, to understand this dynamic, we need a new way of understanding spectatorship and consumption. Colin Capmbell's modern hedonist, first mentioned earlier in this chapter, is a good place to start. Unlike traditional hedonists, who drew pleasure directly from the consumption of great quantities of products, in modern times "individuals do not so much seek satisfaction from products, but the imagined emotions to which the product image lends itself" (2005, p. 89). To Campbell, modern consumers, rather than seeking products for their material value, or even for the value society ascribes to them, seek products to fulfil emotionally intense day-dreams they have entertained. It is imagination that possesses "the very special power to conjure up stimuli" and "provide infinitely greater possibilities for the maximisation of emotional experiences" (2005, p. 76). Conceiving of consumers as imaginative, modern hedonists seeking continuous emotional fulfilment helps us understand what motivated audience members to attend futurist performances knowing that a riot may ensue. For, unlike traditional hedonists, modern hedonists are not only drawn by pleasure, but rather the full range of emotion. This becomes clear when we consider that imagining – the essential act of the modern consumer – is doing something with a proposition that one has in mind. The nature of the proposition is as flexible and mutable as imagination itself.

This concept is explored convincingly by Kendall Walton, who defines imagination as an "entirely remarkable invention" in which "we can arrange content as we like" (1990, p. 68). The function of imagination, Walton argues, is to help us experience a much broader emotional range to that which our life would otherwise permit. "There is a price to pay for real emotion", Walton explains, and imagination "provides the experience – something like it anyway – for free" (p. 68). As demonstrated in chapter 4, the reputation for riotous behaviour often preceded the opening night of a futurist *serata*. If spectators of futurist performances had imagined the possibility of a riot, they most likely attended to satisfy their appetite for the emotions associated with rebellion, emotions that therefore became associated with futurism. This engagement with the futurist cultural product requires a considerable degree of agency from the audience, the same agency that characterises Campbell's modern hedonist. Such an individual, he argues, "is both actor and audience in his own drama" (2005, p. 75).

Recent interpretations offered by Jane Bennett also invite us "to resist the story of the disenchantment of modernity […] including the idea of commodity fetishism" (2001, p. 4). Bennett seeks to rehabilitate the concept of enchantment derived from ancient, superstitious eras and apply it to contemporary experience. She focuses on the possibility of genuine wonder at a world of immeasurably complex and varied commodities, which constantly encourage us to maintain a sense of openness to the unusual, the captivating and even the disturbing in everyday life. Bennett's thoughts on the opportunities for enchantment in modern life encourage us to "open the way for a deliberate receptiveness toward, even an active courting of, these fetishes" (2001, p. 127). In her analysis, Bennett questions the assumption that the impact of commodity fetishism needs to be as damaging as Marxist theory suggests, pointing out that Marx's original concept lacked theoretical rigour, and that the dehumanising effect of the commodity has consequently been taken for granted.

To Bennett, consumerism is a form of enchantment, a heightened state of presence, of interactive, bodily receptiveness, which, however, does not rely on receiving, but on unpredictable, de-intellectualised processes. Bennett's understanding of enchantment described a physicalised, rather than exclusively intellectual involvement – one which relies on the affect of the "theatrical dimension of commodities" (2001, p. 114). Bennett's enchantment is aesthesia, and is achievable through the consumption of a product, especially a cultural commodity (be it an advertisement or a performance). Instead, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that cultural consumption is an assenting, hegemonic surrender – "to be pleased means to say Yes" (1972, p. 144). Their understanding of pleasure describes a state that produces an unfocused, myopic, wallowing hiatus, which "always means not to think about anything" (p. 144). This seemingly lobotomising feat is achieved, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, achieved primarily by advertising. Able to hide its objectives of "insulation and desensitisation" (p. 144), advertising obfuscates the reality of products' exchange value and of the labour conditions involved in their manufacture.

Adorno and Horkheimer's dispiriting analysis removes any sense of agency from the consumer, who is depicted stranded and manipulated in an environment designed to exploit them. Marxist critique of commodity fetishism suggests that the real value of products becomes irrelevant and is replaced by a value constructed by the marketing industry. It ignores the possibility that the

surplus value may be construed by the consumer in response to offerings provided by the marketing industry. The more convincing observation, made by Colin Campbell, is that "the 'real' nature of products is of little consequence to consumers compared with what it is possible for consumers to believe in them" (2005, p. 89). As Walton concisely puts it, "imagining something is entirely compatible with knowing it to be true – or not" (1990, p. 13). The power of consumers' imagination can also be found in what Bennett describes as "the sense of vitality, of charged-up feeling often generated in human bodies by the presence or promise of commodity consumption […] or more specifically, their artistic representation" (2001, p. 114). The "artistic representation" of the fetishism of commodities – be it visual art, performance or, of course, advertisements – is key to the impact of the commodity on the consumer. This impact is demonstrably effective in energising rather than pacifying consumers' reactions, as the *raison d'etre* of the advertisement is to stimulate consumption.

Bennett's approach is to hail the best that advertising has to offer as being part of "a tradition of works of art that explore the phenomenon of animation – of dead things coming alive, of objects revealing a secret capacity for self-propulsion" (2001, p. 112). The concept of "dead things coming alive" is important to both the commodity and theatre, which operates upon the dramatisation of artificial constructs. The connection is particularly clear in Marinetti's *dramma di oggetti* (object dramas), such as *Vengono* (They're Coming). This sees a butler rearrange chairs in various configurations so as to depict hierarchy. What is crucial to this "sintesi d'oggetti animati"[146] (Marinetti 1927, p. 3), as Marinetti himself indicates, is that the pieces of furniture "acquistano a poco a poco una strana vita fantastica. E alla fine lo spettatore, aiutato dal lento allungarsi delle ombre verso la porta, deve sentire che le sedie vivono veramente"[147] (p. 3). The detailed stage directions that demand the movement of the chairs, along with the set design and lighting, conspire to give to those items the impression of ownership of the stage and of their environment (the living room), something which we would only expect of human characters. This performance, then, is precisely about objects coming alive. This anthropomorphism is evident from the very onset of

[146] synthesis of animated objects
[147] gains bit by bit a strange, fantastical life. In the end the spectator, helped by the slow lengthening of the shadows towards the door, must have the impression that the chairs are truly alive.

futurism. Marinetti dedicated much of the opening of his founding manifesto to a lyrical description of his car, of which he famously stated:

> Nous approchâmes des trois machines renâclantes pour flatter leur poitrail. Je m'allongeai sur la mienne comme un cadavre dans sa bière, mais je ressuscitai soudain sous le volant - couperet de guillotine - qui menaçait mon estomac.[148]
>
> (Cited in Lista 1973, p. 85)

The emotive range attributed to the machine is indicative of the extent to which objects 'came alive' to Marinetti and the futurists. The hyperbolic depiction of a steering wheel as a guillotine helps represent the car as a symbol of an unstoppable modernity, as a metaphor of that which would sever the 20th century from its predecessors. The cars described in the manifesto invoke lust, fear of death and violence – all catalysed by an overwhelming desire to be attached to the machine… the same metaphysical desire referred to by Susan Bennett and invoked by the commodity. This is a motif that the futurists pursued enthusiastically, and which is prevalent in the whole range of performances that displayed machines and automata as protagonists (as we shall see, more fully, in chapter 7). Injecting life into inanimate mechanical objects affords them an aura – that which in commercial contexts is the commodity. In celebrating this metaphysical process, the futurists certainly revealed their enchantment with modernity.

Futurist characterisation and the commodity

The wonder at "things that come alive" finds, among the futurists, an outlet in the emergence of characters who embody the movement's cult of the machine, which is a defining selling point for the futurists. A coincidental source of inspiration, which developed the relationship between the self and the cultural product, appears in the first man-object to figure in advertising. The Michelin Man (whose original name was Bibendum) was first depicted in 1910 as a body made of thin tyres, riding a bicycle with identical-looking tyres on its wheels. The chubby character's demeanour

[148] We approached three snorting beasts to feel their contours. I stretched out on my car like a corpse on it bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, which, like a guillotine, threatened my stomach.

seemed to be jovial, as it often appeared with out-stretched arms and a smile, and could be seen interchanging parts of its body with the tyres on the bicycle. This was a significant development of the concept and character of the sandwich-board man, who retained his human form as he displayed product details. Bibendum, instead, took on the form of the product, anthropomorphing the tyre. Michelin clearly believed that performance would lend itself well to this development in advertising, for they launched Bibendum, as a life-size character, to appear in the streets of major European cities: “Bibendum was often played by real actors dressed up in rubber suits. He made various public appearances [and] entered the mass visual vocabulary of popular culture” (Pinkus 1995, p. 14). Through Bibendum’s launch, Michelin tried to apply the properties of joviality, friendliness and affability to their product, thereby commodifying it with an aura which neglected of the colonial violence involved in the rubber’s procurement.

Futurist connections to Bibendum are to be found in Fortunato Depero’s advertising, which in many ways defined how futurism interacted with the commercial art form. An interesting example is Depero’s rubber-headed woman, which he produced as an advertisement for a manufacturer of erasers. Depicting a woman made of black rubber, the image exploits racial stereotypes relating to the origin of the raw material. In a similar vein, Depero’s advertisements for Presbitero pencils display a range of female figures, made of pencils which combine to form their torso and limbs, choreographed into a dance. The same motif is used in Depero’s advertisement for the San Pellegrino tablet, a digestive aid and laxative. Here, a character made of connected metal boxes stands at the top of a ladder, unblocking a pipe with a plunger, on the end of which is fixed a San Pellegrino tablet. The metallic, human-like figure performs an action which is also the intended function of the tablet.

The contrast between Depero’s image and the long line of San Pellegrino posters published in the late 19th century could not be more stark. Since the 1880s, San Pellegrino had invested in advertising in the form of posters produced by renowned artists. For decades, the style of these posters was inspired by belle-epoque aesthetic values, exemplified by the works of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (Fasce, Bini & Gaudenzi 2016). Whether they were advertising the company’s mineral water or digestive remedies, the San Pellegrino posters would typically depict women wearing elaborate dresses and hats, often in ornate gardens or before luxurious mansions, looking

directly at the viewer. While the brand name would be displayed prominently in cursive font, the product or its function would typically be absent from the poster.

In Depero's poster for San Pellegrino, the association between human and product is the subject of the poster, and is both complex and multi-layered. The character is constructed with constituent parts of the digestive tablet and the pumping action of the character is akin to the action of the product in a more literal sense. The plumber-figure represents the San Pellegrino digestive tablet 'coming alive'.

In the above-cited cases the human being is *made of* a product; the human body is manipulated to suggest the object's human qualities. On the one hand, the product becomes a commodity through its appropriation of human characteristics; on the other, the body is commodified by its metamorphosis into a product, and therefore by its assimilation of the product's qualities. Ostensibly, the purpose of this complex commodification of body and product is to enhance the consumer's identification with the personified product by diminishing the physical and conceptual distance between the two. These figures therefore all manage to combine the consumer and the product. They represent the beginning and the end of the transaction that is commodity fetishism, which aims at investing a product with super-imposed qualities – qualities that will be further invested in the consumer, once the product is purchased.

The futurists' alignment of performance and commercial products seems to anticipate elements of Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of culture as just another form of capital. Writing in 1979, Bourdieu maintained that cultural capital works alongside economic capital and could thus be traded, in accordance with a movable exchange rate. He observed how individuals could manipulate their bodily and intellectual self so as to align themselves with a pre-existing "taste", or cultural code, which itself has a specific (though flexible) place in a stratified class system. The principle which generates the taste of a given class across the whole range of fields or domains is what Bourdieu calls the 'habitus'. Bourdieu's theory of cultural relativism identifies clothing, gait, accents, accessories, hair styles, books held and read (whether in public or private) and so on, as objective representations of the social self. The closer an individual's taste is to the 'habitus', the higher its contextual value. The human body and mind are represented – even replaced – by objects and codes which allow the individual to trade themselves into "a sense of one's place […]

their distinction between social neighbours" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 471). The accumulated combination of such codes – or what we may call someone's individual culture – is what Bourdieu defines as 'cultural capital'. Indeed, Bourdieu famously stated: "culture is the ultimate fetish" (p. 310).

The connection with the futurists' advertising is clear. In their advertising enterprise, as in their performance, the futurists attempted to merge the human figure with the product-object, and inversely, by engaging their riotous reactions, to also allow spectators to depict themselves as futurist. In this way, they intended their advertised products to become part of their consumers' 'habitus' and 'cultural capital'.

The interaction between the commodity and the self is crucial to futurist praxis. A key theoretical document for futurism is the prophetic 1915 manifesto co-written by Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero and Enrico Prampolini (the latter's name however doesn't appear on the original), *La ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* (Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe). The text seeks to construct a new aesthetic lexicon with terms such as 'plastic complex', which is an example of an 'artificial living-being' with a 'transformable outfit'. This figure is then to be displayed in performances named *Réclames fonomotoplastiche* (Phonomotorplastic Advertisements), a term which, interestingly, aligns the form of performance and advertising. This manifesto is ostensibly directing futurist performance towards the replacement of the human actor with an object-actor. The artificial 'living-being' is a character whose principal qualities are determined by the object it embodies. As the object and the human are incorporated within the same dimension, the artificial 'living-being' bore transformable outfits that assumed the mystical, magical qualities of the commodity, which absorbs the content of the product within its shell.

This is the theatrical dimension of Depero's object-human figures as seen in his advertising, as well as serving as the premise for the staging of ensuing futurist performances. A sort of kinetic sculpture, the plastic complex (of which the artificial 'living-being' is an apt example) is one of Depero's most significant contributions to futurist theatre. Its core elements can also be found in Depero's costume designs for Igor Stravinsky's *The Nightingale*, which were commissioned by impresario Sergey Diaghilev in 1916. Beyond clothing in floral patterns for the dancers, Depero devised marionettes which would move alongside the dancers on stage. These movable figures were often humanoid in form, and constituted specific characters relevant to the narrative, such as

the savages, who were provided with weaponry. The quality of these designs led Pierre Lerat, who was previewing *The Nightingale* for *Sic* magazine in 1917, to comment on the "dessins inedit" by praising Depero's "mise en scène des plus curieuses, et encore des costumes d'une extraordinaire fantasie"[149] (cited in Beretta 1999, p. 18).

Although all the original models of these dancing marionettes have since been destroyed, photographs of the performances still exist. One clear image, entitled *Depero futurista*, published only for the first time in the catalogue of the *Museo di Arte Moderna di Rovereto e Trento* (MART) exhibition, in 1999, depicts a human-like figure, which is rather reminiscent in its posture, of Boccioni's sculpted *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. However, Depero's dancer is covered, from head to toe, in floral and mechanical appendages, from head to toe, of varying size, colour and positioning. Indeed, the human shape is merely hinted at. Thus, this figure of a 'plastic complex' visually represents the point at which Depero's designs went beyond the human form and chose the mechanical for dramatic effect.

Depero's own references to the fully-designed set suggest that the marionettes were to hold an equal – if not superior – on-stage presence to that of the dancers. The likelihood of this is strongly suggested not only by the marionettes' size, but also by their impressive number and by the fact that (as indicated by their positioning on stage and their actions) they were designed to move alongside the human bodies of the dancers. A photograph of the set, held in MART's reference library, pictures the marionettes towering above human dancers, at an estimated height of three metres. While all of the human dancers held their arms near their hips, when photographed, many of the marionettes displayed flailing limbs (these were not simply arms, but a fantastical array of accoutrements, including guns, shields, flowers and wings), which took up most of the available performance space. Unlike the handful of human dancers, these figures were everywhere to be seen: on the steps leading to the auditorium stage right, downstage, upstage and also painted on the backdrop. The artistic and narrative relevance of these figures is therefore not in support of the humans' dancing, but rather central and supported by human movement.

[149] original designs […] most peculiar mise en scene and also costumes of extraordinary creativity.

More interestingly still, Depero continued this motif in later costumes, set designs and choreographies. These were

> abbozzate di getto nei suoi taccuini tra il 1920 e il 1921 a oggi ancora inedite. […] Personaggi imbottiti; personaggi vestiti; personaggi luminosi in tela con luce interna; personaggi in cornici (tondi e quadrati), torniti e a scatola; personaggi a molle, di matite.[150]
>
> (MART 2009, p. 386)

The physicality and objectivity of these characters (rather than props) is an interesting development since the objects chosen by Depero were all utilitarian, commercial items, for some of which Depero had produced advertisements. A case in point is his advertising tapestry for the firm: Masks Pencils, which was purchased by the director of the Champs-Elysees Theatre in Paris in 1925. Again, this enormous tapestry can be seen only at MART, in the catalogue to their 1999 Depero exhibition. It boldly displays two human-like figures on a stage-like platform, captured as if in motion, with their heads tilted, legs wide apart and their arms pointing upwards. The item for purchase – the pencil – becomes a dancer to express a surplus artistic value. Therefore, rather than being drafted merely to represent an object, these designs constitute an early attempt at embedding the magic of the commodity into performance.

Depero's use of plastic ballet costumes based on advertising designs is an indication of a tenuous – if relevant at all – distinction between advertising and performance. When engaged in the promotion of "una serie di articoli di largo consumo come spumante, scarpe, cioccolata solubile, ombrelli, materiali di costruzione ecc., decide di servirsi dei suoi personaggi del teatro plastico"[151] (MART 2009, p. 315). The influence here runs both ways. Just as his advertising designs became costumes for his performances, Depero's theatre also clearly influenced his advertising. He even devised a theatrical motif for his famous Campari advertisements. Inspired by his plastic ballets, *La danza del Cordial Campari* (The Dance of Cordial Campari) depicted

[150] roughly sketched in his notebooks between 1920 and 1921 and as yet unpublished. […] Stuffed characters; dressed characters; luminous characters with lights within shades; characters in frames (round and square), wrought and boxed; characters on springs, made of pencil.
[151] a series of products for mass consumption, such as sparkling wine, shoes, soluble chocolate, umbrellas, construction materials etc., decided to make use of characters from his plastic theatre.

characters that combined the human form and the product. As part of the performance, which was enacted at several corporate events hosted by Campari, masked actors would drink Campari, dressed in costumes which reflected the isosceles triangle of the Campari bottle, which Depero had himself designed earlier. The scenographic sketches displayed in the exhibition catalogue also suggest the movement of the dancers through the use of straight lines parallel to the supposed direction of the movement. These lines indicate that the figures' dance was to follow the isosceles shape of the bottle itself. Therefore, Depero's Campari figures were consumer products in their shape, costume and movement. The human actor within the Campari-bottle costume is as irrelevant to the performance as the material, utilitarian value of a product is irrelevant to its surplus value. It is the commodity – and the emotive surplus value it offers – which itself becomes the focus of the performance.

Depero bridged the gap between performance and advertising by acting upon the strong analogies between the two. His characters are his products and his audience are his consumers. After all, it was Depero who predicted in 1929 that "Tutta l'arte dell'avvenire sarà fatalmente pubblicitaria"[152] (cited in Crispolti & Scudiero 1989, p. 18). It should come as no surprise, then, that his home/museum, Casa d'arte Depero (Depero Art House) in Rovereto, closely resembles (in terms of architecture and interior decoration) both a theatre and a commercial shop.

For the museum's reopening in 2009, Rovereto City Council gave concrete form to the designs that Depero had sketched, but never completed, for his museum, by refurbishing his ground floor entrance-hall into the Caffé Campari as he had envisioned it. This space, which is laid out much like a theatre's front-of-house, is intensely commercial, with a café-counter and shelves displaying merchandise[153]. The interior decoration features rows of Campari bottles as well as incorporating their triangular geometry into the furniture and counter-tops. From the triangular, Campari-styled stools, to the various photographic images of Depero, on display, this space appears entirely themed – one might say branded. The provision of programmes, outlining the contents of the museum, in chronological order, coupled with the fact that the museum is accessed by climbing up steps to a large hall with an auditorium, all add to the intention of preparing the

[152] All the art of the future will inevitably be advertising.
[153] Appendix 15.

spectator for a theatrical experience. As the entrance to his life's-work, Depero's museum seems particularly fitting, since the convergence of the spectacle and the commercial is the distinguishing trademark of his work, and indeed, of futurism itself.

Theatregoing and consumerism

Recent developments in audience theory offer novel perspectives into the intricate processes involved in our interaction with both the arts and commodities. In an effort to explore the cognitive impact of performance, Bruce McConachie explains that "research suggests that the adult brain is responsive, even in terms of structure, to experience", and that experiences which can affect brains physiologically include "beliefs and expectations, including placebo effects" (2008, p. 30). From here, McConachie draws some far-reaching, yet questionable, implications on audience theory. He declares that theatregoing "is a kind of placebo; the 'pill' we swallow as spectators when we engage in a performance allows us to believe in certain realities" (2008, p. 30). That the brain can be susceptible to the illusion of placebo is not in question, but that this same process should takes place when voluntarily attending a performance, with the expectation of witnessing fictitious representation, seems less credible.

As Ernst Gombrich reminds us, real illusion requires the deception to be achieved through a dramatic loss of control, "where the beholder's reaction fuses with the object and so transforms it that it becomes increasingly hard to specify exactly what is really there" (1996, p. 148). Rather than illusion, what most spectators experience, however deeply involved they are in the performance they are witnessing, is the powerfully suggestive effect of make-believe. Importantly, this can only happen with a degree of consent. In visual art, Gombrich explains, when painters "had to cast around for means to strengthen the illusion of twilight, it only worked when the context set up an expectation among the audience which reinforced the artist's handiwork" (1960, p. 173). It is not placebo that helps spectators gain a successful arousal of emotions, but rather a "level of self-consciousness which permits the willing suspension of disbelief" (Campbell 2005, p. 76). Both the consumer and the theatregoer may need to suspend disbelief in order to gain maximum satisfaction from their respective consumption, but this is instigated by themselves. Allowing ourselves to not disbelieve is in our own interest, as a state of constant disbelief, of utter

scepticism, “robs symbols of their automatic power” (Campbell 2005, p. 76), and therefore necessarily weakens the emotional engagement we can draw from symbols. Just as theatre can present a cultural product which belies its objective reality and operates on super-imposed narratives, the commodity and its advertising actively hide their utility value and flaunt super-imposed qualities, but neither completely fools the consumer. Rather, the consumer fulfils their imagination through their consumption or spectatorship.

Successful advertising generates an enthusiasm about a product, which aligns the emotive veneer of the commodity to the emotive desires of the consumer. It operates on a performance discourse, which relies upon the projection of characters and narratives over products – all designed to impact on the spectator’s emotive experience. This enchantment is closely aligned with the state described in the key manifesto *L’Immaginazione senza fili* (Wireless Imagination) as “la facoltà rarissima di inebbriarsi della vita e di inebbriarla di noi stessi […] di connettersi al nuovo senso del mondo che si fonda sul completo rinnovamento della sensibilità degli oggetti ed umana”[154] (cited in Barsotti 1990, p. 24). One can infer that Marinetti was here hailing the importance of the commodity in the modern world, as was suggested by his visionary alignment of the sensibility of objects to that of humanity. The proximity of these two, expressed even syntactically, hints at the defining characteristic of the commodity and its fetish. Marinetti also homed in on the enchanting effect of the commodity by expressing his binary inebriation with modernity and with the inebriation of modernity. This two-way process is a novel way of conceiving the discourse of enchantment, as it resonates with both performance and advertising – both of which rely on the response of an audience for their success.

What, then, is the connection between the consumption of a commodity and the consumption of a futurist performance, with all the avant-garde rebelliousness of the latter? Julia Walker may help us understand this process by explaining the concept of liminality in performance. She maintains that theatre “is an art form devoted to oscillation, offering us a glimpse of the world as it can be imagined […] and an experience of the world within our body’s viscera” (2003, p. 152). This resonates with Bennett’s concept of the affect, an impact that she attributes to advertising and

[154] The rare ability to inebriate oneself with life, and to inebriate life with oneself […] of making a connection with a new understanding of the world that bases itself on the complete renewal of the sensibility of objects and humanity.

commodity fetishism as well as theatregoing. Bennett suggests that the heightened receptive, reactive stage, which can be achieved by the audience in an aesthetic experience, catalyses the shift from theory to practice. This is what Schiller described as "the transition from a passive to an active state of thinking and willing" (1995, p. 78). A reaction from the audience is necessary to both futurist performance and advertising – revolt and consumption respectively. Thus, if a practical change or reaction is sought amongst the audience (and effect that both futurist performance and advertising invariably pursue), it becomes important to instigate physicalised, unexpected impulses. This physicalised reaction is to be found at the root of all advertising stunts and, in terms of performance, in every futurist *serata*.

The need for advertising to trigger a physical reaction became evident in the late 19th century in promotional stunts such as the locomotive crash, organised by William George Crush, to promote his new railway line. In Texas, on 15th September 1896, spectators were invited to witness two steam locomotives in a head-on collision at high speed. Crush's explicit aim was to capture the morbid fascination with accidents that he had noted among the American public, so he offered them the chance to stand close to the railway line to experience the "smash-up bonanza" at close quarters. Such was the audience's and Crush's focus on the physicalised action that three spectators died and scores were injured by the flying debris after the collision led to an unexpectedly violent, steam-fuelled explosion (HistoryNet 2016).

Perhaps on a smaller scale, Marinetti's famous car crash, which inspired and gave birth to the opening of the founding futurist manifesto, became a source of street theatre. Marinetti, in his attempt to capture its potential, used linguistic imagery to hyperbolise the event: "Quando sorsi — sciupato, sporco schifoso — da sotto la macchina catapultata, sentii una gioia bollente bianca metallica attraversare il mio cuore!"[155] Then he capitalised on the accident itself, and "subsequently converted [it] into a mythic event" (Poggi 2009, p. 274). Marinetti also ensured that the event and the crowd it had attracted were photographed, with him in prominent – even proud – positioning amongst the wreckage. Both Crush and Marinetti had recognised the excitement that emerges as spectators come close to powerful objects, produced by modernity. This is not necessarily a lust for

[155] When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!

projections of danger, but a reaction to the unimaginable impact of the machine, the power of which went beyond all expectations. Crush and Marinetti, together with their audiences, felt that sense of wonder at objects going further than their objecthood and wearing an emotive, value-laden mantel – which is precisely the trick of the commodity.

Especially through their performance, the futurists affected their audiences, often orchestrating revolts specifically designed to heighten the affect – as was demonstrated in chapter 5. Countering the claims of the alienating impact of consumerism, made by Marxist theory, Helen Grehan applies Levinasian philosophy to performance to reminds us that even in consumerist societies, theatre can facilitate face-to-face engagement. The interactive context of theatre allows

> the saying to operate in performance alongside (or underneath) the said, and together, they generate an environment where the spectators and the performance or the performers are bound together in a process of exchange. Although individual vulnerability is exposed by the saying, it is important to understand that each spectator exists.
>
> (2009, pp. 14-15)

According to the critical perspectives influenced by Levinas' philosophy, vulnerability and bodily encounters (both characteristic of performance) represent a first step towards the re-humanisation of an alienated society. Thus, the visceral, face-to-face assaults that the futurists imposed upon their audiences, during their performances, may well have served to engage, rather than distance, an audience. This is an important consideration, in view of the counter-intuitive obstinacy with which futurist performances sought to disturb their spectators once they were listening. For instance, the futurists can be seen provoking dissent when in Venice with the manifesto: *Contro Venezia passatista* (Against Passéist Venice). As explored in depth in chapter 4, the futurists sensed that nothing would spur an audience's emotions more than an attack on the places that define it. So the futurists, in their performances, regularly insulted the theatre and city that the audience inhabited. As Marinetti probably predicted, these criticisms would spur the audience into protest, and often riot. There are few better examples, in performance, of Bennett's concept of the affect, or of Levinas' face-to-face encounters.

The connections between futurist performance, advertising and the commodity are therefore layered, and both practical and theoretical. Futurist performance blurred the distinction between consumer and spectator on a number of levels. Firstly, it conceived of its audience in the same way that a commercial company would conceive of its consumers. Secondly, Marinetti the playwright would pen dramas which elevated the stage-object to a commodity. Finally, the movement as a whole would promote itself and its performance events according to the theoretical principles which underpin the commodity. Perhaps most importantly, the overall impact of the performance would instigate similar affective reactions to those experienced when submitting to the lure of the commodity. In this way, futurist performance practised the enchanting experience of consumerism upon its audience.

7. FUTURIST BRANDING AND THE MACHINE

The term marketing marshals many different functions involved in the process of selling a product, including publicity, advertising, product delivery and public relations. Chapter 2 investigates the creative methods the futurists adopted in generating publicity; chapter 3 explores the futurists' direct involvement in the advertising and marketing industries and how these influenced their artistic modus operandi. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal in greater detail how the processes of marketing flourished in various forms of futurist performance. What this thesis has not as yet explored, and perhaps what makes the futurists' practice most prescient and visionary, is the futurists' forays into branding: the most recent significant development of marketing theory and practice. The distinctions between publicity (becoming known through media or social reporting), advertising (intentionally spreading awareness of a product), marketing (identifying customers and rendering products ready for sale) and branding (developing and managing the core concept of a product) set the latter apart both historically and conceptually. Branding is a complex and abstract process that harnesses symbolic meanings and interactions between producer and consumer in order to develop a unique 'personality' which can then be applied to an extended series of coherent products. Through a process of branding, though not necessarily consciously and explicitly, futurists were able to create a cluster of identity-laden meanings that both distinguished their movement from others, and propagated their brand through their aesthetic production.

Before we can accept that futurists built and managed a brand of their own, it's worth noting that the understanding and practice of branding has been and continues to be in flux. Some of the first historical uses of the term branding can be found in agricultural contexts, where Norse language adapted the verb *brandr* (meaning to burn or ignite), to describe the process of applying hot irons to livestock to forge indelible identifiable marks on their skin. The mark (a Saussurian signifier), which through ironmongery could be applied identically on many heads of stock, served to prevent misappropriation and also eased the process of trade in busy markets. The etymology of branding points to the act of lighting a fire, or burning (with which indeed it shares its linguistic roots). The semantic origins of the commercial brand are also ancient. Wilson Bastos and Sidney

J. Levy, in their research of marketing history, document branding through its ancient historical origins in human civilisations, including tribal practices involving body paint or tattooing to indicate social status and belonging (2012, p. 350). Even before Norse linguistically aligned the practice to the act of burning (a semantic leap with significant, multi-layered impacts, as will be explored below), the practice of marking products was commonplace. As Peter Kastberg explains in his history of branding: “The phenomenon of branding is probably as old as organized trade itself; it could in fact be as old as human territorial behaviour”. Among the examples he cites is the fact that in “Ancient Athens the wine and oil merchants would put a stamp on their goods in order to identify them” (2010, p. 1).

A brand was therefore, in its ancient inception, a visual mark, or logo, the main function of which was to define to whom a product belonged. This understanding is consistent with the American Marketing Association’s definition of a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Dinnie 2008, p. 14). In this sense, a brand carries no other intrinsic meaning other than the product’s provenance and identity – unless of course that provenance and identity carried with it additional meanings.

Eric Shaw’s revealing research into renaissance commercial practices outlines how it was in the 16th century (when, incidentally, the enduring mantra of marketing: “buy cheape, sell deare”, was coined) that salespeople’s marketing started focusing explicitly on the concept of reputation – but that of the salesperson rather than that of the product (2015, p. 397). Prior to this development, the product’s functionality and utilitarian value determined its marketing potential. The foregrounding of personal reputation as a selling point, however, approximated the product and the salesperson, as it aimed to cast onto the product the qualities of the merchant. Reputational qualities typically included honesty, coherence, reliability, transparency and religiosity. Renaissance marketers therefore developed an understanding of the role that the producer’s or salesperson’s own reputation plays in affecting the perception of the product beyond its function.

Josiah Wedgewood, the famed English neoclassical potter who initiated the eponymous style of crockery, seemed to strategically develop an early sense of commercial branding for his pottery business by offering hundreds of pieces of an intricately handcrafted tea set to Queen

Charlotte for free. Taking him months of work, and for no payment, the Queen's Ware Service nonetheless served Wedgewood well. As soon as they were accepted in 1765, he began to label his everyday pottery items: 'Queen's Ware Wedgewood'. Then, eight years later, Catherine the Great (Queen of Russia), after visiting Charlotte, commissioned her own royal set: the Frog Service. For years thereafter, Wedgewood's sales of smaller pottery items sky-rocketed both in England and Russia (Wedgewood 2016). Wedgewood intentionally sought to apply the aura of royalty to his products by offering gifts in exchange for a name. He sensed the importance of the emotive associations attached to royalty, and invested his time into associating this to his crockery. Wedgewood's surname, and brand, has endured ever since. In this sense, a brand works much like a surname: a unique identifier to be applied to any number of progeny.

Early versions of the Koran make use of the term *firebrand*, which somewhat confusingly converts to the tautological *firefire*. In its literal context firebrand signified that which most imminently ignites a fire, such as a dry piece of flammable timber. Yet its meaning later spread and became anthropomorphised as "an agitator – someone who creates unrest or strife as in aggressively promoting a cause" (Bastos & Levy 2012, p. 351). Surely firebrand is a fitting term for Marinetti, whose disruptive fomenter persona was central to his modus operandi, and particularly to futurist performance practice. As explored in chapter 2, the futurists' incendiary (and Austinian) performativity held the properties of the firebrand in its destructiveness and propagation. It is no surprise then that A. L. Rees, when exploring the futurist methodology, would state that "everything they touched on they ignited" (2011, p. 26). The very inception of futurism was a metaphorical singeing of a brand, as it established an identity radically, even explosively, unlike others. Bastos and Levy characterise branding as coming from "a fire that carries intensity of meaning. It generates feelings of partisanship […] because it announces identity and distinction" (2012, p. 352). So when Marinetti conceived of futurism (in circumstances the significance of which will be later explored in this chapter) he sought to achieve identity in a competitive market of cultural movements that would later be aggregated under the collective noun of modernism, including expressionism, constructivism and cubism. The context was therefore ripe for futurists to pursue branding initiatives in order to distinguish themselves from the other contemporary 'isms'.

Despite the noun first appearing (in its relevant meaning) in 1922 (Harper 2015), it wasn't until the second half of the 20th century – and therefore after futurism had ceased to exist as a movement – that a more articulate and mature understanding of branding developed. From the 1950s onwards, gradually the industry's understanding of branding went beyond a logo or a name. Whereas a logo can represent and signify a brand, the two are not the same thing. A logo on a product performs the identifying functions on behalf of the brand, but it is not the brand in itself. Thinking of a brand as a simple image or word is a reductionist view that focuses on the product to analyse the brand, which is much like focusing on a leaf to analyse a tree. A product is an off-shoot of the brand. It depicts an embodiment of it, but it remains a distant offspring to the parent. David Mercer explains that a trademark, or protected sign, "is the tangible item of intellectual property – the logo, name, design, or image – on which the brand rests. But brands also incorporate intangibles such as identity, associations, and personality" (1998, p. 18). Thus a brand is both a sign indicating its Saussurian denotative literal, naturalised signified content, but also a potent symbol which carries further sociocultural, emotional or ideological meanings. A brand is therefore a fire of sorts – but a fire that performs powerful social, economic and even magical actions. Depending on its use, branding can grant a product birth, sublimation, fertility and identity.

This more complex perspective of the role and impact of branding on the way customers react to products evolved through the work of theorists such as Marshall McLuhan, Burleigh Gardner and Sidney Levy, as well as practitioners such as David Ogilvy. Gardner and Levy's influential 1955 article: 'The Product and the Brand', published in the *Harvard Business Review*, has been credited with coining the term "brand image" and delineating the difference between advertising and branding, explaining that "Every advertisement is part of the long-term investment in the personality of the brand" (cited in Clark, Brock & Stewart 1994, p. 28). Gardner and Levy also presciently explained that "people buy things not only for what they do, but also for what they mean" (cited in Bastos & Levy 2012, p. 355). The demotion of a product's utilitarian value below its emotive and symbolic value was clearly a major conceptual step, which helped define the value and semantic-laden constituents of brands, and foregrounded the brand's centrality in the act of selling. Among professional advertising copywriters in the 1960s, David Ogilvy (Ogilvy & Mather 2016) probably understood the maturing role of branding best. He grasped that advertising –

indeed marketing as a whole – serves the brand in a relationship that is not reciprocal. Advertising nourishes, shapes and maintains a brand; this is its first function, even above the function of selling. While the marketers job involves placing the product, its functionality and price at point of sale, it is the brand that attracts consumers to the point of sale in the first place.

Clearly, then, contemporary branding is a concept and practice belonging to a time and place – as most concepts are. The presence of the term in published literature, as recorded in Google N Gram, rose steadily from 1945 to 1980, whereupon it steepened dramatically (NGram Viewer 2013). The noun's prominence coincides therefore with the economic rise of late capitalism and its economic bedfellow postmodernism. Indeed, K. Moore and S. Reid have argued that the evolution of branding as a concept could only have developed in the 20th century as it required the emergence of the technology that enabled mass media (2008, p. 422). Nonetheless the term, despite its ubiquity, remains surprisingly nebulous. In the 1960s Gardner and Levy hazarded an early definition of the contemporary brand as "a governing personality that is unified and coherently meaningful" (cited in Bastos & Levy 2012, p. 355). This definition is helpful in that it highlights the emotive constituent of a brand, but is misleading in the way it presents a brand as entirely controlled by its owners: governed, coherent and unified… much like and advertisement.

Unlike an advertisement, however, a brand lives primarily not on a billboard, nor the copyrighter's desk, but in the mind of the consumer. As Kastberg observes, "the brand acts as a mental anchor" (2010, p. 1), suggesting therefore that it sits within the metaphorical ocean of the consumer's mind. A more nuanced and contemporary understanding of a brand is offered by C. Mcrae, S. Parkinson and J. Sheerman, who argue that "a brand represents a unique combination of characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning that is inextricably linked to the brand" (1995, p. 14). More elegant definitions come from Joanne Lynch and Leslie Chernatony, who define branding as "clusters of functional and emotional values" (2004, p. 14), or Broos' poetic: "symphonies of meaning" (2012, p. 376). As nuanced and perceptive as these definitions are, they still overlook an important and complex element of contemporary branding: agency. The metaphorical 'symphony' quite accurately characterises the brand as a cacophony produced by multiple, overlaying instruments, but it also implies direction and a script. Certainly companies invest considerable resources into growing,

protecting and managing their brands, but this doesn't by default make them the sole controlling agent of the brand's meaning and value.

Many of the semantic and conceptual developments of branding listed above occurred after futurism, and can therefore only be applied to the movement retrospectively. This poses some methodological challenges, because the futurists could not then have been explicitly conscious of their branding practices in the same terms that would define branding three decades later. The ensuing discussion will not therefore claim that futurism understood and practised branding in the same way that practitioners may do today. Rather, it will observe whether thinking and methods carried out by the futurists are similar to contemporary branding praxis, and what the nature of that similarity reveals. In order to do so, it is first helpful to frame branding through its development across modernity and postmodernity.

Brand beyond the modern

The aspect of contemporary branding that most distinguishes it from marketing is the extent to which consumers can control and shape a brand's effectiveness and processes. Perceiving a brand as a product that a company sells, betrays a binary perspective that pits the producer as a creator against the consumer as the recipient in a relationship underpinned by the capitalist adversarial tension of exploitation. This perspective is a modernist perspective, where the desire to understand is driven by formulaic separation for the purpose of static analysis – even when sometimes the reality is much more fluid, interdependent and unpredictable. Fuat Firat and Alladi Venkatesh observe that the majority of our critical engagement with consumption is perceived through the frame of modernist systematic analysis – a perspective reinforced by the fact that capitalism was most influentially critiqued by Marx's broadly modernist eye. Yet the authors argue that modernism, in its relative rigidity, its insistence on duality and its reliance on immovable meta-narratives, just won't do if we want to accurately understand the nature of consumption in contemporary, late capitalist times.

As Firat & Venkatesh explain, the critique of branding has been holding back our understanding of its real processes back: "Nowhere are the paradoxes and dualities of modernism more evident than in its consumer ethos" (1995, p. 242). The most obvious of these dualities is the

edict that pits the consumer and the producer in opposition to each other, the same edict that frames the producer as the strategist who creates value by fooling a gullible and entrapped consumer into destroying value. Instead, a postmodern lens, heralding a re-enchantment with the commodity and the unpredictable fluidity of late capitalism, "elevates consumption to a level on par with production, where consuming is also viewed as a value-producing activity" (p. 242). This perspective is much more relevant to an understanding of how contemporary consumers interact with brands, and it echoes Colin Campbell's assertion that imagination is the "dynamic mechanism at the heart of modern consumerism" (2005, p. 8). When consumers purchase a branded product, they do not do so in isolation of the socio-cultural context in which they are immersed. If brands are really symphonies of meaning, then we know that they must relate to other meanings in order to signify. As Keith Dinnie argues, "Brands of course do not exist in a vacuum, and to be successful they must coexist effectively with the prevailing zeitgeist… through creative interactions with their environment" (2011, p. 14). The way brands operate in a market is therefore, rather than the mere utterance of meaning, much closer to a conversation.

Whereas consumers may buy products repeatedly, they are not loyal to products, but rather to brands. Clearly though, it is not specifically the brand's name or logo that consumers follow; rather their loyalty (dependency, even) is to the images and symbols that the brand's meanings produce when consumed. From the point of purchase and, crucially, into its use, a brand's semantic cluster is appropriated and reshaped by the consumer for their own social positioning. As Guy Debord presciently explained, the shift from capitalist to late capitalist societies is witnessed through "a general sliding from having into *appearing*, from which all actual 'having' must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function" (2002, p. 16). Debord's appearance runs parallel to Campbell's, who explains consumption as "the desire to experience in reality the dramas which they have already enjoyed in imagination" (2005, p. 90). With this in mind, then, brands are not so much what brand designers put into them, but what consumers, read into them. Both parties employ agency in the commercial exchange. Brand management is therefore about shaping an ongoing emotional relationship with consumers.

This exchange is enabled by postmodernity, the context within which brands have emerged as supreme cultural entities, where "culture is so ubiquitous that it, as it were, seeps out of the

superstructure and comes to infiltrate, and then take over, the infrastructure itself" (Lash and Lury 2007, p. 6). Nowhere is this model more evident than in the web 2.0 commercial model, where "it is consumers, or pro-sumers, who are often co-creators and promoters of online content, including videos pictures of viral memes and comments" (Davis 2013, pp. 39–40). New media audiences are rarely passive consumers of services. Their active participation, especially as content creators, can make bottom–up processes of consumer self–organisation a reality. The production of meaning is no longer exclusive to the creative class, but rather occurs at the moment of consumption, "the moment in the process where symbolic exchanges that determine and reproduce the social code occur" (Firat & Venkatesh 1995, p. 251). The dialogue at the centre of the consumption of a brand is what makes it so pervasive in contemporary societies. Much more than simply an identifier for a product, brands have become an identifier for the self. Through their consumption, consumers use brands as "learning and communication devices through which to define and convey aspects of our selves, of our national identity and of the groups we desire to be associated with and those we wish to be disassociated from" (Bell 2013, p. 359). Brands act as identity lightning rods; consumers' endless need to shaping their identity can be channelled through brands and their consumption. So brands help shape who we are and in turn we help shape what a brand is, by virtue of who we are when we consume it before others.

The futurist brand

Where, then, does futurism fit in the complex, fluid, late capitalist exchange that is the brand? At first glance, the movement's context (and the fact that its existence was so significantly tied to its historical, political and geographical moment) distances futurism from contemporary branding practice, the definition of which wouldn't even emerge until several decades later. Yet upon closer observation, these distancing factors are not so definite. Futurism was among the first widespread avant-garde movements of the modernist enterprise, and as such embodies many of the destabilising impulses which helped generate modernism. The impulses of early modernism are, counterintuitively, actually more similar to the characteristics of postmodernism than to those of modernism itself. This is best explained by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who famously declared that "postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state" (1984, p. 79). Whereas late

modernism (exemplified by the pared-sown aesthetic of the likes of Samuel Beckett) sought to reduce its focus to a clinical exploration of the human condition in modernity, early modernism sought to expand its focus in reaction to the arrival of modernity. Futurists, who were constant generators of theories and methods aiming to achieve their self-promotion, certainly fit the early modernist mould. The possibility of futurists exploring the entirely new space of postmodern branding (even if without its language) is therefore not so far-fetched.

Even a cursory look at futurist practice reveals that there are many aspects of it that befit the characteristics of contemporary branding. The first act of the brand, and that which gave the practice its name, is its ability to generate, propagate and mark its identity on contact – like a fire. The term "futurism" itself, then, functions as a powerful moment of conception, and follows many of the best practices of branding, including the use of nomenclature in new contexts so that it is not weakened by its pre-existence. Futurism as a brand name helps to orient audience expectation as the movement colonises multiple fields of cultural activity. The futurist practice of penning manifestoes for dozens of disciplines – each containing the adjective 'futurist' – is an easily-recognisable example of the sub-branding strategy of applying coherent characteristics to a series of products in order to leverage the reach of brand's value. This is the same strategy developed by corporations such as Virgin, which originated in the financial industry, but which has since branded services in the aviation, entertainment and telecommunication industries among others.

Clues to futurist branding are not only found in their sub-branding practice. The willingness futurists had in making themselves known knew few bounds. As we have seen, they developed an Austinian performative discourse in their *serate* that incited a rebellious audience reaction. This in itself led to further publicity obtained through the reportage of the press. Marinetti's firebrand presentation in the *serate* instigated a ripple effect that catalysed the audience into rioting with futurist fervour, embodying futurist principles in arenas beyond the original stage of the event. This practice developed a reputation that futurists then exploited to achieve sell-out tours, and it ostensibly operates on the premise that the consumer will identify with the brand's personality. The brand's personality, though multiplied through the audience, is also destabilised as it is spread; its identity made flexible through its shared authorship. It operates, in other words, much like contemporary branding. These observations that connect futurism and branding are, so far, but

cursory observations, which need further questioning. For instance, if futurists did engage in the construction and the management of a brand in its contemporary sense, what exactly is the futurist brand? In the absence of explicit futurist theorising on branding, how can its identity, personality and image be defined? What motifs function as common denominators of futurist theory and practice, significant enough to be used as semantic identifiers of futurism?

A few clusters of meaning jump to mind: rebellion against the status quo; the exaltation of war as an energising, modernising force; the celebration of urbanisation; the glorification of Italian nationalism; the fascination with mechanical and electrical technology; the obsession with change and constant renewal. All of these can be considered accurate descriptors of futurism, and they certainly helped futurists build their own identity, but not all among them were explicitly expressed by futurists as the defining identifiers of their enterprise. Importantly, not all of these clusters of meanings can even coexist in the brand. A brand is a synthesised reduction of an organisation's core meanings rather than a list of its multiple variations. As Al and Laura Ries explain, "The power of a brand is inversely proportional to its scope […] model expansion undermines the brand name in the mind of the consumer" (2009, p. 3). This equation takes some nuanced interpretation. It's not necessarily a brand producing several products that undermines itself. After all, Coca Cola sell fourteen different varieties of drinks featuring its name. Rather, it is an attempt to embody more than one set of values or symbols that dilutes brands. However, many its products (or sub-brands), the brand meaning must remain unique. The problem emerges when, for example, "companies such as Chevrolet try to signify too many meanings: a Chevrolet is a large, small, cheap, expensive car… or truck […] running separate advertising programs for each of its models" (Ries & Ries 2009, p. 3). A brand dictates brevity: two or three characteristics at most. A process of elimination needs to be applied to the elements of futurism in order to reach the core of the futurist brand.

Of the futurist motifs listed above, some are less fitting or widespread than others. For instance, the characteristics of Italian nationalism that futurists celebrated were very specific. Their nationalism was not unconditional. Futurists spent much time, in their manifestoes, distancing themselves from the traits of Italian culture for which the country is most known: the cultural heirloom of its history and arts. Futurists even rejected Italy's militarised imperial past that

Mussolini resurrected in his attempt at invigorating Italian nationalism: ancient Rome. Italy's own set of core values can, as Dinnie argues, be considered a brand in itself: "nations have always branded themselves – through their symbols, currency, anthems, names and so on … it is just the terminology of nation branding that is new, rather than the practice itself" (2011, p. 20). It makes sense that branding should be closely associated to national identity – because we know that branding is an exercise in identity-building. If that is the case, then Italy's brand surely lives in its past. The extent to which Italian nationalism and futurism cohere can therefore be identified by attempting a match between the brand of the country and that of the movement. The match between a future-oriented movement, who put the future in their very name, and a nation whose past defines its greatness, is clearly not close. The problem with Italy, from futurists' point of view, is that its brand is a cluster of past-tense meanings. If anything, the futurists sought to break 'brand Italy'.

The perception problem with 'brand Italy' was not only noticed by the futurists. A number of technology businesses operating in Italy in the early 20th century were caught between an emerging nationalism among their consumers and an uncomfortable awareness that technological advancement was led by foreign cultures, particularly America. Indeed, America enjoyed a trade surplus with Italy, and much of it due to technological inventions such as the zip, electrical appliances, batteries, building materials and processes and the lift. This bind saw advertisers attempt to combine nationalist and international modern concepts within their adverts, often by aligning foreign words with Italian national identifiers. For example, Delta advertised its lightbulbs by scripting on its billboards: "Delta = Electric = Italiana" (Medici 1986, p. 33). Similarly, Milan's first commercial electricity providers named themselves: "Standard Elettrica Italiana" (p. 35) and Turin manufacturers of fire extinguishers named themselves: "Società Italiana Knock-Out", selling a product patented in Delaware (p. 30). Similar bilingual juxtapositions struck a chord for many decades, including "Bitter Campari" and "Cordial Campari" (p. 124), all of which marry Italian and English nouns and adjectival phrases. For Italy's exceptionalism to be credible, it had to incorporate and represent the best of international advances and modernity. Such was the premise behind Marinetti's nationalism: it had to come second to technological currency. So nationalism was a quagmire of contradictory meanings, and thus overall a poor fit to futurism's brand.

Marinetti's infamous cry: "guerra: la sola igiene del mondo"[156], published in the movement's magazine *Poesia* in 1905, indicates that war itself could be at the centre of the futurist brand identity. The violent aesthetic with which so much futurist art and performance is imbued also indicates the strong affinity between futurism and war. The most famous parole in libertà (words in freedom), *Zang Tumb Tumb*, an onomatopoeic concrete poem representing a bombardment, illustrates this affinity. The military has oftentimes been the seat of the most cutting-edge technological invention, something that no doubt would have attracted the futurists. As Albini lays it out, "la tecnologia è il luogo dell'incontro tra scienza e economia, la cui stimolazione è spesso rappresentata dalla domanda militare"[157] (2003, p. 10) . However, it's worth observing that bellicose aesthetic was the closest futurism ever got to actual war. Yes, Marinetti, Carrà, Mazza and Boccioni fought near Verona in the First World War for a few weeks (where the latter lost his life), but the movement itself never successfully mobilised as a militia nor had any recognisable impact on the conflict. If war alone was to define brand futurism, the movement was a failure. Moreover, the celebration of militarism by the futurists was not – again – unconditional. The futurists, Marinetti first among them, exalted war in so far as it advanced Italian interests. Marinetti makes no mention of the might of the invention of the British tank, for example. The futurists were fascinated by the bellicose aesthetic in general, but not enough to make it define their brand. Unlike nihilists such as Blaise Cendrars, who separated concepts of nationalism and militarism to dismiss the first and worship the second (Chefdor 1980), the futurists' militarism remained, in the end, Italian.

Rebellion against and rejection of the status quo, and the constant advocacy for change, are also strong candidates for the best-fitting definition of the futurist brand. Certainly, the futurist repudiation of the past was crucial to their ethos, and appeared as early as in the founding manifesto, within which Marinetti makes of *passéist* one of his favourite (or, rather, most hated) words, and within which he calls for the burning of museums. Indeed, the futurists honed in on their pivotal impact on the construct of time, and even applied this principle to themselves, calling for their works to be relegated "to the wastepaper basket" (cited in Huxley & Witts 1996, p. 290). As

[156] war: the world's only hygiene
[157] technology is the meeting place of science and economy, and its stimulation is often represented by military demands.

convincing as this appears, the problem with settling on the rejection of the past as futurism's brand meaning is that it is very hard to delineate this past in defined semantic and visual terms. While the futurists' rejection of the status quo certainly did not involve nostalgic escapism into a mythical yesteryear, but rather a lurch ahead into the unknown, it's worth asking: which eras in particular did futurists detest? The past, after all, is a long time. The founding futurist manifesto cites examples of *passéist* culture from ancient Greece past to 19th-century melodrama (Huxley & Witts 1996, pp. 290-291). But what of, for example, times of intense technological progress such as the early modern period, which was shaken by the impact of the printing press, or of social and political upheaval, such as the French revolution, or of times of unprecedented urbanisation such as the late 18th and early 19th century? There is no mention of these moments in the scorn futurist literature held for the past.

Then again, these pasts don't exactly fit the stock image of the stale, conservative, immobile history that futurists were so keen to disrupt. What futurists fought against was a certain past, arguably one whose characteristics were in evidence in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century. So, if the rejection of the past is not a clear enough brand identifier for futurists, we are left with the future, which after all even appears in their name. That the future should be the defining brand meaning of futurism seems an instantly more reasonable proposition, but not itself without complications. Much like the past, the future ends up being quite varied. What characteristics did futurists seek in the future? This was unknown to futurists, but among other developments, the future of aesthetics in Italy included a state-sponsored obsession with neoclassical celebration of ancient Rome. Surely that's not the future the futurists had in mind. Vague concepts that are too easily distorted won't suffice in holding a brand identity together, so it is necessary to explore how the futurists themselves defined their adored future; how they visualised it. The brand requires a concrete semantic anchor – even if symbolic.

The symbolic and semantic identity that best holds the cluster of meanings encapsulated within futurism is that of the machine. Mechanical inventions and their consequent impact on the human experience are firmly at the centre of the futurist brand. The focus on the machine was intense throughout the movement's trajectory, and indeed began before its inception. As early as 1899, Marinetti was already engaging with the idolatry of science, as he wrote that "la science, par

ses vandalismes et ses épheémères reconstructions, a rendu notre âme trébuchante et inassouvie au bord du mystère"158 (cited in Somigli 2006, p. 336). Marinetti's myth of the machine and of speed emerged from late 19th-century symbolism and developed into his pre-futurist writings. One of Marinetti's pre-futurist publications, the 1908 extended poem *La ville charnelle,* narrates a car race in hyperbolic terms soon to be characteristic of futurism. Marinetti ends the poem thus: "Avec vous, mes êtoiles!.../Plus vite!... Encore plus vite!.../Et sans répit, et sans repos!.../Lâchez les freins!"[159] (Marinetti 1908, p. 172). The car assumes a supernatural potency and becomes a kind of mythical creature, an instrument for the overthrowing of decadent culture". Gianni Grana remarked that "Marinetti's myth of the machine – a label that could include the more general characters of the futurist technological imagination – was the perception and the pre-figuration of the current and future technological transformations and epistemological modifications, of which the machine was the most suggestive element" (cited in Somigli 2003, p. 111).

As scientific inventions were widespread throughout the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th century, it's worth noting that in the 1910s the machine was a symbol that held potent currency. Science was thriving (consider that Einstein's iconic $E=MC^2$ was first published in 1905), and its machinery represented a changing present, and therefore the future. The industrial revolution had shaken the cultural torpor of much of Europe, but was yet to have the same effect in Italy. PierLuigi Albini determined that "la cultura italiana prevalentemente (ahimè, ancora oggi!) ha avuto un atteggiamento negativo o di indifferenza nei confronti della tecnologia"[160] (2003, p. 13). He goes as far as characterising modern Italian history as a "storia di un'assenza della scienza, che per i futuristi era una specie di ritardo evoluzionistico"[161] (p. 13). Federico Luisetti and Luca Somigli, though in more balanced terms, agree. They describe early 20th-century Italian culture as "unbalanced because, while it grants recognition to certain objects, for example all things aesthetic, and gives them their due balance in the world of meanings, it banishes other objects, particularly things that have no meaning but do have a use, a utilitarian function" (2009, p. 17). The futurists sought to invert this bias through a "tecnofilia che nasceva da un paese ancora arretrato […] per

[158] science has pushed our stumbling and unsalted soul to the brink of mystery.
[159] Let me join you, my stars!.../Faster!... Even faster!.../And without respite, and without rest!.../Release the breaks!
[160] italian culture prevalently (alas, still now) has had a negative or indifferent attitude towards technology.
[161] story of the absence of science, that to he futurists was a sort of evolutionary retardation.

non parlare dell'egemonia di una cultura letteraria e formalista del tutto incapace di comprendere la rivoluzione industriale[162]" (Albini 2003, p. 15). Despite being surrounded by an anti-science cultural environment, the futurists grasped that machines extended the physical realm of the human, and were encroaching onto the cultural realm too. Due to electric, combustive and hydraulic energy, machines for the first time performed physical tasks with greater strength, speed, accuracy and stamina than any human could wish for. Clearly, none of the futurists actually did science, but they did mythologise it, and its achievements were central to the futurist ethos and aesthetic. Superhuman power, velocity, resilience and accuracy were never-ending quests for futurists. As we shall see, futurists sought these elements in their full range of artistic endeavours, through a process of sub-branding.

Futurist sub-branding

The reach of futurist sub-branding (and therefore the range of aesthetic products they lent their brand to) is famous, and correlates to the movement's totalitarian scope, which Luigi Paglia describes as the "Vasta attività culturale-imprenditoriale di diffusione del Futurismo"[163] (1977, p. 30). This activity was only possible because of the emerging (and emerging awareness of) the increasingly urbanised society that would produce a mass audience. It is in this context of profound economic and social transformations that Marinetti "responded to the radical nature of this epochal shift with a project almost equally global in its ambitions, that committed itself to an aesthetic of renovation" (Rainey 1994, p. 109). As M. Calvesi explains, "È il futurismo che per primo si qualifica apertamente come 'stile di vita', coordinando in un unico programma ogni tipo di attività artistica ed anche pratica"[164] (1966, p. 152). The futurist project was an anthropological one: a new vision of man faced with the world of machines; a state of permanent cultural renewal favouring the mythology of the new over the conformism of traditions. Futurism was a philosophy of becoming,

[162] Technophilia that emerged from a country that was still behind its times […] not to mention the hegemony of a literary and aesthetic culture entirely incapable of understanding the industrial revolution.
[163] Vast cultural-enterprising activity for the expansion of futurism.
[164] It's futurism that first defines itself openly as a 'lifestyle', coordinating in a unique program every type of artistic activity and practice"

expressed by an activism celebrating life as the constant evolution of being. And through all of its permutations the machine is the common denominator.

Mature brands, as Aeron Davis describes, “develop from being associated with single products to becoming conceptual centres for ranges of products and services. Brands have become recognised as having value in themselves, or brand equity… production is now for building a brand” (Davis 2013, p. 78). This same principle was applied by the futurists through the symbol of the machine. Indeed, all but three futurist manifestoes use the noun ‘machine’ or its derivatives... no other significant nouns have such a spread across the movement’s vast theoretical literature. Technological terms used with insistence across a wide range of documents include: “dinamismo, elettricismo, magnetismo, ruote del treno, aeroplani, esplosivi, molecole, atomi, solidi, liquidi, gas, campo di forze e così via, tutti termini collegati alla scienza” (Albini 2003, p. 5). The futurists’ “*machinolatry”* (Somigli 2003, p. 57) was so widespread as to identify it as the movement’s key thematic motif.

Marinetti came close to explicitly defining the characteristics of the machine that formed the core of the futurist brand. At a futurist lecture in 1924 at Paris’ Sorbonne University, he explained: “io per macchina intendo tutto ciò ch’essa significa come avvenire: la macchina da lezioni di ordine, di disciplina, di forza, di precisione e di continuità […] l’essenziale, la sintesi” (cited in Albini 2003, p. 14). Futurism was to therefore simultaneously invoke strength, electricity, explosiveness, violence, innovation, metallurgy, supremacy and destruction, giving birth to what Gregory Kozintsov aptly described in 1921 as an “art without a pedestal or a fig leaf… art that is hyperbolically-vulgar [and] mechanically exact” (1975, p. 97).

It’s worth remembering that the founding *Manifesto futurista* begins with a detailed and hyperbolic description of Marinetti’s car crash, where he felt the “iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart” (cited in Huxley & Witts, 1996, p. 290). It’s a thinly-veiled birth metaphor for the movement, which positions itself as an embryo soon to be delivered by a machine. As Ostashevsky explains, in various futurist manifestoes, “as years go by, Marinetti emerges from increasingly larger vehicles [...] In 1909 he made do with his overturned Fiat” (2016). In the 1912 *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature), it was “in an airplane, sitting on a fuel tank, my belly warmed by the head of the pilot”; in 1914, in *Splendore*

geometrico e meccanico (Geometric and Mechanical Splendour), Marinetti swears that his "Futurist senses perceived this splendour for the first time on the bridge of a dreadnought" (Ries & Ries 2009, p. 13).

Marinetti was thinking about the explosive physical and aesthetic power of mechanical and electrical energy even before he penned the founding futurist manifesto. He drew on the important rhetorical model developed by Mario Morasso in *La nuova arma (la macchina)* (The new weapon (the machine)) and *Il nuovo aspetto meccanico del mondo* (The new mechanical aspect of the world), penned in 1905 and 1907 respectively. These texts analysed the seismic changes that machines would wield upon society, and largely celebrated these impending transformations. Even closer inspiration was provided by Morasso's *L'artigliere meccanico* (The Mechanical Soldier). This piece draws a comparison between Nike of Samothrace and a speeding motor car, a trope which is clearly echoed in Marinetti's founding manifesto of futurism.

It is no surprise, then, that in January 1909 Marinetti's proto-futurist play *Poupées Electriques* (Electric Puppets), should depict a love affair between human characters and electric-mechanical robots. This intersection, often visceral and physical in nature, between the biological and the mechanical was an early exploration into what would become fertile ground for postmodern performance (Graham 2012). Its instigator and motivator is a reflective recognition between the human and the machine who function in seemingly joint intent. The machine operating for the human projects an illusion of agency; of alliance, in its very design, to the operator's aims. Joseph Newman explains the extensive psychological surveys into consumer behaviour were carried for the car insurance industry by the Social Research Inc, which concluded that automobiles were perceived by their drivers as being psychologically significant extensions of the self (1992, p. 13). While this point is focused on cars, and no cars feature in *Poupées Electriques,* it is significant to the broader futurist association of the human and the machine as part of its brand identity.

Exalting the machine and the new technologies of their day, the futurists sought a convergence of art forms and the marriage of multimedia art with technology. In 1916, Marinetti synthesised his thinking into a line of code – as if designed to activate a virtual event: "(Pittura + scultura + dinamismo plastico + parole in libertà + intonarumori + architettura) tecnologia = teatro

sintetico"[165] (cited in Grisi 1990, p. 144). Notable in here is the placement of technology as a multiplier of all the other elements which, encased in an arithmetical bracket, are demoted in importance when compared to technology. It's as if Marinetti saw the machine as the tool with which to break barriers that had previously seemed unassailable. These barriers most readily seem aesthetic barriers, but futurists also assaulted epistemological barriers, including time and space themselves. The speed of the machine was seen to compress, deform and bend both. This compression aesthetic is, predictably, found in futurist visual art.

Giacomo Balla's *Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio* (Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash), explored above, depicts a poodle in motion through the divisionist technique that simultaneously displays its legs across many points of their movement, showing a dog with a dozen legs. Visually, the blurred effect that joins the legs creates the illusion of movement, realising the aesthetic aim of demonstrating the impact of speed on the biological body. Such was the impression of things coming alive that Guido Guglielmi describes Balla's subjects as "Macchine energetiche che debbono innalzare la temperatura della vita e promuovere stati di pienezza assoluta"[166] (1979, p. 123). This effect is even more pronounced in Depero's impressive *Ballerina*, that places a dancer on a spinning podium and, through a similarly divisionist technique, frames two symmetrical joined ballerinas with twelve legs in vortex. The machine does not appear directly in Balla's painting, and is latent in Depero's, but photography is however inferred in the artists' ambition to capture the aesthetics of movement. While divisionism appeared in cubist paintings before futurist paintings, this aesthetic goal is fully achieved in the extraordinary experimental photography of the futurists, who were among the first to intentionally change exposure length to capture the visual impression of movement.

The 1913 'chronophotographic' collection by brothers Arturo and Anton Bragaglia – a significant innovation of the medium – is an ode to the transformational visual potential of the photographic machine. Within these portraits, they exposed negatives for a chosen number of seconds to blur the motion in between the start and end positions of human movement. The transition is thus tracked across the space of the photograph, where human faces and bodies

[165] (Painting + sculpture + plastic dynamism + words-in-freedom + composed noise + architecture) technology = synthetic theatre
[166] energetic machines that must lift the temperature of life and promote states of absolute wholeness.

appear to liquefy and multiply. Again, the futurists are pushing the human body to its mechanical frontier, bringing the mechanical and biological physiognomies closer together. Even the names the Bragaglia brothers gave to their work, such as *Ritratto polifisionomico di Umberto Boccioni* (Polyphysiognomical Portrait of Umberto Boccioni), or *Ritratto fotodinamico di una donna* (Photodynamic Portrait of a Woman). The brothers used the mechanical eye of the camera to suggest a new mechanical view of the world, able to observe and preserve time and space in a way beyond normal human capabilities – once again placing the machine at the centre of their aesthetic.

It seems inevitable, considering their predilection for technological imagination, that the futurists would be among the first to explore cinematography. Other film-makers had already developed short mute non-fiction films, and some exponents of other avant-gardes called for an increased role of film in art, but the futurists were the first to both develop an artistic theory and a practice for this ambition. It wasn't until 1916 that Marinetti, Ginna, Corra, Settimelli and Chitti co-wrote the manifesto *La cinematografia futurista* (Futurist Cinematography). Yet futurists had started producing art films as early as 1910, when brothers Arnaldo Ginna and Bruno Corra designed the typescript: *Musica cromatica* (Chromatic Music). While *Vita futurista* (Futurist Life, analysed in chapter 2) was the movement's longest and best-known film, and also the only one for which we still have some stills, it was perhaps not their most technically impressive. *Musica cromatica*, however, saw one of the first reported cases of experimentation with hand-painting film. The film is believed lost but its detailed annotations persist, and are described by a spellbound A. L. Rees, who aligns futurist cinematographers to "very early Hollywood – another cluster of ambitious adventurers using spontaneity, publicity and the machine to create a new art" (2011, p. 27). Ginna and Corra painted coloured shapes directly on film, to depict, when projected, growing and diminishing shapes and melding landscapes. The two Florentine futurists cleared the screen of "overt human action while developing rhythmic interaction of basic symbols (squares, circles, triangles) to replace narrative as a master code" (2011, p. 29). The abstract film consisted of moving shapes and colours, and had no human subject, a significant exclusion which coheres with the increasingly mechanised performance modes that the futurists were developing on stage.

Musica cromatica therefore tried to relinquish the whole artwork to the machine, which was central to both its mode of production and also in its content, as depicted through the geometric subjects. The musical accompaniment to the film was key to its function, as the title indicates, and it was composed by futurist musician Luigi Russolo. Russolo's *intonarumori* (noisemaker), the only original performance of which survives in James Hayward's *Musica Futurista: The Art of Noises*, is an assault on the senses. The inventor/musician produced machines to be used as musical instruments that accompany futurist declamation and poetry reading. The instruments' volume, percussive range and verisimilitude to the sounds of industrial machinery allows them to portray the sounds of the burgeoning industrialisation of Europe, through a form of enhanced realism. The mechanical noises that Russolo portrayed, such as that of a bombardment, a spinning fan belt, a rotary blade, were all depicted with hyperbolic volume, tone and definition by his custom-built instruments (Hayward 2004). Never had the machine been brought closer to the human senses.

In further evidence of their (if not intentional nonetheless comprehensive) vast sub-branding, futurists even applied the brand principle of machine-worship to disciplines as unlikely as cuisine. Marinetti and Fillia's *Manifesto della cucina futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Cuisine) emerged as late as 1932 to accompany a series of banquets with a strong performance focus scheduled across Italy. Examples of recipes and meals served at these futurist dining evenings are an indication of the reach and longevity of the futurist brand. One important banquet proved the hallmark of futurist application to cuisine. It was named with a branded neologism *Aerobanchetto*, took place in Bologna on 12th December 1931 and was reported in the local paper, *Il Resto del Carlino*, with no by-line. The banquet was meticulously planned in its set design, costume, food and entertainment; all cohering with the futurist brand. As reported by the paper: "Le tavole erano state disposte con inclinazioni ed angoli, dando l'impressione di un velivolo. Qua le ali – qua la fusoliera – la in fondo la coda … Al posto delle solite tovaglie troviamo dei fogli di carta argentata, che vorrebbero essere dell'alluminio, e una lastra di latta lucente che funge da sottopiatto"[167] (Il

[167] The tables were arranged in slanted and angled positions, creating the impression of an aircraft. Here the wings – here the fuselage – down there the tail… Instead of the usual tablecloths we found sheets of silver paper, representing aluminium, and a sheet of luminous tin as a placemat.

Resto del Carlino 2016). Entrees consisted of “panini appositamente modellati a forma di un monoplano o di un’elica”[168] (Il Resto del Carlino 2016).

The futurist machine brand permeates the event’s iconography, with both the macroscopic set design and the microscopic prop placement reinforcing the mechanical environment. The futurist set design for the banquet turned the machine into the whole context for the dining and artistic experience. It’s as if diners, in order to participate, had to first be swallowed by the airplane. They would soon enough be swallowing machines too. Dishes served on the evening, as listed on the menu, included “Elettricità atmosferiche candite”[169] (Il Resto del Carlino 2016), which consisted of “saponette di finto marmo, contenenti nel loro interno una pasta dolciastra formata con ingredienti che solo sarebbe possibile precisare con una paziente analisi chimica”[170] (Il Resto del Carlino 2016). The reporter here uses the language of chemistry and stonemasonry to define the futurists’ dish – an early glimpse of molecular gastronomy a century before Heston Bluementhal popularised it. The main course consisted of a *carneplastico*: a phallic, missile-like conglomeration of meats mechanical in its shape and colour. It was served while an engine rumbled and accelerated next door. The machine permeated all aspects of the banquet, targeting as many senses as possible.

The *Manifesto della cucina futurista* (Futurist Cuisine Manifesto) cites a 5-course degustation menu proposed by Marinetti and Fillia. The names of the dishes are telling: “1) Il passo di corsa… 2) In quarta… 3) Scontro d’automobili… 4) Perdendo una ruota… 5) Bombe a mano”[171] (1986, p. 172). Each dish is mechanical in its nomenclature, and their progression seems to trace various stages of a vehicular accident and explosion, with a crescendo leading to a climax. One of these dishes is a roast chicken filled with a stuffing made of red zabaione custard, filled with silver-coloured spherical candy pellet… in effect serving the animal shot and bleeding: an inimitably futurist image of the biological and the mechanical merging through violence. The brand has therefore permeated the food itself. Not surprisingly, then, instead of the literal ricetta (recipe),

[168] sandwiches purposefully shaped as a monoplane or a propeller.
[169] candied atmospheric electricity
[170] pastries of fake marble containing a sweetish paste with ingredients that could only be described as the chemical analysis of a patient.
[171] 1–The running pace… 2–In fourth gear… 3–Car crash… 4–Losing a wheel… 5–Hand grenades!

Marinetti and Fillia describe their recipes with the chemical and mathematical noun: “formula” (1986, p. 173).

Further intriguing branding practices were in evidence when the futurists held a futurist cuisine event in a Turin restaurant. Firstly, Marinetti changed the name of the hosting restaurant (for a few weeks before and after the futurist dinner event) to *Santopalato*, and drew on Diulgheroff and Fillìa to refit the business’ interior décor to a design full of metallic and glass linearity and sharp angles. The set design of the restaurant, as with staged futurist performances, embodied the brand identity, clad as it was in aluminium from floor to ceiling. Indeed, the demarcation between banquet and performance is thin at best. During the interval between the entrée and the main course, “la sala s’immerge in una diafana luce azzurra ritmica … la folla non trova di meglio che mettersi a picchiare furiosamente sopra i piatti di latta, promossi così al ruolo di intonarumori”[172] (1986, p. 133). The diners and audience participate in the noise, becoming *spectactors* who perform to the rhythm of the inferred machine. This reaction is not unlike that of audiences in futurist *serate*, who reproduced the riotous content they witnessed and took the narrative and performative development into their own hands. These audience appropriations of futurist meanings and symbols are evidence of the brand at work. A spectator acting out the principles of the performance is a consumer appropriating the brand values and performing them through and after the act of consumption.

The strong performance qualities of futurist cuisine make it a powerful carrier of the futurist brand, but futurist performance itself is even more directly hands-on in the development and reinforcement of the futurist brand. Central to the alogical nature of the futurists’ performance practice is “compression, simultaneity and the involvement of the audience” (Kirby 1971, p. 49). This is evident in synthetic plays such as *Vasi comunicanti* (1915) and *Simultaneità* (1916) (wherein machines appear on-stage), in which the stage is split in a range of ways to depict different time zones and narratives operating concomitantly – and sometimes (impossibly) converging. So in their evangelical faith in technology, the futurists found the connection between the machine and the affront to the limitations of the status quo (and consequent ascension to the

[172] the hall was immersed in a blue rhythmic light … the crowd couldn’t but start hitting furiously the tin plates, promoting itself therefore to the role of ‘soundmakers’.

future). It went further – in the 1911 *Manifesto dei drammaturghi futuristi* (Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights), Marinetti (and 19 other co-authors) declared that it was "necessario introdurre nel teatro il senso del dominio della macchina" (cited in Kirby 1971, p. 27).

Within a decade, in Ivo Pannaggi and Vinici Paladini's 1922 *Manifesto di arte meccanica futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art), this developed to the fully-fledged pursuit of human robots and cyborg-like union of flesh and metal within performance. The principles of movement for such performances were first set out in the 1916 manifesto of *Declamazione dinamica e sinottica* (Synoptic, Dynamic Declamation), which called for body actions based on the staccato movement of machines, creating cubes, cones and spirals. This manifesto is particularly significant to futurist performance, and the startling extent to which it asks performers to transfigure as machines is explored in more depth in chapter 3. Yet preceding it is a performance that already experiments with many of its principles: the early prototype that was Giacomo Balla's 1914 play *Macchina tipografica* (Typographical Machine), only delivered in a private performance for Diaghilev. Here, a dozen performers depict parts of a typing machine before a backdrop with the single word: *tipografica*. In two rows, six performers simulated a piston, while six created a wheel driven by the pistons – each vocalising onomatopoeic sounds for their motion. As Goldberg explains: "One participant, the architect Virgilio Marchi, had described how Balla had arranged the performers in geometrical patterns, directing each person to represent 'the soul of the individual pieces of a rotary printing press. I was told to repeat with violence the syllable STA', Marchi wrote" (2001, p. 22). The theory behind these futurist dances was then developed by Enrico Prampolini's 1915 *Manifesto di scenografia futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Scenography), which designed a stage with "architettura elettromagnetica, vitalizzata e potente"[173] (cited in Berghaus 2014, p. 259). Prampolini went further to declare, prophetically: "nella sintesi finale, attori umani non saranno più tollerati"[174] (p. 259). Later still Marinetti would confirm, in his 1917 *Manifesto della danza futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Dance), that the performer should go "oltre alle possibilità musculari e cercare nella sua danza l'ideale del corpo moltiplicato del motore"[175] (cited in Poggi 2009, p. 334).

[173] Electromagnetic architecture, vitalised and powerful
[174] in the final synthesis, human actors will no longer be tolerated
[175] go beyond muscular possibilities and aim in the dance for that ideal multiplied body of the motor

So the theory of movement, at least, fits squarely within the branded concept of the machine, which was also the inspiring muse for the futurist aesthetic.

Practice, as is often the case with futurists, was not far behind. The challenging ambition of a truly mechanical performance was ingeniously attempted through the impressive set designed by Pannaggi and Paladini for the futurist performance *Ballo meccanico* (Mechanical Ballet, 1922). Consisting of mechanically moving lighting and pieces of setting, this performance only lasted five minutes, within which it depicted an extraordinary 49 sets which involved both the stage and the auditorium. The metallicity of these performances saw the body, the voice and the soul merge with the machine, in an early convergence with the futurist brand.

Wherever one looks in the futurist performance canon, one finds the machine. Fedele Azari's *Teatro aereo futurista* (Futurist Aerial Theatre), in which he depicts flight as a superior form of dance. In Azari's performance, the protagonist loops, somersaults, spins and dives in a prop/costume shaped like an aircraft with a motorised exhaust that intones what Azari calls its 'voice'. The aircraft expresses the aviator's mind and rhythms with "absolute identification between the pilot and his airplane, which becomes like an extension of his body: his bones, tendons, muscles, and nerves extend into longerons and metallic wire" (Kirby 1971, p. 219). Azari's ballistic performance would later be mirrored by Depero's *Anihccam 3000*, the poster for which depicts a tubular standing locomotive in motion, howling "uuuuu" in a steam cloud (Avanzi & Belli 2007, p. 232).

Another notable example is Mario Scaparro's 1920 drama *Una nascita* (A Birth), where we witness the anthropomorphism of two gendered airplanes. They perform "aerosex under the cover of a cloud. The seaplane then lands on water to expel four aviators from her pregnant belly" (Pickering-Iazzi 1997, p. 215). Scaparro's aim is evidently to convey the union of the human and mechanical bodies by having the latter perform biological functions to produce the former. The way he achieves this is by constructing a visual metaphor that is as literal as can be afforded; its clarity echoed in the title to highlight his authorial intent. If Scaparro's development is pursued to its logical conclusion, then futurists would conceive of a performance which didn't need humans at all.

The futurists' exploration of automata is a development of a trend that had begun on 1870, with the first appearance of an automaton on stage with the ballet Coppelia by Sergei Vikhalov.

Importantly, Vikhalov's figure did not move, but was positioned in a number of situations in the choreography. The concept was picked up by Henri Bergson, who in 1911 wrote about the machine in art "producing he illusion of a mechanical arrangement" (cited in Soloski 2008, p. 1). The aim of Vikhalov and Bergson is that of better honouring the principles of mechanical exactness and strength, and is most significantly developed by futurism.

Mauro Montalti's adaptation of Russian expressionist playwright Leonid Andreyev's *The Life of Man* (1920) achieves precisely this. Montalti replaces actors with figures shaped like points and columns or rows of coloured lights, which are rhythmically lit by onstage, movable lighting rigs. The forms had the capability to rotate, puff smoke, and disappear… all accompanied by off-stage voices. Andreyev's abstract script could be delivered without a visible human, but with machines visibly creating the narrative (391 2016). Fortunato Depero's dance-theatre performance *Anihccam 3000*, a development from his earlier success with the puppet dance *Balli Plastici* (Plastic Dances), spells machine backwards and casts itself a millennium into the future. In this play, Depero replaces marionettes with human performers dressed as locomotives and next to actual on-stage moving machines[176]. In this choreographed, mechanical ballet, the movement and soundscape were dominated by the physiognomy of the machine, and the narrative centred around the emotional connection between a station master and Locomotive 2310, climaxing in a spiralling duet. The description in the notes to the play's pamphlet (MART 2009b) is reminiscent of Depero's painting, *Ballerina*.

Luigi Fillia's 1925 *Sensualità* (Sensuality) further epitomises the mystical status in which the machine was held. The play's set was dominated by five floors of vibrating metallic sheets, angled so as to create the illusion of perspective. Three voices representing Spirit, Matter and Action could be heard contemporaneously to the appearance of a red spiral, a white cube and three coloured geometric figures respectively. As Fillia himself describes, "Everything is geometrical – lucid – indispensable: splendour of the artificial sex that has speed in place of beauty … the world drinks the oxygen of machines for its insatiable lungs and sings more strongly!" (cited in Poggi 2009, p. 256). As late as 1931, Bruno Munari's poster for Marinetti's play, *Simultanina*, depicted an

[176] Appendix 16.

automaton made of a fused female bust and aeroplane. These performances, described chronologically, depict the increasing precision and confidence with which the futurist brand informs its performance. The machine, in body and voice, increasingly replaced the human as futurism sought to dispense with the biological in order to achieve the apex of mechanical strength, speed and precision.

The intense focus that artists such as Prampolini, Depero and Balla placed on set design, including associated props and costumes (which in the case of machines are often one and the same) was explored in more detail in chapter 5, but is worth revisiting as it becomes particularly important to the way the futurists built their brand. A brand is, when you think on it, a product's fundamental setting, so it is helpful to draw upon branding research to explore the importance of the futurist set designs to futurist branding as a whole.

The futurist stage was the physical context in which the futurist product was delivered. In this way, it operated similarly to site branding, a recent and significant development within the branding industry (Floor 2014). It is increasingly visible in practice in retail stores that are instructed install branded fittings and furnishing if they wish to sell certain branded products (a notable example being Apple, which will only sell its products in other stores if they erect the aluminium frames and install the birch tables that Apple uses within its own stores). The practice of designing sets as powerful branding tools is also underpinned by theory.

Maaike Broos and Alfons van Marrewijk's analysis of the latest trends in the interior design and retail operations is of interest here. Within retail stores of Dutch fashion house Oger, they highlight the impact spatial design has in constructing and communicating retails brands. To them, the way contemporary branding practices have been applied to space is highly theatrical; retail spaces "have become the stage on which shop attendants perform" in the overarching aim of "constructing and communicating retail brands" (2012, p. 375). In their denotation of the way retail stores are constructed, Broos and van Marrewijk use the language of theatre (front-stage, backstage, scripts, roles, props and settings) to describe retail stores. Of their theatrical perspective, Broos and van Marrewijk say that it "allows us to understand how a theatre removes consumers from everyday life and isolates them in a constructed environment in order to create a unique and aesthetic experience" (2012, p. 377). Brand consumption is therefore dependent on

putting the consumer through a removal of context, a transportation into a new space within which the brand becomes the significant narrative. The act of consumption becomes "a drama performance in the spatial settings of a retail theatre" (p. 377).

The set design of Prampolini, Depero, Balla and other futurists, which removed the biological to venerate the mechanical, was an early prototype of the theatricality described by Broos and van Marrewijk. Their sets were instrumental in establishing the cluster of meanings and symbols which encapsulates the movement's motifs. Due to its prevalence, significance and influence, the machine, then, is the brand meaning of futurism, albeit not one defined by the term brand, nor explicitly identified by the futurists as the unique defining characteristic of the movement.

Brand management

If the machine, in all its symbolic potency, touched the very core of futurism and became the movement's brand, how then did the futurists manage their brand? Brand management in itself is an interesting, if complex proposition. Indeed, corporations spend vast resources, after the construction of a brand, on brand management, which often becomes a company's first priority. Marinetti himself can be seen to micro-manage the futurist brand, often intervening in colleagues' manifestoes with hands-on modifications, and at times even blocking initiatives. Such was the case with Gino Severini's manifesto, *Le Analogie plastiche del dinamismo* (Plastic Analogies of Dynamism), the publication of which was vetoed by Marinetti. As Luca Somigli reports, in a 1913 letter, "Marinetti first remarked on the stylistic failings of Severini's text, pointing out that 'il titolo no va assolutamente, perchè è troppo generico, troppo già contenuto nei titoli di altri manifesti. […] I manifesti, accumulandosi, si distruggono a vicenda"[177] (2004, p. 163). Marinetti displayed impressive branding nous, recognising that incoherent branding, where slightly differing messages are repeated, runs the risk of diluting the brand's intensity. While coherent sub-branding is a brand's key strength, muddying the waters of the brand itself could undermine its very existence. Without the language of its industry, Marinetti understood much of what marketers would begin

[177] the title absolutely won't do because it is too generic, too similar to the content of other manifesto titles. […] Manifestoes, when accumulated, destroy one another.

discussing half a century later. So the founder of futurism can be described as the movement's brand owner and manager: its key protector.

However, the question raised by the most recent research on branding is to what extent a brand can be effectively managed. Sangeeta Singh and Stephan Sonnenburg explore the example of the brand management of Dove (a skincare and cosmetic brand part of the Unliever product group), which in its *Real Beauty* marketing campaign instigated public discourse over perceptions of feminine beauty by revealing some of the digital processing behind advertising images of women, and encouraging consumers to contribute their images and thoughts about perceptions of beauty. They then used some of the images provided by consumers on social media, asking the public to judge whether they were beautiful, offering binary choices such as: 'fat or fit?' or 'wrinkled or wonderful?' The persistent use of binary rhetorical questions that questioned the standard presentation of beauty common to most cosmetic brands instigated widespread participation among consumers, further feeding the content. The response data was then also published. The extent of consumer content-creation was, at the time, unprecedented, such that the authors question what triggers consumers into participating into a brand-initiated narrative process, as was the case with Dove.

Singh and Sonnenburg posit that the motivator for consumer involvement is the friction of cognitive dissonance, which was ably exploited by Dove. They argue that "paradox, ambiguity, or bipolarity dramatically upsets the balance of forces, provides the motive to consumers for participating in the brand narrative" (2012, p. 193). One way to create this tension is to agitate around a community issue which is related to the brand. Brands need a live, current topic – even a divisive one – to help elevate their name beyond the weakening drain of the perception of the vested interest, which of course all share. In order to be effective, the brand must offer a point of view that is at once unique yet shared by enough people to build its following; be that perceptions of the artificiality of beauty in 2010s England or of Italo-Austrian nationalism in 1910s Italy. As Ries and Ries explain, "The birth of a brand is achieved with publicity, not advertising" (2009, p. 11). Brands need to propose something so unique to the context within which they emerge that the public want to know about it – and therefore the media wants to publish it. It must generate 'earned coverage', an industry term which defines media coverage obtained without payment.

A point in evidence is Anita Roddick's The Body Shop, which became "an international brand with no advertising at all. Instead she travelled the world and issued press releases pushing her ideas about the environment on a relentless quest for publicity" (p. 11). Roddick's message of low-impact cosmetics channelled the public's environmentalism, and its originality and topicality convinced newspapers, magazines and radio and television stations wherever she travelled to afford her interviews. With each new interview, Roddick planted the seed of her brand in a community – soon to be followed by a store. This sort of publicity, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5, was key to futurists' success. They got their public so incensed and polarised over a live issue that newspapers couldn't resist publishing their brand.

Managing brands, then, "is about managing tension" (Singh & Sonnenburg 2012, p. 196), because tension is crucial to instigate public involvement, which as seen above is vital for the life of a brand. Consumers must be willing holders and disseminators of brand meanings, so their agency must be employed. The reliability of the consumer's agency is, of course, haphazard, as they can reinterpret the brand by consuming it in unexpected, new and significant ways. Dove, for example, had to face a backlash against its *Real Beauty* campaign when some consumers pointed out that its parent company, Unilever, also owned other brands that reinforced the cosmetic industry's aesthetic status quo constructed through unrealistic body shapes and intense digital image processing. These include Lux and Tresemmé, and also brands that position themselves squarely within perspectives that objectifies women, such as Lynx. The result was a wave of ironic consumption, where consumers used social media to mock the *Real Beauty* campaign by depicting Dove products next to Unilever's other brands and posing binary questions (such as: "feminist or chauvinist") to mimic and subvert Dove's message. This serves as a warning: "brand owners have to remember that their audience is more than users or consumers and … may be actively involved in co-creating the brand narrative to influence the tension constructively or in some cases, as in Dove's, destructively" (Singh & Sonnenburg 2012, p. 196). Ostensibly, successfully navigating (NB: not managing) a brand is a devilish, ongoing balancing act.

This all stems from the established observation that consuming a brand is a way of interpreting its meanings. So, for example, ironic consumption (where a consumer purposefully buys products that they deem inappropriate to their social identity) can destroy a brand, but it can

also shift a brand into cult status and lead to extraordinary sales, despite being ostensibly unpopular. Or alternatively, if a brand attracts aspirational consumption (where consumers buy it in order to embody social codes they perceive to be above them and to which they aspire), its growing success may undermine its very identity. In other words, if too many people have incorporated a brand which makes of exclusivity an important symbol, then the brand risks losing its identity. So brand consumption itself is a meaning-making process, where the consumer can shape the narrative for the producer. Firat and Venkatesh argue that contemporary brand management requires much the same skill-set, agility and processes involved in improvisational theatre. In other words: a loose script and structure, with some key goals to be obtained through unpredictable routes, which are often determined by the audience and the players, both of whom have considerable influence over the plot who can play the role of the narrator or that of the listener" (2012, p. 191). Firat and Venkatesh draw significant comparisons between performance and branding: "Our paper uses the metaphor of improvisation (improv) theatre" (p. 189), such that the audience can redirect the content. After all, "Improvisation is not about doing one right thing, but about continuously doing things right" (Vera & Crossan 2004, p. 238). This telling analogy highlights the impact that futurist *serate* had on their brand management.

The unpredictable improvisational nature of the consumer's response to a brand is evident in the audience reaction to the futurist *serate*, where spectators were challenged and split by paradoxical dualities posed onstage. This resulted in disputes of the performance to the point of rioting. The audience members, through a moment of mass-induced dissent, became different kinds of people: more violent and dissenting. In other words, spectators were defined, if temporarily, by the consumption of the futurist performance. The connections to contemporary brand management are striking, but to what extent can we attribute consciousness of this to the futurists? If anything, Marinetti's hands-on micro-management of many aspects of the futurist brand indicates that he lacked an understanding of the extent to which 'brand futurism' would actually be defined by his spectators. On the other hand, his willingness to instigate rebellions among his audience in full knowledge that he wouldn't be able to dictate their development and ending is ostensibly parallel to Firat and Venkatesh's "improv theatre" theory of brand management. The extent of the futurists' intentionality and self-consciousness in their brand

management approaches may be hard to determine, but my research allows us to observe important similarities with modern-day, evolved branding praxis. Albeit applied retrospectively, the analysis of the futurists' branding activity suggests that they were already living in today's immersive age of competitive marketing and branding, where everyone is a consumer, and where every consumer is a carrier and shaper of a brand.

CONCLUSION

When Filippo Tommaso Marinetti first published his futurist manifesto in early 1909, he was channelling, and instigating, the future according to his own vision. So exploration of the effectiveness of the futurists' oeuvre calls for a somewhat acrobatic historical scrutiny: one that must also consider the present.

Looking back, seeking to determine the extent to which the futurists anticipated, or indeed even called into being, a future that we may recognise as this present age, seems a not implausible task. Such was their impact that at times it appears as though they shared our benefit of hindsight, or perhaps better put, that their foresight has become our hindsight.

The fundamental premise of futurism rests on a re-conceptualisation of time, on the ability to shape, separate and label it. As we tried to make clear in our first chapter, Marinetti made a conscious attempt to time the movement's inception to correspond with the first avant-gardes, which were to shape European artistic innovation for decades to come. The futurists perceived their time. They saw that the advent of urban, industrialised modernity was a defining moment in history. Even though the arrival of industrialised modernity in Italy was delayed compared to that of northern Europe, and even though mass urbanisation only really accelerated in Italy during the Great War, the futurists' anticipated these transformations and responded to them with an enthusiastic leap into the future.

This study offers some tools to understand how art and society, in early 20th-century Europe, became increasingly blended. By effecting a symbiosis between performance and marketing practices, the futurists repositioned the role of both. For instance, in their use of voice and choreography in their performances, the futurists appropriated the clamorous gestures and onomatopoeic speech of the street-caller. They demonstrated that performance and marketing were not two separate entities, but rather were part of the same endeavour. In doing so, they were among the first to grasp that advertising and branding would become ubiquitous and inseparable from modern culture, which Guy Debord, several decades later, would define as "the society of the spectacle" (2002, p.1). The futurists helped us understand art as a broader social process.

What prompted the futurists' merging of performance and marketing was the movement's persistence in pursuit of their audience. Rather than just attracting an audience to their cultural products, the futurists went out and captured their audience. This is evident, for instance, in the extent to which the futurists grasped and exploited the linguistic power of performativity, by breaking free from the descriptive restrictions of conventional semantics to, in Austin's words, "[doing] things with words" (1975, p. 1). By embedding illocutionary language into their *serate* and variety theatre, the futurists made their performance art function in similar ways to advertising. Indeed, at its most successful, advertising is fundamentally performative, as it must be active enough to urge consumption.

Anticipating the self-branding feats of artists such as Andy Warhol and commentators such as Marshall McLuhan, the futurists were among the first who sought to turn their selves into a coherent brand. Marinetti even experimented with his signature (seeing as futurism and his name both contained the consonants f-t-m) so that it would simultaneously represent both futurism and his name. More identification between the movement and the person is evident in the film *Vita futurista* (Futurist Life). In various scenes set in public spaces, the futurists appear as themselves enacting futurist motifs, such as engaging in anthropomorphic relationships with machines, and triggering scuffles involving onlookers. Unscripted and staged in the midst of members of the public, *Vita futurista* nullifies the distinction between the performer's self and their character. A constant among the film's *mises en scène* was the consternation displayed by the nearby, ostensibly unaware members of the public. The futurists sought this public out, intruded upon their space and forced their aesthetic upon them.

The futurists' strategic attention-seeking is perhaps most noticeable in their choice of performance venues, which redefines site-specific performance in ways that dramatically blur the boundaries between performance and marketing. Their radical *serate* and variety theatre were scripted to include site-specific insults that regularly instigated riots. By choosing venues near police stations, the futurists ensured the police's intervention and consequent press coverage. Through this marketing ploy, the futurists can be seen to chart the stage as part of a broader urban environment; and re-chart the broader urban environment as a promotional space. The futurists' performative geography demonstrates the extent to which they would go to achieve attention.

Attention, of course, is important to all artistic movements, but the brazen, systematic way in which the futurists sought it indicates that they anticipated attention becoming the "primary currency of 21st-century digitised consumer societies" (Davenport & Beck, 2013, p. 34).

Generating attention is the key marker of productivity in a society where, as John Lukacs declared, "the production of consumption becomes more important than the consumption of production" (cited in Campbell 2005, p. 36). The futurists sensed the growing importance of the process of consumption, such that it became central to their performance. They equated spectating with consuming, and tapped into the imaginative process of modern hedonism, to which Colin Campbell attributes contemporary consumerism. The futurists were routinely able to create the expectation of dissent before performances, and then spur spectators into expressing it. Spectators fulfilled their own imaginative impulses by consuming the futurist aesthetic, and fleetingly became just as rebellious and disruptive as the futurists. Far from being subdued, conned or coerced into enacting onstage events, the futurist spectator was cast into liminal situations and energised into living out the futurist aesthetic. Thus futurism offers an example of how the enchanting qualities of commodity fetishism (as theorised by Jane Bennett, Susan Sontag and Colin Campbell) occur in practice.

What best casts futurism as a movement that foresaw, if not instigated, the future of marketing is the movement's branding. Futurism was among the first artistic movements to seriously contemplate its name, its logo and its brand identity. While the term 'futurism' first appeared in the 1840s, it only did so in a strictly limited theological context. Marinetti's appropriation of the noun in 1909 to describe an avant-garde movement introduces a meaning new enough to deem it a neologism. The language through which we understand contemporary branding has only emerged in the past five decades, and was therefore out of reach for the futurists, but strategically creating a new noun to distinguish oneself is a marker of brand-development.

The futurists built on their branding practice by synthesising a brand identity around the idolatry of the machine. This process was gradual and not always conscious, but there is explicitness in the ways Marinetti (particularly through his editorial interventions) tightened and pursued what meanings and values best defined the movement. Very much in evidence was the

futurists' unprecedented success in their sub-branding practice. The movement's core symbol of the machine found reproduction in a remarkably widespread list of cultural products, from performance to fashion to cuisine. Anticipating contemporary principles of brand management, the futurists' sub-branding never strayed too far from their brand identity, therefore reinforcing – rather than diluting – brand futurism.

The futurists can even be construed as having an early awareness of the limitations of brand management, limitations imposed by the fact that brands live in consumers' minds and can therefore be modified by them. Not only were the futurists willing to let their audiences disrupt their performances through riots, they also sought to capitalise on the riots to further capitalise on the attention they raised. All this hints at an improvisational, interactive approach to performance, the very same approach that characterises contemporary, agile brand management.

Perhaps the best way to think of futurism is as a visionary movement with a deep understanding of the direction in which not only performance, but also marketing, consumption and the experience of being in an audience were headed. Looking back on their innovations, then, we can see the significant role the futurists played in the cultural transformations that have led on to consumerist societies.

APPENDICES

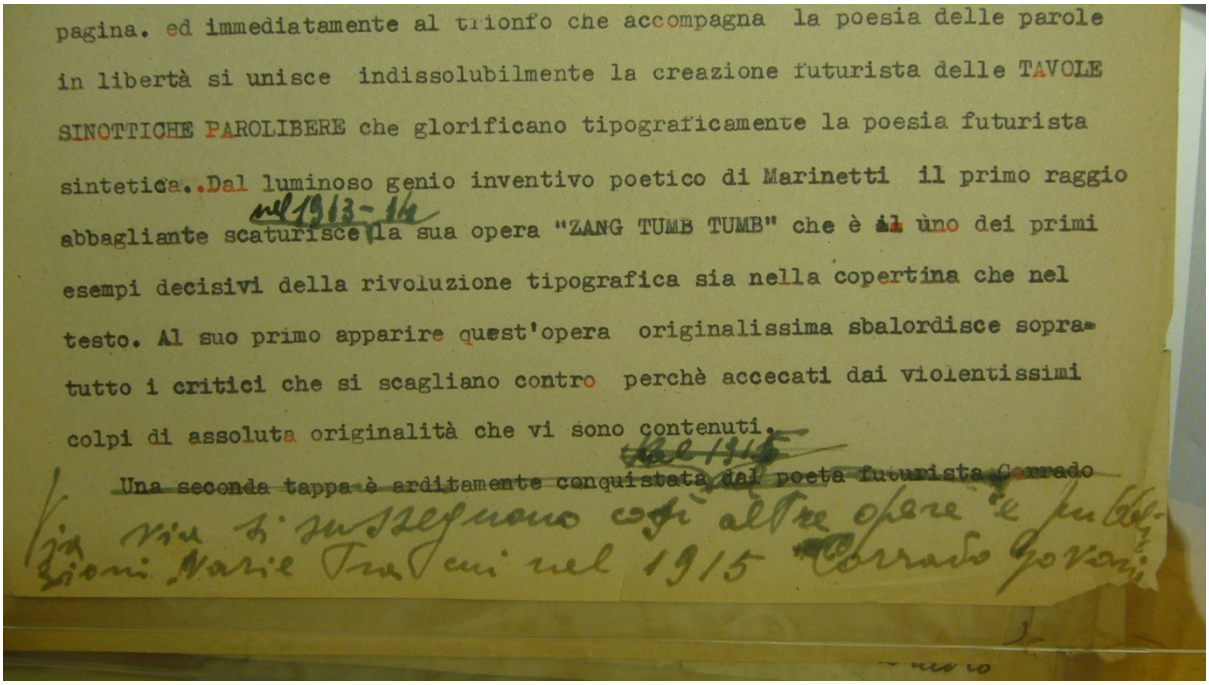
Appendix 1

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 2.

Appendix 2

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 10, Folder 10.

Appendix 3

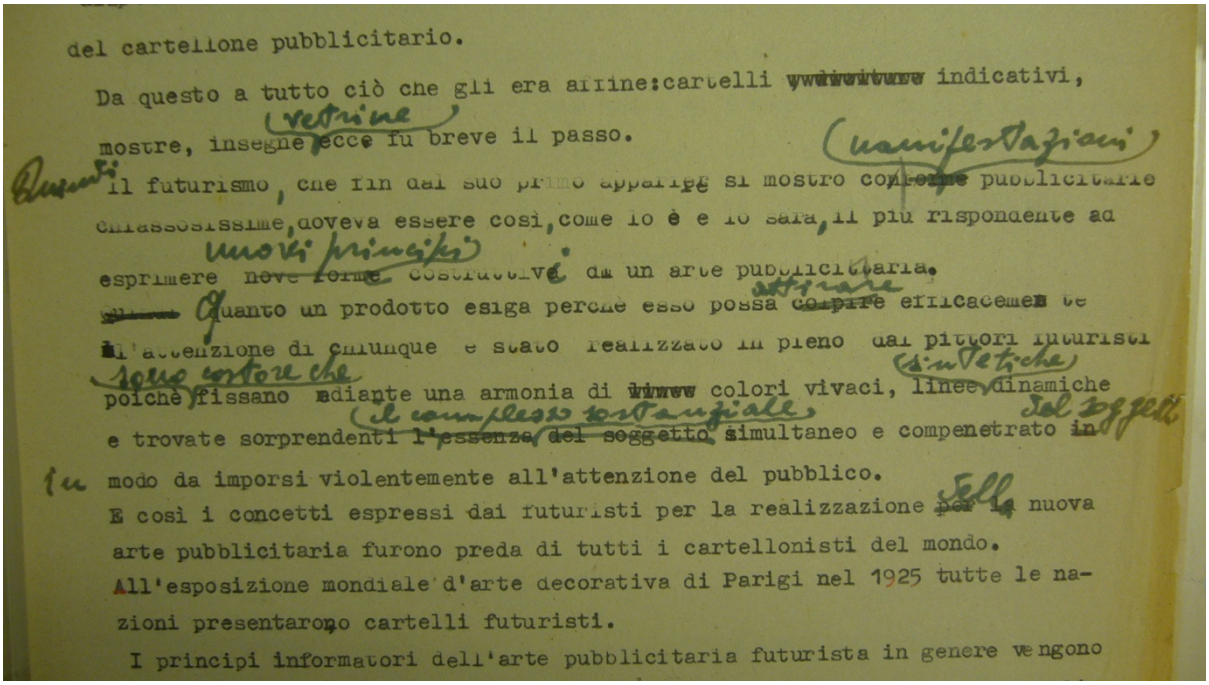


pagina. ed immediatamente al trionfo che accompagna la poesia delle parole in libertà si unisce indissolubilmente la creazione futurista delle TAVOLE SINOTTICHE PAROLIBERE che glorificano tipograficamente la poesia futurista sintetica..Dal luminoso genio inventivo poetico di Marinetti il primo raggio abbagliante scaturisce nel 1913-14 la sua opera "ZANG TUMB TUMB" che è ~~il~~ uno dei primi esempi decisivi della rivoluzione tipografica sia nella copertina che nel testo. Al suo primo apparire quest'opera originalissima sbalordisce soprattutto i critici che si scagliano contro perchè accecati dai violentissimi colpi di assoluta originalità che vi sono contenuti.

~~Una seconda tappa è arditamente conquistata dal poeta futurista Corrado~~ nel 1915

Marinetti, F. T., *Manifesto dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica,* Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

Appendix 4



del cartellone pubblicitario.

Da questo a tutto ciò che gli era affine: cartelli indicativi, mostre, insegne (vetrine) ecco fu breve il passo.

Il futurismo, che fin dal suo primo apparire si mostro contro (manifestazioni) pubblicitarie chiassosissime, doveva essere così, come lo è e lo sarà, il più rispondente ad esprimere nove forme costruttive (nuovi principi) di un arte pubblicitaria.

Quanto un prodotto esiga perchè esso possa (attirare) efficacemente l'attenzione di chiunque è stato realizzato in pieno dai pittori futuristi poichè fissano (sono sintetiche) mediante una armonia di colori vivaci, linee dinamiche e trovate sorprendenti (il complesso sostanziale) del soggetto simultaneo e compenetrato in (del oggetto) modo da imporsi violentemente all'attenzione del pubblico.

E così i concetti espressi dai futuristi per la realizzazione (Sella) per la nuova arte pubblicitaria furono preda di tutti i cartellonisti del mondo.

All'esposizione mondiale d'arte decorativa di Parigi nel 1925 tutte le nazioni presentarono cartelli futuristi.

I principi informatori dell'arte pubblicitaria futurista in genere vengono

Marinetti, F. T., *Manifesto dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica,* Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

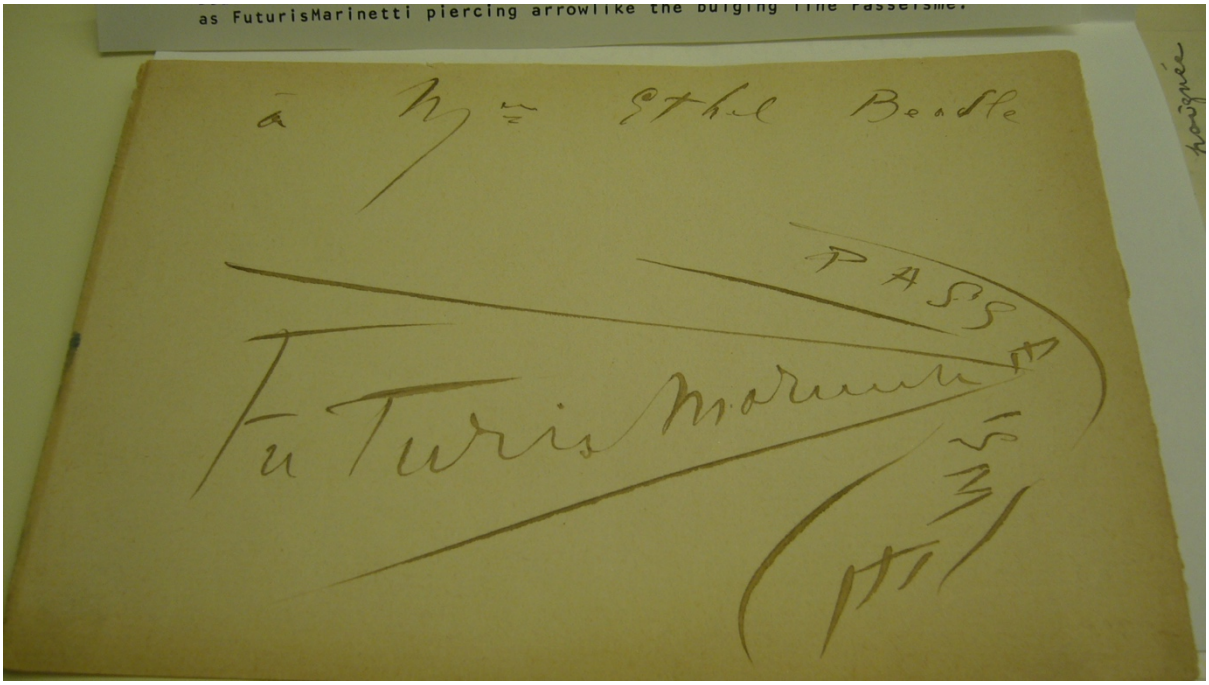
Appendix 5

Marinetti, F. T., Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 9.

Appendix 6

Balla, Giacomo, Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 9.

Appendix 7



Marinetti, F. T., Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 28b.

Appendix 8

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

Appendix 9

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

Appendix 10

MART Front-of-House, Rovereto.

Appendix 11

Dottori, Gerardo, Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 9.

Appendix 12

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 9.

Appendix 13

LACERBA

Periodico quindicinale — *Qui non si canta al modo delle rane.*

Anno I, n. 24 — *Firenze, 15 dicembre 1913* — Costa 4 soldi

CONTIENE: Grande Serata Futurista — MARINETTI, Agli spettatori — SOFFICI, La pittura futurista — PAPINI, Contro Firenze passatista — CARRÀ, Contro la critica — BOCCIONI, Dinamismo plastico — MARINETTI, La politica futurista — PALAZZESCHI, Cari concittadini — SCARPELLI, Lettera a Papini — PAPINI, Ai Fiorentini — GOVONI, Io e Milano (II) — SOFFICI, Giornale di bordo — *Comunicati:* Competente mancia; I futuristi e la Gioconda.

Grande Serata Futurista

Firenze - TEATRO VERDI - 12 Dicembre 1913

RESOCONTO SINTETICO (FISICO E SPIRITUALE) DELLA BATTAGLIA

Da una parte (sul palcoscenico):

2 poeti (Marinetti, Cangiullo)
3 pittori (Boccioni, Carrà, Soffici)
1 antifilosofo (Papini)
1 immoralista (Tavolato)
1 volontario occasionale (Scarpelli).

Armi: Coraggio, Strafottenza, Disinvoltura, Idee nuove, Insulti necessari, Buoni Consigli, Poesia originale.

Stati d'animo: Disgusto per la bestialità dominante Soddisfazione estetica per lo spettacolo magnifico della folla contrastata e infuriata.

Alleati: Gruppi di amici e simpatizzanti (giovani, operai) in due o tre palchi e in platea. Molto chiasso e poca energia. Per far cessare il rumore ne facevan dell'altro. Disorganizzazione. Gettito di fiori. Battimani senza continuità. Ci volevano cazzotti. Bisognava fare sgombrare i palchi più indecenti.

Feriti: Un ferito (Marinetti).

Resultati: Irritazione del pubblico che voleva ascoltare. — Aumento di simpatie per il futurismo. — Conversioni immediate al futurismo. — Vergogna postuma di gran parte della cittadinanza. — Rimproveri di tutti i giornali alla vigliaccheria stupida degli spettatori. — Grande gioia dei futuristi.

Dall'altra parte (nella sala):

5000 nemici:
Clericali (per la morale e la religione).
Borghesi (in difesa de' luoghi comuni).
Studenti (per difender Mazzoni, sobillati dai professori).
Liberali (per vendicare il loro presidente ecc.).
Aristocratici (beceri più degli altri).
Virtuisti (Cristiani (?) che insultano e si vendicano).
Giornalisti (indifferenti, ironici).
Poliziotti (inattivi).
Beceri (presi a nolo).

Armi: Patate, carote, cipolle, assafetida, torsoli, acciughe sardine, uova, pattona, sputi, mele, castagne, pastasciutta, lampadine elettriche, fagioli, ceci. Trombettine, trombe d'automobile, corni, raganelle, chiavi ecc.

Stati d'animo: Voglia di far chiasso. Becerismo scatenato. Volgarità finalmente traboccante nell'impunità. Odi personali. Risentimenti postumi. Ebbrezza d'essere in molti contro pochi. Cretinismo furioso. Vigliaccheria in libertà. Sfogo degli inferiori contro i superiori. Paura di far parlare. Vendetta contro colpi vecchi e nuovi. Asinità. Bovità. Pecorinità. Maialità.

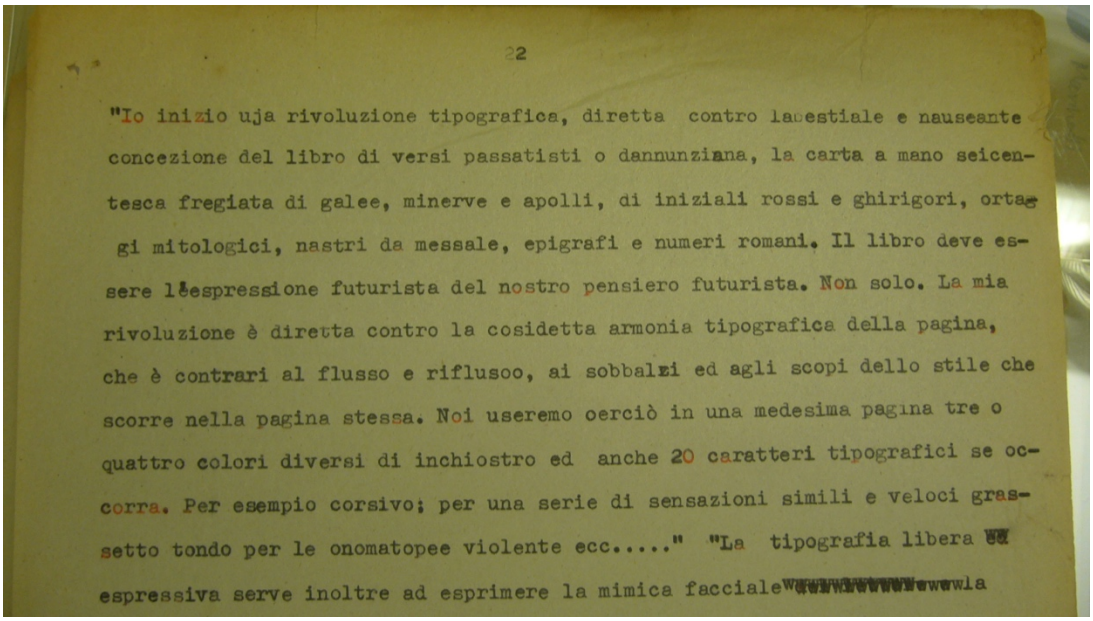
Alleati: La teppa fuori e le guardie dentro.

Feriti: Molti feriti in platea (dai loro compagni dei palchi).

Resultati: Noia, Stanchezza, Spese, Spolmonatura, Insulti reciproci fra gli spettatori. Fuga generale. (All'uscita i futuristi non trovarono un solo nemico e neppure per la città e per i caffè).

Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 28b.

Appendix 14



22

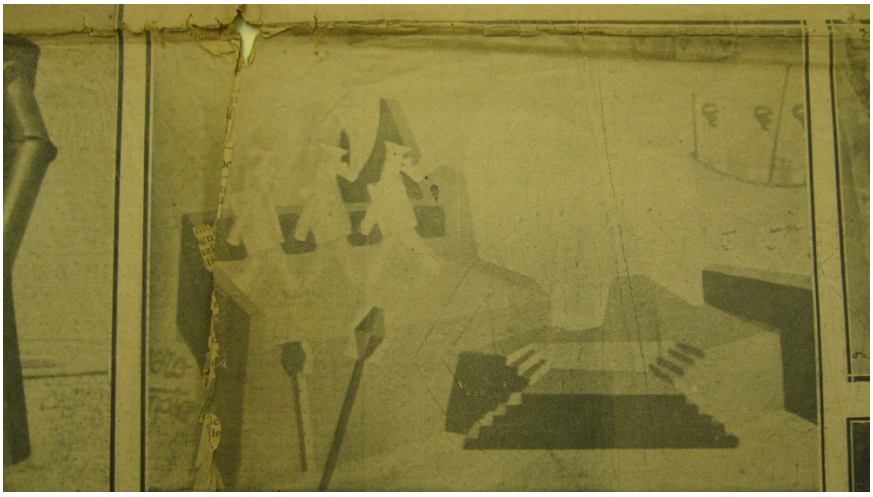
"Io inizio uja rivoluzione tipografica, diretta contro laoestiale e nauseante concezione del libro di versi passatisti o dannunziana, la carta a mano seicentesca fregiata di galee, minerve e apolli, di iniziali rossi e ghirigori, ortaggi mitologici, nastri da messale, epigrafi e numeri romani. Il libro deve essere l'espressione futurista del nostro pensiero futurista. Non solo. La mia rivoluzione è diretta contro la cosidetta armonia tipografica della pagina, che è contrari al flusso e riflusoo, ai sobbalzi ed agli scopi dello stile che scorre nella pagina stessa. Noi useremo oerciò in una medesima pagina tre o quattro colori diversi di inchiostro ed anche 20 caratteri tipografici se occorra. Per esempio corsivo; per una serie di sensazioni simili e veloci grassetto tondo per le onomatopee violente ecc....." "La tipografia libera ed espressiva serve inoltre ad esprimere la mimica facciale[redacted]wla

Marinetti, F. T., *Manifesto dell'arte pubblicitaria e tipografica,* Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 8.

Appendix 15

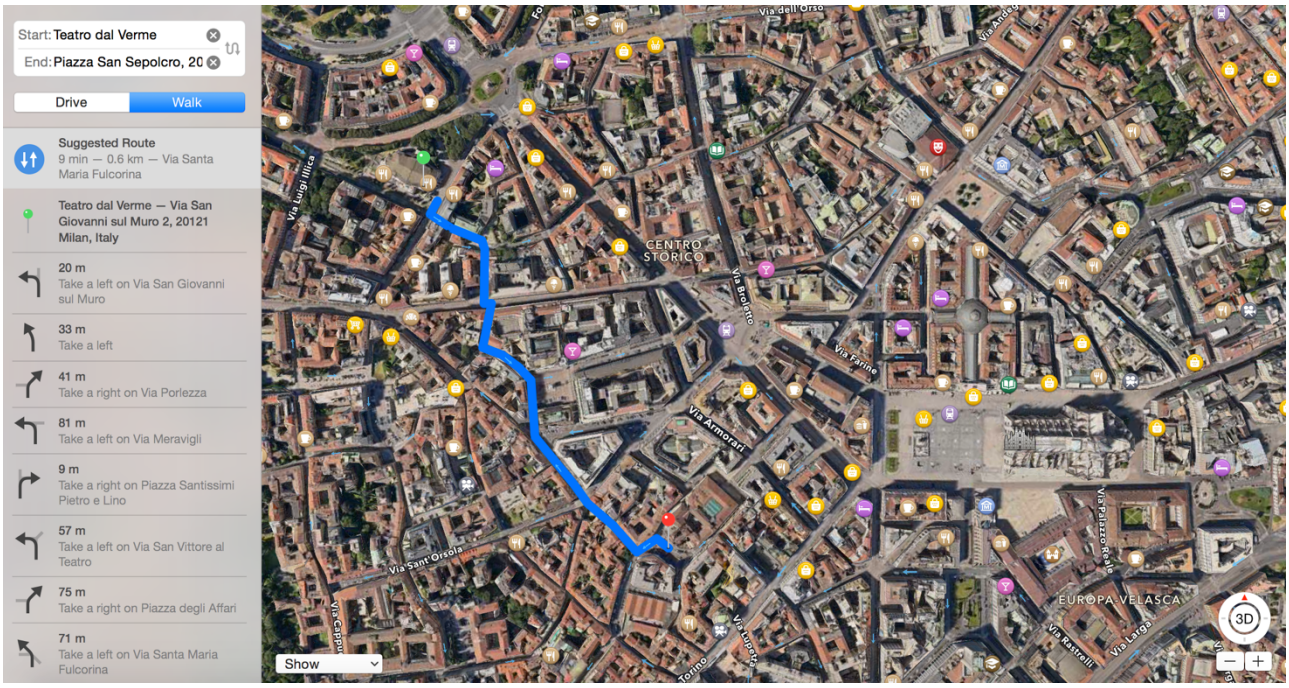
MART Front-of-House, Rovereto.

Appendix 16

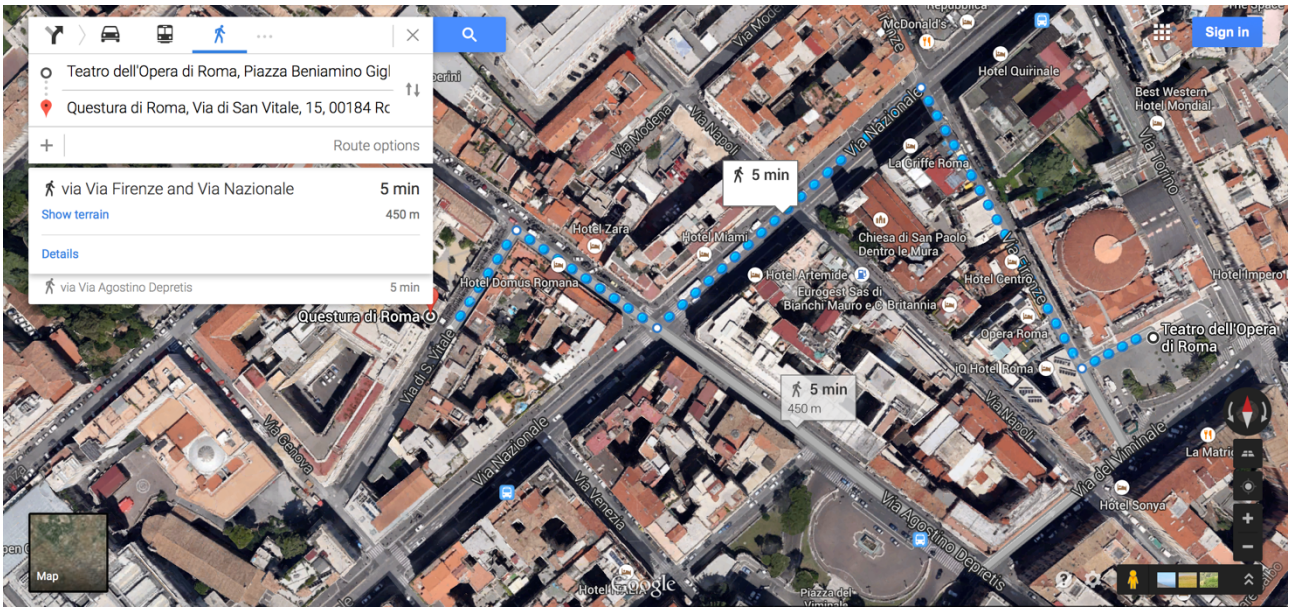


Italian Futurism archive, Getty Research Institute, Box 9.

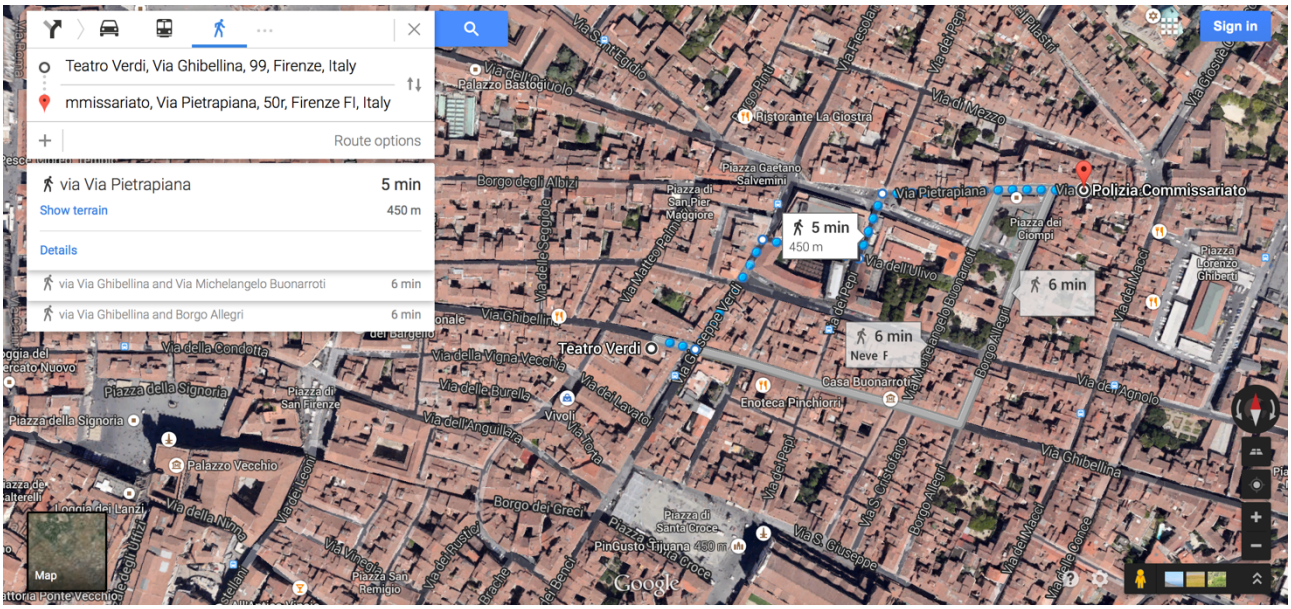
Appendix 17



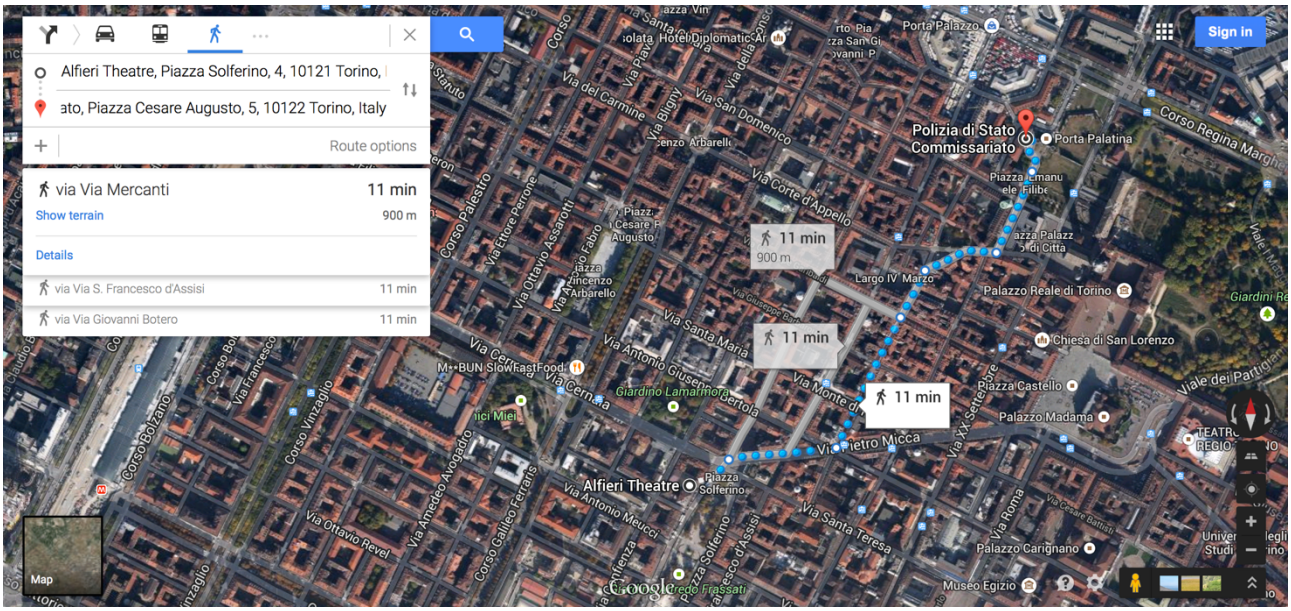
Mapped route between Teatro dal Verme and Police Headquarters in Milan.



Mapped route between Teatro dell'Opera and Police Headquarters in Milan.



Mapped route between Teatro Verdi and Police Headquarters in Florence.



Mapped route between Teatro Alfieri and Police Headquarters in Turin.

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