

PROLOGUE TO FUTURISM I

The "Futurist moment" was the brief utopian phase of early Modernism when artists felt themselves to be on the verge of a new age that would be more exciting, more promising, more inspiring than any preceding one. Both the Italian and Russian versions of Futurism found their roots in economically backward countries that were experiencing rapid industrialization—the faith in dynamism and national expansion associated with capitalism in its early phase. In the prewar years, political and aesthetic decisions seemed, for however brief a time, to be, so to speak, in synch—hence, no doubt, the extraordinarily rich artistic production.

M. PERLOFF (THE FUTURIST MOMENT)

But it is the movements which survive, oddly, here where we live & work as poets & artists: or, if not the movements, then their sense of art as an extension by other means of the life around us—as coextensive, then, with life itself. All of which, as *futurism*, had come sharply into focus by the start of the world war: a first radical mix of art & life, the epitome in the popular mind of an avant-garde. It was, on both its Russian & Italian sides, the first great "art" movement led by poets; and if its means now sometimes seem exaggerated or unripe in retrospect, they carry within them the seeds of all that we were later to become.

While Marinetti's opening manifesto for Italian Futurism bristled with a polemical stance in favor of the transformed present (1909), the later manifestos of Futurist poets & artists offered formal/"technical" approaches to the works then getting under way. The key term—still resonant today—was *parole in libertà* (= words set free), by which poetry was to become "an uninterrupted sequence of new images . . . [a] strict net of images or analogies, to be cast into the mysterious sea of phenomena." This freedom-of-the-word, while it resembled other forms of collage and of image juxtaposition, more fully explored the use of innovative & ex-

pressive typography in the visual presentation of language, as set in motion by forerunners like Mallarmé (above). But the verbal liberation didn't end with the page; it moved, rather, toward a new performance art & a poetry that "scurried off the page in all directions at once," as Emmett Williams phrased it for the "language happenings" of a later decade. Outrageous & aggressive, the Futurists' performances mixed declamation & gesture, events & soundings, indifference & engagement, to break the barriers between themselves & those who came to jeer or cheer them. Wrote Marinetti *selbst* (circa 1915): "EVERYTHING OF ANY VALUE IS THEATRICAL."

But their impact on the future showed up in other ways as well. In their manifestos, as a leading instance, they created a radical form of *poesis*, of the poem as an act of making, in which theory & practice—like their poetry & politics—were inextricably tied together. They called for speed—improvisation—as spirit of the present, thus moving (via Dada) toward Surrealism's stress on automatic writing & the later (1950) cry of Charles Olson—in setting forth a new "projective verse"—that "always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!" Their experiments with typography—like those with performance—were picked up by other European movements & artists and, in somewhat altered form, by Americans like Ezra Pound and e. e. cummings—and through them by post-World War II groupings from Fluxus to Black Mountain. Marinetti's call for "the total destruction of syntax," while in practice not matching the works of, say, a Gertrude Stein, did foreshadow the later experiments of artists like Jackson Mac Low and John Cage, or the 1980s innovations of the American "language" poets. Nor is there any question that the Futurists' glorification of the machine was a first step toward what would eventually emerge as a fusion of art & technology through computers, videos, & synthesizers—in the work, e.g., of poets like Henri Chopin or Bernard Heidsieck. In their ability to set such things in motion—if not to complete them on their own—the Futurists extended their "moment" from the century's beginning to its end.

With all of that, too, came a fearful, destructive masculinity: an enthusiasm for war ("the world's only hygiene") & for fascism (in this they were not, alas, unique among poets); & a railing against presumptive forms of social "weakness" (e.g., feminism), as well as against "passéist" institutions (libraries, museums, etc.) to a degree well past the levelling strategies of most other avant-gardes. The result has been to obscure—even now—the memory of what the Futurists accomplished in their own right or helped to open up for others.

DEMONSTRATION FOR INTERVENTION IN THE WAR

Interventionist Manifesto 1914



Courtesy Scala/Art Resource, NY

from THE MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM

We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the prisoned radiance of electric hearts. For hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs, arguing up to the last confines of logic and blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling.

An immense pride was buoying us up, because we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars glaring down at us from their celestial encampments. Alone with stokers feeding the hellish fires of great ships, alone with the black specters who grope in the red-hot bellies of locomotives launched down their crazy courses, alone with drunkards reeling like wounded birds along the city walls.

Suddenly we jumped, hearing the mighty noise of the huge double-decker trams that rumbled by outside, ablaze with colored lights, like villages on holiday suddenly struck and uprooted by the flooding Po and dragged over falls and through gorges to the sea.

Then the silence deepened. But, as we listened to the old canal muttering its feeble prayers and the creaking bones of sickly palaces above their damp green beards, under the windows we suddenly heard the famished roar of automobiles.

"Let's go!" I said. "Friends, away! Let's go! Mythology and the Mystic Ideal are defeated at last. We're about to see the Centaur's birth and, soon after, the first flight of Angels! . . . We must shake the gates of life, test the bolts and hinges. Let's go! Look there, on the earth, the very first dawn! There's nothing to match the splendor of the sun's red sword, slashing for the first time through our millennial gloom!"

We went up to the three snorting beasts, to lay amorous hands on their torrid breasts. I stretched out on my car like a corpse on its bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, a guillotine blade that threatened my stomach.

The raging broom of madness swept us out of ourselves and drove us through streets as rough and deep as the beds of torrents. Here and there, sick lamplight through window glass taught us to distrust the deceitful mathematics of our perishing eyes.

I cried, "The scent, the scent alone is enough for our beasts."

And like young lions we ran after Death, its dark pelt blotched with pale crosses as it escaped down the vast violet living and throbbing sky.

But we had no ideal Mistress raising her divine form to the clouds, nor any cruel Queen to whom to offer our bodies, twisted like Byzantine rings! There was nothing to make us wish for death, unless the wish to be free at last from the weight of our courage!

And on we raced, hurling watchdogs against doorsteps, curling them under our burning tires like collars under a flatiron. Death, domesticated, met me at every turn, gracefully holding out a paw, or once in a while hunkering down, making velvety caressing eyes at me from every puddle.

"Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I spun my car around with the frenzy of a dog trying to bite its tail, and there, suddenly, were two cyclists coming toward me, shaking their fists, wobbling like two equally convincing but nevertheless contradictory arguments. Their stupid dilemma was blocking my way—damn! Ouch! . . . I stopped short and to my disgust rolled over into a ditch with my wheels in the air. . . .

Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse. . . . 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!

A crowd of fishermen with handlines and gouty naturalists were already swarming around the prodigy. With patient, loving care those people rigged a tall derrick and iron grappels to fish out my car, like a big beached shark. Up it came from the ditch, slowly, leaving in the bottom like scales its heavy framework of good sense and its soft upholstery of comfort.

They thought it was dead, my beautiful shark, but a caress from me was enough to revive it; and there it was, alive again, running on its powerful fins!

And so, faces smeared with good factory muck—plastered with metallic waste, with senseless sweat, with celestial soot—we, bruised, our arms in slings, but unafraid, declared our high intentions to all the *living* of the earth:

MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM

1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.
2. Courage, audacity, and revolt will be essential elements of our poetry.
3. Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and

sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap.

4. We say that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot—is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.
5. We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of its orbit.
6. The poet must spend himself with ardor, splendor, and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.
7. Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man.
8. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! . . . Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed.
9. We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman.
10. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.
11. We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.

APRÈS LA MARNE, JOFFRE VISITA LE FRONT EN AUTO



After the Battle of the Marne, Joffre toured the front by car

Translation from the Italian by R. W. Flint & Arthur A. Coppotelli

Correction of proofs + desires in speed

No poetry before ours
with our wireless imagination words
in freedom longggGGG live FUTURISM fi-
nally finally finally finally
finally

FINALLY

POETRY BEING BORN

train train train train tren tron
tron tron (iron bridge: tatluuuun-
tlin) sssssssiii ssiissii ssiiasssssiii
train train fever of my
train express-express-expressssssss press-press
press-press-press-press-press-press-press-press-
press-press-pressssssss stung by the sea salt
aromatized by the oranges seeking the sea

sea sea jumping jumping rails
rails jumping rrrrrails rrrrrails
(GREEDY SALTY PURPLE FANTASTIC IN-
EVITABLE SLOPING IMPONDERABLE FRA-
GILE DANCING MAGNETIC) I will explain
these words I mean the sky sea
mountains are greedy salty purple etc.
and that I am greedy salty purple etc.
all that outside me as well as in
me absolute totality simultaneity synthesis =
the superiority of my poetry over
all others stop Villa San Giovanni
capture + fish + enjoyment
of the train-shark netting it pushing it
in the ferry-boat-whale departure of
the floating station solidity
of the planed oaken sea
indigo ventilation
(INSENSIBLE DAILY ORDERLY METHODOICAL
SILKY STUFFED METALLIC TREMBLING
CUT-OFF PACKED UP POLISHED
NEW) ignition of a sailing
ship = a kerosene lamp + 12 white
lampshades + a green carpet + circle

of solitude serenity family
method of a second ship prow working
the metal of the sea at its lathe
foam shavings being lowered by the
temperature = 3 fans above the mountains
of Calabria (*AZZZZZURRRRRRE SLOW INDUL-
GENT SKEPTICAL*)

Debris of Messina in the straits
earthquake of walls-mud feeling
the sea as a sum of different
weights navigating = addition
200,000 blocks beams ropes barrels
(*ploooooom*) + a million sacks blue rotten
ceilings green doors yellow cabs
+ 2,000 steam pregnancies *tataploom-*
ploom flac flac against the prow-
stomach holding in its mouth the
entire ROUND SEA = swimmer juggler
+ porcelain dish (6 Km. in diameter)
between the teeth

MOON (*OLD YELLOW*)

over

head

tremors whiteness buzzings birth exaspera-
tion of 4 electric lights hanging on the
train stopped in the floating station of
the ferry-boat

MOON (*DIRTY MILK*)

over

head

light sufficient for correcting the galley
proofs to my book on Adrianople
no no nausea appearance
of the besieged city in the straits turning away
from Messina-Mustafa-Pascia
the graduated heap of Villa
San Giovanni tumbling of 8 electric
lights into the sea to the right Reggio
2nd cascade of white fire beneath
my feet-bulkhead-keel 1,000 m. depth
center of the straits volcanic sewer
opened 5 years ago possible
stretchings of the terrestrial intestine
Villa San Giovanni = febrility
of 300 electric lights shaken by 18
different densities of wind current

dance of fishes amused before the
 acetylene limelight of a fishing boat
 Reggio = tumult of 800 electric
 lights (**BRANDISHED FURIOUS RABID**) shaken
 by 20 different densities of wind
 current universal hatred for the
 moon train sliding away
 from the ferryboat-net

MESSINA

Messina improvisation general rehearsal of
 a city that is about to walk out on stage
 indifference of the author sugars and joys of
 the atmosphere exchange of serenades
 (3 baritones 2 tenors) chilly tenacity of the
 ivy upon the huts flexibility of the rein-
 forced concrete in harmony with the rabid
 cunning of the lava elegance of an apart-
 ment = alcove + canopy + art gallery
 + kitchen stuffed in a hut (8 mq.)
 impossibility of opposing haughty
 facades to the wind of the straits any
 higher than 10 m. truncated ambition of

the proprietors preoccupation of the
 houses = getting on all fours like wrestlers
 to avoid getting knocked down next quarrel
 appearance of the earthquake
 wrestler tired sleeping on the doorstep
 smoke of the volcano appeal hurled to the ve-
 suvius's stromboli's treachery of the
 vegetation = disguises for the earthquake men-
 ace of a heavily perfumed garden peppered
 with danger powder-magazine +
 will + work + comfort + thoughtless-
 ness of the nocturnal fecundation =
 Messina speed of cars
 heading for Catania

70 Km.

per hr.

|||||

driver half-thrown back
 beneath the enormous wheel
 that spins like a planet skat-
 ing skating on the speed
 washed by the turns turns
 meadows gardens beaches
 scenery of Calabrian
 mountains cone of Etna
 indigo inlets promontories

exploding roasting + speed + ferocity of the
 tires coal dust of the street thirst thirst of
 the rubber cactus

Translation from the Italian by Richard J. Pioli

SUCCESSIVELY

Blue absence
Red will
Pink desires
On
But
But
However
the shadows
prepare a formidable
plot
FOR
too red
further
really
TOO BLACK

Translation from the Italian by Richard J. Pioli

COMMENTARY

*Avant-garde heroism: 100 meters machineguns shots eruption violins
brass peem puum pac pac teem tuum machineguns tataratatarata*
F. T. M. (*Zang Tumb Tuuum*)

Born in Alexandria; educated in Paris; only later, Italy; his first published writings in French, marked by an overblown symbolism he was never wholly able to shake off. It was in Paris too that the founding manifesto of Futurism first appeared—in *Le Figaro* (2/20/09)—as an example of the new “art of the manifesto” (*arte di far manifesti*) that he virtually invented &

through which he made some of his major breakthroughs as a poet. The Futurist Manifesto preceded Futurism as such, but the movement began to coalesce shortly thereafter in Milan—& later Florence—around artists such as Carrà, Balla, Boccioni, & Russolo, who as a composer brought “the art of noises” into music, constructing instruments that prefigured the electronic music & poetry of a later time. The movement drew early on poets such as Buzzi & Palazzeschi; its energies extended to others such as Ungaretti & Campana &, largely through Marinetti’s efforts, impacted the work of Pound & Lawrence, Loy & Tzara, & Russian Cubo-Futurists like Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky—all represented in these pages. A central player in his glory years, Marinetti argued for a new freedom in word & act; for a liberation of the visible word & the conceptual image; for interminglings of art & life, of “high” and “low” in art & culture, of poetry & theory—a dynamism he was unable to recover in a fascist/statist setting, or to relate to newer works & movements in & out of Italy.

Zang Tumb Tuuum, described by translator Richard Pioli as the “showcase” for “a kind of literary terrorism,” is not just an encomium to war—its central theme—but an example of Futurist preoccupation with “an aesthetic of the machine.” And yet, as Pioli also points out—wisely: “The machines of Marinetti’s writing cannot be said to bear much close resemblance to real machines, although this was his intention. They are as fanciful as Duchamp’s machines[:]. . . a strange amalgam of precision language as Marinetti explains it in the technical manifestos and a wild, funny fantasy of outlandish, mechanized monsters . . . where even calibrations, measurements and quantification of the events taking place are mimicked.” The poem’s setting is Adrianopolis in Turkey, besieged by the Bulgarians during the first Balkan War—the present selection concerned with travels to the front, where Marinetti had been serving as a war correspondent.

F. T. Marinetti

from **THE VARIETY THEATER MANIFESTO**

FUTURISM WANTS TO TRANSFORM THE
VARIETY THEATER INTO A THEATER OF
AMAZEMENT, RECORD-SETTING,
AND BODY-MADNESS.

1. One must completely destroy all logic in Variety Theater performances, exaggerate their luxuriousness in strange ways, multiply contrasts, and make the absurd and the unlikelike complete masters of the stage. (Example: Oblige the *chanteuses* to dye their décolletage, their arms, and especially their hair, in all the colors hitherto neglected

as means of seduction. Green hair, violet arms, blue décolletage, orange chignon, etc. Interrupt a song and continue with a revolutionary speech. Spew out a *romanza* of insults and profanity, etc.)

2. Prevent a set of traditions from establishing itself in the Variety Theater. Therefore oppose and abolish the stupid Parisian "Revues," as tedious as Greek tragedy with their *Compère* and *Commère* playing the part of the ancient chorus, their parade of political personalities and events set off by wisecracks in a most irritating logical sequence. The Variety Theater, in fact, must not be what it unfortunately still is today, nearly always a more or less amusing newspaper.
3. Introduce surprise and the need to move among the spectators of the orchestra, boxes, and balcony. Some random suggestions: spread a powerful glue on some of the seats, so that the male or female spectator will stay glued down and make everyone laugh (the damaged frock coat or toilette will naturally be paid for at the door)—sell the same ticket to ten people: traffic jam, bickering, and wrangling—offer free tickets to gentlemen or ladies who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric and likely to provoke uproars with obscene gestures, pinching women, or other freakishness. Sprinkle the seats with dust to make people itch and sneeze, etc.
4. Systematically prostitute all of classic art on the stage, performing for example all the Greek, French, and Italian tragedies, condensed and comically mixed up, in a single evening—put life into the works of Beethoven, Wagner, Bach, Bellini, Chopin by inserting Neapolitan songs—put Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Zacconi, Mayol, and Fregoli side by side on the stage—play a Beethoven symphony backward, beginning with the last note—boil all of Shakespeare down to a single act—do the same with all the most venerated actors—have actors recite *Hernani* tied in sacks up to their necks—soap the floorboards to cause amusing tumbles at the most tragic moments.
5. In every way encourage the *type* of the eccentric American, the impression he gives of exciting grotesquerie, of frightening dynamism; his crude jokes, his enormous brutalities, his trick weskits and pants as deep as a ship's hold out of which, with a thousand other things, will come the great Futurist hilarity that should make the world's face young again.

Because, and don't forget it, we Futurists are YOUNG ARTILLERY-MEN ON A TOOT, as we proclaimed in our manifesto "Let's Murder the Moonshine," fire + fire + light against moonshine and against

old firmaments war every night great cities to blaze with electric signs Immense black face (30 meters high + 150 meters height of the building = 180 meters) open close open close a golden eye 3 meters high SMOKE SMOKE MANOLI SMOKE MANOLI CIGARETTES woman in a blouse (50 meters + 120 meters of building = 170 meters) stretch relax a violet rosy lilac blue bust froth of electric light in a champagne glass (30 meters) sizzle evaporate in a mouthful of darkness electric signs dim die under a dark stiff hand come to life again continue stretch out in the night the human day's activity courage + folly never to die or cease or sleep electric signs = formation and disaggregation of mineral and vegetable center of the earth circulation of blood in the ferrous faces of Futurist houses increases, em-purples (joy anger more more still stronger) as soon as the negative pessimist sentimental nostalgic shadows besiege the city brilliant revival of streets that channel a smoky swarm of workers by day two horses (30 meters tall) rolling golden balls with their hoofs GIOCONDA PURGATIVE WATERS crisscross of *trrrr trrrrr* Elevated *trrrr trrrrr* overhead *trrrrrrr* whissstle ambulance sirens and fire-trucks transformation of the streets into splendid corridors to guide push logic necessity the crowd toward trepidation + laughter + music-hall uproar FOLIES-BERGÈRE EMPIRE CRÈME-ÉCLIPSE tubes of mercury red red red blue violet huge letter-eels of gold purple diamond fire Futurist defiance to the weepy night the stars' defeat warmth enthusiasm faith conviction will power penetration of an electric sign into the house across the street *yellow slaps* for that gouty, dozy bibliophile in slippers 3 mirrors watch him the sign plunges to 3 redgold abysses open close open close 3-thousand meters deep horror quick go out out hat stick steps taximeter push shove *zuu zuoen* here we are dazzle of the promenade solemnity of the panther-cocottes in their comic-opera tropics fat warm smell of music-hall gaiety = tireless ventilation of the world's Futurist brain.

Translation from the Italian by R. W. Flint & Arthur A. Coppotelli

Francesco Cangiullo 1884-1977**DETONATION**

Synthesis of All Modern Theater

CHARACTER

A BULLET

*Road at night, cold, deserted.**A minute of silence. — A gunshot.*

CURTAIN

F. T. Marinetti**A LANDSCAPE HEARD**

Radio Sintesi

The whistle of a blackbird, envious of the crackling of a fire, ends by extinguishing the gossip of water.

- 10 seconds of lapping.
- 1 second of crackling.
- 8 seconds of lapping.
- 1 second of crackling.
- 5 seconds of lapping.
- 1 second of crackling.
- 19 seconds of lapping.
- 1 second of crackling.

25 seconds of lapping.

1 second of crackling.

35 seconds of lapping.

6 seconds of the whistle of a blackbird.

F. T. Marinetti**THEY ARE COMING**

Drama of Objects

Luxurious room, evening. — A large lighted chandelier. Open French windows (upstage left) that open onto a garden. At left, along the wall, but separated from it, a large rectangular table with cover. Along the wall on the right (through which a door opens), a huge and tall armchair beside which eight chairs are aligned, four to the right and four to the left (of the armchair).

A MAJORDOMO and two servants in tails enter from the left door.

THE MAJORDOMO: They are coming. Prepare. (Exits.)

(The servants, in a great hurry, arrange the eight chairs in a horseshoe beside the armchair, which remains in the same place, as does the table. When they have finished, they go and look out the door, turning their backs to the audience. A long minute of waiting. The MAJORDOMO re-enters, panting.)

THE MAJORDOMO: Countermand. I am very tired. . . . Many cushions, many stools . . . (Exits.)

(The servants exit by the right door and reenter loaded down with cushions and stools. Then, taking the armchair, they put it in the middle of the room and arrange the chairs (four on each side of the armchair) with the chairs' backs turned toward the armchair. Then they put cushions on each chair and on the armchair and stools before each chair and, likewise, before the armchair.

The servants go again to look out the French windows. A long minute of waiting.)

bulubú bulú bulú bulú bulú bulú
bulú bulú bulú bulú bulú bulú
fulú bulú bulú . . . (*Very, very prolonged.*)
RED (*roaring, crashing*): SORKRA TI BOM TAM cò
TE' TO' LICO'
TUIT TUAT TUE
tui iiiiliutautautak taut
TATATATATA TROK — PLOK

PATONTA'
TRAIO' TORIAAAAKRAKTO

(*Very brief pause.*)

BLACK and GRAY (*together*):
Each repeats his corresponding parolibero.

WHITE and RED (*together*):
Each repeats his corresponding parolibero.

A WHISTLE

Translations from the Italian by Victoria Nes Kirby

tititònk
tititànk
tititènk

Klo-klo-klo-klo-klo-klo

COMMENTARY

EVERYTHING OF ANY VALUE IS THEATRICAL. (F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Synthetic Theater*, 1915) And again: *A thing is valuable to the extent that it is improvised.*

With the Futurists the poem came hurtling off the page & entered into performance. The move began with poetry & manifestos as words to be voiced in public, often with accompanying sound effects & props, & soon developed into theatrical *serate* (evenings) in concert halls & vaudeville palaces. While capable of extended & bombastic bouts of verbalism, the Futurists typically performed short scripted works called *sintesi* (above), characterized in Marinetti's synthetic theater manifesto (1915) as "synthetic (i.e., very brief) . . . atechanical . . . dynamic, simultaneous . . . autonomous, alogical, unreal." Their stress on invented languages, simultaneous performances, & audience-bashing & provocation (glue on seats, vegetables to throw back at performers) was picked up by later avant-gardes like Dada (below) & 1950s/60s Fluxus. Similarly their call for "synthetic expressions of cerebral energy" characterized by "the mechanization of the performer" & the creation of "a specialized reality that violently assaults the nerves" may have paved the way for post-Surrealist theatrical experiments by Artaud ("the theater of cruelty," page 521), Jerzy Grotowski, Julian Beck (*The Living Theater*), & Robert Wilson. Among "the many forms of futurist theater" cited by Marinetti were "lines written in free words, simultaneity, compenetration, the short, acted-out poem, the dramatized sensation, comic dialogue, the negative act, the reechoing line, 'extra-logical' discussion, synthetic deformation, the scientific outburst that clears the air." The Futurists were also the first avant-garde group to experiment with radio & film.