

UCLA

Carte Italiane

Title

Introduction

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/868430rs>

Journal

Carte Italiane, 2(6)

ISSN

0737-9412

Author

Carey, Sarah

Publication Date

2010-10-20

DOI

10.5070/C926011382

Peer reviewed

Introduction

Sarah Carey, Editor-in-Chief

In 1909 the Italian avant-garde movement known as Futurism announced itself to the world through a manifesto penned by its genial leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Published previously in a scattering of small Italian newspapers, the document achieved its world-wide notoriety when placed on the front page of *Le Figaro* on February 20th. The manifesto, which outlined eleven literary, aesthetic and moral “breaks” from the past, was printed in the illustrious Parisian newspaper along with some of the following introductory remarks:

Nous avons veillé toute la nuit, mes amis et moi, sous des lampes de mosquée dont les coupoles de cuivre aussi ajoutées que notre âme avaient pourtant des cœurs électriques. Et tout en piétinant notre native paresse sur d’opulents tapis Persans, nous avons discuté aux frontières extrêmes de la logique et griffé le papier de démentes écritures.

These oft-forgotten phrases seem to call to mind both the previous tradition of artistic and literary countercultures in nineteenth-century Europe and (at least from an American literary perspective such as my own) the much later musings of the Beat Generation. I might even go so far as to say that the image of Marinetti and his friends reminds me of several lines from Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” — “angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night.” Personal musings aside, Futurism’s legacy in the twentieth-century should not be underestimated: the enormous impact of Futurism on the upstarts of movements in Europe and Russia such as Surrealism, Dadaism and Cubism is truly beyond compare.

2009 marked the 100th anniversary of the appearance of the “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” in *Le Figaro*. In commemoration of this event, the graduate students of the UCLA Department of Italian organized a graduate student conference entitled “Futurism: The Invention of a Primordial Tomorrow, TRADITION + LEGACY.”

The forum sought to address two very different aspects of the Futurist movement: its relationship to and diversion from tradition as well as the Futurist legacy that has continued to influence Italian culture even today. The success of the conference was due in large part to the collaboration of an internationally-based panel of participants who hailed from the United States and the United Kingdom, two inspiring keynote speakers, Professor Claudio Fogu from UC Santa Barbara and Professor Beppe Cavatorta from the University of Arizona, Tucson, and the gracious and generous support of Fondazione Azzurra in Los Angeles.

The current volume of *CARTE ITALIANE*, which is partially funded by Fondazione Azzurra, puts forth in print the work of many of the participants from this commemorative event, plus further contributions from Italy and elsewhere that address the themes explored during the conference. We debut with the translation of a previously unpublished draft of a speech composed by Marinetti that was unearthed in the archives of the Getty Research Institute this past year by UCLA's own Gianluca Rizzo and Dominic Siracusa. "Aspects of Simultaneity in the *Divine Comedy*" gives us a very different perspective on the founding text of the Italian literary canon and provides us with further pause for reflection on the connections between tradition and legacy with respect to Futurism's founder, Marinetti. Heather Sottong's article, "Marinetti's Metaphorical Break with Tradition," continues in this vein. Sottong's analysis of Marinetti's use of metaphor in "Le Bataille de Tripoli" (1911), "8 anime in una bomba" (1919), and "L'areopoema del Golfo della Spezia" (1935) focuses on the author's approach to the topic of war and explores the degree to which Marinetti's use of metaphor departs from tradition in different genres and at different stages of his poetic development. In "Back to Futurism: the Ill-Digested Legacies," Beppe Cavatorta explores the legacy left by Futurism in the Neo-avant-garde. Cavatorta's analysis begins with Futurist treatises such as the "Manifesto Tecnico della letteratura futurista" (1912), "Distruzione della sintassi - Immaginazione senza fili - Parole in libertà" (1913), "Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico e la sensibilità numerica" (1914) and "Il romanzo sintetico" (1939), as well as several of Marinetti's tables of words-in-freedom, and then traces their ideological connections to the poetry of Edoardo Sanguineti, Adriano Spatola, Alfredo Giuliani, Ugo Carrega, Emilio Villa, and others during the latter half of the twentieth-century. In her article entitled "Elements of the Divine in Futurist Art and Literature," Jessica

Strom bridges the gap between the realms of Futurist literature and art by focusing on the use of religious symbols and shifting belief systems in Aldo Palazzeschi's *Il codice di Perelà* and the *arte sacra* of Fillia.

With respect to Futurist art, this volume of CARTE ITALIANE also honors the 100th anniversaries of the “Manifesto dei pittori futuristi” and the “Manifesto tecnico della pittura futurista,” both penned in 1910 by the great Futurist painters Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini — figures who appear in several of the articles collected here. The work of independent scholar Laura Iotti, “Futuristi e anarchici: Dalla fondazione del futurismo all’ingresso italiano nella prima guerra mondiale (1909 — 1915),” looks at art, politics and history through points of both contact and dispute between Futurism and Italian anarchists at the beginning of the twentieth-century. Both considered avant-garde movements, Iotti sees similarities in the ways in which they rail against *passatismo*, choosing to settle her discourse on Marinetti, Carrà, and Boccioni. Rosalind McKeever, on the other hand, posits questions of temporality and primitivism in “Futurism’s African (A)temporalities.” Emerging from the paradox of early Futurism’s appetite both for progress and technology and for Africa and the primitive, McKeever’s article seeks to reconcile these aspects by examining the use of African elements in early Futurist theory, the art of Boccioni and Carrà and the literature of Marinetti. Adriana Baranello focuses instead on the enduring impact of Futurist art in “Deus (ex) macchina: The Legacy of Futurism’s Obsession with Speed in 1960s Italy.” According to Baranello, the Futurists’ fascination with cars and movement leaves a lasting mark on the rest of the twentieth-century and she gives us examples such as *Il sorpasso*, Dino Risi’s 1962 film, and Emilio Isgrò’s 1964 visual poem “Poesia Volkswagen.”

Three articles address sexual relations and/or constructions of gender in this volume. In “Casanova, Marinetti and the Art of Seduction,” Dominic Siracusa explores Marinetti’s strategy behind seduction, which he sees as a form of dissimulation in order to instigate women to participate in the Futurist movement, thus appearing more libertine or egalitarian than the “enlightened” Casanova. Siracusa’s analysis of Marinetti’s *Come si seducono le donne* and Casanova’s *L’histoire de ma vie* shows how Marinetti campaigns against societal institutions and traditions such as marriage and the idea of romantic love that oppress both the sexes. Carmen Gomez addresses what she calls Futurism’s “paradoxical feminism” in “Gender, Science, and the Modern Woman: Futurism’s Strange

Concoctions of Femininity.” Gomez analyzes Futurism’s rewriting of the more traditional concepts of time, nature, and procreation, as well as their influence on female identity in Enif Robert’s *Un ventre di donna* (1918) and Rosa Rosà’s *Una donna con tre anime* (1918). Emma Van Ness discusses sexuality and scandal in “(No) Queer Futurism: Prostitutes, Pink Poets, and Politics in Italy from 1913–1918.” Van Ness begins by looking at Italo Tavolato and his “Elogio della prostituzione” from 1913 and then explores Marinetti’s and the Milanese Futurists’ treatment of Tavolato, Papini, Palazzeschi, and other Florentines in their correspondence, articles, and manifestoes, concluding with Marinetti and Corra’s homophobic novel *L’isola dei baci*.

The volume concludes with two articles that in one way or another explore the relationship between Futurism and Fascism. In “Modernismo ed elitismo nell’età delle macchine: I confini di una nuova aristocrazia in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti e Benito Mussolini,” Lorenzo Santoro focuses his attention on how Marinetti drew attention to specific generational and social targets, a similar approach that Mussolini used in order to confront the questions of gender identity and the modernistic figure of the hero. My own contribution to the present volume, “Futurism’s Photography: From *photodynamismo* to *fotomontaggio*,” takes as its starting points the early theory of photodynamism by Anton Giulio Bragaglia and the rather rocky relationship between Bragaglia, Marinetti, and the Futurist painters. The impact of Futurism’s at times hesitant involvement with the medium is then traced through Fascist mediatic culture and even on to Italian neorealism, giving a final example of just how intertwined are the concepts of tradition, revolution and rebirth.

This special edition of CARTE ITALIANE came together with the help of members of this year’s editorial board, including Brittany Asaro, Brendan Hennessey, Erika Nadir and Camilla Zamboni, as well as many of my colleagues and professors at UCLA, including Luigi Ballerini, Lucia Re, Heather Sottong, Monica Streifer and Emma Van Ness. I would like to particularly thank editors Cindy Stanphil and Jessica Strom for their enormous help in finalizing the articles and streamlining the peer-review process. Many thanks to Carmen Gomez, Gianluca Rizzo and Dominic Siracusa for their work coordinating the conference and these printed proceedings. I would also like to personally acknowledge William Morosi for the typesetting and cover design and Stacey Meeker at the GSA for her continued support and promotion of our journal. I

hope that the present volume of *CARTE ITALIANE*, which will be the last under my direction, will convey the enthusiastic energy and collaborative atmosphere of the commemorative 2009 conference. In my view, this collection of essays stands as a testament to both the innovative work of young scholars in the field of Italian Studies in 2010 and to the enduring and inspiring legacy of the Italian Futurists.