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Feeding Trans-sense: Gender and Digestion in the Futurist Project

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Feeding Trans-sense:
Gender and Digestion in the Futurist Project

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2021

To my mother and her mother for all their love and support.

To my father for his forever curiosity.

A Luciano, Anna, Giulia, e Marta Chiassarini; Alessandra Tuzi e Daniele Gatti, senza i quali la lingua e la cultura italiana non avrebbero mai occupato un posto così speciale nel mio cuore.

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Introduction

Futurism was a future-building project driven by the visions of its founder, poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Witnessing radical technological advancements at the beginning of the twentieth century, Marinetti saw potential for the rapport between technology, environment, and man to revolutionize the possibilities for being in this world. He enacted an imaginative project through his writing, constructing a vision of the future and plans for its actualization. He imagined new beings that would occupy the future and how they would mutually sustain and be sustained by their environment.

Futurism examines the body in relation to the world: the body can be a site where elements from the environment are taken in and transformed. As those elements are transformed, the body is transformed, as well, in ways that can realize limitless physical and psychic potential. These processes of intake, transformation, and integration into the body can also be referred to as the processes of ingestion and digestion. Considering digestion as the process by which inputs from one's environment are transformed by the body for the dual purpose of sustaining the body and allowing the body to reciprocate an effect on its environment, I will investigate the roles of ingestion and digestion as means of transformation in the Futurist future-building project. Motifs of ingestion and digestion appeared throughout the Futurist canon, from their founding *Manifesto* to their later cookbook. The Futurists proposed a consumption of their conceptual framework: they wished for their ideas to be taken in by the public and integrated into their beings in a way that would actuate a specific Futurist vision for society. However, there was a constraint within their realm of otherwise limitless potential. The Futurists' vision of limitless transformations

becoming realized in the human body and in the world outside the body was problematized by the rigid gender limitations that structured their rhetorical framework.

The rhetorical framework upon which the movement was founded constructed a gender binary that ultimately confined the potential of movement's work. Within this framework, the romantic, the sentimental, the natural, the organic was feminized, while the machine, the technological, the metallic, the inorganic was masculinized. The Futurists promoted a forsaking of the feminine for the masculine. They believed masculinity would fuel war, and war would be the force that would deliver a new culture unto the world. Their gendered rhetoric did not impede their early work from exploring the transformational potential of the human body in a figurative sense: they imagined a new being, *multiplied man*, who would come to activate and sustain the Futurist vision through an evolutionary process that resembled an abstract form of digestion. It was later in the movement when the Futurists translated their rhetorical imaginings into sensory experiments at the site of the body that their attachment to a binaristic, oppositional construction of gender began to contradict the purported 'limitlessness' of their original aspirations.

By masculinizing inorganic material and feminizing organic material in contrast, eating became an occasion where the male eater consumes a figure of the feminine. While this could be perceived as a position of power for the male eater, as it was spun in *La cucina futurista*, it also indicates that ingestion and digestion are processes wherein the feminine threatens to transgress the boundaries of the masculine. The Futurists consequentially attempted to control consumption to ensure the stability of the gendered bedrock upon which their entire movement rested. A preoccupation with "perfect" digestion ensued, an ambition that was unachievable in the context of the human body. Ultimately, the Futurist enterprise of actualizing infinite transformation by

means of figurative and literal processes of ingestion and digestion was undermined by their fundamental reliance on opposing, binaristic gender constructions.

Chapter 1:

Ingestion and War in Early Futurism

I will anchor my arguments in this paper on the work of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), the poet who founded Futurism. In order to frame the Futurist project, I rely on the introductions written by Günter Berghaus and Lawrence Rainey that were included in a 2006 collection of Marinetti's *Critical Writings*, and the 2009 Yale University Press *Futurism* anthology, respectively.¹ I direct the majority of my focus to Marinetti and his writing because he was the nucleus of Futurism and its original source. This focus is not meant to ignore the subsequent contributions that his colleagues and followers made to the movement. I will reference other Futurists in my discussion, as it is necessary to understand how Futurism existed beyond Marinetti in order to consider and appreciate the movement in full. But the majority of statements I make in reference to "Futurism" regard the essence of the movement as it was developed directly by Marinetti through his work beginning in 1909.

Within the first few years of the twentieth century, "the lifestyle of a modern metropolis" was emerging in the north of Italy, as it had been in other major countries across the continent.² This techno-industrial modernity was springing up, however, in a country whose culture was still largely steeped in the artistic traditions of the previous century. Marinetti was emerging as a minor celebrity in the Milanese literary sphere at the time, a status he reached partially through his distinct writing style and partially through his embrace of shock value and spectacle. In his twenties, preceding the advent of Futurism, he published poems, reviews, several books, and two plays. Several motifs that would come to pervade the Futurist movement were already present in

¹ F. T. Marinetti and Günter Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, 1st ed (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), chap. Introduction: F.T. Marinetti (1876-1944): A Life Between Art and Politics; Lawrence S. Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), chap. Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism.

² Marinetti and Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, xxviii.

Marinetti's pre-Futurist works. For example, Marinetti's pre-Futurist play *Le Roi Bombance* features themes of violence, revolution, and ingestion.³ This indicates that while the movement grew to include a wide variety of artists and thinkers, all exploring and interpreting Futurism to their own ends, the movement was born as an extension of ideas Marinetti had been engaging with on some level from the outset of his literary career.

In October of 1908, Marinetti was in a car crash that he “soon himself endowed with mythical proportions.”⁴ He drafted the foundational *Futurist Manifesto* shortly following the incident. The *Manifesto* opens with an account of that ill-fated joyride, reproduced as a sort of mythical origin story for the movement. This crash is often written about as a life-changing incident that compelled Marinetti, through the shock of the trauma, to reconsider the trajectory of his life's work. Marinetti recalls the creation of Futurism:

On 11 October, 1908, after having worked for six years at my international review, *Poesia*, in order to liberate the Italian lyrical genius, which was threatened with extinction from traditional and commercial obstacles, I suddenly felt that all the poems, articles, and debates were no longer sufficient. A change of method was absolutely imperative: to get down into the streets, to attack the theaters, and to bring the fist into the midst of the artistic struggle.⁵

Rainey, citing this excerpt from Marinetti's own writing, complicates this perspective, proposing instead that Marinetti was already discontent with the status of contemporary culture

³ Rainey gives a concise summary of *Le Roi Bombance* on page 5 of his introduction to the anthology: “It depicts a fantastic Castle of Abundance which becomes the site of a revolution by ‘the hungry ones’, the destitute masses who proceed to devour the king, but then bring him back to life when, gluttoned by an orgy of eating and drinking, they vomit up his dismembered parts.”

⁴ Lawrence Rainey, “Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism,” in *Futurism: An Anthology* (Yale University Press, 2009), 5.

⁵ F. T. Marinetti, “First Futurist Battles,” in *Guerra, sola igiene del mondo*, in Luciano de Maria, ed., *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 235–245, here 235.

prior to his crash, and merely used the incident as an allegorical device to his own service. The anecdote turns the manifesto into an “allegory of death, reincarnation, and modernity, a conversion narrative in which trauma gives way to revelation, accident to significance.”⁶ The story of the crash culminates in a moment where Marinetti finds himself under the racecar in a ditch on the side of the road. He describes drinking the “nourishing sludge” of the muddy ditch and being reminded of breastfeeding from his Sudanese wet nurse as a child.⁷ Marinetti’s deliberate description of “gulping down” mud in conjunction with the last words uttered (by an unknown speaker) before the car accident (“...let’s fling ourselves, like fruits swollen with pride, into the wind’s vast and contorted mouth!...Let’s throw ourselves, like food, into the Unknown, not in desperation but to fill up the deep wells of the Absurd.”⁸) mark the appearance of the theme of ingestion in the Futurist canon.⁹ Marinetti had experimented with the theme in his pre-Futurist work, as previously mentioned. Here, ingestion and digestion reappear as concepts that mark a moment of transformation or transcendence: Marinetti eats, and proposes being eaten, to realize the aims of his new movement. These details in the founding *Manifesto* solidify the place of ingestion and digestion within Futurism’s conceptual lexicon.

Marinetti begins the preamble of the *Manifesto* using the collective pronoun ‘we’: “We had stayed up all night—my friends and I...”¹⁰ ‘We’ refers reflexively to Marinetti and his friends. Later in the text ‘we’ refers to “we strong and youthful *Futurists*”¹¹ Within the pages of

⁶ Rainey, “Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism,” 6.

⁷ F. T. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909),” in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Christine Poggi, Lawrence Rainey, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 50.

⁸ Marinetti, 50.

⁹ The association Marinetti draws here between the ingestion of the muddy water and his memory of breastfeeding from his wet nurse foreshadows *La cucina futurista*’s (1932) complicated conceptual commixing of foodstuffs with human flesh.

¹⁰ Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909),” 49.

¹¹ Marinetti, 52.

the *Manifesto*, Marinetti and his friends are transformed into Futurists. Marinetti assumes this collective Futurist identity, using the pronoun ‘we’ in most of his writing over the course of the movement even when the work attributes him as its sole author. Marinetti held that sense of a collective movement, that sense of the project being something that was beyond the bounds of his singular person, from the project’s very conception. There is a touch of paradox in this detail: Marinetti invokes a *collectivity* that transcends singular personhood, but he generates that collectivity from the singular source of his individual self, as he alone authors this founding *Manifesto*. Such questions of individuality versus collectivity arise in an examination of Marinetti and his relationship to Futurism because he, in many ways, embodied the ‘heart’ of the movement, but Futurism grew to be embraced and reinterpreted by a wide variety of artists across the globe.

The eleven objectives of the *Manifesto* and the language in which Marinetti describes them are energetic, fanatical, and violent. Marinetti describes the *Manifesto* in the paragraph succeeding the list of objectives as a “manifesto of burning and overwhelming violence.”¹² The insistence on violence complements the Futurist glorification of war as “the only hygiene of the world.”¹³ This view has its roots in Karl Marx’s description of violence as “the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one.”¹⁴ The belief was that violence, specifically in the form of war, would catalyze global progress at the beginning of the twentieth century, giving way to new progress for mankind.

¹² Marinetti, 52.

¹³ Marinetti, 51.

¹⁴ Marinetti and Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, 219.

Marinetti suggests both the literal and rhetorical use of violence. Regarding the usage of rhetorical violence, the *Manifesto* asserts, “Poetry must be conceived as a violent assault launched against unknown forces to reduce them to submission under man.”¹⁵ Marinetti used writing, and instructed for it to be used, as a means of the violence. Marinetti did not believe his poetry would cause physical injury to those who read it; rather, he saw writing and rhetoric as a means of actualizing transformation, related to the way he saw war as a means of creating a new world. Marinetti viewed the objectives of Futurism as realizable through the collaboration of literal means (e.g. war) and rhetorical means (e.g. projecting transformative ideas in writing). Through Futurism, he wished to bring that transformative, ‘healthy violence’ into the artistic sphere to actuate a new mode of cultural production.¹⁶

Along with the glorification of war, Marinetti intended to glorify “contempt for woman” in his *Manifesto*.¹⁷ The use of the singular ‘woman’ here is significant. Marinetti is not promoting contempt for *women* but contempt for *woman*. Marinetti’s (and, by extension, other prominent male Futurists’) relationship with women is not easily defined. Marinetti engaged with the work of female Futurists, such as Valentine de Saint-Point, who made significant contributions to the intellectual trajectory of the movement.¹⁸ He also, however, constructed a

¹⁵ Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909),” 51.

¹⁶ “Marinetti adopted many of the anarcho-syndicalist views and amalgamated them with the lessons he had learned from Nietzsche, Sorel, and Bergson. It was from these ideas that he developed his concept of ‘war, sole cleanser of the world,’ which runs as a pervasive thread through his work. In many of his writings and speeches he propagated a concept of *élan vital* and ‘healthy violence’ that required destruction in order to construct a new world.” F. T. Marinetti and Günter Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, 1st ed (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), xx.

¹⁷ Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909),” 51.

¹⁸ Valentine de Saint-Point authored the “Manifesto of Futurist Women (Response to F.T. Marinetti)” (1912). For information on other female Futurist artists, see Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, eds., “Biographical Sketches,” in *Futurism: An Anthology* (Yale University Press, 2009), 507–20.

gender identity of ‘woman’ in his writing that became a figurative receptacle for the problems he perceived in contemporary society. He then positioned that gender role in opposition to ‘man,’ to whom he assigned characteristics he promoted as essential to the transformation of society. The rhetoric he employed to found Futurism rests on a binaristic codification of gender that posits a tremendous amount of figurative significance in the categories of ‘male’ and ‘female.’¹⁹

Amid these adversarial undercurrents, though, there is a glimpse of a more sublime, transcendent Futurist attitude. The eighth point of the *Manifesto* reads:

We stand on the last promontory of the centuries!...Why should we look back over our shoulders, when we intend to breach the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, for we have already created velocity which is eternal and omnipresent.²⁰

Marinetti suggests here that he sees the Futurists standing before the threshold of futurity, while also asserting they ‘already live’ in an environment that indicates the arrival of that futurity. He sees his vision as both something to strive for and as something that has already, in a way, been reached.

The *Futurist Manifesto* was published on the front page of Paris’ *Le Figaro* newspaper in 1909, launching Marinetti into instant international fame. Futurism expanded in the following two years through its extension into the realm of the visual arts; its hosting of *serate*, or evening performances; and its dedication to the production of manifestos.²¹ Futurism’s expansion into

¹⁹ In one instance in *La cucina futurista* (1932), there is mention of a “neuter,” or a person gendered as neither male nor female; however, this subject’s identity is not detailed beyond mere mention.

²⁰ Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909),” 51.

²¹ For more on the Futurist *serate*, see Lawrence Rainey, “Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism,” in *Futurism: An Anthology* (Yale University Press, 2009), 7–11.

different media reconfigured the scope of the movement. The artists who signed on brought with them an insistence on the unification of life and art, and an interest in conscious matter beyond the human body, expressed in their 1910 “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto.”²² Berghaus elaborates on the relationship between art and life in the Futurist project:

Futurism sought to bridge the gap between art and life and to bring aesthetic innovation into the real world. Life was to be changed through art, and art was to become a form of life. The Futurist project of innovation attempted to obliterate the contemplative, intellectual concept of culture and aimed at a total and permanent revolution in all spheres of human existence. What was later called ‘Futurist Re-fashioning of the Universe’ was aimed at a transformation of humankind in all its physiological and psychological aspects, of the social and political conditions prevailing in the modern metropolis.²³

Berghaus presents a succinct description of the Futurist future-building project: the Futurists sought nothing less than the total transformation of ways of human-being. Marinetti put together a collection of essays — *Le Futurisme* (1911) — during those nascent years of the movement that “provided a coherent, electrifying vision of the contemporary world, one dominated by communications and transportation technologies having incalculable effects.”²⁴ Within these essays, he imagines how this transformational revolution will take place on a societal level, on a psychological level, and on a physiological level at the site of the human body. It is in these essays that Marinetti makes clear the function of the Futurist movement as a future-building project.

²² Umberto Boccioni et al., “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto,” in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Christine Poggi, Lawrence Rainey, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 64–67.

²³ Marinetti and Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, xix.

²⁴ Rainey, “Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism,” 11.

The trajectory of the Futurist movement became complicated, ironically, by the reality of war. Marinetti and his colleagues were outspoken interventionists, advocating for Italian intervention in WWI. This interventionism was tied in to the movement's belief in war as a generative catalyst. As Rainey notes, "Interventionists had hoped that the advent of war would have a cathartic effect on the Italian consciousness, creating a new people."²⁵ The artistic momentum of the movement was diverted to the war mid-1915. By the war's end, Futurism was at a turning point: several prominent members of the movement had died in active combat, and others had turned away from Futurism to pursue their work in independent directions. New, young recruits had joined, but, as Rainey writes, "whether these [new recruits] possessed the power or originality of the earlier nucleus has been much debated."²⁶ Futurism entered a sort of artistic dormancy in this post-WWI period, as Marinetti moved towards the political sphere with the intention of establishing Futurism as a political force.²⁷ He published the "Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party" (1918) and became involved in the founding of the Fascist Party, though he and his Futurists harbored skepticism of the Fascists' antisocialism. The Fascist Party ultimately grew too conservative for Marinetti under the leadership of Benito Mussolini, and he resigned from the party in 1920, ending the Futurists' direct participation in politics. The movement refocused its attention on art and adopted the stance "...that Futurism operates in 'the unlimited domain of pure fantasy' and only 'intervenes in the political battle in the hours of grave danger for the Nation.'"²⁸ The fact of the matter, however, was that the Futurists were

²⁵ Rainey, 22.

²⁶ Rainey, 23.

²⁷ Marinetti and Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, xxv.

²⁸ Marinetti's introduction to *Futurismo e fascismo* (1924) in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, 1st ed., pp. 430, 432; 2nd ed., pp. 494, 496-97 in Berghaus, *Critical Writings*, xxvi.

forced to navigate their position as avant-garde artists within a complex, Fascist reality. Futurism never fully recovered the international renown it had held in those first few years following the publishing of the founding *Manifesto*. The work produced in this late period did, however, continue to build on the movement's early interests of revolutionizing all aspects of human life. In particular, the relationship to the five senses emerged as a prime concern with the manifesto on *Tattilismo* (Tactilism) (1921) and *La cucina futurista* (The Futurist Cookbook) (1932).

Chapter 2:

Le Futurisme and the Rhetoric of Futurist Utopia

Rhetoric of Utopia at the Site of the Body

Marinetti had a vision of a Futurist future. The 1911 *Le Futurisme* essay collection comprised an overview of that vision: war would serve as a form of ‘hygiene’ for the world, clearing space for a new global culture characterized by masculinity and speed to take hold; technological advancements already present in the contemporary landscape would facilitate war and effect psychological and physiological change in human beings; these changes would vitalize men as soldiers capable of enacting transformational war and establishing a new culture in the wake of the ‘healthy violence.’

Marinetti explicitly described his imaginings as a ‘vision’ while illustrating his “FUTURIST VISION-HYPOTHESIS” in his 1911 work “Electrical War.” “A haunting vision of the future carries my soul away in delicious gusts,” he wrote, proceeding to describe a futuristic scenario in which “the energy of distant winds and the rebellions of the sea have been transformed by man’s genius into many millions of kilowatts, spreading everywhere yet needing no wires...”²⁹ This electric landscape, in Marinetti’s vision, would free men from “the paradigm of weakness and debilitating softness that comes with wood and fabrics” allowing them to realize a more advanced society.³⁰ The new society would be characterized by a kind of “perfect” living where everyone’s needs are met, granting people transcendence beyond certain human limitations:

²⁹ F. T. Marinetti, “‘Electrical War’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 101.

³⁰ Marinetti, 101.

Hunger and poverty have disappeared. The bitter social question, annihilated. The financial question reduced to a simple matter of accounting for production. Freedom for all to make money and mint shiny coins.

The need for degrading labor has ended. Intelligence finally reigns everywhere. Physical labor ceases to be servile, now having only three goals: hygiene, pleasure, and struggle.

No longer needing to strive for his daily bread, man finally conceives the pure idea of ascensional record-setting. His willpower and ambition grow immense. All surpluses are at play in every human mind. Rivalry strives for the impossible, purifying itself in an atmosphere of danger and speed.

Every intelligence has grown lucid, every instinct has been brought to its greatest splendor, and now they clash with each other for a surplus of pleasure. Because people find enough to eat, they can perfect their lives in numberless antagonistic exertions. An anarchy of perfections. No vibration of life is lost, no mental energy wasted.³¹

This illustrates one possible outcome that could have resulted from the changes in society that Marinetti urged throughout his Futurist canon. The plans and ideas put down in writing in the movement's founding years pointed comprehensively towards a discernible horizon line resting at the limits of the Futurist gaze. The horizon of the Futurist vision was utopian, but in the Jamesonian sense of 'Utopia' as "a method of imagining schemes, spaces, objects, whole futures that, through the power of fantasy and desire, inspires political change in the real world but never actually arrives from the fantastic into the real."³² This is the context in which rhetorician Andrew Pilsch considers the concept of utopia in his 2017 book *Transhumanism: Evolutionary Futurism and the Human Technologies of Utopia*. In Pilsch's framework, "'Utopia' comes to mean a kind of methodological imagination."³³ The concept of utopia is as much about the

³¹ Marinetti, 102–3.

³² *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson 2005; Frederic Jameson is philosopher and Marxist political theorist.

³³ Andrew Pilsch, *Transhumanism: Evolutionary Futurism and the Human Technologies of Utopia* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 17, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt7qm>.

processes of imagining and striving towards an ideal as it is about the *nature* of that target ideal. Working with this understanding, Marinetti's relationship with utopia becomes more clear. He and the Futurists undertook an imaginative project that carried the utopian spirit: they ventured to dream of ways of relating to their contemporary society that were intended to realize a new way of being in the future. "War, the Only Hygiene of the World," an essay in the *Le Futurisme* collection, affirms within its opening lines "that one of Futurism's absolute principles is the continuous development and unending progress, both bodily and intellectual, of man."³⁴ Ongoing development was the objective of the movement, an objective that can never be fully 'reached' because it is always moving forward. Integral to Marinetti's vision of 'perfect' living was a sort of evolutionary process in which man would become merged with machine. This process would result in a transhuman being that Marinetti referred to as *multiplied man* or the *mechanical son*.

Pilsch's discussion of transhumanism and its rhetoric of evolutionary futurism can be considered, anachronistically, alongside Marinetti's writing to round out an understanding of Marinetti's imagined evolutionary process and its implications for the Futurist movement at large. Transhumanism is a movement first named in the 1970s by FM-2030 that "represents a new vision of the future in which we are ourselves being evolved by the futuristic setting we have already created for ourselves."³⁵ The movement "helpfully articulates a rhetoric of utopia that uses the human body and the human soul...as the material for imagining futures that are not mere re-presentations of the present."³⁶ While transhumanism was not established as a movement

³⁴ F. T. Marinetti, "'War, the Only Hygiene of the World' from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915)," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Christine Poggi, Lawrence Rainey, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 84.

³⁵ Pilsch, *Transhumanism*, 2.

³⁶ Pilsch, 3.

until much later in the twentieth century, the movement's body of thought has roots in avant-garde modernism. Pilsch acknowledges that this includes the writing of the Futurists, referencing Marinetti and Mina Loy in the first chapter of his book. Pilsch describes this core, avant-garde foundation as “a utopian rhetoric of technology” called evolutionary futurism.³⁷

“Evolutionary futurism,” Pilsch continues “...rhetorically situates technology as exerting mutational, evolutionary pressures on the human organism. However...the longer history of evolutionary futurist rhetoric focuses more explicitly on the ways of being — new philosophies, new social orders, new affordances — unlocked by an evolutionary overcoming of the category of the human.”³⁸ Evolutionary futurism recognizes the boomerang effect of humans' launching of technology out into their environment. The environment effects a reciprocal response: the technological landscape that humans created exacts evolutionary change on the human body. Pilsch notes that these evolutionary changes are not exclusive to the physical aspects of the body; the technology impacts the human psyche and ways of being, as well.

Pilsch situates evolutionary futurism as a form of rhetoric because the transhumanist vision of the future “is, as all futures ultimately are, a linguistic mirage”³⁹ Transhumanist thinkers make observations about the state of their contemporary moment and then construct in writing their imaginings about what will come in the future. For this reason that evolutionary futurism and transhumanism “project a particular future through language,” we can consider them as rhetorical modes in effect.⁴⁰ We can understand the Futurists' vision to exist in parallel with evolutionary futurism because the movement's vision was a form of rhetoric.

³⁷ Pilsch, 3.

³⁸ Pilsch, 3.

³⁹ Pilsch, 11.

⁴⁰ Pilsch, 12.

Pilsch wants to clarify that his description of evolutionary futurism as a utopian rhetoric is not to say that it is a rhetoric of unrealistic daydreaming, as might be the case if we were to understand ‘utopia’ as designating its literal translation from Greek: ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere.’⁴¹ In designating evolutionary futurist aspirations as ‘utopian,’ Pilsch is not claiming transhumanists were headed nowhere; rather, he makes the case that they were striving to arrive somewhere, somewhere real. It is the “fantastic” quality of these aspirations, in combination with how they inspire a constant striving towards a shared vision of the future, that distinguishes the evolutionary futurist rhetoric of transhumanism as utopian. The Futurists’ vision shares this Jamesonian, utopian quality.

Marinetti harnessed the function of utopian rhetoric as a method of imagining futures in his early Futurist writing. His work expressed aspirations that could be described retrospectively as transhumanist, as they involved the evolution of a new transhuman being. Tracing the construction of Marinetti’s future vision through five of his essays from the *Le Futurisme* collection will illustrate how the movement’s glorification of war, reverence for industrial technology, and rhetorical polarization of gender functioned to position the male body as the material with which a Futurist utopia would be constructed.

⁴¹ Thomas More first used the word “utopia” in his 1516 book *Utopia*. The British Library gives an etymological explanation: “[Thomas More] coined the word ‘utopia’ from the Greek ou-topos meaning ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere’. It was a pun - the almost identical Greek word eu-topos means ‘a good place’. So at the very heart of the word is a vital question: can a perfect world ever be realised?” “Thomas More’s *Utopia*,” n.d., <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126618.html>.

Machine Love and the Multiplied Man

In his essay “War, the Only Hygiene of the World,” Marinetti puts forth the image of a ‘social tree.’ Marinetti wrote that the Futurists

want to tear up and burn [the social tree’s] deepest roots...which are called: a mania for order, desire for the least possible effort, fanatical adoration of the family, worry over fixed times for eating and sleeping, vile quietism, love for the old and the aged, for whatever is word out of ill, horror in the face of the new, contempt for youth and rebellious minorities, the veneration of time and the years which have accumulated, of dead and moribund people, the instinct for laws, chains, and obstacles, a horror of violence, the unknown, and the new, a total fear of freedom.⁴²

The quantity of elements included in this list illustrates how substantially tangled in these ‘roots’ Marinetti felt society to be. The roots of the social tree portray a sleepy, anxious, stubborn, and timid way of being. There is an apparent attachment to history, to the old, dying, and dead, and an aversion to the new and the coming unknown. There is a devotion to order, organized systems, and habitual behavior, and opposition to anything that may threaten those systems and behavior. Marinetti uses the symbol of the tree to express the extremity of the Futurists’ aims. He distinguishes the Futurists from other radicals, like the Anarchists, in critiquing that other radicals “are content with attacking the political, legal, and economic branches of the social tree” whereas Futurists wish to work at removing the “deepest roots” of these societal conditions.⁴³ Using this metaphor of the social tree, Marinetti proposes an ‘uprooting’ of his contemporary

⁴² Marinetti, “‘War, the Only Hygiene of the World’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” 85.

⁴³ Marinetti, 85.

society that would alter people's daily habits and routines, but would span to an upheaval of larger processes of cultural meaning-making as well.

Within the same essay, Marinetti emphasizes the body as a major site of the Futurist project. As previously cited, Marinetti affirms, "that one of Futurism's absolute principles is the continuous development and unending progress, both bodily and intellectual, of man."⁴⁴ This principle confirms the movement's interest in human transformation, in working with the body and psyche as a material. The usage of the word 'man' here is comparable to other contexts in which 'man' is used to designate humanity at large without consideration for gender. In the context of Marinetti's canon, however, it may be appropriate to read more deeply into this gender specification. It becomes evident in the successive essay, "Contempt for Woman," that Marinetti was locating the efforts of the Futurist project within the male body and positing the female body as the container of everything that antagonized the movement. He writes, "We feel contempt for woman conceived as the reservoir of love, engine of lust..."⁴⁵ The Futurists conceived of 'woman' as a figurative embodiment of sentimentality, passèism, nostalgia, romanticism — concepts that are encompassed in the words 'love' and 'lust' in the movement's lexicon. The essay continues, "We feel contempt for horrible and staid Love that encumbers the march of man and prevents him from transcending his own humanity, from redoubling himself, from going beyond himself and becoming what we call *multiplied man*."⁴⁶ Marinetti here claims that 'Love,' embodied by woman within his rhetorical world, inhibits man's continuous development, which

⁴⁴ Marinetti, 84.

⁴⁵ F. T. Marinetti, "'Contempt for Woman' from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915)," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Christine Poggi, Lawrence Rainey, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 86.

⁴⁶ Marinetti, 86. Emphasis in original text.

is at the heart of the Futurist project. He gives further detail in this line, as well, about that continuous development, revealing that it will lead man to transcend his humanity and become a new being: *multiplied man*. This development he describes is a generative process that does not exactly fall within the realm of ‘natural’ evolution. Marinetti is cognizant that, in advocating for the evolution of man in a process that excludes women, he is describing an alternative to human procreation. He states, “...we male Futurists have felt ourselves abruptly detached from women, who...have become a mere symbol of the earth that we ought to abandon. We have even dreamed of one day being able to create a mechanical son, the fruit of pure will, synthesis of all the laws that science is on the brink of discovering.”⁴⁷ In detaching from women, the Futurists imagined new technologically-mediated processes of human generation that would yield their newly evolved being, the mechanical son. The detachment from women derives from a desire to detach from the natural world, which the Futurists wished to see conquered and controlled by industrial technologies. Women figuratively embodied not only romanticism and sentimentality in the Futurist imagination, but all things natural and organic as well.

Futurism recognized love and lust to be forces that kept man’s focus on women, preventing him from detaching from his humanity and developing the new generation of *multiplied man*. As a solution, Marinetti proposed the abolition of “the apparently indissoluble fusion of the two concepts of *Woman* and *Beauty*” and offered, instead, a new object of male desire: “the idea of mechanical beauty. Whence we exalt the love of machines...”⁴⁸ In loving machines and seeing in them the beauty that was once attributed to women, a transferral of lust

⁴⁷ Marinetti, 89.

⁴⁸ F. T. Marinetti, “‘Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Christine Poggi, Lawrence Rainey, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 89–90.

occurs, replacing woman as love object with machine as love object. Marinetti describes this romantic love between men and machines in “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine” in scenes that conjure images of homoerotic affection: “Have you ever observed [mechanics] washing the huge, powerful body of their locomotive? Theirs are the attentive, knowing endearments of a lover who is caressing a woman he adores.”⁴⁹ Despite Marinetti referencing an ‘adored woman’ in his comments on the mechanics’ affection for their machines, these sentiments can be read as homoerotic because of the ways in which Marinetti consistently masculinizes metal and machinery in his writing. The machine is an object rhetorically positioned in contrast with women and femininity, rendering it masculine in the binaristic structure of Futurist gender roles. The description of the locomotive as a “huge, powerful body” ascribes desire to a large, semi-cylindrical, and external object, effectively referencing a phallus — especially when considered alongside the erectile description of the locomotive as a “beautiful steel machine that had so often glowed with sensuous pleasure beneath [the mechanic’s] lubricating caress.”⁵⁰ The homoerotic undertones further underscore the Futurists’ revulsion towards the feminine and the organic: they would rather redirect their attraction towards the masculine and the mechanical than allow their male form to ‘merge’ with the feminine in heterosexual sex or heterosexual procreation.

He discusses mechanics treating machines as having “a personality, a soul, will,” noting that such treatment can lead to the machine performing “much better than had ever been foreseen in the calculations of its builder — its father!”⁵¹ These comments position machine as a romantic

⁴⁹ Marinetti, 90.

⁵⁰ Marinetti, 90.

⁵¹ Marinetti, 90.

love partner and man as a parent of machinery. Conceptual boundaries between man and machinery shift within the essay as Marinetti declares,

Hence we must prepare for the imminent and inevitable identification of man and motor, facilitating and perfecting a continual interchange of intuitions, rhythms, instincts, and metallic disciplines that are absolutely unknown to the great majority of people today and are divined by only the most clear-sighted minds.

If we grant the transformational hypothesis of Lamarck, we have to recognize that we are aspiring to the creation of an inhuman type, one in which moral suffering, generosity, affect, and love will be abolished, poisonous corrosives that sap the inexhaustible supply of vital energy, interrupters of our powerful physiological electricity.

We believe in the possibility of an incalculable number of human transformations, and we declare without a smile that wings are waiting to be awakened within the flesh of man.

The day when it will be possible for man to externalize his will in such a way that it is prolonged beyond himself like an immense, invisible arm — on that day, Dream and Desire, which today are empty terms, will reign supreme over conquered time and space.⁵²

This description imagines the actualization of the Futurist vision at the site of the body: the identification of man with motor brought about through a mutual, reciprocal relationship between machine and mankind. Marinetti references “the transformational hypothesis of Lamarck,” which can be understood to be the hypothesis that animals evolve and change based on changes within their environment that affect their behavior.⁵³ If the external environment is changing in such a way that machine technology is becoming omnipresent and an integral part of

⁵² Marinetti, 90.

⁵³ “According to Lamarck, organisms altered their behavior in response to environmental change. Their changed behavior, in turn, modified their organs, and their offspring inherited those ‘improved’ structures.” “Evolution: Library: Jean Baptiste Lamarck,” n.d., https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/02/3/1_023_01.html; Richard W. Burkhardt, “Lamarck, Evolution, and the Inheritance of Acquired Characters,” *Genetics* 194, no. 4 (August 2013): 793–805, <https://doi.org/10.1534/genetics.113.151852>.

human life, then humankind itself will become transformed by machine technology. Marinetti reiterates in this brief passage the Futurist belief in infinite human transformation, seriously asserting that the human body could even one day grow wings. This bold and imaginative vision, tinged with angelic fantasy by the invocation of wings, must still be considered here to be addressing the male body. He pushes this notion of non-womanness further, describing the longed-for day when man will be able to physically manifest his will into a large, invisible ‘arm’ that extends beyond his body, a description that conjures the image of a futuristic phallic limb.

Rhetoric of Evolution as a Digestive Process

Marinetti encouraged intimacy in the relationship between man and machine, a core element of evolutionary futurist rhetoric in that, according to Pilsch, “Transhumanism represents a cultural shift in which the technologies changing the horizon of our lives have a significantly more intimate relationship to our bodies.”⁵⁴ This intimacy is reciprocal: as man invites technology to have a more profound role in his life, technology enacts an evolutionary effect on man’s body, accelerating their ‘closeness.’ As previously mentioned, Marinetti elucidated the culmination of his ‘FUTURIST VISION-HYPOTHESIS’ in his essay, “Electrical War.” The piece describes the physiological, evolutionary response activated in the bodies of the *multiplied men*: “Their flesh forgetful of the germinating roughness of trees, forces itself to resemble the surrounding steel.”⁵⁵ There is a physical consciousness, activated as a response to the body’s environment, that is capable of evolving the body from within. Marinetti imagined that this

⁵⁴ Pilsch, *Transhumanism*, 7.

⁵⁵ Marinetti, “‘Electrical War’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” 102.

physical consciousness would unlock powers in the psyche, as well. In line with the transhuman view that “changes in morphology yield to changes in cognition,”⁵⁶ Marinetti envisioned that not only would the body be activated to evolve itself, but that man’s will would also gain the power to transform the body as it desired. The Futurists exalted the ever-mutable nature of the human body, rebuking set structures in “Electrical War” (a hypocrisy of the movement’s rigid rhetorical framework) and claiming to only love that which can be transformed, “immense, mobile, and impassioned framework that we can consolidate, always differently at every moment, according to the ever-changing moods of the winds, with the red concrete of our bodies set firm by our wills.”⁵⁷ Marinetti compares the body to concrete, a building material, implying that the body is a material that can be used to construct the Futurist future.

The essays in the *Le Futurisme* collection explicate the motivations and interests that drove the Futurist vision, detailing an evolutionary process by which transhuman beings would come to populate their envisioned future. The body and its environment would work in synergy to actualize the vision — man constructs a technological landscape that exerts transformational pressure back onto man — but, once activated, the body and its environment would also interrelate to sustain the vision. It is the nature of this sustenance I would like to further investigate: the Futurist canon features tropes of ingestion, consumption, and digestion. These concepts service the realization of the vision the Futurists put forth in their writing.

⁵⁶ Pilsch, *Transhumanism*, 20.

⁵⁷ Marinetti, “‘Electrical War’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” 99–100.

Marinetti's essay "We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon" rejected Symbolism⁵⁸ and spoke to collaborating with both mechanics and Mechanics — "the force that grips the earth in its network of speed" — to establish new creative systems. Marinetti declared,

With us begins the reign of the man whose roots are cut, the multiplied man who merges himself with iron, is fed by electricity, and no longer understands anything except the sensual delight of danger and quotidian heroism.⁵⁹

He proclaims that the Futurists were 'beginning' something new: "the reign of the man whose roots are cut." The root metaphor refers to the image of the social tree Marinetti planted in "War, the Only Hygiene of the World." His assertion that this reign was something that was 'beginning,' and was thus new, implied that there was another reign that would be coming to an end — the reign of the man whose roots are not cut. This new societal 'reign' would overturn the authority of men rooted in traditionalist, romantic, passèist ills (as they were perceived by Marinetti). The *multiplied man* who merges himself with metal would instead rule over society.

Marinetti describes a key aspect of this new being within the excerpt: *multiplied man* "is fed by electricity." He rounds out the idea of an electric diet in his work "Electrical War,"

⁵⁸ The Futurists' rejection of Symbolism can be understood as a disdain for the Symbolists' "desire for the immortal and imperishable masterwork." The Futurists instead wished to embrace "in art, the concept of becoming, the perishable, the transitory and ephemeral." The love of that which could vanish or transform is connected to the Futurists' belief in the supremacy of the future over the past — they did not want to make art that would endure for centuries and thus become part of a storied past. F. T. Marinetti, "'We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon' from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915)," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 93.

⁵⁹ F. T. Marinetti, "'We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters, the Last Lovers of the Moon' from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915)," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (Yale University Press, 2009), 94.

wherein he describes the harvesting and harnessing of Earth's electric energy.⁶⁰ Beyond just the electric content of the *multiplied man's* diet, Marinetti addresses the very question of the dietary practices and nutritive systems of the new being. Marinetti could have described the *multiplied man* as being 'powered' or 'fueled' by electricity, but he chose instead to say that the being is *fed* by electricity.⁶¹ This choice of language reflects this new being's transformative potential as it is imagined by Marinetti. If the *multiplied man* were to be described as being 'powered' or 'fueled,' for example, he would be ascribed a far simpler relationship with his body/form. The relationship between a machine and its power source is comparable to the relationship between a living being and its food source, but ultimately the relationships are different. Both the machine and the body take in and put out energy,⁶² but the distinctiveness of the nutritional process is that inputs introduced to the body become part of the material composition of the body as those inputs are digested. The body builds itself with the material it consumes. Viewed from this perspective, the phenomenon of consumption can be understood as part of a process of ongoing transformation for the being that is 'feeding.'

By saying that *multiplied man* is 'fed' by electricity, Marinetti imagines that this new being has a body whose transformative potential is subject to the influence of what it consumes. This implies that the realization of Marinetti's Futurist vision is in some ways reliant on the diet of the beings he wishes would inhabit his envisioned future. *Multiplied man* and his environment have a reciprocal relationship based on inputs and outputs that is predicated on the process of

⁶⁰ Marinetti, "'Electrical War' from Le Futurisme (1911), Translated as Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo (1915)," 101.

⁶¹ "...si nutra di elettricità..." Marinetti uses the verb *nutrirsi* in the original text, which can be translated as 'to feed (oneself)' or 'to nourish (oneself)'.

⁶² I am using the word 'body' here to describe the form of any living being, whether plant or animal, that undergoes some sort of process of consumption and digestion to obtain nourishment.

digestion: *multiplied man* must consume elements of his environment in order to, first, integrate more totally into that environment by means of digesting those inputs so that the material of his environment becomes part of the material of his body, and, second, to have a physical form that allows him to function in a way that sustains the society of which he is a part and product.

Digestion as a Means of Transformation

This detail concerning *multiplied man*'s diet can be interposed onto the examination of the transformative potential of ingestion and digestion within the Futurist imagination. The theme of ingestion was present from the founding *Futurist Manifesto*. Marinetti gulped down mud beneath the wreckage of his racecar just a few lines before he launched into the objective points of the manifesto; he and his Futurists went out for their joyride in the first place proclaiming they wanted to throw themselves into the mouth of the Absurd to be eaten up like fruit. In this founding *Manifesto*, it seems the processes of ingestion and digestion are employed figuratively. The question of whether these processes occupy a figurative or literal place in the movement becomes more ambiguous within the bounds of the *Le Futurisme* collection. These essays centered the body as the site of the Futurist project: the body would transform into *multiplied man* through a technological, environmental exchange. As they regard *multiplied man*, processes of ingestion and digestion move closer towards literal significance. *Multiplied man* would come into being through an evolutionary process that resembled a form of abstract digestion in which technological inputs from the environment are consumed by man and integrated into his flesh.

The ingestion and digestion of *multiplied man* cannot be considered to be fully real and literal, though, because they concern a being who is not yet actually in existence. While *multiplied man*'s electric diet may parallel literal eating processes, it still exists solely within Marinetti's rhetorical Futurist poetics. Until *multiplied man* evolves into being, the transformative potential ascribed to ingestion and digestion within the founding *Manifesto* will not be realizable.

Much later in the course of the movement, however, the Futurists endeavored to realize the transformative potential they had explored rhetorically in their early work. They shifted their focus from the rhetorical sphere to the real human body in *La cucina futurista* (1932). The text includes a manifesto, essays, and recipes that together propose a new cuisine intended to move the Italian people closer towards the Futurist vision originally put forth in the *Le Futurisme* collection. Bringing the matters of ingestion and digestion down from the rhetorical, poetic sphere to the site of the human body complicated the Futurist project. Along with having to contend with the contemporary socio-political conditions, mapping rhetorical ambitions onto the human physique exposed anxieties and preoccupations with gender identity that underpinned the Futurists' conceptual framework.

Chapter 3:

How to Eat an Erection on a Plate

Futurist Vision Embodied

La cucina futurista (The Futurist Cookbook) (1932), was a collaborative work by Marinetti and Fillia⁶³ featuring a culinary manifesto by Marinetti; commentary from a range of intellectuals and nutritional ‘experts’; documentation of actual banquets hosted by the Futurists, including descriptions of their *Taverna del Santopalato* restaurant in Turin; and recipes for dishes from the Futurist imagination. The work brought nutritive themes down from the rhetorical realm to the physical site of the human body, marking a full immersion into the world of the five senses that the Futurists had begun theoretically exploring in their *Tactilism* manifesto, released a decade prior to the cookbook.

This recontextualization of the Futurist imagination onto the human body raised the stakes of the movement’s objectives, especially as they were producing work within their contemporary Fascist context: working with the material of the body carried ramifications for individual and collective identities. In her master’s thesis “The Critical Rumble,” Aldridge notes, “the Futurists’ aggressive incorporation of the entire sensorium was essential to their project to destroy the traditional cultural apparatus of Italy and posit the modern State as a force capable of reorganizing the most fundamental corporeal registers of the Italian subject.”⁶⁴ The Futurists recognized that working with the senses meant having authority over people’s bodies, which held implications for the notions of subjectivity and identity within the Fascist reality of early 1930s Italy. The relationship between Futurism and Fascism was complex and remains a topic of debate. Although Futurism’s avant-garde character sharply contrasted Fascism’s classical,

⁶³ Pseudonym for the artist Luigi Colombo (1904-1936)

⁶⁴ Kelly Rae Aldridge, “The Critical Rumble: Marinetti, Benjamin, and the Politics of Gastroaesthetics in Modernity” (Stony Brook University, 2012), 13.

hierarchical authoritarianism, Futurism's hyperbolic, assertive, and imperialistic rhetoric proved to be "easily assimilable into fascism."⁶⁵ The Futurists secured state sponsorship under Mussolini's regime but had to reconcile their anti-passèism with the Fascists' propagandistic program of classical revivalism. This tension is present in *La cucina futurista* — a work in which the Futurists cushioned their avant-garde jabs at Italian tradition with grand nationalist gestures and implicit advocacy for the regime's political agenda.

La cucina futurista opens with a brief mission statement declaring the proposition, "to radically modify the nutrition of our race, fortifying it, dynamicizing it, and spiritualizing it with new dishes in which experience, intelligence, and fantasy efficiently replace quantity, banality, repetition, and cost."⁶⁶ The 'religion of velocity' and drive towards brutish masculinity that characterized the early Futurist works would endure to define the movement's approach to gastronomy. The cookbook considers the major problems of the Italian diet to be large portions and attachment to traditional foodways. The Fascist undertones that run throughout the work are present from this opening line with the specification of addressing the Italian "race." The introductory mission statement also indicates that this gastronomic enterprise was a continuation of their project to interrelate the processes of ingestion and integration into a Futurist society, stating their objective to, "create harmony between men's palette and their life, today and

⁶⁵ Aldridge, 5. For more information on the nuanced complexities of the relationship between Futurism and Fascism, see Lawrence Rainey, "Introduction: F.T. Marinetti and the Development of Futurism," in *Futurism: An Anthology* (Yale University Press, 2009), 5; Kelly Rae Aldridge, "The Critical Rumble: Marinetti, Benjamin, and the Politics of Gastroaesthetics in Modernity" (Stony Brook University, 2012).

⁶⁶ "... di modificare radicalmente l'alimentazione della nostra razza, fortificandola, dinamizzandola e spiritualizzandola con nuovissime vivande in cui l'esperienza, l'intelligenza e la fantasia sostituiscano economicamente la quantità, la banalità, la ripetizione e il costo." F.T. Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista* (Milano: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1932), 5. *English translations from this text included in the body of the paper are mine unless otherwise cited.*

tomorrow.”⁶⁷ While *La cucina futurista*’s objectives held the Futurists’ oppositional and contradictory attitude, the project was also intended to respond to the artists’ contemporary context to inspire “optimism at the table.”⁶⁸ Even in this late period, the movement’s work continued to look forward into the future toward their utopian horizon line.

A narrative report follows the mission statement, titled “A meal that avoided a suicide,”⁶⁹ whose genre as fiction or nonfiction is unclear. The chapter recounts the efforts of a group of Futurists trying to bolster the spirits of a man, Onesti, who is in existential agony over a boredom he senses in the Italian palette, steeped in ‘ancient habits.’ Onesti is convinced that, “a similar way of feeding yourself prepares you for suicide.”⁷⁰ The Futurists set to work concocting mad culinary inventions to resolve the man’s suicidal dilemma. The edible exhibition the artists ultimately produced epitomizes the Futurist’s feminization of the organic in contrast to their masculinization of the inorganic. The masterpiece dish, entitled *le curve del mondo e i loro segreti* (the curves of the world and their secrets), is an edible representation of “the suave magnetism of the most beautiful women and of the most beautiful, dreamed-of Africas.”⁷¹ The dish is described in geographical terms, as though it were a sugar-coated landscape whose topography recalls the curves of a feminine body. The image invoked here recalls Marinetti’s nostalgic reference to the breasts of his Sudanese wet nurse in the founding *Futurist Manifesto*: the narrator fantasizes about the African female figure in connection with consumption. In the

⁶⁷ “creare un’armonia tra il palato degli uomini e la loro vita di oggi e di domani.” Marinetti and Fillia, 5.

⁶⁸ “l’ottimismo a tavola.” Marinetti and Fillia, 6.

⁶⁹ “Un pranzo che evitò un suicidio” Marinetti and Fillia, 7.

⁷⁰ “...un simile modo di nutrirsi prepara al suicidio.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 10.

⁷¹ “le curve del mondo e i loro segreti”; “...il magnetismo soave delle donne più belle e delle più belle Afriche sognate.” Marinetti and Fillia, 15. For a full description of the dish, see Footnote 79.

context of *La cucina futurista*, the artist-chefs conflate the image of the African female body with a geographical landscape.

The proximity of consumption, fantasy related to the African continent, and the female body within the Futurist imagination speaks to the Italian colonial legacy. Italy's colonial occupation began in the mid-1880s with the annexation of the port of Massawa on the Red Sea and expanded violently over the successive decades to include territories of present-day Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Marinetti long commended Italian imperialism. He published a laudatory manifesto in 1911 following the Italian invasion of Tripoli and traveled to Libya to work as a journalist during the ensuing war. At Paris' 1931 Colonial Exhibition, he hosted a banquet, documented in *La cucina futurista*, that boasted "an atmosphere simultaneously African and mechanical that beautifully rendered the desire to interpret colonial motives according to a modern and futurist sensibility."⁷² Marinetti's embrace of the Italian colonial project, in conjunction with his personal connection to Egypt, having been born there, amounted to an abstract attachment to the continent that appears throughout the cookbook. The interconnectedness of colonial domination and Italian colonizers' sexual exploits with the indigenous *madamas* of North Africa is clear in *le curve del mondo e i loro segreti*, where an indefinite reference to Africa is made in relation to a sexualized, consumable landscape.⁷³

In presenting the dish to Onesti, Marinetti launches into a speech describing men's appetite for women:

⁷² "...una atmosfera simultaneamente africana e meccanica che rendeva splendidamente la volontà di interpretare i motivi coloniali secondo una sensibilità moderna e futurista." Marinetti and Fillia, 116.

⁷³ For more information on madamismo—the phenomenon of the sexual colonization of North African women by European men—see Ponzanesi, "The Color of Love: Madamismo and Interracial Relationships in the Italian Colonies," *Research in African Literatures* 43, no. 2 (2012): 155, <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrite.43.2.155>.

We love women. Often we are tortured with a thousand gluttonous kisses in our eagerness to eat one of them. Naked, they seemed to us tragically clothed. Their heart seems to us, if struck by the supreme enjoyment of love, the ideal fruit to bite, chew, suck. All the forms of hunger that characterize romantic passion guide us in the creation of these works of insatiable genius and taste. They are our moods realized. Fascination, infantile grace, ingenuity, dawn, prudishness, the raging whirlpool of sex, the downpour of all the cravings and all the swoonings, the itching and the rebellions against the ancient slavery, each and all have found here, through our hands, an artistic expression so intense as to require not only the eyes and their admiration, not only touch and its caresses, but the teeth, the tongue, the stomach, the intestine equally enamored...in this catalogue of the Exhibit of Edible Sculpture, you will be able to read tonight the original erotic-sentimental whisperings that aroused in the artists certain flavors and certain forms apparently incomprehensible. Light, aerial art. Transient art. Edible art. The eternal, fleeting feminine imprisoned in the stomach. The pining, superacute tension of the most frenetic desires finally satiated. We are deemed wild; others believe us to be highly complicated and civilized. We are the instinctive new elements of the big future lyrical sculptural architectural Machine, all new rules, all new directives.⁷⁴

Rather than console the existential dread of Onesti, the Futurists plunged “into the kitchen, into an orgy of creation of food sculptures, sexual substitutes.”⁷⁵ The Futurists

⁷⁴ “Amiamo le donne. Spesso ci siamo torturati con mille baci golosi nell’ansia di mangiarne una. Nude ci sembrarono sempre tragicamente vestite. Il loro cuore, se stretto dal supremo godimento d’amore, ci parve l’ideale frutto da mordere masticare suggerire. Tutte le forme della fame che caratterizzano l’amore ci guidarono nella creazione di queste opere di genio e di lingua insaziabile. Sono i nostri stati d’animo realizzati. Il fascino, la grazia infantile, l’ingenuità, l’alba, il pudore, il furente gorgo del sesso, la pioggia di tutte le smanie e di tutte le svenevolezze, i pruriti e le ribellioni contro l’antichissima schiavitù, l’unica e tutte hanno trovato qui, mediante le nostre mani, un’espressione artistica tanto intensa da esigere non soltanto gli occhi e relativa ammirazione, non soltanto il tatto e relative carezze, ma i denti, la lingua, lo stomaco, l’intestino ugualmente innamorati....in questo catalogo della Mostra di scultura mangiabile, Lei potrà leggere questa notte gli originali pettegolezzi erotici-sentimentali che suscitavano negli artisti certi sapori e certe forme apparentemente incomprensibili. Arte leggera aviatoria. Arte temporanea. Arte mangiabile. L’eterno femminino fuggente imprigionato nello stomaco. La spasimante superacuta tensione delle più frenetiche lussurie finalmente appagate. Ci giudicate selvaggi, altri ci credono complicatissimi e civilizzatissimi. Siamo gl’istintivi nuovi elementi della grande Macchina futura lirica plastica architettonica, tutta leggi nuove, tutta direttive nuove.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 17–19.

⁷⁵ Sam Rohdie, “An Introduction to Marinetti’s Futurist Cooking,” *Salmagundi*, no. 28 (Winter 1975): 132.

encouraged and affirmed existence through assertion of their masculinity, here displayed as sexual appetite for women. This sexual appetite is conflated with appetite for food in Marinetti's speech as he discusses "the forms of hunger that characterize romantic passion." He refers to a temptation men feel to eat women while kissing them. The Futurists resolved this temptation in their gastronomic project: their conceptual framework effectively gendered organic material as feminine, converting food into a figure of the feminine. This allowed them to 'imprison the eternal feminine' in their stomachs, affording them control over the feminine, stabilizing and strengthening their masculine identities. But this method of stabilizing their masculinity carried an inherent contradiction: in seeking control over the feminine by means of consumption, the Futurists allowed the feminine to enter themselves, transgressing the boundaries of their male bodies. This threat to the stability of their masculine identity had to be addressed in the gastronomic project, which led to an intense preoccupation with perfect digestion, as digesting the feminine foodstuff without any excess waste would ensure it would not pollute the male body.

After the mission statement and "A meal that avoided a suicide," the section on "manifestos ideology controversies" begins.⁷⁶ This chapter features the *Manifesto of the Futurist Kitchen*, which first appeared in Turin's *Gazzetta del Popolo* in December of 1930. The *Manifesto* contains a declaration of the Futurists' objectives in entering the gastronomic realm as political artists, an invective "against pasta," an "invitation to the chemical," and a definition of "the perfect meal."⁷⁷ The language Marinetti employs is characteristically bold from the first

⁷⁶ "manifesti ideologia polemiche" Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 21.

⁷⁷ "Contro la pastasciutta," "Invito alla chimica," "Il pranzo perfetto" Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 26, 29, 30-34.

lines of the *Manifesto*, in which he defines Futurism as the only artistic movement “that has, as its essence, daring recklessness.”⁷⁸ He describes that the new cuisine proposed by the *Manifesto* and elaborated in the rest of the cookbook will adapt eaters’ bodies to exist in harmony with the futuristic society that the movement intends to realize: a society transformed by bellicose masculinity and veneered with machine technology. The gastronomic venture operated under the recognition of “this truth: you think, dream, and act according to what you eat and drink.”⁷⁹ This awareness of the connection between ingestion, imagination, and action motivated the Futurists to work with food as a material they could manipulate in order to realize their visions at the site of the human body and beyond.

The new Futurist cuisine largely catered to the Italian male eater.⁸⁰ Several featured dishes of the culinary program explicitly reference the human body. The dishes that reference the female form, such as *le curve del mondo e i loro segreti*⁸¹ and *Mammelle italiane al sole* (Italian

⁷⁸ “...che abbia per essenza l’audacia temeraria.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 26.

⁷⁹ “...questa verità: si pensa si sogna e si agisce secondo quel che si beve e si mangia.” Marinetti and Fillia, 27.

⁸⁰ My arguments focus on the gender of the eater, though the eater’s nationality is equally important to *La cucina futurista*’s concerns. There is a focus in the cookbook on reconstructing an Italian national identity through a total renovation of Italian cuisine, an aspect of the project with strong ties to Fascism.

⁸¹ “Il capolavoro. Aveva per titolo *le curve del mondo e i loro segreti*. Marinetti, Prampolini e Fillia, collaborando, vi avevano inoculato il magnetismo soave delle donne più belle e delle più belle Afriche sognate. La sua architettura obliqua di curve molli inseguentisi in cielo nascondeva la grazia di tutti i piedini femminili in una folta e zuccherina orologeria verde di palme di oasi che meccanicamente ingranavano i loro ciuffi a ruota dentata. Più sotto si sentiva la garrula felicità dei ruscelli paradisiaci. Era un mangiabile complesso plastico a motore, perfetto.” The masterpiece. It was titled ‘the curves of the world and its secrets.’ Marinetti, Prampolini, and Fillia, in collaboration, injected it with the suave magnetism of the most beautiful women and of the most beautiful, dreamt-of Africas. Its sloping architecture of soft hills chasing itself across the sky hid the grace of all the little feminine feet in a lush and sugared verdant clockwork of oasis palms that mechanically shift their fronds into gear. Below you heard the garrulous happiness of Paradise streams. It was an edible motorized sculptural complex, perfect. Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 15.

breasts in the sunlight),⁸² present soft textures and sweet flavors shaped into the curves of hips or breasts. These elements pique the sexual appetite of the eater, implying a male eater in the assumed cis-hetero Futurist context. In the case of the dishes that reference the male form, such as *Ultravirile* (Ultravirile)⁸³ and *Porco eccitato* (Aroused pork),⁸⁴ the dishes affirm male sexuality in their references to virility and sexual arousal. The *Porco eccitato* is more or less an erection on a plate: a raw salami served upright in a puddle of piping hot espresso. These sexual overtones are one way the eaters' masculinity is reinforced through the Futurist cuisine, as virility and strong sex drive are major characteristics of the male gender within the Futurist conception. Energy and willingness to fight, two other pillars of masculinity, are also

⁸² “Mammelle italiane al sole (formula dell’aeropittrice futurista Marisa Mori) Si formano due mezze sfere colme di pasta candita di mandorle. Nel centro di ognuna si appoggia una fragola fresca. Indi si versa nel vassoio zabaione e zone di panna montata. Si può cospargere il tutto di pepe forte e guarnire con peperoncini rossi.” Italian breasts in the sunshine (formula of the Futurist aeropainter Marisa Mori) One forms two half-spheres full of candied almond paste. In the center of each one rests a fresh strawberry. Then one pours into the serving dish zabaione and spots of whipped cream. One can sprinkle the whole dish with strong pepper and garnish with red hot chilis. Marinetti and Fillia, 231.

⁸³ “Ultravirile (formula del critico d’arte futurista P. A. Saladin) Su di un piatto rettangolare si dispongono delle sottili fette di lingua di vitello lessa e tagliata per lungo. Su queste si sovrappongono due file di cosce di gamberi arrostate allo spiedo, in modo che risultino parallele e in senso longitudinale all’asse del piatto. Fra queste due file si colloca il corpo di un’aragosta precedentemente scrostata e disossata, ricoperta di zabaione verde. Alla parte posteriore dell’aragosta si dispongono tre mezze uova sode tagliate longitudinalmente ed in modo che il rosso poggi sulle fette di lingua. La parte anteriore invece si corona con sei creste di pollo a mo’ di settore, mentre completano la guarnizione del piatto due file di cilindretti composti di una rotella di limone, una di granelle e una fettina di tartufo cosparsa di uova d’aragosta.” Ultravirile (formula of the Futurist art critic P. A. Saladin) Featured on a rectangular plate are thin slices of veal tongue, boiled and cut lengthwise. On top, two rows of spit-roasted shrimp legs are overlaid so that they are arranged parallel and longitudinally to the axis of the plate. Between these two rows is positioned a lobster, shelled and gutted earlier, covered in green zabaione. The lobster tail features three hard-boiled eggs cut longitudinally and so that the yolks rest on the slices of veal tongue. The lobster head is crowned with six section-like rooster crests, while the dish’s garnish is completed by two rows of little cylinders consisting of a wheel of lemon, one of grains, and one sliver of truffle sprinkled with lobster caviar. Marinetti and Fillia, 100, 220.

⁸⁴ “Porco eccitato (formula dell’aeropittore futurista Fillia) Un salame crudo, privato della pelle, viene servito diritto in un piatto contenente del caffè- espresso caldissimo mescolato con molta acqua di Colonia.” Aroused pork (formula of the Futurist aeropainter Fillia) A raw salami, skinned, comes served erect on a plate holding coffee — piping hot espresso mixed with a lot of water from Colonia. Marinetti and Fillia, 102, 209.

consistently encouraged throughout *La cucina futurista*. A fierce devotion to bolstering these marks of masculinity brands the Futurists' culinary program.

Against Pasta and Il pancismo

The abolition of pasta from the Italian diet was a crucial precept of the new Futurist cuisine. The movement vilified pasta in all its iterations, describing it as a vice, a dictator, a nefarious habit of the Italian people. This stance was at odds with the Fascist regime's food policies, which were based on the notion of "...alimentary sovereignty, or total self-sufficiency with regard to food supplies."⁸⁵ The push for alimentary sovereignty translated into a reversal of "important trends in food habits and nutritional levels from the era before and during World War I" as imports were cut back and Italians were encouraged to adopt an "austere diet" based on grains and local produce.⁸⁶ The economic and political motivations behind the regime's food policies were shrouded in a nationalistic narrative about reviving the foodways contemporary to the period of Italy's unification.⁸⁷ The Fascists' interest in reviving traditions of the previous century sharply contrasted the Futurists' desire to totally renovate Italian cuisine, but the movement was careful not to decry the Fascist regime's food agenda outright. Instead, the Futurists found ways to incorporate certain principles from the Fascists' agenda into *La cucina futurista*, repackaging them as components of a new avant-garde approach to eating. For example, the cookbook's hype for bite-sized portions "as a way to isolate and appreciate each

⁸⁵ Carol Helstosky, "Fascist Food Politics: Mussolini's Policy of Alimentary Sovereignty," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): pt. Abstract, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571042000179164>.

⁸⁶ Helstosky, pt. Abstract.

⁸⁷ Roberto Ibba and Domenico Sanna, "Food and the Futurist 'Revolution'. A Note," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas* 4, no. 8 (2015): 12.

particular taste” also served the political functions of “aestheticizing appetite control,” a trend agreeable to the strict Fascist food rations, and attacking the “large sustenance dining patterns of rural agrarian passèist Italy.”⁸⁸ Futurism’s critique of a rural food culture dominated by large portions of pasta pointed its finger at southerners, Neapolitans in particular. The Futurists and Fascists shared an approach to measuring Italian progress through degrees of departure between the industrial economy of the north and “the agrarian economy of the south, which was perceived as economically obsolete and culturally regressive.”⁸⁹ In this shared aversion to the south and favor for the north, Futurists found a way within their anti-pasta campaign to appease the regime: they endorsed rice as the new staple of the Italian diet. Mussolini had “actively promoted rice, cultivated in Northern Italy, as an alternative to the southern-bound and economically arduous pasta.”⁹⁰ This agenda was explicitly expressed in the *Manifesto of the Futurist Kitchen*, as Marinetti chides, “Remember that the abolition of pasta will liberate Italy from expensive foreign grain and will favor the Italian rice industry.”⁹¹

The industrial implications of the abolition of pasta in favor of rice are eclipsed, though, by the Futurists’ condemnation of pasta’s effect on male virility and energy. The Futurists were more so against pasta than they were pro-rice. They only chose to highlight the grain as a way to make up for their repudiation of pasta — a position that, if adopted, would significantly detriment the wheat industry that Mussolini was trying to bolster. Even with the signature rice dish, *Tuttoriso* (Allrice), the cookbook only qualifies the specialty in terms that directly resolve

⁸⁸ Aldridge, “The Critical Rumble: Marinetti, Benjamin, and the Politics of Gastroaesthetics in Modernity,” 11.

⁸⁹ Aldridge, 11.

⁹⁰ Aldridge, 11.

⁹¹ “Ricordatevi poi che l’abolizione della pastasciutta libererà l’Italia dal costoso grano straniero e favorirà l’industria Italiana del riso.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 29.

the main problem the Futurists had with pasta, describing it as, “a very virile dish.”⁹² Within *La cucina futurista*, the question of virility became entangled with the process of digestion. The avant-garde eating methods in the cookbook suggest supplementing meals with accompanying sounds, scents, and tactile stimulants in order to “create within the eater an optimistic mood uniquely useful for good digestion.”⁹³ Beyond optimism, “the aromas, the music, and the *tactilisms* that season the Futurist dishes prime a joyful and virile mood indispensable for the afternoon and night.”⁹⁴ In establishing this connection between good digestion and sexual energy, the Futurists ensure digestion “is safeguarded” by their gastronomic recommendations.⁹⁵ The wariness for foods and methods of eating that “run the risk of causing indigestion” largely motivated the movement’s crusade against pasta.⁹⁶

The digestion of pasta is described as “a slow, insidious rumination,” painting the slow breakdown of the dish as a sort of danger to the intestines.⁹⁷ This sense that digesting pasta corrupts the body is amplified by the claims that “pasta cannot be considered an easily digestible food because it dilates the stomach” and that “the habitual and exaggerated use of pasta determines certain enlargement and exaggerated abdominal volume.”⁹⁸ Pasta is faulted with distorting the shape of the body by enlarging the stomach. This potential to cause bloating poses a significant threat to man’s virility as “the weighted, encumbered stomach is never favorable to

⁹² “un piatto molto virile.” Marinetti and Fillia, 113.

⁹³ “creare sul mangiatore uno stato d’animo ottimista singolarmente utile ad una buona digestione.” Marinetti and Fillia, 35. Italics are mine.

⁹⁴ “...i profumi, le musiche e i tattilismi, che condiscono le vivande futuriste, preparano il giocondo e virile stato d’animo indispensabile per il pomeriggio e per la notte.” Marinetti and Fillia, 35–36.

⁹⁵ “è salvaguardata” Marinetti and Fillia, 113.

⁹⁶ “corre il rischio di fare una indigestione!” Marinetti and Fillia, 114.

⁹⁷ “una ruminazione insidiosa, lenta...” Marinetti and Fillia, 65.

⁹⁸ “la pasta asciutta non si può considerare come un cibo di facile digestione perché dilata lo stomaco...”; “l’uso abituale ed esagerato della pastasciutta determina certo ingrossamento ed esagerato volume addominale.” Marinetti and Fillia, 37.

physical enthusiasm for a woman or to the possibility of rightfully possessing her.”⁹⁹ Beyond the possibility that a man who ate too much pasta at dinner may not feel up to a night of raucous sex, Michael Delville elaborates in his book *Food, Poetry, and the Aesthetics of Consumption: Eating the Avant-Garde* that the Futurists’ preoccupation with bloating may hold larger implications:

But what is at stake here is not just the future of the Italian (male) eater but also his ultimate transformation into a passive, desexualized body whose ‘exaggerated abdominal volume’ neither encourages ‘physical enthusiasm for a woman’ nor favors ‘the possibility of possessing her at any time.’ Pasta thus stands accused not only of devitalizing the Italian people but also of destabilizing the distribution of gender codes and biological roles. In Western culture, the threat to sex distinctions constituted by the bloated stomach has a long history that goes back to the Pythagorean ban on beans, which was based on the belief that beans contained the human embryos of reincarnated souls and could make their eaters’ bodies pregnant...Whereas for the Pythagoreans eating beans amounts to endocannibalism (and farting to an abject form of abortion), in what Bataille might have called Marinetti’s ‘general economy’ of food production and consumption, flatulence becomes the conceptual ground of a politics of waste that points to unutilizable form of food ingestion resulting in dangerous symbolic reversals of gender and natural differences between the sexes. More generally, Marinetti’s vitalist philosophy, which purports to combat the deadening effects of ‘quantity, banality, repetition and expense,’ condemns the dispersal of energy caused by the task of transforming heavy food into nourishing matter.¹⁰⁰

The serious preoccupation with bloating and the roundness of a man’s stomach reflected the movement’s “anxieties about fragmentation of identity and confusion of codes,” as their concern can be traced to fears of the masculine form appearing pregnant and, thus, feminine.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “lo stomaco appesantito ed ingombro non è mai favorevole all’entusiasmo fisico per la donna e alla possibilità di possederla dirittamente.” Marinetti and Fillia, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Michel Delville, *Food, Poetry, and the Aesthetics of Consumption: Eating the Avant-Garde*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2012), 101–2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203937792>.

¹⁰¹ Cinzia Blum, “Rhetorical Strategies and Gender in Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto,” *Italica* 67, no. 2 (1990): 197, <https://doi.org/10.2307/478592>.

Digestion must be optimized, from the Futurist perspective, to preclude excess waste; waste's status as waste constitutionally defines it as something that is 'other' than the body. Cinzia Blum notes, "The abjection of corporeal waste and, in general, of that which traverses the boundary of the self, goes along with that power as its 'other.'"¹⁰² Waste from the digestive process, whether in the form of excess metabolic energy expenditure or gas from poorly digested food, must be minimized so as not to allow its 'otherness' from the rest of the body to destabilize the identity of the eater. Blum mentions that anything that "traverses the boundary of the self" possesses that subversive power. Food in itself has already been other-ized by the Futurists as organic, feminine material that figuratively opposes masculine machinery. Pasta merely comes to epitomize the hazards of ingesting a figure of the feminine as a male eater; in taking longer to be digested, there is more time for pasta's figurative femininity to pollute the masculinity of the eater. In an open letter to Marinetti cited in *La cucina futurista*, Marco Ramperiti writes of pasta, "Its flavor is all in that assault on outstretched jaws...in that total grip of pasta on the palette and the innards, in feeling totally one with it..."¹⁰³ Ramperiti makes clear here that the utmost hazard of consuming pasta is *feeling one with it*. In a twist of grammatical fate, the noun 'pasta' is gendered as female in the Italian, so Ramperiti's statement could also be translated as "feeling totally one with her."¹⁰⁴ As the male eater consumes pasta, the Futurists warn he runs the risk of the pasta consuming *him* by totally confusing his sense of self.

¹⁰² Blum, 201.

¹⁰³ "Il suo gusto sta tutto in quell'assalto a mascelle protese,...in quell'aderenza totale della pasta al palato e alle viscere, in quel sentirsi tutt'uno con lei..."Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 43.

¹⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, the word for rice (*riso*) is masculine in the context of Italian grammar, so the substitution of rice for pasta resolves the perceived threat to masculinity even at a grammatical level.

To combat the disfiguration of the male form, the Futurists designed their cuisine to inspire “the fight against weight, *bellyism*, obesity.”¹⁰⁵ Having a flat, smooth stomach became a principled imperative within the Futurists’ culinary campaign, as it signified the security of one’s masculine identity — the identity that was the site of the Futurist project. A French article cited in *La cucina futurista* relates having a flat stomach to the realization of the movement’s objectives:

It is now a matter of remaking the Italian man, because what does it serve to have him raise his arm in the Roman salute if he can rest it without effort on his huge belly? The modern man should have a flat stomach, under the sun, to have clear thoughts, make quick judgement, and take energetic action: look at the Black man, look at the Arab. Marinetti’s gastronomic paradox aims for moral education, like his paradoxes for aesthetic education: it is necessary to shake up the material to reawaken the spirit.¹⁰⁶

A reconfiguration of the material of the body can ‘reawaken’ the spirit. The Futurists’ exaltation of a flat stomach was not only a response to their aversion to fat or bloated stomachs; a smooth abdomen was appealing to the movement because it reinforced the aesthetic of smooth, metallic machinery that the Futurists wished to see embodied in their multiplied man. The mechanization of man would resolve the threat of indigestion, neutralizing any risk of masculinity being subverted and allowing masculinity to carry on with transforming the world through man’s

¹⁰⁵ “la lotta contro il peso, il pancismo, l’obesità.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 136. Italics are mine.

¹⁰⁶ “Si tratta oggi di rifare l’uomo italiano, poiché a che serve di fargli levare il braccio nel saluto romano, se può riposarlo senza sforzo sul suo grosso ventre? L’uomo moderno deve avere il ventre piatto, sotto il sole, per avere dei pensieri chiari, una pronta decisione, e un’azione energica: guardate il negro, guardate l’arabo. Il paradosso gastronomico di Marinetti mira all’educazione morale, come i suoi paradossi all’educazione estetica: bisogna scuotere la materia per risvegliare lo spirito.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 95.

energetic enthusiasm for war. Aldridge summarizes, “Marinetti’s metallized body, in which the organic, messy, violent act of tearing, chewing, swallowing, digesting, and defecating are sublimated into the clean, shiny order of the machine, represents the ultimate submission of food to aesthetic, and of aesthetic to war.”¹⁰⁷ The Futurists employed the aesthetic of a metallized body in the interior design of their *Taverna del Santopalato* in Turin. The interior of the restaurant was covered in aluminum, and a pulsating aluminum ‘body’ stood in reference to the Futurists’ dreams of transhuman evolution:

In the *Taverna Santopalato* there took shape a pulsating, aluminum structure; and this was not coolly used to take up space but rather served as an active element of the interior: dominating aluminum, supple skeleton of a new body, complete with the rhythms of an indirect light...In the aluminum body, the light served as an arterial system, indispensable to the activation of the ambient organism.¹⁰⁸

The program laid out in *La cucina futurista* nourishes masculinity in parallel with the vision that Marinetti illustrated in the 1911 *Le Futurisme* essay collection: the tired, moonlight-loving attitude of nineteenth-century romanticists, epitomized by the feminine, would be rejected, and an energetic proclivity for violence, epitomized by the masculine, would take its place. A boost of masculine energy would prepare people for a transformative war that would usher in a new world populated by *multiplied man*. The cuisine drove organic — feminine — influence out of the kitchen, amplifying the role of machine technology in food preparation and

¹⁰⁷ Aldridge, “The Critical Rumble: Marinetti, Benjamin, and the Politics of Gastroaesthetics in Modernity,” 25.

¹⁰⁸ “Nella Taverna Santopalato si delineava perciò una pulsante struttura di alluminio e questo non era freddamente utilizzato a ricoprire dello spazio ma serviva come elemento operante dell’interno: alluminio dominante, agile ossatura di un corpo nuovo, completato con i ritmi della luce indiretta...Nel corpo dell’alluminio la luce serviva dunque come sistema arterioso, indispensabile allo stato d’attività dell’organismo ambientale.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 92-93.

consumption. *La cucina futurista* pushed this directive to the point of even proposing that men no longer eat food at all and, instead, are fed by nutritional supplement pills and radio waves. Just as the body would undergo an evolutionary process aided by technology to move further away from the natural, so, too, would food be evolved by scientific and technological methods to move further away from the natural. The Futurists saw their cuisine as a precursor to this alimentary evolution, a way of preparing “men for the chemical foods of the future, and maybe for the not-distant possibility of realizing, by means of radio broadcasts, a diffusion of nutritional waves.”¹⁰⁹ The far reaches of the Futurists’ gastronomic imagination actually envisions the elimination of cuisine altogether as men are nourished by radio waves and, later, *multiplied man* is fed by electricity. The Futurists were aware that they were skirting a self-contradiction in imagining such synthetic means of nourishment within a cookbook, reflecting, “The trouble is you move towards the abolition of cuisine, and thus of the *Santopalato*.”¹¹⁰ But the hosting of Futurist banquets and the existence of the *Taverna del Santopalato* proved that the execution of the movement’s culinary project was not impeded by the prospect of this self-contradiction.

La cucina futurista exposes, however, a more urgent self-contradiction within the overarching objectives of the movement. The Futurists’ attachment to masculinity, denial of the feminine, and efforts to oppose the transfiguration of the male body negate an ‘absolute principle’ of the movement that was emphasized in the *Le Futurisme* collection: the realization of “an incalculable number of human transformations.”¹¹¹ In those essays, Marinetti stresses that

¹⁰⁹ “...gli uomini ai futuri alimenti chimici e forse alla non lontana possibilità di realizzare, per mezzo della radio, una diffusione di onde nutrienti.” Marinetti and Fillia, 86.

¹¹⁰ “Il guaio è che si andrà verso l’abolizione della cucina e quindi del Santopalato.” Marinetti and Fillia, 86.

¹¹¹ Marinetti, “‘Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine’ from *Le Futurisme* (1911), Translated as *Guerra, Sola Igiene Del Mondo* (1915),” 90.

Futurism aspires after the continuous, and purportedly limitless, development of man. Marinetti wrote that the Futurists seriously believe, “without a smile that wings are waiting to be awakened within the flesh of man,” a belief that seems tame when considered alongside their visions of man’s skin turning to metal as he wills new, invisible limbs onto his body.¹¹² While these physical and psychic metamorphoses were primarily explored by Marinetti in his *Le Futurisme* essays, human transformation was an ideal integral to the Futurist imagination at large. Futurist writer Aldo Palazzeschi, for example, imagined a man made of smoke as the protagonist of his novel *Il codice di Perelà*.¹¹³ *La cucina futurista* married the objectives of the culinary project with the movement’s larger transformational objectives, in affirming, “the necessity to modify the cuisine because our general way of life is modified, because, breaking habits, it is necessary to prepare the palette for future ways of feeding.”¹¹⁴ Despite this revolutionary resolve, the Futurists were limited within their gastronomic endeavor as they had to navigate the stubborn gender conceptions that structured the movement’s underlying rhetorical framework. Futurism rests on a binaristic, oppositional rhetoric that “sets up an aggressive, virile subject against a feminized reality to be conquered or destroyed.”¹¹⁵ In *La cucina futurista*, the act of eating threatens to destabilize the gender identity of the male eater because the consumption and digestion of organic material serves as an opportunity for a figure of the feminine to transgress the boundaries of the male subject. The male body could be transfigured by indigestion, bloating, or weight gain in such a way that would make it appear feminine, resulting in a more non-binary

¹¹² Marinetti, 90.

¹¹³ Aldo Palazzeschi, *Il Codice Di Perelà* (Edizioni Futuriste di “Poesia,” 1911).

¹¹⁴ “la necessità cioè di modificare la cucina perchè modificato è il nostro generale sistema di vita, perchè, rompendo le abitudini, bisogna preparare il palato alle future alimentazioni.” Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista*, 90–91.

¹¹⁵ Blum, “Rhetorical Strategies and Gender in Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto,” 197–98.

gender presentation. What could potentially be an opportunity for substantial transformation to take place in the human body via ingestion and digestion becomes a hazard to be thwarted by any means necessary, i.e. the abolition of pasta from the Italian diet, due to the Futurists' rhetorical reliance on inflexible gender identities. Ultimately, the Futurists' inability to allow morphing and warping of gender identity contradicts their absolute principle of realizing infinite transformations in the human body.

Conclusion: A Fundamental Contradiction

The Futurist movement was born from the writings of F.T. Marinetti in the early twentieth century. The poet communicated his perception of his contemporary culture in a series of essays and manifestos that set up a gendered world view in which women embodied the natural earth and cultural traditions of past centuries while men stood for technological advancements and the promises of the future. Marinetti envisioned a total reconfiguration of society achieved through the glorification of masculinity, machinery, and war.

Writings from the movement's early years emphasized the Futurists' belief in their power to realize infinite transformations in the world around them; they imagined new ways of being in the world, new methods of intellectual exchange and art production, and even new beings that would come to populate the earth. Marinetti wrote about a new being he called *multiplied man* that would inhabit his envisioned Futurist utopia. As machine technology grew to dominate the environment, Marinetti imagined these technologies would exert an evolutionary pressure onto the human body, causing it to become part machine. This idea exemplifies a sort of rhetoric that positions the body as the site of future-building projects.

The Futurist canon featured themes of ingestion and digestion from the first *Futurist Manifesto*. In the movement's early years, the Futurists employed these motifs abstractly and metaphorically. The notion of digestion appeared in Marinetti's writing about *multiplied man*: the evolutionary process that Marinetti believed would deliver this *mechanical son* was one in which inputs from the environment would be taken into the body and made part of the body in order to sustain it. This process resembles an abstract form of digestion.

Much later in the movement, the Futurists turned to explore literal, rather than abstract, processes of ingestion and digestion with *La cucina futurista*. The Futurist cookbook included a manifesto, essays, interviews, and recipes that, together, comprised a proposal for a new Italian cuisine. Along with recommendations for new flavor combinations and eating methods, the Futurists' culinary campaign insisted resolutely on the abolition of pasta from the Italian diet. *La cucina futurista* dedicates a large portion of its wordcount to warnings against indigestion caused by eating pasta. Pasta-related indigestion threatened to rob men of their virility, their bellicosity, and their flat stomachs. The cookbook's adamant preoccupation with these 'threats' reveals a link between the process of digestion and the stability of the Futurists' gender constructions. Because organic material had been gendered as feminine in contrast to 'masculine' machinery, food became a symbol of the feminine in the Futurist context. Eating, then, stood as a moment in which the feminine had an opportunity to transgress the boundaries of the masculine, destabilizing the male eater's gender identity. If pasta were digested poorly, it could cause bloating, which may make a man appear pregnant; men's flat stomachs had to be safeguarded, as the aesthetic of a smooth abdomen resembled the aesthetic of smooth, metal machinery that the Futurists idealized. Rather than open up their culinary program in such a way that would invite the prospect of the male eater's body transforming in a gender expansive direction, the Futurists defended the stability of the masculine, male identity because the foundational rhetoric of their movement relied on it.

There exists a fundamental contradiction within the Futurist project: the Futurists' desire to infinitely transform man's psyche and physical form was set against their efforts to stabilize the binaristic, oppositional conceptions of gender that buttressed the movement's fundamental

rhetoric. In a chapter of her doctoral dissertation titled “Domestic Transgressions,” Carey points out that the Futurists were committed to “a logic of contradiction,”¹¹⁶ and it was this commitment that afforded them power to deconstruct and reconsider selfhood. In this privileging of “transgression over consistency or coherence,” Carey argues that Futurism was based on a drive towards transformation and transcendence, rather than on a drive towards negation and destruction.¹¹⁷ I agree that the Futurists’ willingness to embrace contradiction was a great strength of the movement, but I counter that the Futurists were unwilling to allow a transgression of the gender identities they had coded into the movement’s foundation. Blum succinctly expresses this discrepancy in the Futurist creed: “In short, barriers between genres can be broken; gender barriers cannot.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Allison Elise Carey, “Domesticity and the Modernist Aesthetic : F.T. Marinetti, Djuna Barnes, and Gertrude Stein,” 2003, 46.

¹¹⁷ Carey, 46.

¹¹⁸ Blum, “Rhetorical Strategies and Gender in Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto,” 200.

Digestivo: A Change in Method

This shortcoming is unfortunate because the Futurist model of ascribing transformative potential to ingestion and digestion offers a powerful method for actualizing one's aspirations at the site of the body and beyond. I appreciate that the Futurists' embraced incoherence, as they ended up creating their own form of sense. Rhodie describes Futurist sense as, "non-sense, trans-sense, absurdity with a distinct purpose."¹¹⁹ I find Rhodie's term 'trans-sense' to be particularly fitting as it evokes transformation, transcendence, motion, fluidity. These elements marked the strengths of Futurism's scope, but they were confined by the constraints of inflexible gender conceptions. I propose a response to Futurism founded on a trans-sense of gender identity that continues to work with the movement's ideas of feeding visions for the future. The Futurists' approach to realizing a vision for the future from the site of the body outward is a powerful method that would be advanced by a radical reconsideration of gender. If the body were truly able to reify infinite transformations regardless of the consequences to the stability of one's gender identity, how far could the impacts of those transformations radiate into the world beyond the body?

My response explores an approach to theoretical, practical, and artistic production that borrows from the example of Marinetti's "change of method."¹²⁰ As I intend to produce work under this approach and invite others to experiment with it as well, I will venture to call my response a sort of movement or method. This method, Momentism, launches with a document

¹¹⁹ Rhodie, "An Introduction to Marinetti's Futurist Cooking," 133.

¹²⁰ Full quotation appears on page 8 of this paper. F. T. Marinetti, "First Futurist Battles," in *Guerra, sola igiene del mondo*, in Luciano de Maria, ed., *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 235–245, here 235.

that echoes the format of Futurism's founding *Manifesto*, although I aim to disrupt the canonical, gendered undertones of such formal documents from the outset in dubbing my work a *manifestx*.

Manifestx of the Momentist Kitchen

I realized a Lasagna at some point on my twenty-second trip around a dwarf star on a massive planetary vehicle. All along my trip, I had been collecting ingredients from the vehicle and from The Place That is Not The Vehicle But Can Only Be Accessed From The Vehicle. I suppose the Moment had finally arrived when I was sufficiently equipped in penchant and pantry to download the Lasagna into being. My Appetite was the one who alerted me the time was right. I put my hands and feet to use. They moved me and I moved them through time and space to gather up all the edible evidence of the Lasagna's actuality. All the while, my Appetite and my Mind's Mouth referred back to one another, revising the invisible blueprint for the egg and flour archetype.

Air, excited to a great temperature, and time delivered the Lasagna to its Full But Never Final Form. I put my hands to use once again, bringing a bite of the dish to my lips, the threshold of the cipher. Inside my mouth, teeth, tongue, and salvia coaxed out all the information that had been fused to sauce and noodle. The Lasagna was simultaneously a reliquary of everything that had come to me and through me before that Moment and a dose of magnetism for all that could potentially come to me and through me in the future.

The Lasagna called for me and my friends, far and wide, to consume the Moment. Our Italian Futurist peers proposed a cuisine to carry eaters into the Future, leaving a rubbled wake of the Past behind. We, Momentists, want our kitchen to wake us up to the glory of the Now with the understanding that it could never arrive without the momentum of the Past, and with the trust that the Future is always nearing us with relentless persistence — there is no point in rushing towards it.

So much of that which comes to me and through me is in the form of sensation and language. We, Momentists, make use of written media, following the Futurist legacy of the art of making manifestoes. But questions arise: what is the function of language and the purpose of trying to put our ideas into it? What revolutionary ripples, if any, can we expect from the dropping of a Manifestx into the gulf of reality? We, Momentists, recognize the apparatus of language as a way for information to enter the body via the eyes, ears, and mouth. Words ask to be welcomed into the mouth, into the throat, into the chest. The tongue, the teeth, and the lips shape sound into expression. What is interesting about written words in particular is that with the help of the eyes, or the fingertips in the case of Braille, they are first read with the Mind's Mouth. The Mind's Mouth speaks the words to you in your head; the Mind's Mouth may even imagine how the words will feel if they ever reach the face's mouth. In this regard, writing words and reading written words relates to the Momentist desire for all to become intimate with the Mind Mouth, a close relative of the Appetite. We embrace the Futurists' desire to involve the five senses in the kitchen, but also recognize that our five senses are *overstimulated* in this bluelight, surround-sound modernity. We employ our five senses intentionally to recalibrate them, rather than spooking all the senses at once and hoping that as they charge they will drag us along with them on their jaunt.

Our Futurist peers sought recreation through deconstruction: only by blowing something up can its wreckage be entirely reconfigured, thus transforming the original thing. We Momentists invite a relative approach for sense-making and understanding within our philosophical and aesthetic framework. Dissolving sense and rationality into nonsense and

irrationality frees us from so many immaterial constraints. The mind's ability to sculpt nonsense into coherence requires a fluency in nonsense, however, that is most easily achieved through full immersion in absurdity. With our Manifestx, our philosophy, our aesthetics we hope to indicate entryways into such an immersion. Ultimately the rewards of the immersion will be proportional to the amount of nonsense the Momentist learns to swallow with appetite. Nonsense swallowed becomes nonsense digested becomes nonsense transformed. And we, Momentists, are vitalized with transformation.

*The frames of the aforementioned entryways are designed with the following sentiments
in mind and mouth:*

Understanding the absolute individuality and personality of the Appetite, this Manifestx and its foodways will need to be tasted, chewed, swallowed, and digested by each reader. Some may find it delectable as is; others will adjust the seasoning to their taste; and certainly there will be those who do not find it suitable to their nutritional needs whatsoever. We are not here to prescribe diets! The method should honor the wants, needs, and imagination of the Appetite at hand. The Appetite does not need to be stretched, squandered, or shamed into adhering to an unsuitable diet.

The hands should be regarded as invaluable, divine kitchen instruments, able to be tuned to the sensitivities required to operate as measuring cups, spoons, thermometers, etc. The limbs connected to the hands — which include the arms and so, too, the shoulders, and so, too, the

torso at large, and so, too, the legs, and, quite importantly, the feet — should also develop an immense sensitivity that radiates from the extremity of the fingertips inward. The feet, especially, should develop this sensitivity as they are the chef's most persistent point of contact with the Earth, from which any foodstuffs the chef may be dealing with are sourced.

The intestines are recognized to be a physical location of part of the mind, the way the brain is considered to be a physical location of parts of the mind. If this is difficult to fathom, look to the vagus nerve, the somatic highway connecting brain and gut. Digestion can then be seen as a process of knowing, understanding, relating things to other things, keeping what is useful, and thoughtfully removing waste.

In all seriousness, nothing is to be taken too seriously (but everything is to be revered).

Everything in moderation — including moderation itself! There is a lot to be realized in bouts of excess and periods of abstinence.

From seed to blossom to fruit, from inspiration to recipe to preparation, from chew to swallow to digest, the business of nourishment is one of alchemical transformation. Transformation is required for nourishment to become possible; in turn, nourishment becomes an opportunity for transformation to become realized in the Body-Mind, in the community, in the culture.

As Momentists, we are fully realized in the present moment with the understanding that it is momentum from the past that has landed us here now and that carries us into the great beyond. Refutation of the past would negate our present existence, leave us without a current to float on into the future. Each instance of synthesis for a Momentist is an occasion to integrate the strands of the past that we tend to let fray back together into a tensile, elastic rope we can use to pull ourselves forward into new realms.

To analyze the ingredients in the dish on the plate on the table is to look at the components of the Moment at hand. When did the Moment begin? Is its end in sight? What has the Moment contained, and what traces of those contents remain? All of time and space and matter converge in that pool of olive oil, so pour it with fascination!

Pleasures as sensual and true as making love, dancing without apprehension, and eating pasta were surely born from the same starburst, so there should be no shyness in relating them back to one another, letting them meet once again.

These frames for entryways into the Momentist absurd will not be securely structured. There exists already enough structure in this world that can be leaned upon if you feel you need the extra support. All the other *ists* with their *isms* will be around, promoting their Solid plans and Solid ideas. The method suggested in this Manifestx is asking for your willingness to totally Sublimate. Excite yourself beyond the Solid (maybe melting at first if you're timid — or

abandon hesitation!) towards an aeriform state (or beyond to the Ethereal!) where less is clear yet all is totally transparent.

The complexities of living in a human body are incredible. Change is the only constant — flux must be embraced. The scribbler of this Manifestx hopes to have changed in the time it took to write, hopes you will have changed in the time it took to read, even if that change is as incremental as a mote of dead skin departing you. That increment would indicate yet the role your Body-Mind plays in that constant of change. The Body-Mind is the Ultimate Site. The Body-Mind is Heaven, Hell, and Limbo. It does not, nor will it ever, look one way or be one thing. The Body-Mind's need and desire to be nourished is remarkable. The Hand feeds itself when it puts food in the Mouth. The Body-Mind feeds itself.

The scribbler of this Manifestx asks if anyone will join in the strange rave of Body-Minds
feeding themselves?

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