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| Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso (1876-1944) |
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| The founder and leader of Futurism, the first intellectual and artistic movement that explicitly defined the codes of avant-garde practice in the twentieth century. His work extended across a multiplicity of fields: journalism, poetry, literature, theatre, visual arts, politics, but it’s probably his all-encompassing activity as a cultural leader and fosterer of innovation that made him one of the pre-eminent intellectuals of his time. He implemented and systematized the practice of diffusing avant-garde ideas through manifestos, performances and happenings, capitalizing on a deliberately magnified antagonistic relation with the tastes of the public at large. His experimentations in visual/verbal relations and stage performances, which led to the creation of *free-word poetry* and *synthetic* *theatre*, were pivotal for the development of new modernist codes in poetry and the performing arts. |
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He was born (real name Emilio Angelo Carlo) on December 22, 1876, in Alexandria, Egypt, the second son of a Piedmontese lawyer. While still a student at the local French Jesuit lycée, he published his first literary magazine, *Le Papyrus.* In 1894 he went to study in Paris and first came into contact with the city’s literary and artistic scene. He subsequently moved to Milan, but continued to be actively involved in Parisian literary circles. One of his mentors was the Symbolist poet Gustave Kahn, a champion of free verse poetry. Marinetti became an influential actor in the cultural exchanges between France and Italy, collaborating with the major French literary journals of the time and serving as the secretary of *Anthologie-Revue de France et d'Italie: Recueil mensuel de littérature et d'art*. His first collection of poems, *La Conquête des étoiles*, was published in 1902. During these years of literary experimentation, he was influenced by the writings of Nietzsche and Bergson, the theories of Bakunin and Sorel, and the rise of anarcho-syndicalism. Marinetti’s first major play, *Le Roi Bombance*, reveals his interest in contemporary ideological debates. Written in 1905 and modeled on Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, this violent satire attacked the major Italian political figures of the time. In the same year, Marinetti launched a literary journal, *Poesia. Rassegna internazionale* (1905-1909), which he financed and directed.  File: Soiree.jpg  Figure A Futurist Soiree by Umbertio Boccioni and Filippo Marinetti  Source: <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3482989?image_id=1046797>  File: ApresLaMarne.jpg  Figure Apres la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto by Filippo Marinetti.  Source: http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3558508?image\_id=1248246  File: Audio clip: Marinetti reciting poetry.  Source: <http://ubumexico.centro.org.mx/sound/artist_tellus/Tellus-21-Artists_03_marinetti.mp3>  At the beginning of 1909 Marinetti founded the Futurist Movement by disseminating a now famous manifesto which was published in several Italian newspapers and, more crucially, on the front page of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro*. With the progressive expansion of the movement, he orchestrated a series of outrageous artistic as well as political soirées, furthering, to cite the title of one of his manifestos, *The Pleasure of Being Booed*. These public events, together with the continual release of new manifestos, constituted the core of the Futurist strategy of cultural and ideological shock and assault on the public. Even his first novel, *Mafarka le futuriste. Roman africain* (1910, in French and in Italian translation), created a considerable uproar in Italy when it was tried in court for obscenity. Particularly influential were his manifestos aimed at revolutionizing the performing arts and literature. The latter theorized the destruction of syntax, the use of onomatopoeia and typographical innovations, and led to the invention of free-word poetry and *tavole parolibere*. In the 1920s and 30s, his work returned to a more narrative approach. Marinetti maintained, however, a strong experimental attitude toward the temporal and psychological structure of his works, at times even offering alternative endings to his novels (see *Gli amori futuristi - programmi di vita con varianti a scelta* [1922]). Similarly, his plays assumed a distinctly a-logical organization, prefiguring the *théâtre de l’absurde*. In the fight against what he saw as the advocates of tradition, he coined the famous Futurist concept of ‘antipassatismo’ (literally ‘anti-past*ism*’) and conceptualized the involvement of Futurism in Italian political affairs as a necessary step in the movement’s core program of radical, cultural revolution. He served as a correspondent from the front during the war between Italy and Turkey, collecting his essays in *La Battaglia di Tripoli* (1911) and reworked the experience of the Turkish-Bulgarian war in the form of a series of *tavole parolibere*, published in *Zang Tumb Tuuum* (1914). He often spectacularly recited his own poetry. At the outbreak of World War I, he organized several demonstrations calling for Italy to enter the conflict on the side of France. At one such demonstration at the Piazza Duomo in Milan, he burned an Austrian flag, an action for which he was arrested. After Italy’s involvement in the conflict, he served in the Italian army and was injured in battle. Following the armistice of 1918, Marinetti’s political activity culminated in the organization of war veterans, including the special assault troops (‘Arditi’), into the political movement of the Fasci Politici Futuristi, which in due course merged with Benito Mussolini’s Fasci di Combattimento in preparation for the elections of 1919. Marinetti’s political program for the Fasci is contained in his 1919 volume, *Democrazia Futurista*. As his diary entries show, he maintained a cautious attitude toward Mussolini’s suspected right-wing leanings and, after their defeat at the ballot box, he stepped down from Central Committee of the party in May 1920. The years 1920 and 1921 saw the publication of the essay *Al di là del Comunismo* and a rapprochement between Marinetti and the political Left. Eventually, with the advent to power of Fascism, he reworked some of his programmatic ideas on public patronage for the avant-garde and presented them as a *Manifesto al Governo Fascista* (1923). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, he devoted himself to the reorganization of Futurism as an artistic movement, planning conferences and exhibitions that would maintain the group’s visibility in Italy and abroad in the face of increasing competition from newer avant-garde movements. The Dadaists, for instance, staged a protest at the 1921 presentation of his manifesto *Le Tactilisme*. In the 1930s, his association with Fascism led to increasing contestations, especially at the Pen Club congresses, where he participated as the Italian representative. He never hid his aversion for Hitler’s politics. In 1933, on behalf of Wassily Kandinsky, he intervened to prevent the closure of the Bauhaus and, after Italy’s alliance with Nazism, he protested the introduction of racial laws. Still, he maintained his early fascination with war, enlisting first in the war in Ethiopia and, at the age of 66, in the Armir expedition to Russia during World War II. After his return to Italy he joined the Repubblica Sociale Italiana and died in Bellagio on December 2, 1944. List of Works:Selected collections of texts: Calendoli, G. (ed.), Marinetti, F.T. (1960) *Teatro*  De Maria, L. (ed.), Marinetti, F.T. (1968) *Teoria ed invenzione futurista*  Lista, G. (ed.)(1977), *Marinetti et le futurisme*  Schnapp, J. (ed.), Marinetti, F.T. (2004) *Teatro*  Berghaus, G. (ed.), Marinetti, F.T. 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Marinetti* (lyric poem: [It.](http://www.futur-ism.it/collezioni/libri/libri.asp?sez=1&det=2) and [Fr.)](http://www.futur-ism.it/collezioni/libri/libri.asp?sez=1&det=3)  1912: *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (manifesto: [It.](http://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/image/2642/) and [French](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0003-0509.htm))  1912: *Supplemento al manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (manifesto: [It.](http://www.futur-ism.it/collezioni/libri/libri.asp?sez=2&det=11) and [French](http://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/image/2646/))  1913:[*La Distruzione della sintassi. L’immaginazione senza fili e le parole in libertà*](http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/destruction.html) [(manifesto: It.](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/))  1913: *Il teatro di varietà* (manifesto: [It.](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0003-0507(1913).htm) and [French](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0003-0508(1913).htm))  1914: *Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico e la sensibilità numerica* (manifesto: [It.](http://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/image/2623/) and Fr.)  1914: [*Zang Tumb Tuuum. Adrianopoli ottobre 1912. Parole in libertà*](http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/dl_crosscollex/brbldl/oneITEM.asp?pid=2037399&iid=1132335&srchtype=) (words in freedom and manifestos)  1915: (with Emilio Settimelli and Bruno Corra) *Il teatro futurista sintetico* (manifesto, [It.)](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0003-0505(1915).htm)  1915-1916: (with Emilio Settimelli and Bruno Corra) *Il teatro futurista sintetico.* volumes  [I](http://ia600404.us.archive.org/12/items/ilteatrofuturist00mari/ilteatrofuturist00mari.pdf) and II (anthology)  1915: *La voluttà di essere fischiati* (manifesto)  1916: *La declamazione dinamica e sinottica* (manifesto)  1916: *La nuova religione morale della velocità* (manifesto: [It.)](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0003-0490(1916).htm)  1919: *8 anime e una bomba* (novel)  1919: [*Les Mots en liberté futuristes* (](http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A3771&page_number=5&template_id=1&sort_order=1)anthology)  1919: *Democrazia Futurista* (political essay)  1921: [*Al di là del Comunismo*](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0001-0448(1920)001.htm) (political essay)  1921: [*L’alcova d’acciao. 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Litolatta*](http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/dl_crosscollex/SetsSearchExecXC.asp?srchtype=ITEM)(metallic book)  1935: *L’aeropoema del golfo di La Spezia* (poetry)  1937: [*Poema del vestito di latte*](http://apicesv3.noto.unimi.it/site/reggi/0001-0742(19371120)000.htm) (poetry)  1940: *Poema non umano dei tecnicismi* (poetry) Archival Material: Marinetti’s Libroni  http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/filippo-tommaso-marinettis-libroni-futurism  Filippo Tommaso Marinetti Papers at Yale  http://drs.library.yale.edu/HLTransformer/HLTransServlet?stylename=yul.ead2002.xhtml.xsl&pid=beinecke:marinet&query=marinetti&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes&hlon=yes&filter=&hitPageStart=1  Filippo Tommaso Marinetti Papers at the Getty  http://archives2.getty.edu:8082/xtf/search?browse-creator=mm;sort=creator |
| Further reading:  Recent biographies of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti:  Agnese, G. *Marinetti. Una vita esplosiva* (1990) Berghaus, G. *The genesis of Futurism: Marinetti's early career and writings 1899-1909* (1995) Lista, G. *F. T. Marinetti, l’anarchiste du futurisme* (1995)  Salaris, C. *Marinetti. Arte e vita futurista* (1997)  Guerri, G.B. *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Invenzioni, avventure e passioni di un rivoluzionario* (2010) Bibliography: Cammarota, D. *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: bibliografia* (2002) |