

FLASHING IN THE SUN WITH A GLITTER OF KNIVES

by Dylan Kinnett

“Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece.”

— *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, F.T. Marinetti, 1909

Picture this. Wild youths have been drinking and carousing, late into the night. Surrounded by a beautiful dome, lush carpets and hanging lanterns, they argue and they dream aloud and they proclaim their demands of the world. This is the noisy spirit of youth at its best. They are, all of them, artists and thinkers and poets; every one of them is their own genius. These dreamers are finished with stuffy old ideas, old academies, and old mythologies. They're scanning the night, looking for adventure, looking for something, anything to throw off the weight of the slow, tired, immovable world around them. Out by the water, hot fires burn in the bellies of giant steam ships preparing to embark. Out on the horizon, huge, belching engines haul trains across the land. Yet, in the first hours of this early morning, it is still too quiet. There doesn't seem to be anything to break the lull, and that lull seems to have lasted for centuries; things have been slow and quiet forever! Suddenly, there is the unmistakable sound of automobiles.

The leader of this young group of midnight poets exclaims,

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

With that, they run to their cars and drive through the streets of the city like bats out of hell. Barking guard dogs recoil in horror at the powerful roar of these three cars. Zoom zoom zoom. People on bicycles can only wobble and look pathetic next to the incredible speed with which these young rebels tear through the streets. Zoom zoom. Crash! One of our young poets crashes his car, flips it, and submerges it in a sloppy ditch. No matter to him, though. He climbs blithely out of the sludge, and has the car towed, in front of an audience of on-lookers who seem to him like relics from some ancient world. Everyone wants to know: will this car start again? It starts! Zoom!

The events in this picture seem like something out of an all-American tale, perhaps from Kerouac’s New York, from the exploits of a Tom Wolfe hero, or even from a conversation overheard last weekend in a college bar. They occurred, however, in Italy, more than one hundred years ago, in 1909. The events of that night are written down, at the start of the Futurist Manifesto, which was one of the founding documents of a group of painters, sculptors, architects and musicians who called themselves the Futurists.

Their movement, Futurism, would have a lasting effect on the art of the Twentieth Century and beyond, but it was a poet, not a visual artist, who first gave voice to the idea of futurism. The Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote the first manifesto. He tells his exciting story about fast driving at the start of the manifesto in order to make two things clear: machines are glorious and speed is king. Understand these two ideas, and you understand the emotional force behind Futurism.

Today, you hear the word futurist thrown around a lot by peddlers touting their internet solutions, their consultancy skills, their viral marketing strategies, their availability for public speaking engagements, their science fiction novels. You hear the word futurist in eulogies for Steve Jobs and biographies of James Cameron. You may hear the word used to describe monuments proposed to be erected on the site of the World Trade Center, or to describe any architecture that looks, somehow futuristic.



MANIFESTO
OF
FUTURISM



**1. WE INTEND TO
SING THE LOVE
OF DANGER,
THE HABIT OF
ENERGY AND
FEARLESSNESS.**

3. UP TO NOW
LITERATURE
HAS EXALTED
A PENSIVE
IMMOBILITY,
ECSTASY, AND
SLEEP. WE
INTEND TO EXALT
AGGRESSIVE
ACTION, A
FEVERISH
INSOMNIA, THE
RACER'S STRIDE,
THE MORTAL
LEAP, THE PUNCH
AND THE SLAP.

**5. WE WANT TO
HYMN THE MAN
AT THE WHEEL,
WHO HURLS
THE LANCE
OF HIS SPIRIT
ACROSS THE
EARTH, ALONG
THE CIRCLE OF
ITS ORBIT.**

7. EXCEPT IN STRUGGLE,
THERE IS NO MORE
BEAUTY. NO WORK
WITHOUT AN AGGRESSIVE
CHARACTER CAN BE A
MASTERPIECE. POETRY
MUST BE CONCEIVED AS
A VIOLENT ATTACK ON
UNKNOWN FORCES, TO
REDUCE AND PROSTRATE
THEM BEFORE MAN.

2. COURAGE,
AUDACITY, AND
REVOLT WILL
BE ESSENTIAL
ELEMENTS OF
OUR POETRY.

**4. WE AFFIRM
THAT THE
WORLD'S
MAGNIFICENCE
HAS BEEN
ENRICHED BY A
NEW BEAUTY:
THE BEAUTY
OF SPEED. A
RACING CAR
WHOSE HOOD IS
ADORNED WITH
GREAT PIPES,
LIKE SERPENTS
OF EXPLOSIVE
BREATH—A
ROARING CAR
THAT SEEMS
TO RIDE ON
GRAPESHOT IS
MORE BEAUTIFUL
THAN THE
VICTORY OF
SAMOTHRACE.**

**6. THE POET
MUST SPEND
HIMSELF
WITH ARDOR,
SPLENDOR, AND
GENEROSITY,
TO SWELL THE
ENTHUSIASTIC
FERVOR OF THE
PRIMORDIAL
ELEMENTS.**

It seems we're transfixed, now more than ever, with the glittering promises and dire consequences of technology. We call it a revolution, and we invent grandiose terms to describe it, like information superhighway or Cyberspace and many wonder whether this new age of information may be so boldly different on an evolutionary scale as to set it apart, the way the bronze age is set apart from the stone age.

In 1909, it was the industrial, not the digital revolution that was on the minds of young, reckless writers of manifestos. The new age, for them, was one which had brought them steam engines and electricity, telegraphs and telephones, towering steel structures and, best of all, zooming automobiles, all within a relatively short period of time. The pace of invention during this new age must have seemed staggering, and to many, exciting. In 1909, the Titanic hadn't been built yet, but that ship was the product of the spirit of its day, a spirit which put tremendous faith in the infallibility of the machine. At the time, there had never been a World War, but the possibility of one seemed interesting, even desirable, to the young futurists, as an opportunity to shake off some dead weight.

It is important to note the political aspects of Futurism, which was born out of a time of increasing industrialization and tension in the years leading up to fascist Italy and World War One. By 1918, a political party was formed, called the Futurist Political Party, by the author of the original Futurist Manifesto, Filippo Marinetti. The artists thought of Fascism as one of many ways to bring modern reform to their society. Futurism's spirit of liberation from the past that is ultimately more interesting than its unfortunate political affiliations, which left many futurists shamed or overlooked, in the years after the fall of fascism.

The futurist manifesto made bold promises to establish an aesthetics of the future, and it spread quickly. The clear demands, instructions, numbered statements and bold claims published in manifesto format made a potent way for the idea of futurism to spread worldwide. It could be said that the manifestos describing their art are actually the best artworks the futurists ever produced.

In 1910, two manifestos were published, "The Manifesto of the Futurist Painters" and the more detailed "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting" which set out to define a new school of futurist painters, with a new, more scientific approach to artistic experimentation. The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting says,

"we would at any price re-enter into life. Victorious science has nowadays disowned its past in order the better to serve the material needs of our time; we would that art, disowning its past, were able to serve at last the intellectual needs which are within us."

More manifestos followed: in 1911, the "Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights" and the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Music"; In 1912, the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture", the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" and "Abstract Cinema – Chromatic Music"; In 1913, a second literary manifesto was published entitled "Imagination Without Strings – Words-in-Freedom" as well as "The Art of Noise," a founding document for much of experimental music in the Twentieth Century; In 1914, the "Manifesto of Futurist Architecture" and so on... Over time, more than 50 manifestos in total applied the idea of futurism to nearly every aspect of life.

8. WE STAND
ON THE LAST
PROMONTORY OF
THE CENTURIES!...

**WHY SHOULD WE LOOK
BACK, WHEN WHAT WE
WANT IS TO BREAK DOWN
THE MYSTERIOUS DOORS
OF THE IMPOSSIBLE?
TIME AND SPACE DIED
YESTERDAY. WE ALREADY
LIVE IN THE ABSOLUTE,
BECAUSE WE HAVE
CREATED ETERNAL,
OMNIPRESENT SPEED.**

**WE WILL GLORIFY WAR—
THE WORLD'S ONLY
HYGIENE—MILITARISM,
PATRIOTISM, THE DESTRUCTIVE
GESTURE OF FREEDOM-
BRINGERS, BEAUTIFUL IDEAS
WORTH DYING FOR, AND SCORN
FOR WOMAN.**

10. WE WILL DESTROY THE
MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES,
ACADEMIES OF EVERY
KIND, WILL FIGHT MORALISM,
FEMINISM, EVERY OPPORTUNISTIC
OR UTILITARIAN **COWARDICE.**

The futurists reimagined even the culinary arts. In the 1930 Manifesto of Futurist Cooking and in the more detailed 1932 Futurist Cookbook the futurists describe recipes for dishes and banquets that push the experience of food into the realm of performance art. Today, a futurist banquet might remind its participants of the “happenings” of the 1960s, or of contemporary performance in general, which has become more common during the 20th Century. At one of these banquets, instructions for the behavior of dinner guests would include absurd, sensory experiences, such as wearing sandpaper and eating in total darkness. The food is meant to be sensed and interacted with all the senses, and thus it is rarely edible. The Italian futurists were opposed to that most traditional of Italian foods, pasta, on the grounds that eating too much of it would make a person sluggish. This anti-pasta attitude (pun intended) was controversial, of course.

Writings that resemble recipes are found throughout the body of futurist writings. After all, a manifesto is similar to a recipe in several ways. Both frequently contain lists. Both are written to prescribe a course of action to produce the intended results. Both can be modified in order to produce slightly different results. It comes of little surprise then that the author of so many manifestos would eventually turn to writing recipes.

In the manifestos, the futurists are opposed to the traditional aspects of nearly every form of creative work. One example is an opposition to the painting of nudes, not because the naked body is dirty, but because it has become a boring, overused subject for art. “Nothing is immoral in our eyes; it is the monotony of the nude against which we fight.” The manifestos challenge some long-held assumptions, traditions, habits and practices, such as the assumption that literature should be beautiful, or that it should be able to be understood by everyone.

“They shout at us, ‘Your literature won’t be beautiful! Where is your verbal symphony, your harmonious swaying back and forth, your tranquilizing cadences?’ Their loss we take for granted! And how lucky! We make use, instead, of every ugly sound, every expressive cry from the violent life that surrounds us. We bravely create the “ugly” in literature, and everywhere we murder solemnity. Come! Don’t put on these grand priestly airs when you listen to me! Each day we must spit on the Altar of Art. We are entering the unbounded domain of free intuition. After free verse, here finally are words-in-freedom.”

Today, even though some ideas like abstraction and a focus on the “new” have been communicated to nearly everyone in our culture, there are still some ideas in the futurist manifestos whose time seems yet-to-come. Many of these are the literary ideas set down in Marinetti’s manifestos, which are now one hundred years old.

Now that today really is the future, from Futurism’s point-of-view, perhaps a survey of those ideas would prove to be inspiring, for a new literary generation, who now enjoy computers, desktop publishing, the Internet and an unprecedented ability to manipulate and disseminate language, quickly and globally. Perhaps now is a good time for futurist literature?

11. WE WILL SING OF
GREAT CROWDS
EXCITED BY WORK, BY
PLEASURE, AND BY
RIOT. WE WILL SING OF THE
MULTICOLORED, POLYPHONIC
TIDES OF REVOLUTION IN
THE MODERN CAPITALS. WE
WILL SING OF THE VIBRANT
NIGHTLY FERVOR OF
ARSENALS AND SHIPYARDS
BLAZING WITH VIOLENT
ELECTRIC MOONS. GREEDY
RAILWAY STATIONS THAT
DEVOUR SMOKE-PLUMED
SERPENTS. FACTORIES
HUNG ON CLOUDS BY
THE CROOKED LINES OF
THEIR SMOKE. BRIDGES
THAT STRIDE THE RIVERS
LIKE GIANT GYMNASTS,
FLASHING IN THE SUN
WITH A GLITTER OF KNIVES.
ADVENTUROUS STEAMERS
THAT SNIFF THE HORIZON.
DEEP-CHESTED LOCOMOTIVES
WHOSE WHEELS PAW THE
TRACKS LIKE THE HOOVES
OF ENORMOUS STEEL
HORSES BRIDLED BY TUBING.
AND THE SLEEK FLIGHT OF
PLANES WHOSE PROPELLERS
CHATTER IN THE WIND LIKE
BANNERS AND SEEM TO
CHEER LIKE AN ENTHUSIASTIC
CROWD.

RECIPE FOR THE LITERATURE OF THE FUTURE

Like any good manifesto, the “Words in Freedom” manifesto begins with a list of conditions. These conditions are elements of life and society, in an increasingly modern Europe at the turn of the Twentieth Century. To be fair, there are some ideas on the list that sound very dated, and almost naive, after the fact of two world wars. For example, “a modification in the idea of war, which has become the necessary and bloody test of a people’s force.” Those ideas are the exception, however. Most of the premise for the manifesto sounds very familiar, with several useful ideas that sound as though they could have been written very recently, or at any time:

- Pace of life is becoming faster.
- People love anything new or unexpected.
- Excitement, danger and heroism are emphasized.
- Gender equality is better now than it was in the past.
- For better or worse, materialism has replaced romance as the place where desire is most often expressed.
- Cultural identity involves a sense of the national economy and industry.
- The world seems smaller now, with increased and improved travel.
- Attention spans are getting shorter. “Quick, give me the whole thing in two words!”
- The human experience is infused with evermore technology.

A common theme throughout all these observations is speed. Another is technology. These are two of the critical elements of a futurist literary aesthetic, first outlined in the manifesto entitled “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” and refined further in “Destruction of Syntax—Imagination without strings—Words-in-Freedom.”

WORDS IN FREEDOM

Speed is an important element, because it enables a more direct approach. Speed frees words from clutter. Speed makes words direct. According to Marinetti, words should be free, they should be delivered swiftly,

“with the same economical speed that the tele-graph imposes on reporters and war correspondents in their swift reportings. This urgent laconism answers not only to the laws of speed that govern us but also to the rapport of centuries between poet and audience. Between poet and audience, in fact, the same rapport exists as between two old friends. They can make themselves understood with half a word, a gesture, a glance. So the poet’s imagination must weave together distant things with no connecting strings, by means of essential free words.”

He names this idea “Words in Freedom” and today we can find similar things everywhere. We’re increasingly able to communicate in ways that resemble Marinetti’s futurist recipe. Since the telegraph of his day, we’ve experienced developments like the one minute commercial, the subway poster, the e-mail, the text message, the tweet — all of these are delivered swiftly, simultaneously, and many of them resemble the rapport between friends, more than they resemble the traditional sense of “literature”. The suggestion to write in short, swift and fast-traveling ways now seems to be a very easy suggestion to take.

MULTI-LINEAR LYRICISM

Among many observations about contemporary life, there are common references to “information overload” which is a condition, real or imagined, where the swiftly delivered messages are coming too often, all at once, and at such a pace that it has become impossible to consume all, or even most, of the information in depth. (The idea of information overload presupposes that all information is best consumed entirely and in depth, like a newspaper that everyone would read from cover to cover.) A century ago, a state of information overload seemed inevitable, and even desirable, to the futurists. It provided a relief from what Marinetti calls Art with a Capital A.

“Art with a capital A constitutes the clericalism of the creative spirit. I ... incite the Futurists to destroy and mock the garlands, the palms, the aureoles, the exquisite frames, the mantles and stoles, the whole historical wardrobe and the romantic bric-a-brac that comprise a large part of all poetry up to now.”

What today we might call “information overload” Marinetti calls Multi-linear Lyricism, and he offers a recipe for how a writer might create the effect.

“On several parallel lines, the poet will throw out several chains of color, sound, smell, noise, weight, thickness, analogy. One of these lines might, for instance, be olfactory, another musical, another pictorial. Let us suppose that the chain of pictorial sensations and analogies dominates the others. In this case it will be printed in a heavier typeface than the second and third lines...”

Today, when reading this outline, it is easy to associate it with multimedia, cinema, or performance art, where these different sensory elements are as “lines” in a poem. With the advent of so many tools for manipulating typefaces, sounds and pictures, millions of people are now able to create multi-linear lyricism. It seems only a matter of time until writers take up these tools to aid them in the creation of new work.

FREE EXPRESSIVE ORTHOGRAPHY

The futurist manifestos were written at a time when abstraction was becoming an increasingly important element in the visual arts. Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, and others — all involved the creation of images that were less literal, less precise than, for example, the paintings of the Renaissance or even the photograph, which was still relatively new at the time. Why didn’t literature become more abstract at the same time? Futurism pro-

**AND WHAT IS THERE TO
SEE IN AN OLD PICTURE**

EXCEPT THE LABORIOUS
CONTORTIONS OF AN ARTIST
THROWING HIMSELF AGAINST
THE BARRIERS THAT THWART
HIS DESIRE TO EXPRESS HIS
DREAM COMPLETELY? ...



**ADMIRING AN OLD PICTURE
IS THE SAME AS POURING
OUR SENSIBILITY INTO A
FUNERARY URN INSTEAD
OF HURTLING IT FAR OFF
IN VIOLENT SPASMS OF
ACTION AND CREATION.**

**DO YOU, THEN, WISH TO WASTE
ALL YOUR BEST POWERS IN THIS
ETERNAL AND FUTILE WORSHIP
OF THE PAST, FROM WHICH YOU
EMERGE FATALY EXHAUSTED,
SHRUNKEN, BEATEN DOWN?**

IN TRUTH I TELL YOU THAT
DAILY VISITS TO MUSEUMS,
LIBRARIES, AND ACADEMIES
(CEMETERIES OF EMPTY
EXERTION, CALVARIES
OF CRUCIFIED DREAMS,
REGISTRIES OF ABORTED
BEGINNINGS!) ARE, FOR
ARTISTS, AS DAMAGING
AS THE PROLONGED
SUPERVISION BY PARENTS
OF CERTAIN YOUNG PEOPLE
DRUNK WITH THEIR TALENT
AND THEIR AMBITIOUS WILLS.



WHEN THE FUTURE
IS BARRED TO
THEM, THE
ADMIRABLE PAST
MAY BE A SOLACE
FOR THE ILLS OF
THE MORIBUND,
THE SICKLY, THE
PRISONER... BUT
WE WANT NO PART
OF IT, THE PAST,
WE THE YOUNG
AND STRONG
FUTURISTS!

posed that it could, by admonishing writers to “freely deform, refresh the words, cutting them short, stretching them out, reinforcing the center or the extremities, augmenting or diminishing the number of vowels and consonants.” This kind of abstract writing does occur from time to time. Some examples include skat jazz lyrics, DaDa sound poetry, phrases invented for use within text messages; it can be done visually by zen calligraphers or by visual poets, but it isn’t done very often. Literary artists just don’t seem to be as interested in abstraction as their musical and visual cousins. In the future, perhaps they might be. On the other hand, many might object to too much abstraction, because words are expected to have meaning; it requires special talent and understanding to convey abstraction in a compelling and interesting way, and without that, most people will say “I don’t get it.” Marinetti would say “I do not care for the comprehension of the multitude, I will reply that the number of Futurist public speakers is increasing and that any admired traditional poem, for that matter, requires a special speaker if it is to be understood.”

MUSICAL NOTATION

So much of poetry depends upon the way it sounds and yet, more often than not, it is written on paper and read silently. Futurism suggests a way to break free of those silent habits, by borrowing from the idea of musical notation. In written music, there are easy ways to read instructions to speed up, slow down, to grow louder or more quiet, to add more sounds or fewer. A large part of written music is a set of instructions for how to perform the music, to control the way that it sounds. If the sound of poetry is also so important, then why do we only write the words and not those instructions? This can be done very easily, with the use of parenthetical instructions. “We put between parentheses indications such as (fast) (faster) (slower) (two-beat time) to control the speed of the style.” Just as it is often done in music, the instructions might also be placed above the lines of the main text.

If, one hundred years ago, the futurists had known about pocket-sized sound recording devices, they may have suggested that all poets should write by speaking into these, and to abandon the page. After all, it is easier, faster, and more direct to hear the changes in the sound of a poem as performed by its author, than it would be to decipher some stage directions about it.

DESTRUCTION OF SYNTAX

The syntax of a language is the set of rules that govern the way that words are arranged. There are right ways and wrong ways to arrange words. Not so for the futurists. Marinetti proposes that writers should destroy syntax. This can be done by using any of the methods above, but in particular, it can be done with a new understanding of pronouns, adjectives and verbs.

The pronoun “I” is to literature what the nude figure is to painting; it is overused, boring, perhaps meaningless because of its overuse and should be avoided. This sentiment is parallel to a common statement today, a statement expressed by the title of a recent book which purports to be a kind of tutorial for how to write on the internet. The title is

THEY WILL COME AGAINST US, **OUR SUCCESSORS,**

WILL COME FROM
FAR AWAY, FROM
EVERY QUARTER,
DANCING TO THE
WINGED CADENCE
OF THEIR FIRST
SONGS,

FLEXING THE HOOKED
CLAWS OF PREDATORS,
SNIFFING DOGLIKE AT THE
ACADEMY DOORS THE
STRONG ODOR OF OUR
DECAYING MINDS, WHICH
WILL HAVE ALREADY
BEEN PROMISED TO THE
LITERARY CATACOMBS.

DRUMMED
MONOTONOUS
RAIN.

BENEATH
A SAD ROOF
BY A COUNTRY,
IN OPEN
NIGHT -

WINTER'S
LAST US - ONE
FIND US -

BUT WE WON'T
AT
LAST THEY'LL
BE THERE...

**THEY'LL SEE US CROUCHED BESIDE
OUR TREMBLING AEROPLANES IN THE
ACT OF WARMING OUR HANDS AT THE
POOR LITTLE BLAZE THAT OUR BOOKS OF
TODAY WILL GIVE OUT WHEN THEY TAKE
FIRE FROM THE FLIGHT OF OUR IMAGES.**

INJUSTICE
STRONG
AND SANE,
WILL
BREAK
OUT
RADIANTLY
IN THEIR
EYES.

THEY'LL STORM AROUND
US, **PANTING WITH SCORN
AND ANGUISH**, AND ALL
OF THEM, EXASPERATED
BY OUR PROUD DARING,
WILL HURTLE TO **KILL US**,
DRIVEN BY A HATRED THE
MORE IMPLACABLE THE
MORE THEIR HEARTS WILL
BE DRUNK WITH LOVE AND
ADMIRATION FOR US.

ART, IN FACT, CAN BE NOTHING BUT VIOLENCE, CRUELTY, AND INJUSTICE.

THE OLDEST OF US IS THIRTY: EVEN SO WE HAVE ALREADY
SCATTERED TREASURES, A THOUSAND TREASURES OF
FORCE, LOVE, COURAGE, ASTUTENESS, AND RAW WILL-
POWER; HAVE THROWN THEM IMPATIENTLY AWAY, WITH
FURY, CARELESSLY, UNHESITATINGLY, BREATHLESS, AND
UNRESTING... LOOK AT US! WE ARE STILL UNTIRED! OUR
HEARTS KNOW NO WEARINESS BECAUSE THEY ARE FED
WITH FIRE, HATRED, AND SPEED!... DOES THAT AMAZE
YOU? IT SHOULD, BECAUSE YOU CAN NEVER REMEMBER
HAVING LIVED! ERECT ON THE SUMMIT OF THE
WORLD, ONCE AGAIN WE HURL OUR
DEFIANCE AT THE STARS!

“No One Cares What You Had For Lunch Today.” It is good writing advice to focus on more substantial things, especially in a world where people are live-blogging their lunches.

If the focus is on substantial things, then it’s possible for adjectives to get in the way, according to futurism. “We must make use of the adjective as little as possible and in a manner completely different from its use hitherto. One should treat adjectives like railway signals of style, employ them to mark the tempo, the retards and pauses along the way.” It might be difficult to imagine a text that uses adjectives in a completely different way, but Marinetti suggests something that sounds quite a bit like what we now call a “word cloud” where the adjective is in the center, and other words and phrases surround it, so that the adjective is understood to modify every other idea on the page. He calls such an all-modifying adjective the “lighthouse adjective.”

A style focused on speed, and on direct things, would naturally prefer the most direct form of a verb, the infinitive. In many cases, the infinitive can stand all alone, as a sentence would, so that the words are free. To live! To die! Infinitive statements like these lend a sense of urgency to the text, and can be used to make calls to action. For example, in what is now a familiar trope for a manifesto, the Manifesto of Futurist Musicians contains a list of numbered conclusions, or calls to action: to convince, to combat, to abstain, to keep at a distance, to destroy, to proclaim, to transform, etc.

TYPOGRAPHIC REVOLUTION

Futurists are keenly aware that printing is a mechanical process. Futurists celebrate this and, for example, one Futurist book was bound together by large metal bolts. Perhaps the most important mechanical process involved with printing is the type itself. For the futurists, words in freedom would demand that the typography should also be free. No more regimented rows of letters in neat, orderly arrangement. The size, shape and position of the words, letters and symbols on the page can be freed up, and used as part of the artwork. A futurist writer, one hundred years ago, would thrill to see the word clouds and info-graphics in use today, or the many software applications that allow us to manipulate the appearance of text on the page or a screen. As these tools become commonplace, they are able to have some effect on the way people write with them.

The goal of all this, in Marinetti’s words, is to “redouble the expressive force of words” to “hurl them in the reader’s face” to “impress on the words (already free, dynamic, and torpedo-like) every velocity of the stars, the clouds, aeroplanes, trains, waves, explosives, globules of seafoam, molecules, and atoms.” It would be just as new and exciting, now as then, to write this way, and with the tools that are available now, it should be easier and, best of all, it should be faster.

YOU HAVE OBJECTIONS?

ENOUGH!

ENOUGH!

WE KNOW THEM. WE'VE UNDERSTOOD!

OUR FINE DECEITFUL
INTELLIGENCE TELLS
US THAT WE ARE
THE REVIVAL AND
EXTENSION OF OUR
ANCESTORS—

**PERHAPS!
IF ONLY
IT WERE
SO!—**

**BUT WHO
CARES?**

WE DON'T WANT TO
UNDERSTAND!

**WOE TO
ANYONE
WHO SAYS
THOSE
INFAMOUS**

**WORDS
TO US
AGAIN!**



**LIFT UP
YOUR
HEADS!**

**ERECT
ON THE
SUMMIT
OF THE
WORLD,**



**ONCE AGAIN
WE HURL
DEFIANCE
TO THE
STARS!**