between human beings and the religious beliefs that inspired their construction. In her meditative book *On Longing*, Susan Stewart observes that pre-industrial cultures understood their place in relation to the environment, where “the vastness of the natural world mirrored the vastness of the individual perceiving consciousness.” By contrast, in the 19th century, the tallest towers in New York, Chicago, and London were meant to symbolize the solidity and strength of Gilded Age mercantile capitalism.

Should we be surprised, then, that if a hundred years later, in our zeal to memorialize the physical and psychic trauma that occurred after 9/11, we act even more defiantly, parade even more extravagantly, and design buildings that are even bigger and more wasteful than the World Trade Center itself ever was? If before September 2001 the World Trade Center was seen, both by its assailants as well as by many Westerners, as a “sick” symbol of the wasteful misuse of the world’s resources, one may wonder whether it would not be in our best interests to rebuild on that hallowed ground something that reflects our humility as well as our ecological sensitivity. What if environmental sustainability was our starting point, rather than being merely a haze afterthought to developing commercial property or building memorials to the dead?


**INGESTION / ANTI-PASTA**

**ROMY GOLAN**

Here is a photo of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti eating a plate of spaghetti in 1930. What looks like an anodyne photograph was in fact a highly loaded image, for this was the man who, together with his younger colleague Filìa (the pseudonym of Luigi Colombo), had just published the “Manifesto of Futurist Cookery” (1930), which declared the anathema of Italy’s sacrosanct pasta. Marinetti saw the Italian table as weighted down by heavy traditional food. The English might be content with their dried cod, roast beef, and pudding, the Germans with their sauerkraut, smoked bacon, and sausages, but for the Italians pasta would no longer do. Marinetti wanted to reverse the best-known chapter of the history of Italian cuisine. In the 17th century, the city of Naples had initiated a gastronomic revolution whereby its inhabitants, until then known as mangiabroccoli and mangiatoglie, now became mangiamaccheroni. The pasta eater, holding the spaghetti in his hands above his mouth, became a stock figure, like the characters of Commedia dell’Arte, disseminated throughout all over Europe. Now the Futurists were calling for the abolition of what they deemed an absurd Italian gastronomic religion. Marshalling the opinions of doctors, professors, hygienists, and impostors, Marinetti claimed that pasta induced lethargy, pessimism, nostalgia, and neutralism. In short, pasta stood behind everything the Futurists had been battling ever since the appearance of their initial manifesto in 1909.

They lamented that pastasciutta—dried pasta of the sort we all eat—was 40 per cent less nutritious than meat, fish, and vegetables. Mixing scientific data with poetic flights of eloquence, Marinetti held that pasta ensnared Italians within the slow looms of Penelope and bound them to the sailing ships somnolently awaiting a gust of wind on a sleepy Mediterranean. Being anti-pasta meant being antipassatista, i.e., against the past.

Predictably, upon its publication in the Turin daily *Gazetta del Popolo* on 28 December 1930, and its translation in the Parisian daily *Comedia* a few months later, the manifesto provoked an uproar. Delighted to have finally managed to write a manifesto that, in line with Futurism’s intent to transform every aspect of life, had finally hit on the one realm of the quotidian that affected every single Italian, Marinetti and Fillìa gleefully devoted a whole section of their 1932 *Futurist Cookbook* to recording the blistering effects of the initial cooking manifesto. In typical Futurist fashion, the section containing the polemic preceded the section with the actual recipes. Marinetti and Fillìa claimed, in equally characteristic Futurist inflationary style, that the pros and cons of pasta were endlessly debated in the Italian press in hundreds of articles by writers, politicians, chemists, and famous cooks, not to mention innumerable cartoons. Meanwhile, foreign publications from London to Budapest, from Tunis to Tokyo, and all the way to Sydney had announced somewhat incredulously that Italy was about to abandon spaghetti. In the city of T’Aquila (a few hours from the Italian capital) women had taken the situation into their own hands by signing a collective letter of indignation, addressed to Marinetti, in favor of pasta. In Genoa, an association called P.I.P.A., an acronym for International Association Against Pasta, was formed. Thousands of miles away in San Francisco, a fight had erupted between two Italian restaurants situated on different floors of the same building. While the head cook of the Savoia, Italy’s royal family, actually came out against pasta, the mayor of Naples professed that vermicelli with tomato sauce was the food of the angels. To which Marinetti responded that if that were the case, it simply served to confirm the boredom of life in paradise.

Ultimately, Marinetti believed, modern science would allow us to replace food with free, state-sponsored pills composed of albumins, synthetic fats, and vitamins that would lower prices for the consumer and lessen the toll of labor on the worker. Ultraviolet lamps could be used to electrify and thus dynamize food staples. Eventually, a totally mechanized production would relieve humankind of labor altogether, allowing man to be at leisure to pursue nobler activities. Dining could thus become a purely aesthetic enterprise. On this premise, Marinetti and Fillìa’s proposals for the new Italian cuisine constitute one of the most inspired chapters in the annals of Futurism. The cookbook gave a new infusion of giovinanza—a favorite Fascist word, meaning “youth”—to the slightly tired antics of a movement now known as Secondo Futurismo. While the spectator could already expect, by the 1930s, to be abused by the Futurist text, the Futurist painting, the Futurist *polimaterico* (multimedia sculpture), and the Futurist performance, here the abuse went not to the head, but straight to the stomach.

The polemics in *The Futurist Cookbook* were followed by an elaborate account of some Futurist banquets. One of the more memorable of these *Aeropranzi futuristi* was a banquet for 300 people held on 18 December 1931 at the Hotel Negrino in Chiavari. Guests were delighted and terrified as they braced themselves to ingest dishes prepared by the famous cook Bulgheroni, who had come especially from Milan to this small Ligurian town to preside in the kitchen over the burial of pastasciutta. Although the Futurists had advocated the abolition of eloquence and politics around the table, the guests nevertheless first had to sit through a lecture by Marinetti on the state of world Futurism. Afterward, the meal began with a flan of calf’s head seated on a bed of pineapple, nuts, and dates, stuffed—oh, surprise—with anchovies. Then, to cleanse the palate, Bulgheroni served a *decollapiatato* (a pun on *decollare*, meaning “to get off the head”)

Marinetti eating pasta at Milan’s Biﬁ restaurant. 1930. Courtesy Estorick Collection
ground”), a lyrical concoction of meat broth sprinkled with champagne and liquor and decorated with rose petals. The main dish was beef in carlinga (another aeronautic term, probably referring to a kind of Dutch oven), meatballs—which composition was best left uninvestigated—placed over airplanes made out of bread crumbs. After a few more dishes the dessert, named eletricità atmosferiche candite, arrived, consisting of colorful little cubes made of fake marble crowned with cotton candy that enclosed a sweetish paste containing ingredients only a long chemical analysis could disclose. Not everybody made it to the end of the course.

Most memorable among other Futurist recipes was the carneoplastico: a synthetic sculptural interpretation of Futurist aeropittura referring to the much-beloved Italian landscape. In honor of the beacon of Italian industry, one could taste the polio Fiat, a stuffed chicken placed on puffy pillows of whipped cream. On a more pornographic note, one could also have a porco eccitato, a cooked salami placed vertically on the plate with coffee sauce mixed with eau de cologne.

Whatever Marinetti might have thought about his capacities for perennial transgression, such conceits of dishes as “divine surprises” had a long historical lineage. They went back to the most extraordinary passages in Petronius Arbitrius’s Satiricon, thus reviving an aspect of Romanità that the Fascists, in their eagerness to revive Roman glories, would have been all too happy to endorse. Indeed, many of the ingredients were coded so that the exotic fruits that appear in so many Futurist dishes were meant to evoke Italy’s hope for a firmer grip on North Africa in fulfillment of its imperial ambitions as master of the Mediterranean. There was, it turns out, some disagreement during the Fascist ventennio as to the ur-history of pasta. According to the story presently told in Rome’s Museo Nazionale della Pasta Alimentare (the only such museum in the world, founded in the 1990s), traces of early pasta implements were found in the archeological remains of the Etruscan town of Cerveteri, near Rome, dating to the 4th century BC. Pasta was also identified in low reliefs of the 12th century. And yet the writer Paolo Buzzii, in an article printed in 1930 in the much-venerated journal La Cucina Italiana, pointed to the fact that no mention of pasta by the ancient Romans could be found in the history of Italian cooking by d’Apicco, the Homer of cooking. This might sound strange, he added, if one thinks of the thousand stories one was told as a child about the catastrophic volcanic eruption of Pompeii, one of which told of plates, still filled with maccheroni, thrown into the lava.

As always with Futurism, Marinetti’s ottimismo della tavola had its darker side in the realm of realpolitik. Not by chance, as he himself acknowledged in the manifesto, Marinetti launched his attack against pasta just when Italy, hit hard by the Depression, was struggling to achieve one of Mussolini’s great dreams: autarchy, or the elimination of Italy’s economic dependence on foreign markets. Pasta, quintessentially Italian as it was, depended on expensive imports of wheat. The regime thus launched a campaign in favor of home-grown rice as a better substitute. Rice, we are told, was more virile, more patriotic, and more suitable for fighters and heroes. Rice also had its part in the history of Italian cooking as the great rival of pasta; it came from the Po valley in the industrial North, while pasta, with its hypothetical birthplace in Etruria and its triumph in Naples, was identified with the center, and even more with the agrarian and backward South. This was a battle that could thus be waged on familiar Futurist geopolitical territory.

And so the Futurists offered tuttoriso: new dishes to replace the traditional Northern risotto. More sinister is the fact that among the doctors summoned by Marinetti was the eugenist Nicola Pente, the man behind the new Instituto di Biotipologia in Rome. Marinetti’s attacks against pasta coincided, significantly I think, with the first wave of Taylorization of pasta production. On display in the Museo della Pasta in Rome are vintage photographs of women (almost never men) at work in front of vertical hydraulic presses, grinders,
cutters, and blenders that look no less impressive, no less daunting, and no less alienating, than the assembly line at Fiat's famous Turin factory known as the Lingotto, a Futurist favorite back in the teens. By the 1930s, the institution of biotypes as substitutes for Taylorism to attain maximal efficiency in the working place and the provision of a master race had taken hold of the Fascist imagination. Thus the New Futurist Man, the man without pasta, the homo ludens who might eventually replace homo edens, the man whom one may be tempted to theorize as the postmodern "desiring machine" of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in Anti-Oedipus, was, then, first and foremost, the New Fascist Man.

Fine. But what is one to make of our Marinetti snapshot? The staple photograph we see reproduced shows Marinetti instructing a female cook on how to concoct one of his recipes, both of them standing in front of a 1913 Muscular Dynamism painted by Umberto Boccioni. So is our photograph here of Marinetti caught red-handed in the act of eating the infamous dish? A good Italian who just couldn't resist? And this taking place at Biffi, if one is to believe the caption, one of the best-known Milanese establishments (still in existence) and a favorite haunt of the Futurists? Or is it a clever maneuver by Marinetti intended to bamboozle the viewer, leave him or her guessing, spinning yet still more controversy? About to send off my text and still wavering between these two interpretations of this piece of photographic evidence, I stumbled on one little paragraph of The Futurist Cookbook. There, entry number 7 in a short section on apocryphal anecdotes provided a possible answer: "Photographs of Marinetti in the act of eating pasta appeared in a few mass-circulation magazines: they were photographic montages carried out by experts hostile to Futurist cuisine, who were trying to discredit the campaign for a new way of eating." There could, however, be another reading: the photo is real and Marinetti, whatever he might have claimed in his cookbook, was simply lying about the montage. There must have been moments when, even for Marinetti, the desires of the everyman vanquished those of the Futurist and the Fascist in him.