

# Hypothesizing the phrase: The syntax of a meal of the word-in-liberty<sup>1</sup>

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*The Futurist movement had the project of a 'reconstruction of the universe' (as Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero state in their manifesto of 1915), that is, of all the semiotic dimensions of culture. This included linguistic syntax (Marinetti, Parole in libertà, 1913) and cookbooks (see Marinetti and Fillia, La cucina futurista, 1932). Starting from a meal of the word-in-liberty, we demonstrate the homology between literary and gastronomic texts.*

KEYWORDS          Futurism, literature, cooking, recipe

Moving. Lightness. Chewing the infinitive.  
Marinetti and Fillia, *The Futurist Aeropoetic Meal*

## **Semio-liberated Futurism**

Well-known specialists of Futurism maintain that, from a theoretical point of view, we know everything there is to know about this 100-year-old avant-garde. All we can do is add bits of factual information, insignificant variations on accumulated knowledge and ratified values (Belli 2007). To a semiologist, such a claim is a *bottom line*, a term that denotes a presentation of results, but also a failure of sorts. It is an uncomfortable bliss: the Futurist avant-garde is a classic that is not done telling its story, and we are constantly in danger of losing the bookmarks.

There is always time to relinquish exploring the different facets of a research topic. Our conference will take this time to present, highlight and problematize the radical Futurist innovations in the substruction and reconstruction of our vital and cultural universes. Using an aeronautical term that would have pleased Marinetti (FTM) and Azari, we could call these innovations 'clear-air turbulences', due to their impact and to the difficulty of retracing them.

Semiotics has no inclination to pass ideological, political or conceptual judgments or to impose literal or figurative limitations: here it merely aims to contribute to the 'sustainable development' of a general reflection on Futurism. In the first place, it will do so by defending its positions *in* the text and not *from* the text. In contrast to angry criticism, hasty judgments and summary trials, the semiotic method relies on microscopic analysis rather than on telescopic synthesis. And it takes the opportunity to examine on the way its own role in the contemporary development of linguistics and philosophy.

Its long silence is due (in addition to political rejection) to a conundrum internal to its own paradigm. Roman Jakobson, one of the greatest linguists of the century of Saussure and FTM, had an intense experience of Italian Futurism and a rather drastic opinion of its founder (Jakobson 1997). According to the young Jakobson, the theoretical principles announced by FTM did not enable the writing of poetry, but only of journalism. This preconception can be attributed to Jakobson's preference for Russian Futurism as well as to his poor knowledge of Marinetti's literary activity and of the verbal and visual experiments of the *Tavole Parolibere*. Jakobson's hasty verdict contributed to the disrepute of Futurism in Europe and discouraged further linguistic and semiotic investigations. This is rather paradoxical, considering that the Futurists' emphasis on the grammar and semiotics of poetry is also one Jakobson's outstanding contributions to the Structuralist school.

We would like to demonstrate that the questions raised and the answers offered by FTM and the Italian Futurist movement bring a qualitative contribution to the fields of semantics, grammar and textuality and to semiotic systems characterised by various forms and substances of expression (see De Maria 2001, Fabbri 1998a, 1998b, 2009a, 2009b). The contribution does not take the form of scientific propositions but of formal presentiments (or 'ungraspable intuitions' in the words of FTM) about parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. It presents a connotative linguistics that must be made explicit. The poetic principles underlying FTM's *Parolibberismo* (words-in-liberty) were meant to be applied also to the other expressive languages of Futurism such as art, fashion, music, design, dance and film. This kind of semio-liberism would have met with the approval of Roman Jakobson, who claimed, for example, that 'the juxtaposition of contrasting grammatical concepts may be compared with the so-called "dynamic cutting" in film montage'.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, for the Futurists, natural languages and the natural world are the places where 'food sculptures', ie. consolidated and expressive paradigms, become manifest. The task of the avant-gardes is to reconfigure the abstract compounds that lie under the sensitive 'skin' of things and, by re-combining perceptual schemes, to compose 'simultaneous harmonies' between elements. These unusual effects will eventually usher in a futuristically reconstructed universe. Their semiotic contribution is implied rather than applied in the poetic experimentation of Futurist cuisine, where the analogy between language and the sensory dimension calls for a deformation of the passéist phrasing of taste, for an 'anti-pleasant' aesthetics

and for the anticipation of a new harmony of sense and the senses (see also Salaris 2000).

## The meal formula

The text *Pranzo parolibero primaverile* (PPP) ('Springtime Meal of the Word-in-Liberty', see Appendix for translation), part of Marinetti and Fillia's writings from 1932, demonstrates these properties (Fig. 1). This 'formula', as FTM calls it, is an 'instructional' narrative (or pastiche) about the preparation, serving and tasting of a springtime meal experienced by a group of young Futurists in the throes of 'literary and erotic anxiety'. This 'synoptic-syngustatory' sequence includes peppers dipped in cod liver oil, garlic wrapped in rose petals, tortellini soup and strawberries in wine. All followed by bicarbonate of soda. The preparation and tasting initially establishes 'imaginative relationships' among 'equidistant' ingredients: 'peppers, garlic, rose petals, bicarbonate of soda, peeled bananas and cod liver oil'. Then each of the participants enjoys a personalised serving of strawberries in Grignolino wine. The first part of the meal is meant to appease anxiety; the second, tedium and monotony.

### pranzo parolibero primaverile

La traversata di un giardino primaverile fra i dolci fuochi di un'aurora piena di timidezze infantili, ha dato a tre giovani, vestiti di lana bianca e senza giacca, un'ansietà tra letteraria ed erotica che non può appagarsi di una colazione normale.

Si mettano quindi a tavola all'aperto sotto un pergolato che lascia passare le dita calde del sole.

Non caldo, ma tiepido sia servito subito un piatto sinottico-singustativo di peperoni, aglio, petali di rose, bicarbonato di soda, banane sbucciate e olio di fegato di merluzzo, equidistanti.

Mangeranno tutto? Ne assaggeranno delle parti? Ne intuiranno i rapporti fantastici senza assaggiare neanche? A volontà!

Doverosamente mangeranno, dopo, una scodella di tradizionali tortellini in brodo. Ciò farà sì che il loro palato spicchi subito il volo cercando nel piatto sinottico-singustativo un'indispensabile nuova armonia.

Formeranno subito un rapporto metaforico inusitato tra i peperoni (simbolo di forza campestre) e l'olio di fegato di merluzzo (simbolo di mari nordici feroci e necessità curative di polmoni malati). Provino allora a intingere il pe-

perone nell'olio di fegato di merluzzo. Ogni spicchio di aglio sarà intanto accuratamente avvolto nei petali di rosa dalle dita stesse dei tre convitati che si distrarranno così ad accoppiare poesia e prosa. Il bicarbonato di soda a disposizione costituirà il verbo all'infinito di tutti i problemi alimentari e digestivi.

Ma il tedio e la monotonia potrebbero nascere dopo che i palati avessero gustato l'aglio alla rosa. Entri allora la contadinotta ventenne e grassa, recando fra le braccia una grande bacinella piena di fragole nuotanti nel Grignolino ben zuccherato. I giovani l'inviteranno, con alte parole in libertà fuori di ogni logica e direttamente espresse dai nervi, perché scodelli al più presto. Direttamente sulle teste la contadinotta scodellerà. S'ingegnino loro finalmente a mangiare, leccare, bere, smacchiarsi, rissando sulla tavola con aggettivi illuminanti, verbi chiusi fra due punti, rumorismi astratti, urli animaleschi che sedurranno tutte le bestie della primavera, ruminanti, russanti, borbottanti, fischianti, raglianti e cinguettanti in giro.

Formula dell'aeropoeta futurista  
**MARINETTI**

Fig. 1. *Pranzo parolibero primaverile*, in Marinetti and Fillia, *La cucina futurista* (1932).

The attention of the semiologist is initially drawn to a rhetorical device. The paradigm of ingredients (Greimas 1985) is expressed through a parallel between two metaphors, an original analogy between two terms and their symbolic connotations: 'an unusual metaphorical connection between the peppers (symbol of rustic strength) and the cod liver oil (symbol of ferocious northern seas and the need to cure sick lungs)'. Then between the garlic, symbol of prose, and the rose, symbol of poetry.

Instantly they make an unusual metaphorical connection between the peppers (symbol of rustic strength) and the cod liver oil (symbol of ferocious northern seas and the need to cure sick lungs), so they try dipping the peppers in the oil. Then each clove of garlic is carefully wrapped in rose petals by the same hands of the three guests, who thus entertain themselves with the coupling of poetry and prose. The bicarbonate of soda is available for use as the verb in the infinitive of all food and digestive problems.

The second textual attractor is found in the last sentence of the first part, and involves a grammatical diversion: 'The bicarbonate of soda is available for use as the verb in the infinitive of all food and digestive problems'. As for the last paragraph, it ends with the collective recitation of 'high-flown words-in-liberty devoid of all logic and directly expressing [the young men's] nervous condition', followed by abstract noises and animal cries mixed with 'illuminating adjectives' and 'verbs shut between full stops'.

So then a buxom country girl in her twenties enters, holding in her arms a huge bowl of strawberries floating in well-sweetened Grignolino wine. The young men invite her, with high-flown words-in-liberty devoid of all logic and directly expressing their nervous condition, to serve them as quickly as possible. She serves them by tipping it over their heads. They end up eating, licking, drinking, mopping themselves up, fighting each other across the table with illuminating adjectives, verbs shut between full stops, abstract noises and animal cries which seduce all the beasts in the springtime, as they ruminate, snore, grumble, whistle, bray and chirrup in turn.

## **Futurist grammars**

The reflection on adjectives and verbs, especially verbs in the infinitive, is part of FTM's poetic project for the destruction and reconstruction of grammar. It is the same attitude whereby Nietzsche demanded that thought be freed from the superstitions of syntax. In his *Literary Manifestos* from 1912 to 1914 (Caruso 1980, Stefanelli 2001, Rainey et al. 2009), FTM planned

an escape from conventional sentence structure, as the latter, despite its prudent head, was wingless and flatfooted, ie. unable to run and, above all, to fly.

As is well known, Futurist theory and practice proposed linguistic and literary recipes for a radical transformation of poetic writing, well beyond free verse. Futurists wanted to abolish the old-fashioned narrative structure by blowing it out of proportion: their radical program of distortion involved discourse down to its smallest parts, including punctuation. The Futurist poetic project is verbivore: it intends to strip the Italian language of the classical mask of syntax. This thuggish gesture liberates the sentence from the elegant and symmetrical harmony of balanced parts of speech; the step-by-step motion, draperies, festoons of an out-of-tune instrument. The Futurists, anti-purists as they are, aim to change the montage (in the cinematographic sense of the word) by modifying the temporal arrangement of forms through an unprecedented configuration of forces. The new rules for the circulation of words will change the order, interdependence and rhythm of ideas and events, as opposed to the monotonous back-and-forth of conventional phrasing. The ensuing new harmony is absolutely necessary to both metropolitan modernism and to the rural world. The experience of natural language and of the natural world must be re-explained.<sup>3</sup>

## The poetry of grammar

FTM develops an ethics of the sign and, above all, a *pathos* of syntax made of attraction and aversion. In Italian, this uncomfortable feeling may be defined as *fastidio*, in its etymological sense of pride (*fastus*) and boredom (*taedium*):

... the feeling of horror that I experience when faced with a noun that strides forward yet is followed by its adjective, as if by some rag or puppy. Yes, sometimes the dog is held back on the leash of an elegant adverb. Sometimes the noun has an adjective in front and an adverb in back, like the two signboards of a sandwich man.

The principle is to disregard grammatical forms such as the adjective and the adverb, while privileging parts of speech such as the noun and the verb. Often neglected in the studies of Futurist poetics (focused as they are on neologistic innovations), verbal morphologies experiment with words and phrases, as for example in cooking-related terms: the *maître d'hôtel* becomes a *guidapalato* ('palateguide'); the barman, a *mescitore* ('pour-outer'); the cocktail is a *polibibita* ('poly-drink') that can be ordered at the *quisibeve* ('one-drinks-here') instead of at the bar; a dessert is a *peralzarsi* ('to-get-up'); a picnic, a *pranzoalsole* ('lunchinthesun'); the *sandwich*, a *traidue* ('betweentwo'), etc. Futurists famously replaced international terminology with newly minted words and linguistic forms, in the typical military style of the avant-garde: by creating a wedge.

However, the Futurists were also acutely aware that the syntax is what gives rhythm to the

lexicon: they therefore emphasised the syntactic dimension, what Jakobson calls the 'poetry of grammar'. In his theoretical and poetic practice, FTM works above all on the primary modelling system of the Italian language, using its properties and focusing on its grammatical and semantic possibilities. He takes a drastic position on the elements that compose the utterance, ie. the parts of speech, and on their delimitation and integration. And he does so by strengthening the use of nouns (the 'existing'); by generalising the infinitive of verbs (the 'occurring'); and by eliminating or transforming the adjective and repealing the adverb, ('existing/occurring'). His radical intervention on the very structure of language affects its formal constitutive meanings, the morphologies whereby it organises reality. His is a grammatical iconoclasm, a logo-clasm if you will.

### **Nouns, adverbs, adjectives**

The noun, for the Futurists, is not a cognitive object that can be predicated, as in traditional grammars. Naked and elementary, isolated or doubled (synthesis-movement or node of nouns), the noun must recover its essential value, 'total and typical'. And carry a clearly defined sense, an 'essential colour', like a train carriage or a conveyor belt that is moved, as we shall see, by the verb in the infinitive.

In their violent attacks against grammatical hypotaxis<sup>4</sup> (ie. against the interdependence between parts), the Futurists primarily targeted the adverb: 'explanatory, decorative and musical' (like the adjective), the adverb blurs the semantic clarity of the noun that it guards. It introduces a meditative break in the manner in which the noun moves across the sentence, and decreases its dynamism; the adverb is the cane or crutch that stops it from running and flying. FTM seems to somehow appreciate the generative flexibility of adverbs, their imperviousness to declension and their intransitivity. However, he deeply dislikes the formal dependence whereby adverbial suffixes are added to words, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, clauses, and even to other adverbs. And what is unforgivable, in his view, is the manner in which the adverb acts as a 'buckle' holding the sentence together, a linking and closing clasp that secures its 'tedious unity of tone' ('a musical ligament that unites the different sounds of a sentence'). Above all, the adverb releases the tension and slows down the Futurist simultaneity ensured by the verb. After all, adverbs are the adjectives of verbs: they determine and modify the latter's meaning and stand in the same relation to the verb as the adjective to the noun.

The adjective, too, was initially ostracised from the radical syntax of Futurism. Epithets and attributes are (etymologically) something that is added on. They are optional and, due to their qualifying nature, carriers of relations and determinations. Moreover, their varying lengths and order of appearance introduce a delay and a rhythmic disturbance among the more important elements, ie. the noun and the verb, and undermine their qualitative value. According to avant-garde poetics, the adjective provides an 'overly minute' definition of the noun, or, as

we would say today, a predication limited only to the sign to which it is directly attached. The noun must therefore be made to dis-agree with the adjective.

It is remarkable that Roland Barthes, distant as he was from Futurism, also took a critical (while nuanced) stance against the adjective. To both Barthes and FTM, the adjective is the tombstone of meaning. '*Affirmer est enfermer*' (Barthes 2002). Because of the aggressiveness and arrogance with which it delivers its valuable merchandise, the adjective, be it positive or negative, ends up anaesthetizing it. Only borderline languages such as science or avant-garde art, 'superhuman' in their passion for objectivity and in the force of their perspective, attempt to question and extenuate predication. However, while Barthes turned towards the impossibility of predication that characterises the neutral sign or degree zero<sup>5</sup> of metaphor or catachresis, the visual writing of the Futurists accepted the adjective if placed between parentheses, so as to avoid direct predication and blurring the tonality and atmosphere of the text.

FTM's initial refusal of the adjective has an interesting textual undertone. Because this refusal is not made in the name of anonymous objectivity or of naked truth, the adjective becomes acceptable when isolated as an 'absolute noun' (FTM) between parentheses. The adjectives become 'illuminating' (as in our PPP) through this typographical filter that dilutes the immediate intensity of their contact with the noun and diffuses it throughout the text. Instead of stopping the analogical momentum of nouns, the adjective, like a lighthouse, diffuses a rotating and semaphoric light through the glass cage of the parentheses. A light that 'crumbles, spreads abroad, illuminating, impregnating, and enveloping a whole zone of words-in-liberty'. The multiplication and sequential arrangement of atmospheric or tonal adjectives, not replaceable by nouns, and isolated by parentheses, ensure the atmospheric multiplication of the poetic sentence.

In short, the Futurist poet gives up on direct predication in order to create a tonal harmony, asymmetrical and *ad sensum*, on the level of discourse.

## The infinitive mode

The linguistics of FTM and of the great specialists of his time, such as Meillet and Vendryès, reduces the parts of speech to their two most fundamental categories: the noun, as we have seen, and above all the verb in the infinitive.<sup>6</sup> This is FTM's most original contribution to today's semio-linguistic discussions on the personal and temporal dimensions of the verb. It is also an unexpected point of encounter with Deleuze's philosophical reflections on signs, language, time and subjectivity.

Ever since his manifestos of 1912-1914, FTM regarded the infinitive mode as 'the very motion of the new lyricism'. Later, in the early 1930s, in his preface to Pino Masnata's (1940) *Tavole Parolibere* ('words-in-liberty tableaux'), FTM re-examined its meaning and clarified its use. In contrast to the other modes, the 'concept' of infinitive expresses syntactic elasticity (in

its adaptation to the noun), and the continuity, duration and fluidity of the life and intuition that captures it. It is the very sign of stylistic velocity. Neutral in its aspect, which it may or may not adopt, the Futurist infinitive is round (like a helix or a wheel) and adaptable to all the vehicles of analogy, while the other tenses and modes are triangular, ovoid, square and as a result a hindrance to momentum. The infinitive is the privileged formant of the verbs of motion, both transitive and intransitive. 'Infinitive verb = the divinity of action' (FTM). Unsurprisingly, Musso-olini's slogans made extensive use of verbs in the infinitive: '*Credere, Obbedire, Combattere*' (to believe, to obey, to struggle).

The infinitive is the home base to which every verb returns after being conjugated. And that makes it a flexible discursive tool. In Italian, the function of the infinitive can be narrative ('*e giù a dire che*', 'and then [they] went on to say that'); deliberative ('*ecco che si può dire che*', 'it might be said that'); exclamatory ('*e dire che!*', 'just to think that!'); or imperative ('*circolare, circolare!*' 'Move along, move along!'). It can be used in infinitive phrases, which are almost always supported by a verb of perception (for example, '*sentir dire*', 'to hear say').

There are other reasons why the Futurists were attracted to nouns and verbs: in the first place, the infinitive verb is a 'verboid' that can function as a noun: it can take articles, adjectives and determinants, and it can act as a subject or as an object of any kind. While participles and gerunds act as adverbs, the infinitive behaves as a morphologically invariable noun which compensates for the shortcomings of derivation, mostly through action nouns.<sup>7</sup> And, as a noun, it can connect with others according to a double regime, simultaneously alternating (as observed by P. Masnata) between its nominative and accusative roles.

In the second place, the infinitive is not subordinated to the I. The degree zero of conjugation leads to the syntactic destruction of 'the literary 'I', in order to scatter it into the universal vibration'. The infinitive *correre* (to run), according to FTM, is a verb whose subject is 'everybody and everything: here is a universal irradiation of flowing life, a movement of which we are a conscious particle'. Thus, the infinitive verb does not express a saturated or absent subjectivity, but an impersonal passion: the optimism and absolute generosity of surrendering oneself to the becoming of everything, 'the heroic and disinterested continuum of effort and joy in "to act"'. It does not concern the state of mind of a subject, but the passion of the molecular processes of matter. And as the grammatical system includes affective language, whereas the classical syntactic period always conjugates a specific emotion, the infinitive function preserves a multi-faceted emotional perspective.<sup>8</sup> Here Marinetti takes to its extreme consequences the depersonalisation that characterised the culture of the entire 20th century. And he does so down to the pronouns, which Carlo Emilio Gadda described as the lice of thought, and to Italo Calvino's image of grimacing in front of the mirror to prevent subjectivity. But the I is not simply a fabric of ghosts: by preserving its elasticity, Futurism wants to preserve the positive, indeterminate, fluctuating, fluid and interconnected character of identity.

## The chronotype of life

To substantivise the sentence. To de-conjugate the phrase. The 'ungraspable' semantic and axiological intuitions that attracted FTM to the infinitive were made explicit in the linguistic and philosophical studies that followed. A case in point is the psycho-semiotic research of Gustave Guillaume, a post-Saussurean linguist who inscribed the morphology of the infinitive in the architectural representation and generation of verbal tenses. One of the syntactic dimensions of his 'chronogenesis' is prospection: the temporal modes are arranged according to a modal course from the virtual to the actual and from 'incidence' to 'decadence'. The perfect participle is decadent, 'the dead form of the verb', its complete achievement to the point of extinction (although it can be reactivated through the auxiliary!). On the contrary, the present participle and the infinitive are its live, incident form. While the present participle is transitional and can be actualised without being completely achieved, the infinitive is the only radically virtual and non-prospective form. 'What is completed', Guillaume argues, 'is null, nonexistent, rejected'. In almost Futurist terms, the chronotype of the infinitive is the signifier of the most virtual tense. It is completely open to what will come to pass without passing away and in blatant opposition to the '*passéist*' completed action (ie. the participle). Time eludes the verb through the zero-sign of the infinitive. The avant-gardes are not reaching out for the future, but for virtuality and simultaneity.

## Becoming and the event

'The verb is the univocity of language, in the form of an undetermined infinitive, without person, without present, without any diversity of voice. It is poetry itself' (quotations are from Deleuze 1997a and 1997b). Without Deleuze's explicit reference to Guillaume,<sup>9</sup> we would be surprised that he should discuss the infinitive (as well as indefinite pronouns and proper nouns) in the framework of his reflections on becoming, virtuality and the event and as part of his philosophical project for a 'pure semiotics' of language in its relationship to reality.

Deleuze, too, wants to retrace the path of chronogenesis: from *chronos*, the time of conjugated measurement, to *aion*, the indefinite time of singular events. This concept builds upon Bergson's reflection on Becoming, which (in spite of FTM's open praise for the genius of Dante and Edgar Allan Poe as opposed to Bergson's) is a staple of Futurist poetics, along with multiplicity and simultaneity.<sup>10</sup> To Deleuze, the infinitive is the signifier of a becoming, a passage of intensity, an experience of the universe in its molecular dimension, through an affective and intensive body. Because Deleuze does not wish to contemplate ideas through concepts, but matter through perception, becoming is the true perception of the vibrating matter of the world in its own intensive nature. It is not a metamorphosis, which presupposes something

that has already happened (the decadent and dead form of the past participle) but an incident process, presided over by the general instance which inhabits the infinitive and which Deleuze occasionally calls the fourth person singular. Hence the Futurist tone of Deleuze and Guattari's (2006) description of intense, imperceptible and molecular becoming, but also of becoming infant, animal or machine: in their 'le devenir-cheval du petit Hans' ('the becoming-horse of little Hans'), 'guêpe rencontrer orchidée' ('wasp to meet orchid'), 'regarder il' ('to look at he') and 'on mourir' ('one to die') the infinitive signifies the singularity of an impersonal and virtual event. Whereas the noun, according to Deleuze, is ambiguous and always subject to interpretation, the infinitive is unequivocal because it linguistically expresses all events in one: 'The infinitive verb expresses the event of language – language being a unique event which merges now with that which renders it possible'. And because the event is introduced into language through the infinitive, the infinitive is that which brings the interiority of language in touch with the exteriority of being, and the actions and passions of the body with the incorporeal actions of language.

Thus, it is not surprising that Deleuze uses 'to eat' to demonstrate how 'the verb [...] causes the event, as that which can be expressed by language, to happen to consumable things'. According to Deleuze, thinking (where the instance of language comes into contact with the existence of being) also means to eat-to speak. A borderline between things that are eaten and sentences that are spoken, between speaking of food and eating words. Starting from Artaud, Deleuze demonstrates how the word can regress into the body, be eaten again by the mouth, and converge into inarticulate spasms, screams, and sighs. Just like the three young Futurists of PPP.

## **Savouring the infinitive**

After this long detour (which is not a digression), it is time to return to the text. For the Futurists, cooking ranks first among the arts, and demands creative originality. PPP therefore presents the formula for constructing an imaginary event, with its protasis, apodosis and clauses, of which FTM wants to change the phrasing, prosody and rhythm. During the narrative, which has a collective protagonist, the hungry young men alternate existing recipes (tortellini soup and sweetened strawberries in wine) with recipes of their own invention (peppers in cod-liver oil and garlic with roses). The latter are original recipes prepared directly by physically manipulating matter: the acts of dipping and wrapping create a sequence of 'equidistant' elements (peppers, garlic, rose petals, bicarbonate of soda, peeled bananas and cod-liver oil). In order to prepare these recipes, the Futurists must first guess the possible 'imaginative relationships' between these elements. These relationships are metasemiotic because the recipe consists in creating metaphorical proportions between two symbols with contrasting meanings. The /pepper/ is to /rustic strength/

as /cod-liver oil/ is to /ferocious northern seas and the need to cure sick lungs/. While the /garlic clove/ is to /prose/ as the /rose petal/ is to /poetry/.

Waiting for the day when nourishing waves could be broadcast by radio, the avant-garde saw eating as a lyrical sport, based on metaphor and analogy. The simultaneous and word-in-liberty meals were spaces where they could invent 'flavourful colourful perfumed and *tactile* food sculptures', whose fundamental harmony of form and colour were meant to nourish the eyes and stimulate the imagination before tempting the lips. Their semio-liberated cuisine was explicitly poetic: 'In Futurist cooking these canapés have by analogy the same amplifying function that images have in literature'.<sup>11</sup> And in gastronomy as in poetry, the superficial plan is where the values articulated in an axiologically and ideologically 'other' discourse become manifest.

FTM's aero-poetic formula is not a web of patterns, ie. of already existing recipes. Nor is it a cookbook, a programme for the construction of edible objects. It is a *Bildungsroman* about the construction of subjects who must appease their 'literary and erotic anxiety' and the 'tedium and monotony' provoked by the coupling of poetry and prose. On this sensory and passionate plan we find the bicarbonate of soda, which symbolizes the verb in the infinitive, the becoming of intensity. Abrasive and anti-acid, it breaks up skin fat and digestive obstructions: it is a refreshing and purifying product for cleaning, beauty and health purposes. Thus, bicarbonate is used to experiment with affective and intensive bodies that are lightly dressed (no jackets), touched by the 'warm fingers of the sun', and in direct contact (without the mediation of cutlery) with the food.

After the old-fashioned and pedestrian tortellini, the Futurist palate can take flight in search of a 'new harmony' in the discordant play of the organs, and elicit the emergence of a new sensitivity which is not a quality but a sign, not an *aistheton* but an *aistheteon* (Deleuze). 'Calmly take up the material again. Crucify it with sharp nails of will. Nerves. Passion. Lip-felt joy. All of heaven in the nostrils. A smack of the tongue. Hold the breath so as not to blunt a chiselled flavour' (FTM).

The springtime meal, which favours raw food, is more attentive to touch than to flavour, more tactile than gustative. It maintains the traditional order of flavours (from savoury to sweet, from the tortellini to the sugared wine), but reverses the sensory experience. While the tortellini soup must be dutifully eaten, the basin of strawberries in wine will be freely tipped over the young men's heads and white clothes, eliciting (in Italian) a vivid and incident spurt of verbs in the infinitive: '*mangiare, leccare, bere, smacchiarsi*'. A unique event of words-in-liberty 'directly expressing their nervous condition': 'illuminating adjectives, verbs shut between full stops'. A speaking-eating, an open, impersonal and simultaneous block of sensation, in which the verbs, like sandwich men between signboards, are stuck in an ambivalence between nominative and accusative. The adjectives, for their part, function as lighthouses, as an atmospheric multiplicity that illuminates the whole meal consumed under the shade of an arbour.

Speaking-eating: the meal, or rather the process of eating, triggers a sound poem in the

style of Khlebnikov (Jakobson notwithstanding) or Depero; a rudimentary language of natural forces and brutal humour that includes abstract noises and animal cries. Futurist words-in-liberty, which communicated without speaking, did actually include animal and mechanical noises, together with old distorted words and dialectal expressions: a throng of noises and a scuffle of voices. In PPP, the metropolitan Futurists, enemies of D'Annunzio's cities of silence, duel with the silent countryside of the Impressionists and the static landscapes of the Cubists, in order to seduce, rather than the engines of the metropolis, the 'beasts in the springtime', which all exist in the present participle, a verbal form that is still alive: '*ruminanti, russanti, borbottanti, fischianti, raglianti e cinguettanti*'. They participate in the universal vibration that must be futuristically expressed in the infinitive. Madness of Becoming.

## Envoy

This, and this alone, can the semiologists see at the bottom of the multi-coloured well of their microscope.

## NOTES

1 Translated by Odysseas Vangelas, Panagiotis Xouplidis and Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou.

2 On the cinematic montage of sentences, see Jakobson 1985.

3 Compare Marinetti's *métaphore filée* of the sentence as a wave to Valéry's description of the writing of Bossuet:

Marinetti: 'It is precisely through the deliberate use of the adjective and the adverb that writers give that melodious and monotonous rocking effect to the sentence, its moving and interrogative rise and its calming and gradual fall, like a wave on the beach. With an emotion that is always identical, the reader's spirit must momentarily hold its breath and tremble, beg to be calmed, until at last it can breathe freely again when the wave of words falls back, with a final punctuation of gravel and a last little echo' (FTM, A Response to Objections (11 August 1912), in Rainey, Poggi and Wittman 2009: 126-27).

Valéry: 'He starts off powerfully from silence, warms up by degrees, expands, lifts, organizes his sentence, which at times builds up like an arch, supported by lateral propositions marvelously distributed round the central moment, rises, casting off its incidentals, surmounting them to come at last to its keystone and move downward again, performing prodigies of subordination and balance, until it arrives at its appointed term and the complete resolution of its forces' (*Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, trans. Martin Turnell. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 108).

4 Parataxis is hypotaxis without markers.

5 It is worth mentioning that Barthes's 'degree zero' comes from Brøndal's glossematics.

6 At the beginning of the century, linguists agreed that the most urgent grammatical problem was that of the parts of speech. Meillet and Vendryès recognized only the verb and the noun among the ten parts of speech usually mentioned in grammar books.

7 Maybe it does not belong to the paradigm of inflection, but to that of derivation; a 'quasi-derivative' in which the relation between root and affix is one of solidarity and not of conjugation (Togeby).

8 'In fact, the grammatical system includes affective language and stylistics may be considered as part of the theory of grammar or at least of syntax' (Hjelmslev).

9 Starting from Guillaume, Deleuze revisits the stoic concept of *aion*, then the definition of *haecceitas*: 'The infinitive and the aion'.

10 See H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), and *Matter and Memory* (1896).

11 See the recipe *Parole in libertà* (Words-in-liberty) by the aero-painter Escodamè; *Il Bombardamento di Adrianopoli* (The Bombing of Adrianopolis) by Pascà d'Angelo; or the *Tavola parola libera marina* (Seascape with Words-in-liberty) by the aero-painter Marinetti. Suitcase-food is served and aeroplatic statues are eaten.

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## APPENDIX

### Springtime Meal of the Word-in-Liberty

Walking across a spring garden through the gentle flames of a dawn full of childish timidity has plunged three young men dressed in white wool, without jackets, into a state of literary and erotic anxiety that cannot be appeased by a normal meal.

They sit down at a table out of doors under an arbour that allows the warm fingers of the sun to pass through.

They are immediately served with a synoptic-syngustatory plate, not hot, but gently warmed, of peppers, garlic, rose petals, bicarbonate of soda, peeled bananas and cod liver oil equidistant from each other.

Will they eat it at all? Will they taste just parts of it? Will they grasp the imaginative relationships without tasting anything? It's up to them.

Next they dutifully eat a bowl of traditional clear soup with tortellini. This has the effect of making their palates take flight quickly to search in the synoptic syngustatory plate for an indispensable new harmony.

Instantly they make an unusual metaphorical connection between the peppers (symbol of rustic strength) and the cod liver oil (symbol of ferocious northern seas and the need to cure sick lungs), so they try dipping the peppers in the oil. Then each clove of garlic is carefully wrapped in rose petals by the same hands of the three guests, who thus entertain themselves with the coupling of poetry and prose. The bicarbonate of soda is available for use as the verb in the infinitive of all food and digestive problems.

But tedium and monotony can arise after the tastebuds have savoured the garlic and roses. So then a buxom country girl in her twenties enters, holding in her arms a huge bowl of strawberries floating in well-sweetened Grignolino wine. The young men invite her, with high-flown words-in-liberty devoid of all logic and directly expressing their nervous condition, to serve them as quickly as possible. She serves them by tipping it over their heads. They end up eating, licking, drinking, mopping themselves up, fighting each other across the table with illuminating adjectives, verbs shut between full stops, abstract noises and animal cries which seduce all the beasts in the springtime, ruminating, snoring, grumbling, whistling, braying and chirruping in turn.

*Formula by the Futurist Aeropoet Marinetti*