Günter Berghaus, Monica Jansen, Luca Somigli

Editorial

This volume of the *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* explores the relationship between Futurism, in its various international articulations, and the Sacred. Like many artists and intellectuals of their time, the Futurists viewed organized religions with great suspicion because, like other conservative socio-political institutions, they hindered the modernization of their country. At the same time, they were also fascinated by the possibility of other states of being or of worlds lying beyond the surface of our mundane existence that could be accessed, among other means, through aesthetic experience. In an almost reciprocal fashion, the rejection of traditional Christian religious beliefs, doctrines and practices was balanced by a yearning for other forms of transcendental experience and by a capacious notion of the Sacred that could include the revelations into the unknown provided by the occult sciences (Spiritualism, Mesmerism, Theosophy etc.). All of this complemented the experience of primeval forces of the cosmos made possible by modern technology, first and foremost speed, as F.T. Marinetti most pointedly argued in his manifesto *La nuova religione-morale della velocità* (The New Ethical Religion of Speed, 1916).

This tension was embodied – as so many of the other contradictions that structure the ideology and aesthetics of Futurism – by the experience of the movement's founder, whose relationship with the Catholic faith into which he was born was fraught, at best, for both personal and political reasons. As an adolescent, he had been a pupil at the Jesuit college 'Saint François Xavier' in Alexandria, where he resided until 1893. The likely apocryphal story of his expulsion as a result of his passion for immoral authors such as Émile Zola and for the anti-clericalism of his youthful journal *Papyrus* was an important component in the construction of his early persona as an iconoclast and rebel.[1] Furthermore, at the turn of the century, his growing nationalism, informed by the liberal and secular values of the Risorgimento, entailed a radical opposition to the Catholic Church's attempts at flexing its political muscle in the recently unified Italy. It is certainly not by chance that Marinetti's earliest political articles appeared in

1 See Marinetti: "Self-Portrait", pp. 6–7. On his expulsion from the college, see also Berghaus: *The Genesis of Futurism*, p. 4. More recently, Viola has questioned Marinetti's self-mythologization and has published documents which show that, in actual fact, he received a most considerate treatment from his Jesuit teachers: "Ben lungi dall'espellerlo, i gesuiti si sforzavano di trattenere il talento che intuivano." See Viola: *L'utopia futurista: Contributo alla storia delle avanguardie*, p. 21.

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the journal *La giovane Italia* (Young Italy), whose inspiration from Giuseppe Mazzini was obvious from the very title, the same as the name of the youth organization founded by the Italian patriot in 1831. Anti-clericalism was one of the central planks – indeed, *the* central plank – of the journal. The call of its editor Umberto Notari, a close friend and associate of the young Marinetti, to "svaticanare" (de-vaticanize) Italy would be echoed by Marinetti and his followers well into the 1930s.[2] At the same time, Marinetti's growing hostility against the Catholic Church must be juxtaposed with his interest in and fascination for 'alternative' forms of spirituality, from the eastern religions about which he learned in the library of his father, an amateur scholar of religion,[3] to the various forms of esoteric discourse – Theosophy, Spiritualism, Occultism – that were an important point of reference for Symbolism, the literary and artistic movement in which he was formed. The relationship between early Futurism and the Sacred was situated at this junction, as the earliest documents of the movement demonstrate. The first political manifesto of 1909 warned against the dangers of a "clerical victory",[4] and the Pope was presented as an object of scorn and ridicule in Marinetti's "novel in verse", *Le Monoplan du Pape* (The Pope's Monoplane, 1912). On the other hand, Marinetti's early texts were rife with exhortations to overcome the boundaries of the material world, to pierce into the "realms of the Absolute",[5] to "fling our challenge at the stars",[6] often couched in images lifted directly from the symbolic storehouse of mythology and religion ("the birth of a Centaur", "the first flight of Angels",[7] etc.).

The essays collected in this volume aim to explore these contradictions and to demonstrate the centrality of the Sacred to the various articulations of Futurism in Italy and on the international stage. In this introduction, we should like to offer readers a path through the volume by identifying three broad areas of research around which the essays have been organized. The first area of research

2 See Settimelli et al.: *Svaticanamento: Dichiarazione agli italiani*. On Notari and *La giovane Italia*, see also Somigli: "Il papa e l'aeroplano", pp. 63 – 66. Notari's proposal to get rid of the Vatican was first made in his essay "Lo sport in Vaticano" in the journal *Verde e azzurro*, a weekly magazine covering the smart set and sports. See Adamson: *Embattled Avant-Gardes*, p. 373, n. 35. See also Notari's book *Dio contro Dio: Il maiale nero. Rivelazioni e documenti*, especially the "PERORAZIONE A Sua Santità Pio X", in which he compared the pope to a "verminosa falange che ha intossicato il sangue della razza italiana" and dared to "darvi un consiglio, Santità: quello di andarvene."

3 See Marinetti: *La grande Milano*, p. 59.

4 Marinetti: "First Futurist Political Manifesto", p. 50

5 Marinetti: "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism", p. 14.

6 Ibid., p. 16.

7 Ibid., p. 12.

is the relationship between Futurism and forms of spirituality alternative to traditional, institutionalized religion. A substantial number studies has already considered the importance of esoteric thought on Futurism and on Modernism in general,[8] but much work remains to be done, especially as concerns the involvement of individual Futurists with these alternative spiritual traditions. **Massimo Introvigne** notes in his essay **Futurism and Theosophy: Giacomo Balla and His Circle** that the painter's interest in Theosophy and other forms of esotericism is usually mentioned as little more than a mere curiosity, and this observation can in fact be extended to many other members of Futurism, including its founder. Introvigne's main subject, Balla, provides a particularly interesting case study of the influence of alternative spirituality in the Italian artistic world, because his production spanned at least two generations and aesthetic movements, the Symbolism of the late nineteenth century and the Futurism of the first half of the twentieth. By the time he came into contact with the Theosophical Society, which had branches in several major Italian cities, Balla was already immersed in anti-clerical circles where political and social movements – Socialism, Mazzinianism, Freemasonry – offered various forms of secular spirituality that could act as alternatives to Catholicism. By situating Balla at the centre of a network of connections with artists of both generations, as well as with writers, politicians and other public figures, Introvigne reconstructs what he calls "a counter-hegemonic milieu" in which various forms of civil and esoteric religion participated in the project of constructing a "Third Rome" alternative to "Catholic hegemony".

Barbara Meazzi in **Making the Tables Dance: Seances, Ghosts and Futurism** looks at the recurrence of the theme of the *séance* in Marinetti's œuvre, from his early prose fiction to the mature (and more commercial) short stories of the 1920s and 1930s. The trope of the *séance* is an instance of a genuine curiosity for psychic and spiritist phenomena that Marinetti shared with several Milanese friends and acquaintances. Meazzi also discusses literary reminiscences that include the works of Edgar Allan Poe as well as those of Marinetti's contemporaries, in particular Enrico Annibale Butti (1868–1912), with whom Marinetti enjoyed a long and fruitful friendship. In an appendix to her essay, Meazzi also presents "Une soirée inoubliable (nouvelle fantastique)", an unpublished short story by Marinetti dating back to his *Papyrus* days that broadens our understanding of the literary apprenticeship of the founder of Futurism.

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8 See for instance Surette and Tryphonopoulos: *Literary Modernism and the Occult Tradition*; Cigliana: *Futurismo esoterico*; Wilson: *Modernism and Magic*; Galluzzi: *Fantasmi elettrici: Arte e spiritismo tra simbolismo e futurismo.*

Without any doubt, the fact that occult phenomena did not appear incompatible with scientific discoveries and technological innovations made them appealing not only to the Futurists but to intellectuals and scientists across Europe, from Cesare Lombroso to Arthur Conan Doyle.[9] In a well-known passage of *Pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico* (Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto, 1910), Umberto Boccioni and his co-signatories drew a direct link between the domains of science and the occult:

> Who can still believe in the opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensibilities have already grasped the obscure manifestations of mediums? Why should we continue to create works that don't take into account our growing visual powers which can yield results analogous to those of the X-rays?[10]

Jennifer Griffiths, in her contribution **Stati d'animo: Futurism, Theosophy and Portraiture**, considers the convergence between science and occultism in the figurative arts by focussing on how the Futurists re-interpreted one of the most traditional genres of Western painting, portraiture. Theosophy, in particular, provided a theoretical framework through which artists could legitimize the claim that, through images and colours, their work could offer an insight into human emotions and feelings comparable to that revealed by the activities of mediums and clairvoyants. Griffiths charts the influence of Theosophical principles and ideas across the history of the Futurist movement, noting how in certain cases new members were co-opted precisely because of their esoteric leanings. From Balla and Boccioni to Benedetta and Zátková, portraiture emerges as the genre best suited to translating the intuitions and revelations about natural and psychological truths into images. Much of this was made possible by the convergence of scientific and paranormal research into the invisible world hidden behind the thin surface of phenomena that could be observed with our eyes.

The widespread interest in Theosophy in the Western world in the early twentieth century could also amplify the reach of Futurist propaganda and theoretical works outside the Italian context. An interesting case is that of the American musical world in **John M. Andrick**'s contribution to this volume, **Futurist Dissonance, Theosophical Transcendence and American Musical Ultra-Modernism, 1909 – 1930**, where Futurism is shown to have been one of several elements that came together in an eclectic and syncretic approach to music. For the young composers and musicians grouped under the label of "Ultra-modernism" – Leo Ornstein, Henry Cowell, Dane Rudhyar and Ruth Crawford – what

9 See, for instance, chapters 6 and 12 in Cigliana: *Due secoli di fantasmi*.

10 Boccioni et al: "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto", p. 65.

made musical Futurism appealing was not so much its fascination with the new sounds or, rather, the noises of the modern cityscape, but rather the Theosophical underpinnings of the works and writings of Luigi Russolo.[11] Through the mediation of Charles Ives, the Transcendentalist tradition native to nineteenth-century American culture merged with the Theosophically infused musical theories of European figures such as Russolo or Alexander Scriabin. It exerted a significant influence on the successive generation of composers for whom music was a means to perceive and give shape to the cosmic order. Eventually, its revelatory power was meant to produce a "transcendent musical experience" leading to "a heightened awareness of universal truths capable of transforming their lives". Thus, the utopian impulse underlying the Futurist cult of the machine was made compatible with the utopianism of Theosophy, which many artists of the early twentieth century found immensely appealing.

In spite of Futurism's attempts at effecting a radical break with Western culture of the immediate past, this utopian impulse, often couched in the heroic terms of a superhomistic transcendence of the natural order, was in fact a sign of Futurism's continuity with previous cultural and social movements. As **Tania Collani** points out in her essay **Desecrating the Divine, Sacralizing Humanity: Futurist Religion vs. Romantic Mysticism**, there was a direct lineage from Romantic mysticism to the Futurist rhetoric of overcoming natural forces through acts of will, in spite of Marinetti's well-known fulminations against his Romantic predecessors. For Collani, the crucial difference between Romanticism and Futurism lies in their approach: while Romantic mysticism relied on an individualistic exercise of overcoming one's ego, Futurism aimed at creating a new form of organized and collective religious discourse. However, while this opposition works well at the level of theoretical positions – and Marinetti made sure to draw and redraw the battle lines between the two movements – the boundaries were in fact more permeable in the artists' creative practices. For poets such as Enrico Cavacchioli or painters such as Vinicio Paladini, a recovery of or reconciliation with Romantic mysticism provided a means through which they could inflect in a more spiritual direction the Futurist religion of modernity.

Simona Cigliana, in **Esotericism and the Occult in F.T. Marinetti: Aspects of the Sacred in Futurist Gnosis**, sketches out an even broader historical picture, arguing that the Futurists and other avant-garde movements viewed themselves as an élite tasked with bringing enlightenment to humanity and overcoming the restrictions placed by Nature on human beings. Cigliana shows this to be a modern resurgence of what philosopher Massimo Cacciari has called the

11 On Russolo's relations to Theosophy, see Chessa: *Luigi Russolo*.

"great underground movement of the Western Gnostic tradition".[12] Dating back to the very origins of Christianity, Gnosticism promised salvation not through blind faith but through the sharing of a secret body of knowledge. The Gnostics sought to reveal the flaws in the cosmic order, to offer mechanisms to overcome them, and to achieve mastery over the self and the material world. Gnosticism enjoyed a resurgence in the late nineteenth century with spiritualist congregations which, like the Theosophical Society, formed part of a reaction against Positivist materialism and institutionalized religion. Cigliana reconstructs in detail the Gnostic elements that run through the rhetoric of Futurism, from pitting the enlightened élite against the masses lost in the sleep of ignorance, indolence and superstition to the emancipation of humanity from the demands of Nature through a mastery of the forces of modernity: speed, artificiality, efficiency. In this light, Marinetti's novel *Mafarka le futuriste* (1909), with its mixture of pseudo-mysticism and pseudo-science in the service of the creation of Gazurmah, the transhuman "hero without sleep", emerges as a sort of 'Gnostic bible' of Futurism.

The second broad theme that emerges in the volume is that of Futurist religious iconoclasm and its contradictions. Organized religion often had the rôle of a sort of straw man against which Futurist artists and intellectuals, in Italy and elsewhere, could sharpen their anti-institutional credentials. Furthermore, iconoclasm and blasphemy were often viewed as part and parcel of avant-garde poetics and, as Birgit Meyer notes, "were valued positively, as means to further emancipation and liberation. From an avant-garde perspective, artworks were expected to break the yoke of religion and tradition".[13] This phenomenon seems to have been particularly prevalent in countries with a long and popular tradition of religious iconography[14] or where an established religion was more closely integrated into the structures of the State (and thus wielded considerable power through the institutions of censorship). In Italy, for instance, the para-Futurist journal *Lacerba* was threatened with a lawsuit for defamation of the State religion when it published Giovanni Papini's article "Gesù peccatore" (Jesus the Sinner) in June 1913. Although the lawsuit was never actually filed, the very public clash between *Lacerba* and the hierarchies of the Catholic Church demon-

12 Cacciari: "Religion", p. 552.
13 Meyer: "The Dynamics of Taking Offense", p. 345.
14 For instance, the old Russian tradition of icon painting re-surfaced in the most important 'icon' of the avant-garde, Kazimir Malevich's *Chernyi kvadrat* (Black Square, 1915). See Taidre: "Kazimir Malevich's Suprematism and Modernist Artistic Mythology as an Alternative to Religion", p. 120.

strated the publicity value of an antagonistic relationship with the dominant religious institution.[15]

Polish Futurism, the subject of **Beata Śniecikowska**'s essay **Religious Traces within Polish Futurism: Entangled Ways of the Sacred**, presents an even more complex knot between religion and cultural production. Aleksander Wat and Anatol Stern's recently rediscovered leaflet *TAK* (YES), one of the founding texts of Polish Futurism issued between late 1918 and early 1919, is rife with subversive allusions to Catholic beliefs and rituals, as were the verses that earned Stern the sentence of one year in prison for blasphemy. The sacrilegious spirit that seems evident in such publications, however, conceals a more profound (and even respectful) approach to religion on the part of the Polish Futurists, whose texts appear in constant dialogue with the religious traditions of the nation, Catholicism and Judaism, as well as with religious folklore and classical mythology, not only at the level of content but also, and perhaps most significantly, at the level of form. For instance, Wat's poem *Ja z jednej strony i ja z drugiej strony mojego mopsożelaznego piecyka* (Me from One Side and Me from the Other Side of My Pug Iron Stove, 1919), or his later *namopaniki*, a poetic genre of Wat's own invention, merge avant-garde experimental techniques, such as Words-in-Freedom and automatic writing, with the 'sacred gibberish' present in numerous mystical traditions, most notably that of the Kabbalah, with which Wat would have been familiar due to his Jewish background. Popular religiosity informed the poems and woodcuts of *pastorałki* (dramatized Christmas Carols), written by Tytus Czyżewski and illustrated by Tadeusz Makowski, while, at the other end of the cultural spectrum, the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice provided a symbolic and narrative structure through which Czyżewski could articulate his simultaneous fascination with and anxieties over modern technology.

Zachary Rockwell Ludington notes in **Spanish Ultraism's Sacred Woman of the Future** a similar contradictory dynamic of overt rejection and implicit adoption of religious discourse at the core of *ultraísmo*, the eclectic avant-garde movement that flourished in Spain between 1918 and 1925. Ramón Gómez de la Serna translated Marinetti's *Proclama futurista a los españoles* (Futurist Proclamation to the Spaniards, 1910), which tied the country's supposed backwardness to the restraining rôle played by both the Catholic Church and women. Ludington notes how avant-garde iconoclasm relied not so much on the rejection of religious traditions and practices as on their inversion or appropriation, thus producing a series of secular rituals alternative to but also pro-

15 See Jansen and Somigli: "The Church", pp. 35–38.

foundly indebted to those of the Church. The attempt to imagine an Ultraist 'woman of the future' relied on an iconology that heavily quoted the very religious and cultural tradition that she was meant to overcome.

In many instances, the avant-garde's engagement with religion was highly complex and entailed both an ironic play with symbols and an attempt to chart other forms of spirituality, seen to be more in tune with Futurist ideas of an alternative religion. **Dalila Colucci** shows in **Tullio d'Albisola's *L'anguria lirica* (1934): Female Transubstantiation and a New Religion of Poetic Materiality** how a poetry book, produced as a unique tin-litho object, achieved this 'new religion' through the irreverent and unusual combination of Futurist cuisine, aeropainting, sacred art and Dante Alighieri's *Divina commedia*. Its designer and author, the second-generation Futurist Tullio d'Albisola, conceived an erotic poem concerning a woman-watermelon named Nelly. She is subjected to the materiality of knife-sharp masculine voraciousness and brought towards resurrection in the illustrations by Bruno Munari. The book re-establishes an equivalence between the female body and the machine. A network of intertextual connections links the tradition of religious literature, in particular Dante's *Divine Comedy* (both works take place around Good Friday and Easter) and various aspects of Futurist culture and art. D'Albisola refers in his poem to Fillìa's painting *Natività – Morte – Eternità* (Nativity – Death – Eternity, 1931) and couples the "liquid body of the Madonna", as the painting is described (probably by Fillìa himself) in the *Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art*, with the edible body of Nelly. This enables Colucci to read D'Albisola's tin book as "a profane book of revelation: a new testament of poetic creation for the machine age, built on multiple, diverted themes of the Sacred, Futurist and not." Colucci's interpretation of the non-conciliatory tensions between avant-garde and religion in *L'anguria lirica* calls into question whether Futurism's cautious rapprochement with the Catholic Church in the 1920s should be viewed as a revisionist return to aesthetic conformism.[16]

The third broad theme of this volume concerns itself with Futurism's return to more traditional forms of religion during the second phase of the movement. **Martina Della Casa** in **Renewing the Sacred and the Sublime: From Early Futurist Manifestos to Marinetti's *Aeropoem of Jesus*** uses the meta-historical concept of the sublime to outline the continuity that links Futurism's political anticlericalism (which was not necessarily anti-religious) to the artistic creation

16 Colucci quotes Berghaus, who interprets "the insipid madonninas" produced by *arte sacra*" as marking the "transformation of Futurist art into Fascist propaganda". Berghaus: *Futurism and Politics*, pp. 246–247.

of a 'new spiritual order' and 'Futurist morality'. This can be seen in the manifesto *La nuova religione-morale della velocità* of 1916 and, on a higher spiritual level, in two manifestos of the year 1931: *Manifesto dell'aeropittura* (Manifesto of Aeropainting) and *Manifesto dell'arte sacra futurista* (Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art). Della Casa's reading of Futurist religiosity through the lens of "sublime Futurist spirituality" also shows a connecting line that runs from Marinetti's *Monoplan du Pape* via *L'aeropoema del golfo della Spezia* (The Aeropoem of the Gulf of La Spezia, 1935) to *L'aeropoema di Gesù* (The Aeropoem of Jesus, 1943/44, posthumously published in 1991). She analyses the latter in terms of a 'return of the repressed' and points to Marinetti's fascination with Cesare Angelini's *Invito in Terrasanta* (An Invitation to the Holy Land, 1937), which made him experience the Futurist 'marvellous' in the "poetization of all the places and all the things visited or touched by Jesus". This is one of the formulas that Marinetti extracted from Angelini's book and transformed into an aesthetic programme that he presented in his manifesto *15 punti per la formazione dell'ideale scrittore cattolico* (15 Points for the Formation of an Ideal Catholic Writer, 1941).[17]

The 'return' to Catholicism, albeit in a contradictory way, is usually explained as part of a post-war 'return to order'. The essays contained in this volume suggest that this *retour à l'ordre* should be interpreted as a complex and multi-directional way of reconciling 'tradition' with 'modernity'.[18] This phenomenon has been described by Stephen Schloesser as "jazz age Catholicism", a term that aims to refute the prejudice that Catholicism and modernity cannot be reconciled. Not by chance, Schloesser speaks of "dialectical realism" in describing post-war Catholic modernism: its two poles are, on the one hand, the eternal and unchanging truths of faith and, on the other, their expression in styles that are appropriate to the times.[19] We can now see the radically different notions of temporality that underlie Futurist works of art and Catholic cultural modernism, which Della Casa also relates to Fillìa. For the former, the work of art acts on the present to make it the starting point of a utopian future, while,

17 It was originally published as "Padre Cesare Angelini massimo scrittore cattolico" in *Autori e scrittori* 6:5 (May 1941).

18 See Somigli and Storchi: "Introduction: The Great War and the Modernist Imagination in Italy", pp. 18–19. Jay Winter identifies the reconfiguration of the Sacred in Modernist art as one of the cultural codes of mourning during and after the human catastrophe of the Great War. See *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 225. Winter also identifies the period of the 1914–18 war as "the apogee of spiritualism in Europe" (p. 76).

19 Schloesser: *Jazz Age Catholicism*, p. 8.

for the latter, the work of art is the present guise of eternal truths that connect us to the past and to tradition.[20]

A pivotal rôle in reformulating the relationship between modernity and sacred art was played by Jacques Maritain, the "self-described 'anti-modernist' Catholic philosopher", who was one of the main proponents of post-war French Catholic revivalism, the so-called *renaissance catholique* or *renouveau catholique*.[21] Although his thought on Catholic modernity was welcomed by Giovan Battista Montini (the future Paul VI) on the pages of the first issue of the journal *Arte sacra*,[22] it was met with hostility by Pope Pius XI who, in his speech for the inauguration of the Pinacoteca Vaticana (28 October 1932), declared that "so-called new sacred art" should not be allowed inside Catholic Churches.[23] The *Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art*, to which many of the essays in this volume refer, should therefore also be placed in the context of this religious reform of sacred art within the Catholic Church, which was met with more enthusiasm by the artistic world than by the ecclesiastical authorities.[24] The convergent but in some respect also diverging paths chosen by Fillìa and Severini, both mentioned as examples of Futurist sacred art in the Manifesto, are significant. While for Fillìa the renewal of 'religion' should be carried forward by avant-garde spiritualism, the first-wave Futurist Gino Severini, who left the movement – although not officially – after the First World War, re-converted to Catholicism, became a follower and close friend of Maritain in 1923 and actively promoted his ideas in Italy.

Severini's artistic and spiritual development is closely analysed in this volume by **Zoë Marie Jones** in her essay **From Futurism to Spiritual Classicism: Gino Severini and the Neo-Catholic Avant-garde.**[25] She considers how Severini and Maritain forged a link between Neo-Catholicism and the avant-garde in interwar Europe and how they combined neo-Thomist rationalism, the purity

20 See Jansen and Somigli: "The 'Necessary Modernisation' of Sacred Art: A 'Double Vision' on Modernism and Modernity", p. 126.
21 Schloesser: *Jazz Age Catholicism*, pp. 3–4.
22 Montini: "Su l'arte sacra futura". The title of the journal evokes the 1919 creation of the "Ateliers d'Art Sacré" by the French painters Maurice Denis and Georges Desvalières. On the debate and evolution of the concept of *art sacré*, see Saint-Martin: "'L'Art sacré', une expression en débat."
23 This speech was commented on and reproduced in an unsigned editorial in *Arte sacra:* [Anon.]: "La parola del Santo Padre sull'arte sacra."
24 On the wariness of the Catholic Church towards the claim of the avant-garde to represent "a new secular, spiritual movement in a secular society; a society in which the established churches and established politics had failed", see Salemink: "The New Iconoclasm", p. 466.
25 See also her previously published essays "Spiritual Crisis and the 'Call to Order'" and "Gino Severini, a Classicist Futurist."

of craftsmanship and the beauty of religion. Starting from the parallels between Jacques Maritain's *Art et scolastique* (Art and Scholasticism, 1920) and Severini's *Du cubisme au classicisme* (From Cubism to Classicism, 1921), Jones analyses Severini's religious commissions from the 1920s and 1930s in light of the premise that modern religious art need not adhere to a particular style. Over the decade, and with Maritain's guidance, Severini was able "to construct an aesthetic framework in which the formal language of Modernism, the harmony provided by the Church, and the craftsmanship of the past could coexist and mutually benefit one another". As Jones argues, the combination of *al fresco* techniques from the *Quattrocento* with Modernist forms and colours[26] links Severini's early commissions, such as the 1921 frescoes at Montegufoni, near Florence, with the religious commissions in Switzerland and Germany, beginning with the decorations for the Church of Saint Nicholas in Semsales in 1926.

A trajectory of Futurist sacred art that leads far beyond the Second World War can also be traced in the works of Leandra Angelucci Cominazzini (1890–1981). Her late initiation into Futurism between 1928 and 1930 consolidated into a long-lasting support of the movement and led her to join in 1967 the *Futurismo-oggi* (Futurism-Today) project promoted by the painter Enzo Benedetto. Born in Foligno, she was introduced to aeropainting by the Umbrian artist Gerardo Dottori, who was described in the *Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art* as the first Futurist to renew the original intensity of sacred art, and who, together with other Umbrian Futurists such as Alessandro Bruschetti and Giuseppe Preziosi, also reconnected the avant-garde to the Umbrian tradition of saints and Christian imagery.[27] In this volume, **Paola Sica** revisits the artistic formation of this neglected and peripheral Futurist woman artist in her essay **Leandra Angelucci Cominazzini: Revisiting the Futurist Debate on Speed, the Sacred and the Spiritual.** She demonstrates that this painter played a more central rôle than has been ascribed to her, even though her contribution was fully recognized only posthumously, for instance when she was included in the travelling exhibition *L'altra metà dell'avanguardia* (The Other Half of the Avant-garde) in the early 1980s.[28] Sica distinguishes two dimensions in her artistic production,

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26 On Severini's contribution to the use of colour in the artistic representation of the Sacred, see Mazzanti: "The Contribution of Colour".

27 Duranti: "Gerardo Dottori, the Umbrian Futurists, and Regional Futurism."

28 Milan: Palazzo Reale, 1980; Rome: Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1980; Stockholm: Kulturhuset, 1981. As is also shown in Griffith's essay, women Futurists played an important rôle in reinterpreting religious iconography. Another interesting example is Mina Loy, author of the 1914 Futurist *Feminist Manifesto* and of a series of poems ranked within the tradition of blasphemous Modernism. See Pinkerton: "Profanating the Communion Table".

which well reflect the duality of Futurist religiosity: on the one hand, works with a personal style that crave for a sense of the Sacred close to the "new extraterrestrial spirituality" invoked in the *Manifesto dell'aeropittura*; and, on the other hand, more programmatic works that reflect the themes and trends of Fascist Italy. Angelucci's development distinguishes itself from that of her contemporaries because of its long duration: her works created after 1962 can be traced back to her earlier aeropaintings, since in her autobiography she herself describes them as "astral, cosmic, spatial, orbiting, stratospheric, curvilinear, geometric [and] lunar".[29] This "afterlife" of Futurism further stresses the complexity of the relationship of modern art with religion. As Aaron Rosen has argued about contemporary artistic production, the "stereotype of the iconoclast artist" still has a staying power, but "contemporary artists who engage seriously with religious traditions, themes, and institutions are much more prevalent" than artists who aim to shock and offend religious sensibilities.[30]

Taken together, the essays in this volume suggest that – for all its iconoclastic and anti-clerical spirit – the Futurist avant-garde developed in close dialogue with the institutional and counter-cultural configurations of the Sacred. The artists did not simply oppose but often adopted in their rhetoric, their imagery and, most importantly, their faith certain practices, from prayer to poetry, which can provide access to the spiritual realm that envelops and redeems material reality.

Section 2: Reviews in this year's volume presents three major scholarly works and two fictional approaches to Futurism. In **Futurist Manifestos Revisited, Luca Somigli** discusses, the second volume of the *Nuovi archivi del futurismo*,[31] focussed on programmatic, theoretical, technical and polemical manifestos. With over 900 entries, reproduced mainly in facsimile, this is by far the largest collection of Futurist manifestos and related documents ever published. Matteo D'Ambrosio spent over thirty years assembling this collection of documents, which are here made accessible in one oversized (and hefty) volume. The significance of the manifesto as a favourite form of theoretical discourse in the historical avant-garde is well known. Futurist manifestos occupy a central place in the development of the genre, its language and typical formats. Although there are many anthologies that gather a few dozen canonical texts that flash up key demands and ideas of the Futurist movement like a 'poster' (the original meaning of the term 'manifesto'), none of them have the comprehensiveness of the corpus assembled by D'Ambrosio. Hundreds of the ephemeral

29 Angelucci: "Autobiografia", p. 10.

30 Rosen: *Art + Religion in the 21st Century*, pp. 10, 17.

31 For the first volume on *Cataloghi di esposizioni*, edited by Enrico Crispolti, see Giorgio Di Genova's review in the *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*.

publications reproduced here in facsimile are extremely rare and often unavailable in public libraries. They are presented with short commentaries, annotations, very extensive and highly reliable bibliographic information, which make the volume an absolute 'must-have' for any serious Futurism scholar.

Fernando Rosa Dias organized in May 2018 a two-day conference at the Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa to commemorate the centennial of the death of Guilherme de Santa Rita, also known as Santa Rita Pintor (1889 – 1918). The resulting volume of proceedings is discussed in this yearbook by **Ricardo Vasconcelos** in his review **Santa Rita Pintor: Work and Life of a Portuguese Futurist Painter.** Rosa Dias's book is the first of its kind to address in detail the work and life of the only Portuguese painter who openly and consistently adopted a Futurist agenda after meeting Marinetti in Paris and agreeing to translate his collection of Futurism manifestos, *Le Futurisme* (Paris: Sansot, 1911). Rosa Dias and his colleagues remove a number of myths and generalizations on Guilherme de Santa Rita that are pervasive in the literature on Portuguese Modernism. Although Santa Rita is often portrayed as an 'icon of Portuguese Futurism', the fact that most of his works were destroyed upon his death makes the study of his œuvre extremely difficult. Rosa Dias's volume provides a great deal of little known or unknown biographical information on the artist, discusses his written works as well as surviving paintings and drawings (including reproduction in the periodical press). Santa Rita was also a consummate performer. His Futurist soirée at the Teatro República in Lisbon on 14 April 1917 counts as one of the most significant events in the history of Portuguese Futurism. Santa Rita's social performances, especially in the Lisbon coffee houses, made him one of the first representatives of what is nowadays called 'auto-performance', i. e. a histrionic presentation of the artistic self in public and the cultivation of an artistic ego as an autonomous work of art.

Matteo D'Ambrosio discusses in **A New Study on Futurism in Sicily** Andrea Parasiliti's *All'ombra del vulcano: Il futurismo in Sicilia e l'Etna di Marinetti*. This volume expands on the author's previous studies of the Futurist magazine *La balza futurista* (1915), directed by Vann'Antò, Guglielmo Jannelli and Luciano Nicastro in Messina, and *Haschisch* (1921 – 22), directed by Mario Shrapnel in Catania.[32] The second part of his new volume concerns itself with the impact that Mount Etna has had on the Futurist literary imagination, especially Marinetti's novel *Le Monoplan du Pape* / *L'aeroplano del Papa* (1912, 1914) and the play *Vulcani* (1927). He also discusses Marinetti's Mount Etna experience of 1924, which was going to result in a "great work about Sicily", which, as it happened, never

32 See Parasiliti: "Editoria futurista di Sicilia."

came to fruition. Furthermore, Parasiliti expands on already existing books on Futurism in Sicily, although focussing more on literature than painting or decorative arts. His research counts as a useful contribution to the reconstruction of the relations between Sicilian culture and the Futurist movement.

Finally, **Barbara Meazzi**, who has recently published a comprehensive study of the Futurist novel,[33] reviews in **Notes on Two Novels in a Post-Neo-Futurist Key** Franco Donatini's *Un futurista romantico* and Guido Santulli's *La sfida alle stelle: Romanzo futurista* (both of 2019). The former is a romanticized life of the painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni and of his love affairs with the model Ines, whom he immortalized in several portraits, the Russian Augusta, the writer Sibilla Aleramo, the actress Olga Vittoria Gentili and, in the last phase of his life, Vittoria Colonna. Also evoked is the artist's creative path, although in a rather disjunctive chronological order. Guido Santulli's novel tells the story of a musician who travels to a fictitious 'Museum of Futurist Art' in Rome, where he hears the voices of Luigi Russolo, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Arnaldo Ginna. They exhort the young man to throw himself head-over-heels into a Futurist adventure. The key idea of the novel is to reincarnate the raw energy and the rebellious spirit of historical Futurism in young people of today. However, this reawakening reflects the author's right-wing mentality and bears many similarities with current neo-Fascist organizations, their re-staging of Futurist dramatic and musical performances and reprinting of Futurist writings from the 1930s and 40s. It is thus more like an 'ideological novel' than a sophisticated artistic narrative.

As in previous years, this volume includes a **Bibliographic Section: Publications on Futurism,** this time covering the years 2018–2021 and offering details of 20 exhibition catalogues, 2 special issues of journals and periodicals, 1 edited volume of conference proceedings, 7 collective volumes, 39 monographic studies, 16 editions and 3 volumes that turn Futurism into fiction. These 88 book publications are supplemented by 1 film recording.

Finally, a few words regarding future issues of this Yearbook. This themed volume 11 (2021) will be followed by an open issue in 2022. 2023 will be a special issue on **Neo-Futurism** that explores in a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective the revivals or continuations of Futurist aesthetics, both in explicit and in palimpsest forms, through literature, art, architecture, design and music. It will be co-edited by Günter Berghaus, Dalila Colucci (Harvard University) and Tim Klähn (McGill University & Canadian Centre for Architecture) and

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33 It will be reviewed in the next volume of the Yearbook: *Il fantasma del romanzo: Le futurisme italien et l'écriture romanesque (1909–1929)*. Chambéry: Presses Universitaires Savoie Mont Blanc, 2021.

present a broad spectrum of case studies that document how Neo-Futurism, from the 1940s onwards, responded in various parts of the world to the ever-changing concept of the (post)modern. A multifaceted array of intellectual and artistic movements has placed itself under the banner of Neo-Futurism, where 'Futurism' evokes the specificity and variants of its Italian and Russian traditions (e. g. techno-optimism, utopianism, formal and linguistic experimentation), and 'Neo' suggests the desire to reinvent them, fostering new epistemologies in a political, neo-human, or trans-human sense. The volume will be structured in four sections: 1) Italy and Western Europe; 2) Russia and Eastern Europe; 3) Asia and Latin America; 4) Music, Theatre, Photography and Architecture.

Following the open issue of 2024 we will again publish a special issue, this time on **Futurism and Primitivism**, to be edited by Günter Berghaus and Mariana Aguirre Alonso (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). Although Futurism is best known for its modernolatry, or interest in technology and urban life, individuals affiliated with this movement engaged with primitivism in Italy and abroad. In Italy, Futurist primitivism responded to colonialism in Africa, from the days of the invasion of Libya (1911–12) to the Abyssinian war (1935–36). Marinetti himself was born in Egypt, and his exploration of Otherness included not only the representation of Africans and Arabs, but also collaborating with 'primitives' closer to home, such as peasant poets from Southern Italy. Native primitivism was therefore intimately related to the Southern question, but also to the national heritage, e. g. the Trecento painters of the Sienese School. This interest in the Primitive, whether in the light of exotic or European works of art, the evocation of savagery and violence, or the reliance on vernacular solution were taken up by intellectuals in Europe and elsewhere. In other countries, the process of adapting the aesthetics of Italian or Russian Futurism went hand in hand with a concern for indigenous traditions of a folkloristic nature. Volume 15 of the *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies* seeks to explore Futurist primitivism as a broad phenomenon, an anti-classicist impulse that questioned modernity while proposing new ways of developing local, regional, national and individual aesthetics and identities. It will address issues of colonialism and Orientalism, the appropriation of folk art, regional dialects and other vernacular aesthetics, the art created by naïve artists, the insane, children and others considered to be outsiders. We are still in the initial phase of planning and welcome abstracts on any of these or related subjects.

Günter Berghaus, Monica Jansen, Luca Somigli

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