

## WAR FEVER AND FUTURISM

Various "voices" of 1914  
Various poems  
Background: Eugen Weber, Futurism  
Marinetti, The Foundation of Futurism  
Marinetti, Futurist Manifesto

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### Various "Voices" of 1914

AUGUST 10

Germans enter Antwerp.

Isn't it luck for me to have been born so as to be just the right age and just in the right place - not too high up to be worried and to enjoy it to the most!

-Julian Grenfell

My own attitude towards the conflict was simple and clear. In my eyes it was not Austria fighting to get -a little .satisfaction out of Serbia but Germany fighting for her life, the German nation for its 'to be or not to be', its freedom and its future . . . Now began for me, as for every German, the greatest and most unforgettable period of my life. Compared with the events of that mighty struggle, all the past fell into empty oblivion. I think with pride and sorrow of those days and back to the weeks of the beginning of our nation's heroic fight, in which kind fortune allowed me to partake.

-Adolf Hitler

Despite all my hatred and aversion for war, I should not have liked` to have missed the memory of those first days. As never before thousands and thousands felt What they should have felt in peace time -.that they belonged together..

-Stefan Zweig

Chosen daughter of the Lord,  
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient sword,  
There's the menace of the Word  
In the Song on your bugles blown,  
England-  
Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

-W. E. Henley e:

How glad I am that tomorrow I shall at last be able to join in the campaign. At last I shall he playing illy part, proving with my life what I think and feel.

-Ernst Toller

All my Libido is for Austria- Hungary.

- Sigmund Freud

AUGUST 15

Sir

Against the vast majority of my countrymen, even at this moment, in the name of humanity and civilization, I protest against our share in the destruction of Germany.

A month ago Europe was a peaceful comity of nations; if an Englishman killed a German, he was hanged. Now, if an Englishman kills a German, or if a German kills an Englishman, he is a patriot, who has deserved well of his country. We scan the news papers with greedy eyes for news of slaughter, and rejoice when we read of innocent young men, blindly obedient to the word of command, mown down in thousands by the machine-guns of Liege. Those who saw the London crowds, during the nights leading up to the Declaration of War saw a whole population, hitherto peaceable and humane, precipitated in a few days down the steep slope to primitive barbarism, letting loose, in a moment, the instincts of hatred and blood lust against which the whole fabric of society has been raised. 'Patriots' in all countries acclaim this brutal orgy as a noble determination to vindicate the right; reason and mercy are swept away in one great flood of hatred; dim abstractions of unimaginable wickedness - Germany to us and the French, Russia to, the Germans - conceal the simple fact that the enemy are men, like ourselves, neither better nor worse - men who love their homes and the sunshine, and all the simple pleasures of common lives; men now mad with terror in the thought of their wives, their sisters, their children. exposed, with our help, to the tender mercies of the conquering Cossack.

And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because, a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride. No literary tragedy can approach the futile horror of the White Paper. The diplomatists, seeing from the first the inevitable end, mostly wishing to avoid it, yet drifted from hour to hour of the swift crisis restrained by punctilio from making or accepting the small concessions that might have saved the world, hurried on at last by blind fear to loose the armies for the work of mutual butchery.

And behind the diplomatists, dimly heard in the official documents,, stand vast forces of national greed and national hatred atavistic instincts, harmful to mankind at its present level, but transmitted from savage, and half-animal ancestors, concentrated and directed by Governments and the Press, fostered by the upper class as a distraction from social discontent, artificially nourished by the sinister influence of the makers of armaments, encouraged by a whole foul literature of 'glory', and by every text-book of history with which the minds of children are polluted.

England, no more than other nations which participate in this war, can be absolved either as regards its national passions or as regards its diplomacy...

It thus appears that the neutrality of Belgium the integrity of France and her colonies, and the naval defence of the northern and western coasts of France, were all mere pretexts. If Germany had agreed to our demands in all these respects, we should still not have promised] neutrality.

I cannot resist the conclusion that the Government has failed in its duty to the nation by not revealing long-standing arrangements with the French, until, at the last moment, it made them the basis of an appeal to honour; that it has failed in its duty to Europe by not declaring its attitude at (the beginning of the crisis; and that it has failed in its duty to humanity by not informing Germany of conditions which would insure its non-participation in a war which, whatever its outcome, must cause untold hardship and the loss of many thousands of our bravest and noblest citizens.

-Bertrand Russell, to the 'Nation'

We are fighting not for shadowy political advantages, not for the lust of power, not for the hegemony of Europe, but for our very existence as an independent nation . . . we say quite simply that the German Fleet must be swept from the face of the seas.

-Editorial in Horatio Bottomsley's *John Bull*

At least the thing will be over in three weeks.

-Lieutenant Bernard Montgomery

AUGUST 20

*Kitchener's 'First Hundred Thousand' stationed at Maubeuge.*

Mr Kaiser, Mr Kaiser, You're the cause of all the trouble, Cause of all the crime. When the Gunners get to France They will make the Germans dance. It's all through Mr Kaiser all the time.

-A Volunteer

I returned to my old faun at Akenfield for 1 Is. a week, but I was unsettled. When the farmer stopped my pay because it was raining and we couldn't thrash, I said to my seventeen-year-old mate, 'Bugger him. We'll go and join the army.'

-Leonard Thompson, to Ronald Blythe

In spite of their schoolboyish demeanour, they were not all young men - very far from it: freely interspersed among young and pink faces were those with a hint of double-chin and thickening jowls; when they removed their stiff-peaked 'cheesecutter' caps one could discern heads which were getting thin on top, as gentlemen's hairdressers have it, and others which were unashamedly balding. Many upper lips were heavily moustached, and on the left breasts of a number of tunics could be seen ribbons of well-nigh forgotten wars - the Sudan, South Africa, the North-West Frontier of India.

-Tim Carew

It is not good when people no longer believe in war. Pretty soon they no longer believe in many other things which they absolutely must believe in if they are to be decent men.

-Thomas Mann

Only the victory of Germany will guarantee the peace of Europe.

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Thomas Mann

One must first overcome the inner Schweinehund.

-Manfred von Richthofen ,

-Honour has come back like a king to earth.

-Rupert Brooke

**Rainer Maria Rilke, "Banner"**

Now it is you I will praise, Banner, that, ever since childhood,  
I gazed surmisingly after and guessingly greeted  
as the streaming files carried you off asleep;  
tremblingly greeted, as though you might dream of my greeting.  
You, now awake in battles, (laming with life like a bride  
that suddenly wakes, and, full of amazement, remembers  
she's loved, leaps up, and with flowing  
hair and gown resplendently billowing maiden,  
storms the night-guarded hill, leaving her feelings behind.  
Revealed at last! . . .

**Julian Grenfell, "Into Battle"**

The naked earth is warm with spring,  
And with green grass and bursting trees,  
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying.  
And quivers in the sunny breeze, And life is colour and warmth and light,  
And striving evermore for thesis;  
And he is dead who will not fight;  
' And who dies fighting has increase.

**John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields"**

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

**Rupert Brooke: War Sonnets**

**I. Peace**

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,  
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,  
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,  
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,  
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,  
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,  
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,  
And all the little emptiness of love!

Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,  
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,  
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;  
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there  
But only agony, and that has ending;  
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

## II. Safety

Dear! of all happy in the hour, most blest  
He who has found our hid security,  
Assured in the dark tides of the world at rest,  
And heard our word, "Who is so safe as we?"  
We have found safety with all things undying,  
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,  
The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,  
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.  
We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing.  
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.  
War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,  
Secretly armed against all death's endeavour;  
Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;  
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.

## III. The Dead

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
These laid the world away; poured out the red  
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
Of work and joy, and that unhopd serene,  
That men call age; and those who would have been,  
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.  
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,  
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.  
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we have come into our heritage.

## IV. The Dead

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,  
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.  
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,  
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.  
These had seen movement, and heard music; known  
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;  
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;  
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.  
There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter  
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,  
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance  
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white  
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,  
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

## V. The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,

A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.  
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

"There is a grave in Scyros, amid the white and pinkish marble of the isle, the wild thyme and the poppies, near the green and blue waters. There Rupert Brooke was buried. Thither have gone the thoughts of his countrymen, and the hearts of the young especially. It will long be so. For a new star shines in the English heavens." George Woodbury, introduction to Brooke's *Collected Poems* (1916).

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**Background: FUTURISM, Eugen Weber, *Movements, Currents, Trends*, p. 265.**

The years before 1914 witnessed a widespread revival of aggressive, nationalistic and warlike sentiments in a younger generation excited by the growing political friction of the time and tired of the rationalism of its teachers whom it did not find particularly admirable or even successful. The mood was reflected in a new movement, young, dynamic, and eager to sing the glories of the new age-machine steel tracks, guns, and roaring engines. Its members saw speed and power as furnishing the dominant motif of the new age, and set out to translate them into prose verse, and the plastic arts.

Although the Futurists were all Italian, their first manifesto was published in the Paris Figaro (February 20, 1909), and their style was borrowed largely from Cubism. The manifesto was highly revealing as a document of its time, and it briefly affected small groups in Russia and France, but Futurism as a movement does not seem to have had much luck outside of Italy itself. There, its advocacy of the dangerous life and of almost frenetic action for action's sake led many of its friends to Fascism: its best painter, Severini, joined Mussolini's party, and so did the poet Marinetti, who became a Fascist senator.

There is little to add to the latter's exalted declarations: they differ little from the slogans of the future Duce, but they mirrored in their time the aspirations of many schoolboys excited by the new possibilities of flight, of the internal combustion engine, of man's tremendously increasing power of movement and production. However there is something else too, for, clearly, what we now label Surrealism was already present in Marinetti as it was in Apollinaire. Energy, intuition, and spontaneous action had come to stay in art as in the politics of the new century.

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**MARINETTI**

*Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) was born in the Piedmont but studied in Paris. For a while, in Milan, he edited a review called Poesia, but his eyes like that of all lively-minded young intellectuals of the day, remained fixed on Paris where he kept returning. His Futuristic manifesto, appearing first in the Paris Figaro on February 20, 1909, had been preceded by a play, Le roi Bombance (1900) and was soon accompanied by a novel-also in French-Mafarka le futuriste (1910).*

*Soon, Marinetti's love for France, Italy's older Latin sister, as well as the dynamic implications of Futurism led him to advocate Italian intervention in the war. He did this, partly, in a book characteristically entitled: War, the Sole Hygiene of the World (1915). For an Italian yet another step remained: Marinetti took it when in 1924 his Futurismo a Fascismo came out in support of the Fascist movement at an awkward moment in Mussolini's political fortunes. Admitted to the Italian Academy a few years later, Marinetti died bespattered with honors at an almost ripe old age, having escaped the fate he predicted for himself in the manifesto that follows.*

**Marinetti, The Foundation of Futurism**

We have been up all night, my friends and I, beneath mosque lamps whose copper domes, as open-worked as our souls, yet had electric hearts. And, while we trod our native sloth

into opulent Persian carpets, we carried our discussion to the farthest limits of logic and covered sheets of paper with insane scrawls.

A vast pride swelled in our breasts, to feel ourselves standing alone, like lighthouses or advanced guards, facing the army of enemy stars that camp in heavenly bivouacs. Alone with the greasers in the infernal engine-rooms of great ships, alone with the dark phantoms that rummage in the red bellies of bewitched locomotives, alone with the drunks fluttering, battering their wings against the walls!

And unexpectedly, like festive villages that the Po in flood suddenly unsettles and uproots to sweep them off, over the falls and eddies of a deluge, to the sea, we were disturbed by the rumbling of enormous double-decker trams, passing in fits and starts, streaked with lights.

Then the silence got worse. As we listened to the exhausted prayer of the old canal and heard the grating bones of palaces moribund in their greenery whiskers, all of a sudden hungry cars roared beneath our windows.

"Come," I said, "my friends! Let us go! At last Mythology and the mystic Ideal have been surpassed. We shall witness the birth of the Centaur and, soon, we'll see the first Angels fly! We must shake the gates of life to test the hinges and the locks! . . . Let us go! This is truly the first sun that dawns above the earth! Nothing equals the splendor of our red sword battling for the first time in the millennial gloom."

We approached the three snuffling machines to stroke their breasts. I stretched out on mine like a corpse in my coffin, but suddenly awoke beneath the steering wheel-blade of a guillotine-that threatened my stomach.

The great broom of folly tore us from ourselves and swept us through the streets, precipitous and profound like dry torrent beds. Here and there, unhappy lamps in windows taught us to despise our mathematical eyes.

"The scent," I cried, "the scent suffices for wild beasts!"

And we pursued, alike to young lions, Death of the dark fur spotted with pale crosses, that slipped ahead of us in the vast mauve sky, palpable, and alive.

And yet we had no ideal Mistress high as the clouds, no cruel Queen to whom to offer our corpses twisted into Byzantine rings! Nothing to die for besides the desire to rid ourselves of our too weighty courage!

We went on, crushing the watchdogs on the thresholds of houses, leaving them flattened under our tires like a collar under the iron. Cajoling Death preceded me on every curve, offering her pretty paw and, by turns, lying flat with a jarring clamp of jaws to throw me velvety looks from the depths of puddles.

"Let us abandon Wisdom like a hideous vein-stone and enter like pride.. spiced fruit into the vast maw of the wind! Let us give ourselves to the Unknown to eat, not for despair, but simply to enrich the unplumbable wells of Absurdity!"

As I spoke these words, I veered suddenly upon myself with the drunken folly of poodles chasing their own tail and there, at once, were two disapproving cyclists, reeling before me like two persuasive and yet contradictory arguments. Their inane undulations scanned over my ground .... What a bore! Phooey! ... I cut off sharply and, in disgust, I pitched-bang!-into a ditch . . . .

Ali! motherly ditch, half full of muddy water! Factory ditch! I tasted by mouthfuls your bracing slime that recalls the saintly black breast of my Sudanese nurse!

As I arose, a shiny, stinking gadabout, I felt the red-hot iron of joy deliciously pierce my heart.

A crowd of fishermen and gouty naturalists had gathered in terror around the prodigy. Patient and meddlesome, they raised high above great iron cast ing nets to fish out my car that lay like a great mired shark. It emerged slowly, leaving behind in the ditch like scales, its heavy body of common sense, and its padding of comfort.

They thought my good shark dead, but I awoke it with a single caress on its all-powerful rump and there it was, revived, running full speed ahead upon its fins.

Then, face hidden by the good factory slime, covered by metal dross, by useless sweat and heavenly soot, carrying our crushed arms in a sling, amid the complaints of prudent fishermen and distressed naturalists, we dictated our first wills to all the living men on earth:

### **Marinetti, Futurist Manifesto**

1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of danger and of temerity.
2. The essential elements of our poetry will be courage, daring, and revolt.
3. Literature having up to now magnified thoughtful immobility, ecstasy, and sleep, we want to exalt the aggressive gesture, the feverish insomnia, the athletic step, the perilous leap, the box on the ear, and the fisticuff.
4. We declare that the world's wonder has been enriched by a fresh beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car with its trunk adorned by great exhaust pipes like snakes with an explosive breath . . . a roaring car that seems to be driving under shrapnel, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.
5. We want to sing the man who holds the steering wheel, whose ideal stem pierces the Earth, itself launched on the circuit of its orbit.
6. The poet must expend himself with warmth, refulgence, and prodigality, to increase the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.
7. There is no more beauty except in struggle. No masterpiece without an aggressive character. Poetry must be a violent attack against the unknown forces, summoning them to lie down before man.
8. We stand on the far promontory of centuries! . . . What is the use of looking behind us, since our task is to smash the mysterious portals of the impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We live already in the absolute, since we have already created the eternal omnipresent speed.
9. We want to glorify war-the only hygiene of the world-militarism, patriotism, the anarchist's destructive gesture, the fine Ideas that kill, and the scorn of woman.
10. We want to demolish museums, libraries, fight against moralism, feminism, and all opportunistic and utilitarian cowardices.
11. We shall sing the great crowds tossed about by work, by pleasure, or revolt; the many-colored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals; the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and the yards under their violent electrical moons; the gluttonous railway stations swallowing smoky serpents; the factories hung from the clouds by the ribbons of their smoke; the bridges leaping like athletes hurled over the diabolical cutlery of sunny rivers; the adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; the broad-chested locomotives, prancing on the rails like great steel horses curbed by long pipes, and the gliding flight of airplanes whose propellers snap like a flag in the wind, like the applause of an enthusiastic crowd.

It is in Italy that we launch this manifesto of tumbling and incendiary violence, this manifesto through which today we set up Futurism, because we want to deliver Italy from its gangrene of professors, of archaeologists, of guides, and of antiquarians.

Italy has been too long a great secondhand brokers' market. We want to rid it of the innumerable museums that cover it with innumerable cemeteries.

Museums, cemeteries! . . . Truly identical in the sinister jostling of bodies that do not know each other. Great public dormitories where one sleeps forever side by side with beings hated or unknown. Reciprocal ferocity of painters and of sculptors killing each other with line and color in the same gallery.

They can be visited once a year as the dead are visited once a year . . . We can accept that much! We can even conceive that flowers may once a year be left for la Gioconda! . . . But we cannot admit that our sorrows, our fragile courage, our anxiety may be taken through there every day! . . . Do you want to be poisoned? Do you want to rot?

What can one find in an old painting beside the embarrassing contortions of the artist trying to break the barriers that are impassable to his desire to wholly express his dream?

To admire an old painting is to pour our sensitiveness into a funeral urn, instead of throwing it forward by violent casts of creation and action. Do you mean thus to waste the best of you in a useless admiration of the past that must necessarily leave you exhausted, lessened, trampled?

As a matter of fact the daily frequentation of museums, of libraries and of academies (those cemeteries of wasted efforts, those calvaries of crucified dreams, those catalogues of broken impulses! . . .) is for the artist what the prolonged tutelage of parents is for intelligent young men, drunk with their talent and their ambitious will.



For the dying, the invalid, the prisoner, it will do. Since the future is forbidden them, there may be a salve for their wounds in the wonderful past . . . But we want nothing of it-we the young, the strong, the living Futurists!

Let the good incendiaries come with their carbonized fingers! . . . Here they are! Here they are! . . . Set the library stacks on fire! Turn the canals in their course to flood the museum vaults! . . . There go the glorious canvases, floating adrift! Take up the picks and the hammers! Undermine the foundations of the venerable cities!

The oldest among us are not yet thirty; this means that we have at least ten years to carry out our task. When we are forty, let those younger and more valiant than us kindly throw us into the waste basket like useless manuscripts! . . . They will come after us from afar, from everywhere, prancing on the light rhythm of their first poems, clawing the air with their crooked fingers, sniffing at academy gates the good scent of our rotting intellects already intended for the catacombs of libraries.

But we shall not be there. They will find us at last, on some winter night, out in the country, under a sad hangar on which the monotonous rain strums, crouching by our trembling planes, warming our hands over the miserable fire of our books of today gaily blazing under the scintillating flight of their images.

They will gather in a mob around us, panting with anguish and spite, and all exasperated by our untiring courage will bound forward to kill us with the more hatred for the love and admiration in their hearts. And Injustice, strong and wholesome, will glitter radiantly in their eyes. For art can be nothing but violence, cruelty and injustice.

The oldest among us are not yet thirty and yet we have already squandered great treasures, treasures of energy, of love, of courage and eager will, hastily, deliriously, countlessly, breathlessly, with both hands.

Look at us! We are not out of breath . . . Our heart is not in the least tired! For it feeds on fire, on hatred, on speed! . . . You find it surprising? That is because you do not even remember having lived!-Up on the crest of the world, once more we hurl our challenge to the stars!

Your objections? Enough! Enough! I know them! Fair enough! We know well enough what our fine, false intelligence asserts.-We are only, it says, the summary and the extension of our forebears: Perhaps! Let it be so! . . . What does it matter? . . . But we don't want to listen! Beware of repeating these infamous words! Rather, look up!

Up on the crest of the world, once more we hurl our challenge to the stars!