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# Casanova, Marinetti and the Art of Seduction

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In her response to Marinetti's novel, *How to Seduce Women*, Enif Robert writes: "Apro il dizionario (e Vi prego di reprimere un gesto di terrore!) al vocabolo — Sedurre: 'Distogliere alcuno dal bene, tirarlo al male con astuzia e dicesi specialmente delle lusinghe che altri usa per attrarre una donna a compiacere le proprie voglie.'"<sup>1</sup> If we look at the etymology of the verb, however, the definition appears to be quite the opposite. The Latin verb *seducere* is comprised of two word parts: *se* meaning "away" and *ducere* meaning "to lead." Furthermore it is also important to consider the significance of any word within a Futurist context. Under Futurism, words are typically stripped of the *passéist* or traditional encrustations they have been exposed to over time and retain only their original meaning. Such an operation opens them up to a wider range of significance and herein lies Marinetti's true intention: he is playing a game of dissimulation. On the surface, he uses the incendiary meaning of seduction to instigate people, but his true intentions are to lead them away from outdated modes of thinking and to create more modern and dynamic ones. This is also true with his seduction of women: by playing the role of the misogynist, Marinetti lures women away from their passive role within the movement and gives them an opportunity to formulate and express their opinions on the position of women within society.

Part of Marinetti's drive is tied to his flamboyant and often absurd personality. His statements on how to seduce women serve not to instruct men on how to increase the number of their conquests, but rather to force readers into rethinking the battle of the sexes. Since Marinetti possessed a great knowledge of literature, he was fully aware of the seducers who preceded him and consequently played on their advice to push the boundaries of male/female relationships.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Futurist must have been acquainted with the misconceptions

surrounding the seducer throughout history: mainly that people failed to distinguish between a playboy or a Don Juan and a Casanova. The former typically seeks the next notch on the bedpost, whereas the latter courted women based on intellectual respect. The shrewd Marinetti knew his book would ultimately be received as the memoirs of a womanizer, but his true scope, in my opinion, was to emulate a Casanova-style seducer.

On the surface, both Marinetti's *How to Seduce Women* and Casanova's *The Story of My Life* appear to be manuals on how to allure women. Yet upon deeper investigation, the qualities of a seducer in Marinetti's text strangely resemble those found in Casanova's. Such an observation immediately raises the question: what does a Futurist like Marinetti, the advocate of the absurd, have in common with a libertine like Casanova, the quintessential illuminist? And furthermore, if both men adopted similar methods of seduction (by this, I mean the freeing of minds to create equality between the sexes), then which man was more the master of the art? This paper will discuss the more traditional aspects of seduction that Marinetti borrows from Casanova. And, since there is no change without influence, I will show how Marinetti actually succeeded in becoming more "libertine" than Casanova himself, leaving his own seductive mark on the future of gender relationships.

Before we begin, we must ask ourselves what the qualities of a successful seducer are. The most obvious example would be their love for travel and mobility. Like a shark in water, the seducer dies if he stops moving and is always hungry for the next experience. In fact, Casanova went to great lengths to satisfy his intellectual appetite: at one point, on a complete whim, he decided to travel from Riga to St. Petersburg. To the modern ear this does not seem like such a shocking statement, but if we consider that he made the trip of 300 miles across the tundra in a coach — only stopping once — we gain some crucial insight into how important novelty was to Casanova: his need to explore new cultural settings, and consequently to gain new experience from them, was not deterred by such an arduous journey, rather, travel in general, no matter the distance, was a necessary means to acquiring knowledge. The same holds true for Marinetti, whose preferred means of travel was of course the train. In their preface to *How to Seduce Women*, Bruno Corra and Emilio Settimelli provide us with some useful background information on our futurist seducer: "Marinetti passa metà della sua vita in treno: corrispondente di guerra e soldato a Tripoli a Bengasi e nelle trincee

bulgare di Adrianopoli, propogandista futurista a Parigi, Bruxelles, Madrid, Mosca, Pietrogrado, Milano, Palermo.”<sup>3</sup>

Such behavior on the seducer’s part could send the wrong message: he is simply having fun and he is seeking out the pleasures of *divertissement*, looking to distract himself from life’s problems. Rather, travel serves as a metaphor for the seductive nature of art: the thought process behind art is intertwined with movement. The more places we frequent, the more things we are exposed to, the more we learn. For the libertine and Futurist alike, travel fulfills the desire to always be learning, to discover new modes of thinking, to constantly rebuild the “self” in order to prevent the stagnation of identity. Here we must be somewhat skeptical of how Marinetti uses the verb “seduce,” for according to its original meaning, it could also apply to the theory of distraction in art. As previously mentioned, the etymology of the verb “seduce” means to lead astray, however, it is also very similar to the that of “distract,” which stems from the Latin verb *distrahere*: “dis” meaning apart and “trahere” to drag. If Marinetti is in fact using “seduce” in this way, then consequently it takes on a wider range of significance: his scope is not only that of leading readers away, but also of instructing them through his art.<sup>4</sup> The distinction between distraction and *divertissement* is very subtle, yet nevertheless points to the benefits of seduction when it is used to didactic ends. Furthermore, if this act of literary seduction functions both as distraction and instruction, then it also serves as a synthesis of the two basic ways in which one perceives art, as either a form of entertainment or education. Not surprisingly, this synthesis Marinetti creates by using the term seduction is perfectly in tune with the Futurist operation of abolishing clear-cut distinctions within art, for in being seduced by Marinetti’s work, readers cannot tell whether its intentions are that of instruction or distraction.

According to Marinetti, this is another fundamental quality a seducer must possess: “Non tutti gli uomini sanno favorire questa facoltà di distrarsi.”<sup>5</sup> It would appear that he believes the seducer himself must understand the seductive qualities of art before he can use it on others, whether male or female. For example, in one of his hilarious anecdotes, Marinetti advises potential seducers on just how distractive art can be when returning from the front on a train with no brakes:

La velocità cresceva. Diventò impressionante. Inquietudine.  
Tutti in piedi. Il furgone sobbalzava [. . .] L’ufficiale bulgaro

ci comunicò che i freni non funzionavano più. I feriti si misero ad urlare [. . .] La catastrofe sembrava inevitabile, la morte sicura [. . .] Io mi alzai e dopo aver acceso una sigaretta mi misi a declamare i miei versi liberi in onore dell'automobile da corsa.<sup>6</sup>

By reciting his poetry, Marinetti managed to distract a train full of soldiers from impending doom and, considering the circumstances in which it was declaimed, it is probably safe to say that this poem had a lasting effect on its audience. This passage also illustrates that the Futurist seducer had more advanced technologies at his disposal such as planes, trains and automobiles, which allowed the transference of ideas to take place at accelerated speed. As a result, the Futurist seducer was much more streamlined than any of his predecessors. However, if Casanova were a Futurist he definitely would have had a little 74 tank like Marinetti in *Alcova d'acciaio* to aid him in the search for new ideas,<sup>7</sup> because fundamentally the two men were in agreement that travel helps “[il] pensiero dell'uomo [. . .] nell'istituire paragoni per esaminare delle relazioni fra le cose,” even the most distant ones.<sup>8</sup>

A third quality shared by both seducers is the need to dominate nature. It poses a threat to man and therefore must be controlled, for his protection or benefit. Thus, the seducer prefers the city to the countryside, for it is not only the place where minds meet, but also where man's ingenuity successfully intervenes in transforming nature from adversary to servant. It is not surprising, then, that Casanova fails to provide the reader with any information about the natural landscape, as he makes the 300-mile trek across the tundra to St. Petersburg. In fact, the narrative jumps from departure to arrival as if the landscape were not worth mentioning at all. Upon his arrival, however, Casanova immediately delves into a lengthy three-page description of a Russian furnace, explaining every small detail about this marvel of heating engineering: “Queste stufe tengono la stanza, che scaldano, calda ventiquattro ore su ventiquattro mediante il buco in alto che è alla cima della grande canna e che il domestico chiude tirando una corda appena è sicuro che tutto il fumo è uscito.”<sup>9</sup> This episode elicits an interesting observation about nature: it is only worth mentioning when man has control over it, when fire has been ingeniously channeled to heat the room for man's benefit. Furthermore, this example of the furnace is simply a small part of the overall mechanism of the city itself. For the libertine, the city serves as

a testament to man's ability to dominate nature. It is the place where modern innovation thrives; it sets the technological trends that will eventually lead to the development or modernization of the countryside. For Casanova, any mention of nature would mean to acknowledge the lack of man's progress therein and, therefore, is altogether avoided.

Marinetti does in fact share Casanova's view that nature is a raw material to be molded for man's benefit, but, as mentioned before, the Futurist seducer always has the advantage of technology to aid him:

Io trovo che la nostra nuova religione futurista della velocità, collaborando con la guerra, trasforma radicalmente l'uomo. Si cominciò col ricolorare i prati e i pendii dei monti cogli avvisi multicolori, delle nuove industrie. Si sventrarono le montagne coi trafori spirali. Oggi si decapitano con delle mine colossali. Si modifica i corsi dei fiumi. Si distrugge il senso romantico della solitudine a forza di strade [...] Si riassume dall'alto con un solo sguardo tutto un orizzonte bollente di fumi irto e segato di scoppi.<sup>10</sup>

As this quote illustrates, Marinetti's attitude toward nature is much more violent than Casanova's; he does not choose to simply ignore it, rather he directly challenges it. In fact, most descriptions of nature throughout Marinetti's works often occur in a bellicose environment; the technological advancements of war eliminate the obstacle of nature in the pursuit of progress. However, Marinetti's war machines are just another, although extreme, example of Casanova's furnace: man's manipulation of nature for his benefit. Marinetti not only wishes to harness nature's power, but to some degree, he seeks to completely reshape it. In the novel, *Mafarka il futurista*, Marinetti's protagonist gives birth to a winged son named Gazurmah with a specific goal in mind: to destroy the sun. Mafarka wants his son to succeed where Icarus failed: "Indietro, Sole, detronizzato a cui ho distrutto il regno! . . . Io non temo le tenebre infinite! . . ."<sup>11</sup> Of course, the destruction of the sun seems a little extreme, even for Marinetti, but nevertheless demonstrates the Futurist agenda to destroy nature by rendering it useless. After all, the electric streetlamp should shine brighter than the sun; artificial light is more dazzling because man created it. Therefore the Futurist prefers the city because it is the place where all of man's ingenuity is on display, where man becomes one with machine in order to create the Futurist centaur.<sup>12</sup>

Thus we arrive at the fourth quality essential to every seducer: not only does he seek to dominate the world outside, but the nature of his body as well. In his cinematic portrayal of Casanova, Federico Fellini includes an interesting episode in which the libertine engages in a sex contest to defend his virility.<sup>13</sup> In order to win, Casanova must “out orgasm” the other man in the span of one hour. Since the libertine was the master of his own internal chemistry, he decided to make a few last minute modifications to guarantee victory: the consumption of seven raw eggs. These little protein boosts provided Casanova with enough energy to continually perform, thus defeating his opponent who obviously was not aware of the hidden power of eggs. Once again, the seducer uses his knowledge to modify nature in order to meet any challenge. Corra and Settimelli recount a similar story about Marinetti in their preface to *How to Seduce Women*:

Aneddoti sulla vitalità *unica* di Marinetti potremmo raccontare [. . .] a centinaia [. . .] In Russia un principe, che ha fama di possedere uno degli organismi più *allenati* all'alcool di tutto l'impero, lo sfida a chi beve più champagne; Marinetti è quasi astemio, ma vuole dimostrare che un italiano è superiore agli altri anche in questo: e accetta. La sfida finisce con la sconfitta decisiva del principe che cade a terra come fulminato, mentre Marinetti se ne va magnificamente equilibrato sulle proprie gambe.<sup>14</sup>

Here a comparison would not even seem fair: Casanova was of course well versed in the bedroom arts, so one could say he only needed a little extra edge to win. But Marinetti did not even drink and furthermore he did not have any “stimulating” tricks up his sleeve to help him win: the Futurist’s power over nature is so great that he just tells his body what to do! Eggs, who needs them?

Such behavior causes the seducer to seem more superhuman than human and consequently brings us to our next quality: godliness. Here the argument tends to be a bit more complicated, mainly because, chronologically, Nietzsche lies between Casanova and Marinetti.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, both seducers believe that God has retreated from the world and therefore man must rely on his intellect to create his own destiny. In other words, they feel it would be a disservice to God if they did not use the tools He gave them. In his preface to *Storia della*

*mia vita*, Casanova explains his stance on God with the help of a verse from Petrarca: “*Con le ginocchia della mente inchine. L’uomo è libero; ma non lo è se non crede di esserlo, perché più attribuisce forza al Destino più si priva di quello che Dio gli ha dato quando gli ha fatto il dono della ragione.*”<sup>16</sup> Thus, man does justice to God by exercising reason, by taking control of his own existence. Marinetti never outwardly declared himself a non-believer; he simply endorsed the superiority of his new religion of speed. With the help of this new technology, mankind grows into a more dynamic being, able to simultaneously take on a multitude of tasks with his ever-expanding intellect. Therefore, Marinetti never openly admitted that God does not exist, he simply stole his infinite power: “Ho contato i 6 miliardi di scosse che le mie sorelle molecole mi hanno dato ho obbedito loro 6 miliardi di volte prendendo 6 miliardi di direzioni diverse la mia vita è un arruffò centrifugo la mia forza di selezione e la mia agilità = DIO.”<sup>17</sup> According to Marinetti, the infinite knowledge of God resides in the very fiber of man’s being. One need only realize that it is there and put it into action. Once again, we return to one of our previous qualities: mobility. The outward metaphor of the endless learning connected to travel is transposed onto that of the mind. Limitless learning for a boundless intellect equals the knowledge of an infinite being.

Such a dynamic seducer requires beauty to be equally dynamic or at least in a constant state of progress. The seducer, therefore, is constantly redefining beauty to avoid any stagnation in its appeal. This new beauty is achieved at the cost of destroying the Aristotelian idea of harmony and is elicited through theories about the body. In speaking to women about their physique Marinetti says: “A venti, a trenta, a quaranta anni l’uomo prova sempre davanti alla bellezza perfetta di una donna, il tedio che dà il museo.”<sup>18</sup> Beauty is no longer associated with the body’s symmetry because it is boring. Asymmetry of the body, on the other hand, is the very thing that allows beauty to be contemplated. A feature that disrupts the body’s harmony is appealing because it is different, because it sets a person apart from the rest. This theory of asymmetry, however, was not a concept original to Futurism. In fact, the libertines had already challenged the Aristotelian idea of the body’s harmony. Women of the eighteenth-century would move an artificial mole around their face to throw off the balance of their features, thus attracting men by always changing ever so slightly.



These slight changes would not suffice to appease the Futurist seducer, however; things must always be done on a grand scale and of course Marinetti is, once again, the orchestrator of such drastic change. How serious Marinetti actually was about reconstructing the body is highly debatable, but nevertheless he compares war to a surgeon that performs operations that alter the body for the better. In *L'alcova d'acciaio*, Marinetti describes the new attributes of his friend Fiordalisi adorned by war:

ha ricevuto [. . .] una palla che gli ha attraversato il collo e spaccato la mascella. Ha sul labbro inferiore una grossa, tonda protuberanza che gli permette, dice lui, di baciare meglio le donne. In realtà le bacia con la sua ferita. Sensazione interessante per una donna patriota e sensuale. Quella bizzarra protuberanza gli serve a trasformare la sua bocca in una vera orchestra.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to believe that Fiordalisi's new mouth would be attractive to any woman, but that is the absurd theory posited by Marinetti: rather than feel a sense of disgust at the wounded returning from the front, women should appreciate the transformations war bestows upon the body, for not only can it perform new, exciting functions, but it also calls traditional aesthetics into question. Marinetti's theories were not, however, only relegated to men. In fact, in *How to Seduce Women* his theories on beauty expand to include a radical alteration of the female form as well: "Questo non è Romanticismo che disprezza il corpo in nome d'astrazione ascetica. Questo è futurismo che glorifica il corpo modificato e abbellito dalla guerra [. . .] Donne, amate i gloriosi mutilati e imitateli partecipando alla guerra. Anche voi! . . . **Anche voi in trincea!**"<sup>20</sup> Strangely enough, Marinetti implies that for a woman to be worthy of a soldier's love she too must submit to a transformation of the body; women must also take on the attributes of a physically enhanced seducer.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that such a theory does not discriminate between genders and social classes reflects one of the principle ideologies of a burgeoning Futurism: equality, the final attribute of a good seducer. It is the issue of equality, either among the sexes or mankind in general, where Casanova and Marinetti begin to differ in their seductive approaches. Fundamentally, both men are the same: they seduce minds away from

out-dated modes of thinking in order to create more dynamic beings. As Casanova states: “Non ho scritto queste memorie per i giovani che per evitare errori hanno bisogno di vivere nell’ignoranza, ma per coloro che a forza di vivere sono divenuti refrattari alla seduzione.”<sup>22</sup> Casanova does try to convince his readers to look at the world in a new light by reading his book; however, this passage raises the question of who is Casanova’s ideal reader. Is he trying to seduce everyone or only a select few? Sadly enough, the libertine — the one who fights for man’s freedom — in reality fights only for those of certain class. In fact, when readers finally reach the episode in which Casanova converses with Voltaire, they gain some valuable insight to his true intentions: that superstitions serve the purpose of subduing the people so they obey a ruler. Voltaire, in the style of a true libertine, says: “Io amo l’umanità e la vorrei vedere felice come me, libera. E la superstizione non va d’accordo con la libertà. Dove trova che la schiavitù possa fare felice un popolo?” Casanova responds: “[La] superstizione è necessaria, perché senza di essa il popolo non obbedirebbe mai al monarca.”<sup>23</sup> Casanova is only interested, therefore, in producing art for the upper echelons of society. Marinetti, on the other hand, made art for everyone, no matter which social class they belonged to and, furthermore, he sought to transform everyone into an artist in their own right. In his 1921 novel *Gli indomabili* — written during his brief, but significant break from Fascism — Marinetti alludes through allegory that the distractive quality of art will liberate the oppressed working class: “Così, più forte delle crudità cacofoniche del Sole e del Sanguè, finalmente la sovrumana frescalata Distrazione dell’Arte operava la metamorfosi degli Indomabili.”<sup>24</sup> To understand how generous Marinetti was with his art, one need only look at his autobiography: one of the first Futurist exhibits was held as a benefit for working class families (some of whom submitted their art to the exhibition), Marinetti would hand out his journal *Poesie* for free and, in the beginning, Gramsci praised the movement as being the artistic side of the working class.<sup>25</sup>

In regard to women, the Futurist once again surpasses the libertine. Yet in order to prove this is true, we must first delve into Casanova’s dark history with women. Casanova’s one and only true love was Henriette. He courted her in a true libertine fashion, without submitting to the game of jealousy and deceit in stealing her away from her lover. Casanova simply went up to him and asked his permission and out of respect for Henriette, he let her go if it was her desire to be with Casanova. Henriette was unlike any other woman he had ever met.

With her, Casanova finally found the dynamic being that constantly intrigued him: well versed in language, literature, music, politics and philosophy. Their love was based more on mutual intellectual respect than physical attraction and Henriette acted as teacher, instructing the student Casanova on a great number of subjects. In fact, it is Henriette who shows Casanova a deep understanding of how to maintain happiness in relationships, even though their amorous utopia did not last: Henriette was eventually summoned back to France by her family. Casanova consequently became slightly jaded, for he never obtained this same connection with anyone else. From this point on, Casanova's love life begins its downward spiral. Shortly after his break-up with Henriette, Casanova meets the femme fatale Charpillon. This nefarious woman not only causes Casanova to become violently jealous, she actually pushes Casanova to the brink of suicide. It took the libertine some time to realize that, in the end, he was being used and, after Charpillon, he no longer trusts women. Throughout the rest of his memoirs, Casanova feels it is best to buy them; he asks their fathers or mothers to sign a contract stating that these women are his possessions and if the contract is broken, he has the right to seek financial compensation. Therefore, the libertine no longer seduces. Rather, he treats women as objects to be bought, sold, and traded (at one point, he buys a 13 year-old Russian girl and before doing so has a doctor verify her virginity) but, strangely enough, he continues to claim that he loves all of these women— even though none of them possess the “libertine” qualities he so admired in Henriette. Casanova fails to separate love and respect; he feels his actions toward women are justified by hiding behind the label of love. In a certain sense, he does not heed his own advice when he says: “Per ciò che riguarda le donne, sono inganni reciproci di cui non s’ha da tenere conto, perché quando c’entra l’amore, di solito si inganna da tutte e due le parti.”<sup>26</sup>

Here it is important to point out that Casanova associates love with “deception” rather than “seduction,” for it is crucial to understanding Marinetti's position on the subject. In a certain sense, the Futurist learns from the negative example set by Casanova and decides to take a much more drastic approach to love: if love is deceptive, then why do we not abolish it all together and be done with it? Marinetti compares the antiquated morals of love to a prison. For him, love is nothing less than a way for two people to oppress each other. Marinetti does not seek to entirely abolish love, however — just strip it of all the societal constructs

that hinder it. These include marriage, fidelity, and most importantly, jealousy:

Bisogna distruggere questa ossessione: la donna unica e l'uomo unico. Accelerare i rapporti sessuali. Moltiplicare gli amplessi intensificati, riassunti e concentrati in poche ore variopinte e spasmodiche. Guai all'italiano che diluisce il suo cuore e monotonizza il suo sesso. Fedeltà: malinconia, abitudine. Gelosia: mania di vecchio sedentario che non può sedersi che in una poltrona sola.<sup>27</sup>

According to Marinetti, these old modes of love are an obstacle in the way of progress: marriage, fidelity and jealousy only propagate the idea of one person possessing the other, that he or she has the right to tell the other what to do because they have some sort of stake in the relationship.<sup>28</sup> By liberating people from the prison of love, Marinetti believes they will inevitably gain more experience and consequently become more dynamic beings (confirming, in fact, Futurist simultaneity and speed in love as well).<sup>29</sup>

However, the simultaneity of love can only take place if there is equality between the sexes. According to Marinetti, women must first be seduced into pursuing all the aforementioned characteristics in order to become dynamic seducers themselves.<sup>30</sup> With his book on *How to Seduce Women*, Marinetti had come a long way from the first manifesto in which he advocates “il disprezzo della donna.”<sup>31</sup> Seven years later, Corra and Settimelli state that he has changed his views, and that *How to Seduce Women* “è un libro di salute e di liberazione per la forza e la libertà muliebre.”<sup>32</sup> By causing such a controversy with women “[q]uesto libro non può, secondo loro, che contenere accuse, condanne e critiche feroci per il sesso delizioso. Lo giudico tale per esperienza prolungata e minuziosa, e provo anzi una specie di spasimo erotico nello stringere la penna che lo glorificherà.”<sup>33</sup> Marinetti hopes to seduce women into thinking about their position within the movement, to liberate them from oppressive concepts of gender, and to transform them into dynamic beings that challenge their male counterparts. He knows that they are hungry to take part in Futurism because outdated romantic verses no longer appeal to their sensibility; it is like offering “un marron glacé a una pantera.”<sup>34</sup> What better way to force women into action than by playing the role of the misogynist, by provoking them with the very thing they despise the

most. In the end, his strategy actually worked: the pages of the literary magazine *Italia Futurista* were flooded with articles written by women redefining their position within both the movement and society, and a number of works by female futurists were later published.

In conclusion, Marinetti sought to abolish the power structure of relationships and gender by completely redefining romantic love and by creating stronger individuals unencumbered by ideas of jealousy or marital possession. However idealistic they were, Marinetti's intentions were to utilize art to transform all facets of society. He did not hide behind the veil of antiquated love, but exposed it as an obstacle to progress for both men *and* women:

[Ci] aiuti a conquistare tutte le belle *libertà* che noi Futuristi vogliamo offrirvi: Diritto di voto. Abolizione della autorizzazione maritale. Divorzio facile. Svalutazione e abolizione graduale del matrimonio. Svalutazione della verginità. Ridicolizzazione sistematica e accanita della gelosia. Libero amore.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, I conclude that Marinetti is more the master of the Art, for he does not love women, rather he seduces them.

## Notes

1. "I open the dictionary (and I beg you to forgive this terrible act!) to the word — Seduce: 'to deter someone from good, to shrewdly draw them toward evil, especially when referring to the allurements others use to entice a woman into satisfying her own desires.'" Enif Robert, "Come si seducono le donne. (Lettera aperta a F.T. Marinetti)," in F.T. Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne* (Firenze:Vallechi, 2003), 113. All subsequent English translations (unless indicated) are my own.

2. Although Marinetti never makes an explicit reference to Casanova's *L'histoire de ma vie* in *Come si seducono le donne*, it is obvious he had it in mind given the similarities of their content. However, the Futurist film *Vitesse* (*Speed*, 1930) by Tina Cordero contains a scene in which a stack of unidentified books expands and contracts, of all these texts, the camera suddenly stops to focus on a copy of Casanova's memoirs. Such a nod demonstrates that Casanova's *L'histoire de ma vie* was one of the few canonical texts respected by the Futurists.

3. “Marinetti spends half of his life on trains: war correspondent and soldier in Tripoli in Benghazi and in the Bulgarian trenches in Adrianopolis, futurist propagandist in Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Milan, Palermo.” Bruno Corra and Emilio Settimelli, “Prefazione,” in F.T. Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne* (Firenze:Vallechi, 2003), 12.

4. Although Marinetti was the object of harsh criticism in Walter Benjamin’s essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, the two intellectuals did share an interesting opinion on the relationship between *distraction* and *destruction* in art: that they are “the subjective and objective sides, respectively, of the same process.” Walter Benjamin, “Theory of distraction,” in *Selected Writings (1935-1938)*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 141. If we consider the destructive Futurist attitude toward art — both that of razing traditional art to the ground or constructing their art with its own transience in mind — Marinetti’s affinity with Benjamin makes perfect sense: not only is he “leading the reader way” from stagnate literary modes but he is also destroying their antiquated functionality within a modern world.

5. “Not all men know how to foster this power of distracting oneself.” Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 23.

6. “The speed increased. It was stunning. Uneasiness. Everyone standing. The car jolted [. . .] The Bulgarian officer told us the brakes didn’t work anymore. The wounded started to scream [. . .] The catastrophe seemed unavoidable, death imminent [. . .] I got up and after lighting a cigarette I began reciting my verses in freedom in honor of the sports car.” *Ibid.*, 62.

7. F.T. Marinetti, *L’alcova d’acciaio* (Milano: Serra e Riva, 1985). An autobiographical novel in which Marinetti travels throughout Europe in his little 74 tank — a somewhat fortified jeep — searching for mischief, either of the bellicose or female kind.

8. “Man’s thoughts [. . .] to use comparisons as a way to examine the relationships between things.” Giacomo Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, ed. Pietro Chiari (Milano: Mondadori, 1965), 1:27.

9. “These stoves keep the room, which they heat, warm twenty four hours a day through hole at the top of the flue, which the domestic closes by pulling a cord once he is sure that all the smoke has exited.” *Ibid.*, 4: 636-37.

10. “I find that our new futurist religion of speed, in collaboration with the war, radically transforms man. It began with re-coloring meadows and mountain slopes with the multi-colored billboards of modern industry. Mountains were disemboweled by spiraling tunnels. Today they are decapitated by colossal mines. The course of rivers are changed. The romantic idea of isolation is destroyed by roads [. . .] With one glance from on high, one can take in

an entire boiling horizon of rivers, punctuated and crisscrossed by explosions.” Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 40.

11. “Get back, dethroned Sun, whose kingdom I’ve destroyed! . . . I do not fear the infinite darkness! . . .” F.T. Marinetti, *Mafarka il futurista*, ed. Luigi Ballerini (Milano: Mondadori, 2003), 228.

12. In the *Founding Manifesto of Futurism* (1909) Marinetti writes: “Noi stiamo per assistere alla nascita del Centauro (We are about to witness the birth of the Centaur).” It is strange, however, that Marinetti would invoke the classical figure of the Centaur — the symbol of harmony between man and nature — in a manifesto that preaches the destruction of tradition. In my opinion, this figure implicitly points to the new, Futurist Centaur — the amalgamation of man and machine.

13. Fellini’s interpretation of this episode is a fictional, and somewhat absurd, synthesis of real events that happened in Casanova’s memoirs. Fellini parodies Casanova’s tale of a Roman orgy by turning it into the sex contest between Casanova and a young Roman servant. However, a conversation regarding the stimulating properties of eggs does take place early on in the memoirs between Casanova and the Nun of Murano: “[la Monaca] Da otto giorni vivo casto, ma ho bisogno di mangiare perché ho nello stomaco solo una tazza di cioccolata e sei albumi di d’uova fresche. [. . .] [Casanova] Non credevo che avessi bisogno di eccitanti.” “[Nun] I have been cast for the past eight days, but I need to eat because all I have in my stomach are a cup of hot chocolate and seven egg whites [. . .] [Casanova] I did not think you needed any stimulants.”) Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, 2:178-79.

14. “We can tell anecdotes regarding Marinetti’s *unique* vitality [. . .] by the hundreds [. . .] A Russian prince, who is famous for having one of the best *trained* organisms for the consumption of alcohol in all the empire, challenged him to see which man could drink more champagne; Marinetti is almost entirely abstinent, but he wants to demonstrate that an Italian is better than the rest even at this: and accepts. The challenge ends with the decisive defeat of the prince who falls to the floor thunderstruck, as Marinetti walks away magnificently balanced on his own two feet.” Corra and Settimelli, “Prefazione,” 10.

15. In brief, the philosopher’s theory that “God is dead” is often misconstrued as the position of an atheist, when rather his theory should be interpreted as the absence of God — for which man is left to fulfill his own destiny. Because certain aspects of Futurism were based on the theories put forth by Nietzsche, they too were misinterpreted.

16. “*To worship on the knees of the mind*. Man is free; but he is not if he does not believe to be so, for the more he attributes to the power of Destiny

the more he denies himself that which God bestowed upon him when he gave him the gift of reason.” Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, 1:22.

17. “I counted the 6 billion shocks my sister molecules gave me I obeyed them 6 billion times taking 6 billion directions my life is a centrifugal muddle my power of selection and my agility = GOD.” F.T. Marinetti, *Zang tumb tumb*, in *Teoria ed invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Milano: Mondadori, 1983), 703.

18. “At twenty, at thirty, at forty, man always feels the boredom of a museum when in front of a woman’s perfect beauty.” Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 22.

19. “[He] received. . . a bullet that passed through his neck and shattered his jaw. He has huge, round protuberance on his bottom lip, which, according to him, allows him to kiss women better. In reality, he kisses them with his wound. An interesting sensation for a sensual and patriotic woman. That bizarre protuberance helps him to transform his mouth into a real orchestra.” Marinetti, *L’alcova d’acciaio*, 207.

20. “This is not Romanticism that despises the body in the name of an ascetic abstraction. This is futurism that glorifies a body altered and adorned by the war [. . .] Ladies, love the gloriously mutilated and imitate them by taking part in the war. You too! . . . **OFF TO THE TRENCHES!**” Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 102-103.

21. For further readings on Futurist mutilations of the female body, see Enif Robert, *Un ventre di donna* (Milano: Cooperativa Grafica degli Operai, 1919). The novel tells of a woman suffering the pains of two attempted hysterectomies; operations that symbolize both a woman’s struggle to “remove” her femininity under Futurism and the creation of new Italy that the female form typically reflects in traditional literature (i.e. Dante, Petrarca, Leopardi etc.).

22. “I did not write these memoirs of mine for youths who need to live in ignorance to avoid error, but for those who, having been through so much, have grown numb to seduction.” Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, 1:35.

23. “[Voltaire] I love the human race and I would like to see it happy and free, as am I. It’s superstition that doesn’t agree with freedom. Where did you find that slavery can make a people happy? [Casanova] Superstition is necessary, for without it the people would never obey the monarch.” Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, 3:667.

24. “In this way, stronger than the cacophonous crudeness of the Sun and Blood, the superhuman re-freshness Distraction of Art carried out metamorphosis of the Indomitable.” F.T. Marinetti, *Gli indomabili*, ed. Luigi Ballerini (Milano: Mondadori, 2000), 88.



25. For further information on the relationship between communism and a young Futurism, see Claudia Salaris, *La storia del futurismo* (Roma: Riuniti, 1985). This comprehensive study of Futurism not only describes Gramsci's praises of the movement, but also includes an unpublished futurist text entitled  $1+1+1=1$ , an anonymous work that shows certain affinities between the avant-garde movement and communism.

26. "When it comes to women, one should not worry about reciprocal deceptions, because when it's a matter of love, people usually deceive on both sides." Casanova, *Storia della mia vita*, 1:24.

27. "This obsession must be destroyed: the only woman and the only man. Accelerate sexual relationships. Multiply intensified embraces, summed up and concentrated in a few multicolored, spasmodic hours. Trouble for the Italian who waters down his heart and *monotonizes* his sex. Fidelity: melancholy, routine. Jealousy: the mania of a sedentary old man who can only sit in but one chair alone." Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 75.

28. If Marinetti actually put his theories into practice it is, once again, highly debatable especially in regard to jealousy. Marinetti actually calls for women to cheat on their husbands while they are at the front; he even encourages them to take on multiple lovers. To resist jealousy in such an extreme situation would be difficult for anyone, either man or woman. Curiously enough, it is rumored that Marinetti did in fact find himself in a similar situation, when his wife Benedetta supposedly had an affair with the Japanese ambassador, Shirokoro Hidaka, while he was off fighting the war. It would be interesting to discover how the parties involved dealt with this issue, but the correspondence between Benedetta and Hidaka is closed at the Getty Museum until 2017.

29. The Futurist ideas of simultaneity and speed in love are here intended as the synergy or interpenetration (*compenetrazione*) of dynamic beings. In other words, the intensification of a relationship that reinforces individuality while at the same time strengthens the bonds of two people as one entity.

30. In speaking about the triangular relationship between author, reader, and text in Dante's Canto V of the *Inferno*, the philosopher René Girard states: "[Books] are not innocent, behind every book there is an author trying to seduce you, who pushes you to imitate him. In my terminology the book performs the function of *mediator*, as a *model* for Paolo and Francesca: their love therefore is, in a certain sense, a *copied love*." Whereas Dante faints at the thought that his book could possibly seduce, and consequently corrupt, young people into loving in the same unjust manner as Paolo and Francesca, Marinetti relishes in the fact that his book actually serves as a model for corruption; he

wants women to mimic the “love” exemplified throughout his text — physical enhancements, affairs, multiple lovers — and he takes full responsibility for the consequences of his literary seduction of women.

31. F.T. Marinetti, *Fondazione e manifesto del Futurismo*, in *Marinetti e il futurismo*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Milano: Mondadori, 1973), 6. (English translation: “d disdain of women”).

32. “It is a book about health and liberation for the power and freedom of women.” Corra and Settimelli, “Prefazione,” 18.

33. “According to them, this book cannot contain anything but accusation, condemnation and ferocious criticism of this delicious sex. My prolonged and detailed experience leads me to judge it as such and yet I feel a sort of erotic spasm as I grip the pen that will glorify it.” Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne*, 21.

34. *Ibid.*, 25. (English translation: “a candied chestnut to a panther”).

35. “[Help] us conquer all the beautiful liberties that we Futurists want to offer you: Right to vote. Abolition of autorizzazione maritale. Easy divorce. Devaluation and gradual abolition of marriage. Devaluation of virginity. The systematic and fierce ridicule of jealousy. Free love.” *Ibid.*, 110.