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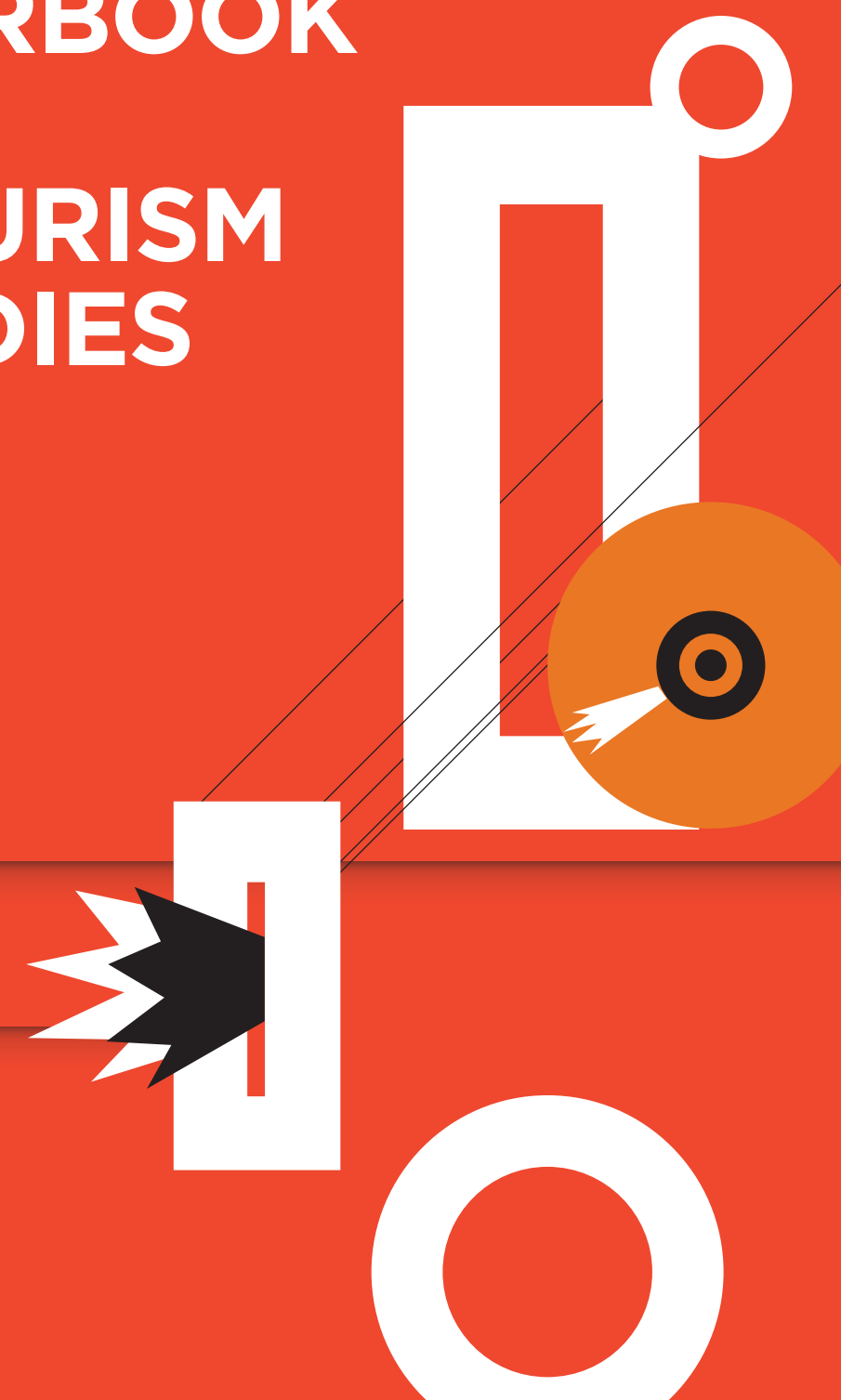
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International Yearbook of Futurism Studies

International Yearbook of Futurism Studies

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The War Diaries of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Ernst Jünger

Andrea Benedetti

This paper offers a philological and thematic comparison of the war diaries written by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944) and Ernst Jünger (1895–1998). Marinetti's notebooks were only published posthumously in an incomplete and censored version, whereas Jünger's text has been faithfully edited. Both authors registered in their diaries more or less daily war experiences in a highly literary style. Whereas Marinetti employed an extensive range of experimental linguistic devices, Jünger adopted a more detached, documentary style in his description of events. Both writers made use of their diaries for literary works of art. As examples of these, I shall discuss Marinetti's *Come si seducono le donne* (1917) and *Lalcova d'acciaio* (1921), and Jünger's *In Stablgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (1920), *Das Wäldchen 125: Eine Chronik aus den Grabenkämpfen 1918* (1925) and *Feuer und Blut: Ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer großen Schlacht* (1925). The literary reworkings of the original diaries show an analogous interpretation of the 'battle of materials' and the ways in which the soldiers confronted and transcended the daily horrors of war. Marinetti's hypertrophic 'self' celebrated the élite assault units (*Arditi*) as an embodiment of the New Man of the future. Jünger, on the other hand, made an interior division between soldier/warrior (action) and writer (observation), which heralded an aesthetic appropriation of war as a 'technical labour process' and projected it onto a higher metaphysical plane. Both diaries show similar ideological implications and share an aggressive, revolutionary nationalism which has a purist and intellectual character and dismisses the compromises of everyday politics. Yet, there were also major differences, summed up in Marinetti's often declared "Love of Battle" and Jünger's exasperated question: "When will this shitty war end?"

Keywords: First World War in literature; War diaries; autobiographical writings; technology of war; revolutionary nationalism

Marinetti and Jünger in the First World War

This essay analyses a number of key aspects of two diaries from the Great War, written by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti¹ and Ernst Jünger,² with the aim of extending the results of my previous research undertaken on Jünger's ambiguous fascination with war and technology.³ My main focus will be on the relationship between the authors' stylistic-formal approaches and their psychological attitudes towards the process of recording daily experiences in the war. Both diaries and their subsequent literary elaborations are examined here from a literary as well as ideological-political viewpoint. My intention is to investigate affinities and differences between the two bodies of texts, especially regarding their authors' fascination with adventure, danger and the 'eroticism of war'. An attendant area of investigation is the two writers' rapport with technology and 'experimentalism', understood as an aesthetic-ideological position towards the modern realities of the early twentieth century.

Marinetti's Futurism promoted a rather exclusive, élitist and, with regard to political realities, limited concept of nationalism, which bore a number of similarities to Jünger's theoretical-propagandist production and literary narratives. The Futurist leader tried to deal with the accelerated dynamism of modern life by presenting an optimistic and intentionally naïve vision of technology, in which the creative potential eclipsed its destructive power. Marinetti saw in war an expression of an elementary "love of battle" (*Taccuini* 241 [13 May 1918]) and in its technological aspects a predominantly aesthetic feature. Just as technological progress was characterized by constant transformation, its aesthetic context was also seen as a field of incessant mutation.⁴ This idea formed the basis of Marinetti's 'theory of montage', first presented in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* (1912). In turn, his theory hinged on the destruction of syntax as an aesthetic consequence of the dissolution of consciousness of self, brought about by the discontinuity with which reality was perceived by a subject in transition and perpetual motion.⁵ The Futurist poet developed his technique of Words-in-Freedom, because modernity had

1 Marinetti: *Taccuini 1915–1921*. In the following, page references are followed by an indication of the date of entry.

2 Jünger: *Kriegstagebuch 1914–1918*. In the following, page references are followed by an indication of the date of entry.

3 See Benedetti: *Rivoluzione conservatrice e fascino ambiguo della tecnica*.

4 See Marinetti: *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, pp. XLIII–XLIV, 45–46, 59, 85–86, 113 and 115. For a parallel in Jünger's writings see Meyer: *Ernst Jünger*, p. 188.

5 See the passage on "Death of the Literary 'I'" in his manifesto, *Destruction of Syntax – Untrammeled Imagination – Words-in-Freedom* (1913).

destroyed the stability hitherto provided by the nexus of the senses and because the traditional relationship between ‘human being’, ‘Nature’ and ‘history’ seemed lost forever.⁶ Marinetti’s war-poetry relied on immediacy of expression in order to reflect the lightning-fast manner with which observed reality imposed itself on the artist’s brain.⁷

An initial comparison of the two writers’ diaries from the First World War reveals that Marinetti’s notes contain a mixture of styles: sober, laconic passages alternate with experimental Words-in-Freedom and purely visual drawings.⁸ In the various re-workings of the original notebooks, Marinetti employed some of the experimental methods of representation outlined in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* (1912).⁹ The aim was to give the literary text a greater force of verisimilitude and to stimulate the reader to widen his perceptive faculties, almost to the point where ‘life’ is substituted by literature.

In comparison, Jünger’s diary notes employed a more ‘objective’ style with a prevalence of conventional grammatical constructions. This ‘traditionalist’ approach suggests that Jünger wanted to render his wartime experiences and the related psychic processes communicable and comprehensible to a wide readership. This became most apparent in Jünger’s best known literary reworking of his wartime notebooks, *In Stahlgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a Storm-Troop Officer, 1920). In this work, Jünger treated discontinuity as a peculiar trait of the ways in which experiences (not just those in a wartime situation) are mentally processed by the individual. Apart from the progressive stylization of the text, Jünger developed an ever more refined personal account, in which the rigour of form and the sophistication of linguistic expression¹⁰ sought to capture the ‘steel-like hardness’ of existence in an era dominated by modern technology. The ordering and stabilizing daily practice of writing compensated Jünger for the psychological effect of the grim and gruesome events at the front, thus reflecting

6 See Serra: *Al di là della decadenza*, pp.37 and 54.

7 Marinetti described his methods of free and untrammelled expressiveness, liberated from all aesthetic shackles and regulations in his manifesto, *Destruction of Syntax – Untrammelled Imagination – Words-in-Freedom*. See also Glaser: “Der große Krieg’: Techniken seiner Schilderungen bei Marinetti und Jünger.” Bobinac: *Literatur im Wandel*, pp. 253–267, here in particular pp.258–259.

8 See Glaser: “Der große Krieg’”, pp. 259–260.

9 However, they were not as radical as the texts in *Zang tumb tuuum: Adrianopoli, Ottobre 1912* (see, for example, the passage quoted by Beata Śniecikowska in this volume, p. 177–178). In comparison, *Come si seducono* and *Alcova d'acciaio* were far more conventional in their use of syntax.

10 See Glaser: “Der große Krieg’”, pp. 262–263, and Kiesel: *Wissenschaftliche Diagnose und dichterische Vision der Moderne*, pp. 102–109.

the division in his consciousness between an active soldier and a reflective writer. This rift may explain why Jünger and Marinetti could both be fascinated by “dieser kostbaren Einheit aus Maschine und Mensch” (this splendid unity of man and machine),¹¹ yet it was only the German writer who would experience phases of demystification regarding the supposedly heroic aspect of the war: “Wann hat dieser Scheißkrieg ein Ende?” (When will this shitty war end? *Kriegstagebuch* 258 [24 May 1917]).

‘Analogical montage’ and Arditism in Marinetti’s war diaries

Following this brief introduction, I shall now proceed to an analysis of the two writers’ approaches to the Great War and of an interpretation of the formal and thematic choices that characterize Marinetti’s notebooks in the philologically debatable edition by Alberto Bertoni.¹² Firstly, however, it must be underlined that these notes cover a longer period of time (from 22 October 1915 to autumn/winter 1921) than Jünger’s work. For this reason, I shall restrict myself here to analysing Marinetti’s notes from 22 October 1915 to 29 December 1918 only, i.e. for the time covering events between the defeat at Caporetto in October 1917 and the capture of Vitto-

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- 11 Jünger: *Das Wäldchen 125: Eine Chronik aus den Grabenkämpfen 1918* (1st edn 1925), p. 8. See also *Taccuini*, p. 125 (23.09.[1917]), p. 128 (24.09.[1917]), p. 278 (10.07.[1918]) and p. 469 (08.01.[1920]); Marinetti: *Lalcova d'acciaio* (1921), pp. 62–63, pp. 119–121 and 236; Marinetti: “L'uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina”, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, pp. 297–301.
- 12 Marinetti’s original diaries are preserved at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven/CT. On their composition and background see Raimondi’s introduction, “Il testimone come attore” (*Taccuini*, pp. XXVII–LVII). The controversial philological operation of erasing notable parts of the notebooks in the edited version has been justified by Bertoni in his “Nota sui criteri di edizione” (*Taccuini*, pp. LIX–LXIII). Additional material was published by Rainey and Wittman: “F. T. Marinetti: Selections from the Unpublished Diaries”, and Andréoli-De Villiers: “Con Marinetti e Boccioni a Dosso Casina: 30 pagine dimenticate e inedite del diario di guerra di F. T. Marinetti.” When comparing the beginning of the diaries in Bertoni’s edition (*Taccuini*, pp. 5–32, covering 22–27 October 1915) with Andréoli-De Villiers publication of the omitted pages, the latter reveal that a) they are less condensed than the corresponding passages in *Taccuini*; b) from the beginning, Marinetti crudely recorded, with a cynical eye and extreme brevity, images of the horrors of war and his lack of preparation for the realities of hunger, cold and thirst as a brutally concomitant of the conflict; c) the horror of war was only in a second phase aesthetically translated into an ‘optical-acoustic war’. The abundant use of analogical language, metaphors and onomatopoeias, direct the readers’ attention to the soldier’s immediate perception of front-line realities as the pivotal matter around which thoughts and actions perpetually revolve; d) the author possessed a patriotic conviction and unshakeable faith in the heroic ‘race’ of the *Ardito*, the authentic Futurist soldier, moulded in the forge of the conflict.

rio Veneto in 1918. During this period, Marinetti served in the Lombard Battalion of Volunteer Cyclists and Automobilists, in the Alpine regiment and the 73rd Artillery Battalion at the Gorizia front, where he was badly wounded (14 May 1917). In September 1917, he joined the *Bombardieri di Nervesa* and was sent to the front on the Karst/Carso. In June 1918, he was appointed to the *Squadriglie Automitragliatrici Blindate*, with which he remained until 23 September 1918.

Marinetti's evocative description of this front-line service employed an 'analogical montage' of words and drawings, with short blocks of nominal phrases and a syntax that was stripped to the bone. Besides the frequent abolition of punctuation and the omission of 'like' in similes, there is a continuously sought-after effect of challenging the reader on a level of a complete 'logical leap',¹³ a feature that originates in the Futurist theory of simultaneity, analogy and Words-in-Freedom.¹⁴ In this way, a pithy and laconic style of Futurist experimentalism was related to the experiences of the trenches. The sober, telegraphic recording style of the diary is pervaded with aesthetic digressions which, in turn, constitute the draft material for the author's subsequent writings, in a reciprocal penetration of art and life. The analogical component of language gives the diary notes a peculiar 'cinematographic' character, aimed at reproducing, moment after moment, the constant mutation of what is real. In this way, Marinetti could visualize the most appalling horrors of war.

The fact that Marinetti, an interventionist from the very beginning of the "giornate radiose di maggio", based his style on a 'sober recording' of the shock of war, but *not* on its explanation, contributed decisively to his exaltation of the First World War: "The conflagration is our first, most youthful Futurist Words-in-Freedom." (*Taccuini* 77 [24 April 1917]) However, this did not wholly override his initial criticism of the meaninglessness of war. In fact, there are a number of passages that suggest that he was forcing himself to uphold his belief in the necessity of this war and its glorious ending.¹⁵ This may have been the reason why the writer avoided taking up an ethi-

13 See, for example, "Twilight split butchered broken-down by the barage of lots of our batteries" (p. 57, 03.03.[1917]), or the expression "defiant equilibrium of wall" (p. 58, 06.03.[1917]) to refer to the few house walls still standing after an attack.

14 See his explanation in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature*: "The noun has to be followed, without the use of conjunctions, by that noun to which it is linked by analogy. For example: man-torpedo boat, woman-bay, crowd-backwash, piazza-funnel, door-tap. Since the speed of air travel has greatly increased our knowledge of the world, perception through analogy is becoming ever more natural for human beings. Therefore, we have to suppress the 'how', the 'which', the 'thus', the 'similar to.'" *Critical Writings*, p. 108.

15 See, for example, *Taccuini*, pp. 155–162 (24.10.[1917]) and p. 181 (08.01.[1918]).

cal position with regard to the horror itself,¹⁶ which, as we shall see, was completely in line with Jünger's position. For example, the shooting down of an Austrian aeroplane and the sight of the aviator's charred body amidst the metal of the aeroplane was commented on in the following manner: "Between the bent tubes looking like the knots of a tie and the rusty netting lay a ripped and blazing fuel tank and, on top of it, a cranium: its brain exposed, boiling and frying." (*Taccuini* 125–126 [23 September 1917])

Marinetti's relationship with the Great War was characterized by an almost theatrical appropriation of Georges Sorel's concept of violence in its most activist and vitalistic sense.¹⁷ Marinetti's glorification of Arditism as the birth of a new Futurist "race"¹⁸ offered a parallel to Jünger's transformation of the assault soldier scorning danger into the New Man moulded by the Great War. The key difference is that Jünger nearly always focussed on the front line reality, whereas Marinetti often treated life in the trenches as a narrative of secondary importance. His descriptions of the war sat side-by-side with stories of love trysts, activities during his periods of leave, digressions on literature, painting and cinema, philosophical reflections and short drafts for planned publication projects. This suggests that, on many occasions, Marinetti fought his 'battle' behind the lines rather than at the front which, in fact, complied with the charge, given to him by the Generals Pietro Badoglio (1871–1956) and Luigi Capello (1859–1941), of inciting the Italian troops to enter the battle as heroic fighters. Marinetti's eloquence was as 'theatrical' as it was effective. Again and again, it gave him opportunity to praise the Italian soldiers' ingenious mental elasticity and to contrast this with Teutonic pedantry and rigidity.¹⁹

The erotic dynamization of existence: Woman between seduction and emancipation

Marinetti's activism was intimately linked to his vitalist instincts, which expressed themselves not only in "a life that is free, full of adventure, vitality, and habitual heroism",²⁰ but also in his erotic exploits. Women

16 See *Taccuini*, pp. 98–102 (14.05.[1917]) and p. 202 (06.-08.03.[1918]).

17 See *Taccuini*, p. 472 (21.02.1920).

18 See *Taccuini*, p. 203 (09.03.[1918]), p. 278 (10.07.[1918]), p. 314 (25.08.[1918]), pp. 315 and 320 (26.08.[1918]), pp. 320–322 (27.08.[1918]).

19 See *Taccuini*, pp. 347–353 (15.09.[1918]) and Guerri: *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, pp. 160–175.

20 "Vita libera avventurosa, energica e quotidianamente eroica." *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, p. 444. Marinetti: "The Necessity and Beauty of Violence", *Critical Writings*, p. 60.

played a central rôle in his diaries and, more generally, in his entire literary production. During his service as a front-line soldier, Marinetti wrote a manual of love, *Come si seducono le donne* (How to Seduce Women, 1917). In this work, Marinetti dealt, often with auto-ironic tones, with the issue of female emancipation.²¹ Like in his notebooks, he emphasized the need to dismantle bourgeois sexual morality and to replace it with free love. Marinetti's diary shows the author's omnivorous appetite for "donne innamorate a mia disposizione" (women who are in love and are available to me; *Taccuini* 196 [19 February 1918]), but also hints at the pivotal nexus between the tropes 'woman' and 'dynamic existence'. The dynamization of life was rendered evident and necessary by the First World War. The alternative was stasis and collapse, also in the personal domain. This is why Marinetti affirmed: "I cannot live with the same woman for more than one day! I am always a man for quick, violent sex. Afterwards sleep and then goodbye."²² Sex as an uninterrupted process of bolstering the Ego was in many ways consistent with Bergson's non-teleological notion of *élan vital*.²³ It may offer us a key to understanding Marinetti's almost obsessive erotic fantasies and his association of *eros* with *thanatos*.²⁴ The enforced celibacy in the trenches was compensated for by dreams of phallic hypertrophy, coarse descriptions of army brothels²⁵ and eroticized visualizations of the war machine.²⁶

Yearning for danger. Attacking the enemy at the front is just like going to a camp brothel bulging and stuffed to the brim with soldiers lieutenants and a few ugly women who hurriedly mechanically generate pleasure. Not giving a damn about venereal disease and death. Ferocious sex. Overflowing youthfulness bursting the frame of punctilious peace. Love of battle. *Hurrying to fill the wells of absurdity* with one's own youth – the only capital at one's disposal! (*Taccuini* 13.05. [1918], p. 241).

21 See *Taccuini*, pp. 387–388 (17.11.[1918]–19.11.[1918]), p. 391 (28.11.[1918]–05.12. [1918]), p. 397 (10.12.[1918]), p. 402 (30.12.[1918]), pp. 407–408 (February [1919]).

22 "Non posso vivere più di 1 giorno con una donna! Sono sempre l'uomo del coito veloce violento. Poi il sonno e il distacco." *Taccuini* 19.04.[1917], p. 71.

23 See *Taccuini*, pp. 479–480 (04.05.[1920]).

24 See *Taccuini*, p. 64 (23.03.[1917]), p. 92 (09.05.[1917]), p. 188 (18.01.[1918]), pp. 189–191 (28.01.[1918]), pp. 224–225 (22.04.[1918]), pp. 240–241 (13.05.[1918]), p. 327 (31.08.[1918]), p. 336 (08.09.[1918]), pp. 410–414 (11.04.[1919]) and pp. 464–466 (30.12.[1919]).

25 See *Taccuini*, pp. 212–217 (28.03.[1918], 29.03.[1918], 30.03.[1918]), p. 242 (13.05.1918).

26 See *Taccuini*, p. 114 (16.09.[1917]): "Le bombarde [...] sono dei membri virili in erezione [...] bombarde che sparano erette come membri virili".

Marinetti dictated *How to Seduce Women* to his Futurist friend Bruno Corra in September 1916, shortly before his return to the front. The draft was corrected in the military hospital of Udine and included an ironic dedication to the Austrian grenade that wounded him in May 1917. The first edition of the manual appeared in Florence in September 1917,²⁷ where it unleashed a lively discussion on the pages of *L'Italia futurista*. The work was structured around Marinetti's exuberant artist-soldier personality. On a formal level, the autobiographical account operates with rather limited linguistic experimentalism. The regular use of punctuation and sentence structure is typical of pamphlet literature, although there is also an antithetic tendency in the metaphoric use of language.²⁸ Thematically, the book deals with Marinetti, the picaresque seducer, and contains rather contradictory views of the female sex. At the centre of the manual is an authentic, telluric, Futurist man with a knack for understanding women's animalistic, sensual, instinctive and ever-changing nature.²⁹ This being said, the description of the seduction ritual as a 'tug of war' between the two sexes perpetuates a tendency towards typification and generalization of women as eternally unfaithful creatures, with a tendency towards belittling her image and proposing theories with embarrassingly chauvinist overtones.³⁰ On the other hand, Marinetti's recognition, without any moral hesitation or reservation, of the – real or presumed – female infidelity could also turn into its exact opposite. The nonchalant celebration of infidelity presents itself as an emblematic search of the eternal feminine for a stimulant of feelings and sensations which, in turn, destroys all notions of an 'ideal woman' and substitutes constancy with the principle of variety.³¹

Although *How to Seduce Women* was a text born out of the experience of the First World War, Marinetti's ultimate aim was to fight an ideological, social and symbolic battle for women's emancipation from the "gabbiasocietà" (fetters of bourgeois society, *Come si seducono*, p. 25), from notions of "pudore" (common decency, *Come si seducono*, p. 26) and from the institution of marriage. As such, it tied in with his well-known mani-

27 See Marinetti: *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 8, 10 and 21; *Taccuini*, pp. 43–44 and 100 (14.05.[1917]); Salaris: *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, pp. 166–167.

28 See, in particular, *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 49–57.

29 See *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 23 and 74–75.

30 See, above all, *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 29–34, 43–57 and 79–94. For an analysis of the polemics in *L'Italia futurista* regarding the female question – ranging from antifeminist positions to those looking for sexual equality – see *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 111–123, and Salaris: *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*, pp. 168–180.

31 See in particular *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 24–27 and p. 46 and Guerri: *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, pp. 117–129.

festos, *Against Marriage* and *Against the Papacy and the Catholic Mentality, Repositories of Every Kind of Traditionalism*.³² Marinetti's book attacked the female models promoted by Antonio Fogazzaro (1842–1911) and Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), criticized the archetypal jealousy of the Italian male³³ and sought to liberate love³⁴ from the 'past-loving' models and aesthetic canons of feminine beauty.³⁵ In its stead, Marinetti advocated a new and dynamic model that exalted women as "the greatest asset of humanity because they are more elastic, malleable, spirited, sensitive, flexible and volatile" (*Come si seducono*, pp. 25–26).³⁶

This last consideration needs to be seen in the context of Marinetti's trust in industrial and technological progress.³⁷ His optimistic vision of a fusion of man and machine was related to his militarist-imperialist-expansionist position which, within the framework of an aestheticization of war, assigned to Italian women a prominent function in the process of rejuvenating a sclerotic, hyper-sophisticated, Western civilization by means of "divine speed" (*Come si seducono*, p. 40).

In anticipation of analogous themes emerging in Marinetti's subsequent work, *L'alcova d'acciaio* (The Alcove Made of Steel, 1921), it is worth noting that the myth of speed, embodied by the car (*Come si seducono*, p. 51) and the train (*Come si seducono*, p. 52), shows a dual aspect in as much as it presents itself both as an acceleration of time and a compression of space. The intense excitement caused by danger and speed also led to a concentration and reinforcement of erotic pleasures. This dual conception was developed by Marinetti largely under the determining influence of Bergson's vitalism³⁸ and projected onto a super-temporal plane dominated by the "rhythm of the infinite, the continuous and the eternal" (*Come si seducono*, p. 51). All of this contributed towards a transformation of man's very essence, presented as an anthropological mutation³⁹ consistent with, as we shall see, the metamorphosis of soldiers into warriors in Ernst Jünger's publications.

It was with this logic in mind that Marinetti concluded his manual with an appeal to women to fall in love with the "glorious crippled sol-

32 They were published in *Roma futurista* (25 May 1919) and *L'ardito* (8 June 1919). For an English translation see *Critical Writings*, pp. 309–312 and 323–327.

33 See *Come si seducono le donne*, p. 75.

34 See *Come si seducono le donne*, p. 110.

35 See *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 17, 22 and 101.

36 See also *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 97–98.

37 See Allegri, Mario: "Tra futurismo ed espressionismo: Su una lettera di Doebelin a Marinetti", pp. 19–55. Here, above all, pp. 35–37 and 46–47.

38 See Salaris: *Arte e vita futurista*, in particular pp. 77, 105, 112–113 and 160–211.

39 See *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 40–41.

diers” (*Come si seducono*, p. 101), to climb, literally, into the trenches⁴⁰ and to experience the cleansing power of “our great hygienic war” (*Come si seducono*, p. 98). The anti-romantic model made up of the “asymmetric dynamic of the alpine soldier sculpted and carved in the furnace of war” (*Come si seducono*, p. 101) constitutes the basis of that heroic “mechanical war” (*Come si seducono*, p. 102) which, in the end, is summed up in the image of the Extended Futurist Man, the perfect fusion of flesh and steel.⁴¹

From ‘elastic discipline’ to ‘Futurist democracy’

The progressive configuration of the new ‘race’ of Futurist *Arditi*, laid out by Marinetti in his war notebooks and in many articles published in *L’ardito*, later collected in *Democrazia futurista: Dinamismo politico* (1919), revolved around the yearning for danger and death in battle and the more general framework of an increasingly brutal, mechanized war.⁴² The new élite soldier found himself in a position where he was granted a high degree of freedom of action but was still subjected to the “soldier’s hard duty”⁴³ (*Taccuini* 15.09.[1918], p. 352). This conflict was ‘resolved’ on an aesthetic level through the avant-garde storm trooper’s “elastic discipline” (*Taccuini* 349 [15 September 1918]).

The *Arditi* despise networks and military discipline, those shackles imposed by academic strategy and Teutonic science. Everything they do is spontaneous, especially their dedication to a final victory. They are Futurists, for they have no truck with the Roman “reinforcements” deployed throughout history, nor do they require scientifically planned preparatory bombardments. They take the enemy trench (shaped like a potbellied banker) by surprise; they break through it, empty it, and then, with one bound, head for Trieste.⁴⁴

40 See *Come si seducono le donne*, p. 103.

41 See *Come si seducono le donne*, pp. 102–103. Already in *We Renounce Our Symbolist Masters, the Last of All Lovers of the Moonlight* he spoke of “extended man who fuses with iron, who feeds upon electricity and understands nothing beyond the desire for danger and day-to-day heroism” (*Critical Writings*, p. 44). Later, this became the topic of his manifesto, *Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine* in the collection, *Guerra sola igiene del mondo* (1915).

42 See *Taccuini*, p. 131 (26.09.[1917]). Marinetti’s embrace of *Arditism* in a political and anthropological sense has been chronicled in Berghaus: *Futurism and Politics*, pp. 92–171. The *Manifesto of the Futurist Political Party* had a decisive influence on the *Arditi*’s political programme, outlined by the Futurist Mario Carli, who also penned a *Manifesto of the Futurist Ardito*.

43 Italics in the original.

44 “Contro il Papato e la mentalità cattolica, serbatoi di ogni passatismo.” *Teoria e invenzi-*



Fig. 1: Marinetti and other volunteers of the Battaglione Lombardo Volontari Ciclisti Automobilisti (1915).

This Futurist “elastic discipline” allowed the *Ardito* to act effectively and flexibly in a military conflict increasingly determined by aeroplanes and armoured cars.⁴⁵ Drawing on his concept of a Futurist religion of speed,⁴⁶ Marinetti focussed his attention on the ‘instruments’ used to dynamize the war, and how this ‘speed up’ could find reflection in a Futurist machine aesthetic. The latter, as we shall see, found one of its most accomplished expression in the ‘romanzo vissuto’ (lived novel), *The Alcove Made of Steel*.

In his war diaries, Marinetti established a tight interdependence between “industrial mobilization and [...] military mobilization” (*Taccuini* 431 [31 August – 1 September 1919]). This anticipated an important theme in one of Ernst Jünger’s best known works, *Die totale Mobilmachung* (Total Mobilization, 1930). In many ways, it resembled the national-revolutionary, anticlerical programme of the *Manifesto del Partito Futurista Italiano* (Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Political Party), published in

one futurista, p. 387; “Against the Papacy and the Catholic Mentality.” *Critical Writings*, pp. 326–327.

45 See *Taccuini*, p. 226 (23.04.[1918]), p. 352 (15.09.[1918]), pp. 360–361 (02.10.[1918]), p. 383 (05.11.[1918], p. 489 (03.08.[1920])). See also Salaris: *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, p. 168.

46 See *Taccuini*, p. 225 (23.04.[1918]) and p. 288 (22.07.[1918]). The manifesto, *The New Ethical Religion of Speed*, was published in *L’Italia futurista* on 1 June 1916.

the last issue of *L'Italia futurista* (11 February 1918).⁴⁷ In the wake of his readings of Marx and Mazzini, and after reconsidering the rapport between State, homeland and Nation,⁴⁸ this programme⁴⁹ sought to attract war veterans, young women and, in general, the proletarian masses with the aim of winning them over for a long-needed modernization of Italian society. Above all, it aspired for a more equal distribution of wealth within the renewed community. Although based on a capitalist industrial system, this “Futurist Democracy” was to be capable of reappropriating the ethical and social value of work⁵⁰ and to escape the capitalist logic of pure profit maximization.

This political project indicated a clear change of direction for Futurism, which from then on became a political, and not just an aesthetic, movement. In the course of summer / winter 1918, Marinetti and Mussolini joined forces and collaborated in the setting up of regional branches of the Futurist Political Party, supported by the Association of *Arditi*. This process culminated in the constitution of the *Fasci italiani di combattimento* (Italian Leagues of Combat) in Milan on 23 March 1919.⁵¹ However, when Marinetti realized that Mussolini was turning into a reactionary politician and his *Fasci di combattimento* progressively and de facto imposed themselves on the Futurist Political Party, Marinetti, the Futurist artist and ‘extremist’,⁵² left the central committee of the *Fasci* (29 May 1920) and adopted positions that were ever more Utopian and anarchic.⁵³

47 See *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, pp. 153–158. Here, in particular, p. 155. For an English translation see *Collected Writings*, pp. 271–276.

48 See *Taccuini*, pp. 237–238 (07.05.[1918], 08.05.[1918] and 10.05.[1918]) and p. 577, footnote 77. These notes were published in *Roma futurista*, 11 May 1919 and *Democrazia futurista* (1919). English translations in *Critical Writings*, pp. 313–316.

49 It was later explained more thoroughly in a series of essays for *L'ardito* and *Roma futurista* and collectively published in *Democrazia futurista: Dinamismo politico* (Futurist Democracy: Political Dynamism, 1919). See *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, pp. 345–469.

50 See *Taccuini*, pp. 370–371 (13.10.[1918]).

51 This process has been summarized, and complemented by a translation of relevant documents, in the chapter “The Postwar Political Battle, 1918–23” in *Critical Writings*, pp. 267–363. It is worth noting that the Association’s first cell was set up in Marinetti’s apartment in Milan on 19 January 1919.

52 See pp. 284–287 (18.07.[1918], 19.07.[1918] and 20.07.[1918]), p. 392 (28.11.[1918]-05.12.[1918]), p. 405 (December 1918-January 1919), p. 406 (December 1918-January 1919), p. 409 (23.03.[1919] and 24.03.[1919]), p. 422 (17.07.1919)), p. 462 (15.12.[1919]), pp. 486–487 (20.05.[1920], 23.05.[1920] and 24.05.[1920]), p. 494 (06.09.1920).

53 See Gentile, Emilio: “La politica di Marinetti”, pp. 415–438.

The Alcove Made of Steel (1921):

The mechanical and metaphysical face of the First World War

The Alcove Made of Steel was composed and published in the course of events that brought the First World War to a close. These ranged from the Italian struggle against the Austrian offensive of June 1918 to the Italian counteroffensive of October/November 1918. The title of the work referred to the steel-armoured car number 74, which Marinetti became responsible for during the final phase of the conflict, and which he personified as a woman and a machine-gun.⁵⁴ On a formal level, the text shows few signs of linguistic experimentalism compared to, for example, the ‘explosive novel’ *8 anime in una bomba* (8 Souls within One Bomb, 1919), which was also the product of a literary reworking of war experiences as noted in Marinetti’s diaries. In *The Alcove Made of Steel*, events were inserted into a framework of secularized, esoteric-religious themes, which seem to re-surface from Marinetti’s early literary production. In this way, a division was generated in the text between two visions: war as a modern technological conflict,⁵⁵ with its correlated relative horror,⁵⁶ and a primordial ‘religious’ clash⁵⁷ with the hated enemy. As will be discussed below, the same division can be found in certain texts by Ernst Jünger that fused myth and modernity, represented modern warfare as a gigantic machine and, at the same time, projected it onto a higher, platonic, metaphysical level. In a similar way, the Futurist author acted as a poet-prophet who, by employing Bergson’s notion of ‘duration’, intuited the “secret embrace of past and future” so that he could “perceive the presence of life lived which envelops every combatant in the moment of battle.”⁵⁸ In this situation of battle, the life of each soldier was nothing but a small particle of an enormous, metaphysical mechanism:

The great wheel of battle. The mystery enthral me, the prophecy gives me courage. Each of the wheels is formed and connected to countless small wheels. The more of these little, delicate, fitting wheels there are, the more powerful the aura of the global wheel engulfs the compact core. When it is easy to discern and count the secondary wheels that drive on the combatant, this combatant shows a most fragile and exposed core. That is why the accumulation of lived sensibility

54 See *Taccuini*, pp. 288–289 (23.07.[1918] and 24.07.[1918]), p. 313 (24.08.[1918]), p. 318 (26.08.[1918]).

55 See *Alcova d'acciaio*, p. 24, p. 69, pp. 118–125, pp. 145–146.

56 See *Alcova d'acciaio*, p. 81, p. 149, p. 211.

57 See *Alcova d'acciaio*, pp. 62–64, p. 78, pp. 169–170.

58 “Intuisco così la presenza della vita vissuta che avviluppa ogni combattente al momento della battaglia [e il] segreto amplesso del passato e del futuro”. *Alcova d'acciaio*, pp. 26–27.

sways elastically and connects itself to other auras, thus protecting him a little, or not at all. (*Alcova*, p. 27).

On the basis of this double vision – technological and metaphysical – the representation of the steel-plated car 74 operates within the already noted Futurist fusion of art and life in a “mechanical theatre that transforms devastation into gestures of beauty, heroism and unexpected action”.⁵⁹ The “alcove” is dominated by its “heart-engine” (*Alcova*, p. 53) and by the eroticism of its feminine forms. Both are to be governed by the driver’s (i.e. Marinetti’s) will and by his desire for intoxicating speed.⁶⁰ This vision is then applied to the erotic dimension with the rigorous logic of “mechanized love” (*Alcova*, p. 9).⁶¹

Ernst Jünger’s original war diaries

Ernst Jünger’s original war diaries, recently edited in an annotated, although not historical-critical, facsimile edition,⁶² consists of sixteen notebooks covering the period 30 December 1914 to 10 August 1918,⁶³ during which Jünger fought as a volunteer on the western front. Their pre-literary status constitutes the basis of Jünger’s best-known published text, *The Storm of Steel*, whose constant reworking is borne out by the existence of seven relative versions (1920, 1922, 1924, 1934, 1935, 1961, 1981).⁶⁴ My analysis of Jünger’s original war diaries will focus here on four aspects: 1) style, 2) aims, 3) psychological value and 4) perceptive process.

My first observation concerns the style of Jünger’s writing. His prose has generally a lively and concise, ‘realistic’, ‘quotidian’ and objective character, in which simple syntactic constructions predominate. Occasionally, the text is enriched with more elaborate phrases and drawings that illustrate and comment on the events depicted. Thus, they form a sort of ‘col-

59 Guerri: *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, p. 135.

60 See *Alcova d'acciaio*, pp. 52–55, 66, 73, 85–86, 132–133, 166, 197–198 and 249–252.

61 See also *Alcova d'acciaio*, pp. 60–61, 87 and 183–185.

62 See *Kriegstagebuch*. For considerations relative to Jünger’s diaries, see Kiesel: “Ernst Jünger im Ersten Weltkrieg: Übersicht und Dokumentation”, pp. 596–647. These diaries are often referred to as *Urtagebücher* (original diaries) to distinguish them from the semi-fictional account in *The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front*.

63 See *Kriegstagebücher 1 – 14b + Fauna coleopterologica douchyensis*, 16 voll. These original manuscripts are preserved in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach as part of the Ernst Jünger bequest.

64 See Kunicki: *Projektionen des Geschichtlichen: Ernst Jüngers Arbeit an den Fassungen von “In Stahlgewittern”*.



Fig. 2: Ernst Jünger (1920).

lage', similar to those produced by Marinetti in his notebooks. The narrative strategies which Jünger employed in his original diaries were modelled on German adventure and war novels from the nineteenth century, from amongst which the popular writings of Karl May (1842–1912) stand out.⁶⁵ In contradistinction to the original diaries, Jünger's semi-fictional elaborations in the seven published versions contain far more stylized and metaphorical levels.

⁶⁵ Karl May wrote many fanciful adventure novels set in the Middle East (the six-volume *Orient Cycle*, 1892), the American Wild-West (the *Winnetou-Trilogy*, 1893) or North Africa (the *Mahdi-Trilogy*, 1896). He was particularly well-loved by the young German generation at the beginning of the twentieth century.

My second comment regards the fact that, from the very beginning, Jünger's original diaries demonstrate a need to render the experiences he was living through, together with the relative psychic processes, understandable to those who would be his potential readers. This means that these notes were penned with the aim of being published at a later stage, an aim which Jünger pursued by presenting the unforgettable, both horrifying and fascinating, aspects of the conflict without taking recourse to any filters.⁶⁶ The young 'soldier-writer' Ernst Jünger seems to have designed his diary project in a manner that it would explain his firm will to escape from the rational, bourgeois world of scholastic institutions and demonstrate the thrill of adventure experienced both in erotic enterprises⁶⁷ and, above all, in mortal combats. This resolve was captured in his phrase, "Mich reizt die wilde Schönheit der Gefahr" (I am attracted by the savage beauty of danger; *Kriegstagebuch* 80 [26 January 1916]).

Thirdly, the daily practice of writing had a stabilizing psychological function of giving vent to pent-up emotions caused by what Jünger had lived through in his diurnal military service, characterized either by the monotony of a 'war of position'⁶⁸ or the sudden eruptions of bloody events.⁶⁹ This practice of detached note keeping⁷⁰ may explain why Jünger's war diaries in their totality became as much an 'adventure book' as a 'war diary'.

Finally and fourthly, and in line with what has been observed above, Jünger's original diaries indicate that the author was already making a distinction in his mind between the soldier's active self and the writer's contemplative self. The same discontinuity can be found in his perception of life in and outside of the trenches.

66 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 34 (25.04.[19]15), pp. 73–75 (10.1.[19]16), p. 271 (19.06.[19]17).

67 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 64 (08.12.[19]15 and 09.12.[19]15), p. 100 (17.04.[19]16), p. 103 (30.04.[19]16), pp. 105–106 (14.05.[19]16), pp. 108–110 (21.05.[19]16), p. 112 (05.06.[19]16), p. 281 (23.07.[19]17), pp. 498–499 and pp. 504–508.

68 See *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 53–55 (23.10.[19]15).

69 See the following notes: *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 42 (25.09.[19]15), pp. 69–72 (28.12.[19]15), p. 277 (12.07.[19]17) and pp. 387–395 (22.03.[19]18).

70 See *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 9–10 (04.01.[19]15), p. 257 (20.05.[19]17), p. 306 (14.08.[19]17), p. 387 (21.03.[19]18), p. 390 (22.03.[19]18).

‘Documentary style’ and narrative ‘objectivity’ in Jünger’s
Storm of Steel

From the first published edition of the elaborated notebooks, *The Storm of Steel*, onwards, Jünger consciously developed, along the lines of a personal report, an organic, progressively more refined, literary ‘product’. He made a *formal* choice of presenting his meticulous, incessant search for sophisticated forms of expression as a correlate to an existence ‘as hard as steel’ in an era dominated by modern technology. The very title of the work, together with the numerous comparisons and metaphors used in the text, was designed to present the war as a volcanic eruption or an optical-acoustic spectacle. On the other hand, it is equally true to say that the author considered his semi-fictional war diary as a literary product that was substantially different from the much more daring forms of experimentation in the contemporary avant-garde, of which Marinetti’s war diary was a typical example.⁷¹

The detachment and objectivity with which Jünger offered in *The Storm of Steel* a first-person account of the brutal front-line events has contributed to a passionate debate among his admirers and detractors on the value and reputation of this *Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer*, which some scholars consider to be an anticipation of the ‘documentary style’ of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity⁷²), placed within a well-defined ‘aesthetic of terror’. Jünger’s style developed primarily through a precise perception of events, already present in embryonic form in his *Urtagebücher*. With penetrating self-criticism and mathematical precision, Jünger recorded the soldier’s emotions when faced with the horrors of war. These ‘psychic mechanisms’ were related to the intensifying mechanization of life in general and presented with utmost clarity and brutal immediacy.⁷³ In a sense, Jünger concluded with logical rigour his attempt to illustrate by means of art the fusion of the soldier’s inner self to a kind of mechanical device. In this way, his elaborated notebooks assumed an important position in the history of literary modernism, in as much as its revolutionary, experimental style places it in the vicinity of works of the avant-gardes mentioned above.

71 Futurism and Expressionism were the two main avant-garde currents discussed in Germany at the time. See Allegri: “Tra futurismo ed espressionismo.”

72 *Neue Sachlichkeit* was a counter-movement to Expressionism and was part of the same *rappel à l’ordre* that brought about the Novecento movement in Italy.

73 See Bohrer: *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens: Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk*, pp. 146–149.

Jünger's objective, reportage-like style has often detracted from the previously mentioned division between Jünger, the volunteer soldier, and Jünger, the observer. Jünger's diary does not only describe but also *interpret* the events in the theatre of war. His narrative in *The Storm of Steel* consciously elaborated the annotations made in the sixteen original war diaries, and used them as a template to draw on for an infinite number of variations and reworkings. What on first sight may read like a 'diary' was in fact an anything-but-impartial literary creation. Whereas the *Urtagebücher* contain many unadulterated recordings of day-to-day events, the *Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (i.e. the semi-fictional *Storm of Steel*) elaborates, re-organizes, extends and fleshes out the original notes into a coherent, literary whole. The book's chronological disposition ("Vom täglichen Stellungskampf. Der Auftakt zur Somme-Offensive. Guillemont. Am St. Pierre-Vaast. Der Somme-Rückzug" ... etc.) turned every chapter into a paradigm of various forms of war: from the monotony of the 'war of position', through the phases of the 'war of materials', to the assault stages and, finally, the open-field battle.

Authorship and heroic activism: Aesthetic reappropriation of the 'war of materials'

Picking up on what was said above regarding Jünger's experimental aesthetics, it is easier now to understand the motives that led the writer-soldier to develop a deliberately 'instrumental' strategy for his use of the original notebook material, especially when we consider the ultimate objective that Jünger had in mind: the constant and determined 'gesture' of reassuming control over his own literary production.⁷⁴

Relating these questions of authorship to my analysis of *The Storm of Steel*, it follows that Jünger tried to remain faithful to the task which he had apparently set himself in the original diaries, that is: to provide an account, and not an interpretation, of his experiences in the First World War.⁷⁵ He, therefore, completely avoided the prophetic question of why men make war⁷⁶ and gave the text that peculiar ideological vagueness

74 See Jünger: "Auf eigenen Spuren", pp. 465–479; here p. 475.

75 See the annotations contained in *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 402–403, which were not attached to the immediately preceding diary notes (17.06.[19]18, p. 402); or pp. 432–434, which were separate from the immediately preceding diary notes (10.08.[19]18, p. 431) and were written between November 1918 and spring of 1919. See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 594, footnote 56; *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. VII–VIII.

76 See *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. 91–92 and *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 148–149 (03.07.[19]16).

which, as we shall see, was abandoned in the 1924 version. Finally, he refrained from addressing the shock effects of the war and resorted to ‘self-censorship’ as a means of psychological self-defence. In fact, without this anticipating protective mechanism, his desperate need to detect meaning in the horror of war would probably have forced him to revisit the conflict and condemn its brutality.⁷⁷

It is at this point that Jünger performed, in *The Storm of Steel*, a decisive step ahead and offered us an aesthetic-interpretative lever to reconstruct the genesis and progressive maturing of the refined literary ‘product’ which took as its starting point the original war notebooks. Whenever Jünger presented himself as a potential military hero,⁷⁸ he was driven by an insuppressible urge towards activism. In the face of the overwhelming force of technology in what he called “the most prosaic of wars” (*Stahlgewitter/1*, p. 120), Jünger did his utmost to remain an “individual” (*Stahlgewitter/1*, p. 133). This, in turn, led him to an aesthetic transfiguration of the epic danger faced by the romantic hero⁷⁹ and a mystification that was later perfected through the soldier’s adherence to the principles of duty and honour, an attraction to danger and other sensations resembling those provided by sport.⁸⁰ Thereby, the writer revealed his tendency to treat battle as a value in itself.⁸¹

The soldier is presented as someone who, when called upon by a modern, culturally-refined nation to fight on the battlefield, looks back over thousands of years of civilization to rediscover that elementary state of mind which once inspired primitive man, a man who was at the same time hunter and prey.⁸² Warfare brings out in man his pre-rational, animal nature, since it is in battle that he tears the veil that separates socially acceptable morals from the primeval levels of ‘Life’. The elementary impulse to destruction dealt with here was related to an aestheticism that was central to Jünger’s description of the soldier’s conscious regression towards a state of (civilized) beast. In all of this, Nietzsche’s *Wille zur Macht* – the “will to power” meant here as the incessant struggle between opposing

77 A typical example of this procedure can be seen in a significant passage of the original diaries, *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 62–63 (01.12.[19]15), which was later eliminated in the relative section of the first edited version of *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 27.

78 See the following notes in *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 43 (25.09.[19]15), p. 101 (20.04.[19]16), p. 202 (12.11.[19]16), p. 265 (13.06.[19]17), p. 271 (19.06.[19]17), p. 344 (01.12.[19]17), p. 425 (25.08.[19]18).

79 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 17, p. 32, p. 84, p. 157, p. 162 and p. 174.

80 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 48; *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 386 (21.03.[19]18).

81 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 79. See also *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 23, p. 69 and above all p. 151.

82 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 36; *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 269–270 (19.06.[19]17), p. 351 (01.12.[19]17).

forces⁸³ – and the figure of the *Übermensch* (Superman) played a central rôle. In his early literary elaborations of his war experiences, Jünger saw in the combatant-warrior a counterpart to the worker.⁸⁴ In a technologically based civilization, this figure is capable of overcoming the supremacy of matter and to ‘immunize himself’ in the struggle against the experience of pain.⁸⁵ This operation is rendered possible through referral to the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, both in terms of destroying bourgeois structures of power and in pushing personal limits to an extreme.⁸⁶

It is in this perspective that Jünger’s naïve attitude towards technology should be understood. In particular, the increasingly central rôle played by the *Materialschlacht* (war of materials) in *The Storm of Steel* renders undeniable the real nature and power of military technology, which Jünger interpreted as a kind of mechanical process of total and absolute labour. The war of materials with its modern weapons of destruction, first experienced in Verdun, possessed an impersonal, abstract and mechanistic character that reduced the soldier to a ‘number’, to being a mere ‘object’ (*Stahlgewitter/1*, p. 169). In Jünger’s account, the individual risks getting swallowed up in the devastating dynamic of the conflict and therefore has to ‘contain’ the danger, or shift it in a positive direction so that in the end this terrible *Nervenprobe* (Trial of Nerves) can be overcome (*Stahlgewitter/1*, p. 64). The model-figure of the frontline soldier is meant to walk unharmed through the heat of the conflict. For this reason, Jünger presented modern warfare in the manner of ‘doing a job’ in the ‘trade of destruction’.⁸⁷ War demonstrates the banality and meaninglessness of concepts such as ‘life’ and ‘death’; on the other hand, it also reveals possibilities of overcoming the horrors of war by immunizing oneself, in a show of monstrous indifference,⁸⁸ against pain⁸⁹ and suffering.⁹⁰

In view of the fact that the search for meaning in war is already contained in the war itself, or rather in that annihilating dynamic which

83 See Müller-Lauter: *Volontà di potenza e nichilismo: Nietzsche e Heidegger*, p. 45.

84 See Jünger’s essay, *Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt* (The Worker: Domination and Form, 1932), pp. 9–317.

85 As later fully illustrated in the essay *Über den Schmerz* (On Pain, 1934), pp. 143–191.

86 See Meyer: *Ernst Jünger*, pp. 44–48 and Wilczek: *Nihilistische Lektüre des Zeitalters. Ernst Jüngers Nietzsche-Rezeption*, p. 24, pp. 40–42 and pp. 45–48.

87 See *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. 14–15 and p. 124; *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 107–108 (19.05.[19]16), p. 177 (28.08.[19]16), p. 380 (21.03.[19]18).

88 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 49 and *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 48 (08.10.[19]15), p. 143 (29.06.[19]16), p. 201 (12.11.[19]16), pp. 233–234 (13.04.[19]17), p. 277 (12.07.[19]17), p. 391 (22.03.[19]18).

89 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 64 and *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 49 (13.10.[19]15), p. 430 (25.08.[19]18).

90 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 23.

Jünger, the author-soldier, did not want to deny, it was even more urgent for him to reappropriate his material and, at the same time, to transcend it by means of art. Thereby, any form of moral reservation could be eradicated.⁹¹ The frontline landscape was transfigured into an “elementary” zone crossed by “force fields” fraught with danger, with the unexpected and the extraordinary, all of which imbued with a “mysterious will” (*einem rätselhaften Willen*) (*Stahlgewitter/1*, p. 65).

In this context, it is particularly interesting to analyse Jünger’s predilection for the new means of military transportation. Aeroplanes and tanks were emblematic technologies that could bring movement into a progressively static conflict.⁹² They were symbolic of a new era marked by the spirit of the machine,⁹³ which Jünger developed further in his subsequent reworking of the diaries, *Feuer und Blut* (Fire and Blood, 1925) and *Das Wäldchen 125* (Copse 125, 1925), in which he presented three variations of the new type of warrior: the aviator, the tank driver and the commander of technologically drilled assault troops.⁹⁴

On the one hand, Jünger depicted war technology as a ‘work process’; on the other hand he interpreted it as a component of Nature. The novelty of his aesthetics of the machine was rooted in his attempt to overcome the antagonism of Nature and technology by re-naturalizing the machine and to give it socio-political value. This tied in with his adoption of a more nationalist position in 1923, which I shall deal with shortly, and the new rapport between action (*Tat*) and literature (*Literatur*). Jünger’s concept was intimately linked to the notion of ‘national energy’ as developed by Maurice Barrès (1862–1923).⁹⁵ This aesthetic programme focussed on the figure of the aviator, who lives in a sublime symbiosis with his machine,⁹⁶ and presents his flying machine as if it were “a butterfly gracefully flutter-

91 See *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. 69–71 and pp. 123–124; *Kriegstagebuch*, pp. 65–67 (12.12. [19]15).

92 On aeroplanes, see *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 14 (22.01. [19]15), p. 19 (15.04. [19]15), p. 44 (26.09. [19]15), p. 88 (13.02. [19]16), pp. 97–98 (09.04. [19]16), p. 104 (10.05. [19]16), p. 112 (05.06. [19]16), p. 115 (no date), p. 145 (01.07. [19]16), p. 205 (25.11. [19]16), p. 234 (13.04. [19]17), p. 241 (23.04. [19]17), p. 277 (12.07. [19]17), pp. 277–280 (16.07. [19]17), p. 314 (04.09. [19]17), p. 342 (30.11. [19]17), p. 365 (06.02. [19]18), pp. 420–421 (29.08. [19]18). On tanks, see, above all, *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 339 (19.11. [19]17), pp. 402–403 (17.06. [19]18), p. 423 (25.08. [19]18).

93 See *Das Wäldchen 125*, p. 115 and *Feuer und Blut: Ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer großen Schlacht*, 1st edn 1925, pp. 31–32.

94 See *Das Wäldchen 125*, p. 3 and 69.

95 See Aubertin: “Ernst Jünger et Maurice Barrès”, pp. 141–153, in particular pp. 151–152.

96 See *Das Wäldchen 125*, pp. 8, 62 and 242 and *Feuer und Blut*, pp. 68–69.

ing between the flowers of fire".⁹⁷ Jünger followed here a classical pattern of interpretation that continually defers the chthonic dimension of the 'war of materials' to a higher, transcendent, 'aerial' dimension. This culminates in the purism of an absolute Will to Power that transcends time and space and is directed by the noble elegance of the aviator's actions, in a mystical fusion of 'heart' and 'brain', of 'passion' and 'muscles'.⁹⁸ Thanks to this, the pilots were presented as young men who were "reinforcing life through the machine"; they were modern dandies living under the "high tension of action", permanently engaged in a "game of life and death" as if war was a 'sporting', albeit destructive, exploit.⁹⁹

The idea of 'homeland' and 'nation' in the transition
from the original diaries to the first (1920)
and the third (1924) edition of *The Storm of Steel*

The facsimile edition of Jünger's war notebooks shows clearly that the religious and nationalist pathos that characterizes the third edition (1924) of *The Storm of Steel* was only a later accretion. This becomes particularly obvious in diary *14 b*. This separate and undated passage¹⁰⁰ may be placed into the period between 9 November 1918 and the spring of 1919 and demonstrates that Jünger's volunteering for military service was not simply caused by a thirst for adventure,¹⁰¹ but also by a rather generic 'sense of national identity', an indelible Prussian sense of duty¹⁰² and also a reactionary and pro-monarchic position.¹⁰³

Between the end of 1918 and January 1920, Jünger, the war veteran, dedicated himself to writing the first version of *The Storm of Steel*, which was published at his own expense in October 1920. In the chaotic post-war period before the establishment of the Weimar Republic, Jünger went through a deep crisis, brought about by his contradictory attitude towards

97 "... das wie ein zierlicher Schmetterling zwischen den Feuerblumen schwebt." *Das Wäldchen* 125, p. 9. See also p. 128 and *Feuer und Blut*, pp. 22–23 and 67.

98 See *Das Wäldchen* 125, p. 80.

99 See *Das Wäldchen* 125, pp. 51, 56–57, 79, 102, 127 and 242–245, and *Feuer und Blut*, pp. 47–48, 51, 54–55, 60 and 113–114.

100 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 431.

101 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 12 (08.01.[19]15), p. 47 (06.10.[19]15), pp. 95–96 (29.03.[19]16), p. 102 (25.04.[19]16), p. 208 (12.12. [19]16).

102 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 121 (21.06.[19]16), p. 376 (21.03.[19]18), p. 386 (21.03. [19]18), p. 433 (10.08.[19]18).

103 See *Kriegstagebuch*, p. 433 (10.08.[19]18), p. 594, footnote 56 and p. 629. The corresponding section in the edited version is in *In Stahlgewittern*, p. VIII.

the army.¹⁰⁴ Jünger had to make a transition from his rôle of soldier-hero to that of soldier-official within the German armed forces, dramatically reduced due to the Treaty of Versailles. Up until the summer/autumn of 1923, he was undecided about whether he should opt for the security of a prestigious, well-paid, but monotonous career of a bureaucrat, or for the uncertain yet exciting vocation of a writer.¹⁰⁵ The first edition of *The Storm of Steel* shows the author's belief that the First World War had to be considered a milestone in the history of humanity. His saying, "Der Krieg ist der Vater aller Dinge" (War is the father of all things, *Stahlgewitter*/1, p. VIII), recalls a well-known fragment of Heraclitus.¹⁰⁶ Jünger used this concept as a cosmic model for interpreting everything that exists in an ultimate pursuit of trying to fuse myth and modernity.¹⁰⁷ Jünger examined the symbolic notions of 'homeland' and 'honour', both products of a heroic-patriotic conception of war as propagated by the Wilhelmine State. At the same time, he emphasized a still traditional, non-pragmatic idea of 'nation', linked to the German fatherland (*Heimat*) and the idea of "Germany's greatness" (*Deutschlands Größe*).¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, in the first edition of *The Storm of Steel* there were signs of a 'veteran's syndrome',¹⁰⁹ of a crack that had opened up between Jünger, the soldier, and the 'Weimar system',¹¹⁰ a conflict that became particularly evident after his nationalist turn of 1923.

The third version (1924) of *The Storm of Steel* presents a long, significant introduction,¹¹¹ in which Jünger expressed an explicit nationalist creed that was linked to his new conception of writing. In the dialectic relation between action and literature ("Tat und Literatur", *Stahlgewitter*/3, p. XIII), the first is inconceivable without the second; it has to translate itself into the second and vice versa. Jünger's appeal to a new and more daring German youth ("eine neue und kühnere Jugend", *Stahlgewitter*/3, p. XIV) was not just rooted in his memories of the First World War or a *völkisch* traditionalism; he wanted to exhort young men to convert memo-

104 His essay, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Struggle as Inner Experience, 1922) and his incomplete novel *Sturm* (Storm, 1923) are an indirect testimony of this crisis.

105 See Schwilk: *Ernst Jünger: Ein Jahrhundertleben. Die Biographie*, pp. 186–187 and pp. 200–282.

106 "War is the father of all and king of all, who manifested some as gods and some as men, who made some slaves and some freemen." Fragment 22B53 in Herman Diels, and Walter Kranz, eds.: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1972–1973.

107 See Rink: *Plutarch des Naturreichs: Ernst Jünger und die Antike*.

108 See *In Stahlgewittern*, pp. IX and 32–33.

109 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. 62 and p. 124.

110 See *In Stahlgewittern*, p. VII.

111 See Jünger: *In Stahlgewittern: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers*. 3rd edn 1924. [SG/3], pp. VII–XIV.

ry into action. They had to show that they could “substitute the pen with the sword, ink with blood, words with action, sensitivity with a spirit of sacrifice”.¹¹² In this way, Jünger appealed to a new generation of Germans to unite forces and prepare themselves for the “turmoil of new battles” so that “Germany may live and not perish” (“Deutschland lebt und Deutschland soll nicht untergehen!”, *Stahlgewitter*/3, p. 283).

Conclusion

To conclude this philological and thematic comparison of Marinetti and Jünger’s diaries from the First World War, it can be said that they both gave testimony to a fractured, optical-acoustic perception of the war. Marinetti’s text tied in with the aesthetic positions he had outlined in his Futurist manifestos and shows a more pronounced linguistic experimentalism based on the procedure of ‘analogical montage’ and the tendency to translate experiences into bold images, which could help the author to transcend the shocking reality of war. Jünger, on the other hand, used a more detached, documentary style to record everyday frontline reality and to effect the soldiers’ (usually unsuccessful) transformation of their traumatized inner-self into a sort of ‘mechanized tank’ when faced with the horrors of battle.

In Jünger’s literary works that were based on the original notebooks one can observe a similar aesthetic, heroic and activist interpretation of the ‘battle of materials’, used to overcome the traumas of war. Marinetti indulged in a *mise-en-scène* of a hypertrophic, erotic ‘self’ which, on one hand, returned to a Bergsonian vitalism and a Utopian fusion of man and machine, and on the other hand promoted a liberation of the female eros for the sake of rejuvenating Italian society. In Jünger’s works, instead, we can find the author’s Ego splitting up into a soldier engaged in action and a writer engaged in observation. Drawing on Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, Jünger aimed at a reappropriation of war as a ‘technical labour process’ and the re-naturalization of technology, as part of their final projection onto a higher metaphysical dimension.

The ideological implications of this aesthetic transcendence found in the diaries of both authors refer back to a shared fundamental patriotism. Through different time scales, modalities and historical-political contexts, both writers developed an aggressive, revolutionary nationalism which had

112 “Wir werden wieder die Feder durch das Schwert, die Tinte durch das Blut, das Wort durch die Tat, die Empfindsamkeit durch das Opfer ersetzen”. *Stahlgewitter*/3, p. XIV.

a purist and intellectual character and was uncompromisingly hostile to the dictates of everyday politics.

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