

Mending the World: Artists' Manifestos

Whoever shall set out to mend the world, and reform men's notions, as well as their manners, will certainly be the mark of much scandal and reproach.

Samuel Johnson¹

We are from the very heart and from the very first – *accustomed to lying*. Or, to express it more virtuously and hypocritically, in short more pleasantly: one is much more of an artist than one realizes.

Friedrich Nietzsche²

'On or about December 1910,' according to Virginia Woolf, 'human character changed.'³ Modernism took hold. Manifestoism can be dated a little more precisely. On or about 20 February 1909, when 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism' was splashed across the front page of *Le Figaro*, manifestoing began in earnest. That celebrated document not only announced a new movement but started a new trend, effectively a new genre, an adventure in artistic expression.

Once upon a time the manifesto was the province of kings and princes. In the seventeenth century it was hijacked by the Poor Oppressed People of England, also known as the Diggers and the Levellers, the radical dissenters of their day. In 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made it their own: *The Communist Manifesto* is the ur-manifesto of the modern period, 'the archetype of a century of modernist manifestos and movements to come'.⁴ *The Communist Manifesto* was first and foremost a political manifesto – a call to arms in the service of the revolution. That was the point. Thus the famous peroration:

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic

revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!⁵

Marx himself was deeply interested in ‘the poetry of the revolution’ – the forms and the phrases that would make it sing – so much so that the rhetorical strategy of *The Communist Manifesto* is as highly developed as the political analysis.⁶ As Marshall Berman underlined, ‘the *Manifesto* is remarkable for its imaginative power, its expression and grasp of the luminous and dreadful possibilities that pervade modern life. Along with everything else that it is, it is the first great modernist work of art.’⁷ Curiously enough, Bertolt Brecht wanted to make a ‘versification’ of it, in hexameters, just as Sergei Eisenstein wanted to make a film of *Das Kapital*. The original seems to be proof against adaptation, but the preamble is already a kind of prose poem, the dramatic opening positively theatrical. ‘A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German police spies.’⁸ Much of this is proleptic, or futuristic; in 1848 the spectre of Communism haunted the pages of the *Manifesto* rather more effectively than it did the chancelleries of Europe. Its time would come. The poetry of the revolution is unforgettable.

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.⁹

These strategies – these very phrases – would be recast and recycled time and again in the artists’ manifestos of the twentieth century. ‘Workers of the mind, unite!’ mimicked the author of the Futurist Manifesto. With artists, the life of the mind is a dazzling and voluptuous operation. A hundred years after Marx appeared in English translation, the architect Lebbeus Woods, a dedicated experimentalist, wrote a manifesto-versification of his own:

I declare war on all icons and finalities, on all histories that would chain me with my own falseness, my own pitiful fears.

I know only moments, and lifetimes that are as moments, and forms
 that appear with infinite strength, then 'melt into air'.
 I am an architect, a constructor of worlds, a sensualist who worships
 the flesh, the melody, a silhouette against the darkening sky. I cannot
 know your name. Nor can you know mine.
 Tomorrow, we begin together the construction of a city.¹⁰

Anyone who manifested after Marx had the spectre of that sainted
 longhair hovering somewhere near.

To manifesto is to perform. The Futurists may be described as the
 original performance artists. In print, on stage, showering leaflets
 from the top of the nearest tall building, their pronouncements per-
 formed their principles. The founding of Futurism was a boisterous
 affair. One of its sharpest observers was Leon Trotsky, organizer of
 the Russian Revolution. Trotsky had a brilliant mind and an acid
 pen. 'Futurism arose,' he wrote later, 'as a protest against the art of
 petty realists who sponged on life.'¹¹ The introduction to the Futurist
 Manifesto did not disappoint:

It is from Italy that we hurl at the whole world this utterly violent, inflam-
 matory manifesto of ours, with which we today are founding 'Futurism',
 because we wish to free our country from the stinking canker of its pro-
 fessors, archaeologists, tour guides and antiquarians.

For far too long Italy has been a marketplace for junk dealers. We want
 our country free from the endless number of museums that everywhere
 cover her like countless graveyards. Museums, graveyards! They're the
 same thing, really, because of their grim profusion of corpses that no one
 remembers.¹²

The Futurist Manifesto itself was of a piece with this magniloquence.
 Its author was F. T. Marinetti (1876–1944), philosopher, novelist,
 playwright, poet, propagandist and self-publicist, the Napoleon of
 the Futurist legions yet unborn, the Trotsky of the Futurist revolt yet
 unachieved. Its tenets were a marinade of Marinetti and his influ-
 ences, poetical and political, acknowledged and unacknowledged,
 among them Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' and Émile Zola's
 'J'accuse', Henri Bergson's notion of *élan vital* and Georges Sorel's
Reflections on Violence, Stéphane Mallarmé's lyrical experimental-
 ism and Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical iconoclasm.¹³ Nietzsche
 in particular was an inspiration, as much for the dramatic quality of
 his writing as for the prophetic character of his thought. Nietzsche
 is both unsettling and unsparing. His very titles send a shiver down
 the spine – *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), subtitled 'Prelude to a

Philosophy of the Future'. His aphorisms continue to goad. 'One must free oneself from the question, "What is good? What is compassionate?" and ask instead, "What is the good *man*, the compassionate man?"' 'We no longer eat a particular dish for moral reasons, one day we will no longer "do good" for moral reasons either.' His observations on artists were at once shocking and appealing:

Artists are *not* the men of *great* passion, whatever they try to tell us and themselves. And that's for two reasons: they lack shame towards themselves (they watch themselves *living*; they spy on themselves, they are too curious . . .) and they also lack shame towards great passion (they exploit it as artistes, the avarice of their talent . . .).

But secondly: (1) their vampire, their talent, usually begrudges them that squandering of force which is passion (2) their artists' *miserliness* shelters them from passion.¹⁴

Marinetti, a light-fingered borrower and a true original, made free with choice passages from his suggestive works, in particular, perhaps, *The Gay Science* (1882):

I welcome all the signs of a more virile, warlike age approaching that will above all restore honour to bravery! For it shall pave the way to a still higher age and gather the strength that the latter will need one day – the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and *wage wars* for the sake of thoughts and their consequences. To this end we now need many preparatory brave human beings who surely cannot spring from nothingness any more than from the sand and slime of present-day civilization and urbanization. . . . For – believe me – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge! Soon the time will be past in which you had to be content living hidden in forests like shy deer! Finally the search for knowledge will reach for its due; it will want to rule and possess, and you with it!¹⁵

The Futurist Manifesto neatly bottles Nietzsche along with all the rest:

1. We want to sing about the love of danger, about the use of energy and recklessness as common, daily practice.
2. Courage, boldness and rebellion will be essential elements in our poetry.
3. Up to now, literature has extolled a contemplative stillness, rapture and

reverie. We intend to glorify aggressive action, a restive wakefulness, life at the double, the slap and the punching fist.

4. We believe that this wonderful world has been further enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of speed. A racing car, its bonnet decked with exhaust pipes like serpents with galvanic breath . . . a roaring motor car, which seems to race on like machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace.

5. We wish to sing the praises of the man behind the steering wheel, whose sleek shaft traverses the Earth, which itself is hurtling at breakneck speed along the racetrack of its orbit.

6. The poet will have to do all in his power, passionately, flamboyantly, and with generosity of spirit, to increase the delirious fervour of the primordial elements.

And more, much more, until, finally, ‘Standing tall on the roof of the world, yet once again, we hurl our defiance at the stars!’¹⁶

We now know that Marinetti had a plan of campaign: the Futurist Manifesto had been extensively trialled in Italy before it appeared in *Le Figaro*.¹⁷ Its inflammatory rhetoric was not spontaneous but carefully rehearsed. No less disingenuous was the disclaimer from the newspaper’s editors which prefaced it:

Mr Marinetti, the young Italian and French poet, whose remarkable and fiery talent has been made known throughout the Latin countries by his notorious demonstrations and who has a galaxy of enthusiastic disciples, has just founded the school of ‘Futurism’, whose theories surpass in daring all previous and contemporary schools. The *Figaro* . . . today offers its readers the Manifesto of the Futurists. Is it necessary to say that we assign to the author himself full responsibility for his singularly audacious ideas and his frequently unwarranted extravagance in the face of things that are eminently respectable and, happily, everywhere respected? But we thought it interesting to reserve for our readers the first publication of this manifesto, whatever their judgement of it will be.¹⁸

Futurist teaching or preaching has always been too much for the unconverted. ‘Futurism, as preached by Marinetti, is largely Impressionism up-to-date,’ rejoined Wyndham Lewis. ‘To this is added his Automobilmism and Nietzsche stunt.’¹⁹ But the withering Wyndham Lewis was out of touch with the times. The Manifesto caused a sensation. With the beauty of speed, the French text was turned into a leaflet and all Europe leafleted. Excerpts appeared in newspapers and magazines the world over. ‘Futurism’ was launched. So too was the talented Mr Marinetti. Overnight, as it seemed, the artists’ manifesto had come of age. For the next twenty years it was all the rage.

For Marinetti, the secret of the successful manifesto lay in its violence and its precision ('l'accusation *précise*, l'insulte bien *définie*'), to which we can add its bombast and its wit.²⁰ This was the Marinetti model, encapsulated in the notorious paragraph 9, with its provocative, almost gratuitous, concluding flourish: 'We wish to glorify war – the sole cleanser of the world – militarism, patriotism, the destructive act of the libertarian, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.'

It is interesting to find that Marinetti had a clear idea of what would do and what would not. The art of making manifestos, as he put it, called for a certain rigour, a verve (or perhaps a nerve), and a sense of style, or form, analogous to the work of art itself. A few years later, Gino Severini, one of a handful of founding Futurists but a little semi-detached, sent Marinetti the manuscript of a projected manifesto. With Napoleonic self-assurance, he replied:

I have read with great attention your manuscript, which contains extremely interesting things. But I must tell you that there is nothing of the *manifesto* in it.

First of all, the title ['The Painting of Light, Depth and Dynamism'] absolutely won't do because it is too generic, too derivative of the titles of other manifestos. In the second place, you must take out the part in which you restate the *merde* and *rose* of Apollinaire, this being, in absolute contrast to our type of manifesto, a way of praising a single artist by repeating his own eulogies and insults. Moreover . . . you must not repeat what I have already said, in *Futurism* [the Manifesto] and elsewhere, about the Futurist sensibility. The rest of the material is very good and important, but to publish it as is would be to publish an article that is excellent but not yet a manifesto. I therefore advise you to take it back and reword it, removing all that I have already mentioned, and intensifying and tightening it, recasting the whole new part in the form of a *manifesto* and not in that of a review article about Futurist painting. . . .

I think I shall persuade you by all that I know about the art of making manifestos, which I possess, and by my desire to place in *full* light, not in *half* light, your own remarkable genius as a Futurist.²¹

'The *merde* and *rose* of Apollinaire' was a reference to a manifesto composed by that astonishing figure, 'L'antitradition futuriste' (1913), as like as not solicited by Marinetti, and edited – manifestoed – according to strict Marinettian principles. Apollinaire himself, it appears, was not exempt from the treatment. 'L'antitradition futuriste' manifests a number of features common to the genre. The Marinetti model became a kind of template. Marinetti's *mots* and

Marinetti's antics resonate throughout the century. The composer Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's scandalous comment on the destruction of New York's twin towers on 11 September 2001, 'the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos', was pure Marinetti. Every art movement commander-in-chief is a mini-Marinetti. The Dadaist Tristan Tzara and the Surrealist André Breton deliberately followed in his footsteps. It was perhaps inevitable that the capo of Dadaism would fall out with the pope of Surrealism. Breton first courted Tzara ('I think about you as I've never thought about anyone') and then dumped him, finding him insupportable and ungovernable. Tzara, it has been said, was a disappointing mail-order bride. He was certainly a handful, and rivalrous to boot. Given the output of both men, there is a certain irony in the attempt of one to diminish the other by characterizing him as a mere writer of manifestos, and not a poet. 'Dada is amazed to see that it now has only a few poor devils on its side, who, huddled up in their poetry, emote like good bourgeois over the memory of its already ancient misdeeds,' wrote Breton acidly in 1922, as Surrealism came on stream. 'And what does it matter if, going his sorry little way, Mr Tzara must one day share his glory with Marinetti?' Breton had a fine line in disdain. 'It has been said that I change men the way most people change socks,' he continued. 'Kindly allow me this luxury, as I can't keep wearing the same pair for ever: when one stops fitting, I hand it down to my servants.'²²

Novel as it seems, and self-proclaims, Apollinaire's manifesto is in fact derivative of other manifestos, notwithstanding Marinetti's strictures. The artists' manifesto is a thievish pursuit, with cannibalistic tendencies. (Inevitably, perhaps, there are Cannibalist Manifestos.) In other words, it is a highly self-conscious and self-referential form. The art of making manifestos is also the art of appropriation. If the bad poet borrows, and the good poet steals, as T. S. Eliot said, then artist-manifestoists are very good poets indeed.

It is also polarizing, or to put it more delicately, self-differentiating. Artists' movements and artists' manifestos typically define themselves *against*. Intellectually, this causes them no trouble: it is not hard to identify who or what they are against – usually their rivals and predecessors. Vicente Huidobro, for example, exponent of Creacionismo (Creationism), specialized in the art of the put-down. 'I find that Surrealism is, in fact, nothing but the violin of psychoanalysis.' As for Futurism, 'a new art for the eleven thousand virgins, but not for those who know anything about anything'.²³ In this crowded field

the Futurists were unusual only in the sheer comprehensiveness of their condemnation: they were against the past.

To specify what they are *for*, on the other hand, is a good deal more difficult. Many manifestos resolve the difficulty into a crude dichotomy, or a round of name-calling, where brickbats and bouquets are tossed at the selected candidates. Apollinaire's manifesto offers an extravagant example, possibly a parody, throwing *merde* at Montaigne, Wagner, Beethoven, Poe, Whitman and Baudelaire, among many others, and *rose* at a long list of the notable and not-so-notable, beginning with Marinetti, Picasso, Boccioni, and Apollinaire himself. Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist version of this procedure was trumpeted in the very title of the journal he created, *BLAST*, which *blasts* some things, Futurist-fashion ('France, sentimental Gallic gush, sensationalism, fussiness . . .'), and *blesses* others ('cold, magnanimous, delicate, gauche, fanciful, stupid Englishmen . . .').

Artists' manifestos are strong on remonstrance. 'Long live – !' and 'Down with – !' are two of its most familiar tropes. In this mood, they are at once vigorous and reductive. Other features of the manifesto, however, are sophisticated indeed. The Futurist revolt was effectively thwarted, but one thrust carried forward: 'words-in-freedom', to use Marinetti's language, and a 'typographical revolution' aimed at exploding 'the harmony of the page'. Words-in-freedom promoted an emancipatory orthography, where the old rules of spelling and syntax could be abandoned, where the typeface flips merrily from one font to another, where letters are repeated as often as you please – 'reds, rrrrrreds, the rrrrrredest rrrrrreds that shouuuuuuut' – and there is word-play all day long in the grammatical Garden of Eden. Not coincidentally, Futurist manifestos resemble modernist poems. Ghosted or otherwise, Apollinaire's manifesto has the look of his famous 'calligrammes' or word-pictures, composed at around the same time.²⁴

Word-play is not the only play involved. Some artists' manifestos are deadly serious. Some are not. In the immortal phrase of the self-styled living sculptures, Gilbert and George, 'The lord chisels still, so don't leave your bench for long.'²⁵ Some waver between the incendiary and the buffoonery. Some are outlandish; some are gibberish. Claes Oldenburg's 'I Am for an Art' (1961) is a glorious fusion of Whitman and Dada, a rattlebag incantation four pages long:

I am for an art that you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with.

I am for an art that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is.

I am for an art that helps old ladies across the street.

I am for the art of the washing machine. I am for the art of the government check. I am for the art of the last wars raincoat.

I am for the art that comes up in fogs from sewer-holes in winter. I am for the art that splits when you step on a frozen puddle. I am for the worms art inside the apple. I am for the art of sweat that develops between crossed legs.

I am for the art of neck-hair and caked tea-cups, for the art between the tines of restaurant forks, for the odour of boiling dishwater.²⁶

The artist as author is full of surprises. Painters in particular are often supposed to be either stupid or vapid, and in any event inarticulate, unable or unwilling to explain themselves. In fact, many painters are capable writers and – whisper it softly – penetrating thinkers. Anselm Kiefer is a great exemplar (see Chapter 6). Barnett Newman is another. ‘The artist is approached not as an original thinker in his own medium,’ noted Newman caustically, ‘but, rather, as an instinctive, intuitive executant who, largely unaware of what he is doing, breaks through the mystery by the magic of his performance to “express” truths the professionals think they can read better than he can himself.’²⁷ Artist-manifestoists give the lie to such condescension. Making manifestos engages the thinker-practitioner; and in this sphere the thinker-performer is by no means a contradiction in terms. Art and thought are not incompatible after all.

It is only to be expected that the thinking is not in straight lines. Artists’ manifestos are full of quirks and foibles. Charles Jencks proposed an arresting typology or tropology of ‘the volcano and the tablet’, which might crush the fun out of them, but which captures very well the deep-seated emotion and semi-scriptural injunction so often on display.²⁸ Despite the clowning, much manifestoing is deeply engaged. Like the face of ‘the other’ in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (see Chapter 1), the manifesto is a demand. It demands something from us, and it demands it now. That something may be no more than our attention – our full attention. Or it may be our adherence to a certain worldview, and as like as not a certain programme. The programme and the worldview are often political, intensely political. Perhaps the most striking feature of the artists’ manifesto is the frequency with which it outruns art to embrace life.

Georg Baselitz’s ‘Pandemonic Manifesto II’ (1962) concludes, pithily, ‘All writing is crap.’ Baselitz has wit; at root, however, he is

deadly serious. As he has acknowledged, his work is anchored in an ‘unhealthy’ history – German history (and possibly his own). Like Kiefer, Baselitz is a great reader, at once an intellectual and visceral painter, who uses his head as well as his feet. ‘I work exclusively on inventing new ornaments,’ he insists. But these ornaments are not mere baubles. Typically they are upside-down – *Upside-Down Lenin* has recently been added to the catalogue – turned on their heads, as if to invert, or subvert, or empty out. Baselitz is an ironist. Perhaps that is the only -ist he is. Physically and psychologically, he stands outside. ‘I proceed from a state of disharmony, from ugly things . . . from feet that are too big’.²⁹

Baselitz’s contemporary R. B. Kitaj apprenticed himself early to what he called ‘the primacy of artistic craziness’: passionate commitment, deep immersion, fierce self-scrutiny. Like his hallowed mentor Cézanne, his career is a monument to the dedicated artist-life; he grew crazier with each passing year. Kitaj’s is a high calling, as his manifestos testify. Unfashionably, he believed that art could bear witness (see Chapter 2), and in his own inimitable fashion he bore witness to the trauma of his times – the Holocaust, the Terror, the camp, the pit. The ‘First Diasporist Manifesto’ (1989) is his testament: ‘We learn about life and its events by uncovering ourselves. . . . The timeless [Samuel] Beckett may also be paraphrased: (Art), that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation. . . . I even suspect that art can mend the world a little.’³⁰

For the manifestos of the first half of the twentieth century, especially, *the revolution* was their unavoidable preoccupation: their subtext and sometimes their pretext. Futurist manifestos raved about ‘the multicoloured polyphonic tides of revolution’. The last words of Le Corbusier’s influential ‘Towards an Architecture’ (1923) posed the question, ‘Architecture or revolution?’, and offered the answer, or the prayer, ‘Revolution can be avoided.’³¹ Others felt differently. In 1919 Raoul Hausmann and Johannes Baader ‘founded’ a Dada Republic by manifesto, in which they instructed the Mayor of Berlin to hand over the treasury and commanded the city’s employees to obey only the orders of the joint authors. Sadly, the Dada Republic was stillborn. The quest continued. In 1938 Breton and Trotsky concluded their manifesto, ‘Towards a Free Revolutionary Art’ (1938), with a ringing declaration:

Our aims:

The independence of art – for the revolution.

The revolution – for the complete liberation of art!³²

In the 1960s, the Situationists gave their own rather prim expression to a similar yearning. Under the Situationist dispensation, everyone would be an artist – an artist in the construction of his own life, as they put it. Their programme was nothing if not expansive:

Against the spectacle, the realized Situationist culture introduces total participation.

Against preserved art, it is the organization of the directly lived moment.

Against particularized art, it will be a global practice with a bearing, at each moment, on all the usable elements. Naturally this would tend to collective production which would be without doubt anonymous (at least to the extent where the works are no longer stocked as commodities, this culture will not be dominated by the need to leave traces). The minimum proposals of these experiences will be a revolution in behaviour and a dynamic unitary urbanism capable of extension to the entire planet, and of being further extensible to all habitable planets.³³

The revolutionary preoccupation might be called the manifesto obligato. It is exhilarating, even elevating, but it also tends to find them out. Trotsky himself published a devastating critique of the artist's limitations in the sphere of 'moral and social revolt'. The critique centred on the feckless Futurists and their half-baked ideas, their political posturing and their artistic shortcomings. It was an awful warning.

The connection of the aesthetics 'revolt' with the moral and social revolt is direct; both enter entirely and fully into the life experience of the active, new, young, and untamed section of the intelligentsia of the Left, the creative Bohemia. Disgust against the limitations and the vulgarity of the old life produces a new artistic style as a way of escape, and thus the disgust is liquidated. In different combinations, and on different historic bases, we have seen the disgust of the intelligentsia form more than one new style. But that was always the end of it. This time, the proletarian revolution caught Futurism at a certain stage of its growth and pushed it forward. Futurists became Communists. By this very act they entered the sphere of more profound questions and relationships, which far transcended the limits of their own little world, and which were not quite worked out organically in their soul. That is why Futurists . . . are weakest artistically at those points where they finish as Communists. . . . That is why they are frequently subject to artistic and psychological defeats, to stilted forms and to making much noise about nothing.³⁴

Revolution or no revolution, artists manifestoed, undeterred. There is something of the incorrigible optimist about the manifestoist. To

make a manifesto is to imagine or hallucinate the promised land, wherever that might be. It is in its own way a utopian project. It is certainly not an undertaking for the faint-hearted. In this sense, perhaps, it is apt for the artist. The characteristic stance of the artist-manifestoist is a sort of spiritual resilience, an uprightness, amid the general flux and flex. Artists strive to make headway in a resistant medium (and a hostile environment, as it may be). With the exception of the latter-day Stuckists, who stand proudly on the wrong side of history, the Futurists and their successor-ists are in every sense forward movements. They wager on progress as they see it. Their battle cry is *towards*. The Moses of modernism for so many of these artists is Paul Cézanne (see Chapter 11), who died just as the manifesto was being conceived. As Cézanne knew, the artist's work is never finished. Nor yet the manifesto.

Beyond the catfights, therefore, artists' manifestos tap into a larger vision. An exchange in Roberto Bolaño's extraordinary novel, *The Savage Detectives*, affords a glimpse of the vision, and the movements:

You're a Stridentist, body and soul. You'll help us build Stridentopolis, Cesárea, I said. And then she smiled, as if I was telling her a good joke but one she already knew, and she said that she had quit her job a week ago and that anyway she'd always been a Visceral Realist, not a Stridentist. And so am I, I said or shouted, all of us Mexicans are more Visceral Realists than Stridentists, but what does it matter? Stridentism and Visceral Realism are just two masks to get us where we really want to go. And where is that? she said. To modernity, Cesárea, I said, to god-damned modernity.³⁵

The artists' manifesto is a passport to modernity. To goddamned modernity.

And then to post-modernity. To poor, put-upon post-modernity. And beyond.

Notes

1. Samuel Johnson, *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper* (London: Johnson, 1810), p. 325.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, *Beyond Good and Evil* [1886] (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 115.
3. See Peter Stansky, *On or About December 1910* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), quoting from *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown* (1924).

4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, trans. Samuel Moore, *The Communist Manifesto* [1888] (London: Penguin, 2002); Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 89.
5. *Communist Manifesto*, p. 258 (translation modified).
6. ‘The poetry of the revolution’, an idea drawn originally from *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), is the master concept of Martin Puchner’s penetrating study, *Poetry of the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). The poetic qualities of *The Communist Manifesto* are also explored in a classic work by Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment* [1986] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
7. Berman, *All That Is Solid*, p. 102.
8. *Communist Manifesto*, p. 218.
9. *Communist Manifesto*, p. 223.
10. Lebbeus Woods, ‘Manifesto’ (1993), in Alex Danchev (ed.), *100 Artists’ Manifestos* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp. 411–12.
11. Leon Trotsky, trans. Rose Strunsky, *Literature and Revolution* [1925] (Chicago: Haymarket, 2005), pp. 120–1.
12. F. T. Marinetti, trans. Doug Thompson, ‘The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism’ [1909], in Danchev, *100 Artists’ Manifestos*, p. 6.
13. Marinetti was steeped in Mallarmé, who is quoted and disparaged (sometimes in the same breath) throughout his work. He was especially fond of a line from ‘The Windows’: ‘In the former sky where Beauty flourished’, which features in at least two manifestos: see F. T. Marinetti, trans. Doug Thompson, *Critical Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), pp. 43, 142. But it may be that Mallarmé is more important for what is not quoted, or admitted, for example ‘The Phenomenon of the Future’, a suggestive text in the celebrated collection *Divagations* (1896). See Stéphane Mallarmé, trans. Henry Weinfield, *Collected Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. Kate Sturge, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 19, 125, 181.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 160–1. For more from *The Gay Science*, see Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, p. 428.
16. ‘The Futurist Manifesto’, in Danchev, *100 Artists’ Manifestos*, pp. 4–5.
17. See Giovanni Lista, trans. Daniel Katz, ‘Genesis and Analysis of Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurism”, 1908–1909’, in Didier Ottinger (ed.), *Futurism* (London: Tate, 2009), pp. 78–83.
18. In Perloff, *Futurist Moment*, p. 82.
19. Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Melodrama of Modernity’, in *BLAST* 1 [1914] (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow, 1981), p. 143.

20. Marinetti to the Belgian painter Henry Maassen, c.1909–10, quoted in Perloff, *Futurist Moment*, pp. 81–2. Perloff's treatment is exemplary. See also Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, ch. 5.
21. Perloff, *Futurist Moment*, p. 81 (her translation, slightly modified), dated to 1913. Cf. Gino Severini, trans. Jennifer Franchina, *The Life of a Painter* [1983] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 138–9, an account rather more favourable to the author.
22. Quoted in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 166.
23. Quoted in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 217.
24. See Guillaume Apollinaire, trans. Anne Hyde Greet, *Calligrammes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), for example 'Ocean-Letter' [1914], pp. 58–65. The manifesto pre-dates this particular example, but the earliest calligrammes were written at the turn of the year 1912–13, a few months before 'L'antitradition futuriste'.
25. Gilbert and George, 'The Laws of Sculptors' [1969], in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 380.
26. Claes Oldenburg, 'I Am for an Art' [1961], in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 353.
27. Barnett Newman, unpublished review of Thomas B. Hess, *Abstract Painting* [1951], in *Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 121–2.
28. Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (eds), *Theories and Manifestos of Contemporary Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2006), pp. 2–11.
29. Baselitz in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, pp. 356–7.
30. Kitaj in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, pp. 405–6, paraphrasing Samuel Beckett, *Proust* [1931] (London: Calder, 1965), p. 11 (where the double-headed monster is Time). To 'mend the world' is Samuel Johnson: see the epigraph to this chapter.
31. Le Corbusier, 'Toward an Architecture' [1923], in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 229.
32. André Breton, Diego Rivera and Leon Trotsky, 'Towards a Free Revolutionary Art' [1938], in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 301.
33. Guy Debord, 'Situationist Manifesto' [1960], in Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, p. 350.
34. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 126.
35. Roberto Bolaño, trans. Natasha Wimmer, *The Savage Detectives* [1998] (London: Picador, 2007), p. 433.