

Inventing Futurism

<recto>



Inventing Futurism

<recto>

The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism

Christine Poggi

Princeton University Press

Princeton and Oxford

Copyright © 2008 by Princeton University Press

Requests for permission to reproduce material from this work should be sent to Permissions,  
Princeton University Press

Sections of chapter 2 published originally as “*Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd*” in , © The University of Chicago Press. Sections of chapter 5 published originally as “*Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body*” in *Modernism/Modernity*, © Johns Hopkins University Press. Sections of chapter 7 published originally as “*The Return of the Repressed: Tradition as Myth in Futurist Fascism*” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* edited by Claudia Lazzara and Roger J. Crum, © Cornell University Press.

Published by Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540

In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 6 Oxford Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1TW

All Rights Reserved

Poggi, Christine, 1953{en-dash}

Inventing futurism : the art and politics of artificial optimism / Christine Poggi.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-691-13370-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Futurism (Art) 2. Arts and society--Italy--History--20th century. 3. Avant-garde (Aesthetics)--Italy--History--20th century. I. Title.

NX456.5.F8P64 2009

700'.4114--dc22

2008011220

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

Publication of this book has been aided by grants from the Millard Meiss Publication Fund of the College Art Association; and the Lenkin Fund, History of Art Department, University of Pennsylvania. [Meiss logo]

This book has been composed in Minion

Printed on acid-free paper. ∞

press.princeton.edu

Printed in the United States of America

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

<DED>For Peter, Sophia, and Claire

<recto>



<FMH>Contents

<recto>

<page numbers tk>

Preface

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1 Futurist Velocities

Chapter 2 *Folla/Follia*: Futurism and the Crowd

Chapter 3 Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises*: Picturing the Futurist Metropolis

Chapter 4 Photogenic Abstraction: Giacomo Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*

Chapter 5 Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body

Chapter 6 Futurist Love, Luxury, and Lust

Chapter 7 Return of the Repressed: Vicissitudes of the Futurist Machine Aesthetics under

Fascism

Chapter 8 Epilogue

Notes

Works Cited

Index

Photography Credits





&lt;FMT&gt;Preface

&lt;recto&gt;

The approaching hundred-year anniversary of F. T. Marinetti's founding of Futurism invites critical reflection on the movement's history, its cultural and political practices, and its legacy. Often ignored in Anglo-American scholarship, Futurism both exemplifies and defies current definitions of the avant-garde. With its demand for new and transgressive approaches to making art, its critique of the social institutions that control the production and display of art, and its desire to integrate art and life, Futurism provides a template for the "historical avant-garde" as analyzed by Peter Bürger.<sup>1</sup> No other movement of the early twentieth century so clearly attacked art for art's sake aestheticism, or so aggressively addressed mass audiences through a variety of popular cultural media. Also central to Futurism was the desire to cast off the burden of the past (while retaining certain privileged precursors), so as to enable a process of constant self-reinvention, which Renato Poggioli viewed as an important characteristic of the avant-garde.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most crucial, however, is what Poggioli calls the "agonistic moment," an adversarial and nihilistic attitude toward the present state of society and tradition that springs from a profound sense of crisis. For Poggioli this sense of crisis drives the avant-gardes to desire an explosion, apocalypse, or catastrophe, envisioned as the prelude to a utopian future. The impulse to destroy figures as the necessary catalyst for the creation of a new world order, and compels the avant-gardes to position themselves temporally in relation to the future. Thus for Poggioli, "the futurist manifestation represents, so to speak, a prophetic and utopian phase, the arena of agitation and preparation for the announced revolution, if not the revolution itself."<sup>3</sup> Seen in this light, "futurism" becomes a general psychological tendency of all avant-gardes, of which Italian Futurism is only "a significant symptom of a broader and deeper state of mind."<sup>4</sup>

Despite its symptomatic character, Futurism has received relatively little attention in the literature on early twentieth-century avant-gardes, no doubt because of its deliberately provocative and incendiary proclamations, its embrace of mass media channels, and its political ideology and affiliations.<sup>5</sup> Theorists and art historians tend to associate avant-garde movements with leftist (especially anarchist or Socialist) political critique, even when the artists in question disdain the public and regard themselves as the elite of a cultural renaissance. Yet Futurism only becomes more interesting and deserving of analysis as a result of its failure to conform to expected political ideologies and practices. The movement's prowar nationalism, celebration of virility, and cult of the machine are also not as unusual as they might seem, for similar attitudes were prevalent throughout Europe. Perhaps most significant has been the difficulty of writing a primarily formal or stylistic history of Futurist aesthetic innovations, given that this was the dominant mode of criticism in the period following World War II.<sup>6</sup> Futurism remains haunted by its fraught and often contradictory political alliances, especially when these are repressed or acknowledged only in reductive and facile formulas.

Among the important early interpretive studies of the movement to address its social ideology and ambivalent response to industrial modernity is Roberto Tessari's 1973 book *Il mito della macchina: Letteratura e industria nel primo novecento italiano* (*The Myth of the Machine: Literature and Industry in Early Twentieth Century Italy*), which includes a chapter on Futurist literature.<sup>7</sup> As Tessari convincingly argues, the Futurist myth of the machine often reveals an undercurrent of anxiety, and, at times, outright rejection. Tessari's analyses, although focused on Futurist texts, point to the wider phenomenon of a negative response to the industrial transformation of Italy within broad sectors of the Italian intelligentsia. Among Futurist scholars, Giovanni Lista has also emphasized the sense of social and psychological trauma driving the

Futurists' attitudes toward modernity, and the diversity and complexity of their political alliances.<sup>8</sup> Other excellent analyses of Futurist cultural politics within the wider context of European social and industrial developments can be found in the work of Umberto Carpi, George L. Mosse, and Emilio Gentile.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, most of their publications and other historically informed studies by European critics remain inaccessible to an English-speaking readership.

In the last twenty or so years the study of Futurism has grown dramatically, eventually crossing the Atlantic and engaging scholars in diverse fields. Significant revisionist readings have appeared, often employing the methods of cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and feminism. For the most part, recent scholarship has focused on specific artists, writers, or media. The scope of inquiry has been enlarged to include the analysis of exhibitions, advertising, public spectacle and theater, fashion, architecture, the decorative arts, murals, and film. At the same time the new availability of many archives, and the acquisition or long-term display of important collections of Futurist art by several museums in Italy, England, and the United States, have allowed unfamiliar facets of Futurism to come into view.

*Inventing Futurism* seeks to contribute to this newly energized field of study by providing an interdisciplinary, historical, and cultural exploration of Futurism, spanning its inception in 1909 into the Fascist *ventennio*. Rather than a general overview, however, this book examines specific themes and issues: the Futurists' often traumatic response to the rise of industrial capitalism, especially as they encountered it in the form of new technologies, accelerated travel, and the threatening presence of unruly urban crowds; the collision of past rural traditions and modes of labor with the construction of the modern metropolis; the challenge of the "mechanical" and seemingly scientific medium of photography to the prestige of the artist and to artistic techniques; the aspiration to create heroic forms of male subjectivity through fusion with

machines and metal, and the related cults of speed and war; the polemical discourse surrounding the rejection of feminism, lust, luxury, and love; and finally, the collapse and reconfiguration of prewar utopianism in the Fascist period. These themes were selected for the light they shed on the movement's ambivalent responses to the rapid growth of industrial modernity in Italy, as well as for their continuing relevance to today's audiences.

In order to establish a social context for Futurism, *Inventing Futurism* draws on studies of Italian post-*risorgimento* history, and on the political and cultural debates that national unification fostered. Also pertinent to this book are a series of microhistories: the development of Italian trains, as well as of electric plants, trams, and lights; urban planning and the industrial expansion of Milan; late nineteenth-century crowd psychology and criminal anthropology; historical and psychological studies of shock, trauma, and their effects; scientific and pseudoscientific theories of matter/energy; and the shifting political developments of Socialism, feminism, and Fascism in Italy. Seeking to work on multiple levels, *Inventing Futurism* attends simultaneously to intellectual currents and social debates, to the material and cultural history of everyday life in early twentieth-century Italy, and to the formal and iconographic complexity of Futurist works of art in a variety of media. Rather than interpret Futurism in the light of its own deliberately inflammatory pronouncements, as a boisterous and naive embrace of modernity in all its modalities, this book brings the contradictions, ambiguities, and ironies of Futurist discourses and practices to the surface. What emerges from such an inquiry is a sharper, more historically nuanced understanding of Futurism's cultural and political ambivalence, and of its fractured and often traumatic response to the shocks of modernity. This ambivalence resonates through Futurism's defiant embrace of what Marinetti called "artificial optimism" <m->an optimism that never fully repressed its negative counterpart.<sup>10</sup>

Working on this book has been an intellectual adventure, taking me into many new and unexpected areas of inquiry. I am grateful to all those who shared in this journey, and whose suggestions and criticisms have sharpened my thinking and opened new perspectives along the way. Parts of this book were presented as lectures at Yale University, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the 2000 International Congress of Art Historians in London, Rutgers University, Temple University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the University of Delaware, and at the University of Pennsylvania. I extend my warm thanks to those who invited me to speak, and to members of the audience who challenged my assumptions or made valuable observations. The graduate students in two seminars I taught at the University of Pennsylvania also deserve special mention for the critical acumen and enthusiasm they brought to the project of casting new light on Futurism.

Several colleagues took the time to read early versions of certain chapters. Their comments provoked me to explore new avenues of research and to clarify my arguments. I am grateful to Robert L. Herbert and Jonathan Steinberg for their counsel on “Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd,” and to Emily Braun for the many excellent suggestions she made on a draft of “Photogenic Abstraction: Giacomo Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetrations*.” Other scholars and colleagues who contributed to the development of the ideas presented in *Inventing Futurism*, shared their expertise, or answered queries include Luce Marinetti Barbi, Luca Buvoli, Ester Coen, Esther Da Costa Meyer, Alessandro Del Puppo, Vivien Greene, Amelia Jones, Lewis Kachur, Marion Kant, Magali Sarfatti Larsen, Giovanni Lista, Daniele Lombardi, Guigone Rolland, Laura Mattioli Rossi, Alessandro Pagnini, Lisa Panzera, Lawrence Rainey, Jeffrey T.

Schnapp, Oliver Shell, and Gerald Silk. Deputy director Riccardo Passoni and the preparators at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin generously allowed me to examine Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*. My visit to the Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection in Genoa was an enjoyable and profitable experience due to curator Silvia Barisione. Francesca Velardita, curator of historical archives at MART (Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto), guided me through the process of working with MART's archival materials. The highly knowledgeable curators of the Image Collection at Penn, Heather Glaser, Constance Mood, Christal Springer, Elizabeth Beck, and Heidi Rivel, provided all manner of information and technical advice. Isabel Suchanek, Alison Chang, and Gregory Tentler helped track down rare documents and references. I owe Masha Kowell, my research assistant, a special tribute for her numerous contributions to this project, large and small.

Several fellowships supported the research and writing of this book. They include an American Fellowship from the Association of University Women, a Dedalus Foundation Senior Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, and a Jane and Morgan Whitney Fellowship from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. My year at the Metropolitan Museum was particularly rewarding, for the stimulating intellectual environment provided by the museum, the opportunity to study the Futurist works of art in the Winston-Malbin Bequest, and the extensive resources of the library. I would like to extend special thanks to curators Nan Rosenthal and Magdalena Dabrowski for their interest in this project, and to Marcie Karp for her gracious oversight of the fellowship program and her terrific sense of humor. The Lenkin Fund of the University of Pennsylvania and a grant from the Millard Meiss Publication Fund helped cover the cost of illustrations.

Parts of this book have been previously published. Earlier versions of "Dreams of

Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body” and of “*Folla/Follia: Futurism and the Crowd*” appeared in *Modernism/Modernity* (Fall 1997) and in *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 2002) respectively. Sections of “Return of the Repressed: Vicissitudes of the Futurist Machine Aesthetic under Fascism” were included in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (2005), edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum.

*Inventing Futurism* owes a great deal to the knowledgeable and incisive responses of the anonymous readers for Princeton University Press. I am enormously grateful to each of them for bringing their critical views to bear on this project and for many valuable suggestions. Dawn Hall copyedited the manuscript with great sensitivity and understanding. Hanne Winarsky was an ideal editor, guiding this book with her enthusiasm and excellent advice from the final phase of writing through to its publication.

Over the years I have benefited from the encouragement and lively conversation of many individuals, including my colleagues in the History of Art Department, in the Women’s Studies Program, in the Comparative Literature and Literary Theory Program, and at the Center for Italian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Among the community of scholars who have sparked my thinking, I would like to acknowledge especially Karen Beckman, Yve-Alain Bois, Millicent Marcus, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Richard Shiff, Kim Sichel, Michael Taylor, Ann Temkin, and Liliane Weissberg. I would also like to express my gratitude for the friendship and hospitality offered by Kathleen Ross and Daniel Szyld, Martha and Leonard Spector, and Keith and Veronique Ross. As always, I am most thankful to Bernard Elliot, for the innumerable ways he has supported this project and made its completion possible. Finally, I dedicate this book to Peter, Sophia, and Claire, for being the remarkable individuals they are.





Inventing Futurism

<recto>

<CHN>Chapter 1

<recto>

<CHT>Futurist Velocities

When the poet F. T. Marinetti founded Futurism early in 1909 by publishing an inflammatory manifesto in several Italian and foreign newspapers, most notoriously on the front page of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro*, he envisioned not just the creation of an avant-garde literary movement but also the cultural and political regeneration of Italy (fig. 1.1). Unlike most nationalists, however, Marinetti rejected traditional values and norms as prototypes for the present. For Marinetti, a truly renovated Italy could only be born out of the ashes of a destroyed past. The newly militarized and industrial nation would be led by a cadre of artist-warriors, who had been liberated from all constraints except that of patriotism. Given this effort to fuse art and social transformation, it is not surprising that the Futurists sought to overcome distinctions between high and low culture in order to address the masses more effectively. To this end they employed the mass media of their day, including publishing manifestos in daily newspapers, plastering them on walls and dropping them in leaflet form from airplanes onto Italian piazzas, staging notorious *serate*, or theatrical evenings (which involved declaiming poetry, reading manifestos, burning the Austrian flag, and generally inciting the audience to riot), publishing their own journals and books, and organizing numerous exhibitions. The movement would eventually embrace innovations in poetry, painting, sculpture, music, the decorative arts, photography, typography, architecture, dance, theater, and film, with the aim of galvanizing the public and promoting heroic forms of consciousness and political action. <fig. 1.1 near here>

Significantly, the “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” was followed in early March 1909 by the first “Political Manifesto for Futurist Voters.”<sup>1</sup> Timed to coincide with the campaign

for the 1909 parliamentary elections, Marinetti's second Futurist manifesto urged voters to take a fiercely anticlerical, antisocialist, and antitraditionalist position, while advocating Italian patriotism and military expansion. The first Futurist *serata*, held in Trieste at the Politeama Rossetti on 12 January 1910, saw Marinetti and fellow poets Armando Mazza and Aldo Palazzeschi denouncing the Triple Alliance, seeking to awaken irredentist sentiment (the demand that Austria cede Italian-language territories, including Trieste and Trent, to Italy), and proclaiming war the world's only hygiene. At the second *serata*, held in Milan at the Teatro Lirico on 15 February 1910, Marinetti was further joined by poets Giuseppe Carrieri, Libero Altomare, Angelo Sodini, and Michelangelo Zimolo. When the latter read a poem by Paolo Buzzi in praise of the Milanese general Vittorio Asinari di Bernezzo, who had been forced to retire for voicing anti-Austrian sentiments, the *serata* was transformed into an irredentist riot.<sup>2</sup> On 8 March 1910, Milanese artists Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo appeared with Marinetti on the stage of the Politeama Chiarella in Turin. Their first meeting with the Futurist impresario had occurred only weeks before. The birth of Futurism in the visual arts was announced officially in the "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters," laboriously composed by the artists over the course of a day and an evening at a café at Porta Vittoria in Milan (with the critical intervention of Marinetti and the assistance of his secretary Decio Cinti), and first published as a leaflet dated 11 February 1910.<sup>3</sup> This manifesto, read at the *serata* in Turin, denounced the cult of the past and its aesthetic laws in favor of the celebration of modern life and the triumphs of science.

In late September 1911, Marinetti issued a manifesto in support of the colonial war in Libya, which included the slogan "Let the tedious memory of Roman greatness be cancelled by an Italian greatness one hundred times more powerful."<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that only Marinetti

signed this manifesto. The artists who joined the movement early in 1910—Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo, as well as Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla, who added their signatures to the painting manifesto shortly thereafter—all held anarchist and Socialist views that initially prevented their full adherence to Marinetti's goal of transforming Italy into a modern, imperialist nation. The period that followed, however, witnessed a rise in nationalist sentiment among many members of the radical Italian left, prompted in part by frustration with the Socialist Party's many compromises and failure to revolutionize the masses, by the desire to reclaim Italian-language territories from Austrian rule, and by the sense that Italy's status as a "proletarian" nation could only be overcome through violent military action, directed by a governing elite.<sup>5</sup> By October 1913, when Marinetti published the "Futurist Political Program" in support of irredentism, the primacy of Italy, free trade, anticlericalism, and antisocialism, its signatories included what the document referred to as the "governing group" of Futurists, including Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo.<sup>6</sup> The program's cultural ideals were intended to promote a Futurist state of mind. It called for the cults of progress, velocity, and courage; love of danger and heroism; the suppression of academies and museums; and a rejection of the government's "monumentomania" and interference in matters of art.<sup>7</sup> The Futurists' many activities in favor of Italian intervention in the First World War on the side of France and England included organizing prowar political demonstrations and serate, burning the Austrian flag, disrupting the university lectures of antiwar professors while dressed in "antineutral suits," and creating interventionist works of art and poetry. In 1918, Marinetti would found the Futurist Political Party, and he ran for parliament in the 1919 elections.<sup>8</sup> Although Marinetti's personal political ambitions were continuously thwarted, Futurism did succeed in playing an important role in diffusing nationalist and prowar sentiments, contributing both to Italy's entry into the First

World War on the Allied side in May 1915, and eventually to the advent of Fascism.

Marinetti later traced his desire to found an activist avant-garde movement to mid-October 1908.<sup>9</sup> Having edited the international review *Poesia* since 1905, he sensed that it was no longer enough to write poetry, to promote the latest literary trends, or to participate in political debates. In order to liberate Italy from the chains of the past, “it was absolutely necessary to change method, to go into the streets, to give battle in the theaters, and to introduce the fist into artistic struggle.”<sup>10</sup> Thus strategies inspired by anarchist and Socialist politics, including the use of the manifesto, intervention in the streets, and the instigation of riots, became the hallmarks of Futurism. Appeals to intuition and the exaltation of violence determined artistic forms and subject matter, as well as the means of political persuasion. As Marinetti explained, “lyrical violence” would function as the “prophetess of that great revolutionary cry,” rousing the masses from their lethargy and instilling in them a desire for revolt and patriotic deeds.<sup>11</sup>

The first version of the Futurist manifesto, consisting of eleven enumerated points printed in blue ink on a two-page flyer, was published under the auspices of *Poesia*. Marinetti had composed the “Manifesto del Futurismo” in December 1908 and had it printed the following January.<sup>12</sup> He then sent it to numerous literary friends, intellectuals, artists, musicians, and politicians, asking for their adherence and promising to publish their responses in *Poesia*.<sup>13</sup> He also distributed it to many journals and newspapers in Italy and abroad, some of which published it in whole or in part along with commentary. Those that published the manifesto in its entirety included: the *Gazzetta dell’Emilia* of Bologna (5 February, front page), *Il Pugnolo* (6 February) and *La Tavola Rotonda* (14 February) both of Naples, the *Gazzetta di Mantova* (9 February), and *L’Arena* of Verona (9-10 February, front page). *Il Mattino* of Naples published parts of the manifesto with an explanation (8-9 February), as did *Il Piccolo della Sera* of Trieste (10

February), while the *Gazzetta di Venezia* published an article on the front page satirizing the new literary school along with substantial citations from Marinetti's text (13 February). The entire manifesto, translated into Romanian and accompanied by a critical analysis, appeared in *Democratia* of Krakow (20 February). Seeking an international platform for his ideas, Marinetti also sent the manifesto to journals in Russia, Argentina, Poland, Germany, England, Spain, Greece, Japan, and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> As the manifesto appeared in English, Spanish, and German, Marinetti published the translations in *Poesia*, thereby further disseminating his ideas across linguistic and national borders. This mass diffusion of a polemical manifesto, and the personal request for a response (many of which were published), would continue to characterize Marinetti's publicity efforts as the movement grew and expanded its activities. The desire to promote Italian patriotism, militarism, and artistic hegemony demanded an international strategy, one that would situate Futurism on the world stage as the most audacious avant-garde movement of its time. This strategy also corresponded to Marinetti's understanding of modernity, which was at once nationalist and cosmopolitan, and which embraced the capitalist economic principles of rapid circulation (of commodities, news, and ideas), advertising, and competition through free trade.

As Giovanni Lista has shown, the "Manifesto of Futurism" had already achieved a certain renown when it appeared on the front page of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro* (20 February 1909), supplemented with its now famous narrative prologue.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the eleven points of the manifesto proper address the reader in the present, future, and sometimes the imperative tense ("We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness"), the prologue tells the story of the manifesto's feverish composition in the past absolute, thereby casting it as a prior, mythopoeic event ("We had stayed up all night, my friends and I . . .").<sup>16</sup> Drafted and

signed by Marinetti alone, the “founding” and “manifesto” both proleptically assert the existence of a collective “we.”<sup>17</sup> The text claims to speak in the name of a group that it also calls into being through an act of performative self-constitution. Having declared a definitive rupture with tradition, the founding of Futurism is authorized only by a dramatic assertion of collective pride and will.<sup>18</sup> Marinetti here practices the Nietzschean art of active forgetting, in order to clear a space for the new. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche had extolled forgetfulness as a positive, creative force: “Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* [inertia] as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression, that is responsible for . . . a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions.” Associating such forgetting with psychic health, Nietzsche further declared it to be the precursor to happiness, pride, and a strong sense of the *present*. Its counterpart was a form of memory similarly imbued with will, and therefore able to keep promises and “to ordain the future in advance.”<sup>19</sup> For Nietzsche, as for Marinetti, consciousness must be driven by desire, in which complementary acts of forgetting and remembering become the means to the creation of the “sovereign individual,” liberated from the “morality of custom,” and master of a free and autonomous will.<sup>20</sup> <fig. 1.2 near here>

In the prologue, Marinetti stages the writing of the manifesto as a violent collision between past and present, whose setting and narrative of rebirth already enact the eleven theses adumbrated in the text. Here is the opening scene, whose orientalist decor (fig. 1.2) evokes Marinetti’s youth in Egypt, as well as the actual appearance of the apartment he inherited from his father in the Via Senato, Milan:

<EXT>We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with

domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the imprisoned radiance of electric hearts. For hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs, arguing up to the last confines of logic and blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling.<sup>21</sup>

Illuminated by the industrial radiance of electric light, Marinetti and his friends refuse their paternal inheritance of atavistic ennui by physically trampling one of its symbols, the richly seductive, oriental rug: a now outmoded textile/text. A new, furiously scribbled writing, inspired by pride and scornful of logic, would take its place. Spilling forth on “many reams of paper,” the manifesto is paradoxically the product of a fierce wakefulness (“we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars”), and of a quasi-automatic, dreamlike stream of consciousness.<sup>22</sup> Marinetti presents the fictive writers as imprisoned and restless within the confines of an interior domestic space, like the electric lights that burn within the filigreed brass lamps; what they long for is the urban street and the thrill of rapidly changing sensations and shocks. Not surprisingly, it will be the beckoning sounds of modern race cars that finally spur them to action. First, however, we read of the “mighty noise of the huge double-decker trams that rumbled by outside” making the Futurists jump, but the silence returns, broken only by the sounds of Milan’s ancient Naviglio (canal system) flowing by just outside Marinetti’s Via Senato home: “old canal muttering its feeble prayers and the creaking bones of sickly palaces.” Finally, these slow, traditional, powerless rumblings are interrupted by “the famished roar of automobiles,” which inspires the Futurists to break out of their prison and greet the dawn, which will cut through their “millennial gloom” like a “red sword.”<sup>23</sup> Significantly, the double-decker tram, a vehicle for the masses, and one that



travels a predetermined route with multiple stops, does not suffice to rouse the Futurists, despite its “mighty noise.” Instead, it will be the race cars, “three snorting beasts,” that will carry them swiftly along as if following a scent, in defiance of Death. In a recurring trope, Death appears as a woman, whose seductions must be refused: “Death, domesticated, met me at every turn, gracefully holding out a paw, or once in a while hunkering down, making velvety caressing eyes at me from every puddle.”<sup>24</sup> <fig. 1.3 near here>

Marinetti describes a traumatic near-death in the climactic next scene, in which the indecisive movements of two cyclists block his path, causing him to take evasive action and roll over into a ditch. Marinetti had, in fact, crashed his four-cylinder Fiat sporting car on 15 October 1908 while driving along Milan’s northwestern industrial periphery, in an incident reported in the *Corriere della Sera* (figs. 1.3 and 1.4):

<EXT>This morning, a bit before noon, F. T. Marinetti was heading down Via Domodossola in his car. The vehicle’s owner was at the wheel accompanied by a 23 year-old mechanic, Ettore Angelini. Although the details of the incident remain sketchy, it appears that an evasive maneuver was required by the sudden appearance of a bicyclist, and resulted in the vehicle being flipped into a ditch. Marinetti and mechanic were immediately rescued by two race car drivers from the Isotta and Fraschini factory, Trucco and Giovanzani, each in his car. Marinetti was transported to his apartment by the former and seems to have received little more than a scare. The mechanic was taken by Giovanzani to the Institute on Via Paolo Sarpi, where he was treated for minor wounds.<sup>25</sup>

<fig. 1.4 near here>

Marinetti recast this crash in the prologue, omitting the mechanic, adding a second

bicyclist, and enhancing the confrontation of old and new technologies. He also gave a retrospective reading of the moments leading up to the collision and of his experience in the ditch. As told in the reworked narrative, even before the crash Marinetti had been driving recklessly, in defiance of death and conventional wisdom, in order to throw himself violently into an uncharted future. He proclaimed to his friends:

<EXT>“Let’s break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let’s give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!!”

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I spun my car around with the frenzy of a dog trying to bite its tail, and there, suddenly, were two cyclists coming toward me, shaking their fists, wobbling like two equally convincing but nevertheless contradictory arguments. Their stupid dilemma was blocking my way<m->damn! Ouch! . . . I stopped short and to my disgust rolled over into a ditch with my wheels in the air.<sup>26</sup>

Not only does the frenzied spin signify Marinetti’s Dionysian desire to plunge into the unknown, but it also leaves him surprised by the sudden appearance of the two wavering cyclists, thereby causing the crash. In the literary rendering of this event, the collision seems both willed and the product of a fortuitous accident, whose traumatic effects were all the greater in that Marinetti was unprepared for them. As a result, he found himself submerged in industrial muck, the wheels of his car helpless in the air, his thrilling mastery of the race car and of speed brought to an abrupt and undignified halt. At first bruised and disgusted (but not admitting to fear), he quickly assumed a new, celebratory attitude, and declared his rebirth:

<EXT>Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse. . . . When I came up<m->torn, filthy, and stinking<m->from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!<sup>27</sup>

This passage will be analyzed in greater detail in chapter 5, in relation to its colonial references and the dream of the man/machine hybrid. Here I want to call attention to Marinetti's theatrical myth of personal palingenesis wrought by a collision between his speeding race car and the "stupid dilemma" blocking his path. The two wobbling cyclists shaking their fists at each other, emblems of an indecisive and futile past, most likely represent the dominant political forces in Italy at the time: the governing Liberal Party led by Giovanni Giolitti and the reform wing of the Socialist Party led by Filippo Turati, forever locked into fruitless debate and a strategy of compromise. Only the untamed and unpredictable power of a race car<m->a "snorting beast" whose speed and animal fury allowed Marinetti and his friends "to break out of the horrible shell of wisdom"<m->could cut through this impasse with a violent collision and overturning. Rather than succumb to the shock of this crash with retroactive anxiety or other forms of psychic blockage, Marinetti seizes upon it as an opportunity to experience the joy of imbibing industrial waste, and of regeneration through the fusion of flesh with metal.<sup>28</sup> His literary tone is deliberately provocative, simultaneously extreme in its claims, and tinged with self-parody. Returning to the collective "we" after being unmasked as the sovereign driver of his race car, Marinetti proclaims that it is with "faces smeared with good factory muck<m->plastered with metallic waste, with senseless sweat, with celestial soot<m->we, bruised, our arms in slings, but

unafraid, declared our high intentions to all the *living* of the earth.”<sup>29</sup> Here metallic waste mingles with sweat and celestial soot, confusing the boundaries of high and low, the heroic and the abject, as the marks of a new corporeal and psychic pride. Even the disfiguration of broken bones is mobilized as evidence of bodily resilience. Marinetti masters the trauma of the crash, not through a fixation on the past but through an active embrace of its destructive power, which as Jeffrey Schnapp has argued, releases new energies and drives.<sup>30</sup> Yet Marinetti’s text simultaneously manifests a Futurist version of the “stimulus shield” theorized by Sigmund Freud and others as a form of protection from unexpected assaults on the psyche; it appears in the fantasy of a metallized body resistant to threats and shocks, in the desire to dominate time and space by imagining oneself as a speeding projectile, and in the assumption of a state of perpetual, combative “readiness” to parry external blows (like “forward sentries against an army of hostile stars”).<sup>31</sup>

The psychosomatic transformations experienced by the race car driver and their links to military readiness and heroism had already been theorized by Mario Morasso, in *La nuova arma (La macchina) (The New Weapon [The Machine])* of 1905, a book that clearly made a strong impression on Marinetti. Writing of the beauty and voluptuousness of speed, Morasso described the experience of the man behind the wheel of a race car:

<EXT>Here is something heroic; a man seated on a rigid seat, like a barbarian king, with his face covered by a hard visor, like a warrior, with his body leaning forward almost to provoke the race and to scrutinize<m->not just the course, but destiny. With his hand secure on the inclined steering wheel, with all his faculties in a state of vigilance, he seems truly the lord of a whirlwind, the tamer of a monster, the calm, absolute sovereign

of a new force, he who stands straight in a vortex.<sup>32</sup>

Morasso rejoiced in the transference of the “vital” power of the machine into men, so that “it is added to ours, and by this union we feel ourselves extraordinarily aggrandized and fortified.” No longer “defenseless” as before, he declared, “we are now extremely strong beings, of an unknown species, centaurs of flesh and iron, of wheels and limbs.”<sup>33</sup> Participating in the life of the machine implied being immersed in its “tenacious metallic body, so that all of its action, its robust, joyful heartbeat, its indefatigability, its haughty indifference, are reflected in us.”<sup>34</sup>

Thus armed and fortified, the young man who had shown courage behind the wheel would be prepared to engage in war, even to the ultimate sacrifice. Morasso asserted that seeking adventure and risking one’s life could become a need and a habit, which the experience of racing could satisfy in the absence of opportunities for colonial conquest, exploration, travel, or war.<sup>35</sup> But if today the race car driver expended his energy in sport and pleasure,

<EXT>tomorrow he would not refuse before the great necessity, before the complete sacrifice for the most noble ideal; he will bury himself under the mine blown up by his own unshaking hand, he will plunge into the bottom of the ocean with his ship, he will burn in a conflagration for the defense of his fatherland and other men.<sup>36</sup>

For Morasso, the thrill of the joy ride was easily converted into the thrill of war; both demanded nerves of steel and a steady hand. Inured to fear and craving new adventures, the habitu  of velocity would not hesitate to perform heroic acts in war, even going so far as unflinchingly to

instigate his own death. Such acts of courage would compensate for the intolerably slow rhythms and utilitarian labors of everyday life in a mercantile society, obsessed by profitable deals and modest, tranquil pleasures.<sup>37</sup> He felt the fatal error of the industrial bourgeoisie had been “to elevate wealth to a goal in itself,” rather than to seek imperial conquests.<sup>38</sup> Horrified by the specter of Socialism as well as by the merely profit-driven motives of capitalism (as was Marinetti), Morasso could only envision the revival of a preindustrial notion of heroism, of “*antica virtus*,” through an embrace of the machine as a model of self-transfiguration.<sup>39</sup> Similar notions had been articulated in the course of the nineteenth century, but they took on a fresh urgency in early twentieth-century Italy, which lagged behind England and France in industrialization and the conquest of speed.

The topos of collision between past and present, with a view to opening a trajectory toward the future, owes much to Marinetti’s experience of cultural displacement and nonsynchronous social and economic development. Born to Italian parents living in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1876, he was schooled in a French Jesuit lycée, where he developed a love of literature and launched his first journal, the bimonthly *Papyrus*. In 1894, Marinetti spent about four months in Paris, completing the second part of his baccalaureate in letters and philosophy. This relatively brief first sojourn in Paris at the age of seventeen strengthened his linguistic and affective bonds to France, and reconfirmed his fierce sense of Italian patriotism—apparently driven by his recognition of Italy’s relatively low position in the European hierarchy of power and prestige. Following in the footsteps of his father, who transferred the family to Milan in 1894, Marinetti then studied law, first at the University of Pavia, and then the University of Genoa, where he received his degree in 1899 with a thesis on “The Crown and Parliamentary Government.”<sup>40</sup> But the young, ambitious poet was never to use his law degree. Instead, after

winning a poetry contest organized by the Samedis Populaires for his poem “Les vieux marins” in 1898, he spent “a triumphal month in Paris” celebrating his prize, and finally convinced his millionaire father to allow him to pursue his passion for literature.<sup>41</sup> In the meantime, he had already begun to publish free verse, written in French, in numerous Symbolist reviews, and to establish considerable renown as a declaimer of French poetry in the literary salons of France and Italy. Other publications reveal an intense interest in politics, social theory, and the psychology of the masses. Around this time Marinetti began to frequent anarchist, Socialist, and syndicalist circles in Milan and elsewhere, priding himself on being welcomed as a rare patriot within this Socialist world.<sup>42</sup> In 1905, Arturo Labriola, a syndicalist leader and coeditor (with Walter Mocchi) of *Avanguardia socialista*, remarked on Marinetti’s presence at numerous political meetings and riots:

<EXT>Many of us know him to frequent socialist assemblies, political rallies, popular uprisings, and to participate also in certain national manifestations that exhibit a revolutionary tendency. Perhaps he comes as an aesthete in search of emotions and perhaps also as a doubter and troubled skeptic in search of faith. But certainly he has not found it, because the knowledge of those new faiths and contact with elated crowds instead have aggravated his pessimism and rendered more bitter the sarcasm with which he expresses it.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, Marinetti became well known within the nationalist and irredentist groups. The violently patriotic and imperialist ideas he later expressed through the vehicle of avant-garde manifestos and other forms of writing were already circulating among these elite circles, which

shared a horror of parliamentary democracy, the politics of reformism, and Socialist pacifism.

As Labriola observed, Marinetti's early writings reveal a pessimistic assessment of the contemporary political situation in Italy, as well as a strong sense of social alienation. After a privileged childhood in Alexandria, and several brief but exhilarating sojourns in Paris, the young Marinetti was forced to come to terms with the cultural and industrial backwardness of Italy, as well as its humiliating failure to establish a colonial empire with the loss of Ethiopia at Addis Adua in 1896. His family's status as nouveau riche also made his entry into aristocratic and upper-bourgeois society in Milan difficult, while his passion for avant-garde literature further distanced him from the tastes and habits of his class. Despite the freedom afforded by his wealth, Marinetti was evidently frustrated by his lack of a meaningful position within contemporary society, only partly disavowed by assuming the mantle of bohemian and poet. As he observed ironically in an early essay on Gabriele D'Annunzio, who dreamed of directly influencing the public through his books and poetry, "Alas, crowds live in perfect ignorance of poets."<sup>44</sup>

Like many members of the cultural and political elite, Marinetti was hostile to the rising power of the masses and their demands for what he derided as an impossible happiness, viewing historical change as subject to the law of the return of the same. As his satirical play *Le Roi Bombance* (*King Revelry*) of 1905 suggests, he regarded the utopian dreams of the Socialists, based on the satisfaction of base appetites rather than higher spiritual goals, as doomed to failure. Nonetheless, Marinetti harbored an anarchist-inspired desire to break through conventional barriers and embrace the multiple rhythms and dynamism of contemporary life, as is evident in his impassioned advocacy of free verse. Similarly, he refused to recognize established social hierarchies, especially the power of the governing bourgeoisie in Italy, and sought instead to



affirm the liberty of the sovereign individual. Such views show him to have been an avid reader of Nietzsche, Georges Sorel, Gustave Kahn, Paul Adam, Mario Morasso, Vilfredo Pareto, Arturo Labriola, Scipio Sighele, and others who exalted violence and the destruction of existing social, aesthetic, and moral norms.

Similarly, Marinetti's early attitudes toward the industrial transformation of Italy, already underway most notably in Milan and Turin, were charged with negativity and an acute sense of psychological crisis. His collection of poems titled *Destruction* of 1904 includes the famous "Le démon de la vitesse," ("The Demon of Speed"), dedicated to his friend and mentor Gustave Kahn. Indeed, this poem remains within the orbit of Symbolism, and seems especially linked to Emile Verhaeren's *Les campagnes hallucinées (The Hallucinatory Countryside)* of 1893 and *Les villes tentaculaires (The Tentacular Cities)* of 1895, with their plaintive invocation of cities that swallow the surrounding countryside, trains that suddenly cut villages in two, smoking factory chimneys that darken the sun, and feverish crowds driven to revolt.<sup>45</sup> Despite its Symbolist imagery and framework, Marinetti infuses his poem with greater tension and ambivalence, often describing the collision of forces in terms of their immediate physical and psychic effects.

In "Le démon de la vitesse" Marinetti narrates a long and anxious train voyage across a varied topography that presents a suite of seductions, obstacles, and occasions for an experience of the sublime. The extended temporality of the journey also provides the poet with a means of meditating on the past, redolent with unfulfilled dreams and the ever-present specter of death, that "eternal leper." At one point the train's velocity propels him over a phantasmal, feminized geography suffused with indolence and nostalgia, into a liberated, virile future: "Oh soft plains of the past, drenched with tears, / haunted by phantoms vaulted over by memory, / I stride over you, on my train adorned with pride."<sup>46</sup> But if the past must be vanquished, "The Demon of Speed"

also betrays the poet's rejection of the sordid and imprisoning features of the industrial present, exemplified by ugly cities, their factories, and crowds. The surging, voracious metropolitan masses, in particular, threatened his sense of singular coherence and identity. In the poem, Marinetti's alter ego encounters this abject crowd, as if for the first time, upon entering the city in an already panicked state due to his train's violent arrival in the station. The conclusion of the train journey constitutes a kind of crash, announced by a series of shocks; the train comes to an abrupt halt with "a great collision! . . . an enormous shaking of the joints," as it is forcibly linked to other cars, thereby losing its freedom of movement and autonomy. Marinetti's poetic *I* flees this *enchaînement*, this capture by breaking through a window, like a "wolf that gets away, abandoning his tail<m->luxury object<m->to the jaws of a trap."<sup>47</sup> Thus seeking to protect his autonomy, Marinetti-as-wolf is propelled into the city at the "sinister break of dawn," where he suddenly finds himself in the midst of the urban crowd, which engulfs him with its teeming, *informe* (miasmatic) presence:

<PY>The streets gorge themselves on the bituminous crowd  
 hazy in the darkness, which seems painfully to shake  
 the stout facades. [. . .]  
 The crumbling plumes of heavy, greasy smoke  
 horribly coat the crush of the crowd  
 that stretches out to me its colossal  
 octopus tentacles with stinking suckers . . .  
 Males and females . . . they all resemble me! . . .<sup>48</sup>

The agent of this frightening dissolution of difference is the specter of death, the “Demon of Frenzies, / who devoured their faces . . . Oh the eternal leper! . . . / . . . Like me? Like me!”<sup>49</sup>

This “Demon” functions as one of the avatars of the train itself, the “Demon of Speed,” whose frenzied movements at times overwhelm Marinetti’s poetic *I*. But Marinetti also imagines death as having the visage of an old wretch covered in incandescent ashes, awaiting him at the end of a small road “in this city convulsed by hatred.”<sup>50</sup> The train rushes relentlessly toward the dreaded metropolis, its velocity courting death. Marinetti’s poetic alter ego responds with a horrified assertion of will, only to abandon the train (and himself) to an exterior force: “Put on the brakes! . . . the breaks are broken? . . . What to do? . . . It is necessary then that I deliver the wild-eyed frenzy of my train to the hostile gliding rails of the tracks.”<sup>51</sup> If the experience of a train’s velocity could at times function to intensify a sense of sovereign individuality (especially when the traveler identified with the driver, or indeed the engine), it could also threaten a loss of autonomy in its complementary role as an emblem of frenzied speed and Dionysian power that overwhelms the largely passive passenger.<sup>52</sup> In its delirium and unstoppable, the train is also linked to the corrosive effects of industrialization, which convert passengers into mere parcels or commodities, and workers into anonymous raw material. The young Marinetti is terrified by his encounter with the urban crowd, none of whose members seem to suffer for having “lost their features . . . their mask . . . their visage” at the hands of “an unknown.”<sup>53</sup> While Marinetti would always resist this leveling de-individuation, preferring to appear as a dandy or galvanizer of crowds, as a Futurist he would nonetheless assume its industrial imprimatur. As we have seen, in *Destruction* Marinetti describes the metropolitan masses as called forth by industry (including the train itself), and as bearing its traces in a heavy coating of greasy bitumen and smoke. Significantly, in the prologue to the “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti will

proudly wear this mantle himself as he emerges reborn from the factory ditch. And he will begin to speak and act in the name of a group, in an effort to interpellate a mass audience.

*Destruction*, however, still posits the poet as a solitary individual, whose unsatisfied desires impel him to flee a dismal reality, or to imagine its violent annihilation. Lacking true conferees, he addresses his impassioned soliloquy to a series of lost or abandoned lovers, potentially rebellious marginal types, or indeed, his own alter egos. The contest of self and other, self and world, suggests a struggle to forge a new, coherent identity from both unmastered inner drives and a threatening exterior world.

A recurring scenario is the desire to escape the allure of carnal pleasure, which, like the crowd's tentacles, imperils the poet's autonomy. Disillusioned by the false promises of love and the quest for the "ideal," symbolized by the alternately liberating, seductive, and despotic sky—"an immense extinguisher, the ghastly sky, which slowly crushes all my desires flaming straight"—Marinetti's poetic *I* longs for freedom and virility.<sup>54</sup> Escaping the arms of his lover and an invitation to sleep, and burning with insatiable *désirs flâneurs*, Marinetti's *I* declares:

<PY>There! . . . no, life is to burn like a lantern of hay.

It is necessary to swallow it in a hardy gulp,

like fair jugglers who eat fire

with a flick of the tongue, making Death vanish in the belly! . . .<sup>55</sup>

As in the prologue of the "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," here Marinetti fantasizes vanquishing Eros/Death through the active, homeopathic incorporation and mastery of its destructive force. Yet the forces of Eros are never fully subdued, nor can they be, for the

imaginary structure of virility depends on repeated victories over desire and repeated acts of death-defying heroism.

In the next section of the poem, it is the industrial power and speed of an electric tram that threatens the poet with annihilation. The sudden apparition of the tram announces the linked themes of velocity and violence, its gleaming rails and blazing colored eyes rushing into the distance and then returning by frightening bounds and leaps. The “great eyes” of the tram seem voracious, “like the mouths of an ogre seizing the bodies of children,” as they plunge toward the hero’s palpitating and vulnerable body:

<PY>Here they are! . . . Here they are! . . . their aggressive speed  
growing miraculously, from sudden leap to leap,  
always climbing, by golden shocks,  
horribly against my eyes, against my brow, incessantly,  
like stones inflamed by comets! . . .

<TBR>

Oh! the cruel anguish! . . . and my heart why does it then  
leap beat after beat,  
on my chest, on my neck, between my teeth? . . .  
Hallucinatory tramways, all trembling with fire,  
ah! roll then with your powerful wheels on my heart,  
crush it against the rails, like a mouse! . . .<sup>56</sup>

Marinetti’s description of the tram emphasizes not only the monstrous vehicle’s velocity and

surging power but also its sudden jolts, leaps, and shocks. It proceeds by rapid lurching and trembling vibrations, which first assault the poet's senses with their "incessant" rhythms and then give rise to the anxiety of being crushed like an insignificant mouse. Moreover, the "fantastic trams" multiply, their rails interlacing low on the horizon. For Marinetti, they are "innumerable," their "great eyes gliding, growing somber in the crowd, / as their eyelashes of fire collide and cross each other."<sup>57</sup> The poem emphasizes the shocks produced by early trams and trains on the sensorium of those still unaccustomed to their speed, brilliant lights, rumblings, and jolts. Rather than celebrate the sheer power of a projectile launched into space from the point of view of the thrill-seeking driver, Marinetti's text captures the threatening presence of ever-multiplying trams from the perspective of the traumatized urban dweller, who finds his roads encumbered by crisscrossing rails, roaring vehicles, and the violent glare of moving lights. <fig. 1.5 near here>

The nearly blinding, hallucinatory presence of electric trams at night, arriving directly into the historic center of Milan, is similarly rendered in Carlo Carrà's *Piazza del Duomo* of 1909 (color plate 1). Powered by Milan's first electric plant, which had been built in the adjoining Via Radegonda in 1883, these trams took on a fantastic appearance under numerous arc lamps and intersecting wires (fig. 1.5). In Carrà's painting, the entire atmosphere seems charged with luminous energy, as crowds mill about a piazza now dominated by the network of trams. Glittering lights dissolve the distinct forms of the figures and diminish the clarity of spatial relations, thereby suggesting the immersion of all things in a shimmering field without fixed points or stable boundaries. Viewed from a high perch, the scene demonstrates the new anonymity of individuals, who can only be apprehended as insubstantial, shadowy presences within the newly mobile and chaotic mass. The Duomo, emblem of tradition and of the previous social life of the piazza, is nowhere to be seen, displaced by the new function of the site as a

traffic node. Rather than depict a traditional social space defined by imposing architectural monuments, Carrà's *Piazza del Duomo* presents an unbound, nonspecific terrain that is nevertheless densely occupied and linked to other travel destinations. Even the sky, formerly associated with a sense of openness, spirituality, and natural sublimity, is traversed by electrical wires that continue beyond the framing edge. Carrà's painting thus conveys both the excitement and spectacle of this modern nocturnal piazza with its fleet of moving electric trams, brilliant lights, and crowds of urban dwellers and a sense of the spatial and psychic disorientation produced by the new technologies of electric illumination and travel.

In Marinetti's early poetry, including *La conquête des étoiles* (*The Conquest of the Stars*) of 1902 and *Destruction*, the night sky with its mysterious depth, flickering stars, and romantic moon is charged with a host of symbolic meanings. At times it represents a realm of freedom and lofty aspirations; but when these ideals prove impossible to attain, it is quickly transformed into a feminized realm of false dreams of love and erotic plenitude, which the autonomous masculine hero must conquer in order to preserve his virility. Given the importance of the night sky as a metaphor within Marinetti's poetic and ideological universe, it is not surprising that he was acutely aware of its industrial transformation. In a section of *Destruction* titled "Contre les villes" (*Against Cities*), Marinetti's poetic *I* addresses the city's beggars, vagrants, and marauders as brothers, to inquire if they enjoy their life "at the end of streets whose night sky is plastered with soot and mortal boredom by sordid industry?" Sardonicly, he asks: "The sky? . . . do you want it, oh presumptuous rats? . . . / For you the sky is only a ventilator, / grilled with telephone wires! . . ." <sup>58</sup>

This theme, developed with even greater rancor, had already appeared in the poet's early essays, including this evocation of a typical "mathematical" and "jarring" morning in Milan,

written for the French newspaper *Gil Blas* in 1901.

<EXT>Beginning at 10 a.m., Milan becomes the station of a gigantic city that doesn't seem real. It is the reign of electricity and of vapor: bells, trumpeting alarms, aggressive bicycles, smoke and noise. Milan has no horizon, no sky. Over this city, flat and surrounded by walls like a dungeon, one has installed prison bars in the guise of a ceiling: for electric tramways they say; to restrict flights of genius, the malicious say. The fact is that an Italian artist finds himself exiled, outside of Italy, and, in a manner of speaking, like a fish out of water. With iron mesh overhead, one feels absolutely caught in a great net.

Oh! how wonderful it is to leave, leaping into the middle of the sky, with the sudden jerk of an eel, to fall back on the divine beaches of Genoa or Naples!<sup>59</sup>

In this text, the poet finds himself exiled, indeed “outside of Italy,” as he experiences the modern industrial rhythms and shocks of a city reduced to a station without a horizon. If, with the founding of Futurism, Marinetti will extol urban noises and factory whistles and celebrate Luigi Russolo's invention of *intonarumori* (noise-tuners), here he longs for escape to unfettered skies, unregulated movement, and tranquil beaches. His response to the accelerated, “mathematical” routines of city life, both in his early work and later as a Futurist, is the dialectical counterpoint to the shocked response of the “metropolitan man” as theorized by Georg Simmel. According to Simmel, the metropolitan man adapts to “the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu” by developing “a protective organ” in the form of a cold, intellectual mental consciousness. His relations with others and things are determined by an



intensification of rationality, associated with the demands of a money economy, such that “a formal justice is often combined with an unrelenting hardness.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, his activities are governed by submission to “a firmly fixed framework of time which transcends all subjective elements.”<sup>61</sup> In contrast, Marinetti identifies with the sudden jerks and leaps of an eel, which signify the bodily pleasure of free, spontaneous movement within the invigorating milieu of the natural elements. Marinetti often composed his poetry (sometimes declaiming it viva voce to friends) while swimming in the sea, finding the bracing effect of being tossed by the waves conducive to flights of imagination.<sup>62</sup> This practice continued even as the poet later attributed his primary Futurist sources of inspiration to the transformative experiences of sitting on the gas tank of an airplane and on the bridge of a speeding dreadnought.<sup>63</sup>

The Futurist painters also learned to take dictation from motors—even preceding Marinetti in explicitly referring to mechanical muses in the titles of their paintings. If Carrà’s *Piazza del Duomo* reveals a certain ambivalence toward the intrusion of electric trams into the heart of Milan, his *What the Tram Told Me* of 1910-11, exhibited at the first Futurist exhibition in Paris at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in February 1912, approaches the subject in an ostensibly more celebratory, Futurist fashion (color plate 2). Rather than provide a distanced overview of a piazza and its trams as he had in the earlier painting, Carrà now seeks to immerse his spectator in the chaotic sensory fullness of a tram ride as it reconfigures the urban environment. In *Piazza del Duomo* the trams are momentarily at rest, taking on and discharging the crowds of passengers that surround them. By contrast, *What the Tram Told Me* pictures a single tramway positioned dynamically in the foreground, as if it were about to lurch forward into the spectator’s space. Nearly filling the pictorial field, the tram is fragmented and intercut with elements of the surrounding metropolis, so that distinctions between interior and exterior, object and ambience,

partially dissolve. The tram's noises, jolts, and rumblings were meant to speak equally to passengers and beholders, for as Carrà explained in the catalogue published on the occasion of the Futurist exhibition traveling to London in March 1912, the painting expresses "the synchronized emotions of a passenger in a tramcar and of the spectator outside."<sup>64</sup> Both positions are depicted within the painting, which includes what appears to be the dark shape of a driver with a cap sitting behind a wheel at the center, and a passenger just behind him at left, as well as the shadowy, hunched profile of a man pulling a cart toward the left in the foreground. Farther to the left, the profile of a horse guided by a man emerges from the fray, while in the center foreground another man wearing a red jacket bends over what may be a cart, whose semitransparent forms interpenetrate those of the tram. At the far right, partly cut off by the painting's edge, we see another vaguely defined man. All of these figures contribute to the sense of a busy urban environment, in which slow moving, utilitarian vehicles jostle with the dynamic electric tram. The illegibility of the fractured space, along with the precarious, tilted position of the tram, visualize the speed and violence with which it traverses the metropolis, disrupting traditional rhythms, dematerializing objects, and dispersing the pedestrian traffic in its path. Indeed, the tram hailed the artist, and the spectator of the picture, in the new industrial language of multiplied, fleeting vistas, glaring lights, cacophonous noises, and blurred spatial boundaries. Such qualities could have both positive and negative valences, since the jolts and thrills afforded by speeding trams were linked to an awareness of their threatening power and unpredictability. Although the tram had become a customary sight in certain parts of Milan by 1910 (since electric tram service had been expanded between 1898 and 1905), Carrà's painting brings to the surface a sense of its originary unruly force, as well as its continuing capacity to provide jarring forms of technologically mediated experience.

Only five years earlier, Morasso had extolled the promise of the electric tram of the future, already visible on the horizon. Consisting of a single, agile automotive car rather than a cumbersome, weighty convoy of linked wagons, it would easily attain the current speed of trains. Such trams would follow no schedules and make no preordained stops; no longer “mobile prisons for man,” they would simply arrive in rapid succession in response to man’s desire, thereby bringing the experience of impetuous velocity—formerly reserved for the wealthy with their “special trains”—within the reach of ordinary urban dwellers.<sup>65</sup> Carrà’s *What the Tram Told Me* captures something of the spirit of this new, volatile (and voluntarist) tram. Ignoring the utilitarian and repetitive uses of the tram, much like Morasso, Carrà focuses on its surging energies and sudden shocks, on its ability to cut through the wavering obstacles in its way, thereby reconfiguring Marinetti’s car crash for the masses. <figs. 1.6, 1.7, 1.8 in succession, near here>

Boccioni’s triptych of late 1911, *States of Mind II: The Farewells, Those Who Go, Those Who Stay*, evokes a similar ambivalence toward the overwhelming power and velocity afforded by modern vehicles of transportation (figs. 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8). These paintings, the centerpiece of Boccioni’s contribution to the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition, aspire to provide the pictorial equivalent of three distinct affective states occasioned by the departure of a young man on a train. On a surface level, this subject gave Boccioni the opportunity to paint a tumultuous situation typical of modern life, but as Guido Ballo has noted, Boccioni organized the narrative around the experience of loss and melancholy.<sup>66</sup> The triptych exemplifies the way in which travel by train, while exhilarating for its conquest of time and space, also intensified the division between “those who go” and “those who stay.” Displayed in the center of the triptych, *The Farewells* depicts a scene in a train station, with a departing train enveloped in swirls of steam,

glowing traffic signals and telegraph poles, and a series of couples who embrace through the windows of the cars. The train, like Carrà's tram, appears in repeated, partly overlapping outlines, so that its interior is opened to the exterior environment. Despite Boccioni's denunciation of the use of chronophotographic effects to convey a sense of motion in painting, he multiplies the image of the train, showing it approaching the station from the upper right, in profile in the center foreground, and then departing into the distance at the left. Boccioni's notes on this painting explain that its most prominent elements, including "the number of the engine, its profile shown in the upper part of the picture, its wind-cutting fore-part in the centre, symbolical of parting, indicate the features of the scene that remain indelibly impressed upon the mind."<sup>67</sup> Here Boccioni emphasizes the selection of specific details and views for their mnemonic and symbolic value. His sequential views, he implies, should not be compared to those captured by the objective, regulated action of a chronophotographic camera, despite the fact that some hostile critics had accused the Futurists of mimicking its effects. Etienne-Jules Marey's invention of chronophotography could only provide an arbitrary array of successive images, precisely because they were produced at measured intervals rather than in response to affective "states of mind." Boccioni's repetitions of the train, as well as of the embracing couples, serve to embed these images in the viewer's mind, much as they persist in his own memory. Although Maurizio Calvesi suggests that we see a single, repeated couple, close examination reveals differences between the figures, indicating that several memories are mingled with a primary one, probably the artist's departure from his mother.<sup>68</sup> If the gender of the embracing individuals at the far right is difficult to discern, the much larger heads of the couple just before them are clearly male, whereas the couple at the lower left comprises a man and a woman.<sup>69</sup> For Boccioni, the experience of parting, whether from his mother, sister, friend,

or lover, is intensified through the blurring of a particular moment with its memory traces as the train hurtles into the distance. Such parting instantiates a rupture whose reverberations threaten the artist's sense of subjective coherence. <fig. 1.9 near here>

One of the early drawings for this canvas focuses on a sequence of three couples seen from above, to enact the progressive separation of the figures from upper right to lower left (fig. 1.9). Boccioni described the swirling "force-lines" that surround the couples as the quasi-musical equivalents of the "confusion of departure" with its "mingled concrete and abstract sensations."<sup>70</sup> The undulating rhythm these lines establish serves both to bind the figures within an enveloping web and to evoke the overwhelming nature of the external energies—speed, steam, and noise—that will ultimately pull them apart. <fig. 1.10 near here>

In another sketch, Boccioni summarized the fraught emotions of the parting couples with the single word, *ancora* (still, yet), a term that suggests awareness of a moment whose termination could already be sensed (fig. 1.10). In the final painting, the climactic moment is reached in the couple at the lower left, the most clearly delineated within the sequence: here Boccioni emphasizes the impending rupture by interposing the physical barrier of the compartment's window between the figures and by the fact that the woman begins to turn away. The "wind-cutting fore-part" of the train's engine re-marks this charged emotional site. The decisiveness of its rending force can be gauged from the two lateral panels, depicting *Those Who Go* and *Those Who Stay*. In the former, the partly dematerialized visages of the train's passengers intermingle with fragments of houses and landscape seen through the window. A torrent of black, blue-lavender, and green oblique lines effaces figure/ground distinctions, and suggests "the violence of speed," to use Boccioni's term. The passengers find themselves merely carried along like so much baggage, rather than in a position of exhilarating power behind the wheel,

and experience “the sensation of loneliness, anguish and dazed confusion.”<sup>71</sup> The word *forse* (maybe), suggesting uncertainty, appears on one of the drawings for this panel. Similarly, “those who stay,” portrayed in the third panel, evince a state of mind characterized by “distressing melancholy” “their infinite sadness dragging everything down toward the earth.”<sup>72</sup> The artist inscribed a sketch for this work with the word, *senza* (without), signifying a condition of lack or separation. Boccioni’s published remarks on his triptych for the catalogue of the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition say nothing of the thrill of pure speed or the quest for adventure and new sensations that a Futurist interpretation of train travel would presumably entail. Instead, the industrialization of travel functions to accelerate the rending of affective bonds, to produce sensations of loss and melancholy, and to shatter the previously known boundaries of self and world.

Severini’s *Memories of a Voyage* of 1910-11, also exhibited at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in 1912, similarly addresses the theme of train travel and its effects on subjectivity and memory (color plate 3). The artist intended the painting to signal his “immense ambition to surpass Impressionism, destroying the subject’s unity of time and place.” Instead of portraying an object in its immediate environment, Severini sought to render its relations to

<EXT>things that apparently had nothing to do with it, but that in reality were linked to it in my imagination, in my memories or by feeling. In the same canvas, I brought together the Arch of Triumph, the Tour Eiffel, the Alps, the head of my father, an autobus, the municipal hall of Pienza, the boulevard . . .<sup>73</sup>

Whereas Boccioni’s *The Farewells* portrays the ways in which strong sensations register

as memory images, so that past and present are linked in a single *durée*, Severini's painting destroys all semblance of spatiotemporal continuity. Yet he too presents the train voyage as a metaphor of consciousness, captured through the lens of panoramic vision. At the center of a "circular" visual field appears the image of a woman with her hands covering her face, perhaps an image of Severini's mother mourning her son's departure, as Daniela Fonti suggests.<sup>74</sup> Around this fulcrum, a series of objects float within a distorted, dreamlike space. Severini emphasized the purely symbolic status of these objects through the use of inconsistent scale, strange juxtapositions, and intense, often unnatural hues. At the upper right we find an image of a young man, probably the artist, in a diamond-patterned shirt contemplating the black bird in his palm, a symbol of the freedom afforded by flight. Severini located this figure next to the town hall of Pienza, emblem of his home; just below appears the Arch of Triumph, followed by a man in a straw hat driving a horse-drawn cart, and then circling to the left, a double-decker bus, an elegant woman with a green parasol and her driver in a carriage, and then above them, the powerful engine of a train with its metallic sheen. At the upper left Severini gives us the Alps, and at the upper right, his destination, Paris, signified by Sacre Coeur and his new neighborhood in Montmartre. In the upper portion of the canvas a couple (father and son?) embraces to the left of a well, the visage of a blonde-haired woman appears next to a campanile, and various other, smaller figures are scattered throughout.

Through the montagelike organization of these images, all equally vivid, Severini pictures the intensity of his memories of a trip to Paris, perhaps his first in 1906, as they collide and mingle with one another. As in Boccioni's *States of Mind* triptych, the train voyage entails not only nostalgia and longing for people and places left behind, but also the loss of a sense of rootedness. Just as the images seen through a compartment window pass by in rapid succession

so that distant places suddenly seem closer, Severini's *Memories of a Voyage* brings near and far into uncanny proximity. A dynamic current runs through the painting, making objects tilt and pitch, suggesting that others might also rise up only to disappear. Their fragmented, intensely colorful, and sometimes warped forms appeal more to the spectator's sense of fleeting (and jolted?) vision than to the slower modalities of touch. While not directly resembling any particular scene observed from a train's window, Severini's work distills many features of the panoramic vision typically experienced by train travelers, especially the sense that the world is laid out for their omniscient overview, even as time and space seem to collapse.<sup>75</sup> Yet *Memories of a Voyage* also counters the potentially homogenizing effects of such accelerated, distanced, and often blurred vision, by isolating and emphasizing specific, emotionally charged images. It is as if the lived experiences through which memory draws the contours of the self overflow the space of Severini's canvas, allowing nostalgia for the past to coexist with an affirmation of the artist's assumed identity as a bohemian living in the cosmopolitan milieu of Montmartre. <figs. 1.11, 1.12 near here>

By contrast, Giacomo Balla's remarkable series of drawings and paintings of speeding automobiles evoke only the present tense, to focus on the immediacy of the driver's (and spectator's) experience of velocity as a modern version of the sublime. Unlike Marinetti, Balla did not own a race car, and there is no record of his having been a passenger in one. His conceptualization of its velocity synthesizes a spectator's view of passing motorcars and of the racecourse with scientific images of motion and the play of fantasy. Balla's earliest pencil studies of motorcars, executed on gridded notebook paper, depict vehicles at rest without any indication of their spatial context. Some of these drawings, which date to late 1912 or early 1913, describe the specific design features of a Fiat Type 3 (1910-12), including the open driver's



compartment with its angled steering column and wheel, suspended lamps and retractable window shade, the side door, windows, flat roof, wheels, flared bumpers, running footboard, and in some cases, also the schematic profile of a driver (figs. 1.11 and 1.12). On one of these drawings Balla noted the presence of a brass hood ornament (*ottone*) and parking lights (*luci*). Other drawings include both this design and the Fiat Type 1, a smaller convertible sedan. According to Balla's daughters, he observed these vehicles from a corner in the Via Veneto, in front of the Palazzo Regina Margherita in Rome, as usual relying on direct observation of a phenomenon as the ground for the elaboration of quasi-abstract, equivalent forms.<sup>76</sup> <fig. 1.13 near here>

In 1913, Balla began to execute a series of monochromatic paintings of motorcars that were clearly inspired by Marey's chronophotographs, which captured the sequential phases of objects in motion through partly overlapping images. *Racing Automobile* of 1913 takes its cue from this strategy; it retains a residue of the earlier realist drawings in the repeated views of the Fiat's flat-roofed frame with a driver behind the steering wheel, coursing along the horizon from right to left (fig. 1.13). But the rotary dynamism of the wheels now generates a proliferating series of abstract patterns that can no longer be contained by a descriptive premise, or even by the limits of the pictorial field. The vortices created by the automobile's spinning wheels and the whirlwinds of air they release fly along the paths opened by a set of orthogonals that converge just past the left edge of the paper. Marinetti had evoked a similar effect in his description of the Brescia automobile races of 1907: "Madness blew so violently on the immeasurable air pump of the circuit, that it took the form of a spiral, rising like a screw to the Zenith . . ." <sup>77</sup> Balla complicates this diagonal trajectory, however, by drawing another set of straight lines that radiate toward the viewer from the advancing, leftmost profile of the race car. Giorgio Nicodemi

reports, based on a conversation with the artist, that Balla intended these projecting lines “to represent the expansion and noise of the motor.”<sup>78</sup> In a reversal of the Renaissance perspectival system, Balla transforms a series of orthogonals, which normally would recede to a vanishing point in the distance, into dynamic lines of force propelled outward from the depicted race car, so that they impinge upon the viewer. For the latter, it is as if Balla recreates the hallucinatory optic and haptic effect many travelers report: that accelerated movement makes it seem that the traversed environment advances upon the traveler, rather than the other way around.<sup>79</sup> The rectangular box shapes that also emanate from the race car further emphasize this effect, while the large projecting angles visualize the atmosphere.<sup>80</sup> More specifically, these rising angles render what Balla elsewhere calls *spessori d’atmosfera* (atmospheric densities), or what Marinetti describes, also in his account of the Brescia automobile races, as the sweeping force of “the blast of air of a departure.”<sup>81</sup> The painting thus functions as a “motor,” to produce an expanding network of intersecting vectors of energy, whose centrifugal flight patterns reach out to the implied spectators. The viewers captured by these surging forces would experience the race car’s velocity as Balla imagined it—as a thrilling onrush of visual, tactile, and aural sensations that partly obliterated subject/object distinctions in the intoxicating sublimity of the moment. For Balla there was little question of sudden jolts, shocks, or even collision. His speeding race cars arrive as roaring projectiles that generate flows of energy in which the car and driver nearly “disaggregate,” as they fuse with a larger oceanic flux.<sup>82</sup>

As my discussion of these examples seeks to demonstrate, the Futurists’ responses to the upheavals wrought by urban modernity were far more varied, and more haunted by ambivalence toward its most disruptive effects, than has usually been recognized. They encountered the belated industrialization of Italy and experienced its psychosomatic shocks and jolts, as well as

its losses and displacements, as a series transformations with both positive and negative consequences. Accustomed to the slower rhythms, forms of perception, and sociality typical of preindustrial, semirural society, the Futurists found themselves lurched into the present by historical change, as well as their own ambitions to become resolutely modern poets, artists, and political activists. To reject modernity would have been to condemn Italy to resting on the glories of its past, in conformity with prevailing stereotypes.

As we have seen, Marinetti's earliest encounters with modern, industrial reality were a source of profound shock and alienation to him. Many of his pre-Futurist poems and newspaper essays reveal a sense of self assaulted by unfamiliar sensations and rhythms: the jarring cacophony of Milan at 10 a.m., the imprisoning web of the city's electric wires overhead and crisscrossing rails underfoot, the velocity and jolts of trains and trams, the glare of electric lights, the factories belching smoke and grime. He seems to have felt particularly threatened by his experience of the "automatic and bituminous crowd," whose sheer numbers and degraded industrial labor (marked by standardization and boredom), led to the erasure of distinctive individualities, implicating his own sense of self.<sup>83</sup> In its automatism, the crowd also seemed to succumb to wavelike surges of violence that threatened to engulf him, as he emphasizes in several early texts, including a lengthy description of the riotous mob that attended Verdi's funeral in 1901.<sup>84</sup> It is as if Marinetti understood the rising political and cultural power of the masses as an entropic phenomenon, which could only lead to a chaotic leveling of hierarchies as the energy that sustained the elites sputtered out. The cult of heroism and violence were among his antidotes to this frightening dissolution of identity in the encroaching mirror image of a homogeneous, abject mass.

Perhaps even more threatening than these shocks encountered in the exterior world were

those that seemed to erupt forth from within: the desire for carnal pleasure and feminine love. Marinetti, like many men of his generation confronted with a sense of their own eroded prestige, and with transformations in women's social roles, sought to erect a barrier against the claims of sentiment and lust. In their stead, he exalted the will to power and enthusiasm for heroic deeds in war. If woman, like the crowd, were subject to irrational impulses and automatic behavior, the virile Futurist warrior would determine his own fate through acts of willful aggression and violence. He would learn to inure himself to the corrosive effects of love and lust, to fuse flesh with metal, and to thrill to the erotic frisson of velocity or an exploding bomb.

In the account I have traced here, it is not often easy to draw a definitive line between Futurist attitudes and actions that might be associated with Freud's notion of a defensive "stimulus shield," and those that generated new, pleasurable flows of energy. Indeed, the Futurists often confound seemingly opposed psychic responses to the jolts, shocks, and ruptures of life in the urban metropolis. What follows is a series of speculations that have driven the analysis of Futurist responses to modernity proposed in this book.

In theorizing the ego's production of a defensive "stimulus shield" in response both to innate instinctual impulses and external psychic threats in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* of 1921, Freud draws on observations made during his early studies of hysteria, as well as on the traumas occasioned by the First World War. His hypothesis is grounded in an economic model of psychic equilibrium, in which pleasure derives from a reduction in the quantity of excitation present in the mental apparatus, or at least in maintaining a stable, constant state.<sup>85</sup> According to this view, excessive stimulation leads only to perceptual displeasure, and results in various mechanisms of repression and fixation associated with "traumatic neurosis." Its effects are most notable when hyperstimulation causes a breach in the ego's protective barrier for which it is

unprepared. Whereas anxiety and fear galvanize a strengthening of the psychic shield in advance of an expected danger, the experience of fright leaves the surprised subject vulnerable, so that the danger is registered by the unconscious with full intensity. Freud notes that a physical injury inflicted simultaneously with the frightening event could diminish the psychic effect of trauma by directing psychic energy to the site of the wound.<sup>86</sup>

For Freud, those who suffer a trauma, whether “severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life,” typically manifest a number of regressive symptoms, as they seek to master the danger they experienced retroactively.<sup>87</sup> Among these symptoms, which point to a subjective rather than organic ailment, are depression, mental impairment, and fixation on the traumatic event and its repetition in dreams and sometimes in life. While often painful, the repetition of an unpleasant situation could carry with it pleasurable effects, especially insofar as it allowed the traumatized subject to actively rework what had initially been experienced passively. It might even be turned into a game, as demonstrated in the famous example of the little boy playing with a wooden spool. In throwing away and recovering the spool to the words *fort* and *da* (*there* and *here*), the boy reenacted and thereby gained symbolic control of his mother’s disappearances and returns, while also giving vent to violent impulses.<sup>88</sup>

Freud regards such repetitive behaviors as a means of reaffirming the coherence of the ego, of binding and rendering “quiescent” its disruptive, repressed energies.<sup>89</sup> A related mechanism is the generation of a stimulus shield or psychosomatic armor to ward off further shocks. By way of explanation Freud posits the analogy of a simple vesicle susceptible to stimulation. By necessity, the exterior surface of this vesicle would become differentiated, allowing it to serve as an organ for receiving stimuli. Yet as a result of the ceaseless impact of

stimuli, its outermost layer, down to a certain level, would be permanently modified, forming a “crust” incapable of further modifications. Just below this layer, which offers no resistance to the powerful energies emanating from the exterior world, Freud imagines a cortical layer that

<EXT>would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these [energies] if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. It acquires the shield in this way: its outermost surface ceases to have the structure proper to living matter, becomes to some degree inorganic and thenceforward functions as a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli. In consequence, the energies of the external world are able to pass into the next underlying layers, which have remained living, with only a fragment of their original intensity. . . . By its death, the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate<m->unless, that is to say, stimuli reach it which are so strong they break through the protective shield.<sup>90</sup>

Although Freud observes that the cortical layer “would be killed” by the intensity of external stimulation if it did not develop a defense, this defense consists in its outermost layer becoming “inorganic,” thereby effecting a *petit mort* in advance. Trauma occurs when a shock is so great that it breaks through this inorganic protective shield, causing psychic blockage and an effort to repair and strengthen the shield through new investments of energy. Similarly, unbound or mobile impulses arising from the instincts can undermine the ego’s stability, leading to renewed cathexis of the stimulus shield, as well as the projection of the threatening forces outward, onto others or onto objects in the world.<sup>91</sup>

The Futurists parried the unfamiliar jolts and shocks occasioned by urban modernity in a

variety of ways, which Freud's hypotheses illuminate only in part. Rather than repress or fixate upon the causes of the psychic disturbances that pose a danger to the sovereignty or coherence of the self, they tended to bring them to the surface in works of art, poetry, or other forms of cultural activity. Insofar as their attitudes evince the erection of a stimulus shield—and this is often the case—it operates with numerous cracks and fissures. Hence their works are often suffused with ambivalence despite the stridency of their rhetorical celebration of modernity. Often a single theme or trope can work on multiple levels to disavow a trauma or lack and to reveal its lingering force.

Several examples explored in this chapter concern the disparate responses of the Futurists to the new technologies of transportation and speed. If Marinetti's earliest encounters with the "demon of speed" were rife with a sense of the train's unruly explosive force and danger, he subsequently embraced these qualities as a cure for the "mortal boredom" and disempowerment of the individual within an increasingly regulated, anonymous mass society. By 1907, in writing about the Brescia automobile races, Marinetti extols the thrill of speed as an intensifier that opens onto an experience of the sublime. Reporting from the perspective of a spectator who identifies with the drivers, Marinetti admires their courageous defiance of death, takes pleasure in their close physical contact with their impetuous vehicles (described as "metallic jaguars," while the racecourse is a "jungle"), and envisions an early version of the volatile man/machine hybrid.<sup>92</sup> Rather than seek pleasure in a diminution of stimulation, or in a constant state of psychic equilibrium, Marinetti wishes to increase the quantity of excitement to the point of exceeding the threshold of the human sensory apparatus. The furious velocity of the race car figures as the supreme expression of desire, as the motor driving the will to power:

<EXT>Faster than the wind! Faster than lightning! . . . Faster than strychnine launched into the circuit of the veins. . . . One need only desire! Let whoever desires fly! . . . Rise to the sky whoever desires! . . . Triumph to whoever believes! . . . It is necessary to believe and desire! . . . Oh desire, oh desire, eternal magneto! . . . And you, my torrid will, great carburetor of dreams! . . . Transmission of my nerves, throwing planetary orbits into gear! . . . Prophetic instinct, oh gearbox! . . . Oh my explosive and detonating heart, who will stop you from crushing Death? . . . Who prevents you from commanding the Impossible? . . . And make yourself immortal, through a stroke of will! . . .<sup>93</sup>

Velocity pulses through the poet's veins as the great intoxicator, conjuring phantasmagorical visions of planetary conquest and immortality. The joy of explosively launching desire into a universe without limits heralds future psychosomatic transformations that promise to turn the merely human subject into a thundering, willful god/machine. But the desperate rhetoric of this passage also intimates that it serves to exorcise a sense of lack, of insufficiency in the realm of power, and certainly the fear of death. The exhilarating sensory intensity of the experience of speed could simultaneously compensate for the dull, repetitive rhythms of ordinary metropolitan life and erect a stimulus screen against psychic shocks of an unpleasant kind. With nerves described as gears and a detonating heart, Marinetti images himself as impervious to unwelcome stimuli or pain. His desire to fuse flesh with metal functions similarly, to fortify an all-too-vulnerable body, rendering it hard, phallic, and immune to attack, whether from within or without. In Marinetti's imaginary universe, as well as in his life, psychic processes of defense and discharge are intimately linked, so that he takes intense pleasure in becoming machinelike, in developing an impenetrable surface and an antihuman psychology, but he simultaneously thrills



to the hyperstimulation of speed and the sensation of an exploding, expanding self.<sup>94</sup>

The next chapter analyzes the Futurists' various efforts to interpellate and galvanize the crowd, that anonymous and despised mass that earlier had threatened Marinetti's sense of individuation. Rather than merely reject the crowd in horror, they seek to convert it to their patriotic cause, through direct address in the form of riotous serate and other public manifestations, as well as through the mass media and works of art and free-word poetry. Although most of the Futurists shared Marinetti's elitist disdain for the masses, they recognized that achieving their aim to renovate Italy demanded an alliance with the most vigorous, youthful, and potentially rebellious members of the public. In appealing to this public, they frequently employed strategies whose motive was to shock, jolt, and otherwise breach its defensive stimulus shield. This culturally produced shield/screen (tradition, habit, propriety), whose purpose was to shelter the subject from a painfully intense, destabilizing apprehension of change or conflict, would have to be shattered so that the shocks of modernity—as rendered through Futurist myth—could be fully and traumatically registered. The violence of Futurist rhetoric and action was intended as a blow to outmoded forms of subjectivity in order to generate a dynamic counterimage: the virile, man/machine vector, whose stimulus shield was newly fortified with fantasies of destruction and heroism. With the outbreak of war, Marinetti wrote to Severini to urge the Futurist painters to create bold, synthetic works that would “strike the imagination and eyes of everyone or of almost all intelligent readers.” He further declared: “I believe that the great war, lived intensely by the Futurist painters, can produce true convulsions in their sensibility, and spur them to a brutal simplification of very clear lines that will strike and incite the readers, just as the war strikes and incites the combatants.”<sup>95</sup> The Futurists hoped that the experience of shock would function much like Marinetti's car crash, or indeed the war, to

reconfigure consciousness so that it would both invite and parry the blows of industrial modernity, while simultaneously unleashing exhilarating new flows of energy and the erotic frisson of the will to power.

<CHN>Chapter 2

<recto or verso>

<CHT>*Folla/Follia*: Futurism and the Crowd

<CHEPI>Crowds are somewhat like the sphinx of ancient fable: it is necessary to arrive at a solution of the problems offered by their psychology or to resign ourselves to being devoured by them.

<m->Gustave Le Bon, 1895<sup>1</sup>

In his “Futurist Vision-Hypothesis” titled “Electrical War” of 1911, Marinetti singled out a number of “wholly new phenomena” characteristic of modernity: “The right to strike, equality before the law, the authority of numbers, the usurping power of mobs, the speed of international communications. [. . .]”<sup>2</sup> These were phenomena that had convulsed the nation and that menaced its existing class hierarchy and political structure; but if the new energies these phenomena had unleashed could be harnessed toward the creation of a militarized, patriotic nation, Futurism would realize its desired revolution. Yet Marinetti’s embrace of the masses was always paradoxical, mediated by a Nietzschean cult of the superman, and filtered through an ideology that both celebrated and derided the “crowd” as a force of the future and a regression to a primitive past. This chapter explores the multiple ways in which the Futurists sought to galvanize the masses, focusing particularly on their performative interpretation of late nineteenth-century French and Italian crowd theory. By attending to the Futurists’ efforts both to shape and to merge with the masses, we gain a clearer understanding of the motivations that drove some of their most famous avant-garde inventions: the Futurist serata, *parole in libertà* (free-word poetry), and their pictorial syntheses of visual and verbal “images.”

Not surprisingly, the figure of *la folla* the crowd occupies a central place within the constellation of Futurist topoi. Simultaneously flattered and reviled, desired and feared, the crowd is the necessary addressee of Futurist rhetoric and the locus of its political and cultural aspirations. Futurism's fascination with *la folla* was deeply ambivalent, revealing an awareness of the masses as a powerful political force whose newly declared rights and demands were destabilizing traditional social hierarchies. Conflated with "the people" or even the Italian race, these masses at times became synonymous with the nation. As such they were said to embody positive characteristics such as intuitive vitality, elasticity, heroism, and even genius. Conflated with the mob, *la folla* degenerated into a spontaneous, unruly collectivity, dangerous in its proclivity for crime, but thrilling as a potential agent of violent political revolt.<sup>3</sup> This very slippage from one mythified referent to the next, from the boisterous multitude gathered at a political demonstration to the violent throng of rioting workers, from the enthusiastic audience at a theatrical performance to the people at large, gave *la folla* its peculiar power and resonance as an imaginary Other.

Always haunting this Other was the threat of social and psychic degeneration. Crowds, as they were theorized at the turn of the century, were thought to succumb inevitably to an atavistic regression to unconscious primal impulses. Once immersed in a crowd, it was claimed, one experienced a loss of differentiation and individuality and merged with the larger, informe mass of an impulsive, irrational group. The Futurists desired integration with this mass in order to experience the exhilarating tumult at its explosive center. But they also desired to stand above or beyond it in order to make the crowd an instrument of their will.

As in the literature of the period, the Futurists understood the crowd to be "feminine" in its malleability, its incapacity to reason, its susceptibility to flattery and hysteria, and its secret

desire to be seduced and dominated. Marinetti made this association of the crowd and “femininity” explicit in 1916 in a manifesto announcing a new militaristic form of poetic declamation designed to promote the war effort. In this manifesto he referred to his long “experience of the femininity of crowds and weakness of their collective virginity in the course of forcing Futurist free verse upon them.”<sup>4</sup> But Marinetti’s interest in crowd psychology as a means of understanding the social unrest of his time can be traced back as far as his early articles and theater reviews for *Gil Blas* and *La Revue Blanche*. In 1900, in an essay analyzing the riots in Milan of May 1898, Marinetti employed the phrase “psychology of crowds,” which was also the title of an enormously influential book by Gustave Le Bon (*Psychologie des foules* [1895]).<sup>5</sup> No doubt drawing on Le Bon’s book, but also perhaps on the contemporary work of the Italian social theorist and irredentist Scipio Sighele (who became a close associate), Marinetti described the riots as rooted in “deep and complex psychological forces,” rather than in material causes such as poverty or famine.<sup>6</sup> He understood the violence that erupted, seemingly without warning, as an expression of the people’s “horizon, the climate, and atavistic behavior.”<sup>7</sup> Such imperious factors defied reasoned argument and seemed nearly impossible to control. Although he demonstrated some sympathy for the Socialists on the barricades in Milan, he regarded the bloody suppression of the riots by the military as inevitable. Marinetti believed that such spontaneous and convulsive events could not lead to genuine reform, for “no country in the world shows itself less prepared for social reform by way of revolutionary change than Italy.”<sup>8</sup>

Marinetti’s early fascination with crowds is also evident in his play *Le Roi Bombance* (*King Revelry*), a satiric tragedy published in 1905 in the *Mercure de France* and performed for the first time in 1909 under the auspices of the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre in Paris. The title and grotesque tone of this play reveal the important influence of Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, with its

reliance on gastronomic and obscene bodily metaphors. More specifically, the play allegorizes contemporary political debates on Socialism fused with reflections on the fatality and meaninglessness of the human condition. *Le Roi Bombance* opens with an image of a famished crowd in which physical hunger represents the desire for power as an implacable force located not in the mind but in the lower bodily domain of the stomach. When the people consume the king's cadaver, thereby metaphorically restoring him to life, the revolution the famine provoked is overturned. The king's reincarnation through the very revolutionaries who had deposed him presents a cyclical view of history, in which powerful institutions such as the monarchy eternally reassert themselves in new guises, despite the rhetoric of politicians or the revolts of sectarian groups.

In a letter of 1905 to Giovanni Pascoli, Marinetti explains that he conceived this play in 1901, while assisting at an oratorical duel between two of the leading political figures of his day: Filippo Turati, a reformist Socialist, and Arturo Labriola, a revolutionary syndicalist. This spectacle occurred before three thousand Milanese workers in a vast hall and was characterized by "brutal stupidities." Marinetti completed *Le Roi Bombance* during the Milanese general strike of 1904, in a spirit of unshakable pessimism toward what he called "irreducible popular imbecility and the ferocity of human nature." Against the crowd, with its eternal "hunger for an impossible happiness," Marinetti set the tragicomic figure of the Poet-Idiot, who was satirically modeled on several known Symbolist and Decadent poets, including himself. This Poet-Idiot, allied with the insurgent dynamism of the libertarian character called Famone (Big Hunger), proposes that the only solution to human misery lies in Art, and in a government of artist-revolutionaries.<sup>9</sup> Finding his ideas misunderstood and derided by the crowd, which cannot distinguish truth from illusion, the Poet chooses to die by striking himself on the forehead. Even

this action has symbolic meaning, since the center of activity of the crowd is not the mind, but the stomach.<sup>10</sup> The poet's suicide is an affirmation of his freedom to determine his destiny and a recognition of his uselessness before the power and ignorance of the masses. In Marinetti's words, the play was intended to demonstrate, in a burlesque manner, "the tragic and inevitable victory of idealist individualism over the brutal mass. Briefly, I concluded with the failure of socialism, the glory of anarchy, and the complete ridicule of the charlatans, reformists, and other scullions of universal Happiness."<sup>11</sup>

As this brief description suggests, Marinetti's concern was as much with his own futile role as an idealist poet in an age of mass audiences as it was with the specter of proletarian revolution. Two violent but ultimately suppressed strikes framed the writing of *Le Roi Bombance*. But as Giovanni Lista has observed, Marinetti's pessimistic response to these events cannot be attributed to the disillusionment of revolutionary aspirations. Rather, his reaction is that of an aristocrat and poet, who is repelled by the rising power of the masses, the threat of Socialism, and its "leveling" egalitarian ideals.

Ironically, when *Le Roi Bombance* was performed in July 1909 to an outraged audience, the "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" had only just appeared in *Le Figaro*. Marinetti chose to publish it on the front page of a Parisian newspaper, where it was guaranteed to garner the attention, not just of poets and other literati, but also of an international mass public. Although the Futurist movement that Marinetti founded retained until its end the notion of an innate social hierarchy, his attitude toward the masses had shifted. In a calculated move, Marinetti rejected his former pessimism, so much part of the Symbolist legacy he had inherited, as well as the ivory tower attitude it implied. In its place he assumed an anti-Decadent attitude of "artificial optimism" and enthusiasm for modern life, and the life of the masses in particular.<sup>12</sup> The

“Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” proclaims, in language that owes much to Walt Whitman:

<EXT>We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of the arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; . . . and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.<sup>13</sup>

Marinetti here sings of crowds in a passage that compares them, in vitality and force, to modern technological inventions. He embraces the crowd as a phenomenon typical of modernity, and he affirms the potential for action and revolution that it promises. His new strategy will be to appeal directly to the masses with the goal of reenergizing the nation along Futurist lines. Only with the collaboration of the most strong and subversive elements of the working class will he be able to achieve his goal of overthrowing the existing bourgeoisie, which he regards as weak and decadent. Futurism, then, will mount a program of political and cultural regeneration with the aim of establishing a patriotic, fully industrialized, militant nation. At the heart of the project lay the recognition, filtered through the lens of crowd theory, of the new social importance of the masses.

Interestingly, Umberto Boccioni had also meditated on the modern phenomenon of the crowd in a pre-Futurist drawing of 1908. *Crowd Surrounding an Equestrian Monument* (fig. 2.1) was based on the fourteenth-century monument to Cansignorio della Scala by Bonino da Campione in Verona.<sup>14</sup> Boccioni’s rendering abstracts the gothic base of the sculpture in order to transform it into a phallic tower that raises the equestrian hero, dressed in medieval armor, high



above the wildly gesturing crowd. Its blurred and partially fused forms oppose his clear, immobile silhouette, set starkly against the sky. This image proclaims the desire of the crowd for the leader in terms so exaggerated as to imply parody. That this desire is decadent, hysterical, and contagious is suggested by the otherwise surprising presence of a laughing nude woman at the right, and by the mimetic repetition of the gesture of the outstretched arms. As if seized by demonic forces, or perhaps in a moment of hysteria, the woman seems to give way to sexual fantasies, or at least to embody the dangerous principle of unleashed desire. The men who raise their arms before the monument also seem overcome: their violently imploring gestures suggest an exalted, irrational state of mind. <fig. 2.1 about here>

This image is fascinating in that Boccioni chooses to portray an aristocratic crowd fashionably attired in black tie, rather than one of the numerous worker demonstrations or riots that shook the nation during the preceding decade.<sup>15</sup> As such, he acknowledges that the modern crowd is a heterogeneous phenomenon, typical not only of proletarian masses but also of other social classes and groups. If he represents this crowd as enthralled by the monument to Cansignorio, the last of the dynastic Scaligeri family that ruled Verona in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it may be in order to allude generally to the desperate desire of the Italian aristocracy to reaffirm its waning prestige and authority. Boccioni still considered himself a Socialist in 1908, and (like Marinetti) would have been critical of the decadence of the ruling elite and of dynastic privilege. His drawing may be a satirical response to the political debates of this period (preceding the parliamentary elections of 1909), in which Socialist demands that suffrage be extended beyond the members of a small, landholding class encountered resistance.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, the equestrian monument to Cansignorio, dedicated to a feudal court, presides over a serene, enclosed cemetery located in the center of Verona. Rather than romanticize this

emblem of a bygone era, Boccioni portrays the prince as rigid and insubstantial; lacking corporeal presence, his virility and power are sustained only by his stiff posture and the absurdly phallic plinth. Crudely outlined and with hatch marks that do little to establish a sense of volume, the prince appears as an illusory being, the collective projection of a hysterical upper class threatened by growing demands for democratic reform. Seen in this light, Boccioni's drawing unmaskes the claims to power of this class as rooted in the political myths and symbols of the distant past. Yet this image can also be read as revealing Boccioni's fascination with virility and power, as manifested by the "leader" who electrifies and dominates the crowd.<sup>17</sup>

Although Boccioni's drawing of an elegant, if hysterical, aristocratic crowd is comparatively unusual, it nonetheless exhibits the psychological qualities and behaviors said by contemporary theorists to define a crowd.<sup>18</sup> For not every assembly of persons, of course, constituted a proper crowd. Le Bon's aforementioned study popularized much that was being debated in scientific journals at this time. He claimed that the crowd appeared when "the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes."<sup>19</sup> No matter how heterogeneous the members of a gathering might be, once they have submitted to what Le Bon called the "psychological law of the mental unity of crowds," their individual attributes and ability to reason became submerged within the newly formed organism. In their place Le Bon discerned the workings of the unconscious, which he believed was a mental substratum created primarily by hereditary influences, or "the genius of a race."<sup>20</sup> This regression to the unconscious also implied an atavistic return to a precivilized state, or even a less advanced stage of human evolution. Le Bon defined the main characteristics of crowds as "impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgement and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides<m->which are almost

always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution in women, savages, and children, for instance.”<sup>21</sup>

Similar parallels between the workings of the modern unconscious and the mental state of so-called primitive peoples, women and children, would also be drawn by Freud in his theory of the psyche, and they turned up in the crowd theory of Scipio Sighele as well.<sup>22</sup> Sighele had written about the criminal attributes of crowds as early as 1891, and had published a book titled *The Criminal Couple* in 1897 in which he asserted that “the crowd-like woman has an *extreme* psychology, capable of every excess, possibly capable only of excesses, admirable at times for its abnegation, frequently frightening in its ferocity, never or almost never even and measured in its sentiments.”<sup>23</sup> His more general work of 1903, *The Intelligence of the Crowd*, consisted, for the most part, of previously published papers, including some of the responses he received from other theorists. In this book he agreed with Le Bon that the crowd is not the sum of its parts, but the diffusion of the self into the greater unity of the collectivity. And he asserted that the laws of the unconscious, which are largely determined by race, govern the crowd. Sighele also repeatedly emphasized the femininity of the crowd as well as its atavism: “Collective psychology, similar to this in feminine psychology (may the women forgive me) is made of cruelty and of contradictions, and passes, or rather leaps, with great velocity from one sentiment to the contrary sentiment.”<sup>24</sup> He differed from Le Bon, however, in insisting on a distinction between the crowd as a static or synchronic phenomenon and the crowd as a dynamic or historically developing phenomenon. Collective psychology, he maintained, pertained only to the static crowd, which he characterized as a simple and improvised gathering and, in that sense, nearly an animal agglomeration; it did not pertain to the formation of publics, which entailed a much slower, more human and civilizing process. He therefore claimed that

“the crowd, in sum, is an eminently *barbarous* and *atavistic* collectivity: the public is an eminently *civil* and *modern* collectivity.”<sup>25</sup> The crowd, therefore, is a “wild horde,” or in other terms, an “*informe* human agglomeration” that thinks and feels tumultuously, and which is, with few exceptions, prone to commit crimes.<sup>26</sup>

Boccioni painted *Riot in the Galleria* in 1910, shortly after he joined the Futurist movement (color plate 4). This work, which was originally exhibited in December 1910 with the less politically charged title *A Brawl (Una baruffa)*, depicts a melee that erupts in Milan’s most famous arcade, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, at night, under the glare of brilliant electric lights.<sup>27</sup> Here again Boccioni displays his interest in an upper-class crowd, but he now provides it with a specifically modern urban setting: a shopping arcade, where the signs of pleasure, fashion, advertising, and consumption create a new, destabilized, hallucinatory space. Paradoxically, this very modernity is linked to a resurgence of atavistic behavior, so that the new artificial intoxicants (alcohol, cosmetics, fashionable hats, electric lights) release regressive or unconscious tendencies. Few art historians have observed that at the center of this melee we find two women, probably prostitutes, locked in battle. Just before them, framed by the arc of their outstretched bodies, two men engage in a skirmish, while a third strives to hold them apart. This linking of female and male bodies suggests a possible narrative pretext for the outburst of anger in sexual rivalry or jealousy, although Boccioni does not clarify causes, but focuses, rather, on effects. *Riot in the Galleria* is formally and thematically similar to a painting now titled *The Raid (La retata)*, but exhibited in 1911 with the ironic title *Dear Prostitutes (Care puttane)* (fig. 2.2).<sup>28</sup> This latter work seeks to capture the tumultuous moment of a police arrest of several prostitutes, again under streams of violent electric light. <fig. 2.2 about here>

Both paintings, then, portray the physical and psychological effects of an agitated crowd,

and both center on the activities of “criminal” women. In *Riot in the Galleria*, the violence of the women at the vortex of the scene generates a double movement. Hysteria spreads like a form of contagion outward to entrap all of those within its field, while it also precipitates a stampede inward toward the center. As in *Crowd Surrounding a Monument*, Boccioni establishes a sense of the unity of the multitude through the use of simple repeated gestures and postures, especially the body flung forward, arms raised in agitation or supplication. This allows us to distinguish those who have been drawn into the chaos, and who begin to form a circle around the protagonists, from those who occupy the far reaches of the Galleria, and are as yet unaffected. Only the gentleman with raised arms in the lower center foreground faces outward. Cut off by the picture’s edge, this figure pitches forward into the viewers’ space, as if to forestall their inward rush. Indeed, the painting’s literal edge is treated as a boundary to be transgressed on all sides: Boccioni crops the electric lamp at the top, and causes figures to flow into the pictorial field from the foreground and sides as if they were compelled by a magnetic force. By this device, he imagines an expanding circle of participants, including those viewers who wish to project themselves into the center of the picture, as if it were the tumultuous center of a riot. Yet Boccioni also portrays the scene from the safety of an elevated perch, which grants him an omniscient optic from which to survey its effects without succumbing to their influence.

The radiant electric light that suffuses the scene enhances the sense that a current of energy runs through this crowd, connecting each individual to the others. Dazzling specks of complementary color dissolve the boundaries between figures so that bodies flow into one another and into the pictorial ground. The treatment of the faces and limbs is especially telling; the visage of each man in the foreground, for example, is indistinguishable from the stippled surface, and their legs and arms have only the wavering, optical presence of reflections in water.

Many of the figures lack visible feet and hands so that at their extremities they dissipate into a charged, atmospheric flux. The loss of felt somatic boundaries and of psychic individuality thought to be characteristic of crowd experience finds its formal equivalent in this brilliantly shimmering, unified surface.

Similarly in *The Raid*, vectors of light, emanating from a set of brilliant lamps in the background, pierce the scene at oblique angles, disrupting its logical spatial coordinates, while also making the narrative difficult to interpret. Such extreme night lighting both illuminates and blinds the figures it falls upon. The hapless prostitute at the center is exposed, trapped by the light. The mass of nearly fused figures who surround her grow increasingly agitated, pointing, turning away, flailing, even as the ground beneath their feet implodes. Fractured, multiplied, and all too dazzling, light appears in these works under the sign of hysteria, producing convulsive behaviors that no longer submit to reason or control. Electric light also provides a setting for the delirium of the crowd in many of Marinetti's texts. This motif turns up, for example, in his descriptions of the riots of May 1898. In one passage of his essay we read: "Toward eight o'clock at night, on the vast square of the Duomo, all inflamed with small electric moons, a human tide burst into foam, armed with raised fists and cries."<sup>29</sup> Or, again: "Milan gasped, all its windows open in an atmosphere exasperated by light and by waiting."<sup>30</sup> <fig. 2.3 about here>

At least one other major painting is worth considering in this context. Boccioni's *The Riot* of 1911 counterposes a massed group of figures on the street with a set of opened windows and electric lamps on the upper floor of a building (fig. 2.3). In the earliest sketch for this work there are no indications of place or time (fig. 2.4).<sup>31</sup> A throng of violently gesturing figures surrounds a closed inner circle of men, who presumably are hunched around a victim of uncertain identity. We appear to witness the consequences of a raid or attack, as the men with

raised fists in the foreground seem roused to vengeance. A distraught woman with two children at the far right provides some anecdotal information, without clarifying the circumstances. In *Sketch No. 2*, the execution is looser and the poses are less detailed (though still legible), but the artist now situates the scene against a backdrop of blazing arc lamps, thereby indicating that the action occurs at night and in an urban setting (fig. 2.5). In a third study for *The Riot*, the scuffle is spatially compressed, reduced to one-third of the scene and treated even more summarily, while far greater prominence is given to the multiplied orbs of light (fig. 2.6). The final painting again rearranges these proportions, but retains the thematic interaction of the fiercely illuminated environment and mob hysteria. Here, as in related works, Boccioni uses electric light as a symbol of the transmission of energy and as the agent of a “new psychology of night-life” whose most “feverish” figures included the *bon viveur*, the *cocotte*, the Apache dancer, and the absinthe drinker.<sup>32</sup> Each of these social types exists on the fringes of bourgeois society and connotes an excess of pleasure spawned by addiction, hallucination, or delirium. For Boccioni, the crowd comprising such types is most exciting and most perilous at night, when repressed desires and illicit behaviors find expression and when the electric lamps are the brightest and most disorienting. Electricity could also serve as a metaphor of the artist’s expressive power to sway and dominate a crowd, much like a great orator or authoritarian leader. In a short theatrical synthesis of 1916 titled “Genius and Culture,” Boccioni has an agitated artist exclaim to an uncomprehending critic: “Glory! Ah! Glory! . . . I’m strong! I’m young! I can face anything! . . . Oh divine electric light! . . . Sun . . . Electrify the crowds! Set them on fire! Dominate! . . .”<sup>33</sup>

<figs. 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 together, about here>

The connection among images of rioting or agitated crowds, a nighttime setting, and particular effects of illumination is one that was frequently discussed at the turn of the century.

Social theorists like Gabriel Tarde, Le Bon, and Sighele drew analogies between social formations and recent discoveries (or in many cases merely hypotheses) in the physical sciences about the nature of matter. In particular, they synthesized psychological theories of hypnosis, somnambulism, and hysteria, with the science of electromagnetism to explain the peculiar psychology of the crowd. In adumbrating his theory that imitation lay at the root of all social relations, for example, Tarde claimed that inspiring human initiatives “tend to propagate themselves [through imitation] at a more or less rapid, but regular, rate, like a wave of light.”<sup>34</sup> The key recurring term, *vibration*, was adduced to account equally for the transmission of rays of light, for contagious diseases, and for ideas: “For the propagation of an attractive force or luminous vibration from a heavenly body . . . or of a national idea or desire or religious rite from a scholar or inventor or missionary, seem to us like natural and regular phenomena.”<sup>35</sup> Or, similarly, “repetitions are also multiplications or self-spreading contagions.”<sup>36</sup> For the most part, such imitation occurred through unconscious or automatic means as a form of passive adaptation to the environment. While an individual might feel his or her socially mimetic actions to be consciously willed and spontaneous, they were actually closer to the actions carried out by the somnambulist in a dreamlike trance. Hence, Tarde could claim that “society is imitation and imitation is a kind of somnambulism.”<sup>37</sup> In the second edition of his book, which appeared in 1895, five years after the first edition, Tarde at times added the word hypnosis to that of somnambulism and stated the newer term might substitute for the earlier one. Both terms signified that the subject was, at least for the time being, deprived of the power of resistance and in a state of “imitative quiescence.”<sup>38</sup> When writing about the somnambulist, however, Tarde emphasized that the torpor, which appears to envelope the affected individual, is in reality quite superficial and masks an intense excitement.<sup>39</sup> Boccioni too had referred to the exemplars of the



new psychology of night (the bon viveurs and others) as “feverish,” implying both a pathological condition and a corresponding state of mental agitation. Not surprisingly then, his crowds frequently erupt into violence at night, when their somnambulist character is most evident.

Le Bon also argued that the mental unity characteristic of a crowd was due to mental contagion, which he classified “among those phenomena of a hypnotic order.”<sup>40</sup> And if a crowd could be easily hypnotized, this was because of its susceptibility to suggestion, which Le Bon believed exerted a force comparable to magnetism.<sup>41</sup> In articulating the mechanism by which sentiments were propagated in a crowd, both Le Bon and Sighele followed Tarde.<sup>42</sup> Sighele, in particular, developed Tarde’s notion of imitation into a theory of physiognomic expressionism, in which the cries and gestures of the body functioned as the manifest and precise signs of an interior psychology. As Sighele explained, “physiognomy expresses quite well the emotions of the spirit, and expresses them, not in a vague and indefinite manner, but definitely and precisely: one can read on the face of a person joy, fear, hatred, almost all of the sentiments of the heart.”<sup>43</sup> He cites Tarde in further affirming that “it is a universal law in the entire kingdom of intelligent life that the representation of an emotional state provokes the birth of this identical state in whoever witnesses it.”<sup>44</sup> In support of this idea he observed that a man’s cry of alarm in a crowded street or piazza induced fear-flight in all of those near him. Both Sighele and Tarde relied on the hypotheses of Henry Maudsley, who, in *The Pathology of Mind*, had asserted that as muscular action is intimately bound to the passions, an emotional state would not be merely imitated, but would be genuinely and intimately experienced.<sup>45</sup> The replication of simple, legible gestures and cries in Boccioni’s crowd scenes enacts this propagation of sentiment through spontaneous imitation, as if it were an overwhelming force of contagion. The various members of the crowd thereby become united as if they formed a single body, and exclaimed with a single

voice.

Such a view of the crowd's suggestibility also implied that the hierarchical relation between the hypnotist and his subject (the hysteric, for example) could be transposed to account for the authoritarian relation between the leader and the crowd.<sup>46</sup> According to Le Bon, once immersed in a crowd, an individual would soon succumb to a "special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Le Bon argued, "crowds exhibit a docile respect for force, and are but slightly impressed by kindness. . . . Their sympathies have never been bestowed on easy-going masters, but on tyrants who vigorously oppressed them."<sup>48</sup> Such a desire for domination, and a lack of tolerance for differing views or sentiments, was especially typical of Latin crowds. Returning to racial stereotypes, Le Bon repeatedly singles out Latin crowds for their extreme qualities, seeing them as the most impulsive, the most changeable, the most feminine.<sup>49</sup> Capable of the most horrific excesses, they might also attain the loftiest destiny if properly manipulated. The crucial goal was to shape the amorphous and potentially expanding crowd, and to give it a single aim and direction. This required a leader, who, like the hypnotist, would hold sway over his subjects through the persuasive use of rhetorical images. <fig. 2.7 about here>

Luigi Russolo's painting *La rivolta (The Revolt)* of 1911 seeks to convey a sense of the power of the shaped crowd as a new political force (fig. 2.7). Configured as a dynamically projecting wedge, his crowd surges leftward and upward, thereby implicitly countering norms of reading as well as the force of gravity. Within the wedge, nearly identical mechanized figures march forward with linked or raised arms to form a single advancing body. This body, composed of simplified, interlocking angular limbs, appears to be resolutely male and invincible. Once the crowd is disciplined, then, it loses certain of its "feminine" attributes, and instead assumes a

regimented, or paramilitary character. Russolo's painting provides an image of the type of social formation that Elias Canetti, in his book *Crowds and Power*, calls "crowd crystals." These he defines as "the small, rigid groups of men, strictly delimited and of great constancy, which serve to precipitate crowds. Their structure is such that they can be comprehended and taken in at a glance."<sup>50</sup> For Canetti, the crowd crystal is all limit, each of its members constituting part of its boundary. Russolo's image captures the essence of this formation, its geometric clarity, density, and constancy serving as the visible signature of unity, force, and impenetrability. He multiplies the power that emanates from this crowd crystal through a repetition of the geometric wedge as an animated shape in its own right, which seems to open and expand as it penetrates and upends the urban landscape. On either side, the houses appear as if magnetically aligned with this brilliantly illuminated angle, thereby conforming to the revolutionary will it figures forth. The implication is that a larger, more informe crowd will follow the path carved out by this advance guard, to take on the new meaning (direction) and militaristic collective identity it asserts. This identity, in which individual particularity and interiority give way to standardization and an emphasis on impenetrable boundaries, presages the postwar development of the fascist mass subject.<sup>51</sup> One thinks of politician and aviator Italo Balbo's famous transatlantic flights, during each of which his fleet of aircraft maintained a similarly rigid, military formation for the entire journey.<sup>52</sup> <fig. 2.8 about here>

Like Russolo's *The Revolt*, Carlo Carrà's *Free-Word Painting* <m-> *Patriotic Festival* of summer 1914 pictures a shaped crowd in dynamic action, although here the heterogeneity of the individual elements is asserted, if only to be subsumed in the greater unity of the whole (fig. 2.8). As Linda Landis has argued, this collage is modeled on the exhilarating new form of vision made possible through aviation: in the center we read *aviatore* (aviator), *Italia, battere il record* (break

the record), and *eliche perforanti* (perforating propellers), terms that invoke Marinetti's patriotic celebration of flight and of record breaking.<sup>53</sup> This work invites the viewer to assume the daring vantage point of the aviator at the fulcrum of its whirring propellers, which spew forth fragments of Futurist manifestos, political slogans, advertisements for medicinal and hygiene products, and, at bottom center, an image of the Italian flag with the inflammatory, irredentist words *Trieste Italiano Milano* inscribed upon it. *Folla* also appears more than once: at the top right, where it is juxtaposed to fragments referring to tramways, bicycles, wagons, and pedestrians, all contained within a *piazza*; and again along a "propeller" at the top right, where references to the "grunts of excited crowds" collide with references to train tracks, and the *volontà* (will) of Edison.<sup>54</sup> The silver-, pink-, and peach-colored sparkles that Carrà flecked onto the painted parts of this collage bring a subtle shimmer to its surface, enhancing the association of light, movement, and the enthusiasm of the crowd.

Although it has long been noted that *Free-Word Painting* *<m>Patriotic Festival* can be precisely dated to the end of June 1914, Oliver Shell is the first scholar to interpret this work as a response to the political crisis provoked by Red Week, a week of widespread anarchist and Socialist rioting that erupted on June 7.<sup>55</sup> The mass revolt was precipitated when the police killed three men who were taking part in the Socialist demonstration in Ancona. News of the deaths spread quickly and generated a series of violent and potentially revolutionary activities in cities throughout Italy. For one week, the red flag flew over many town halls, private property was expropriated, and many laws, including tax laws, were suspended or revoked. When this insurrectionary movement collapsed, Carrà, like many other anarchists and intransigent Socialists, seems to have lost faith in the spontaneous revolutionary potential of the proletariat. A new and invigorated nation would be achieved through an ideal of unity under the guidance of a

heroic, visionary leader, rather than through continued class conflict. As Shell argues, the synthesizing composition of this work provides an image of this unity in the form of a centralized social organization. With the term *Italia* firmly anchored at its center, the nation appears as a centrifugally expanding force. The volatility and cacophony of modern life—as signified by the bits of collage text and onomatopoeic effects—are affirmed within this all-embracing, dynamic, but hierarchical structure. For Carrà, unity and wholeness now require nationalist myths, and must be sustained by the authority of the monarchy and the power of the army—ideas that would have been anathema to the former anarchist. Carrà’s collage, according to this analysis, presents the viewer with an alternative to the revolt of Red Week: the threatening proletarian crowd would be absorbed into the larger, homogeneous notion of the people, and given a new, synthesizing shape. We might add that the radial structure of this collage, which simulates the whirring blade of a propeller, also speaks of the violence inherent in the accomplishment of this new unity. At the center is the leader/aviator; cast out to the margins are the crowds. In 1915, in his book of essays and pictorial works called *Guerrapittura* (*Warpainting*), Carrà made his belief in the distinction between the leader and the crowd explicit: “The crowd, the plebes, will never understand the superior man. We’ll leave the masses their silly leaders. We have always insulted the crowd.”<sup>56</sup> <fig. 2.9 about here>

By contrast, Francesco Cangiullo’s *Great Crowd in the Piazza del Popolo*, also of 1914, exemplifies the chaotic structure, heterogeneity, and purposelessness of contemporary mass society in the absence of a strong leader (fig. 2.9). The multicolored and typographically varied slogans that stand in for the voices and sensations of the crowd remain disparate and jumbled. We can catch fragments of isolated remarks, most of which fail to take on any revolutionary significance: *cappelli* (hair), *vento* (wind), *acciuuffarti* (to grab), *profumato* (perfumed), *fischia*

(whistle), *prepotenza* (arrogance), *flatulente* (flatulent), *gonfio di* (swollen with), *minacciarti polmonite* (threat pneumonia), and *ssiii raglio* (ssiii bray). The many references to bodily functions, shouts, whistles, and even animal cries call attention to the material desires and needs of the crowd. The only unifying element is the slogan Cangiullo inscribed diagonally across his cacophonous assembly: *TUTTO VENTRE* (ALL BELLY). As in Marinetti's *Le Roi Bombance*, the crowd is depicted as driven by base instincts for sensuous gratification and self-aggrandizement and seems incapable of reasoned discourse or self-discipline.<sup>57</sup>

Remo Chiti's theatrical synthesis *Parole* (*Words*) of 1915 is similarly structured, if more optimistic about the possibility of a dispersed, informe multitude overturning existing laws and social institutions. It comprises the random, fragmented phrases heard in a crowd as it confronts the "old, white-haired, automatic" gatekeeper, who bars the door of a government building. As Chiti explains in his notes, "The life of the plaza, overflowing with conflict, shows signs of forming around a determined movement." The words of the crowd, although incoherent and emanating "from various points," nonetheless express "an adamant wish; a strange influence murmurs something from its innumerable mouths":

<PY>. . . and why ARE THEY also a . . .  
 . . . exactly! and in FIFTY YEARS not . . .  
 . . . go there! THAT IS enough . . .  
 . . . of him who WAITS some more . . .  
 . . . that is SOMETHING that doesn't work . . .<sup>58</sup>

Although characterized as governed by unconscious desires and articulating no specific political

view, this waiting and arguing crowd is sufficiently terrifying to bring about the collapse of the decrepit gatekeeper. The implication is that with this destructive gesture, it has cleared the way for a new social order and that the door to the future now lies open.

The “determined movement” that Chiti believed was nascent in 1915 alluded, at least in part, to the growing demand for intervention in the war on the part of Futurists and other patriotic militants. Despite the ambivalence of Cangiullo and Chiti toward the “life of the plaza,” it was precisely on the Piazza del Popolo in Rome, and in other city squares in Italy, that orderly, well-dressed bourgeois demonstrators gathered during the Radiant Days of May, 1915, to insist that Italy enter the war on the side of France and England. The slogan these demonstrators shouted, “War or Revolution!” contributed to the Italian parliament’s surprisingly enthusiastic declaration of war just days thereafter. Giacomo Balla was inspired by the interventionist rally he witnessed in the Piazza di Siena, in the gardens of the Villa Borghese near his home, to paint a number of “hymns” to patriotic crowds. *Patriotic Song* of 1915 departs from the oval shape of the Piazza di Siena to provide a centralized image of a strongly unified crowd (color plate 5). Wavelike violet, blue, and orange forms well up out of this oval, creating dynamic circular patterns that figure forth the voice of the multitude as if it were a force of nature—much like the diagonal ray of golden light that strikes the scene from the upper right. In the center rise three towers, painted red, white, and green. These towers elongate the colored stripes of the Italian flag, give them three-dimensional form, and project them into space, as if embodying a cry hurled to the skies. This cry is answered by the shaft of light, which streams down on the scene from above, in a secular allusion to a divine benediction.<sup>59</sup> Balla thus renders the desire of the demonstrating crowd for intervention in the war through three mythic and overdetermined allegorical tropes, constructing an image of a unified, patriotic nation that in fact did not exist: the people (the

cresting waves), the nation (the flag), and the indomitable will of Nature/Truth/God (the ray of light).<sup>60</sup> <fig. 2.10 about here>

*Flags on the Altar of the Country*, also of 1915, similarly defines and shapes the patriotic crowd through a dominant, architecturally defined site (fig. 2.10). Balla situates this interventionist demonstration before the famous Monument to Victor Emanuel II in the Piazza Venezia in Rome. Intended to represent the unity of the Italian nation, this imposing structure was popularly referred to as the “Altar of the Country.” Balla synthesizes and abstracts this monument, which had been inaugurated only four years earlier, retaining the white of the marble facade and the symmetrical arms formed by the lateral pavilions. But he also compresses the monument, increases its height, and interprets the curvature of the classical facade as a dynamic metaphor of expansive movement. Again, wavelike forms, colored red, white, and green, denote the patriotic cries and songs of the demonstrators who mount the monument’s steps while holding aloft their flags. The purple-gray forms that swirl up out of this crowd constitute a visual cipher for the slogan *Viva l’Italia* (Long Live Italy). In visualizing the unified body and voice of the crowd as explicitly oceanic, Balla appropriated an existing literary metaphor for the crowd and its volatility, with important recent examples in the writings of Gabriele D’Annunzio, the Futurist poet Enrico Cavacchioli, and Marinetti. In a novel of 1895, *The Virgins of the Rocks*, D’Annunzio employs the term *gorghi melmosi* to refer to the slimy whirlpools of the multitude that threaten to engulf the legitimate king. The term *gorghi*, in which one also hears an allusion to the gorgons, figures the crowd as a Medusa-like, castrating force.<sup>61</sup> Cavacchioli’s poem “Revolution” adopts a similar set of tropes:

<PY>Oceano di popolo,



Marea disordinata del terrore,  
 Maëlstrom d'ogni libidine,  
 Singhiozzo maciullato dal pianto,  
 Urlo, grande urlo di una sola bocca,  
 Pugno di un solo braccio gigantesco,  
 Testarda forza d'ariete e di catapulta,  
 Proiettile del disprezzo,  
 In piazza!  
 (Ocean of people,  
 Confused tide of terror,  
 Maelstrom of every lust,  
 Sob, broken by weeping,  
 Shout, great shout from a single mouth,  
 Punch from a single gigantic arm,  
 Obstinate force of a battering ram and catapult,  
 Projectile of defiance,  
 In piazza!)<sup>62</sup>

Here the oceanic metaphor expresses simultaneously the confused disorder of the crowd, its uncontained libidinal energies, and its unity as a driving, ineluctable force. In Marinetti's writings, the sea appears in a number of guises; its attributes oscillate between the masculine and the feminine, and it serves as a figure both of formidable natural power and of the abyss. In Balla's paintings, the swirling, wavelike forms of the crowd retain some sense of this

fundamental ambivalence. Although configured as enthusiastically patriotic and proroyalty, the welling and surging, never stable forms of the singing crowd, demand articulation and containment. Balla achieves this through the shaping device of the architectural site, through the symbolic use of color, and through the literal frame of the canvas. <fig. 2.11 about here>

In *Patriotic Song*, as in related works, Balla echoes the red, white, and green of the flag in the colors of his painted and shaped frame. In *Interventionist Demonstration in the Piazza del Quirinale*, Balla deploys rising wavelike volumes as the abstract equivalent of the shouts of the crowd (fig. 2.11). This work seeks to render the sensations of the artist who had participated in a demonstration at the Piazza del Quirinale, in front of the king's palace. A photograph of a rally that occurred in this piazza captures the multitude that gathered to demand intervention of the king, who stood far above observing from his balcony (fig. 2.12). The bourgeois demonstrators, composed mostly of men wearing straw boaters, stand by calmly. In his painting, Balla transforms an orderly demonstration into a tumultuous event, characterized by jostling curved forms that give rise to voluminous, embodied cries. He denotes the presence of the monarch above the crowd through the insignia of the House of Savoy, an owl-like form with a knotted rope. As in Carrà's *Patriotic Festival*, the crowd, a metonym for the people, is galvanized through nationalist, prowar sentiment. Moreover, this crowd demands a leader, who will realize its desires: in this case, King Vittorio Emanuele III. <fig. 2.12 about here>

Balla's paintings of interventionist demonstrations portray the demands of predominantly bourgeois groups as if they were the will of the people in unity with their King. Yet we know that the majority of Italians were opposed to the war; support for intervention was centered in the urban and industrial north, and was popular among discontented members of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, including the Futurists. For these groups, war appeared as an antidote to the

threat of Socialism, and as a means of bringing into being a newly invigorated, imperialist nation. Whereas Marinetti witnessed the violent student and worker riots of 1898 and had eventually retreated from the barricades to the safety of his balcony, he, Balla, and the other Futurists were active participants in prowar rallies.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, they often organized these events and on several occasions found themselves in jail for their actions. Through inflammatory rhetoric and Austrian flag burnings, the Futurists sought to incite their audiences to rise up in revolt against the government's apparent pacifism and neutrality. Such activism had its roots in strategies already developed in Futurist serate, performative events staged throughout Europe during which Marinetti and his friends harangued and insulted their audiences with the aim of jolting them out of their stasis and complacency. Yet Marinetti's goals and strategies in these serate exhibit the ambivalence of his attitude toward the crowd—his desire both to dominate and to merge with a larger oceanic multitude. He appeared on stage in black tie, the very figure of an aristocratic poet, whose lineage might be traced to Baudelaire's flaneur (fig. 2.13). As such, Marinetti distinguished himself from the teeming, heterogeneous audiences who flocked to hear him. Yet he also advocated a dissolution of the traditional barriers between performers and spectators. In his manifesto "The Variety Theater" of 1913, he declared the need to seek the audience's collaboration, so that the action might develop "simultaneously on the stage, in the boxes, and in the orchestra." Such a fusion of spaces and actions could only derive, however, from the fact that "the audience cooperates in this way with the actors' fantasy."<sup>64</sup> <fig. 2.13 about here>

Marinetti's style of addressing the crowds that attended his serate, no doubt seeking a confrontation, was based on the practice of *fisicofollia*, or "body-madness."<sup>65</sup> This was an expressive language involving the entire body, comprising a rapid fire of verbal images delivered

in dramatic cadences, enhanced by facial mimicry and violent gestures. In his account of the riots of May 1898, Marinetti had observed that in trying to quell the revolt, the Socialist deputy Filippo Turati had addressed the rebels with a speech accompanied by brief and monotonous gestures; the assembly had then dispersed.<sup>66</sup> He argued that such a timid and restrained form of interpellation would hardly serve the cause of fomenting a revolution. In 1916, with Italy in the midst of war, the Futurist leader criticized what he called “passéiste declamation,” asserting that “even when supported by the most marvelous vocal organs and the strongest temperaments, [such declaiming] always comes down to an inevitable monotony of highs and lows, to a ragbag of gestures.” In contrast, he characterized his own style of declamation as an ironically self-conscious form of seduction:

<EXT>I have amused myself with seducing and moving [lecture audiences] better and more reliably than all the other declaimers of Europe, insinuating into their obtuse brains the most astonishing images, caressing them with the most refined vocal spasms, with velvety softnesses and brutalities until, mastered by my look or entranced by my smile, they felt a feminine need to applaud something they neither understood nor loved.<sup>67</sup>

Such an approach to inciting the audience might have been culled directly from a reading of Gustave Le Bon or other contemporary theorists of the crowd. Le Bon maintained that “the laws of logic have no action on crowds.”<sup>68</sup> An idea could only exert influence on a crowd when it “entered the domain of the unconscious, when indeed it has become a sentiment, for which much time is required.”<sup>69</sup> The language of the unconscious lay not in reasoned discourse but in images, for “crowds being only capable of thinking in images are only to be impressed by

images. It is only images that terrify or attract them and become motives of action.” Hence, he declared the theater to be an ideal medium for communicating with the crowd, a view shared by Marinetti.<sup>70</sup> Le Bon further stated that “an orator in intimate communication with a crowd can evoke images by which it will be seduced.”<sup>71</sup>

The syndicalist Georges Sorel, whose advocacy of proletarian violence in the cause of revolution was well known to Marinetti, advanced similar views.<sup>72</sup> In arguing for the efficacy of starkly contrasting, simple images in rousing the passions of the masses, Sorel drew on the ideas of both Henri Bergson and Le Bon. Political oppositions, such as that between the working and ruling classes, should be thrown into sharp relief in order that “the soul of the revolutionaries may receive a deep and lasting impression.” Since ordinary language could not achieve this result, Sorel believed “use must be made of a body of images which, *by intuition alone*, and before any considered analyses are made, is capable of evoking as an undivided whole the mass of sentiments” that would inspire revolt against modern society.<sup>73</sup> This body of images constituted “the *myth* in which [revolutionary] Socialism is wholly comprised.”<sup>74</sup> Despite his admiration for Le Bon, Sorel’s faith in the motivating power of myths caused him to contest Le Bon’s belief that the instincts of crowds were generally conservative. For Sorel, such a view did not pertain to societies that retained a vital conception of class war.<sup>75</sup> The myth of the general strike, delivered through images of individual heroism leading to catastrophic total revolution, was designed to sweep away nuances and critical reflection on the part of insurgents. Although Marinetti’s aim was the creation of an imperialist nation rather than the triumph of syndicalism, he too wished to instigate a cataclysmic transformation of society through appeals to myths of virility, heroism, and the liberatory potential of violence.<sup>76</sup>

Despite differences in their political goals, Marinetti shared Sorel’s conviction that

images could rouse the sentiments of the masses to new levels of intensity regardless of their reality or logical basis.<sup>77</sup> Le Bon had made even stronger claims. In addressing a crowd, he advocated the use of images that avoid the cumbersome trappings of cause and effect and instead join dissimilar or unconnected things by the merely apparent “bonds of analogy or succession”: “The characteristics of the reasoning of crowds are the association of dissimilar things possessing a merely apparent connection between each other, and the immediate generalisation of particular cases.”<sup>78</sup> The successful orator would produce this leap to an unfounded conclusion through a succession of images, hammering it home through sheer repetition and affirmation.

Marinetti’s invention of *parole in libertà*, which he declaimed in Futurist serate throughout Europe prior to the war, depended on just such strategies of alogical condensation and displacement. In his 1912 “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature,” he advocated the destruction of syntax and punctuation in order to achieve a rapid, telegraphic style of writing. Verbal images, torn from the connective tissue of language, deprived of adjectives, adverbs, and other mediating terms, would be juxtaposed in order to create startling new analogies. As Marinetti put it, “analogy is nothing more than the deep love that assembles distant, seemingly diverse and hostile things.”<sup>79</sup> The examples he presented, “Man-torpedo-boat, woman-gulf, crowd-surf,” achieve fusion only through the force of the dominating image. “One should deliberately confound the object with the image that it evokes, foreshortening the image to a single essential word.”<sup>80</sup> If such foreshortening precluded the orator being understood, all the better, for *la folla* did not seek understanding, but belief. Marinetti declared that he had taught the Futurist poets “*to hate the intelligence*, reawakening in [them] divine intuition, the characteristic gift of the Latin races.”<sup>81</sup> Speed and the power of mimicry would be essential to this circumvention of reason. Words should arrive in fistfuls or be launched as if they were

bombs; they should perform the actions they signified, rather than merely describe them.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, Le Bon had remarked: “When it is wanted to stir up a crowd for a short space of time, to induce it to commit an act of any nature . . . the crowd must be acted upon by rapid suggestions, among which example is the most powerful in its effect.”<sup>83</sup> Much would depend upon the prestige of the orator, his ability to provide a model for mimetic action, and the susceptibility of the crowd to his hypnotic performance.

Significantly, with the war underway, Marinetti came to regard his previous declamatory mode as insufficiently military. Whereas in the past he had sought to seduce and master a “feminized” and essentially passive crowd, now he wished even more explicitly to transform the crowd, to give it a masculine shape and infuse it with the will to power. This task demanded a more militant style, characterized by systematic forms of dehumanization: the declaimer must metallize, liquefy, and electrify his voice in order to ground it in the vibrations of matter, as opposed to a “convulsive humanization of the universe.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, gestures would become starkly geometric and rigid, in order to divest them of the lingering nostalgic effects of feminine caresses or supplications.<sup>85</sup> The somatic language of desire would be suppressed in favor of an austere, mechanized repertory of movements. These movements would collaborate in the “scattering of words-in-freedom,” engendering a euphoric fusion of self and matter, self and crowd, in an accession of power. Thus interpellated, the audience, “magnetized as it follows the figure of the declaimer,” would nevertheless not submit to his force passively, but would respond in kind with dynamic energy. The ideal was to achieve “unbroken contact” with the crowd, the flow of energy establishing a current whose effects would be both psychic and physical.<sup>86</sup>

If for Marinetti the primary medium for addressing the crowd inevitably became the performative event—serata (in which he also declaimed his free-word poetry or read his

manifestos), theater, political demonstration, or riot—what, then, of Futurist poetry and visual images? These too were intended to stage an encounter with the viewer or reader in which the separation of subject and object would be overcome. Significantly, in his remarks on addressing the crowd, Le Bon insisted on the power of images to convey sentiments, even while analyzing “the science of employing words.”<sup>87</sup> He frequently referred to what he called *image-ideas* in pictorial and theatrical terms, noting that they became effective “on condition that they assume a very absolute, uncompromising, and simple shape.” In their rapid and disconnected succession, he also compared them to the progression of slides in a magic-lantern show.<sup>88</sup> Le Bon further associated the image with illusion or appearance, as opposed to reality, and argued that only the former mattered when it came to swaying a crowd, since it was incapable of distinguishing between the two.<sup>89</sup> Seen in this light, the Futurist desire to infuse verbal forms with visual qualities becomes clearer. By adopting dynamic and varied typography or displaying words in a pictorial format, the Futurists sought to allow their free-word poems, paintings, and collages to be taken in at a glance, at least initially. Words were to perform like images, establishing the appearance of a desired reality that would be intuitively and instantaneously grasped and affirmed as a whole. As such, the Futurist word—deformed, stretched, and onomatopoeic—strives to take on the characteristics of a symbol—a signifier whose form appears motivated rather than merely conventional or arbitrary. Conversely, Futurist visual works frequently employed verbal elements, interpolating fragments of manifestos, newspaper clippings, and slogans into their compositions as a means of making their political message more explicit and multisensory. The convergence of pictorial and poetic devices in works such as Carrà’s *Patriotic Festival* reveals an effort to appeal to the viewer both linguistically and visually. In such works, meaning is carried through onomatopoeic effects and fragments of free-word poems, popular



advertisements, and slogans, as well as through the centrifugal design. Carrà also sought to overcome traditional conventions of singular viewing/reading by publishing this collage in the journal *Lacerba*, where a larger public than possible in a traditional museum setting would see it.<sup>90</sup>

Although they did experiment with new subjects, techniques, and forms of distribution, most Futurist visual works only gestured toward the ideal of an encounter with a mass audience. What drawing, painting, and collage could not achieve in the realm of direct, bodily confrontation and action might nonetheless occur in the register of empathic identification. Working in visual media, the artists exploited the immediacy and apparently nondiscursive logic of the image, as theorized by Le Bon and others. Their goal was to appeal to the viewer's intuition, to draw him or her, as if magnetically, into the dynamic center of the work. The boundaries of subject and object, self and other necessary to critical thought would thereby be dissolved in favor of an exhilarating expansion of the ego. But whereas Baudelaire's flaneur imagined himself taking on and discarding the identities of anonymous but discrete individuals encountered in the crowd, Futurist empathy was comparatively dehumanized. In Futurist painting, strident effects of contrasting color, dazzling light, distortions of perspective, and brushwork that fuses figure and ground all correspond to Marinetti's literary strategy of using analogies to cast a net over all of matter. Ideally, in Futurist art, the image functions as a kind of hypnotic lure, similarly casting its net over viewers and dispersing subjectivity into the oceanic continuum of the crowd, dominated by the leader. If such an appeal frequently missed its target during the prewar period, when the crowds at the Futurist serate or theatrical events shouted back, or when the viewers of Futurist art responded with satire, the fate of crowd psychology and the arts it inspired in the postwar period provide an alternate view of its potential ideological effects. Under the Fascist regime, mass

culture is dominated by images of crowds gathered in adulation of the Duce. The crowd finds its shape in the leader, who now exists by virtue of, and in relation to, the mythified crowd.<sup>91</sup>

<CHN>Chapter 3

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises*: Picturing the Futurist Metropolis

<CHEPI>One doesn't speak enough of the formidable industrial and commercial development of Lombardy, Liguria and Piedmont, <m->Milan, Genoa, Turin! This however is the new Italy being reborn, this is what we love!

<m->F. T. Marinetti, 1911<sup>1</sup>

<CHEPI>I am going to Milan with the rapacious intention to triumph and to conquer her.

<m->Boccioni, writing of his planned move from Venice to Milan, May 1907<sup>2</sup>

Boccioni's *The City Rises* functions as a pictorial manifesto to visualize the utopian dream of the Futurist metropolis (color plate 9). Depicting the construction of an electric plant on the industrial periphery of Milan, this monumental painting stands as a kind of pendant to the much smaller *Riot in the Galleria* begun at the same time in the spring of 1910 (color plate 4). Writing to a friend as he neared completion of his *quadrona* (big picture), Boccioni explained: "Working on a large scale, as always, I multiplied the inspiration and the picture has become more populated, more violent than at first. The crowd has grown and I hope to express in all, even the smallest figure, the sense of being irresistibly driven ahead [*andare fatale*] that crowds have when at work."<sup>3</sup> Both paintings, then, portray the dynamism of urban life by focusing on collective passions and their corporeal expression as engines of modernity: one by representing a riot in a bourgeois site of pleasure and consumption in the heart of Milan, the other by celebrating the *élan vital* of a group of proletarian workers on the outskirts of the city, as they channel the surging energy of gigantic winged horses. As figured forth in these and related

paintings, the Futurist city emerges as a polycentric constellation of symbolic sites, each with its typical forms of pleasure and work, mass psychology, and violent movement. Class, gender, the sociopolitical geography of the city, and even the time of day play a determining role in structuring these sites and their affective valences. Boccioni imagines the riot in Milan's most fashionable, bourgeois shopping arcade as centered on the rivalry between two prostitutes, whereas the crowd of workers in *The City Rises* is male, proletarian, and engaged in a heroic struggle to dominate natural forces. And while *Riot in the Galleria* presents the riot as a form of contagion propelled by unconscious desires at night under the disorienting glare of electric lamps, *The City Rises* pictures the dynamic will to power of male laborers under streams of brilliant sunlight. Yet it would be too simplistic to argue that Boccioni unequivocally condemns the rioters as decadent, or exalts the workers as avatars of the future. Both paintings exemplify the artist's fascination with the violent movement of crowds, and both involve the exhilarating but potentially frightening dissolution of individual psychic and corporeal boundaries. And both give visual form to emblematic themes announced in Marinetti's "Founding Manifesto," from which Boccioni seems to have drawn explicit, and at times surprisingly literal, inspiration:

<EXT>We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; [. . .] factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; [. . .] deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after meeting Marinetti early in 1910, Boccioni became the principal author and cosignatory of the “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters,” dated 11 February 1910, followed two months later by the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting.” Having joined the fledgling movement and aspiring to lead its artistic wing, Boccioni embarked on a new set of paintings, the most ambitious of which was *The City Rises*. He struggled with it for about a year, executing numerous studies in pencil, ink, tempera, and oil, before showing it, under the title *Lavoro* (*Work*) at the Exhibition of Free Art in Milan, which opened on 30 April 1911. The painting has a complex history, with roots in two earlier allegorical triptychs, as well as in philosophical ideas that can be traced to the artist’s youthful writings. Issuing from themes and preoccupations central to Boccioni’s pre-Futurist work, the transformation of this painting in the course of its execution allows us to follow the emergence of a distinctively Futurist style and subject. It also reveals the tension between Boccioni’s pre-Futurist, social humanitarian ideals, which focused on rural labor, the plight of mine workers, and the tranquil beauty of the Italian landscape, with Futurism’s celebration of urban modernity, rioting masses, electric energy, speed, and violence. More specifically, the long and difficult transformation of *The City Rises* points to the importance of the modern metropolis as a Futurist topos, one that required crystallization in new forms of experience and their visual representation.

For the Futurists, envisioning the new metropolis necessarily entailed rejecting the traditional tourist site, with its historical ruins, nostalgia for the past, obsession with romantic love, decadent luxuriousness, and subservience to the tourist. Marinetti addressed one of his earliest manifestos to the Venetians, whose “putrefying city” he wished to heal with an infusion of industry, militarism, and electric light. Written by Marinetti and dated 27 April 1910, “Against Past-Loving Venice” was also signed by Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo. On 8 July the Futurists

launched a three-year attack on the city by dropping thousands of leaflets bearing this manifesto from the Clock Tower in St. Mark's Square onto the crowd returning from the beaches of the Lido:

<EXT>We renounce the old Venice, enfeebled and undone by centuries of worldly luxury, although we once loved and possessed it in a great nostalgic dream.

We renounce the Venice of foreigners, market for counterfeiting antiquarians, magnet for snobbery and universal imbecility, bed unsprung by caravans of lovers, jeweled bathtub for cosmopolitan courtesans, *cloaca maxima* of passéism.

We want to cure and heal this putrefying city, magnificent sore from the past. [. . .]

We want to prepare the birth of an industrial and military Venice that can dominate the Adriatic Sea, that great Italian lake. [. . .]

Let us burn the gondolas, rocking chairs for cretins, and raise to the heavens the imposing geometry of metal bridges and howitzers plumed with smoke, to abolish the falling curves of the old architecture.

Let the reign of holy Electric Light finally come, to liberate Venice from its venal moonshine of furnished rooms.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than Venice, Florence, or Rome, the prototypical Futurist city would be Milan, symbol of Italy's growing industrial strength and cosmopolitanism. Celebrated in Marinetti's "Founding and Manifesto" of 1909, the city was promoted as a place of dynamic transformation and multisensory stimuli. It was the privileged space of the machine as an avatar of speed and power,

of factories under construction, of railways and tramlines, bridges and shipyards. Despite the publication of the “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” on the front page of the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, the movement was effectively born in Milan; this was Marinetti’s center of operations before the First World War and home to many of the earliest artists to join, including Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo. Yet, in the early twentieth century, Milan could not compete with Paris, London, Vienna, or New York in population density, industrial production, commerce, or cultural prestige. In his posthumously published memoirs, *Great Traditional and Futurist Milan*, Marinetti described the Milan of his adolescence as the site of a collision between the forces of the past and future, praising the city as “forever the central power plant of the energies and optimism of Italy.”<sup>6</sup> Referring to gatherings of poets at the Café Savini in the Galleria, he writes of the “happy-go-lucky bohemianism of dialect verses” that in their mocking, licentious tone, “toss away all reserve in the hope of getting this onward marching city out of its shackles and defeating the prissy abstemious bound-up past opening art and life to wind-wept horizons.”<sup>7</sup> It was the steel industry in particular that interrupted the traditional, nuanced rhythms of Milanese life with its harsh, dissonant “poetry”:

<PY>Amid the rural and genteel graces of old Milan life its shaded half-tones  
 conspiring with flowers and dreams suddenly the crude clashing poetry of the Great Steel  
 Industry  
 Flood of exciting salaries  
 Whirling roar of lathes and wheels  
 Tribes and tribes of sublime redskin smokestacks suddenly capture more than half  
 the once-familiar horizon

Endless belching scarlet of conceited furnaces

Their clamor of real money derides the groaning church bells that rock with  
medieval tears [ . . . ]

Solemn unwinding of coal into the sky and night morning evening the slow  
outpouring and reabsorbing of streams of workers<sup>8</sup>

Looking back, Marinetti acknowledges the role of “exciting salaries” and of money generally as the motor driving the clamor of the factories and the movements of the workers; the medieval church bells could not hope to drown out the “whirling roar” and “endless belching” of capital. A sense of loss permeates this account, despite the fact that it is written by a self-described “aeropoet” who championed the industrialization of his native city: “Milanese echoes are no longer alabaster seashells the ears of children with their sweet little hands on grandfather’s whiskers but walls of eyeless houses a hundred meters high and smoked over with Destiny.”<sup>9</sup> By the time he wrote these words, the aging and nostalgic Marinetti was living in Venice and Rome and willing to remember both the excitement of the industrial transformation of Milan, and the fateful character of its negative effects. In passages such the one cited above, Marinetti implies that modernization<m->all those “tribes” of smokestacks<m->is driven by Destiny (capital), which remains impervious to childlike innocence or the individual will. His language invokes a primitive violence, in which the familiar horizon is captured by foreign, erupting, phallic forms. Ironically, modernity emerges as the upsurge of a wild and frightening force (the redskins) that destroys the rhythms of the past in order to command new, regimented forms of movement and labor; the factories endlessly absorb and release streams of workers like so much smoking coal spewed into the sky. “Night, morning, evening”<m->even the natural temporal cycles of work



are confounded, homogenized in a continuous flow of productivity. Marinetti had expressed a similar idea, with greater enthusiasm, in his 1911 essay “Electric War”: “hasn’t the noctambulism of work and of pleasure already almost fused together day and night?”<sup>10</sup> In *Great Traditional and Futurist Milan* the workers are reduced to a kind of collective raw material with no apparent control over their fate; elsewhere in the same text Marinetti refers to “the Strike that prophet of revolutions.”<sup>11</sup> Throughout his reminiscences, Marinetti veers from exaltation at the “insolent poetry” of industry to descriptions and metaphors that suggest anxiety about its destructive forces.<sup>12</sup> In the era of high Futurism, however, it had been necessary to create a less ambivalent myth of the Futurist metropolis as an ideal whose realization was already underway, most notably in Milan.

If the exemplary Futurist city did not quite exist, then one could provide a proleptic image of its creation. Futurist rhetoric celebrates the process of constructing the city, imagining it in a moment of dynamic becoming rather than as an already existing site for the experience of urban leisure, fashion, and spectacle such as we find in French Impressionism. Late nineteenth-century artists who responded to the contemporary industrial and social transformation of Paris, comparable in many ways to what occurred at the turn of the century in Milan, did so in terms that suggest an entirely different attitude toward modernity. If train stations enveloped in steam, elevated views of Baron Haussmann’s grand boulevards, café scenes, dance halls, and other forms of contemporary pleasure and circulation figure prominently in Impressionist painting, urban labor and the construction of the city are rarely depicted. In contrast, Futurism proclaimed urban construction to be the very emblem of modernity, whose exemplary sign was scaffolding.

In “Electrical War,” a text that seems to draw some of its imagery from Boccioni’s paintings and drawings, especially *The City Rises*, Marinetti declared, “nothing is more beautiful

than the scaffolding of a house under construction.” This pronouncement is offered as “an explosive gift” intended to complete the poet’s earlier celebration of the beauty of speed. For Marinetti, the construction site becomes a field of mobile and often violent affirmations of will:

<EXT>Scaffolding, with girders the color of danger<m->landing platforms for airplanes<m->with its innumerable arms clawing and combing the stars and comets, its aerial quarterdecks from which the eye embraces a vaster horizon . . .

Scaffolding with its rhythms of pulleys and hammers, and from time to time, the lacerating cry and the heavy thud of a mason who falls, great drop of blood on the pavement . . . scaffolding symbolizes our burning passion for the coming-into-being of things.

Fie on things already built and finished, bivouacs of sleep and cowardice! We love only the immense, mobile, and impassioned scaffolding that we can consolidate at any moment, always differently, according to the changing direction of squalls of wind, with the red cement of our bodies molded [*pétris*] by our wills.<sup>13</sup>

Infused with a desire to enhance human power and to experience a new perceptual horizon, Marinetti’s rhetoric also entails, even demands, an antihumanist psychology. The embrace of danger and the challenge to nature (“clawing and combing the stars and comets”) requires a thrilling indifference to human fatality, the fallen worker reduced to a harrowing cry, a thud, and a splotch of blood. By contrast, the Futurist’s own body, kneaded out of a malleable but strong construction material (cement), would be formed and colored red by a volatile and mobile intensity of will, in aggressive response to every sudden attack (the squalls of wind) from the

environment. If the girders are “the color of danger,” so too would be the Futurist body, conceived as analogous to a house under construction. Building the modern city implied forging its new inhabitants as well; their psychic and corporeal identity would be capable of constant transformation, always exemplifying the process of becoming as a form of autogenesis. Scaffolding, a metaphor of the inner will to power, would drive the forces of material self-fashioning.

The Futurist myth of the modern metropolis coincided, to a large extent, with Milan’s self-promotion as the nation’s capital of industrial production and commerce. In the years following unification in 1861, the rising tide of economic growth had transformed Milan from a still largely agricultural and artisanal city to one with numerous factories along its ever expanding periphery, as well as the beginning of the infrastructure required to support modernization. During this period, the city and its surrounding regions experienced a dramatic increase in population, attracting those seeking work in the new industries as well as the allure of urban life. The population grew from 354,000 inhabitants in 1881 to 538,000 in 1901. Between 1901 and 1911, the period of greatest growth, Milan reached a population of 701,000, with the addition of 160,000 inhabitants within the city, and another 100,000 within its peripheral zones.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of the National Exhibition of 1881, Milan could boast the completion of the Central Train Station (1864), the foundation of the Polytechnic University (1863), and the realization of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (1878). The 1884 Cesare Beruto plan, adopted in 1888, sought to provide open spaces in the historic center for financial institutions, commerce, and new residential construction. Similar to Haussmannization in Paris, it entailed the destruction of many working-class neighborhoods and the old slaughterhouses and markets, most notably on

the northwest side of the city from the piazza of the Duomo to the Castello Sforzesco. Like the recently built Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, the new sites and their neo-Renaissance buildings were expressions of the power and commercial interests of the ruling, bourgeois class: the radial Piazza Cordusio (home to the stock exchange, banking, and insurance), the Via Dante, which cut through smaller, irregular streets to provide a straight, grand boulevard connecting the Piazza Cordusio with the Castello, and the Foro Buonaparte, a semicircular avenue that frames the Castello and provides open views of the city. In the process of these transformations, and as a result of intensified housing speculation, the working class found itself increasingly ejected to the outskirts of the city, where the factories were also located. The Beruto plan then sought to connect the center and industrial periphery through the creation of a radial organization of major, tree-lined avenues, piazzas, and small parks, all designed to permit the limitless expansion of the city. Yet the divide between the more densely populated, increasingly bourgeois, commercial, and financial center, and the randomly developed, working-class periphery remained. During the 1880s, the city's network of services and transportation was enlarged, without, however, creating a sense of real continuity or unity between the different zones of Milan. In 1882, gas lines were extended beyond the center of the city; the first Central Electric Plant in the Via Santa Radegonda near the Duomo was built the following year, generating power for the arc lamps in the Duomo's piazza and adjoining Galleria; in 1888, work began on an aqueduct and on a sewer; and in 1891 the Società Edison began running the electric trams that appear in so many Futurist paintings. Yet little thought was given to providing adequate housing for the growing population of workers and peasants on the outskirts of the city until the early years of the twentieth century. The first *case popolari* (workers' houses) were built by the private Società Umanitaria in Via Solari in 1905-6, followed by those in the Viale Lombardia in 1911. Other *case popolari* were

built by the city administration (in Via Ripamonti in 1905-6), and by the Foundation of the Institute for Popular and Economical Housing (Istituto per le Case Popolari ed Economiche) in 1908.<sup>15</sup> These, however, remained relatively modest, isolated interventions and were not integrated with specific factories or the larger fabric of the periphery.

By the early twentieth century, the expanding set of concentric zones that surrounded the old Spanish walls of Milan (the second ring) included an impressive number of new and renovated factories. These comprised De Angeli, for dyeing and printing fabric, located to the west beyond Porta Magenta, and Richard, a ceramics plant to the south at San Cristoforo. Pirelli, famous for its tires, Alfa Romeo, maker of automobiles, Ercole Marelli, producer of materials for thermoelectric plants, and La Breda (then called Elvetica), a locomotive factory and foundry (much celebrated by Marinetti), were all located in the north. The Radaelli steelworks established itself to the southeast, along with Binda, on the Corso di Porta Romana, which employed five hundred men and women to make buttons. As the population of the peripheral zones began to rival that of central Milan, the city gradually annexed them as a means of consolidating its power and generating new sources of tax revenue.

By 1910, as many as 15,000 workers traveled daily between the city's center, its periphery, and the outlying countryside, in trams, trains, horse-drawn carts, or on foot. It was in this ill-defined and often-desolate ring, in which factories, workers' housing, and electric plants coexisted with plots of farmland and empty lots, that the future of the city was most in evidence. The nonsynchronous pace of change brought the transformation of this zone into greater relief, offering premonitory signs of the future. For Boccioni, who settled in the industrial area near the Bastioni di Porta Romana to the southeast of Milan in the spring of 1908, comparatively affordable rents were most likely the first attraction. Eventually, however, the inchoate character

of this zone may also have been appealing, offering the artist the opportunity to improvise new patterns of pictorial organization while seeking to capture something of its changing and indeterminate physiognomy.

Boccioni arrived in Milan in mid-August 1907, anxious but hopeful about his prospects for beginning a new life in the city. Writing to Severini a few months later, he declared Milan to be “a city that honors all of Italy, the only one that represents her.”<sup>16</sup> Already, in Padua the previous spring, he had confided feelings of restlessness and a desire to depict new industrial subjects in his diary:

<EXT>I went to the countryside to work, but didn't find anything. The usual lines tire me, I'm nauseated and fed up with fields and little houses. . . .

I must confess that I search, search, search, but don't find. Will I find what I'm looking for? Yesterday I was tired of the big city, today I ardently desire it. Tomorrow what will I want? I feel I want to paint what is new, the fruit of our industrial time. I am nauseated by old walls, old palaces, old subjects based on reminiscences; I want to have today's life before my eyes.<sup>17</sup>

The conventional repertory of subjects, “fields, tranquility, little houses, woods, ruddy and strong faces, workers' limbs, weary horses etc.,” strikes the twenty-five-year-old artist merely as “an emporium of modern sentimentalism.” He further declares that “indeed, all modern art seems old to me. I want what is new, expressive, formidable! I want to cancel all the values I have known, know, and am losing sight of, in order to remake, reconstruct on new foundations. All the past, marvelously grand as it is, oppresses me. I want what is new!”<sup>18</sup> Even before joining the Futurist

movement, Boccioni articulates one of its major themes, the oppressive burden of the past for young artists who wish to express the particular character and sentiments of their time.

Boccioni's diary from his first year in Milan records the tortuous process, full of high ambition and self-doubt, of defining his ideals and struggling to make a living. Although he detested doing so, he sought commissions for commercial work, mostly journal covers, illustrations, and advertising posters, but occasionally for paintings as well. He made drawings of racing automobiles and bicycles for the covers of the monthly magazine of the Italian Touring Club, many of which were turned down, and drew a masthead for the journal *Il Lavoro Italiano* (*Italian Work*) that was also rejected (fig. 3.1). The latter occupied him for some time, undergoing many revisions.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the combination of elegant, Art Nouveau lettering framed by delicate foliage and two hypermasculine workers, inspired by Michelangelo's *ignudi*, struck a false chord. But this modest project devoted to the theme of work also reveals the artist's tendency to think in terms of idealized, allegorical figures even when addressing modern themes. Perhaps it seemed strange to the editors of the journal that Boccioni sought to address proletarian workers in the language of elite art, which bore little relation to actual conditions of labor. Were the workers to feel ennobled through identification with these virile figures? Three years later, in executing *The City Rises*, Boccioni would again attempt to address ordinary workers through heroic allegorical figures in which the transformed bodies of the protagonists would play a vital role. <fig 3.1 about here>

But in the intervening period, Boccioni continued to seek commissions from illustrated papers, publishing companies, industrial establishments, and social humanitarian organizations. On 17 October 1907 he wrote in his diary that he had found work for Casa Ricordi, publisher of music and graphics, and that as soon as possible he would buy supplies to begin serious work.<sup>20</sup>

Yet in the entry for 13 November we read: “I knocked on the doors of all the industrial establishments without finding anything. Ricordi isn’t happy with the covers that I made with such great care. Chiattonne promises much but I don’t understand how such a large establishment can have nothing for me. . . . I don’t have money for anything.”<sup>21</sup> His design for an advertising poster for the Bertoni fashion house, executed in the manner of Aubrey Beardsley, was also rejected. Sometime in 1908 or 1909, he painted a portrait of the Folzer factory, which manufactured oils and lubricants. The unusual, horizontal format of the work, which allows the entire length of the factory to be arrayed on a slight diagonal before the viewer, and the prominent placement of the name “Emilio Folzer,” suggests that this was a commissioned painting. In his private work from this early period in Milan, there is little evidence of engagement with the new subjects offered by urban life. Only in the spring of 1908, with Boccioni’s move to his mother’s apartment, do we find a significant expression of interest in the modern transformation of Milan’s periphery. Yet the artist hardly welcomed the change in his living circumstances. On 5 April he recorded in his diary that, “At the end of the month I will have to leave my room. Perhaps I’ll go to Mamma’s but I fear I won’t be able to stand it. . . . How will I find the energy to move from the center to the countryside?”<sup>22</sup> Like so many workers, artisans, and newly arrived immigrants to the city, Boccioni found himself constrained to live outside the Spanish walls.

Soon after arriving at his new apartment, Boccioni took cognizance of his surroundings in a self-portrait (fig. 3.2). Situated on the balcony, the artist portrays himself against the backdrop of the new hybrid industrial zone, with several large houses amid fields and vacant lots in the distance, a house under construction in the middle distance at left, and just beyond, a train moving to the right, about to cross a small overpass. A few summary gestures indicate isolated



individuals walking on the road below, and a horse pulling a cart near the house under construction. One gains little sense of the relations between these people, who are seen from a distance that seems to negate any sense of their identity, or even of their destination in the large, indeterminate spaces they traverse. As in the paintings of the periphery that would follow, this zone is pictured as an autonomous world, with no visible link to the historic center of Milan. Although Boccioni places himself outdoors, without the mediation of a window frame (which had appeared in the related sketch executed in his diary), the elevated point of view precludes full immersion in the scene. A strong figure in his heavy Russian overcoat and cap, palette in hand and an intense gaze on his face, Boccioni depicts himself as a stranger, a bohemian artist in this zone of housing construction and industrial work. As he wrote in his diary on 13 May, “In that house I finished a self-portrait that leaves me completely indifferent.”<sup>23</sup> <fig 3.2 about here>

Other typical subjects from this period include landscape scenes, often with peasants tilling fields vibrant with plants and flowers in postures that recall Jean-François Millet and Camille Pissarro. These works were executed on the basis of small outdoor sketches in oil, along with pencil drawings devoted to specific details. In one of these small scenes, which may combine observed and remembered elements, Boccioni also registered the experience of the new trains speeding through the countryside. Only two years earlier Milan had celebrated the completion of a second Sempione Tunnel, which opened a railway line connecting the city to Lausanne, Paris, and London, with an international exposition.<sup>24</sup> Whereas the older tunnel had linked Turin, the nation’s first capital, to the Germanic lands to the north, the new tunnel improved contact with France and allowed Milan to present itself as Italy’s gateway to Europe.

*Passing Train*, a canvas of only 9 by 23 inches, probably reflects the artist’s memories of the paintings he saw during a weeklong visit to Paris in early October 1907, and perhaps

indirectly, memories of the voyage itself (fig. 3.3). The horizontal format, raised horizon line, and vibrant gestural brushstrokes, all reminiscent of works by Vincent Van Gogh, allow Boccioni to emphasize the open expanse of the foreground, in which layered flecks of complementary color create a sunlit field of grass and flowers. In the distance appear the sea, a few hastily sketched sailboats, and the sky, streaked with lavender, rose, and white clouds. The train, with its billowing waves of smoke, cuts through this idyllic landscape, introducing a potentially discordant element that nonetheless seems harmoniously integrated into its setting. A hint of melancholy is evoked by the presence of a few low-flying black crows at the right, probably in homage to Van Gogh. <fig 3.3 about here>

Boccioni's attitude toward the effects of technology on the countryside must have been ambivalent at this point. In *Periphery*, a drypoint also executed in 1908, he depicted a bleak landscape, against which rise several factories and their smokestacks (fig. 3.4). The foreground is nearly empty, a wasteland whose corroded and cracked surface appears inhospitable to vegetation. The numerous harsh lines Boccioni scratched across the plate suggest a desire to disfigure the ground, as if in emulation of the partly obliterated or ruined site. A few broken twigs and low trees mark the middle ground, while the indistinct forms of a building under construction rise at the far right. No human presence animates this scene, which remains abandoned and desolate under a gray, winter sky. <fig 3.4 about here>

The theme of the industrial periphery of Milan continued to preoccupy Boccioni throughout 1909 and early 1910. Sometime in late 1908 or early 1909 he moved to a larger apartment with his mother and sister Amelia, at 23 Via Adige near the Piazza Trento at Porta Romana. His images of this ambiguous zone focus on the coexistence of seemingly contradictory aspects of traditional and modern forms of labor, transportation, and social cohesion. In

*Factories at Porta Romana*, of spring/summer 1910, Boccioni once again chooses an elevated perch and horizontal format that allows him to survey a vast, open panorama (color plate 7). In composing his scene, the artist was directly inspired by the construction sites and movement of workers in his immediate neighborhood. Boccioni organizes his painting in depth by focusing on the dramatic orthogonal of a large avenue, perhaps the Via Isonzo, which ran east-west along the Piazza Trento, and its progression of telegraph poles. Workers travel along the avenue in both directions, on foot as well as in carts. The construction of a new building, with scaffolding and a few workers just barely visible on its roof, dominates the right side. <fig 3.5 about here>

In an earlier painting, *Twilight*, exhibited at the Famiglia Artistica in Milan in December 1909, Boccioni depicts part of the same scene from a more proximate vantage point; in this pre-Futurist work the building at the right was not yet as advanced and the artist focused on capturing the glowing effects of a sunset mingled with factory smoke (fig. 3.5). In *Factories at Porta Romana* (executed after Boccioni had joined the Futurist movement), the artist strove for more brilliant effects of light and for a more explicitly modern subject. By adopting a strongly horizontal format and a more distanced view, he was able to include, at the left, the Central Electric Plant in the Piazza Trento (which he could see from the window of his apartment in the Via Adige), and whose facade is readily identifiable from its progression of neo-Renaissance arches and its enormous smokestack (fig. 3.6). In a trench at the far left, men with their horse-drawn carts dig out the foundations for a new structure in preparation for the renovation of the plant that began in the spring of 1910.<sup>25</sup> Painted in bright, contrasting colors, the movement of laborers, horses, and carts, along with the factory smokestacks and rising clouds of steam in the distance, conjoin to evoke a sense of industrial productivity. Yet the scene also accommodates more traditional forms of labor, with workers tending to cultivated fields, traversed by smaller

footpaths, and women looking after children. Indeed, men, women, and children commingle within this luminous space, in which couples and small groups walk or work together, suggesting the survival of traditional relations in an era of increased immigration and itinerant labor. Despite the rise of worker unrest and strikes during these years, due to high unemployment and a severe shortage of adequate housing, Boccioni pictures a utopian scene of social harmony that presages new industrial growth without necessitating a rupture with the past.<sup>26</sup> <fig 3.6 about here>

Brilliant sunlight, which strikes the scene in materialized diagonal rays, plays an important role in creating this sense of harmony and vitality. For the first time in this series of paintings of Milan's periphery, Boccioni renders effects of light as if they were autonomous plastic elements, a technique he would continue to explore in his Futurist painting and sculpture. He seems to have been inspired by the symbolic treatment of light by artists such as Giovanni Segantini and Gaetano Previati, whose paintings he had seen and admired in a show of Italian Divisionism in Paris in October 1907. Previati's Symbolist work, in particular, greatly impressed him during this period as an alternative to Balla's positivist realism. Boccioni undoubtedly also saw the Previati retrospective that opened in January 1910 at the Palazzo della Permanente in Milan; this exhibition comprised two hundred works, including two triptychs of 1907, *Il giorno* (*The Day*) and *L'eroica* (*Heroic*). Both allegorical works featured mythic male figures leading gigantic horses, rendered with luminous filaments of paint.<sup>27</sup> In his book of 1913, *Futurist Painting and Sculpture*, the artist referred to light as a "quality of the atmosphere" that "always has definite forms and volumes" and could therefore be modeled. Aspiring to capture the movement of light as it intersected the environment, whether a ray of the sun or of an electric lamp, Boccioni asserted that, "This current of light is considered, in a Futurist painting, as a direction of form that can be depicted, that lives as a form and that has the tangible value of any

other object.”<sup>28</sup> As in later paintings, here it figures forth the energy of the sun as a beneficent, pantheistic force whose traces are registered in a radiant web of colored brushstrokes across the painting’s surface. <fig 3.7 about here>

In addition to this quasi-spiritual role, light also assumes a socially symbolic value in *Factories at Porta Romana*. In the closely related paintings *Morning* of late 1909 (fig. 3.7) and *Twilight*, Boccioni depicts the passage of men and women along the same wide avenue in order to emphasize the cycle of a day’s work. This preoccupation with rhythms of labor, their correspondence to times of day, and to natural and artificial illumination, reprises a well-established theme in turn-of-the-century Divisionist and social humanitarian painting in Italy. <figs. 3.8, 3.9 together about here>

In *Work* of 1902, Giacomo Balla had portrayed a solitary gas lamp to evoke the symbolic link between an artificial source of illumination, a predawn hour, and proletarian labor. This work condenses a theme already taken up in Giovanni Sottocornola’s somber depiction of entire families of workers gathering at a tram stop under dim gas lamps in the early morning, in *The Dawn of the Worker* of 1897 (fig. 3.8) and in Plinio Nomellini’s *Morning at the Factory* of 1893 (fig. 3.9). Such paintings pointed to the hardship of factory work that required the predawn assembly of families of laborers and presumably long hours. In a more utopian vein, Balla’s famous triptych, *The Worker’s Day* of 1904, depicted the construction of a building at morning, noon, and evening in separate panels, each associating a time of day with a specific activity, as the work’s first title emphasized: *They Work, They Eat, They Return Home* (fig. 3.10). It thereby exemplified the principle that a “natural right” to respect should determine the length of the worker’s day. The syndicalist Arturo Labriola, who frequented Marinetti’s apartment in Milan, made this case in his widely read book *Reform and Social Revolution* of 1904, reissued in 1906

and 1914. Citing Karl Marx and Georges Sorel, he argued against the “liberty of contract, which permits the worker, constrained by need, to accept all the conditions that the capitalist says are in his interest to impose on the worker.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, regulation of the workday put the right of the worker above the rights of the capitalist, forcing the bourgeois state to recognize “the right of the human being.”<sup>30</sup> Boccioni’s paintings of the industrial periphery of Milan at dawn, midday, and sunset do not simply seek to capture chromatic effects under various atmospheric and lighting conditions, they also participate in the Socialist affirmation of this natural contract. Unlike Marinetti’s workers (in the text cited above), who stream like black smoke into and out of the steel factories at night, morning, and evening, Boccioni’s workers appear as individuals or in small groups, moving in legible (and not entirely uniform) patterns along the avenue and across the fields. They are seen with empathy, as participants in the social and technological transformation of the periphery, rather than as anonymous or potentially frightening masses.

<fig. 3.10 about here>

Early studies for *Lavoro*, as Boccioni’s painting was originally titled, also invoke this symbolism. Shortly after beginning this monumental painting, measuring 2 by 3 meters, Boccioni explained to his friend and patron Nino Barbantini that he hoped to achieve “a great synthesis of labor, light, and movement.”<sup>31</sup> The canvas, which the artist acknowledged was still “transitional,” derives both from his 1908 to mid-1910 paintings of Milan’s industrial zone and from several drawings for a triptych of early- to mid-1910, titled *Giants and Pygmies* (figs. 3.11 and 3.12). The central panel of these latter drawings, with their workers and draft horses set before a factory under construction, would become the immediate point of departure for *The City Rises*. As Virginia Spate has observed, the panel on the left side of the final drawing depicts three tiny but determined men attacking several mighty trees, symbolizing the masculine mastery

of the traditionally feminine sphere of nature as a prelude to its transformation into the modern city (fig. 3.12). At the right, a miniscule male figure nearly merges with the base of a giant telescope pointing at the night sky, symbolizing science and the “conquest of the stars,” the title of Marinetti’s famous poem of 1902.<sup>32</sup> <figs. 3.11, 3.12 together about here>

In *La conquête des étoiles*, and other early poems, including *Destruction*, Marinetti imagines a mythic struggle between the masculine forces of the sea and the seductive feminine power of the stars. This theme recurs in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” where Marinetti twice repeats the rallying cry: “Erect on the summit of the world, once again we hurl our defiance to the stars.”<sup>33</sup> Fused with his phallic telescope, his powers of observation and conquest multiplied, Boccioni’s “pygmy” is transformed into a superman who dominates nature through an assertion of will. In an earlier drawing, Boccioni explicitly associates each panel of the triptych with a time of day, writing *la notte* (night) under the telescope, *il giorno* (day) under the construction of the factory in the center, and *l’alba* (daybreak) under the trees. The left edge of the paper is inscribed with the words: “Un uomo<m->una donna” (a man<m->a woman) and *parabola* (parable) (fig. 3.11). Here the artist seems to have been considering the possibility of creating a parable synthesizing a tripartite scheme evoking the symbolism of the times of day, with an overlay of gender dualism<m->a task that was evidently difficult. <fig. 3.13 about here>

A similar idea had guided his earlier studies for a triptych of 1907-8, *Homage to the Mother* (fig. 3.13). The artist explained the intricate and highly biographical, yet ultimately clichéd, symbolism in a note in his diary:

<EXT>The painting is this. On the side panels are the two children. One works and questions science; from the window we see modern life. The other works by the light of a

lamp and from the window we see a cloudy evening sky and the glimmering of the moon. In the central panel the tired mother with a figure on either side to symbolize the feelings of the children, the two adorations, one sweet, feminine who kisses her hand with devotion, the other prouder in an attitude of anger and virile defense. The background: sunset church ruins.<sup>34</sup>

Boccioni never executed the final version of this painting, a truly idiosyncratic vision drawing on pre-Raphaelite medievalism while simultaneously embracing the study of science as a modern, virile enterprise, to be carried out in sunlight against the backdrop of a train on a bridge and factory smokestacks. In the center, the mother collapses before a cruciform window mullion, while a church spire appears in the distance. As in several earlier drawings, Boccioni rather blasphemously places a female figure (a thinly veiled reference to his own beloved “Gran Madre”) in a Christ-like, sacrificial role, here accompanied by her attribute (and the cause of her exhaustion), the sewing machine. The female figure sewing by the window at the right (inspired by his sister Amelia) is associated with night and the reflected, flickering light of the moon.

In the later triptych *Giants and Pygmies*, Boccioni instead linked the telescope and the “masculine” study of science to “night,” first situating this panel at the left. Unhappy with this sequence, he reversed it in two subsequent drawings, putting “daybreak” at the left. What remained constant was the central panel *il giorno* (day) depicting several men seeking to control large, imposing draft horses, while a factory under scaffolding and several towering smokestacks rise in the background. Although announced as one of a pair of terms in this gendered parable, “woman” appears only in the lateral panels representing trees and stars, natural forces to be mastered. In the end, Boccioni chose to emphasize the exclusively masculine domain



of the workers in the central panel, inscribing one of his color studies with the words, *Gli uomini* (The Men). Rather than include individuals, small groups, and women with children, as he had in *Factories at Porta Romana*, his vision of labor now demanded a more heroic crowd of workers, an ideological shift we can attribute largely to the influence of Futurism and its masculinist rhetoric.

The initially puzzling theme of giants and pygmies can be traced to a short story titled “Pene dell’anima” (Suffering of the Spirit) that Boccioni wrote in Catania in 1900, at the age of eighteen. The protagonist, a young romantic poet who is partly a surrogate for the artist, is daydreaming at the beach about his struggle to realize his ideals when he suddenly declares:

<EXT>Uncertainty! This is the reward when you engage the battle, you know what awaits you, you know yourself to be the most likely to fall. Nonetheless you accept, you fight and perish! . . . Oh! Sublime battle, which a poem could not suffice to express! Titanic battle of the pygmy against the impossible! A noble battle, daily and eternal, without which a man would be only an animal!<sup>35</sup>

Returning to this theme in 1910, Boccioni transformed the battle waged by a solitary, tortured poet to that of a crowd of virile, proletarian workers. Several studies on this theme depict comparatively diminutive men engaged in a struggle to control and channel the energy of gigantic horses. In the central panel of *Giants and Pygmies*, as well as in several related drawings, the men appear to drag harnessed horses, either by stretching out their limbs or coiling in on their own bodies to exert greater force (figs. 3.14, 3.15, and 3.16). In one of these drawings, probably among the earliest, as no indication of the setting is given, Boccioni focuses primarily

on the effort of one man who plants his feet firmly on the ground while throwing his entire body away from the horse he seeks to pull (fig. 3.14). The horse, whose head is just visible at the left edge of the paper, seems to enter the scene under protest. Another drawing also relies on cropping to enhance the sense of contest between man and horse, while introducing several background elements (fig. 3.15). Another worker and his horse appear in the distance, along with a summary sketch of a bridge traversed by several horses and a factory smokestack. A third sketch begins to approximate the final version of the composition (fig. 3.16). Here Boccioni situates the struggle between the main protagonist, whose body contracts inward, and his massive horse in the center of the picture. With feet no longer anchored to the ground, the worker's position is less stable, his musculature more difficult to read. Into the lower left corner, Boccioni also introduces a figure that would survive all subsequent changes. Cast on a diagonal, this worker leans forward to push the handles of a cart cropped by the left edge, a posture that serves to counterbalance that of the central worker while implying the extension of the action beyond the frame. In the background Boccioni sketches the rudimentary forms of a factory, the bridge surmounted by horses, the smokestacks, and what appears to be the first rough indication of a train with a trail of smoke moving through an arch beneath the bridge. <figs. 3.14, 3.15, 3.16 together about here>

At some point during the elaboration of these studies, the artist painted *Giant and Pygmy*, a canvas that eliminates the narrative setting to focus entirely on the relation of a single worker and his horse (color plate 8). Boccioni magnifies the power of the draft horse by enlarging his head and upper body, transforming his collar into a winglike shape, and situating him on a rising axis, so that his head, harness, and hoofs are partly cut off by the edges of the picture. Wearing blue trousers and a white shirt, the diminutive worker stands between the front legs of the horse

as he reaches up to grasp his collar. The near meeting of the heads of the horse and worker, and the intermingling of their bodies, suggests a close rapport, even a kind of corporeal empathy. Rather than dominate the horse, the worker seems partly to fuse with him, his body floating off the ground rather than exerting force against it. Due to Boccioni's loose, sketchlike technique, the brown tints of the horse's far front leg show through the worker's semitransparent body, just as his outstretched arm takes on the hues of the horse's torso. This painting reminds us of the artist's lifelong love of horses, and of the fact that the "giant" represents the pygmy's "ideal," an unrealized aspect of himself projected into the world that he nonetheless encounters as an external image.<sup>36</sup> The near embrace of the formidable horse and his human counterpart occurs in an otherworldly, dreamlike space that allowed Boccioni to express the ambivalent status of his relation to the "ideal": the object of desire as well as of agonistic struggle. <fig. 3.17 about here>

A similarly conceived, luminous ink drawing reverses the direction of the central horse so that it assumes its final position, facing left, while also including the by now familiar set of background elements (fig. 3.17). As in *Giant and Pygmy*, it treats the Pegasus-like horse and two foreground men as if they were made of the same energized substance rendered through frenzied lines that refuse to fix tangible boundaries. Boccioni enhances the shared, diagonal alignment horse and men by allowing the figures' limbs to bleed into their shadows, thereby extending the thrust of their trajectory. Indeed the figures seem constituted as shadows cast against a brilliant white ground.

Of the four color sketches for *Lavoro*, the oil sketch in the Mattioli collection is closest to this ink drawing, and the first to synthesize all the components of the scene (color plate 6).<sup>37</sup> Relying on a darker palette with dissonant harmonies of violet, mauve, reddish brown, blue, dark green, orange, and peach than he would in the final painting, Boccioni laid his colors

on in thick, gestural strokes that create multiple layers and complex textural effects. His goal seems to have been to multiply the figures while enhancing a sense of unity through the repetition of postures and the painterly fusion of bodies with their environment. As in the ink drawing, the men's bodies conform, as if magnetically, to the dominant diagonal instantiated by the now flame-red horse with the blue, winglike collar; and, as in the drawing, the men's legs and feet seem to taper off, merging with their own shadows and the pictorial ground. The central horse is now pulled by three figures, a central one seen from the back as he leans toward the left while grasping the horse's collar, another coiling in on himself while turning to look at his co-worker. In the final painting, this will be the only worker to look out of the painting; Boccioni eventually gave him a "proletarian" visage, with strong rugged features, a dark complexion, a mustache, and cap. A third figure in green, with arms splayed out to either side as he strives to grasp the horse's trace, barely assumes corporeal form at the far right. Behind him, another worker in blue and mauve with a brown cap reaches forward with both arms, while farther in the distance and toward the center, the open-armed gesture of another figure is hinted at in tones of pale lavender on mauve.

The left side of the painting also received further elaboration; next to the man in the lower corner pushing the handles of his (offstage) cart appears a second figure with arms upraised wearing brown trousers and a dark green shirt. He reaches up to grasp the brown collar of the white horse whose head and upper torso intrude into the scene at the far left. It is an improbable gesture, intended only as an echo of the other diagonal poses. In the middle distance behind him, situated between the white horse and the red horse, stand two nearly identical figures in dark green and brown, their arms stretched forward as they lean slightly backward, their posture perpendicular to the dominant diagonal (although their shadows run parallel to it, so

that the meeting of their legs and shadows creates two forward projecting wedges). Apparently not satisfied with their position and postures, Boccioni eliminated them from the final painting.

In the background, the factory, bridge, and smokestacks take on more definitive forms. The train, summarily indicated in black, gives off billowing waves of peach and gray smoke as it breaches the arch under the bridge. The factory under construction is seen from below; rising on an angle, it thrusts a strong projecting arris toward the viewer, while its uppermost scaffolding is cut off by the picture's edge. Thick textural streaks of peach and light green paint stream down from the factory's distal right edge, as well as from the left edge of the adjacent building, to evoke the material presence of rays of light. These rays, along with the prevalence of ochre, peach, and orange in the ground, infuse the painting with a golden glow indebted to the example of Previati. A similarly radiant ground had invested *Giant and Pygmy* with a timeless aura.

The Mattioli oil sketch marks a turning point in the conception of the picture. Here the artist endeavored to represent a crowd of workers convulsed in a moment of intense striving, while simultaneously subordinating anecdotal elements to the unity of the whole. Rather than one or two workers, this sketch has nine (relatively) legible figures in the foreground and middle ground, and a wealth of contextual details. Yet because most of the figures participate in the same surging, diagonal movement from lower right to upper left rather than struggle against one another in static, held postures as in the earlier drawings the painting communicates a sense of singular purpose consonant with Boccioni's understanding of the psychological unity of crowds of workers (that sense of "irresistibly moving ahead"), and with Marinetti's exaltation of the will to power. <fig. 3.18 about here>

The dynamic force of the horses and the extreme gestures of the men now embody the idea of pure explosive energy, the thrill of sheer expenditure beyond that required for work. It is

difficult to imagine the violent movement of the enormous, rearing horses as having any practical function, and indeed the expected carts loaded with bricks and other building materials are not in evidence. In a pencil drawing from early 1910, Boccioni records the appearance of a docile draft horse pulling a cart before a building under construction, while a man follows a few paces behind (fig. 3.18). Such draft horses, still very much in use in these years, provided a realist point of departure for a painting initially devoted to the subject of work. Boccioni would have observed them pulling their loads in his neighborhood at the Bastioni di Porta Romana, where the construction of houses and factories was underway. But in the final version of *Lavoro*, as in the studies that preceded it, the carts are implied rather than depicted, and the harnesses, symbols of domesticated labor and even of drudgery, are transformed into dynamic emblems of phallic power. <fig. 3.19 about here>

In the tempera in the Jesi Collection at the Pinacoteca di Brera, which is the largest of the color studies, Boccioni magnified the central horse so that he becomes a monstrous vortex of energy with a strongly projecting collar that pierces the upper edge of the picture (fig. 3.19). Strident primaries, along with green, now replace the cooler tonalities of the Mattioli sketch. The postures of the two men in the lower left corner have been rendered largely unintelligible by the way they are cropped, while at the far right a man stretches out to grasp the horse's blue trace in a gesture that seems largely superfluous given that both horse and man are moving in the same direction. In comparison with the more loosely defined green figure at the far right in the Mattioli sketch, this worker indurates into a taut vector swept into the scene by a dynamo he cannot control. The ground itself swells and roils in brilliant red and yellow waves that simultaneously suggest the sea, fire, or the flux of an energized field. Occasionally, Boccioni added slender blue outlines to figures that threatened to dissolve into flecks, swirls, and flows of

pure color. The tempera sketch inscribed *Gli uomini* belongs to this moment, given its high-keyed, primary hues, the monumental scale of the central horse, the interpenetration of forms, and the similar cropping of the figures. <fig. 3.20 about here>

In the smaller tempera study in the Estorick collection, the artist reduces the relative size of the central horse so that his bladelike collar no longer ruptures the upper edge of the picture (fig. 3.20). But as in the other color sketches, the legs and feet of his workers merge with their shadows, are left undefined, or are cropped in order to avoid all indications of a weight-bearing relation to the ground. Instead, the men are launched into space on a diagonal that defies gravity; they appear less to guide or control the flame-red horses than to become infused with their energy.

Through these alterations Boccioni brought his initial Socialist-inspired theme closer to Marinetti's Futurist vision, in which work is conceived as a form of earthbound drudgery to be superseded through technology, war, and the experience of flight. As Giovanni Lista argues, the worker, even the modern factory worker, has no place in Marinetti's universe, despite the occasional, fragmentary references he makes to this social theme.<sup>38</sup> Marinetti extols the machine as a vehicle of enhanced power, aggression, speed, and thrilling sensations, never as the instrument of mere productivity. Similarly, he celebrates factories as emblems of modernity, as engines for the release of energy and of a rupture with the past, never as places of actual work. Boccioni's 1908-10 paintings of Milan's industrial periphery, with their factories and workers, draft horses and carts, are entirely foreign to Marinetti's ideal. Giving his painting a Futurist character required Boccioni to convert a theme initially inspired by the struggle of proletarian workers to construct the modern metropolis through the domination of nature, including the animal power of the draft horses into one that exalted the violent dynamism of their

movements and the flow of energy as autonomous values.

Boccioni was in attendance on 30 July 1910 when Marinetti delivered his “Discourse on the Beauty and Necessity of Violence” at the Sala d’Arte Moderna in Milan, under the auspices of the Circle of Socialist Revolutionary Youth. Marinetti’s oration celebrated both violence and patriotism as antidotes to the complacent decadence of contemporary society, arguing for a “double fervor for a possible proletarian revolution and a possible war.”<sup>39</sup> A lengthy review in the Socialist *Il Secolo* reported that the Futurist poet addressed an audience of Socialists, anarchists, workers, and political activists, “pronouncing certain phrases rich in invectives against indifferentism, quietism, the spirit of profit, universal weakness, but concluding with a general eulogy to energy . . .” Interrupted by cries of approbation and denunciation, Marinetti further extolled the “value of the individual, physical education, courage, the rejection of superstitions and hypocrisy, the love of battle and of liberty.” When he declared himself in favor of duels as a means of settling disputes, Marinetti was met with: “No, no! These are bourgeois amusements! The ideas of a millionaire! We are workers. To slaps we respond with slaps.” The crowd further rejected his appeal to patriotism, filling the hall with shouts of “Down with Italy! Down with the fatherland! What do we have to do with patriotism! I spit on the fatherland! Long live the Workers International!” *Il Secolo* noted that one of Marinetti’s most hotheaded defenders was Boccioni, who had to be calmed by other Futurists.<sup>40</sup> Boccioni’s ardent embrace of the Futurist cause rendered any overture to Socialist workers ambivalent, riven along the fault lines dividing ideals of proletarian revolution and ideals of imperialist war. But in July 1910, Boccioni had not yet severed his links to the workers’ movement or to the utopian premise of egalitarian liberty of expression through art.

Having engaged the theme of “labor” and its transformation through many studies,



Boccioni finally began painting the large canvas in late July or August 1910. He commenced this major work shortly after the inauguration on 16 July of a one-man retrospective at the Ca' Pesaro in Venice, organized by Barbantini, its director. The artist wrote to his patron asking for an advance on sales of his exhibited paintings so that he could buy canvases and materials for new works: "Wednesday I'll begin a painting of 2 x 3 meters and two others a little less than half that size. You can see that the fire is burning; let's hope it goes well and death to passatismo!"<sup>41</sup> Shortly after beginning the new works, he addressed a letter to "My dear (eternal) malcontent," probably his longtime lover Ines, describing the passion and enthusiasm that inspired him, so different from the lethargy and lack of certainty that he had frequently complained of in his diaries during the previous years:

<EXT>*Ciao cara!* Just a quick line because I have to go and do battle with my huge canvas. *Amore mio*, if it comes out as I think, the world has never seen anything like it! I am so immersed in it that it was fully drawn in an hour and a half. . . . What great leaps forward! I can say like Wagner to Sig. Frid: It comes out of all my pores! You can't imagine how different my way of feeling is now when I'm working. I feel as if I'm really creating something, and the work comes to me now with a fever<m->I don't know what to think of so many works of the past turned out in listless and discouraged moods. The way I am working now resembles the way I worked on only two or three works in my life. Now I understand the fever, passion, love, violence meant when one says to oneself: Create! . . . How I understand Marinetti's dictum: No work that lacks an aggressive character can be a masterwork!<sup>42</sup>

Boccioni's rhetoric, describing a feverish battle waged with his huge canvas, recalls the theme of giants and pygmies, with the painting itself now cast as the "giant" or desired ideal. In his diaries Boccioni had often recorded feelings of smallness and inadequacy before the towering figures of art. In December 1907, having read Eugène Müntz's book on the Renaissance, he confessed: "What he says about Leonardo Michelangelo Bramante Raphael makes me disappear like snow in the sun. How can I believe myself to be someone before such giants?"<sup>43</sup> In February 1908 he exclaimed: "Dürer is immense, great, a titan, awe inspiring, as much as a genius can be in his creation. . . . Michelangelo! How can I risk speaking of him with my words. Who am I?"<sup>44</sup> Such reflections led him to wonder, not only about what kind of men these were but also about their bodies and desires, always in relation to his own feelings of insufficiency and lack: "Today an article on the *Twilight of the Gods* by Wagner devastated me. What were these great men like? what soul? what body? what desires? I am becoming ever more stupid and mediocre. And yet I hope for<m->what?"<sup>45</sup>

In beginning to execute *Lavoro*, so long prepared and struggled over, he finally experienced the furious drive and passion to realize the masterwork that he had longed for and that would prove his genius and virility. As he describes it, the work was sketched spontaneously, with a speed and immediacy that overcame the critical distance between subject and object. Immersed in the painting, he worked with love and violence, the work spilling forth feverishly from his very pores; such metaphors evoke a corporeal experience of impassioned creation whose effects would be registered in the aggressive character of the masterwork. He attributed a similar violence and inspired striving to the protagonists of the painting, whose bodies he transformed into volatile trajectories, lines of force signifying the union of *psyche* and *physis*. Yet at moments he also felt overwhelmed by the task before him. In a letter, probably

addressed to Ines, he conveyed his fear of inadequacy in surprisingly explicit sexual terms: “I am happy but I have a terrible fear because it is easy enough to speak of carrying out a work feverishly . . . there is a castrating material part that demands a patient almost material work. I fear this will distract me from the violent unity I want to render. It is so large that it is frightening!”<sup>46</sup> The fear that slow, patient, material labor<m->analogous to that of construction workers, bricklayers, or even draft horses<m->would undermine the unity and violence of the initial moment of inspiration, is telling. In a painting devoted to the theme of labor, it is notable that Boccioni associates the slow material aspects of work with castration. To work, patiently and methodically, was to risk becoming feminized and proletarian.<sup>47</sup>

Sometime in late 1910 or early 1911 Boccioni wrote again to Barbantini, informing him that he was working hard and that the three paintings were almost finished. Of *Lavoro*, he explained:

<EXT>It is done completely without a model and all technical skills are sacrificed to the ultimate cause of emotion. . . . If I can do it (and I hope to), the emotion will be rendered with as little recourse as possible to the objects that aroused it. The ideal, for me, would be a painter who, wishing to represent sleep, would not turn his mind to the being (man, animal, etc.) who sleeps, but could evoke the *idea* of sleep by means of lines and colors, that is, universal sleep beyond the contingency of time and place.

And this through pictorial sensations, that is, beautiful colors and beautiful forms.<sup>48</sup>

As this letter suggests, Boccioni sought to allow his ideas and emotions to dictate forms and

colors that he believed would be universally expressive in the absence of realist description. Yet the tension between the sensations aroused from direct observation and those that flowed from an ideal or feeling continued to mark his paintings, including *Lavoro*. Although symbolist in its use of nonnaturalistic effects of light and color, in the thematic role played by the enormous winged horses, and the willful deformation of the workers' postures, the scene still departs from Boccioni's experience of Milan's industrial periphery. As Leonardo Capano and Antonello Negri have shown, in selecting his theme Boccioni took direct inspiration from the municipal renovation of the Central Electric Plant in the Piazza Trento, begun in June 1910.<sup>49</sup> The artist's apartment was located at the end of Via Adige where it opened onto the Piazza Trento, allowing him a view of the electric plant and the new construction from his window. As we have seen, the plant is recognizable both in *Factories at the Porta Romana* and in the background of the final drawing for *Giants and Pygmies*, where Boccioni raised its height and emphasized its scaffolding and three towering smokestacks (fig. 3.12). This is the structure that inspired the painting, and that, however transformed, rises in the distance of *Lavoro*.

The construction of an electric plant, symbol of dynamism and of the human domination of natural forces, must have appeared an ideal Futurist subject to Boccioni. It also coincided with Milan's expansion of the electrical network, necessary to its industrial growth and commercial interests. Beginning in 1884, electricity had been distributed throughout the region by the Società Generale di Elettività Sistema Edison, a private company. When its contract expired in 1904, the city decided to assume control of the production and distribution of electricity. The following year, construction began on a new steam-powered electric plant in the Piazza Trento, intended initially to provide energy for public lighting, but eventually also for the distribution of potable water and for other industrial and private uses. Completed in 1906, the electric plant extended

over 11,000 square meters, and was linked to the train station (Stazione Merci) at Porta Romana for the provision of coal. With various substations organized in a ring, it provided power along a twelve-kilometer path.<sup>50</sup> Behind its classicizing facade, which Boccioni eliminated in both *Pygmies and Giants* and *Lavoro*, the interior comprised boilers capable of generating steam of 300 degrees, vapor pumps (both compound verticals and Duplex horizontals), condensers, batteries, piston-driven motors, turbines, and turbo-alternators.<sup>51</sup> It was an impressive complex employing the latest technological processes.

Despite its recent completion, in 1910, engineer Tito Gonzales, director of all electrical works in Milan, initiated a renovation project designed to increase the plant's productivity. The new construction allowed the Central Electric in the Piazza Trento to receive energy as well as generate it. Drawing power from as far away as the electric plant at the source of the Adda River at Grosotto in Valtellina, as well as several other plants along a high tension line that ran for 150 kilometers, the plant in the Piazza Trento became the first destination in Milan for the accumulation of distant energy and its local distribution. That the power generated by water flowing at the foothills of the Alps could be captured and transmitted via a series of electric plants along the Adda River, scaling summits, running through gorges and valleys, and traversing plains until at last it reached Milan, where it served to illuminate streets, run trams, distribute potable water, and drive the factories, was a thrilling example of a technological triumph.<sup>52</sup> The *Corriere della Sera* reported that beginning in June 1910, "hundreds of excavators and thousands of draymen began to remove and to carry far away all the earth in the Piazzale Trento and the wide Via Crema."<sup>53</sup> This enormous construction project began just as Boccioni embarked on the first studies for *Lavoro*, and continued during the period of the painting's transformation and completion in March 1911.

Elaborating upon the theme of the construction of an electric plant, Boccioni seems to have wanted to add elements that further dramatized the modernity of the scene, as well as the significance of electric power. As we have seen, a bridge with an electric tram appears in the upper left background of some of the earliest sketches, while below a train hurtles through an arch directly at the viewer. As a bridge did not exist at the Piazza Trento, its presence in the final painting reminds us of the artist's statement to Barbantini that he worked without a model. No doubt its inclusion was largely inspired by Marinetti's invocation of "bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives" in the founding manifesto of 1909.<sup>54</sup> While the bridge may have been based on those he had seen in Paris or Rome, as has been suggested, it seems more likely that Boccioni would have turned to a bridge in Milan as a prototype.<sup>55</sup> A charcoal drawing of the Gamboloita Bridge, dated "morning 28 May 1910," was probably executed precisely as a study for this feature in *Lavoro* (fig. 3.21). The sketch depicts a bridge with a single arch before several tall buildings. A sun dial and electric lamp stand before it, perhaps prompting the artist's comment, scrawled at the bottom of the sheet: "Gamboloita Bridge seen from the train tracks<m->sufficiently interesting Morning 28 May 1910 New enough." Presumably this meant the bridge and its site were sufficiently interesting and new to appear in his masterwork. In developing this section of the painting, Boccioni must have decided to introduce the train, which was implied by the inscription but not visible in the drawing, as it constituted a vital symbol of Futurism's celebration of speed and technology. In other sheets of sketches, probably from this period, he drew a train yard with an electric lamp; rendered separate views of workers on scaffolding and a train; and experimented with the forms of an overpass, telegraph pole, electric tram, and bridge.<sup>56</sup> In *Lavoro* he employed the bridge not only as an emblem of modern technology in its own right but also as a platform for an electric tram, electric

poles, and throngs of people traveling with horses and carts. <fig. 3.21 about here>

Four years later, drawings of the Futurist “New City” by architect Antonio Sant’Elia would also emphasize urban structures that permit the rapid circulation of people and goods, including bridges, broad highways, train stations, train tracks, funiculars, elevators, overpasses, viaducts, and airstrips (fig. 3.22). Inhabitants would be able to traverse the city both horizontally and vertically, crisscrossing vast spaces on multiple levels between setback high-rises. Most of these pathways were elevated so that the street and piazza, traditional loci of movement and social communication, are progressively abandoned, along with the urban crowds and workers still central to Boccioni’s social vision. <figs. 3.22, 3.23 about here>

Within the Futurist mythology of modernity, the construction of the city, and of an electric plant in particular, exemplified the human annexation of the energy inherent in matter. In 1913 and 1914, Sant’Elia created a series of drawings for visionary hydroelectric plants that celebrate the power of these monumental structures (fig. 3.23). Like Boccioni’s paintings and Marinetti’s writings, these are lyrical responses to the sublime idea of the electric plant of the future rather than functional blueprints or even descriptions of existing plants, such as the one in Piazza Trento, or the Crespi plant near Lake Como, Sant’Elia’s native town. Rather than refer to these historicizing, neoclassical structures, Sant’Elia preferred to create spectacular new images captured in a combination of bold, ruler-drawn, geometric masses and flowing, hand-drawn elements. Washes of glowing orange, mauve, dark green, and blue lend a dreamlike quality to these works. The perspective is always from below, so that the towering dam and power station dwarf the imaginary viewer. Human beings appear as tiny blurred forms within the depicted scene, when they appear at all. These drawings seem to be the product of complex fantasies that simultaneously celebrate the colossal power of the electric plant while suggesting that in

confrontation with this technological world, the human subject is insignificant.<sup>57</sup>

Electrical fantasies took a more utopian turn in Marinetti's writings, only to evolve into an orgy of violence as spectacle. In "Electrical War," he imagines all of Italy traversed by electric cables. If a deficit of natural coal had put Italy at a disadvantage during the era of steam power, the country would now be unified and "fertilized" through electricity:

<EXT>Through a network of metal cables the double force of the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic seas climbs to the crest of the Apennines to concentrate itself in great cages of iron and crystal, mighty accumulators, enormous nervous centers planted here and there along Italy's mountainous spine.

The energy of distant winds, the rebellions of the sea, transformed by man's genius into many millions of Kilowatts, will penetrate every muscle, artery, and nerve of the peninsula, needing no wires, controlled from keyboards, with a fertilizing abundance that throbs beneath the fingers of the engineers.<sup>58</sup>

In the scenario that follows, Marinetti describes a world governed by electricity, in which hunger, poverty, disease, and work are banished, air temperature and ventilation are controlled automatically, men write books of one thousand pages on thin metal sheets (costing only eight francs), telephones are wireless, and crops and forests spring up with lightning speed. Inevitably, however, war breaks out between the great powers due to competition over superabundant industrial production. It is directed by "small mechanics," analogous to Boccioni's pygmies, whose flesh has come to resemble steel and who are now "masters of primordial forces." They deploy "steel elephants" and battery-powered trains from afar, to wage a thrilling interplanetary



war with electric explosions in a new antihuman sky, “unbreathable and empty of all matter.”<sup>59</sup>

Integral to this vision of an electrical future, in both its utopian and violent aspects, were recent scientific and pseudoscientific theories of matter. Marinetti and Boccioni were both fascinated by recent discoveries and hypotheses about the structure of matter, which they converted to their own ideological and aesthetic uses. Indeed, to ally his art with science had been one of Boccioni’s aspirations since at least 1907 and carried associations with both modernity and masculinity, as the drawings for *Pygmies and Giants* make clear. In “The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting,” Boccioni declared that “the vivifying current of science [would] soon deliver painting from academism” by affording a new perception of the hitherto secret, dynamic core of matter. Composed of whirring electrons, all objects and space itself were simply varying manifestations of a “universal vibration.” As the X-ray had revealed, objects could no longer be viewed as opaque and inert, or as having distinct and resistant boundaries. Space imploded, collapsing distance and unleashing fantasies of interpenetrating objects and of superimposed or simultaneous realities. Boccioni proclaimed: “Space no longer exists: the street pavement, soaked by rain beneath the glare of electric lamps, becomes immensely deep and gapes to the very center of the earth. Thousands of miles divide us from the sun; yet the house in front of us fits into the solar disk.” The manifesto continued, asking tentatively: “Who can still believe in the opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensitiveness has already penetrated the obscure manifestations of the medium.” Not only was matter already in motion, already vibrating, but it could also be rendered even more volatile through movement and the action of light. Point nine in “The Technical Manifesto” asserts: “That movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies.”<sup>60</sup> Such a view drew on ideas circulating in popular science, such as Gustave Le Bon’s *The Evolution of Matter* of 1905, which

may have been known to Marinetti. According to Le Bon, force and matter are two different states of the same thing, so that one should regard matter as a reservoir of colossal energy rather than as an inert, indestructible mass. For Le Bon, “Matter represents a stable form of intra-atomic energy; heat, light, electricity, etc., represent instable forms of it.” In addition, he argued that, “By the dissociation of atoms—that is to say by the dematerialization of matter, the stable form of energy termed matter is simply changed into those unstable forms known by the names of electricity, light, heat etc.”<sup>61</sup> Once matter had lost its material qualities, it was capable of emitting “particles endowed with immense speed, capable of making the air a conductor of electricity, of passing through obstacles, and of being thrown out of their course by a magnetic field.”<sup>62</sup> Among those “excitants” that functioned as sparks to “disaggregate” matter and liberate quantities of energy, Le Bon cited “heat, light, etc.”<sup>63</sup> In *The City Rises*, the play of brilliant complementary colors on the partially dematerialized bodies of the men and horses figures forth a Futurist vision of this new science, with its emphasis on matter’s volatility and potential for scattering. The central, foreground worker in the painting raises his arms in an open, expansive gesture, as if to receive the transformative energy of light that streams down on him from the edges of the power plant in the distance as well as from the sun overhead. Here the rays of light that appeared in earlier works, such as *Morning* and *Factories at the Porta Romana*, are given a new, specifically Futurist significance, as the visible sign of the generative release of energy, both solar and electric.

As already noted, Boccioni first exhibited *Lavoro* along with several other works at the Esposizione d’Arte Libera. Giovanni Lista has called attention to the fact that the artist was a principal organizer of this exhibition, held under the auspices of the Casa del Lavoro in association with the Università del Popolo (People’s University), both devoted to the social

assistance and education of the working classes.<sup>64</sup> The idea grew out of Boccioni's ties to the Società Umanitaria in Milan, which had provided him with a hall in which to paint his unusually large canvas.<sup>65</sup> According to the testimony of Margherita Sarfatti, who had become a friend and supporter of the artist's work, Boccioni proposed the exhibition of "free art" to Alessandrina Ravizza toward the end of 1910. Ravizza, a revered member of the governing board of the Società Umanitaria, also directed the activities of the Casa del Lavoro and the Università del Popolo, which she had founded. Sarfatti recalled that Boccioni conceived the idea of an annual jury-free exhibition on the model of the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, but as Lista observes, he gave it an entirely different social meaning.<sup>66</sup> The letter-invitation, issued by the Società Umanitaria on 30 January 1911, declared the intention of the Casa del Lavoro to organize a free exhibition whose total profits would benefit unemployed workers. But rather than present one of the "usual art exhibitions," the goal was to "demonstrate instead that an artistic sense, held to be the privilege of the few, is innate in human nature, and that the forms with which it manifests itself are the simple exponents of the greater or lesser sensibility of the person who renders them."<sup>67</sup> Here the announcement affirmed the egalitarian principle that all individuals have a creative sensibility, although some are more naturally gifted than others. But the expression of originality, sincerity, and naïveté was valued over the mastery of a "common and conventional" artistic language: "In this search for a more ingenuous, instinctive, and sincere art, brought back to its healthy origins, we do not despair in accepting certain works that grow out of incomplete or intentionally symbolic expression."<sup>68</sup> Professional artists were welcome, as long as they "intended to affirm *something new*, far from imitations, derivative works or fakes."<sup>69</sup> If there was a precedent for exhibiting the work of non-professional artists in the shows organized in 1909 by the Società di Previdenza for female workers, Boccioni's innovation was to include both kinds of

artists on an equal footing.<sup>70</sup> Most remarkably, the exhibition was open to everyone: to various kinds of artists, workers, and children alike:

<EXT>It is an exhibition open to all: to children who often reflect, unconsciously but with vivacious signs, whatever strikes their imagination; to workers; to the men who adopt the universal language of forms and colors to render that which words would only express badly; to the many who seek to define the truth as it appears to them in an instant; to those who draw forth from their own sensibility and from nature, a world of forms and colors, in contrast with reality, but in harmony with the mind.<sup>71</sup>

There is little doubt that Boccioni wrote this letter-invitation. He was the first to sign it, followed by Carlo Carrà (who had taught art courses for several years at the Società Umanitaria), Alessandro Mazzucotelli (an artist who taught decorative arts at the Umanitaria), Guido Mazzocchi, Ugo Nebbia (a writer), and Giovanni Rocco.<sup>72</sup> It may have been during visits to Mazzucotelli's classes that Boccioni encountered the "proofs" to which the announcement referred, of the "truly surprising ease and rapidity" with which the most varied people assimilated new skills: "Especially in the Department of Toys, there were many occasions to admire the spontaneity with which persons with no experience of drawing or painting succeeded in creating objects that awakened the interest of the public."<sup>73</sup>

A year before the 1912 Blaue Reiter exhibition organized by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc in Munich displayed the works of modern artists (representing both realist and abstract tendencies) along with "primitive" works from various cultures and the art of children, Boccioni sought to affirm the universality of sincere artistic expression through the Esposizione

d'Arte Libera in Milan. He shared with the Blaue Reiter group the desire to demonstrate the breadth and astonishing power of nontraditional cultural forms, including more abstract tendencies, in part as a justification of his own search for a universal artistic language. What made his exhibition unique, however, from a social and political point of view, were its direct ties to the Società Umanitaria and the Casa del Lavoro. Rather than simply present unfamiliar art (whether avant-garde or historical) to the public, Boccioni called upon the public itself, especially workers and children, to collaborate in the production of the event. The letter-invitation, having launched a “warm appeal to all those who value the sincerity and seriousness of the present initiative,” proclaimed that: “The exhibitors are our first collaborators.”<sup>74</sup> Probably for this reason, only contemporary works drawn from the local community were exhibited. Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo represented the Futurists, each with a room devoted to his paintings.<sup>75</sup> This was the first group presentation of the Futurist painters, and it is notable that it occurred in the context of a “free exhibition” comprising over four hundred diverse works.

The exhibition was held in the abandoned halls of the Ricordi Factory in Viale Vittoria (not far from the Casa del Lavoro), thereby converting a former site of work to a site for free cultural expression and new social alliances. This was a utopian gesture, made in the hope that Futurists, workers, and children could exhibit their works together in a space that functioned outside the strictures of the official academic and state-sponsored salons, and outside all aesthetic hierarchies and norms. Boccioni addressed his painting, *Lavoro*, along with *Riot in the Galleria*, *Mourning*, and *The Laugh*, directly to the ordinary workers, children, and fellow Futurists who constituted his coexhibitors, and the work's first audience.

The exhibition as a whole, and *Lavoro* in particular, received surprisingly favorable reviews. The critic for *Il Secolo* (Giuseppe Sprovieri?) praised Boccioni's paintings for his “solid

audacities in drawing and color,” observing that in his other works, as in “*Lavoro* with the city rising and the convulsive anxiety of horses dragging loads and trams passing along a distant horizon and workers toiling or immersed in a blue cloud of dust, he always succeeds in giving us an extremely personal vision of art.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, *La Perseveranza*, a conservative Milanese newspaper, declared, “the orgy of color takes nothing away from the reality, but rather, adds a frisson of life.”<sup>77</sup> In contrast, *L’Uomo di Pietra* satirized the artist’s efforts, declaring “couples help each other in trying not to laugh.”<sup>78</sup>

For the artist, the most shattering remarks were those of his friend Nino Barbantini, who criticized *Lavoro* for its lack of clarity and unresolved allegorical character:

<EXT>Among the recent works, an extremely large allegory of labor does not really prove convincing. It is neither very intriguing nor very eloquent, because the broad conception, which is carried out uncertainly and in an inadequate form, lacks clarity and organic cohesion. Perhaps the work was not sufficiently prepared and needed to be worked out in advance at greater depth and length, but even after examining its preparatory studies I am induced to believe that by and large it is not in accord with Boccioni’s character to persist in symbolic painting.<sup>79</sup>

Boccioni, cut to the quick, responded to Barbantini in a letter affirming the sincerity of his purpose, and the long preparation of the painting:

<EXT>I could and would like to discuss with you at length what you say about persisting in symbolic painting. Am I right in thinking that you are not absolutely questioning my

sincerity in producing a work which in one form or another I meditated over for four years? Granted that point, I would say to you that the only defect in the picture *Lavoro* is a slight insistence on realistic details in a work which is entirely a mental vision that grew out of reality. Therefore it is not my symbolic tendency that should be condemned but the particular work which may have failed.<sup>80</sup>

Deriding the obsession with “isms that mean nothing whatsoever,” Boccioni affirmed the purity of his purpose in “erecting a new altar to modern life vibrant with dynamism,” and further stated, “a picture that attempts this is infinitely superior to any sort of more or less objective reproduction of real life.”<sup>81</sup>

The picture’s contradictions may lie less in the tension between allegory and realism, however, than in Boccioni’s utopian appeal to a heterogeneous audience of Futurists, bourgeois supporters, Socialists, and workers through an avant-garde image extolling the construction of an electric plant, and by extension, the modern city. Apart from questions of artistic style, such viewers could hardly have shared a similar attitude toward labor, the heroism of collective work, or its relation to the machine and industrialization. Boccioni’s own ideas on these issues were in the process of evolving as he executed the many sketches for the painting, so that aspects of the earlier, more social-humanitarian picture survive its eventual Futurist rendering. Foremost among these are the lingering references to muscular laborers pushing carts or seeking to grasp the collar or trace of purely symbolic horses in a scene that figured forth a dynamism and heroic striving in excess of (even in opposition to) the mundane task of transporting building materials. But then, even at its conception, Boccioni had imagined a representation of sublime struggle between pygmies and giants. Futurism gave him a way to recast the struggle so that the pygmies

were transformed into vectors of explosive force no longer bound to the earth's gravity. As the artist wrote in his passionate reply to Barbantini's critical review, in painting *Lavoro* he had been "a man who is trying to fly!"<sup>82</sup>

Boccioni's laborers reveal the ambiguity of this reconfiguration insofar as they are "dematerialized" <m-> their bodies built of layered flecks of color that seem partly to "disaggregate" under streams of radiant light. Even as the men's postures conform to the diagonal imperative of the will to power, their virility seems potentially threatened by the dissolution of their bodies into the vibrating pictorial field. The fusion of the men with their environment signified a modern, "multiplied" form of perception that Boccioni believed intuitively penetrated the energized core of matter. Yet it also destroyed a sense of the distinct material substance and individuality of these men, a loss Boccioni partially redressed by introducing various physiognomic details, such as the rugged features and mustache of the figure looking leftward, or the muscular tension in the arms of the man at the far right.

Significantly, in *Lavoro* the artist celebrates dynamism and power primarily through the vitalism of men and animals rather than machines or other industrial symbols. The electric plant, bridge, train, and electric tram provide the backdrop to what remains a human drama centered on masculine bodies and the expression of what Boccioni described as the "will that determines movement, the sensation of gesture, that is, gesture in its unfolding."<sup>83</sup> Despite Futurism's professed embrace of the machine, Boccioni's refusal of mechanical forms of work is registered in this painting. As his letters to Barbantini and the letter-invitation for the Exhibition of Free Art make clear, he rejects technical perfection and repeated formulas in favor of sincerity, purity of conception, and impassioned creation. The commitment to an intuitively rendered Divisionism lay not only in its ability to convey sensations with the immediacy of heightened color relations,



but also in the fact that “every, even minimal, mark carries within itself the imprint of the individual.”<sup>84</sup>

The development and first exhibition of *Lavoro* also reveal the contradictions inherent in the attempt to synthesize the goals of socialism and those of Futurism. The poet Libero Altomare reports that when Boccioni asked him to arrange his first meeting with Marinetti, he confided that “he admired the leader of Futurism and that in Art he sympathized with his program, even while maintaining his own Marxist political convictions.”<sup>85</sup> Marinetti himself recognized Boccioni’s leftist political views and connections in his preface to the artist’s show at Ca’ Pesaro in July 1910. He described Boccioni as an adventurous and restive spirit, and as “a member of anarchist and revolutionary circles, attracted in turn by violent action and by dream, before resolving to dedicate himself to painting.”<sup>86</sup> In a diary entry of 22 March 1908, the artist refers to the present as being “on the cusp of universal brotherhood.”<sup>87</sup> The crowd of workers in *Lavoro* might even be said to represent this brotherhood in heroic terms. The proletariat appears as the protagonist of historical progress insofar as its labor constructs the city of the future, thereby accelerating the industrial transformation of capitalist society and exemplifying the moral virtues of virility and passionate devotion to a collective cause. In its unity of effort, the crowd of workers also figures forth the dynamic, resolute power of the organized proletariat, which might be tapped for the cause of revolution.

Yet even as Boccioni sought to address the workers associated with the Casa del Lavoro through the Esposizione d’Arte Libera, he was in the process of consolidating a more elite brotherhood of fellow Futurists. His letter to Severini in the late summer of 1910 asks for advice about possible new members, who must have the appropriate intellectual qualities, be convinced of the Futurist cause, and committed to Divisionism in painting.<sup>88</sup> Several aspirants, including

Leonardo Dudreville, were rejected.<sup>89</sup> As the artist assumed an explicitly avant-garde attitude in his art, his antagonism toward the public grew. Perhaps Boccioni's greatest disillusionment came from the failure of the Socialist intelligentsia and the workers to understand and embrace his art and its vision of modernity. By 1914 he could write bitterly of

<EXT>a democratic public of anarchist and socialist intellectualoids. . . . One would expect something of this extreme left in life and in politics. . . . On the contrary, they are the most ferocious imbeciles, the most vulgar advocates of traditional banalities, of moral and reactionary commonplaces. We Futurists have always found them violently opposed and insensitive to all revolutionary experiments in art, in which, logically, they should have found simple analogies in their stupid, Camera del lavoro brains. . . . Puah! how disgusting!<sup>90</sup>

Following the Esposizione d'Arte Libera, Boccioni began to align himself with the far more authoritarian and hierarchical views of Marinetti's Futurism. The movement gave him a sense of group identity, shared purpose, and a sympathetic audience based on self-election rather than social class. In 1908, he had written in his diary, "I feel the need to work for something, for some man, woman, friend, old or young lovers, I don't know! If what I do could serve someone, an individual or a community, a city, a nation, humanity. . . . I don't know, maybe I would be somewhat uplifted, but as it is, ignorant, alone, unknown, living is stupid and brutish."<sup>91</sup>

Futurism, with its exhilarating rhetoric, patriotism, and emphasis on the will to power answered this need more readily than an alliance with workers, with whom he shared no economic ties despite his poverty. Probably Boccioni's shift in political allegiance occurred over a period of

time, as he did not sign Marinetti's October 1911 colonialist manifesto "A Tripoli Italiana" ("To Italian Tripoli"), which supported the war with Libya (begun on 30 September 1911). It seems to have been during the latter half of 1912 or 1913 that the artist revised the lecture he had given in Rome on 29 May 1911, with a view to publishing it. After the statement in the original lecture that the Futurists were fascinated by "the symbols of the city," he inserted a reference to "the panting of factories that incessantly produce riches for the strong."<sup>92</sup> The term *strong*, perhaps deliberately vague, suggests the industrial elite more than its workers. When Boccioni's *Lavoro* was exhibited in Paris in February 1912, at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, it was given a new title, probably by Marinetti: *La ville monte* (*The City Rises*). This title erases the reference to work, to the heroic proletarian protagonists, and to Boccioni's pre-Futurist Socialist ideals. But as we have seen, this was a process already driving the transformation of the painting. If this first Futurist masterwork was initially conceived as a struggle between giants and pygmies carried out by small but courageous workers, its final rendering presented a Futurist allegory of the creation of the modern industrial metropolis as a manifestation of virile self-transcendence.

<CHN>Chapter 4

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Photogenic Abstraction: Giacomo Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*

<CHEPI>I saw a photograph that competed with whatever other painting. Mechanics has made such advances in the reproduction of nature that to man there remains only the *spirit*. Everything moves toward the *spirit*.

<m->Umberto Boccioni, diary entry of 12 October 1907<sup>1</sup>

<CHEPI>With the perfecting of photography, static traditionalist painting has completely fallen from repute; the cinema kills static contemplation. . . . Static traditionalist painting was vanquished because it was obliged to transfix one single point among the infinite variety of aspects of nature. Mechanics have overtaken the traditionalist painter and forced him into becoming a pitiable imitator of static and exterior forms. It is imperative therefore not to halt and contemplate the corpse of tradition, but to renew ourselves by creating an art that no machine can imitate, that only the artistic Creative Genius can conceive.

<m->Giacomo Balla, "The Late Balla<m->Futurist Balla," 1915<sup>2</sup>

In the summer and fall of 1912, while engaged in the design of a decorative program for a patron in Düsseldorf, Balla began work on a series of abstract drawings and paintings he later titled the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* (*Compenetrazioni iridescenti*) (color plates 10 and 11).<sup>3</sup> Radiant sketches in watercolor appear in his notebooks and in letters to family and friends, signaling the great interest he took in his "research," as he called it, into light, color, and geometry. The works executed on the basis of these studies are among the earliest geometric abstractions in twentieth-

century art.<sup>4</sup> Often executed with ruler and compass, and with colors organized into iterable patterns, these works eschew the more organic and atmospheric approach of Wassily Kandinsky, as well as his deliberately childlike drawing and application of color. They also diverge from the more allusive and soft-edged incipient grids of Piet Mondrian and of Robert and Sonia Delaunay, (in which fragments of the Eiffel Tower and other urban forms can usually still be detected), as well as the hand-drawn, floating, and relationally composed geometric forms of Kasimir Malevich. Indeed, Balla's abstractions are startling in their bold declaration of a quasi-mechanical mode of drawing, in their embrace of the grid and of kaleidoscopic patterns, and in their desubjectified and serial color schemes. Yet the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* are rarely included in the canon of modernist abstraction, which tends to emphasize the development toward nonobjectivity of Malevich, the "Orphic Cubism" of Robert Delaunay, or the spiritualizing tendencies of Kandinsky and Mondrian.<sup>5</sup> Unlike these artists, Balla wrote very little to explain or justify his abstract works, and it appears that only one of them may have been exhibited prior to World War I.<sup>6</sup> The *Iridescent Interpenetrations* have therefore been difficult to date with certainty, and no prewar published criticism exists to guide us in their interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, it is precisely this absence of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* from the many exhibitions sponsored by the Futurists and from the scene of manifesto writing and theoretical proclamation that demands further analysis. Hitherto unpublished correspondence from the young artist, critic, and gallery dealer Giuseppe Sprovieri to the artist Umberto Boccioni in early September 1913 (to be discussed below) makes it clear that the suppression of these works began with Balla's fellow Futurists. At stake were deeply held notions of the role of artistic intuition and creativity, an uneasy relation to photography, and, paradoxically given that we are speaking of Futurism, toward the infiltration of mechanical processes into modalities of vision and

pictorial execution. Perhaps even more surprising is the demand, articulated in the critical positions of Boccioni and Sprovieri, for humanist norms of representation, especially illusions of spatial depth and corporeality as vehicles of empathic identification. From today's perspective, the anxiety that Balla's abstractions aroused resembles the unease many now feel toward digital photography and other computer-generated imagery, in which the loss of the real-world referent opens onto the dizzying, groundless domain of simulation.

This chapter explores the tension between the craft ideals of Balla's early realist works and his later engagement with mechanical modes of production and technologies of vision. It also considers the slippage between abstraction, which is linked to sensations of nature through processes of distillation and the theory of pictorial equivalents, and decoration, which is no longer linked to a real-world referent. Balla's longstanding interest in the decorative arts and in traditional artisanship fueled his desire to contribute to the regeneration of modern design that was so common at the turn of the nineteenth century. Given that his commission in Düsseldorf came from the Löwensteins, members of the Austrian and German Jewish elite, it is not surprising that he was partly inspired by the model provided by the Wiener Werkstätte<m- >especially the simple, strikingly modern designs for room decor and furniture from the period 1903 to 1905. The decorative work and early manifestos of Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser would have confirmed Balla's belief in the aesthetic value of simplicity and in the idea that art should reflect the sensibility of its time rather than repeat outmoded formulas.<sup>8</sup> More unexpected is the way in which Balla synthesized this model with that provided by the chronophotography of Etienne-Jules Marey, whose work he had undoubtedly encountered at the Paris World's Fair in 1900, and again at an international competition of scientific photography held in conjunction with the Universal Exhibition in Rome in April 1911.<sup>9</sup> Balla's abstractions grew out of the

convergence of two seemingly incompatible media with divergent aims—nonfigurative decoration and scientific chronophotography. Each opened a vista onto a new set of pictorial possibilities, allowing the artist to imagine translating his experience of light into a simple vocabulary of colored geometric forms arranged in self-reflexive patterns across a surface.

In some accounts of the development of modern art, articulated most clearly by Thierry de Duve, an aesthetic rupture occurs in 1912, such that the traditional craft of painting comes to seem obsolete in the light of industrialization generally, and of photography in particular. In an age in which mechanized labor became increasingly the norm, to insist upon work executed by hand seemed technically anachronistic. Photography presented the most immediate challenge to the function and prestige of the artist, whose ability to render appearances could not compete with that of the camera. With mimetic painting no longer viable for those artists sensitive to the uselessness of this now outmoded practice, two alternative responses emerged. The first was pictorial abstraction based on the aspiration for a tabula rasa and self-reflexive purity in art, exemplified by the work of Kandinsky or Mondrian. The second embraced painting's mechanical "other," taking industrial or serial modes of production, including photography, as its model. Marcel Duchamp's readymades and photography-based works exemplify this strategy. Abstraction, according to this view, stands in opposition to photography with its seemingly transparent realism, its automatic and mechanical processes, its lack of personal expression, and its infinite reproducibility.<sup>10</sup> In Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, however, it is the artist's engagement with photography (including those very qualities deemed inartistic by so many of his contemporaries) that leads him inexorably to abstraction. Rather than constitute a rejection of the technological modes of production of his time, Balla's abstractions absorb and reconfigure certain of their features. As in the case of Marcel Duchamp in 1911 and 1912, Balla's "passage"

to a new, quasi-industrial practice of art is surprisingly rapid. But to grasp its meaning, we must first recall his earlier work and its social and aesthetic context. We must also examine Balla's longstanding engagement with the Symbolist trope of painting as window, but one whose frame and transparent surface have been called into question.

In 1904, shortly after renting some rooms in a former monastery in the Via Parioli near the Villa Borghese in Rome, Balla executed *Proprietor* (fig. 4.1). The artist later described this painting as an important early work, and deeply regretted its loss while on exhibition in Russia in 1909.<sup>11</sup> The only known photograph was taken when the work was exhibited in Rome in 1905, where it hung alongside a painting by the Symbolist Antonio Mancini.<sup>12</sup> The latter considered this juxtaposition an affront, and surely the contrast is telling.<sup>13</sup> It sets into relief the greater realism and luminosity of Balla's work, with its emphasis on observed effects of light and on a quotidian subject, as well as its rigorous planarity and geometrical organization. Even Balla's unadorned frame, upon which the title is inscribed, announces its modernity and its aesthetic of simplified truth telling. <fig. 4.1 about here>

*Proprietor* pictures the artist's new landlord, Tommaso Sebastiani, seated before a window, surveying his fields and distant buildings in the brilliant light of high noon. The artist's daughter, Elica, describes Sebastiani as a "rough but intuitive man," who frequently advised Balla to buy some land in the area, arguing that eventually it would make the artist rich.<sup>14</sup> She writes that Balla would laugh at this proposition, "while observing instead the man, the 'proprietor,' who, seated near a window on a hot summer day, looks with a knowing and pleased expression at his terrain, those fields golden with grain on which would rise the palatial houses and villas, streets and gardens of the Sebastiani district."<sup>15</sup>

Balla depicts Sebastiani unsparingly in his function as a proprietor, which he crystallizes



in an act of looking. The painting presents viewing as a mode of ownership, implying a link between clear visual apprehension of an object or vista and physical possession of it. To see, on this model, is to grasp, both conceptually as a form of knowledge and materially as a form of power. Indeed the proprietor, head inclined slightly forward, gazes through the window with an intensity that becomes the equivalent of a bodily gesture. Although he sits, immobile within a private interior, his right arm runs along the windowsill as if it were a prolongation of his look; thus aligned with the right and lower edges of the window, his body frames the exterior view, thereby claiming it. In a related indexical gesture, his penetrating gaze reaches across the sunlit fields to survey the workers, to follow their movements, to evaluate their progress. The very distance from which he regards his farmhands is a measure of his mastery over the intervening space, as well as of their labor.

Despite the compelling authority of the proprietor's gaze, Balla's painting does not seduce the observer into identifying with it; rather, Balla's deliberately crude frame, which looks as if a novice carpenter might have constructed it, and his evident brushwork, break the illusion of the depicted scene and introduce a critical point of view.<sup>16</sup> For at the turn of the century Balla was associated with Socialist circles. He was especially close to the writer, editor, and social humanitarian Giovanni Cena, whose portrait he painted in 1910, and to the other members of his circle, including the feminist writer Sibilla Aleramo and the educator Alessandro Marcucci, his brother-in-law.

Despite these political and aesthetic alignments, Balla surprised his contemporaries by signing the "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters" in 1910, partly in response to the enthusiasm of his former pupils Gino Severini and Umberto Boccioni. Yet his work continued to develop independently along the lines of his earlier production, and he did not exhibit with the Futurists

until early in 1913. Balla's social and artistic activities through this period remained at odds with the bellicose nationalism and antihumanitarianism of Futurism.

As late as spring 1911, the artist showed twelve paintings of itinerant peasants and the fields they cultivated in an exhibition dedicated to the Agro Romano, or Roman countryside. Organized by Cena and Marcucci on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition in Rome, the show celebrated fifty years of Italian unity.<sup>17</sup> It was intended to highlight the achievements of the literacy program organized by Sibilla Aleramo, Anna Celli, and Cena's circle.<sup>18</sup> Within the thatch exhibition pavilion, designed by Duilio Cambelloti, farm implements, utensils, furniture, and cloth made by peasants were on view along with Balla's paintings. These depicted peasants in traditional dress, standing before a thatch hut like the one that housed the exhibition.<sup>19</sup> Presiding over this display of objects and works of art was Balla's *Portrait of Leo Tolstoy*, whose book *What Is Art?* continued to inspire the social program of Cena and his circle.<sup>20</sup> Nothing could be further from Futurism than this homage to the peasant and to the continuity of craft-based life in rural Italy. References to modernity appear here only obliquely, in the implied recognition that such traditions were threatened by continuing poverty, poor sanitation, the trend toward urbanization, and a rising tide of emigration from Italy during these very years.

More explicit signs of progress in science, technology, and even in techniques of representation could be seen elsewhere at the 1911 Universal Exhibition in Rome. Another pavilion, which must have attracted Balla's attention, was devoted to scientific photography and included the chronophotographs of Marey. Here, Balla most likely renewed his earlier acquaintance with Marey's work, which he had undoubtedly seen at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900, and which was widely known in Italy.<sup>21</sup> In 1882, Marey had found a means to render visible the ephemeral stages of an object's trajectory through space by inventing a

photographic gun capable of taking as many as twelve shots per second on a single rotating plate. Not satisfied with the clarity of these images, later that year Marey invented the first chronophotographic camera with a fixed horizontal plate and a rotating shutter disk capable of recording ten shots per second. The resulting images, remarkable for their precision as well as their beauty, figure forth the discrete, successive phases of an object or body in motion (figs. 4.3 and 4.4). By capturing and making available to vision what the unaided eye could not register, Marey's photographs promised to reveal the truth of movement: for example, the exact positions of a bird's wings as it soared or descended, or the positions assumed by the limbs of a running horse, or of a walking or jumping man. Eventually, Marey went on to discover means of photographing even such difficult subjects as currents of wind, or the lapping of waves on the beach. <figs. 4.3, 4.4 together about here>

Unlike his contemporary Eadweard Muybridge, Marey was trained as a physiologist, and his purpose was to understand the principles of locomotion, whether animate or inanimate, according to a mechanistic model. Countering the theories of those who held that a mysterious vitalist force or spirit engendered movement, Marey sought to show its universal basis in the laws of mechanics. Visibility ensured the possibility of precise measurements, essential to a scientific understanding of cause and effect, and these measurements in turn could be graphed or even rendered mathematically. For Marey, chronophotography was simply "the most perfect form of the graphic method," achieved by optical means.<sup>22</sup> As such it constituted "the language of phenomena themselves," an indexical form of writing "superior to all other modes of expression."<sup>23</sup>

One of the paradoxes of Marey's method is that in the process of making a sequence of movements visible, the corporeality of the moving body or form was often lost. Beginning in late

1882, Marey at times eliminated superfluous detail by dressing his subject in black, with strips of metal and shiny buttons, or various geometric shapes cut out of white paper, attached to specific body parts, such as limbs, joints, or head. Photographed against a black background, only the reflective elements and other white marks were registered, creating a dematerialized graph of lines and dots.<sup>24</sup> With the subject of motion itself thus altered and clarified, Marey could increase the number of shots per second from ten to one hundred, thereby creating optical patterns that offered both discrete, legible phases of a movement and a sense of continuity. The result was a new visual language comprising overlapping, angular, two-dimensional elements, measurable signs of motion detached from the body or object that produced them.

Given his longstanding interest in photography and in its uses as a model for painting, it is not surprising that Balla found new inspiration in Marey's chronophotographs. In 1911, his interest in photography was also stimulated by the work of Anton Giulio Bragaglia, a new adherent to the Futurist movement. Bragaglia sought to improve upon the Marey's chronophotography by inventing a new technique he called *photodynamism*.<sup>25</sup> Through the latter he aspired to counter the accusation that photography could only capture the static, successive stages of movement, never its fluid continuity. His photodynamisms, produced through long exposures, recorded the back and forth motion of simple, repetitive gestures and tasks: a carpenter sawing, a man changing position, hands typing. The resulting images, as photography historian Marta Braun has noted, emphasized the first and final position of the moving subject, with a blur of forms melding together the intermediary phases.<sup>26</sup> As in the chronophotography of Marey, Bragaglia's photodynamisms had the effect of partially dematerializing forms in order to convey sensations of movement. His image of Balla playing guitar, of circa 1912, focuses on the artist's hands as they assume different positions; but this impression of temporal and spatial

change leads to a loss of somatic boundaries, as multiplied and semitransparent hands take on a quasi-autonomous status in relation to a body that is nearly absent. <fig. 4.4 about here>

Balla's appropriation of photographic models, especially that of Marey, occurred in the period following the Universal Exhibition in Rome, which may have given him an opportunity to gauge the relative backwardness of Italy in art and industry. This was a time of crisis and transition for Balla, as he moved away from his previous social humanitarian and peasant themes and began to ally himself more closely with the Futurists. Remarkably, no extant works can be securely dated to the year spanning late spring 1911 to spring 1912. It was most likely during the fall and winter of 1911 that Balla executed his famous painting *The Street Lamp*, which was listed in the catalogue for the Futurist show at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris, held in February 1912. Although mentioned there for the first time, the painting was not exhibited, almost certainly due to the objections of Boccioni, who must have found the theme and its treatment insufficiently modern given his recent visit to Paris and his awareness of Cubism.<sup>27</sup> Although the subject is related to Balla's earlier images of street lamps, this painting is unprecedented in its celebration of the explosive energy of electric light. Balla's first sketches of racing motorcars, which are obviously indebted to Marey's chronophotography, probably date from spring or summer 1912.<sup>28</sup> As these themes suggest, the artist wanted to engage specifically modern subjects, and to do so in visual terms that were informed by science. The related motion paintings include *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* of May 1912, *Girl Running on a Balcony* of June/July (color plate 12), and *Rhythm of a Violinist*, executed in November while the artist was in Düsseldorf. Of these, *Girl Running on a Balcony* is closest to the analytic approach that Marey exemplified. Yet Balla's painting takes Marey's chronophotographs only as a point of departure, a model in the transformation and dematerialization of moving objects into vectors of energy. In

preparation for *Girl Running on a Balcony*, Balla executed several drawings of his daughter Luce running along the balcony of their home. A familiar phenomenon provides an initial optical experience, which Balla abstracts into a pattern of repeated, geometric motifs. In one drawing, his daughter's body is reduced to a set of angular marks, which empty the figure of three-dimensional presence and diminish identifying details (fig. 4.5). Her body is not connected organically to her multiplied legs, which the artist renders in reddish ink rather than pencil, interweaving broken with unbroken contours, shaded forms with transparent ones. <fig. 4.5 about here>

Another sketch, which focuses on the juncture of the body and dress with the legs, takes this process further (fig. 4.6). A triangular pattern, which in the earlier drawing still alluded to the forward thrust of a knee, is now liberated almost entirely from any descriptive function. The legs become a frieze of repeated stick forms so devoid of resemblance to their referent that the artist supplements them with the word *destra*, or right, and more faintly *sinistra*, or left, to signify the successive fall of the feet over time. Dotted semicircles create a sense of continuity for each limb and foot. Such diagrammatic devices, composed of purely two-dimensional linear and dotted elements, suggest an equation between the graphic forms of writing and drawing.<sup>29</sup> In another drawing, remarkable for its near abstraction, a series of vectors intersect the semicircular pattern of the girl's running feet, creating an energized field in which a dominant angle thrusts forward against the countercurrents of opposing forces (fig. 4.7). <figs. 4.6, 4.7 together about here>

To the extent that such graphs seem to be generated by the body itself, and merely captured or registered by the artist (as in Marey's "graphic method"), they can be understood as immanent to it. The body effects its own transformation into a system of signs<m->and

simultaneously into a machine for the production of such signs. This interest in converting the body into a semiotic apparatus led the artist in 1914 to choreograph a short theatrical “synthesis” titled *Macchina tipografica (Typesetting machine)*.<sup>30</sup> In a drawing for the synthesis, the dancers’ bodies, composed of linear elements reminiscent of letters and punctuation (the two central “heads” take the form of a comma or apostrophe, while the bodies look like inverted Ys), simulate the rigid, mechanical movements of a newspaper typesetting machine (fig. 4.8). They beat out a repetitive, staccato rhythm that generates script, albeit one more aligned with Dada than with a typical newspaper. On the reverse of this sheet, Balla wrote out an onomatopoeic text comprising twelve simultaneous lines of sound effects to be recited mechanically by twelve performers, each dressed in the same costume.<sup>31</sup> The resulting cacophony emulated and celebrated—but also mocked—the rationalization of the machine and its efficient repetitions. <fig. 4.8 about here>

*Girl Running on a Balcony* is less extreme in its equation of the body with a machine, but the process of schematization is still at work. Balla’s painting melds the data of vision with pure pattern, by partly fusing the running figure with the metal grill of the balcony. The grill provides a stable matrix of measurable, equidistant units, like the cuts in Marey’s chronophotographs; here it establishes this matrix as nearly flat, more like a lattice than a volume for the body that moves across and through it. The signs of movement are thus counterbalanced and contained within a framework that homogenizes the pictorial field into a unified, all-over pattern: the implied temporality of a moving body is frozen into a series of static moments displayed spatially across the canvas. The corporeality of the body is also dissolved in the play of flickering, layered, and overlapping patches of color, in which all tactile and material cues are converted to a single, if unstable, system of painterly marks.

At the far right edge of the canvas, Balla established a subtle framing device through two narrow vertical strips that run along the entire right edge, matched on the far left by three adjacent strips, all with patches of color laid into them. These vertical elements, with their opposition of saturated and pale yellow tones on the left, and darker blues, greens, and oranges on the right, allude to the fall of light on the edges of the doorway through which Balla observed his daughter.<sup>32</sup> With this device he created an analogy between the view through the doorway and the viewfinder of a camera, which similarly crops an image that we know extends beyond its frame. *Girl Running on a Balcony*, then, reveals its affinities to Marey's photography, not only in its reduction of the body to a successive set of fixed moments set forth simultaneously but also in its singular, framed view and transcription of the presence of light. Shortly after completing this painting, Balla departed for the first of his two visits to Düsseldorf, arriving on July 11. He stayed for a month, returning for a second, longer visit in late October.

The passage toward abstraction coincided with Balla's two 1912 sojourns in Düsseldorf at the home of the Löwensteins, who had commissioned the artist to decorate their salon as well as a study for music and painting, probably with one or more glass walls, being built in the garden.<sup>33</sup> (Later they also asked Balla to design the decor of a bedroom, but no traces of this project have been found.) During his second visit to the Löwensteins in November and December, Balla also painted *Window in Düsseldorf* (fig. 4.9), a work that, like the earlier *Proprietor*, meditates on the theme of the view through a window, with its dialectic of near and far, interior and exterior spaces, optic and haptic cues, direct light and reflection. <fig. 4.9 about here>

The picture represents a view through a doubled window in which the distant forms of the Rhine River and a bridge are just discernible as hazy violet forms. Pale yellow strokes



applied in horizontal rows read as crystallizations of sunlight on the central windowpane and call attention to this surface as a screen between the viewer and the world outside. Paradoxically, these strokes continue their parallel course across the canvas to the right, where they contradict the orthogonal projection of the opened window, thereby reestablishing the planar materiality of the surface. Brought into the interior on the open pane of glass, the “reflected” light intensifies, yellow and blue-violet becoming more saturated, while the forms of the bridge and river are further broken down into distinct touches of color. The tactile qualities of the paint and the brilliance of color become quasi-autonomous, as the twice-filtered, represented object—the iron bridge in the distance—begins to dissolve. A pair of binoculars on the sill draws attention to the theme of looking and, in particular, to the desire to enhance natural vision by bringing things closer, making them available to detailed scrutiny. As such, the binoculars allude to the Futurist aim of depicting the simultaneity of near and far, just as the reflections on the opened window bring light and color from the exterior into the room. Significantly, however, the binoculars remain unused, and Balla’s painting does not replicate their close-up mode of seeing, in which an object or even a fragment of an object is magnified in isolation from its visual field. Such viewing formally and psychically fetishizes the objects it seizes hold of, overcoming distance as a means of disavowing loss or absence.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Balla seems to have wanted to represent the perception of objects endowed with aura, objects that remain at a distance (however near they might be), forever ungraspable.<sup>35</sup> One of his letters from July records his impressions of a trip on the Rhine, describing a long series of fleeting visual events, to conclude, “everything seems unreal, untouchable.”<sup>36</sup> In another of his letters from November 1912, Balla writes of his nostalgia for Italy, linking this emotion with the distance of the Rhine and its bridge seen through a window: “While writing I opened the window for a moment in order to have some fresh air; at

a distance I can see the Rhine and the iron bridge. But everything is veiled and Italy so far away.”<sup>37</sup> Rather than seek to lift the veil, however, in order to give objects a clearly bounded form and presence within a determinate, measurable space, Balla’s *Window in Düsseldorf* emphasizes the mist and haze and the ambiguity of spatial relations. <fig. 4.10 about here>

In a sketch included in his letter home of 18 November, Balla opened both panes of the double window in order to gain a better view (fig. 4.10): in the painting, one pane remains closed, a screen that is simultaneously transparent and opaque. Moreover, he executed this work in a Divisionist manner that renounces most outlines, traditional modeling, and detail—all representational devices associated with proximity and tactile apprehension. Perhaps his knowledge of Leonardo—one of several authors he mentions in his letters home—inspired this modernist version of aerial perspective.<sup>38</sup> But whereas da Vinci had called for aerial perspective in order to distinguish planes in depth more clearly, advising that the most distant objects should be the least outlined and the most enveloped in blue, Balla allows the signifiers of distance to invade the entire painting.<sup>39</sup> This is remarkable given that he simultaneously positions the viewer quite close to the window and its projecting pane, so that proximity and distance are ultimately held in tension. The result is an image that inscribes distance, loss, and memory into the experience of viewing.

*Window in Düsseldorf* invites meditation on the relation of visual and tactile cues in the representation of both the material window and the “immaterial” view that coalesces on its panes. The handle on the closed window, the binoculars, and the opened pane appeal to the viewer’s sense of touch; they also function as emblems of a desire for a clearer, penetrating vision that the work as a whole refuses to deliver. Instead, distant view and interior reflection intermingle as pure sensations of equal value that have left their traces on a single, unified

diaphane or veil. The work invites us to read this diaphane as establishing a series of analogies between the depicted pane of glass, the literal canvas, and the retina. The work's materiality is both affirmed and dissolved: the window frame and mullions organize the composition into a grid that echoes the picture surface and its rectangular format; yet by cropping his window frame so closely, and by emphasizing the projecting orthogonal of the open window, Balla also causes the composition to spill beyond it into the viewer's space. In contrast to the earlier painting, *Proprietor*, where seeing implied a mode of ownership, here Balla explores a comparatively "pure" gaze, in which the knowable, graspable object recedes in favor of an experience of light invested with aura. We should not understand such a painting as a "merely" formalist exercise (to which the optic/haptic opposition tends to be reduced), but as an attempt to render a particular, historically conditioned experience of viewing, which here includes the traveler's sense of the fleetingness and immateriality of cursory impressions and of nostalgia for those people and things left behind. This effort entailed an exploration of the self-reflexive act of seeing through the metaphor of the window, and its gridded, materially present pane. The motif of the window, so important in Symbolist painting, opened a path toward abstraction in Balla's work, one that was simultaneously explored by Robert Delaunay.

The *Iridescent Interpenetrations* would go even further toward rendering the experience of light apart from the specific temporal or spatial perception of objects and toward implying an infinite extension of the pictorial surface into the environment. The first sign of these remarkable works appears in a postcard Balla sent to his pupil and friend Gino Galli (care of his own address in Rome), on 21 November 1912 (fig. 4.11).<sup>40</sup> The recto of this postcard is framed in each upper corner by a square, centrifugally ordered pattern, while the verso includes a sketch for an abstract composition based on four registers of triangles and repeated colors. Balla

refers to these images as “a type of SPECTRUM [*iride*]” that he hopes “to perfect and to render still more fused.”<sup>41</sup> In a letter home of 5 December, the artist again sketches a small, geometric composition in the corner, this time allowing the depicted triangular module to inflect the shape of the overall image, so that it radiates outward from a narrow base (fig. 4.12).<sup>42</sup> The artist invites his family to enjoy “this little rainbow”:

<EXT>My very dear ones. Oh, first of all take some pleasure in this little rainbow [*iriduccio*] because I am certain that you will like it; it is the result of endless testing and retesting, finally achieving the aim of delighting through simplicity. This study will bring about other changes in my painting [*pittura*], and through observation from life, the spectrum [*iride*] will reveal and convey an infinity of color sensations etcetera.<sup>43</sup>

Usually translated as rainbow, Balla uses the related terms *iride* and *iriduccio* in these texts, rather than the more common *arcobaleno*; *iride*, and its diminutive *iriduccio*, can refer to rainbows, but also to color patterns based on the refraction of the spectrum, to prisms, and to the iris itself.<sup>44</sup> A related play with the term *iride*, its derivatives, and their multiple meanings also appears on the recto of a small drawing, where the artist wrote: “iridi iride iriscenze [*sic*] iridate” (prisms iris iridescences irradiated).<sup>45</sup> Thus Balla points his readers not only to the rainbow and prism, as external phenomena, but also to the human perceptive apparatus, and to the works of art that mediate the two. His interest lies in the transformation of his empirical vision of light into art, by way of a distilled focus on pure sensations of radiant, prismatic color. <fig. 4.11 about here>

In the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* that followed, however, these sensations were

progressively given over to the play of variation, discovered not in nature but in the imaginative manipulation of a limited repertoire of pictorial givens (figs. 4.13 and 4.14, color plate 13). What began with an act of observation was loosened from its referential moorings as the artist's abstractions began to generate new series of related works. Balla executed his compositions, which he described as rooted in simplicity, with the help of a compass, ruler, and set square, though many lines and the color fields were also freely drawn (often between points marked by a ruler), or painted. Triangles and circles, forms symbolic of perfection, proliferate in ordered schemas that evoke less a specific temporal experience than general structures of observation. Many of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, for example, are organized so that a series of interlocking triangular shapes meets its mirror reflection across a horizontal divide. Balla refers to such reflections as nearly impossible to paint in one of his letters home: "the lakes with the great mountains that are reflected in the iridescent waters are among those effects that it is better to consider unpaintable if one thinks and sees the proportion of a man in relation to the things that surround him."<sup>46</sup> *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 4* (fig. 4.14), and many pages from Balla's Düsseldorf sketchbook (color plate 10, fig. 4.13) seek to realize this elusive effect, evoking the way water reconfigures a vertical image within its horizontal register, without, however, depicting any particular objects.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, Balla did not paint a white line at the "horizon" in any of these works, choosing instead to let an unmarked interval on the paper or canvas support suggest a nearly immaterial division. Subtle movement is implied through the interlocking triangles and repetition of color patterns, which invite the viewer to follow trajectories across the pictorial field. But this surface mobility, akin to the flickering effect of Divisionist dots and strokes, belies a more profound stillness, the result of absolute balance and predictable order across a uniformly planar surface. <figs. 4.12, 4.13, 4.14 together about here>

*Iridescent Interpenetration No. 7*, executed in oil on canvas, complicates this structure somewhat by adding a third register, so that both the top and bottom mirror the pattern of the central band (color plate 13). A perfect square containing a self-reflexive image, this painting proclaims its unity and autonomy. Yet the cropping of the pattern at right and left allow one to imagine this painting as a section of a larger universe. Light travels from right to left across the work, illuminating the interpenetrating triangles at right so intensely that they are almost bleached of color, while those at left verge on darkness. This painting thus points to the limits of visibility as governed by the intensity of refracted light. Although Balla tends to work, as he does here, with the spectrum, he rarely does so in a completely pure or systematic form. He prefers variations, frequently pastels, and often leaves out certain colors: here the expected yellows and oranges as we travel from light yellow-green to pink, red, blue, and violet.

In *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 7*, the handmade frame, comprising vectors of pale violet set slightly off center around the perimeter of the work, also suggests its dynamic expansion into the surrounding environment. In related sketches from Balla's Düsseldorf notebooks, we witness other attempts to imagine the spatial projection of this pattern, both horizontally and obliquely, so that a representation of recession emerges from an abstract, planar vocabulary of form and color (figs. 4.15 and 4.16). Relying solely on the convergence of orthogonals and a loss of chromatic intensity as the eye travels from left to right, these sketches imply perspectival views into depth in the absence of the depiction of objects or tactile cues such as overlapping forms. Do they consider the application of Balla's decorative pattern to a wall in the Löwenstein house, or are these sketches simply an effort to reintroduce the lost element of depth for its own sake? The lack of certainty on this point is revealed in the fact that there is no consensus on how these images should be oriented. If we choose to see fig. 4.15 as an ascending

triangular form, an elevation of color that rests on its narrow base, as Balla does in another version that he signed and dedicated to Francesco Cangiullo (color plate 14), we foreclose the possible spatial implication of the sketches.<sup>48</sup> A rigorous two-dimensional frontality is reasserted; insofar as the representation of depth implies temporal as well as spatial distance, this *Iridescent Interpenetration* strives for pure, visual immediacy. <figs. 4.15, 4.16 together about here>

The same uncertainty can be found in many of Balla's notebook sketches, which are numbered twice (by whom we don't know), along different axes (fig. 4.13). This is not merely an anomaly that affects a few studies, and that we might seek to rectify once and for all. Fagiolo dell'Arco's catalogue of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* lists nineteen works, three of which, he tells us, had been previously published in reverse.<sup>49</sup> A review of the scholarship indicates that even today there is little unanimity in how many of these works are reproduced. Of course, Balla may have had a "correct" view in mind, but the difficulty subsequent viewers have in discerning it is indicative of a quality essential to these abstraction compositions. The multiple possibilities for viewing the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* are an effect of the artist's experimental mode of execution, in which similar patterns were tested in horizontal and vertical versions; it is also a feature inherent to their abstract symmetries and repetitive, geometric patterns. Such works no longer depend on analogies to the human body, with its upright, gravity-bound stance, bilateral symmetry, and centered, hierarchical point of view.<sup>50</sup> Such a release from anthropomorphic norms of perception, already present in some of the earliest *Iridescent Interpenetrations* such as *No. 1* (fig. 4.17), points instead to a dehumanized world of mechanized vision, with its measurable geometric units, interchangeable perspectives, and tendency toward serial repetition and variation. If in some of the sketches and watercolors Balla evoked an explosion of light

radiating from a stable, centered ground-point to the upper corners of the paper, like the sun rising on the horizon (fig. 4.18), in others he seems to have been inspired by the disorienting *mise en abyme* of geometric colored patterns produced by the kaleidoscope (fig. 4.19).<sup>51</sup> Throughout the series of *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, he oscillated between these opposed alternatives: the one a distillation of sensations of nature (reflections of water, eucalyptus leaves, the rising sun), the other a mimicking of the optical effects produced by mechanical devices such as the kaleidoscope or simply by the logic of serial production within a limited vocabulary of geometric forms and color patterns. <figs. 4.17, 4.18, 4.19 together about here>

It is likely, of course, that because these works originated within the context of a decorative project, Balla conceived them as adhering to the serial principles of abstract ornament, which include repetition and inversion, rather than to the existing hierarchical norms of easel painting. The photographs of the Löwenstein living room that survive show that Balla's decorations consisted of narrow, horizontal, misty riverscapes (similar in subject to *Window in Düsseldorf*), set high on the walls within a specially built framework (figs. 4.20 and 4.21). From his letters home, we learn that there were four paintings of the Rhine.<sup>52</sup> By 18 November he was able to report to his family: "I've finished four paintings for the salon [. . .]. The salon is almost finished and it is of an intangible elegance, beyond what I imagined. They come to me for my opinion on everything that has to be done and even my foolish ideas are appreciated. [. . .]"<sup>53</sup> No photographs of the study in the garden, which was completed the following year, exist.<sup>54</sup> We don't know whether Balla was able to carry out any of his boldly geometric designs for a doorway framed by a set of black columns with red capitals, and a ceiling pattern (fig. 4.22). Another drawing shows plans for the floor and furniture, traversed by dynamic vectors in black, white, rose, blue-violet, and green, and a ceiling decorated with overlapping, semitransparent



blue, yellow-green, and rose rectangles and triangles (fig. 4.23).<sup>55</sup> However, according to Elica Balla, some of the geometric patterns her father created were applied to shiny, black furniture, “on which these small motifs stood out like jewels.”<sup>56</sup> The effect was shocking to the first visitors, as recorded by these comments of Grethel Löwenstein in a letter to Balla of February 1913: “I write to you from my black desk, in the salon, I can’t tell you anything, come and see it, but come quickly . . . everyone is amazed and doesn’t understand, such is the wonder!”<sup>57</sup> (A black desk can be seen in one of the photographs of the salon, although Balla’s decorative motifs are not visible [fig. 4.20]). Balla’s numerous designs and sketches for the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, and the many versions executed in larger-format watercolors or in oil on canvas, suggest that what originated in the realm of decoration was deliberately expanded and elaborated in the realm of painting. As his letter of 5 December put it, “This study [leading to the *iriduccio*] will bring about other changes in my painting.”<sup>58</sup> <figs. 4.20, 4.21, 4.22, 4.23 together about here>

Balla’s designs for simple furniture, painted or lacquered a shiny black and decorated with abstract motifs, suggests that he was at least partly inspired by the “black and white” style of the Wiener Werkstätte. During the period 1903 to 1905, Hoffmann and Moser abandoned the organic, floral, and wavelike patterns of their earlier work for the Viennese Secession in favor of a starker, reductive vocabulary of modular geometric forms, usually squares but also triangles and lozenges, some of which closely resemble the forms favored by Balla (fig. 4.24). They often stained or lacquered their furniture white or black to create a ground for inlaid motifs in wood or semiprecious stones, or for patterns painted on the surface. The modular forms that structured the furniture at times reappeared in these decorative patterns, so that three-dimensional form and surface design echoed each other. The furniture was then symmetrically arranged in rooms with

white walls, whose framing elements (doorways, columns, capitals, entablatures, the arris between walls, wall and ceiling, or wall and floor) were figured in black (fig. 4.25).<sup>59</sup> Columns and capitals, for example, might be delineated in black lines and circles, without implying any three-dimensional mass or weight-bearing function. At times, Hoffmann and Moser enhanced this largely pictorial treatment of spaces by causing black and white checkerboard patterns, or triangles, to proliferate across walls, ceiling, and floor, thereby creating a unified (and kaleidoscopic) ambience. <fig. 4.24, 4.25 together about here>

When Balla arrived at the newly built Löwenstein home, the spacious rooms that were “all white” immediately struck him. His description of his own bedroom suggests that it was decorated according to a taste informed by Wiener Werkstätte designs: “The bed, chairs, dressing table, wardrobe, everything shiny and light, because extremely white with a simple ornament [drawing of ornament with dots and dashes] that turns like a ring all around the walls; space everywhere, so that I can’t imagine anything better.”<sup>60</sup> Balla’s designs for the salon, executed with the assistance of a carpenter, employed similar white walls and simple framing elements, within which his paintings were set. The artist was no doubt already well aware of the Wiener Werkstätte, both because of his long-standing interest in the decorative arts and because Hoffmann had designed the Austrian pavilion at the 1911 Universal Exhibition in Rome, including the interior decor for the Gustav Klimt room. It is likely that, once in Düsseldorf, Balla discussed this model with his hosts, and he may have been able to see further illustrations in journals. Yet Balla did not simply imitate Werkstätte designs, so much as adapt them to his own purposes and very different sensibility. His drawing for the study in the garden, for example, employs a far more dynamic and colorful vocabulary, with asymmetrical patterns and diagonal vectors that suggest movement and interpenetrating forces (fig. 4.23). Moreover, rather than use

simplified modular forms for both physical structure and surface decor, Balla establishes an opposition between the functional forms of chairs, benches and tables (so basic they hardly seem “designed”), and the painted elements that traverse their surfaces. From Elica Balla’s description, it appears that in the salon, he lacquered the furniture black to provide a dramatic counterpoint for his iridescent, jewel-like motifs. Given his predilection for color patterns, and for the interpenetration or “fusion” of these colors through the use of triangles, lozenges, and overlapping circles (rather than the static form of the square), one cannot imagine Balla relying solely on the opposition of black framing elements against white walls to create a purified, elegant ambience, nor on the natural color of different woods or semiprecious materials to create inlaid patterns in his furniture. According to Ettore Colla, who first published six of Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, the artist’s work culminated in a series of large wall paintings (*grandi affreschi*) for the “Music-Hall” in Düsseldorf.<sup>61</sup> While no documents record the placement or appearance of these wall paintings, as we have seen, several of Balla’s studies do seem to consider their eventual placement on a wall or ceiling.

Like many other artists of his generation, Balla did not make a clear distinction between his paintings and decorative works and frequently used the geometric motifs explored in the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* as models for decorative designs and vice versa.<sup>62</sup> The artist’s interest in clothing predated the creation of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*. On each of his visits to Düsseldorf, for example, Balla attracted attention by arriving in a suit of his own invention. In July, he wrote: “My clothes have caused a veritable sensation, especially the most recent light-colored, checked suit; however, they won’t let me take it off.” And in November: “The black suit with the white stripe creates a sensation.”<sup>63</sup> It is not surprisingly, then, that the abstract motifs of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* soon turned up on neckties and on men’s suits, on curtains, on

coat racks, and eventually on furniture and objects of all kinds (fig. 4.26).<sup>64</sup> The notebooks of 1912 and 1913 also employ these motifs in eight sketches for a manifesto or catalogue cover for the 1913 exhibition of the Roman Secession, which Balla helped to organize. When the Futurists were not allowed as much space at this exhibition as they had hoped for, they withdrew as a group, and Balla's designs for the manifesto or catalogue were not used.<sup>65</sup> Giuseppe Sprovieri later recalled that the apotheosis of Balla's geometric abstractions appeared, nonetheless, at the Roman Secession exhibition (held in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in the Via Nazionale), in the form of a decorative design for a hallway linking four exhibition rooms. According to Sprovieri, the design was based on *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 1*, and "gave the idea of a gigantic kaleidoscope."<sup>66</sup> <fig. 4.26 about here>

If Balla was clearly fascinated by this world of abstract, iterable, colored forms, which originated in sketches for a decorative project, he was reluctant to embrace fully the mechanical implications that might be drawn from it. In a watercolor based on a pattern of crossing diagonal lines, Balla painted the resulting lozenges in variations of red, blue, green, and yellow (color plate 15). As in so many of the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, this watercolor demonstrates the artist's desire to avoid a purely systemic process, even as he follows a predetermined geometrical pattern and sequence of colors. Some of the lines are hand drawn, while even those drawn with a ruler frequently overshoot their mark. Areas of color are applied with delicacy, but without fuss, so that the linear boundaries are respected as guideposts, but also transgressed. The paper retains an ever-visible presence as the ground for the grid that redoubles it, while also providing a literal border beyond which the pattern proliferates. <fig. 4.27 about here>

One of the sketches executed in Düsseldorf reprises the motif of the girl running on a balcony, now in conjunction with a fully abstract *Iridescent Interpenetration*, suggesting a

relation between the two (fig. 4.27). Balla turns her body into a set of flat, geometric shapes, and her gait into a series of overlapping broken and unbroken curves that continue across the page even in the absence of the girl herself. Here the sign for motion has been isolated from its referent in the material world, just as sensations of color in the *Iridescent Interpenetration* are no longer anchored to the play of light and reflection on three-dimensional forms in space. In both sketches, elements of drawing and composition that might have allowed for the interpretation of unique qualities in the motif, or expressive variation in its execution, have been subordinated to a format that reduces idiosyncrasies while preserving a sense of formal play. As this juxtaposition reveals, Marey's chronophotographs not only directly inspired Balla's motion studies but also allowed him to imagine abstract, graphic patterns (and sequences of color) as independently expressive elements.

Nonetheless, Balla's embrace of Futurism's cult of the machine must have encountered some traces of uncertainty or resistance. For even as the machine had rendered many forms of traditional labor obsolete, while introducing more fragmented and repetitive tasks, the camera threatened to render painting obsolete, at least insofar as it demonstrated that traditional skills for the representation of reality were now outmoded. Yet chronophotography, originally a tool of positivist science, also held the promise of enhancing vision for the uses of art, thereby promoting a new alliance of art and science.

Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations* represent an attempt to come to terms with these developments, poised as they are between the artist's pre-1912 celebration of traditional craft, and his emerging and post-1912 celebration of the machine, cacophony, and speed. Like Marey's chronophotographs, they suppress the unique, material presence of objects in space in favor of repetitive, streamlined forms congruent with modern, industrial labor. Yet, significantly, Balla's

first major paintings inspired by Marey, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, *Girl Running on a Balcony*, and *Rhythm of the Violinist*, executed in the summer and fall of 1912, explore spontaneous and expressive forms of movement. Rather than affirm the new, rationalized modes of labor or regimented movement promoted by Frederick Taylor's "time-motion" studies, Balla seeks to capture the pleasure inherent in natural or artistically skilled movement, unconstrained by work or mathematical analysis. Even the speeding cars, the most Futurist of his new subjects, are conceived against the Taylorist model of time management in the interest of efficient productivity, as a celebration of the thrill of velocity (see fig. 1.13). Yet by adapting the conventions of representation manifest in Marey's chronophotography, Balla nonetheless introduced a distinct element of mechanicity and repetition to his art.

As we have seen, in the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, Balla at times uses the impersonal ruler, compass, and set square to achieve geometrically regular and iterable modular forms. His color progressions frequently follow predetermined rules, which allow for clear, predictable patterns and minimize spontaneous invention. The determining patterns, which often take the form of grids and their variations, instantiate serial production.<sup>67</sup> Balla sometimes neglected to complete sketches whose final appearance had been established at the outset (fig. 4.28). Yet his *Iridescent Interpenetrations* also reject the mechanical, deskilled, and automatic, by allowing accidents of drawing, occasional unexpected color variations, and hand-painted forms to enliven the page or canvas. Balla's contemporaries, however, seem to have responded most of all to the mechanical aspects of his execution, which they related to the cold industrial quality of the photograph. This mechanicity, along with the conversion of all experience to a purely visual, abstract language devoid of mimetic references to the phenomenal world, struck a profound blow to their very definition of art. <fig. 4.28 about here>

Boccioni, as we know from his published correspondence, rejected Balla's work for its photographically inspired depictions of motion, which he viewed as inevitably static, lacking the intuited continuities that a mechanical apparatus could never provide. On 4 September 1913, Boccioni wrote to Sprovieri, who was then in the process of opening his Galleria Futurista in Rome and planning his first exhibitions. The letter expresses his violent rejection of Bragaglia's photodynamism, of Balla's recent work, and of what Boccioni calls (in a reference to Marey and Bragaglia, whom he refuses to distinguish) "grafomania":

*I urge you, writing in the name of all the Futurist friends, to refuse all contact with the photodynamism of Bragaglia. It is an arrogant uselessness that damages our aspirations of liberation from the schematic or successive reproduction of stasis or of motion.*

For an elementary beginning that which Balla HAS DONE. What he will do will certainly be superior. [. . .] imagine therefore if we need the grafomania of a positivist photographer of dynamism. . . . Experimental dynamism. His [Bragaglia's] little book<sup>68</sup> seemed to me, and also to our friends, simply monstrous. His affectation and infatuation with the inexistent are grotesque<sup>69</sup>

Sprovieri responded to Boccioni in a letter of 5 September 1913. Although he claims to be moved by Balla's effort "to renew and improve" his work, he wonders if he "is on the right path." As this is the only contemporary commentary on Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, and one that is hitherto unpublished, it is worth citing at length:

<EXT>[Balla] vacillates between that impassioned verism of the past and an abstraction that makes him forget solidity, the bodily form of objects in order to enter into a sterile and cold research into color combinations. He too is obsessed with research into unusual, strange, and fascinating subjects and with the achievement of a purely exterior chromatic charm. His canvases lack organicity. They are sometimes purely decorative exercises. Thus the “Sensation of Eucalyptus” (very profound in its intentions) [probably *Iridescent Interpenetration: Eucalyptus*], falls into the arabesque of an oriental carpet with a geometricizing of colored triangles that are supposed to have the value of natural coloristic equivalents. Better, more constructive, but also incorporeal and without solidity is the “Vision of the Binoculars” [*Window in Düsseldorf*].<sup>70</sup>

This highly charged response reveals that those Futurists who saw Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetrations* keenly felt the suppression of the body, even of the corporeal as such. Sprovieri was bewildered by the absence of an organically ordered composition, of a hierarchical unity in which the human body might find its analogue. Without such cues to the world of solid objects, Sprovieri found himself in the presence of the merely pleasing, the decorative, the simulacral. This he experienced as a form of exteriority, a world of surfaces, patterns, and reflections that denied interiority and foreclosed empathic response.

Of course the terms of Sprovieri’s critique of abstraction were already in circulation during these years, and they would continue to haunt nonmimetic painting for decades to come.<sup>71</sup> Already in 1905, Maurice Denis had accused Henri Matisse’s paintings of being “schemas,” cold applications of theory: “One feels oneself to be entirely in the domain of abstraction,” which excludes “anything not arrived at by the painter’s reason, everything that comes from our instinct



and from nature.”<sup>72</sup> Another critic, writing in 1910, asserted that Matisse had “confused two genres: the art of the painter and the art of the carpet maker.”<sup>73</sup> Similarly, one of Kandinsky’s nearly abstract paintings was denounced as a “color sketch for a modern carpet,” when he exhibited the work in Munich in 1910.<sup>74</sup> The German critic Julius Meier-Graefe, writing in 1923, sounded an apocalyptic tone when describing the loss of reality, of modeling in the round, that he encountered in modern painting from Paul Cézanne, to Édouard Manet, to Matisse. (Sprovieri had met Meier-Graefe in Paris during a trip of 1906-7, at a time when these ideas were already in circulation.<sup>75</sup>) Like Sprovieri, he speaks of tapestries, cold decorative exercises, and a loss of three-dimensional depth, seeing in them forms corresponding to “modern big-city perception”:

<EXT>Life and work, suffering, love<m->who needs all that? These only burden color. The meager residue of humanity is condensed into color tones. . . . Reality is distilled into an improvised flat surface. In the 1908 [*sic*] *Bonheur de vivre* motifs not unlike Cézanne’s black Baroque were combined kaleidoscopically into a primitive decoration. Cézanne’s flower paintings lost volume, were denaturalized. Surface planes lead to tapestry. . . . Tapestry becomes a system, a figure of speech, an *idée fixe*.<sup>76</sup>

For Meier-Graefe, the flattened, confusing patterns of contemporary painting, akin to those of tapestry and the kaleidoscope, are inimical to the traditional, humanist goals of painting. Instead, they constitute “the final extraction of modern big city perception, a form for people who live with nerves alone. It is unthinkable that this whirligig of wallpaper patterns could produce a dramatic effect. The style prohibits heroic gesture. Anything experiential would be awkward.”<sup>77</sup> Color, which in the nineteenth century was generally viewed as the primary vehicle for the

expression of emotion, was now reduced to an *idée fixe*, a matter of rhetoric and cliché, organized on the schematic model of the color chart rather than responsive to spontaneous feeling.<sup>78</sup> Denaturalized and applied in seemingly arbitrary ways, color addressed the nerves of already shocked modern city dwellers, rather than integral subjects. More profound experiences could not be communicated through such a flat, reductive, arbitrary style.

Sprovieri, writing ten years earlier, had articulated much the same view. He rejected the notion that Balla's colored triangles could be the "natural equivalents" of color sensations of eucalyptus, thereby refusing to give them the status of significant or motivated form.<sup>79</sup> It was undoubtedly Balla himself who had explained to Sprovieri (recall the dealer's reference to "profound intentions") that his colored geometries constituted such "equivalents," as this was an idea he also set down in one of his notebooks of the period: "Everything is abstracted with equivalents that reach from their point of departure to infinity."<sup>80</sup> The point of departure, presumably the sensation of nature, led through abstraction to the discovery of a formal "equivalent," which would generate a corresponding sensation in a purer, distilled vocabulary. This process, Balla seems to say, has no limits<m->it leads to infinity, to pure abstraction. (Another note in one of Balla's sketchbooks stated simply, "Abstract interpenetrations."<sup>81</sup>) But Sprovieri could not follow him so far, seeing in a painting that may be *Iridescent Interpenetration: Eucalyptus* of 1913/14, only the meaningless arabesques of an oriental carpet (fig. 4.29).<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Balla's *Vision of a Binocular (Window in Düsseldorf)*, perhaps one of the unusual subjects Sprovieri denounced, remained "incorporeal and without solidity"; its play of reflections was surely symptomatic of the fleeting, simulacral surface patterns that, using the language of Kantian aesthetic judgment, he found merely pleasing. These patterns could only correspond to a new and threatening form of subjectivity<m->mobile, fragmentary, decentered,

devoid of expressive feeling. (Baudelaire, for his part, had celebrated this mode of mobile perception in his famous essay, “The Painter of Modern Life,” where he described “the lover of universal life” as “a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness.”<sup>83</sup>) It is hardly surprising then that Sprovieri, who agreed with Boccioni, excluded Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetrations* from the exhibitions of Futurist art his gallery mounted in these prewar years, although he did show Balla’s figurative motion studies and other works. Years later Sprovieri would revise his view, asserting that Balla’s “analysis of movement leads to a synthesis . . . and this is the synthesis that we see in Balla’s paintings, and they’re a true prelude to abstraction.” He continued: “Balla can now be seen to be the most important of the Futurists. The others were typical expressions of their period, and they’ve since fallen by the wayside, but Balla is still completely contemporary.”<sup>84</sup> <fig. 4.29 about here>

With the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, Balla did indeed seek a purely visual pleasure, associating it with delight, simplicity, and truth, as well as with a particular, distilled form of machinic vision. The *Iridescent Interpenetrations* can be seen, as Boccioni and Sprovieri suggest, as unconsciously linked to the world of industrial production, in which the body is abstracted into rationalized, repetitive forms, lacking in organic unity and depth. But they are also, and simultaneously, a utopian response to the alienation and fragmentation of that same world. If advances in science and technology (of which chronophotography is one example) meant that unaided vision was no longer adequate to the task of producing new knowledge, thereby severing the *savoir/voir* dyad that had been central to Balla’s earlier, positivist works, then vision might be celebrated in its own right. Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetrations* suspend the contradictions between opposed terms, as if seeking their reconciliation. Departing from an interest in scientific photography that sought to render the successive phases of movement

visible, Balla arrived at abstraction. Released from the task of objective description, the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* bear witness to Balla's pleasure in the exploration of sensations of color in their own right. These works evoke a sense of play and naive simplicity, but also manifest a quasi-mechanical mode of production according to ordered, geometric series. Later, Balla would declare, referring to his "cinematic" paintings: "In my art I sought to equal the machine and to precede it in its path to perfection."<sup>85</sup>

Balla's emphasis on the purity of visual experience, disengaged from the world of objects, and therefore from overt political meanings as well, was merely provisional. It pertained primarily to the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, which the artist treated as a distinct series even as he began to explore multisensory possibilities in other works. An effort to convey sensations of touch, and even of sound, emerged in 1913 and 1914, as the Futurists theorized an art that would interpellate the totality of the perceiving subject.<sup>86</sup> In *Forma-Rumore (Noise-Form)*, of circa 1913-14, for example, Balla painted dramatically projecting forms in enamel on gold paper in an effort to capture a sense of the disruptive thrust and cacophony of noise (fig. 4.30). Even the use of varnish on metallic paper in *Forma-Rumore* evokes, if it does not literally produce, crackling sounds. This work was subsequently reinterpreted as a relief, constructed out of cardboard and colored tinfoil, and published in the manifesto "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe" in March 1915 as *Colored Plastic Complex of Noise + Speed*. <fig. 4.30 about here>

The depiction of speed<m>birds in flight and racing automobiles<m>had attracted Balla's interest by the summer and fall of 1912 as we have seen. During the following two years, Balla worked on these series and the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* simultaneously. While each of these series evinces the process of abstraction, the effort to represent speeding objects (or even abstract lines of flight) required a different visual structure, one that emphasized a trajectory

rather than a mutual mirroring and interpenetration of forms. Such unidirectional vectors, often set within an illusory three-dimensional space, could also more readily convey political meanings, as in the series on the cry “Long Live Italy” and the *Interventionist Demonstrations* that Balla executed in 1915, in which welling oceanic forms are meant to represent the dynamic, prowar will of the people (see color plate 5, figs. 2.10 and 2.11). The politicization of Balla’s abstraction required this reintroduction of tactile values and illusionistic space, as well as more explicitly coded forms and color schemes (such as the use of the colors of the Italian flag).

Balla declared his total conversion to Futurism in April 1913, through a highly theatrical, if brief, exhibition at the art gallery of the antiquarian Peppino Giosi. A sign that stretched across the street in front of the gallery stated in black letters between two black crosses: “Balla is Dead. Here are sold the works of the Late Balla.” Through this staged death, the artist sought to bury his pre-Futurist works and self in order to be reborn as Balla Futurista.<sup>87</sup> Casting his lot with his younger Futurist colleagues, he broke with his former social humanitarian ideals (thereby inadvertently losing many friends), in a rupture that remains partly inexplicable.<sup>88</sup> The artist seems to have concluded that only through a fresh departure, a definitive embrace of the future, could he achieve the goal of renewing Italy as well as his own art. Elica Balla tells us that, having failed to dispose of all of his pre-Futurist works, he put them out of view in a separate repository, and then repainted his entire house white in emulation of the Löwenstein house in Düsseldorf.<sup>89</sup> A fragment from his diary, which probably dates from this period, reads: “beginning that art which will be the sincere expression of a future life.”<sup>90</sup>

The utopian ideals expressed in the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* imply a social order of harmony and balance, of mutual reflection and *compenetrazione*. Tessellated triangles and lozenges delicately pierce larger, similar forms in order to fuse with them in regular series;

kaleidoscopic interlaced circles engender larger centrifugal patterns; luminous color progressions create visual trajectories in multiple directions across the visual field. No form or color remains singular or functions as a figure isolated from the multiple relations through which it enters visibility. Balla's deliberately simple *Iridescent Interpenetrations* evoke a world of symmetry and coherence, in which complementary structures echo each other, thereby affirming an essential unity. By contrast, the patriotic ideals of the later works become increasingly violent and render a social world in conflict. *Boccioni's Fist*, first executed in 1915 as a graphic figure defined by lines of force, exemplifies this transition into the domain of tactility as a mode associated with action and power. In 1916, with the war underway, Balla created a sculptural version of this figure, now riding the crest of a wave, as if the dynamic speed and thrust of a thrown punch could only be adequately conveyed in three-dimensional form (fig. 4.31). <fig. 4.31 about here>

Conceived in 1912, the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* stand apart from these explicitly political works. In their pursuit of a pure, disinterested mode of viewing, realized through a formal structure that emphasized the harmony and beauty of geometric colored forms, the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* nonetheless project a utopian vision of an ideal future. Balla himself described this vision and its relation to a particular experience of light. The world of the future would be like

<EXT>an immense extremely prismaticiridescentluminous diamond, extremely clean, elegant, lived in by a most beautiful, dazzling humanity, very spirited, ordered, happy, extremely healthy, spiritualized by new IDEALS . . . and with an indestructible superfaith; see you soon in a few centuries.<sup>91</sup>

In works such as *Today Is Tomorrow: Iridescent Interpenetration*, of circa 1913-14, Balla provides the viewer with a paradoxical kind of window onto the future (color plate 16). By refusing the Renaissance paradigm of painting as unfolding an illusory world before the centered beholder, Balla seeks a glimpse of what James Joyce called the “ineluctable modality of the visible,” while also pointing to the materiality of the medium of paint on wooden panel (you could knock your scone against it).<sup>92</sup> This is self-reflexive vision, inquiring into its own conditions of emergence and possibility, apart from the apprehension of particular objects situated in space and conditioned by time. If Balla’s early *Proprietor* associated vision with the ownership of those objects seen beyond the transparent windowpane, here Balla presents the opaque, sensuous materiality of the pane itself and the colored pigment applied to its surface. Once again a plain wooden frame is central to the work, associating Balla’s labor with that of the carpenter, the traditional artisan, thereby retaining a link to his earlier humanitarian concerns. Recession into depth is both hinted at, in the contrary patterns of violet and yellow diminishing triangles in the two horizontal bands at the top, and arrested, held on the surface by that very contradiction. But no objects to be grasped, no vistas to be claimed, are represented. Instead, colored forms hovering within an indeterminate space are made available to perceptual pleasure. *Today Is Tomorrow*: this title, like the work itself, condenses temporality into an intensified, simultaneous present. For Balla, the ideal utopian order imagined here could only be held together in a fragile synthesis of opposing forces, which, at least in Italy, collapsed with the onset of war and its disastrous aftermath.

<CHN>Chapter 5

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body

<CHEPI>I feel the matter of my heart being transformed, metallized, in an optimism of steel.

<m->F. T. Marinetti, *The Steel Alcove*, 1921<sup>1</sup>

<CHEPI>Metal is neither a thing nor an organism, but a body without organs.

<m->Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*, 1986<sup>2</sup>

As the visible manifestation of virility and the will to power, the Futurist ideal of the male body is the site of multiple fantasies, images, poses, and performances. Predating the analyses of Freud, the Futurists nonetheless share his belief that the ego is primarily constituted as a “bodily ego,” understood not merely as a given sensory surface, but as “itself the projection of a surface.”<sup>3</sup> For Freud, this surface is at once a cognitive, psychic, and physical entity, whose sensory, defensive, and unifying functions develop in response to both internal drives and external stimulation. For the Futurists, it is a similarly malleable substance, open to accelerated Lamarckian transformations driven by desire. The Futurists regarded the traditional humanist body, and the psychological self it housed, as an anachronism in an age dominated by machines, a dynamic notion of matter, the “religion-morality of speed,” and war. Rather than affirm a classically beautiful body, in harmony with nature and the stable, rational order of the universe, the Futurists sought to reconfigure the male body to resist shocks and omnipresent speed, in preparation for a nonhuman, mechanical, and combative destiny. Through rebirth in the form of a man/machine complex, the Futurist male would fuse flesh with metal as a prelude to an even



more sublime fusion with the volatile world of matter.<sup>4</sup>

The corporeal transformations imagined and enacted by the Futurists were both phantasmagorical and “real.” Through literary, pictorial, and theatrical works, as well as through political activities, the Futurists articulated a field of gendered, somatic relationships in which dream, image, and actuality often blurred. Yet there always was also a gap between desire and its realization in which the contradictions and unstable gender significations inherent to Futurist fantasies of autogenesis and fusion with the machine become apparent. The Futurist ideal of masculinity exposes a number of tensions that this chapter will attempt to interpret dialectically. How best to affirm virility while becoming free of the debilitating effects of desire? How to imagine the body’s boundaries as both permeable, shifting, and open to ecstatic fusion with the environment, and simultaneously as rigid, closed, and resistant to danger? How to hold in solution a narcissistic longing for expansion of the ego and fantasies of omnipotence with their seeming negation, a longing to overcome subject/object distinctions through fusion with matter/mother? How to respond to the body’s temporality, its inevitable mortality and reversion to (mere) matter? And finally, how to create an immortal man/machine hybrid, a body always already posited in the future tense?

<TBR>

In his literary manifestos of 1912, 1913, and 1914, Marinetti repeatedly advocated the death of the literary *I*, or authorial self, that “obsessive *I* that up to now the poets have described, sung, analyzed, and vomited up.”<sup>5</sup> Rather than project human emotions and preoccupations onto nature, poets were to express the life of matter in its molecular composition and movement, to intuit “its different governing impulses, its forces of compression, dilation, cohesion, and disaggregation, its crowds of massed molecules and whirling electrons.”<sup>6</sup> Marinetti’s emphasis

on the “life” of matter was intended to obliterate traditional distinctions between the organic and the inorganic, between sentient beings and the physical and mechanical world. He sought, in poetry but also in art and in politics, to open a new field in which a chiasmic exchange of properties and attributes might occur. The Futurist male, “multiplied” by the machine, would exemplify a new superhuman hybrid adapted to the demands of speed and violence. Sportsman, aviator, or warrior, he would be capable of astounding feats of physical prowess. His inner consciousness, modeled on the running motor, would be emptied of all that was private, sentimental, and nostalgic of all that in 1913 Marinetti called *psychology*, which he deemed a “dirty thing and a dirty word.”<sup>7</sup> Machines, in an inverse movement, would become the locus of all rejected human capabilities and drives, including libidinal desire and procreation. According to the poet, “motors . . . are truly mysterious. [. . .] They have whims, unexpected fantasies. They seem to have personalities, souls, or wills.” Marinetti further asserts that if adored, flattered, caressed, and never overtaxed, the machine will give back “much more and much better than the calculations of its builder<m->its father!<m->made provisions for.”<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, then, the motor will obey its master. Once fused with the machine, with wings sprouting from his very flesh, the transformed Futurist male will be able to externalize his will without resistance, achieving each of his desires while reigning over space and time. <fig. 5.1 about here>

*First Record (Premier Record)*, a free-word collage poem of 1916 dedicated to the Italian aviator Guido Guidi, exemplifies Marinetti’s fantasy of “mechanical splendor” and its attendant ambiguities (fig. 5.1). Whereas Guidi had established a new world record by flying to an altitude of 7,950 meters, Marinetti’s poem seeks to visualize the expansion of a heroic but impersonal self (*moi + moi + moi + moi*) in the process of breaking an entire series of world records. Appearing simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as conquering the North Pole,

Marinetti's multiplied hero achieves each of his victories by annexing the explosive energy of a machine or racehorse. The various selves who direct and dominate these powerful vehicles are also transformed by them. Marinetti emphasizes the fusion of man and machine, flesh and metal, by defining the self as a carburetor minus eight grains of sand—that is, without the danger of malfunctioning that sand would cause. Propelled by a mixture of gasoline and attention, and with the further addition of good luck, the hero-as-carburetor overcomes his merely human state in order to embody a Nietzschean ideal of superhuman courage and triumphant force. The text further informs us that his thrilling exploits have been prepared by erotic conquests, which draw on the same psychosomatic energies: “bridled suppleness of the precise muscles nerves made agile by the long coitus (burning rapid dancing liquid jolted) with Juliette.”

In celebrating record breaking as an end in itself, Marinetti departs from the ideology of the industrial bourgeoisie in Italy. As Jeffrey Schnapp has observed, Marinetti's body/machine complex does not correspond to the ideals of efficient expenditure, predictability, and standardization being devised at the time in the domain of scientific work management (Taylorism).<sup>9</sup> Instead, his unstable hybrid of man and machine is described as a “centaur,” a capricious creature with violent drives and erotic impulses.<sup>10</sup> Liberated from the struggle for existence, the energy he expends is sheer surplus. What Marinetti calls the “pure idea of the ascensional record” is a manifestation of this freedom from utilitarian productivity.<sup>11</sup> <fig. 5.2 about here>

Here comparison with Francis Picabia's *The Child Carburetor* of 1919 proves instructive (fig. 5.2). Picabia's carburetor is an enigmatic apparatus, a mechanical instrument that has usurped human functions while emptying them of subjectivity. The artist's earlier machine works, including *Girl Born without a Mother* and *Young Girl in a State of Nudity* (a precisely

rendered image of a spark plug), both of 1915, make the erotic association of women and machines explicit. They also reveal Picabia's obsessive fantasy of autonomous reproduction, of procreation without women. Similarly born of man alone, *The Child Carburetor* mocks human desire by equating sexual union with the pulsing motion of a piston within a cylinder, driven by a coupling of gas and air. Yet, as in Marcel Duchamp's bachelor machines, the longed-for combustion fails to occur, here thwarted by a spherical migraine. The various mechanical parts remain disjunct and curiously static against the wood-grain ground, as if laid out for inspection on a table prior to assembly.

Although not without humor, Marinetti's work exhibits none of Picabia's biting irony. Whereas *The Child Carburetor* displaces the human subject, *First Record* celebrates triumphant self-transcendence, ubiquity in time and space symbolizing invincibility and a godlike omniscience. Both works retain a reference to nature, or the organic world of materials, as the necessary counterpoint of their mechanical being. For it seems that nature, and the feminine with which it is conflated, cannot be suppressed without leaving a trace. A wooden panel functions as the flat, literal ground for Picabia's painting; unformed and primal, it invites the artist's hallucinatory reveries. The mechanical forms he depicts on its surface are given a similarly literal presence and color with the addition of metallic paint. In an open letter of 1920, Picabia directs his viewers to seek the explanation of his work in the physical rather than in the psychological domain. "Magnetic ions" he remarks, perhaps not entirely seriously, have determined the "equation of the sexes," for the human brain is a powerful "magnetic field" in rapport with other naturally occurring magnetic phenomena. For this reason, Picabia asserts, his use of metallic paint should not be viewed as merely ornamental, but as having special significance.<sup>12</sup> Like Marinetti, he seeks to link the activity of the mind to purely physical forces

while retaining a fundamentally vitalist and irrational attitude toward matter. Sexual desire, according to this antihumanist view, springs from the involuntary interactions of insentient (or para-sentient) metallic substances and the force field generated by the earth, and therefore remains utterly devoid of subjective or sentimental value.

While fantasizing a similarly nonsentimentalized eros, Marinetti never entirely rejected voluntarism, or the realization of desire as a manifestation of power over nature. In *L'alcova d'acciaio* (*The Steel Alcove*) of 1921, a first-person *romanzo vissuto* (lived novel) recounting Marinetti's experiences during the last months of the war, the poet proclaimed: "I believe that the audacious will to win is a force that projects itself out from the muscles with enormous impetus and force."<sup>13</sup> And in "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," published in 1916 shortly before *First Record*, he described the evolution of mankind's domination of nature as the acquisition of an "army of slaves": "From space man stole electricity and combustible fuels to transform motors into faithful allies. Man forced vanquished metals, rendered flexible with fire, to ally themselves with the fuels and electricity. He thus assembled an army of slaves, hostile and dangerous, but sufficiently tamed to transport him rapidly over the curves of the Earth."<sup>14</sup> Despite Marinetti's injunction against personifying or sentimentalizing natural phenomena, the earth assumes a distinctly "feminine" character in this and all other Marinettian texts. Comprising unequal terrains, valleys alternating with mountains, and with roads following irregular and indolent rivers, the earth offers no straight lines or level planes conducive to speed. Yet this might still be corrected. The poet declares that he hopes "to see in the near future the Danube course at 300 km. per hour in a straight line. One must persecute, lash, and torture all those who sin against speed."<sup>15</sup>

If the literal ground of *The Child Carburetor* is a wooden panel, the depicted ground in

*First Record* is the earth; the work is organized as if it were a map with the North Pole at the top and the Atlantic stretched across the center. Given this structural logic, it is not coincidental that flight, a triumph of technology and a metaphor of freedom from a (feminine) earthbound condition, becomes a dominant motif. In “Electrical War” Marinetti imagines a future in which only freight trains will creep along the earth. “Man, having become airborne, sets foot there only once in awhile!”<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Picabia’s *Child* does not envision a future of limitless freedom, but its destruction—at least insofar as the future is associated with the conquests of technology. The words *détruire le futur* (destroy the future), which Picabia has inscribed on the painting’s surface, mock Futurism and its enthusiasm for destroying the past.

Marinetti’s fantasized fusion of the machine and the male body, while obviously a product of his intoxication with power and freedom from utility, also reveals a fetishistic impulse. Precisely because nature is understood as the locus of the feminine and the maternal, it must be opposed and displaced by both the machine and its symbolic ally, matter (physical substance/energy understood as inherently dynamic). Marinetti, I will argue, imagines matter as a vector of speed, a volatile, masculine substitute for a nature still construed as predominantly horizontal, gravity bound, and organic—inextricably linked, that is, to cycles of gestation, birth, maturation, and death. Caught in this cyclic temporality, nature can never propel Marinetti into the future or become the vehicle of a new, quasi-inorganic (and therefore immortal) masculine subject. Of course, this displacement proves unstable, and occasionally the feminine associations of nature (including the “lack” it embodies) return to contaminate matter, reminding us of what has been refused or repressed. For the most part, however, the concept of matter is remarkably “productive.” It allows Marinetti to confound the organic and the mechanical, the procreative and the industrial, and thereby to seize for himself the illusory power of male

autogenesis.<sup>17</sup> Hence the sexual ambiguity that structures Marinetti's desire for, and identity with, the machine.

The system of oppositions and substitutions at work here can be elucidated by an examination of the narrative account of the birth of Futurism in Marinetti's "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," already discussed in chapter 1. Here we recall that the story begins with Marinetti and his friends spending a feverish night arguing and writing within a lush, oriental interior, a space redolent of nineteenth-century decadence and its obsession with enervating sensual pleasures. Having broken with logic, awake and standing erect, they burst forth into the street, galvanized by the "famished roar of automobiles." The text continues: "We went up to the three snorting beasts, to lay amorous hands on their torrid breasts. I stretched out on my car like a corpse on its bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, a guillotine blade that threatened my stomach."<sup>18</sup> Embodying an archetypal myth of femininity, the automobiles are simultaneously associated with life and death, a compliant responsiveness, and the threat of castration. Menaced by the guillotine blade aimed at his "stomach," Marinetti revives, recovering his male prowess. As he puts it, "We had nothing to make us wish for death" for "we had no ideal Mistress raising her divine form to the clouds, nor any cruel Queen to whom to offer our cadavers."<sup>19</sup> The automobiles themselves redress this feminine absence and allow their masters to escape the debilitating<m->even life threatening<m->effects of relations with (idealized) women.

As we have seen, this preliminary scene sets the stage for the core event of the story; while seeking to avoid two wobbling cyclists, who symbolize the impasse of the old logic, Marinetti suddenly overturns his race car into an industrial ditch. Here is the poet's ironically rhapsodic prose:

<EXT>Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse. . . . When I came up<m->torn, filthy, and stinking<m->from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!<sup>20</sup>

In this narrative, the collision of past and present figures as a symbolic death and rebirth, in which a factory drain substitutes for the mother's body, and industrial sludge nourishes the infant. This tale draws on Marinetti's memories of his childhood in Egypt, the muddy water reminding him of the breast of his Sudanese nurse. Maternal functions are here conflated with those of the colonized other, and both are superseded by the technological. This deliberate confusion of identities serves both to feminize and to eroticize technology, so that when a crowd of bystanders fishes his car out of the ditch, a caress from the poet is enough to revive it. It is Marinetti who now restores his "beautiful shark" to life, thereby becoming her father as well as her lover. Shorn of her "heavy framework of good sense" and her "soft upholstery of comfort," the automobile is reborn as a hard, dynamic form, a violent projectile into the future.<sup>21</sup> Thrillingly phallic in shape and power, but feminine in allure and identity, the automobile becomes a classic Freudian fetish, a locus of transposed desire. It thereby exemplifies what Hal Foster has called "the double logic of the technological prosthesis that governed the machinic imaginary of high modernism: the machine as a castrative trauma *and* as a phallic shield against such trauma."<sup>22</sup> Intriguingly, Foster posits<m->following Lacan's formulation of sexual difference as defined in terms of *being* or *having* the phallus, a position of mastery no one can fully assume<m->that Marinetti aspires to the former. To the extent that *being* the phallus is a



conventionally “feminine” position, involving display or masquerade in order to mask lack, Marinetti’s overt display of virility can be understood as “feminizing.” The instability of gender identifications along the human/machine axis is in part an effect of the shifting positions of identification and display, the machine playing the parts of feminized lover, daughter, and phallic prosthesis all at once.<sup>23</sup>

Marinetti describes guns, locomotives, and even the armored tank he commanded during the First World War in similar terms. In “Battle of Tripoli” he equates his machine gun with a phallic femme fatale: “Ah yes! you, little machine gun, are a fascinating woman, and sinister, and divine, at the driving wheel of an invisible hundred horsepower, roaring and exploding with impatience.”<sup>24</sup> In “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine,” Marinetti asks, “Have you never seen mechanics lovingly washing the great powerful body of their locomotive? This is the minute, knowing tenderness of a lover caressing his adored mistress.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, *L’alcova d’acciaio* returns obsessively to descriptions of Lieutenant Marinetti’s amorous relation to his armored car number 74, equipped with equally feminized artillery (fig. 5.3).<sup>26</sup> In a parody of literary texts that eulogize the unique, ideal woman, Marinetti asks: “Haven’t you met my new mistress? I will introduce you. You understand, the one I prefer, who will exclude all others and be perhaps definitive. [ . . . ] My 74 has the health of iron, or rather steel, and a marvelous sensitivity, but armored.” The poet admits that she is much like her sisters, “But mine is the most agile of all. She has the strongest heart-motor, and the fire of her ironic artillery has neither weaknesses nor distractions.”<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere the text compares her artillery fire to “a furious dance,” whose “ta-ta-ta-ta-tà” is “capricious, ruthless, ironic and feminine,” although she always remains loyal to Marinetti.<sup>28</sup> This eroticized relation of man to his machines, indeed to his weapons, solves a problem inadvertently introduced by the negation of women and of their

reproductive capability: How to maintain a myth of heterosexual virility in a world without women? <fig. 5.3 about here>

The topos of autogenesis through the union of man and machine, so important in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” also provides the narrative impetus for Marinetti’s 1909 novel, *Mafarka le futuriste* (*Mafarka the Futurist*). This novel, like the opening scene of the founding manifesto, draws on the author’s memories of North Africa, and its eponymous hero is an Arabian king with imperialist ambitions. When Mafarka’s beloved brother dies (in an echo of the death of Marinetti’s own older brother), he creates a mechanical son, Gazurmah, to be his immortal substitute. Carved out of oak, Gazurmah is nonetheless modeled on an airplane; his enormous, resplendently orange cloth wings are stretched over a lattice composed of steel, bamboo, and hippopotamus sinew. With his coarse skin, squared jaw, ribs of iron, and formidable metallic member, Mafarka finds his creation beautiful. He breathes life into his son with a dangerously homoerotic, lingering kiss on the lips, and is then thrown to his death by his impatient, newly born progeny—a fate he has foreseen and even desired so that he might be reborn in the immortal Gazurmah. (The narrative thus overturns the traditional myth of Icarus, in which the son’s desire to fly is thwarted by the sun/logos, which melts the wax that fixes Icarus’s wings, thereby affirming paternal law and authority. In contrast, Marinetti conceives Mafarka/Daedalus as the father/engineer who successfully constructs a new god. Not surprisingly, Gazurmah’s triumph over the old authority is represented in the final scene, when he conquers the sun to reign henceforth in darkness.<sup>29</sup>)

It is this early example of a cyborg, generated without the aid of what the novel calls a “vulva,” who eventually fulfills his father’s dreams by raping and obliterating the earth. The novel’s project, as Barbara Spackman has argued, is to bypass the “vulva” and fertilize what

Marinetti calls an “unused ovary” with a male spirit.<sup>30</sup> The fruit of his father’s will, Gazurmah is “beautiful and pure of all the defects that come from the maleficent vulva and that predispose one to decrepitude and death! . . . Yes, you are immortal, my son.”<sup>31</sup> Mafarka renders the dual aspiration for autogenesis and immortality and the attendant demonization of women’s bodies explicit when he triumphantly discovers that “it is possible to procreate an immortal giant from one’s own flesh, without concourse and stinking complicity with woman’s womb.”<sup>32</sup> The misogyny of this text is an effect of a prior rejection of merely human, abject corporeality and hence, of mortality, which Marinetti projects onto femininity. The terror driving this attempt at male autarchy is apparent even to Mafarka, who tells his nascent son: “I created you thus with all the force of my desperation, for the intensity of creative energy is measured by the magnitude of the desperation that generates it.”<sup>33</sup>

A fragment of Marinetti’s diary of 31 March 1917, a time when he was still on active military duty, reveals a similar ambivalent commingling of erotic pleasure, violent fantasy, and disgust with the female body. Most significant is the way his identity as a soldier stands in opposition to, and ultimately destroys, the possibility of sexual pleasure with a woman. Here virility is affirmed through military violence rather than through erotic or sensual activity.

<EXT>Always always, in my life these two tormenting states of mind have alternated with one another. In the happiest and most voluptuous bed I have suddenly torn myself away from the arms of a seductive and delightful lover, and trembling seated at the edge of the bed I have strained my ear to catch a distant, imaginary shelling. Nostalgia, desire for heroism and violence. In the muddy broth of the trench which the shellings have made, a monstrous ivy of women’s naked bodies climbing from my temples up to the

moon. Torrid nostalgia of lust. Why? Why?<sup>34</sup>

In this passage, Marinetti's desire for military heroism and violence tear him away from the arms of his lover, interrupting the flow of sexual passion. The imagined sounds of distant shellings further transfer Marinetti from the edge of the bed to the "muddy broth" of a trench created by the shellings—a "trench" that functions as a trope for female genitals. It is lust itself that these violent fantasies kill, through the imagined abjection of his lover. From this trench with its muddy broth, which recalls the factory drain and its muddy water in the collision scene of "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," climbs a "monstrous ivy" of naked female bodies. Assimilated to a frightening vegetal state, these bodies ascend to the moon, the oft-rejected symbol of sentimental love in Marinetti's oeuvre. The horror of this scene exceeds the seemingly rational denial of both love and lust in many of the poet's writings. By reducing "the immense Amore of the romantics" to the simple need to conserve the species, and sexuality to a casual "friction of the epidermis," Marinetti also erects a barrier against the pleasures of the body.<sup>35</sup> Yet the "torrid nostalgia of lust" always returns, despite the poet's efforts to repress the flow of desire.

Klaus Theweleit, in his study of the psychic structure of Fascist soldier males in Germany, has identified a similar impulse to negate sensual pleasure by recourse to violent acts or fantasies.<sup>36</sup> (It is one of Theweleit's theses that the psychosomatic formation he finds so prevalent among the Freikorps and Fascist soldier males is not exclusive to these groups, but extends in various degrees to all those who lack a strongly developed body-ego or unified sense of self.) For the soldiers Theweleit analyzed, as for Marinetti, the war figured as the ideal arena in which to experience the relation of body and world. Only in war could they be the source of,

or somehow connected to, every explosion, without risking the disintegration of their fragile egos. Apart from war, the soldier males organize their lives on the model of severe military discipline and maintain relationships primarily with other men within a strict hierarchical order. By disciplining the body, rendering it hard and nearly metallic, they create a kind of protective armor, designed to shield them from their fear of dissolution. This fear emanates from the sense of an inner void, or lack of psychic coherence, which is then projected outward. Often this void takes the threatening form of a miasma associated with both femininity and the unruly proletarian masses. The texts and images Theweleit analyzes frequently describe this miasma as bloody, oozing, a viscous liquid with the power to contaminate, overwhelm, or destroy whatever it comes into contact with. The creation of body armor is designed to render the Fascist soldier male resistant to this contagion, but also, and perhaps most importantly, serves to render him impervious to sensual or erotic pleasure, which necessarily implies the breaching of both psychic and somatic boundaries.

For the Fascist soldier male, desire may be released only in the moment of firing a machine gun, throwing a grenade, or dropping a bomb. This outward eruption provides a surfeit of sensations in which the rifleman, for example, imagines himself as a bullet, hurtling through space to penetrate the enemy. He desires, not union with the enemy, but its utter obliteration. As Theweleit explains, he explodes *against* the enemy, in a movement that allows his body to atomize as it erupts. Yet this disintegration ultimately serves to strengthen his body-ego-like a gun that explodes in a powerful discharge of energy but remains whole.<sup>37</sup> A similar attitude fuels many of Marinetti's corporeal fantasies, revealing a profound desire to experience the body as a ballistic weapon, to render it both an explosive force and impervious to attack. "Let's Murder the Moonshine" of 1909 proclaims: "It is necessary<m>do you understand?<m-

>necessary for the soul to launch the body in flames, like a fireship, against the enemy, the eternal enemy that we would have to invent if it didn't exist."<sup>38</sup> This text continues to describe the "furious" pleasure of war as a form of coitus to which even the feminized, informe (miasmatic) enemy abandons herself:

<EXT>See the furious coitus of war, gigantic vulva stirred by the friction of courage, *informe* vulva that rips itself open the better to offer itself to the terrifying spasm of the next victory! It's ours, the victory . . . of that I'm sure, because the madmen are already hurling their hearts toward heaven, like bombs!<sup>39</sup>

The ballistic metaphor pervades Marinetti's wartime writings. In *L'alcova d'acciaio* Marinetti compares his body to a grenade about to be inserted into a launcher, while he dedicates *Come si seducono le donne* (*How to Seduce Women*), written in 1916, to the Austrian grenade that wounded him, adorning his face and legs with "The only tattoos worthy of we Futurists."<sup>40</sup> Turning the same reifying glance on himself that he elsewhere cast upon his enemies, Marinetti regards his burned and bleeding flesh as if it were an aesthetic phenomenon seen from a distance, indeed seen anaesthetically: "Wounded in the groin by a large piece of shrapnel, fallen under the heap of stones and sandbags of the dazzling battery, I rose up with a burned face and taking off my blood-soaked trousers, I admired the extraordinary violet of my thighs and of my battered knee."<sup>41</sup> It is this ability to desensitize the body, to experience it as pure exteriority that allows Marinetti simultaneously to treat it as a weapon and to marvel at its wounds. If there appears to be an element of masochism in this open display of battered and "tattooed" flesh, it serves only to reaffirm Marinetti's control of his own bodily sensations and his pleasure in withstanding the

enemy's assault.

While arguing that Theweleit's analysis of the libidinal structure typical of the German Freikorps and Fascist soldier serves to elucidate a similar structure in the Futurist male, I nevertheless wish to point to certain differences. Perhaps because Marinetti was above all a poet and member of an international avant-garde, and retained a certain romantic allegiance to anarchist ideals of individual liberty and spontaneity, his body armor remained provisional and fragmentary. It might be assumed, but could also be cast off—at least temporarily. At times he rebelled against military discipline insofar as it constrained the freedom of the individual, choosing, for example, to escape the sweltering heat of tank 74 for a breath of fresh air from time to time, even though this was against orders.

The narrative of *L'alcova d'acciaio* is organized around a constant oscillation between his desire for women and his desire for military heroism. Arriving in Naples for a tryst with Bianca, Marinetti observes: “a battle had broken out between my willful brain full of ideas of war and of the next offensive, and my trembling heart, vanquished, liquefied, Neapolitan. Extremely irritated, upset, with tears in my throat, I reeled in the cab as it jolted along nocturnal alleys.”<sup>42</sup> Surprisingly, in this case his love for Bianca triumphs and the exhausted soldier cedes his will to a woman. He experiences this reversal of ideals as a defeat and remarks ironically, “An absurd demon forces me to degrade myself, to annihilate myself. Perhaps I have suffered too much from the exuberant fullness of strength and of constricting rigidity.”<sup>43</sup> At this point Bianca assumes Marinetti's Futurist spirit and refuses his offer of marriage, explaining that he is her second lover, and that she will marry the first. Significantly, all the women Marinetti encounters in the novel have had previous lovers, and he remains singularly unconcerned about their virginity or their faithfulness. In this he diverges sharply from the attitudes of the Fascist

soldiers analyzed by Theweleit. Nor does Marinetti admire discipline and military hierarchy for their own sake, seeing in them a threat to the intuitive élan, elasticity, and pride of the Italian character.

The novel closes with a speech to a captured Austrian colonel and his “niece” Rosa, in which Marinetti explains that the Italians were victorious in the war because of innate national differences. For Marinetti, German military “preparedness” and force could never triumph over Italian spiritual elasticity and improvisatory genius. (In the light of such self-proclaimed racial stereotypes, Boccioni’s painting *Elasticity* of 1912, depicting a dynamically rendered male on horseback, whose body partly fuses with his horse and the surrounding environment, might be compared with Arno Breker’s 1937 bronze sculpture of a classically inspired male warrior titled *Preparedness*, a paragon of tensed muscles and hard, impermeable flesh.) Marinetti further exemplifies this racial contrast by refusing to carry off the seductive Rosa, despite his “rights” as a conqueror, thereby demonstrating the moral superiority of Italian civilization. But by this time the war has been won, and he has already spent the previous night in the arms of a divine woman—a personified Italy who submits to his embrace in the clean, shining quarters of a steel alcove, the armored tank number 74. Whereas Mafarka and his son had represented the type of the nomadic warrior, a pure upsurge of destructive power alien to the laws and institutions of any state, in *L’alcova d’acciaio* Marinetti fuses his militarism with the patriotic goals of Italy.<sup>44</sup> This demands a corresponding transformation of the earth itself, from an unmarked, deterritorialized feminine ground, to the delimited and embodied territory of the nation. “The elegant roseate form vibrates on the map! No longer map, she is incarnated.”<sup>45</sup> Only in this mythic form does Marinetti penetrate her (via his armored car number 74, in whom he now sees lesbian tendencies), addressing Italy thus: “The very virile impetus of this my motor which is



also heart, sex, inspired genius, and artistic volition, enter you, with rough pleasure for you, for me, I feel it! I am the extremely powerful Futurist genius/sex of your race, your favorite male who gives you a refertilizing vibration in penetrating you.”<sup>46</sup> But this rough embrace of Italy implies a recognition of the modern state’s laws and moral codes, including, surprisingly, Christian forgiveness. Marinetti articulates the duality of his new identity at the close of the war by pointing to the coexistence of primitive and civilized qualities within himself: “Extravagant primitivism of my temperament, virgin, wild, sincere, elastic, full of cruel barbarisms and of a profound, civilized humanity. A temperament that hurls itself forward, strikes, but immediately understands and forgives all, with a lofty, indulgent, and tranquil goodness.”<sup>47</sup> This conciliatory text predicts the fate of Futurism in the postwar period, which would cede its will, not so much to women or romantic desire, as to the Fascist state and its authority. <fig. 5.4 about here>

Among the Futurist artists, Umberto Boccioni was most closely associated with Marinetti during the prewar period. Like the poet, Boccioni was obsessed with the idea of expressing the “life” of matter in his art. Paintings such as *The City Rises*, and the 1912 *Materia* (Matter<m->but also mother, a measurable substance, and the first product of creation: chaos) posit a continuity on the level of molecular structure between the human body and the objects of the world (fig. 5.4). For Boccioni the inherent dynamism of matter implied that all objects interpenetrate each other, shattering the apparently closed boundaries of individual forms. Following the French philosopher Henri Bergson, he further believed that only individuals endowed with superior intuitive power, especially artists, could detect the spontaneous forces of objects that propel them to fuse with their environments.<sup>48</sup> Yet, Boccioni’s works also betray anxiety about the new concept of matter-as-energy, suggesting that he did not fully abandon the gendered, metaphysical spirit/matter, will/substance duality. <fig. 5.5 about here>

As we have seen, in Marinetti's texts matter functions as a kind of antinature; it both displaces and substitutes for a nature still invested with sentimental feminine attributes. The situation in Boccioni's case is more ambiguous.<sup>49</sup> In *Materia* the monumental form of Boccioni's mother serves to equate primal matter with motherhood, associating feminine procreation with sheer physicality. Boccioni's mother is invaded by the energized forces of the street, which penetrate the domestic interior she inhabits and represents. In an earlier meditation on this theme, *The Street Enters the House* of 1911, Boccioni depicts his mother leaning over a balcony to observe the dynamic activity of men constructing the foundation of a modern factory (fig. 5.5). Her head and upper body plunge into the vortex of the scene before her, so that she seems to collaborate in the interpenetration of interior and exterior forces. This posture is replicated by that of several other women, who also lean out from nearby balconies to observe the men at work, the masculinity of their sphere underscored by the vertical poles that provide its emblematic scaffolding. <fig. 5.6 about here>

In a related painting of 1912, *Horizontal Construction*, Boccioni again situates his mother in the liminal space of a balcony, but turns her so that she faces the interior (fig. 5.6). She no longer views or participates in the activity of urban life, but submits to its dislocations and transformations. Moreover, his mother's vision is now fractured along a central fault line, yielding a synthesis of profile and frontal aspects, one that suggests not her own multiplied visual power, but that of the artist.<sup>50</sup> The term *horizontal* in this painting's title refers to its three-dimensional volumes, rather than to its format, which is square; but horizontality may also be an attribute associated by Boccioni with his mother/matter's newly passive status.

How can we explain the apparent change in the artist's depiction of his mother, in particular, his inability to equate his own act of omnipotent looking with that of his mother? I

would like to suggest that it was prompted, at least in part, by conversations with Marinetti, or a reading of texts such as “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine,” in which we find the following passage: “Thus we will see disappear, not only love for the woman-spouse and for the woman-lover, but also love for the mother, principal support of the family and as such opposed to the audacious creation of the man of the future.”<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Marinetti’s rejection of the cult of the mother reawakened Boccioni’s own earlier anxieties about matter, his recurring uncertainty over the selection of an appropriate medium for a given subject, and his fear of resulting chaos. In this context, the artist had once written: “It is the terror of matter that suffocates me.”<sup>52</sup> Whatever the reasons, during the summer of 1912, Boccioni returned temporarily to a hylomorphic model in which form and matter, spirit and substance, constitute opposing if complementary terms. Paradoxically, it was this form/matter duality that Marinetti had sought to negate by positing an energized matter with its own inherent properties of propulsion and diffusion.

*Materia* is closely related to *Horizontal Construction*, except in its format, which is decidedly vertical.<sup>53</sup> Sitting with her excessively large, coarse hands clasped before her, Boccioni’s mother seems like so much raw matter waiting to be imbued with an active (male) spirit.<sup>54</sup> Force lines emanating from the orthogonals of the distant buildings partially dissolve and fragment her massive form, while a semitransparent nude, swift and male at right, and a lunging horse at left, arrive from the street to traverse the scene at the level of the balcony.<sup>55</sup> Horses, along with the men who ride or guide them, had already appeared as quasi-allegorical figures in *The City Rises* of 1910 (color plate 9), which Boccioni had titled *Gli uomini (The Men)* in a preliminary study. As we saw in chapter 3, the studies reveal that in the course of articulating his vision of the city under construction, Boccioni came to embrace Marinetti’s

exaltation of speed and dynamism as the free, nonutilitarian expression of the will to power. Accordingly, he transformed his workers from gravity-bound laborers into surging vectors of energy. Similarly, he replaced the horses' harnesses with soaring winglike forms. If the horse's harness returns in *Materia*, it is because the nature of work, of spirit infusing matter with form, is once again at stake. The small scale of the horse and man is also noteworthy, implying their objective physical distance from this interior, which they have nonetheless breached. (In *Horizontal Construction*, which lacks these figures, Boccioni experiments with simply writing distance onto the trajectory of invading force lines: 200 meters, 122 meters, and so forth.) In a later but related symbolic gesture, Boccioni arranged for his 1913 sculpture, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, to be photographed as if it were flying into his apartment through an open window bearing a flower or leaves (fig. 5.7). As such, the sculpture dramatically performs its function as a representative of masculine spirit/form, to become a modern avatar of the angel Gabriel. <fig. 5.7 about here>

Significantly, *Materia* presents one of the few examples of centripetal motion in Boccioni's work; in most cases, in as *The Development of a Bottle in Space*, also of 1912, the opened core of the bottle suggests that a centrifugal force propels itself out from and around a centered, stable object to join with the environment, including a dish, table, and even a house in the distance (fig. 5.8). In the terms established by *Materia*, it is the vertical, masculine forces of the street, emblematic of the dynamism and modernity of city life, that penetrate a feminine personification of matter in order to obliterate the distinction between interior and exterior, human being and urban world. <fig. 5.8 about here>

Only the hands of Boccioni's mother appear to counter this collapse of boundaries. As Virginia Spate argues, these "gigantic hands escape fragmentation and momentarily stabilize the

huge, metallic, piston-like arms, the heavy shoulders and heavy breasts.” They appear to circle a belly that “is in fact a void,” so that the painting enacts a constant oscillation between presence and absence, form and void. Shifting between unstable identifications, Boccioni represents his mother as both a “body-sized phallus, rearing up from the base of the painting,” and as a terrifying image of the void, “of the violation of the maternal body, and inescapably, of castration, of the threat of the maternal embrace, of the horror of touch.”<sup>56</sup>

An image of ambivalence, *Materia* has provoked sensations of discomfort in many viewers.<sup>57</sup> The looming, gnarled hands of Boccioni’s mother encircle a body that, in psychic terms, is uncanny<m->familiar and strange, too near and too far, suggesting that it is simultaneously desired, forbidden, and threatening. Verging on the grotesque, these hands further confound the opposition of active and passive, spirit and matter, to speak of Cecilia Forlani’s age and years of manual labor as a mother and seamstress. Insofar as they seem shaped by work, by her temporal and corporeal experience, her hands retain a latent power and resist the disintegration visited upon the rest of her form. Their meanings exceed the logic of the spirit/matter duality reaffirmed by *Materia*, in which it is the artist who dominates and transforms matter in the creation of this very painting, and thereby implicitly engenders his own mother. <fig. 5.9 about here>

Whereas *Materia* personifies matter in the form of Boccioni’s mother, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* dramatizes the becoming-machine of the male subject, in what might retrospectively be called a Futurist cyborg (fig. 5.9). This sculpture strives to represent the Nietzschean ideal of the heroic superman by realizing the dreamed-of fusion of human flesh and metal. Boccioni regarded it as the most “liberated” of his sculptures, and indeed, the numerous related drawings in charcoal, watercolor, pen, and tempera reveal a strong erotic investment in

the execution of this image in both two and three dimensions.<sup>58</sup> Its success lies in its synthesis of a series of opposing qualities, in which the differences between the animate and inanimate, hot and cold, movement and stasis, fragmentation and unity are suspended. The work evokes the heat and flickering evanescence of flames as well as the cold, rigid impenetrability of a speeding projectile; it suggests the power of tensed human muscles through streamlined forms and abstracted, mechanical surfaces that refuse all resemblance to flesh; and it retains a sense of balanced stability and corporeal coherence despite a body that lacks limbs and that has been pierced by sharp, geometric forms. Perhaps most of all, for Boccioni it figured forth a sense of “continuity,” of the permanence of the *I*, conceived in defensive opposition to the fragmentation and disintegration of the self. Like the horses in *The City Rises*, Boccioni’s Futurist cyborg has developed thrusting winglike forms that intimate the possibility of flight.<sup>59</sup> The head bears no human features; encased in a helmet and with a crosslike projection in the place of a visage, it plies through space like Boccioni’s famous fist on the power of sheer externalized will.

In creating *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, Boccioni sought to exemplify Marinetti’s dream of a man/machine hybrid as articulated in “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine.” Indeed, the sculpture realizes the terms of this 1911 text in an almost literal manner. Citing the “truth of Lamarck’s transformational hypothesis” Marinetti proclaimed:

<EXT>. . . we must prepare for the imminent, inevitable identification of man with motor, facilitating and perfecting a constant interchange of intuition, rhythm, instinct, and metallic discipline of which the majority are wholly ignorant [. . .] we look for the creation of a nonhuman type in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection, and love, those sole corrosive poisons of inexhaustible vital energy, sole interrupters of our

powerful bodily electricity, will be abolished.

We believe in the possibility of an incalculable number of human transformations, and without a smile we declare that wings are asleep in the flesh of man. [. . .]

This nonhuman and mechanical being, constructed for an omnipresent velocity, will be naturally cruel, omniscient, and combative.

He will be endowed with surprising organs: organs adapted to the needs of a world of ceaseless shocks.

From now on we can foresee a bodily development in the form of a prow from the outward swell of the breastbone, which will be the more marked the better an aviator the man of the future becomes . . .<sup>60</sup>

Fulfilling the nonhuman ideal presented here, Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* seems all armor, the "prow" formed by the breastbone circling around and sheathing an empty core. The paradox of the sculpture is that volition emanates from a mechanical being devoid of human organs and interiority; matter itself—and in particular metal—constitutes this body without organs. For if wood is the emblem of nature, metal is the archetype of matter.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the fact that *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* was originally executed in plaster, its synthetic, streamlined forms give little evidence of the artist's hand. In order to convey a sense of "metallic discipline," Boccioni employed a formal vocabulary of sleek surfaces and sharply projecting, geometric elements. When this sculpture was displayed in Paris in June 1913 at the Galerie la Boétie, Guillaume Apollinaire urged Boccioni to have it cast in bronze, a remark the artist reported to his friend Vico Baer.<sup>62</sup> I believe that the posthumous castings in bronze, ordered by Marinetti, realize the artist's intent to create an image of the fusion

of flesh with metal—although perhaps steel, rather than bronze (a material Boccioni had rejected as traditional and “passatista” in his 1912 “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture”), would have been preferable. Whereas *Materia* continues to rely on the opposition of form and matter, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* strives to render states of being by evoking the nonhuman multiple physical properties of metal.<sup>63</sup> The “life” of metal is thereby conceived as its content; in its molten state, metal exemplifies fluidity, expansiveness, and eruptive force, but when cold and hard, it exemplifies the impervious rigidity of pure will. <fig. 5.10 about here>

During 1913 and 1914, Boccioni further explored the dynamism of the male body through paintings, drawings, and collages of cyclists, soccer players, and men on horseback. Despite Marinetti’s enthusiasm for bodily fusion with ballistic weapons and motor-powered machines, especially race cars, airplanes, and armored tanks, Boccioni’s efforts to represent the experience of velocity drew inspiration from more familiar subjects.<sup>64</sup> For the artist, the manifestation of energy always retained an originary link to straining muscles and tense, electrified nerves, even when these were subsequently transfigured into soaring, partly dematerialized forms as in the case of the male workers in *The City Rises*. His painting *Dynamism of a Cyclist* of 1913 departs from a series of pencil studies of a rider partly merged with his vehicle, to culminate in a nearly abstract work. In one drawing, Boccioni portrays the rider leaning into a wind-cutting “angle” of force with such drive that his head pierces its upper edge (fig. 5.10). Similarly, the volumes of his body generate smaller currents and flows of air, conveyed through rough hatch marks and multiplied, spinning wheels. In the painting, Boccioni relies on contrasting colors and varied brushwork to evoke the interpenetration of the figure and environment as an effect of velocity (fig. 5.11). Ocher, brown, and yellow volumes coalesce in the center of the image, suggesting a core that has gathered its strength through a concentration



of will, in order to discharge it in waves of churning motion. The rider hunches over his vehicle, his head a visorlike form thrusting forward; we see the powerful curves of his bent upper back, left arm, and thigh, as well as the cubic forms of both massive hands gripping the handlebars. Articulated into mostly disjunctive tubular and straight-edged volumes, and given a metallic glint through blue and green shading, Boccioni's rider evokes a machinelike assembly that owes something to the example of Fernand Léger. Its hardened, gleaming forms seem resistant to pressure yet "elastic" enough to remain agile and mobile, capable of provisional configurations. The volumes also seem multiplied, or strangely distorted (as in the elongation of the left leg), to suggest the continuity and dispersion of the moving body over time, just as the spinning wheels are captured in more than one position. As the rider/bicycle complex penetrates the surrounding atmosphere (the purple curve functions much like the angle of force in the drawing), it casts swells of wind to either side. In control of his bicycle and exposed to the elements, Boccioni's cyclist experiences the exhilaration of velocity, which intensifies sensations even as it disaggregates the body into contingent and fragmentary forms. <fig. 5.11 about here>

Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Man's Head* of 1914 returns to the theme of the Futurist superman, but this time the work addresses a specific historical moment to become a vehicle of prowar propaganda (fig. 5.12). The artist intended the diversity of materials used in this collage<m->which include papers of different weight and texture, as well as ink, oil, and gouache<m->to produce a physical effect of conflict and motion and thus to convey a sense of the man's bellicose state of mind. This collision of contrasting and overlapping materials also suggests the volatile interpenetration of figure and ground, man and environment, indicating the collapse of any distinction between a subjective state of mind and public discourse. Fragments of newspaper text<m->emblems of the public sphere<m->remain legible beneath patches of

gouache and ink; they speak of patriotic fervor, a desire for war, and for acts of cruelty. From the text that lies across the man's head we read: "Serbians," "Imperial," "war," "struggle," "Hungary," and "of the Fatherland." At the lower right, similarly violent images are evoked: "pistol," "great cruelty," "a huge crowd of people," "fear," and "anger." Belonging at once to the domain of state propaganda and to the man's inner consciousness, the newspaper signals the extent to which the two have merged. The individual ego is both negated and multiplied as it expands in total identification with the fatherland and its imperialist goals. As in *Materia*, the boundary between the interior and the public domain is breached, so that all becomes exteriority, and consciousness is constructed from without. <fig. 5.12 about here>

Not surprisingly, the outbreak of World War I inspired further Futurist images of masculine heroism, whether through fusion with machines and weapons or through the ego-ecstasy of explosive self-annihilation. Gino Severini, too ill from the effects of tuberculosis to participate, nonetheless executed a series of works depicting men at war. His *Armored Train in Action* of late 1915 was based on a photograph of a Belgian armored train, published in the bimonthly *Album de la Guerre* on 1 October 1915 (color plate 17, fig. 5.13). In transforming the photographic source, Severini centered and righted the overhead view of the train, giving it a distinctly phallic shape. He also eliminated the two soldiers observing the action, so that in the painting all five depicted men point rifles toward an unseen enemy at the left. As prosthetic extensions of the body, the rifles break through the armored shell of the train, echoing the powerful blast of the cannon above, which sends clouds of smoke into the surrounding countryside. Sharp triangles, painted in sparkling yellow flecks tinged with green or rose, also bristle along the left side like drawn daggers. They project from the gleaming metal armor of the train, enhancing the violence of its penetrating force. Encased within the ironclad train,

anonymous, uniformed soldiers take aim at the enemy, repeating a single, precise gesture. If in the photograph the varied postures and individual features of the soldiers were visible, in the painting the logic of standardization takes over. The men's bodies form a single, erect corps, whose protective armor allows them to experience the thrill of explosive destruction while remaining (at least temporarily) safely intact. Yet the men also seem imprisoned within the partly exposed, vulnerable interior of the train, whose shape insinuates a dark void into the sunlit exterior, a shining emblem of phallic presence. The stark juxtaposition of abstracted organic forms (soldiers and foliage) with illusionistically rendered metallic forms (note the special prominence given to each rivet) suggests a further exchange of properties—the machine usurping the immediacy and power of the traditional humanist subject. Similarly, the glowing red forms of the engine car at the top of the canvas intensify the erotic charge of the armored train, investing this instrument of death with simulacral life. <fig. 5.13 about here>

Severini's *Cannon in Action (Words in Freedom)* of 1914-15 also enacts a displacement of eros, picturing war as the violent penetration of an aroused, trembling, feminine earth (fig. 5.14). Severini's Futurist fantasy depicts two "soldiermachines" (*soldatsmachines*), whose forms interlace those of their cannon in a melding of brown and gray tones. According to the text inscribed along the edges of a zigzag at the upper right, these soldiermachines "charge systematically" (*chargent systhematiquement [sic]*), demonstrating mathematical perfection, precision (*precision [sic]*), and power; yet the painting depicts them as strangely immobile, their expressionless heads turned away from the exploding cannon. The force of its fire is described in multisensory terms by centrifugally organized blasts of typographically varied text: as a noisy "BBOUMM" receding into the distance, as 100,000 volts of penetrating light, as a series of sizzling vibrations (szszszszszsz), and as the revolting, acidic stench of gas. The

cannon's disembowelment (*sventrement*) and obliteration (*anéantissement*) of the earth meets a willing, frivolous accomplice. Even as the soldiermachines advance, and "the cannon drives itself obstinately into the earth" (*Le canon s'enfonce obstiné dans la terre*), the free-word picture announces that "the earth rises toward the cannon in waves" (*La terre monte en vagues vers le canon*), while the vibrating grass emits shrill cries (*Vibrations de l'herbe vers le canon/iiii iiiiiii . . .*). Despite the enthusiastic call "Lets go boys/FIRE!" (*Allons les gars/ FEU!*), the soldiers seem too passive to participate in the sublime pleasures enjoyed by the cannon. As in *Armored Train in Action*, the fusion of man and machine here suggests self-estrangement, vulnerability, and entrapment as much as accession to power. <fig. 5.14 about here>

Like Severini's *Cannon in Action*, Carrà's *Atmospheric Swirls* <math>Blast of a Howitzer</math> (*Avvolgimenti atmosferici* <math>Scoppio di un obice</math>) of 1914 pictures the eruptive force of a ballistic weapon through varied typography and centrifugally rotating shards of form (fig. 5.15). But whereas Severini's work still depicts the male soldiermachine, Carrà's collage enacts his fantasized scattering and disappearance into a convulsed and violated atmosphere. The protagonist here is the howitzer, a light cannon shorter than a gun of the same caliber, employed to fire projectiles at high angles of elevation at targets that could not be reached by flat-trajectory weapons. The howitzer's shortened barrel produces an excessively loud muzzle blast, attributed to the explosion of powder both within and without the cannon, as well as to the impact of gases on the surrounding atmosphere. In Carrà's collage, circular shapes at the center left suggest the howitzer's wheels, while a short tubular form near the composition's center, pointing toward the upper left and spewing forth a blast of smoke, evokes the cannon's barrel. Around the howitzer churn waves of expanding turbulence and scattered letters imitating the sounds of a bursting shell, the *Z*'s in *Zang* given special prominence by appearing on pasted paper triangles that

visualize a sense of penetrating force. <fig. 5.15 about here>

The stenciled letters *Zang Tuuum Tumb* link this work to Marinetti's free-word war epic, which takes its title from the onomatopoeic sounds (and echoes) of exploding cannons.<sup>65</sup> Marinetti began to hurl this celebration of violence at the public in Futurist serate in February 1913, and it remained the centerpiece of Futurist declamation until the mid-1920s. The definitive Italian text, complete with charts, synoptic tables, explosive typography and onomatopoeic renderings of noise, appeared in 1914, although extracts had already been published in *Lacerba* in 1913.<sup>66</sup> Marinetti conceived *Zang Tumb Tumb* as an eyewitness account of the Bulgarian victory over the Turks at the Battle of Adrianopolis conveyed through a rapid-fire succession of images and sounds, often redolent with eroticized violence. In some passages, a cannon blast pierces the feminized atmosphere, generating thrilling sensations: "excitement of the atmosphere 3 billion new vibrations sensibility irrrrritated by bustling echoes under the assault of heavy perforating roars *zang tumb-tumb-tumb* [ . . . ]."<sup>67</sup> Another section of the text extols the fusion of "suspended particles of black smoke mineral and organic detritus" and speaks of the "dispersion of 40 million billion molecules<m->fleeing-dusty without legs without head without arms on the hills and in the valleys of atmosphere agitated by soft frenetic tremblings of air [ . . . ]."<sup>68</sup> Carrà's collage similarly projects the spectator into the center of a vortex, where<m->in identification with bursting cannon shells<m->he can imagine his molecular diffusion into electrified matter. (The term *avvolgimenti*, usually translated as "swirls," sets in motion a chain of associated meanings<m->from turning or winding up, to intrigue and deception, to a military maneuver in which a wing of an enemy formation is overtaken and struck from behind [after the front has been secured], to the complex of conductors that create a magnetic field.)

With this collage we return to the leitmotif of the death of the literary *I*, so often invoked

in Marinetti's writings. With Italy's entry into the war in May 1915, this theme took on greater urgency. In a manifesto of 1916, Marinetti attunes his aesthetic ideals even more closely to military attitudes, gestures, and acts by calling for a warlike, mechanical declamation of his poetry. In order to achieve this goal, the performer is to dress anonymously, dehumanize his voice and face, metallize or electrify his voice, and in all ways imitate motors and their rhythms, until ultimately, he has "disappeared." In the new Futurist lyricism, Marinetti declares, "our literary *I* consumes and obliterates itself in the great cosmic vibration."<sup>69</sup> Assimilated to the energized world of matter, with electrical currents coursing through his veins, his body sheathed in metal, and his actions imitating those of motors, Marinetti longs for dispersal and disintegration. In the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" he dreams of a vital art that would pour out from the forest of his veins, "beyond the body, into the infinity of space and time."<sup>70</sup> Only by imagining his own imminent death could he fantasize this final scattering as an apotheosis, a triumph over his own mortality. Within the terms of this fantasy, writing poetry, and making art, become equivalent to the violent eruptions of war.

<CHN>Chapter 6

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Futurist Love, Luxury, and Lust

<CHEPI>We will glorify war<m->the world's only hygiene<m->militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.

<m->F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," 1909<sup>1</sup>

<CHEPI>Lust is to the body what the ideal is to the spirit<m->the magnificent Chimera, ceaselessly sought after, never captured, which the young and the avid, intoxicated with the vision, pursue without rest.

LUST IS A FORCE.

<m->Valentine de Saint-Point, "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," 1913<sup>2</sup>

<CHEPI>In the name of the great virile, fertile, and innovative future of Italy, we Futurists condemn the excessive stupidity of women and the devoted imbecility of men, who together collaborate in the development of feminine luxury, prostitution, pederasty, and the sterility of the race.

<m->F. T. Marinetti, "Against Feminine Luxury," 1920<sup>3</sup>

In a violent attempt to wrench itself free of debilitating influences and ideals, Futurism declared its scorn for women, romantic love, and *lussuria*, the unbridled desire for carnal pleasure. If Charles Baudelaire had dreamed of journeying with his mistress to the phantasmagorical land of Coccagne, where all would be "luxe, calme et volupté,"<sup>4</sup> Marinetti fantasized a world inflamed by aggression and inhabited by virile man/machine hybrids, impervious to the demands and

terrors of ordinary flesh. His immediate target was Symbolist and Decadent poetry, especially that epitomized by Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Gustave Flaubert, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Oscar Wilde, with its devotion to the obsessive love of an idealized woman and fascination with the femme fatale. Such writing, imbued with voyeurism and nostalgia, represented the “last crazy fling of a sentimental, decadent, paralytic romanticism toward the Fatal Woman of cardboard.”<sup>5</sup> Having declared his opposition to feminism in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti further explained his views in a text of 1911, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism”:

<EXT>This hatred, precisely, for the tyranny of *Amore* we expressed in a laconic phrase: “scorn for women.”

We scorn woman conceived as the sole ideal, the divine reservoir of *Amore*, the woman-poison, woman the tragic trinket, the fragile woman, obsessing and fatal, whose voice, heavy with destiny, and whose dreaming tresses reach out and mingle with the foliage of forests drenched in moonshine.

We despise horrible, dragging *Amore* that hinders the march of man, preventing him from transcending his own humanity, from redoubling himself, from going beyond himself and becoming what we call *the multiplied man*.<sup>6</sup>

Marinetti believed that “*Amore* romantic, voluptuary obsession,” was invented by poets and similarly might be withdrawn as an outmoded, badly printed text.<sup>7</sup> The poet set out to revise the rejected manuscript in terms that restore a sense of self-sufficiency and power to men.

Paradoxically (or inevitably?), the campaign to liberate men from the chains of *Amore* found that



its “best allies are the suffragettes, because the more rights and powers they win for woman, the more will she be deprived of *Amore*, and by so much will she cease to be a firebox for sentimental passion or an engine of pleasure.”<sup>8</sup> Quintessentially modern, the suffragettes appeared to be working toward certain Futurist goals. Despite his stated opposition to feminism, Marinetti was ambivalent in his attitude toward these women, who refused to live up to the clichés of docile, seductive femininity that he also sought to destroy. At moments, he even questioned the hierarchy of the sexes upon which the edifice of virility seemed to rest: “As for the supposed inferiority of woman, we think that if her body and spirit had, for many generations past, been subjected to the same physical and spiritual education as man, it would perhaps be legitimate to speak of the equality of the sexes.”<sup>9</sup> This view may reflect conversations Marinetti had with Italian feminists, including Anna Kuliscioff and Sibilla Aleramo, with whom he maintained friendships throughout these years. Yet, he could not resist ridiculing their demand for the vote, arguing that “in their present state of intellectual and erotic slavery,” women would rapidly carry out the “total animalization of politics.”<sup>10</sup> Marinetti hails this eventuality for its destructive potential: “We, who profoundly hate politics, are happy to deliver it into the spiteful claws of women; for it is truly to women that has been reserved the noble role of definitively killing Parliamentarianism.”<sup>11</sup> This is a remarkable statement from a man who aspired to become a deputy, who created the Futurist political platform in 1913, and who would run for election alongside Mussolini in 1919. Yet Marinetti’s antiparliamentarian views were shared by both Socialist and Conservative political parties at the turn of the century in Italy. Socialists and syndicalists believed that democratic representation was illusory since it merely affirmed the power of the existing, decadent ruling class. Conservatives and nationalists further held that members of Parliament inevitably succumbed to the irrational thinking and collective hypnosis

assumed to be typical of crowds and women—even though Parliament was an entirely male body and only upper-class men with substantial means could vote. In an 1895 tract titled “Against Parliamentarianism,” Scipio Sighele asserted that: “In sum, the Chamber is psychologically a female and frequently even a hysterical female.”<sup>12</sup> What better way, then, to precipitate its self-destruction than to allow (hysterical) women deputies into its precincts? Marinetti also assailed the existing deputies for their avarice, dishonesty, and flamboyant but empty and inarticulate rhetoric, citing “financial corruption, shrewdness in bribery,” as well as “hollow eloquence, grandiose falsification of ideas, triumph of high-sounding phrases, tom-tom of Negroes, and windmill gestures.” These accusations imputed to Italian men “feminine” and “primitive” vices, which would only become exacerbated by the entrance of actual women to Parliament: “Woman, as she has been shaped by our contemporary society, can only increase in splendor the principle of corruption inseparable from the principle of the vote.”<sup>13</sup>

Inherent to such casuistry, only partly leavened with deliberate irony, is the anxiety Marinetti and many of his contemporaries felt about changing sexual roles, the new liberties demanded by women, and the rise of consumerism and luxury in modern urban society. The desire for luxury, in particular, exemplified the decadence of contemporary women in its confusion of artifice, money, and love. Although he elsewhere praised all that was artificial as a sign of human triumph over nature, Marinetti deplored luxury’s unnatural allure and power over men: “The prodigious development of feminine luxury has made of love a poor slave, more or less rebellious under the oppressive force of Money.”<sup>14</sup>

Marinetti’s rejection of luxury is an aspect of his larger negation of Symbolist and Decadent aesthetics, which favored artifice over raw or unembellished nature. In his essay “The Painter of Modern Life,” Baudelaire associated nature (defined as the voice of self-interest) with

evil, and moral elevation with reason, calculation, and art. Transferring these philosophical tenets to the order of beauty, he famously praised fashion and make-up as evidence of spiritual nobility through the expression of an ideal: “Fashion must therefore be thought of as a symptom of the taste for the ideal that floats on the surface in the human brain, above all the coarse, earthy and disgusting things that life according to nature accumulates, as a sublime distortion of nature.”<sup>15</sup> To achieve this, fashion must be viewed as a living adornment, inseparable from the woman who wears it. Conceived as a harmonious whole enveloped within an entire world of feminine accoutrements, woman is the very image of happiness for Baudelaire: “When he describes the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, what poet would dare to distinguish between her and her apparel?”<sup>16</sup> As an “idol,” whose assigned task is to be adored, Baudelaire enjoins woman to rise above nature, “the better to conquer the hearts and impress the minds of men.” It is of little consequence if her ruse and artifice are recognized, “if their success is certain, and the effect always irresistible.”<sup>17</sup>

Writing half a century later, Marinetti refused to be conquered by the ruses of feminine idols or to confuse women with their seductive apparel. In his manifesto of 1913 “Destruction of Syntax<m->Imagination without Strings<m->Words in Freedom,” he proclaimed that science and technology had altered human sensibility, leading to the “semiequality of man and woman and a lessening of the disproportion in their social rights.” A related development could be observed in the “disdain for *amore* (sentimentality or *lussuria*) produced by the greater freedom and erotic ease of women and by the universal exaggeration of female luxury.” Contemporary women, according to Marinetti, found “all the mystery of love in the selection of an amazing ensemble, the latest model, which her friends still do not have. Men do not love women who lack luxury. The lover has lost all his prestige. Love has lost its absolute worth.”<sup>18</sup> Marinetti deplored

the fetishization of luxury, which usurps the authentic place of love and of pure carnal desire. Virility and heroism could have no place in a world devoted to the sex appeal of feminine decoys and supplements. A form of aggressive authenticity could be recovered, however, through the mechanization of sex. Applied to erotic encounters, the beauty of speed would produce only the necessary frisson to guarantee the continuation of the species.

Such a reduction of corporeal pleasure, however, was never seriously entertained by Marinetti or the other Futurists. Marinetti's early poems, including *La conquête des étoiles* and *Destruction*, are redolent with sexual fantasies, often cast in the form of an epic struggle between the usually (but not always) masculine power of the sea and the feminine, romantic allure of the moon and stars. The prologue to *Destruction* is titled "Prayer to the Almighty Sea, to Deliver Me from the Ideal." Some of the poems in the collection, however, still betray the legacy of Symbolism in their evocation of desire for an ideal love. For example, "Song of the Mendicant of Love," begins:

<PY>I saw you one night a short while ago,  
 I don't know where, and then I waited, yearning . . .  
 Night, swollen with stars and blue perfumes  
 suspended her nakedness above me, dizzy  
 and shaken with love! . . .  
 Night madly opened her constellations  
 like palpitating, purple and gold veins,  
 and all the blood's illuminating pleasure  
 streamed into the vast sky . . .

I waited drunk beneath your glowing windows  
 alone blazing through the space.

I waited still for the supreme miracle  
 of your love, the ineffable charity  
 of your gaze . . .

. . . For I am a mendicant starved for the Ideal  
 walking along the shore  
 seeking love and kisses  
 to nourish my dream.

I defiantly lusted for the sky's jewels  
 to embellish your nakedness like a queen! . . .<sup>19</sup>

<TBR>

(Je t'avais vue un soir, naguère, je ne sais où,  
 et depuis, haletant j'attendais . . .

La Nuit gonflée d'étoiles et de parfums bleuâtres,  
 alanguissait sur moi sa nudité éblouissante  
 et convulsée d'amour! . . .

La Nuit éperdument ouvrait ses constellations  
 comme des veines palpitantes de pourpre et d'or,  
 et toute la volupté illuminante de son sang  
 ruisselait dans le ciel vaste . . .

J'attendais ivre, sous tes fenêtres embrasées,  
 qui flambaient seules, dans l'espace;

j'attendais immobile le miracle suprême  
 de ton amour et l'aumône ineffable  
 de ton regard . . .  
 . . . Car je suis le mendiant affamé d'Idéal,  
 qui va le long des grèves,  
 quêteant l'amour et les baisers,  
 de quoi nourrir son rêve.)<sup>20</sup>

Although such desires would be violently repressed in Futurism, they tended to resurface, often in displaced forms. In the proto-Futurist *La ville charnelle* (*The Carnal City*) of 1908, Marinetti imagines an exhilarating, sensual journey in his automobile as it races across plains and over mountains, until finally he finds himself flying into “the intoxicating fullness of the Stars, streaming in the great celestial bed.”<sup>21</sup> Rather than the powerful sea, it is now technology that allows human victory over (and erotic fusion with) the stars. With “Let’s Murder the Moonlight” of 1909, the poet writes of a group of Futurist men, whose “nerves demand war and despise women, because we fear supplicating arms that might encircle our knees on the morning of departure!”<sup>22</sup> They flee the old European cities of “Paralysis” and “Gout” to arrive at midnight “almost in the sky, on the high Persian plateau,” where they struggle to resist “the carnal Moon, the Moon of lovely warm thighs, abandoning herself languidly against our backs broken with weariness.”<sup>23</sup> If the nymph with the broken back was a nineteenth-century symbol of the raped woman, Marinetti’s reference to the Futurists’ “broken backs” imputes this status to men.<sup>24</sup> The moon is accused of sexual violation, even as “she” abandons herself languidly in a posture of seductive availability—indeed, it is this enveloping languidness and the “weariness” it causes

that enervates and “rapes” the men. Deciding to “murder the moonlight,” the Futurists seize the electrical power of nearby waterfalls to create luminous globes: “So it was that three hundred electric moons canceled with their rays of blinding mineral whiteness the ancient green queen of loves.”<sup>25</sup> The allegorical paradigm of this text revises Marinetti’s earlier vision of a heroic battle between sea and stars, but without fundamentally altering it. Sublimity and masculine power now accrue to the forces of technology. Yet, the poet still emerges as a man who experiences the world, including both nature and technology, in hyperbolically eroticized terms. His virility depends on the repeated conquest and destruction of the “eternal feminine,” a leitmotif whose constant return suggests both the failure to contain or vanquish desire and the centrality of this theme to the constitution of the Futurist “brotherhood.”

A similar aspiration to negate the Symbolist obsession with fantasized woman, whether noble ideal or femme fatale, structures the earliest Futurist paintings. The fourth point in the “We Fight” column of the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting,” declares the Futurists to be “Against the nude in painting, as nauseous and as tedious as adultery in literature.” In 1912 the painters further explain that in advancing this rule, they are not motivated by concerns of immorality, but by the monotonous presence of nudes in the exhibitions of the last fifty years, “since artists obsessed with the desire to expose the bodies of their mistresses have transformed the Salons into arrays of unwholesome flesh!”<sup>26</sup>

Boccioni’s pre-Futurist work already exhibits a strong desire to resist the claims of lust, while simultaneously affirming his masculinity. On his first visit to Paris in 1906, the artist was particularly amazed by the numerous cabarets and café-concerts with fanciful decor and names such as *Il Cielo*, *L’Inferno*, *Le Néant*, *Nottambuli*, *Assassini*, *Quattro Arti*, and *Lepre Agile* [sic], all brimming with *cocottes*.<sup>27</sup> The artist’s enthusiastic letter to his mother and sister of April

1906 is worth quoting at length:

<EXT>In Paris there are 80,000 [*cocottes*] registered with the police!!!!!! And this, believe me, is the main characteristic of Paris. I have seen women such as I never imagined existed! They are all painted: hair, eyelashes, eyes, cheeks, lips, ears, neck, shoulders, bosom, hands and arms! But painted in such a marvelous way, so knowingly, so refined as to become works of art. And note that even those on the low rungs do this. They are not painted to supplement nature, they are painted for pleasure, with the most vivid colors: imagine: hair of the most beautiful gold topped with little hats that seem like songs: marvelous! A pallid face, the pallor of white porcelain; cheeks of light rose, lips of pure carmine outlined clearly and strongly, rose-colored ears; the neck, nape of the neck and the breast extremely white. Hands and arms painted so that they all have extremely white hands attached with the most delicate wrists to musical arms. Taratan taratan taratan!!!<sup>28</sup>

Boccioni admitted that the marvelously painted *cocottes* were a source of constant delight to him, but also declared that “these women hold no sensual attraction for me; they are too different from the women I have always observed and these seem to me like objects.”<sup>29</sup> He may have felt intimidated by their public display of artificial elegance; he was also unaccustomed to their confident and casual sexual advances, which he claims coolly to have declined.<sup>30</sup> But he was fascinated by the frenetic dancing at the Moulin de la Galette, where he saw the women he had described. Having gone there to sketch, he found himself dancing amid the general abandon, and wondered where he was. Part of his disorientation arose from the difficulty of distinguishing the



aristocratic from the working-class women: “Everyone tried to invent dance movements, one more voluptuous than the next. The women were extremely light, vaporous; it seemed a dance for duchesses and three-quarters were old seamstresses and models.” Declaring that he had been amazed all night, he wrote: “Tomorrow night I’ll return. I would like to bring back a painting of this spectacle!”<sup>31</sup> There is no record of such a painting, and only a few sketches of fashionable men and women sitting together at café tables, and one of a woman in a dress standing (or dancing?), remain from this trip. Yet the memory of the Moulin de la Galette and of other Parisian cabarets resurfaces in several of Boccioni’s later paintings and drawings, including *Modern Idol* and *The Laugh* of 1911.

In late 1907 and early 1908, having installed himself in Milan, Boccioni was living alone for the first time. Although he would frequently visit his longtime friend and lover Ines, he suffered from the lack of desire they felt for each other. In a diary entry of July 1907, he questioned his general absence of feeling for anyone apart from his mother and sister:

<EXT>Is the *absolute* indifference toward women that seizes hold of me, except in certain periods in which the 24-year-old male makes himself felt, a good sign? Is it good that I don’t feel within myself either the desire or the ability to love? Is it good that I feel absolutely no tie, no affection in the world, except for the great deal (the maximum I can) for my Mother and my Sister? Is it good to desire to remain alone?<sup>32</sup>

In November 1907 he confided to his diary that Ines had told him about her passion for another man, Cinta. “She told me things about Cinta that I didn’t suspect. Intense voluptuousness that I’ve always read about or imagined but never experienced. Nights of unsatisfied desire because

of the immense desire of each for the other. I have never experienced any of this.” He wondered about the fact that he had never felt a strong attraction for those women he most loved and admired. On the contrary, he observed, “those few women who have given me moments of pleasure (never more than moments) have held the lowest position in my moral and intellectual evaluation. It is curious, but it is like that.”<sup>33</sup> Boccioni was unable to discover the causes of this failure to unite love of the spirit with that of the body. In his texts and paintings, however, there is ample evidence of a culturally produced psychic split between women regarded as pure and “ideal” and those other disreputable but fascinating women he had seen at the Moulin de la Galette and visited in Venice and probably elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> A diary entry of March 1907 goes so far as to suggest that the experience of sexual pleasure aroused a fear of estrangement from his mother, always the primary object of Boccioni’s love: “Does *pleasure* distance me from the Gran Madre? I don’t know how to explain anything!”<sup>35</sup>

The many portraits Boccioni executed of his mother, some partially nude to reveal breasts with erect nipples or a sensuously rendered back, remain unprecedented in the history of art both for their number and their transgressive expression of longing for the maternal body. The artist’s obsessive return to this theme arises from his strong, though ambivalent, love and attachment to his mother. If many of his portraits evoke a desire for union with the maternal body and a fantasy of erotic plenitude, in others Boccioni seems to have struggled to disavow or master this desire through negation. The portraits of his mother titled *Anti-Graceful* suggest an effort to de-idealize the mother, to picture her as fragmentary and inassimilable (fig. 6.1). She stands as a powerful, quasi-totemic figure, eliciting love, identification, and a fear of being engulfed. On one level, *Anti-Graceful* functions as the maternal counterimage to the cool and artificially seductive prostitute in Boccioni’s work. Yet this image of his mother participates in the cluster of fantasies

that structure Boccioni's affective life, in which desire and its prohibition often coexist. <fig. 6.1 about here>

Late in 1907, after a period of anxiety and self-doubt, Boccioni conceived an idea for an engraving to be called *Liberty*. Rather than aspiring to unite his love for a woman with erotic pleasure, the artist imagined himself transcending the claims of physical desire, as well as ambition and social convention, by withdrawing into a lofty, disembodied solitude. In his diary, he cited this quote from Henrik Ibsen as his source of inspiration: "To be a character to have the strength to live without friends alone with one's own ideal: this is the celebrated liberty . . . opposed to this are human conventions respect for relatives and family."<sup>36</sup> As Boccioni elaborated on this citation, he emphasized his desire for freedom from all the daily forms of misery and struggle, whose only solution would be to live in cold, contemplative isolation. "True Liberty above all the miseries. The impossibility, the serenity, the contemplation from above in silence perhaps in the cold (blessed solitude<m->only blessedness) and down with battles brutal labors, love, war, death."<sup>37</sup>

Although Boccioni never executed his projected engraving, two ink drawings, made in 1907 and early 1908, carry out this desperate allegorical program. Both are stylistically and thematically indebted to Aubrey Beardsley, Edvard Munch, Gustav Klimt, and Giovanni Segantini in the depiction of demonic feminine idols, although Boccioni's curious combination of medieval and modern elements is idiosyncratically his own. In the later drawing, *Beata solitudo* (fig. 6.2), Boccioni imagined an upper, spiritual realm inhabited by an androgynous figure swathed in the voluminous folds of a heavy cloak and held aloft by clouds. A representation of the immaterial soul, this almost angelic personage casts no shadow while sitting in a contemplative pose beneath a shining sun, the artist having abandoned the notion of a gelid

atmosphere. Although sometimes taken as female, this figure deliberately confounds a clearly gendered identity, perhaps in response to the rejection of sexual desire. Boccioni likely projected his own identity and aspirations onto this detached being, who seems to represent an idealized alter ego. <fig. 6.2 about here>

Below, in the realm of earthly delights and vice, appear a host of figures representing various types of love. Ranged across the foreground, Boccioni depicted a prostitute wearing only an elaborate hat with an excessively large plume, a necklace, rings on every visible finger, decorated stockings, and high-heeled shoes, along with her even more naked, lecherous client. She flaunts her sex, while the serpent draped around her arm addresses her male admirer, who crawls toward her in an abject posture.<sup>38</sup> A stack of tomes titled *Rights, Morality, Justice, Religion, War, and Duty* provide a pedestal for a smoking incense burner and a crown, signifying the teachings of church and state that only an old, bearded man, perhaps a philosopher, still studies. Behind the courtesan, partly dwarfed by her hat, is a charming image of a young mother breast-feeding her child surrounded by a halo. If the prostitute is Eve, this woman stands for the Virgin. To the right, Boccioni drew the chivalrous forms of two young lovers signifying romantic, conjugal sentiment and fidelity. Behind the figures representing various forms of love and lust appear images of struggling workers, phalanxes of praying monks and nuns, armies prepared for battle (at left), and scenes of war (at right), as well as several shrieking supplicants with arms raised toward the upper realm. While Munch inspired the latter, Albrecht Dürer provided the model for a fearsome Knight of the Apocalypse, who rides a cadaverous horse across the center of the image. Behind the Knight, in the center background rises a great basilica based on St. Peter's amid a modern city with smoking factory chimneys, electric poles, a dirigible, and biplane. Boccioni here condemns all types of love, labor, conquest, technological

invention, and religious belief as equally vain given the inevitable triumph of death. The drawing proclaims that only a detachment from earthly struggles and responsibilities, and a renunciation of desire, allow for true freedom and equanimity. Yet *Beata solitudo* evinces nothing so much as desire expressed in negative form: the desire *not* to desire, *not* to experience pain or lack.

Boccioni never fully embraced this solution to the uncertainties of his existence: his diaries continued to record his daily effort to achieve artistic recognition and support, as well as to find the “ideal” woman and experience the sexual desire that eluded him. In joining the Futurist movement with its activist stance and embrace of violence and struggle, Boccioni definitively abandoned the goal of living in noble solitude and suppressed his identification with a feminized alter ego. He then found himself in the paradoxical position of renouncing a lust for women he had never really felt; indeed, ambivalence toward desire continued to circulate in his Futurist work, inspiring a variety of pictorial scenarios. <fig. 6.3 about here>

It was during the spring of 1910, after joining the Futurist movement, that Boccioni and Russolo painted extremely similar pictures, *Female Head* (color plate 18) and *Perfume* (color plate 19) respectively. Carrà’s *Swimmers*, although ostensibly different, can also be associated with this group (fig. 6.3). As Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen have argued, the three Milanese Futurists seem to have “given themselves a kind of appointment” around a highly suggestive passage from Marinetti’s April 1909 manifesto, “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” which addresses feminine seduction and lust.<sup>39</sup> They probably intended this collective endeavor to affirm their adherence to Futurism by addressing one of its foundational themes, “the scorn for women.” Rather than constitute a bold new Futurist vision of this topos, however, their paintings draw on a long tradition of associating narcissistic or fatal women with water, and of depicting them with long, enveloping tresses of hair. Immediate precedents could be found in the work of the pre-

Raphaelites, the Symbolists, Munch, and Segantini, as well as in much Academic painting. Boccioni and Russolo each depict a woman lost in an all-absorbing world of sensuous reverie, as vividly colored, swirling filaments of paint surround and even engulf her. Carrà's *Swimmers* portrays several women who drift along in a rapid current of blue-green water. Largely submerged with arms outstretched and hair flowing behind them, they lift their heads only enough to reveal reddish faces and dark, languid eyes. In the context of Marinetti's manifesto, these paintings of women, which emphasize the interpenetration of "object" and environment, take on a specifically gendered signification.

In "Let's Murder the Moonshine," Marinetti had referred to dangerously seductive, swimming women who embody the moonlight on "the surface of the liquid night":

<EXT>a sighing verdure rose by magic from an earth crisped by surprising undulations. From the blue fluctuations of the meadows there emerged the vaporous heads of hair of numberless swimming women, who sighed as they opened the petals of their mouths and their humid eyes. Then, in the inebriating drench of perfumes, we saw a fabulous forest growing and spreading around us; its drooping leaves seemed tired by a too lazy breeze. A bitter tenderness wavered there.<sup>40</sup>

Metaphors of undulating water, tresses of hair, inebriating perfume, and a fantastically proliferating forest conjoin to create an atmosphere of feminine entrapment. The women only partly emerge from a kind of natural, oozing medium, simultaneously blue meadow, fluctuating water, and dark forest. Immersed in this liquid flow, they can only raise their heads to reveal their vaporous hair, to sigh with petal-like mouths, and to open humid eyes. Marinetti denies

these women freedom of movement, articulate speech, and the ability to see, all characteristics reserved for masculine subjectivity within this scenario. Instead he relegates them to a presymbolic realm that suggests the unconscious as well as a womblike, dark, and claustal realm. Their bodies remain fused with an informe primordial element that seeps into the surrounding environment to drain it of masculine energy and rigidity, until the breezes are “too lazy” and the leaves on the trees droop. The term *vaporous*, used to describe their heads of hair, connotes female hysteria; women suffering from this archetypically female disorder were long thought to be afflicted with maleficent “vapors.”<sup>41</sup> No doubt the “inebriating perfume” emanating from these swimming Ophelias would prove toxic to men. Having conjured forth this horrifying sexual nightmare, Marinetti then asserts the power of raging tigers to quell it violently, to “force a breach” leading to “huge convulsions of stricken foliage.” The tigers attack “the invisible phantoms” who refused to stay in the “depths of that forest of delights,” but “constantly rose to the surface” like pathological symptoms.<sup>42</sup> Now it is the violated forest that writhes and moans in hysterical spasms. The mixed metaphors multiply deliriously, suggesting a fear of a mysterious femininity that lurks everywhere, in the forest depths, watery pools, undulating meadows, and especially, in the shimmering moonlight.

In its excessive use of familiar tropes for female atavism, lust, and hysteria, Marinetti’s text is still highly indebted to the Symbolist influence he wishes to throw off. The same might be said of Russolo’s *Perfume*. His protagonist casts her head back in a languorous, dreamy pose, eyelids lowered, lips parted, as she gives herself over to the radiant swirls of perfume that surround her. The female phantasm drifts in the currents of a vibrating environment from which she is scarcely distinguished. Streams of blue strokes, interspersed with flecks of orange, yellow, green, and red, form eddies around her, but also intermingle with her hair and barely suggested

upper body. Russolo seems to have thought he could communicate sensations of smell, as they rise and circulate within an atmosphere, through synaesthetic analogies with patterns of color that suggest movement and the interpenetration of elements. Encircled and permeated by sensations of perfume, this female figure experiences a kind of narcissistic autoeroticism. She takes pleasure in her own sensuous immanence in apparent oblivion of the outside world.<sup>43</sup> Here, as in Marinetti's text, proximity to the body implies a regressive state associated with lack of access to symbolic discourse, outwardly directed vision, and control over space and movement.

In Boccioni's version of this theme the female figure inclines her head downward, but she too has closed eyes and slightly parted lips. Around her swirl fantastic red tresses that multiply until their wavelike forms fill all the surrounding space. The curved upper border of the painting echoes the inward-turning gesture of the woman's head and its surrounding strokes of paint, to enhance the overall sense of encirclement. As has been frequently observed, this painting also exemplifies Boccioni's new approach to color as set forth in "The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting": "It will readily be admitted that brown tints have never coursed beneath our skin; it will be discovered that yellow shines forth in our flesh, that red blazes, and that green, blue and violet dance upon it with untold charms, voluptuous and caressing."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Boccioni gave his female figure a "voluptuous and caressing" violet visage, highlighted with brilliant yellow and green patches. Enveloped in an expanding field of luxurious red hair, she was intended to be the Futurist answer to the traditional *femme fatale*.

However, the innovative character of *Female Head* must have seemed doubtful even to Boccioni, who did not include it in his first Futurist exhibitions. Reviews of the works he did show under the imprimatur of Futurism at Ca' Pesaro in July and at the Famiglia Artistica in December 1910 were mostly negative and often highly sarcastic; critics lost no time in pointing



out that his paintings failed to live up to the strident claims made in the manifestos and that even the technique of Divisionism was hardly new. The journalist for the *Corriere della Sera* referred to the public's disappointment in Boccioni's one-man show at Ca' Pesaro:

<EXT>Umberto Boccioni exhibited with the anticipated "Futurist brand": according to the expectations of the public, therefore, his pictures should have been objects of major attraction for the present show. Instead they were a disappointment from this point of view. In fact, in the exhibited works Boccioni has demonstrated a balanced Impressionist and Divisionist sensibility; he has given a few vivid touches to a few portraits. One was expecting pictorial acrobatics, ideological strangeness, in sum, a bit of revolution; but instead there was nothing.<sup>45</sup>

As in the works exhibited at Ca' Pesaro, in *Female Head* only the patches of brilliant yellow and green on the woman's face break with tradition. Moreover, this painting still exemplifies the Symbolist notion of the "eternal feminine," rather than a contemporary cocotte. And although her excessive, flowing red hair suggests she is a temptress, with her eyes closed, head inclined, and a smile on her lips, this woman seems almost demure. She might even evoke positive maternal associations rather than inspire fear. A truly Futurist version of the theme would have to be more violent, and locate the features of her lussuria more specifically within the urban present.

Taking up this challenge, Boccioni's *Modern Idol* of 1911 depicts a contemporary femme fatale, transforming the elegantly painted prostitutes the artist had seen in Paris into a phantasm of perversity (color plate 20). The "idol" depicted here seems related to the brawling women in

*Riot in the Galleria* (color plate 4), as if the artist had wished to give us one of their portraits in dramatic, even grotesque, close-up. Like her sisters, Boccioni portrayed this ostentatiously dressed woman at night within an electrically illuminated environment, no doubt the Galleria. She wears a red and green striped coat with a high fur collar, an elaborately decorated large hat, earrings, a pink flower or bow over her left ear, and distinctly visible make-up. This is a woman devoted to cultivating a lavishly seductive appearance, who revels in artifice and lusts after luxurious possessions.

Boccioni seems to have imagined this cocotte as immobilized before a shop window, an activity emblematic of city life. As Ester Coen observes, *Modern Idol* represents an attempt to visualize this passage in the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting”:

<EXT>How is it possible still to see the human face pink, now that our life, redoubled by noctambulism, has multiplied our perceptions as colorists? The human face is yellow, red, green, blue, violet. The pallor of a woman gazing in a jeweler’s window is more intensely iridescent than the prismatic fires of the jewels that fascinate her.<sup>46</sup>

Like the woman in the text, who looks fixedly into a jeweler’s window, Boccioni’s idol takes on and even surpasses the glittering character of the gems she desires. Resembling the jewels behind the pane, her made-up face splinters into prismatic rays of yellow, green, red, violet, pink, and blue. She too is a resplendent object, destined to be admired and bought, though perhaps not easily consumed. Like the flickering stars that Marinetti wished to vanquish in so many of his poems, the jewels in Boccioni’s manifesto evoke “femininity” insofar as their “prismatic fires” denote a realm of seductive but inconstant appearance. Their mode of visibility always implies an

oscillation between presence and absence, just as the flashing brilliance of stars can only ever be the trace of a past illumination erupting into the present. As Baudelaire wrote in “The Lamentations of an Icarus,” “It is thanks to the incomparable stars, / Blazing in the depths of the sky, / That my devoured eyes see only / The memories of suns.” The poet declares himself “burnt up by love of beauty,” a fate Marinetti wished to avoid.<sup>47</sup> For the Futurist, the old, European, “vomiting” sun was only a sputtering, convulsive star, destined to be overpowered.<sup>48</sup> In “Against *Amore*,” he compares sentimental love to an “immense leash with which the sun in its orbit chains the courageous earth that would surely rather leap at random, run every starry risk.”<sup>49</sup> Leaping from star to star, Marinetti proclaims his desire for freedom from attachment and his defiance of a single ideal *Amore*, although in escaping the sun’s orbit he can hardly be said to escape the allure of the stars altogether.

Marinetti’s repeated efforts to conquer the stars suggest a fascination with their glittering brilliance, which he associates with the palpitations and convulsions of desire. In “Song of the Mendicant of Love,” as we have seen, Marinetti describes the intoxicating power of the stars, and his “defiant lust” for the “sky’s jewels,” with which he wishes to embellish the nakedness of his lover, who is simultaneously a woman and the carnal figure “night.” Such embellishment can never be permanent, as it vanishes and reappears with the alternation of day and night. What the poet ultimately longs for is “the ineffable charity” of the gaze, which the flickering stars promise but never fully deliver. In subsequent poems and manifestos, including “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” Marinetti proposes to destroy desire through the violent glare of electric light, which cancels the alternation of night and day, and the auratic effects of inconstant star and moonlight. His 1913 manifesto “The Variety Theater,” returns to the theme of the “amusing battle between spasmodic moonlight, tormented by infinite desperations, and the electric light

that bounces violently off the fake jewelry, painted flesh, multicolored petticoats, velvets, tinsel, the counterfeit color of lips.” If the “energetic electric light triumphs, and the soft and decadent moonlight is conquered,” it is due to the former’s phallic, demystifying illumination, conducive to “easy, light, and ironic loves.”<sup>50</sup>

In *Modern Idol*, Boccioni exploits the harsh, artificial rays of multiple electric globes to produce the strangely iridescent glow of the noctambulist visage. As in Marinetti’s texts, electric lights serve to obliterate the seductive glimmer of the stars or moon in order to become instruments of a new lussuria. The moonlit pallor of the nineteenth-century femme fatale was often a delicate or translucent white, although in the effort to suggest that such women never saw the healthy light of day, their skin might also be rendered as glaucous and waxlike.<sup>51</sup> Pale and glazed with a dull but flawless finish, their pallor evoked the weak, reflected, distant light of the moon. Related tropes were prevalent in Symbolist poetry. For example, in “Clair de Lune,” Arthur Symons imagines he sees, “In the moonlit room your face, / Moonlight-colored, fainting white,”<sup>52</sup> whereas Marinetti, in “Let’s Conquer the Moonlight,” wrote of the “ancient green queen of loves.” Boccioni, in emphasizing the electrically produced, prismatic brilliance of his idol’s skin, countered such wan, sickly coloring and its associations of passivity, fragility, and distance. Pierced by the violent rays of electric globes, the cocotte’s countenance takes on the vivid hues and mottled surface of the kaleidoscopic nocturnal world that surrounds her. No longer idealized or beautiful in the conventional sense, her heightened coloring reveals its kinship with the strident tones of modern fashion, advertising, and shop windows. It does not, however, escape an unhealthy tincture with its lurid greens, reds, violets, and yellows applied in thick, pasty brushstrokes. Even the “whites” of this cocotte’s eyes comprise flecks of red, blue, black, and green. And like her predecessors, the moonlit goddesses and femmes fatales of the

nineteenth century, who were so often lost in dreamy reverie, looking into mirrors, or asleep, and hence unable to engage the outside world, she fails to acknowledge her male interlocutors.

Boccioni's idol too looks into a glass and is perversely fascinated by what she sees.

The idol's intense gaze, at once hypnotic and aggressive, suggests that she is momentarily immobilized before the jeweler's window, captured by its spectacle and her own reflected image mingled with it. She seems to experience the contradictions described by Gabriel Tarde in his theorization of the heightened perception of city dwellers, who everyday encounter such a wealth of sensations as to make them into virtual foreigners or tourists. Upon immersion in an urban environment especially rich in "all kinds of suggestions," individuals typically experience a kind of hyperstimulation that leads to loss of normal consciousness and memory. "The college freshman, the Japanese traveler in Europe, the countryman in Paris, are as stupefied as if they were in a state of catalepsy. . . . In this singular condition of intensely concentrated attention, of passive and vivid imagination, these stupefied and fevered beings inevitably yield themselves to the magical *charm* of their new environment." The result was state of "somnambulism" (which, as we have seen, was a contemporary term for hypnotism), in which the naive and unprepared outsider succumbs passively to the "charms" of the metropolis. Yet, Tarde believed that "such a state of mind is characteristic of many city dwellers," who apparently could never be masters of their environment. He continues his analysis to argue, "the noise and movement of the streets, the display of shop-windows, and the wild and unbridled rush of existence affect them like magnetic passes."<sup>53</sup> For Tarde, the frenetic movement and alluring display of commodities function like the "magnetic passes" made by the (male) doctor or magician in order to hypnotize his (usually female) subject, reducing her to a state of passive receptivity and suggestibility. Boccioni's idol exemplifies this feminized state, at once passive

and feverish, lacking in consciousness, but driven by desire. An inherently complex figure, she represents the archetypal urban dweller who easily succumbs to the mesmerizing effects of the pleasures on offer; yet she herself is one of those pleasures for the male.

As Tarde's text suggests, the cocotte's demonic gaze evokes a kind of hypnotic obsession akin to what nineteenth-century theorists called monomania, and sometimes hysteria.<sup>54</sup> In monomania, which proved difficult to distinguish from ordinary neurosis, the major pathological symptom was fixation on a single idea (such as envy) or behavior (such as gambling or stealing). Hysteria was a broader category, usually assumed to be typically female and to derive from "wandering" reproductive organs, a mysterious and undiscoverable "cerebral lesion," or weakness of moral character. It comprised a congeries of symptoms, referred to as *stigmata* by theorists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, and Paul Regnard, as well as Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud. These included temporary or long-term partial paralyses, convulsions, contractures, insensitivity to pain or inexplicable pain, a narrowed field of vision, and a fixed stare. All of these symptoms could be induced and cured through hypnosis, to which hysterics were thought to be particularly amenable. Susceptibility to suggestion and hypnosis, emotional volubility, and a tendency toward theater and mimicry were all signs of weak self-determination or will, and hence were taken to be typically feminine. For Charcot and his colleagues at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, hysteria was a largely hereditary nervous disorder, often linked to degenerate and criminal tendencies, including narcissism, compulsive mimicry and lying, and sexual promiscuity.<sup>55</sup>

The Italian criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso, whose ideas were widely circulated and hotly debated at the turn of the century (and some of whose lectures at the University of Turin Balla had attended), also believed hysterics suffered from inherited

degeneracy, which often found a criminal outlet in prostitution. In his book *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (*Criminal Woman, the Prostitute and the Normal Woman*) of 1893, Lombroso elided the categories of the “born criminal,” prostitute, epileptic, and hysteric, emphasizing the “complete analogy” between them: “Given this complete analogy between born criminals and the hysterical woman, with the exception of the superior mendacity, volubility, and preoccupation with sexual matters of the hysteric, we can see immediately that epilepsy is found infrequently in prostitutes because it has been replaced by hysteria.”<sup>56</sup> If these categories were found to be largely interchangeable, it is because they were constructed on the same model of perceived anatomical and moral deviance from the norm provided by the classically proportioned, European white male. <fig. 6.4 about here>

Indeed, the idol’s gaze borders on the pathological, recalling the cataleptic stare to be found in earlier images of hysterics and hypnotized women, such as *The Somnambulist* by Gustave Courbet (fig. 6.4). Boccioni’s cocotte seems similarly transfixed by the shop window and the eleven streams of electric light that rain down upon her. (Here it is useful to recall that asking an individual to stare at a light, or to follow the movement of a glittering object, were techniques for narrowing vision known to induce hypnosis.) Yet she acquired this gaze, and the physiognomic features that accompany it, only after the artist revised an earlier study (fig. 6.5). In a pencil sketch, a young woman in an overpowering hat glances upward and to the left with a gaze that might be described as wistful, melancholic, perhaps even vulnerable. Her eyelids and simply defined mouth slope downward, her eyebrows trace normal curves, and her unremarkable nose seems a bit long. The woman’s hair falls naturally around her face, and her clothing is left unspecified. Yet circles sketched in above her hat indicate that Boccioni already conceived this drawing as depicting a woman under the hypnotic glare of electric orbs. <figs. 6.5, 6.6 together

about here>

In a subsequent pencil drawing, Boccioni modified the woman's physiognomy and gaze so that she begins to take on features Lombroso would have recognized as belonging to a criminal woman (fig. 6.6). She now stares directly and aggressively forward, into the jeweler's window but also at the viewer, with eyes that slant upward. Her eyebrows have become oblique, her nose shorter and broader, her cheekbones more pronounced; her chin, whose contours Boccioni altered several times in the earlier sketch, is now cast into bright light, and rendered still more prominent. Her lips, like those of the cocottes Boccioni had seen in Paris, are "outlined clearly and strongly"; in the painted version they will be bright carmine. All of these features will be further enhanced and exaggerated in *Modern Idol*. Here the presence of the large hat set low over the woman's head (unlike its raised position in the earlier sketch) conspires with the dark cast shadow to render her forehead smaller and more recessive than it had been previously. Her eyebrows also descend to touch her eyes, emphasizing their oblique angle. Her nose has suffered a similar deformation to become strangely squashed and misaligned with the lusciously painted mouth. The strongly illuminated chin, glowing with green, yellow, and white highlights, takes on a singular prominence and visibility not fully explained by the fall of light.

In altering the features of his idol's face, Boccioni drew on the well-known typology of atavistic anomalies observed and categorized by Cesare Lombroso. Applying the laws of evolution to human physical and moral development, Lombroso believed that any resemblance to apelike or animal characteristics signified an anatomical reversion to an earlier evolutionary state, thereby resulting in limited intelligence, insensitivity to pain, and a "savage" inclination to crime. In his first major book, *L'uomo delinquente (Criminal Man)* of 1876, as well as in its sequel, *La donna delinquente (Criminal Woman)*, he looked especially for low, receding brows,



small cranial capacity, strongly projecting jawbones, flattened noses and large nostrils, high and widely spaced cheekbones, prominent ridges over the eyebrows, “handlebar” ears, and dark curly hair. As Lombroso explained in his 1911 introduction to *Criminal Man*, it had been a revelation to discover, through his study of the anomalous skull of “a famous brigand,” that the criminal is

<EXT>an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek-bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake.<sup>57</sup>

If criminal men were relatively easy to identify by virtue of their prominent jawbones, squashed noses, and sessile ears, women posed something of a conundrum. Lombroso admitted that women generally committed fewer crimes, a fact that came into conflict with his belief that they were less evolved than men and hence morally inferior. Rather than allow this to trouble his taxonomy, however, he adduced a number of reasons for this unexpected lack of female criminal behavior, all of which served to bolster the biological distinction between the sexes and to preserve male superiority. Like Herbert Spencer, whose ideas informed his thinking, Lombroso argued that women constituted the general “type” required for the preservation of the race, whereas men had attained a higher level of development and hence of individual differentiation.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, it was necessary for even criminal women, especially prostitutes, to remain attractive to their male clients. Hence, they tended not to exhibit the more extreme

deformities found in criminal men.<sup>59</sup> Lombroso nonetheless went on to cite the statistics of several other researchers, demonstrating that prostitutes and hysterics were indeed marked by atavistic features after all. Although they might be hard to discern while these women were young, these features gradually became manifest as the women aged and they began to exhibit the characteristics common to criminals, hysterics, and other “deviants.” Because it was illegal to publish the photographs of imprisoned Italian women, Lombroso instead published the images (photographs, drawings, and engravings indiscriminately mixed together) of German and Russian criminal women (fig. 6.7). Accompanied by tables and charts linking specific anatomical features to particular crimes, the viewer was urged to search these images for signs of atavism, such as a reversion to “masculine” characteristics, those connoting apes, or even “less evolved” nonwhite races. <fig. 6.7 about here>

In drawing on this lexicon of supposedly anomalous features in order to represent the degenerate and hysterical qualities of his cocotte, Boccioni, like Lombroso, had to walk a careful line between signifying her pathology and preserving her feminine beauty and allure. His idol had to manifest a perverse obsession with lussuria while remaining an object of fascination. Boccioni accomplished this by emphasizing her cataleptic stare, with eyelids and irises rimmed in red paint, to suggest demonic possession or hysteria (its nineteenth-century equivalent), as well as a lust for jewels. The addition of a fur collar, which rises up to cover her neck and surround her face, enhances her seductive, feline appearance, thereby suggesting a reversion to animal appetites and instincts, especially promiscuous sexuality. This urban noctambulist glitters in all her finery under the penetrating rays of electric light, to embody the perverse love of jewels, artifice, and luxury that, according to Marinetti, supplants love and reduces the prestige of the male lover.

The threatening power of such bejeweled cocottes returns as a theme in Boccioni's *The Laugh*, completed in spring 1911 and shown at the Arte Libera exhibition (color plate 21). During the exhibition a hostile viewer defaced *The Laugh* by running his finger through its still wet paint. Although later accounts claim the picture was slashed with razor blades, a contemporary review in *La Perseveranza* reports that the attack occurred as a form of ironic commentary on the ideal of "artistic freedom" asserted by the exhibitors:

<EXT>We are in the Futurists' hall, at the Arte Libera exhibition, in the former headquarters of the Ricordi Company. Two citizens are admiring a picture with violent splashes of bright red.

"The art of painting could not be more free than this."

"Oh no, it could be even more so . . . like this." And a finger stretches out to the red splashes, still fresh, and then streaks over the canvas making squiggles and arabesques. "There you are," he observes, "the picture is more complete now, or at least it is more pleasing to my own artistic freedom."

And, modest in such great glory, he goes on his way not even asking compensation from the painter for whom he has finished up the violent contrasts of the Futurist canvas. It is said that F. T. Marinetti is looking for the unknown disciple in order to dedicate a book to him. And looking for him too is the "retouched" painter Boccioni, in order to put into practice that part of the Futurist doctrine that has to do with the fist and the slap in the face.<sup>60</sup>

Responding to this event, the artist's friends sent Marinetti a telegram announcing that

“Unknown cowards have defaced picture *The Laugh* by Umberto Boccioni. Numerous artists also adversaries highly indignant. Walls in our hall getting covered with insults. Undaunted we are continuing battle sending you wishes of victory for yours. Speak about it in lecture.” Marinetti did so in his 7 May serata at the Teatro Fenice in Venice.<sup>61</sup> The destructive act of the hostile viewer was quickly converted into proof of the work’s violent originality, a publicity stunt typical of Marinetti.

Boccioni then further altered the painting’s composition and facture, probably after his visit to Paris in November 1911, in preparation for the February 1912 exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. Although no photographic record of the painting’s original appearance survives, one can assume that the prevalence of objects such as glasses, carafes, wine bottles, and cups dissected and seen from various angles as well as the numerous fragmented planes and sharply defined lines, constitute a response to Cubism. Yet the artist retained the overall theme, which emphasized the portrayal of “states of mind,” as well as his reliance on bold color oppositions. One gains a sense of its strong visual impact at the *Arte Libera* exhibition from the description offered by Nino Barbantini in his review of 19 May:

<EXT>One of these pictures (*The Laugh*) depicts a group of light women and *viveurs* in a very lively conversation around a café table while one of the women, all of whom are dressed bizarrely, breaks out into uproarious laughter which is taken up by the others. The scene is viewed with acute penetration and represented in painting of irresistible effectiveness. The effect is in large part due to the violence of the coloring, to the dazzling juxtaposition of extremely strong and luminous tones. In the center of the group an enormous yellow feather seems a veritable spray of fireworks.<sup>62</sup>

There is no mention here of objects seen from multiple points of view, memory, or roentgen rays. By the time *The Laugh* appeared at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, the catalogue provided the following description: “The scene occurs around a table in a restaurant, where the atmosphere is gay. The personages are studied from all sides, and both the objects in front and those behind, are to be seen insofar as they are present in the painter’s memory, so that the principle of the roentgen rays is applied to the image.”<sup>63</sup> It appears that after his trip to Paris in late 1911, Boccioni began to explore the possibility of enhancing vision through the simultaneity and superposition of aspects; rather than a superior form of total knowledge, however, simultaneity implied the evocation of memory and affect, grasped on the model of scientific transparency (X-rays) but achieved through the artist’s intuition. <fig. 6.8 about here>

A group of sketches allow us to reconstruct the original scene in more detail, and to speculate on how Boccioni altered it after his trip to Paris. In one of the earliest pencil drawings, the artist portrayed a single laughing cocotte in a large hat, surrounded by five well-dressed *viveurs* (fig. 6.8). Her laughter, to which the men respond in varying degrees and ways, seems to signify her coquettishness and ability to hold the circle of admirers around her. Perhaps the joke was intended to arouse a sense of rivalry, as the two men in the lower right confront each other aggressively, the central, broad-shouldered, bald man leaning toward his adversary in a smiling but provocative manner, while the latter scowls fiercely with beady eyes, raised eyebrows, and heavy jowls. Indeed, all of the male visages and postures border on caricature, depicting a crowd of wealthy but aging businessmen on a lark. <fig. 6.9 about here>

In a subsequent drawing, the artist introduced a second cocotte with a decorated hat (seen from behind), in the place of the balding *viveur*, who is moved to her right (fig. 6.9). These two

figures engage in conversation in the foreground, while the three other men share in the first cocotte's laughter, the one seated at the far left leaning possessively against her. A café table with a few glasses and plates, and the rough indication of other diners in the distance, provide the beginning of a setting. <figs. 6.10, 6.11, 6.12 together about here>

The laughter takes a more explicitly vulgar turn in a third drawing, in which Boccioni raised the vantage point so that we look down on the now enlarged, decorated hat of the prostitute with her back to us (fig. 6.10). She gestures with arms and hands held out to either side, elbows resting on the table, while the woman who faces her reclines to expose her chest and a broad, toothy laugh seen from below. The men, however, no longer share in the joke. Dwarfed by the corporeal presence and expansive hilarity of the women, the man at the left seems to occupy only a confined space as he sits hunched and motionless before his drink. The viveur with a mustache at right, leaning toward the laughing cocotte, frowns, while the man to the far left turns away. Boccioni employs a strong diagonal axis, from lower right to upper left, to connect the two laughing women, opening a rift between male and female "states of mind." Two further sketches explore this psychic disparity: one focuses on the laughing cocotte, the other on a rather grim looking viveur (figs. 6.11 and 6.12). As in the final work, in the sketch the prostitute leans back to reveal her pale, plump flesh and décolletage. Overcome by gaiety, her entire body participates in the act of laughing, as if it were a form of unconscious sexual exposure. Smudges and hatch marks on her face suggest that it is flushed in enjoyment; the wild plumes that spring forth from her hat add to the sense of frenzied excess. As in the earlier *Beata solitudo* and *Modern Idol*, the overdecorated hat signifies the vanity and fetishistic appeal of the prostitute. The sketch of the male admirer, in contrast, is an image of containment. Dressed in an evening jacket and white shirt, with mouth closed and eyes indicated merely as hollows, the man

remains rigidly inexpressive, his visage almost a death mask. <fig. 6.13 about here>

Another rapidly executed sketch emphasizes the disfiguring, morbid aspect of convulsive laughter, contaminating men and women alike (fig. 6.13, verso of fig. 6.12). Boccioni further enlarges the prostitutes' plumed hats, thereby lending an air of extravagant decadence and vulgarity to the scene. He contorts the visage of the cocotte at the upper left into a grimace, while the three viveurs laugh with misshapen, open mouths, in heads that might be mistaken for skulls. The man at the left has been reduced to a disembodied, reclining, eyeless head; his open rictus might signify a shriek or death moan, as well as a laugh. This study suggests that Boccioni wished to explore the violence and abjection that attends the laughter of the cocotte and her entourage. The prostitutes' laughter could only be a form of entrapment, an exercise in power and duplicity. <fig. 6.14 about here>

In the *Arte Libera* exhibition, Boccioni also presented another painting dedicated to the expression of a "state of mind," *Mourning* (fig. 6.14). In this work, the multiplied visages of two old, keening women (one with flowing red hair, the other with gray hair tied in a bun) mourn the death of an individual, whose casket appears at the upper left. Their lined and distorted faces exhibit extreme signs of grief, while several almost disembodied hands writhe in pain. In a diary entry of June 1907, after lamenting the suicide of Giuseppe Pelizza da Volpedo at the age of thirty-nine, Boccioni cited Oscar Wilde on the difference between expressions of laughter and those of sorrow: "Beneath laughter and joy there can be a rough and coarse soul, but beneath sorrow there are always tears! Sorrow, in contrast to pleasure, wears no mask." The passage further declares that "truth in art" lies not in resemblances, nor in the reflections of silvery waters, such as those that mirror the moon or that show Narcissus to himself. Rather, "the truth in art is the unity of a thing with itself; that which is external made expression of that which is

internal: the spirit made flesh with the body and the body animated by the spirit. For this reason there is no truth that can compare to pain.”<sup>64</sup> Perhaps Boccioni intended to demonstrate, through the juxtaposition of the two paintings *Mourning* and *The Laugh* at the Arte Libera exhibition, the expressive difference between the states of mind of the old, wailing women and the young, laughing cocottes. Yet, as Nino Barbantini noted, *Mourning* had a caricatural quality, the multiplied faces appearing, pace Wilde, precisely as masks.<sup>65</sup> Some of the convulsed faces in the sketches for *Mourning* resemble those in the sketches for *The Laugh*, revealing an undercurrent of ambivalence toward laughter and its capacity to generate pain (fig. 6.15). <fig. 6.15 about here>

In the repainted version of *The Laugh*, brilliant rays of electric light strike the scene from multiple angles, as they had in *Modern Idol*. The two extravagantly dressed cocottes dominate the scene; the one laughing in the upper left corner wears a blue dress with a plunging décolletage and a large red hat with a blue feather, while her companion in the foreground sports a flame-red dress and a multiplied blue hat with careening orange and yellow plumes. A third laughing woman at the right, not previously present, holds a cigarette to her red painted lips, her face flushed with make-up and surmounted by an enormous chignon. Gesturing with sparkling, bejeweled hands, these women flaunt their sexuality and artificial allure, with varying effects on their male admirers. The multiplied visage of the viveur in the tuxedo at the left manifests a distinct frown as he presses his left arm and hand against his chest in a gesture connoting refusal and displeasure. Conversely, the nearly disembodied man leaning his head, with eyes closed, against the laughing cocotte, seems oblivious to the scene before him, while the man in the right foreground smiles as he leans forward, right elbow resting on the table, his hand supporting his head. If the women are linked in their coquetry and frivolity, the viveurs display different states



of mind, conveyed through posture, attire, and facial expression. Rather than affirm the contagious effects of laughter, the varying responses of the men and their comparative marginalization within the scene evoke Boccioni's memories of the prostitutes he had seen at the Moulin de la Galette and other café-concerts in Paris, in which fascination mingled with a sense of disorientation and alienation. Although a few subsequent drawings and paintings address the theme of the uneasy relations between fashionably dressed men and seductive women within the modern urban café, none so explicitly exposes the artist's ambivalence and unease toward the brazen display of feminine sexuality and artifice he had encountered in the French capital.<sup>66</sup> Fausto Pretella, interpreting *The Laugh* from a psychological point of view, notes that this ambivalence takes on a critical, moralizing character that ultimately derives from the irreconcilable conflict between the artist's contradictory ideals of femininity, leading him to depict the viveurs in acerbic, caricatural terms. For Pretella, this psychic conflict "ruins the festival of sensuality, conferring on the whole a sinister and violent tone."<sup>67</sup>

Yet the artist continued to play out these contradictions in his art, as in his life, simultaneously attracted to and disdainful of the pleasures of urban nightlife. Severini recalled Boccioni's "mania for elegance" and his habit of chasing after the *midinettes* (working-class young women) during his 1912 visit to Paris in order to show them his picture in the *Excelsior*, often mistaking their curiosity for "success with the ladies."<sup>68</sup> When Severini visited Milan later in 1912, Boccioni insisted that they stroll through the Galleria together in fashionable evening attire. According to Severini, who was obliged to wear a tuxedo, Boccioni's clothes consisted of "a black suit with a jacket that buttoned up to his chin, like the jackets called 'vareuses' in France. A starched white collar peeked out over the high-buttoned jacket and on his chest were the drooping bows of a 'Lavalière' tie. A round hat with an upturned brim and patent-leather

pumps with bows completed his opening-night dress.”<sup>69</sup> The references to the prestige of French fashions are telling, as is the similarity of these clothes to those worn by the variously laughing and frowning viveurs in *The Laugh*. Thus attired, but with no money in their pockets, Boccioni and Severini, along with the far less well-dressed Carrà and Russolo, would dine in simple little restaurants where they sang and argued about “painting and love.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Marinetti recalled that Boccioni, “perhaps in a spirit of emulation loves to talk to me about his amorous adventures and is very worried about his first elegant clothes to replace his usual black suit buttoned up to the neck . . . he satisfies his yen for the life of ease among rich fashionably dressed men and women [at the Cafe Cova].” As Marinetti further remarked, the artist was “intent on a powerful plasticity an aggressive Don Juanism and luxury among luxuries.”<sup>71</sup> Boccioni’s obsessive insistence on appearing publicly in aristocratic clothing he could scarcely afford signals his participation in an urban culture devoted to class-blurring fashion and spectacle, even as works such as *Beata solitudo*, *Modern Idol*, and *The Laugh* convey a desire to resist the threatening, artificial allure of the modern prostitute and the cults of luxury and lust. <fig. 6.16 about here>

Boccioni’s caricatural drawing, *A Futurist Serata*, allows a further reading of the ambivalence implied by *The Laugh*, and of the important role that the symbolic “exchange of women” among Futurist men played in affirming their collective masculinity (fig. 6.16).<sup>72</sup> In the drawing, which spoofs the futurist serata at the Politeama Garibaldi in Treviso on 2 June 1911, Boccioni, Balilla Pratella, Marinetti, Carrà, and Russolo gesticulate wildly on a stage littered with vanquished *passatisti*. The latter’s pale, supine, generalized forms contrast dramatically with the elegantly attired and erect Futurists, who command the space around them. In the foreground, an orchestra directed by Pratella blasts its noisy sounds at the stage, while a fitting backdrop is provided by three enlarged caricatures of emblematic paintings: Boccioni’s *The*

*Laugh*, Carrà's *Swimmers*, and Russolo's *Music* (in which the swirling form/force of music and a series of phantasmal masks in the original painting have been transformed into a female octopus with waving tresses of hair and tentacle-like hands, surrounded by swarming insects).<sup>73</sup> The presence of these three paintings attests to the newly vital place of visual imagery in the Futurist serata, in what appears to have been the first display of works of art on stage, and more specifically, to the themes of lust and the scorn of women. In Boccioni's caricature, each artist stands before his work, partly interacting with it. At the far right, Russolo gestures toward the fallen *passatisti*, ignoring the multiplied arms of the octopus/woman that reach out to encircle him. Carrà, at center stage, waves his right hand toward his swimmers, whom Boccioni has stripped of their orange swimsuits and shoes, rendering their sexual meaning more explicit. The female swimmers' bulbous, naked bodies, flowing hair, and watery milieu mark them as distinctly "other" to the upright (if rather squat) Carrà in his dark suit. Although gesturing toward the swimmers, he turns his back to them. At the far left of the cartoon, pictured as the most dynamic figure on the stage, Boccioni stomps on the abject, flattened bodies of the *passatisti*. Behind him appears a caricature of *The Laugh*, transformed so that the laughing prostitute at the left now displays an enormous toothy grin and naked breast. The artist, dressed in black tie, seems partly to fuse with the depicted scene, as if to take his place among the now animated *viveurs* in the foreground. (In this schematic version of the painting, executed precisely to affirm the group identity of the Futurists, all the men join in the laughter, the subtle distinctions among them having been eliminated.) Rather than turn his back to the spectacle of laughing, sexually alluring *cocottes* and their *haut bourgeois* male entourage, Boccioni's cartoon suggests his desire both to participate in and to dominate the scene. If the artist chose to represent *The Laugh* in this cartoon, it may have been partly because it had engendered a violent response at the *Arte Libera*

exhibition, thereby exemplifying his own audacity and the role Futurist painting ideally would play in inciting the public. But the three depicted works also function as a symbolic group; as such they serve as stage props that allow the artists to enact the terms of Marinetti's manifestos, which simultaneously evoke and denounce the specter of lust. The cartoon is also meant to be funny of course; like much of Marinetti's prose, it self-consciously parodies its exaggerated rhetoric and performance style, thereby giving the viewer a chance to participate in the joke, another way of becoming an insider.

Severini and Balla are absent from this scenario, as they were from the early serate; they also seem not to have shared the misogynist attitudes of Marinetti and most other Futurists toward women. In his own way, however, Severini was attracted to the spectacle of modern urban entertainments, especially nightclubs and dance halls such as the Moulin de la Galette, Bal Tabarin, and Monico. By his own account, he was a good dancer and soon gained free admittance and other favors from these establishments.<sup>74</sup> Significantly, the majority of his paintings from the prewar period depict the swirling and glittering forms of dancers, rendered in geometric shapes and the colors of the prism, intended as "light-colors" rather than "pigment-colors."<sup>75</sup> Severini's *La danseuse obsédante* (*The Haunting Dancer*) of 1911 (color plate 22) was exhibited at the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition of 1912, alongside Boccioni's *The Laugh* and *Modern Idol*. The title (sometimes inaccurately translated as *The Obsessive Dancer*) describes a female dancer who has become an object of obsession to her presumably male audience. Significantly, she appears not to dance, but merely looks directly and seductively at the viewer with large dark eyes, echoed by the yellow eyes of the black cat she holds in her right arm. At the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition, this painting would have invited comparison with a work closely related in color and facture titled *Le chat noir*, which is also the name of a famous Parisian

cabaret.<sup>76</sup> In *La danseuse obsédante*, the artist may have intended to evoke this setting, while also associating the dancer with the licentious sexuality of the cat (much as Manet had done in *Olympia* and Toulouse Lautrec had done with his images of May Belfort).<sup>77</sup> With her right hand the dancer also holds forth a small, dark violet object, probably a castanet. Yet its meaning is not exhausted in an allusion to flamenco; the dancer presents the object as a highly charged symbol, a gift or lure, like Eve's fruit.

Similar to Boccioni's *The Laugh*, Severini's dancer appears within the nocturnal setting of a cabaret or dance hall illuminated by the prismatic rays of several electric globes. The central globe, hanging just over her head, casts centrifugal beams of blue and lavender "light-colors" over the scene, fracturing and doubling the forms of the dancer and her cat. Using a modified version of neo-Impressionist technique, Severini applied small touches of pure paint to the surface within discrete geometric areas. Distributed into flattened planes, a scheme of complementary colors—mostly blues and lavenders juxtaposed with various shades of orange, as well as white and black—creates a scintillating surface, evocative of the movement and electric lights of a Parisian dance hall without being directly descriptive. As in Boccioni's *Modern Idol*, these deliberately artificial colors are meant to endow the canvas with a jewel-like luminosity. In a letter of 1910 to Boccioni, Severini explained that, "I would like my colors to be diamonds and to be able to make abundant use of them in my pictures so as to make them gleam with light and richness."<sup>78</sup> For Severini, particular color harmonies also had associative and even synaesthetic value, communicating a sense of the total ambience, including its sounds and smells.<sup>79</sup>

Within this multisensory environment, the already fractured and doubled protagonist reappears in the upper portion of the canvas in the form of two smaller female dancers with short

dark hair and orange dresses; caught in different moments of a dance, with arms outstretched and hands holding orange castanets they seem to evoke memories of past performances folded into a simultaneous present. For Severini, such allusions to remembered events and images enhanced the emotional intensity of the work, allowing nostalgia and desire to coalesce.

Severini also placed the small figure of a male observer in elegant evening dress at the left edge of the canvas. His presence returns us to the theme of obsession, and of the female dancer as the object of a fetishistic gaze, even as her own gaze directly seeks the implied (male) viewer outside the frame. Severini presents the dancer as both proximate (does she sit at our table or stand against a nearby bar?) and distant, seemingly available yet dispersed in time and space. Her forms are partly dissolved or mingled with rays of electric light on the screenlike surface of the painting, as if to suggest scintillating reflections in a mirror or glass. The doubling of her figure in the foreground, which denies the singular presence of an individual in time and space, also intimates this mirroring effect, as does the dislocation of her still powerful look. The viewer who would imagine himself into the center of this work is invited to experience a similarly kaleidoscopic multiplication and dispersion of the self, an effect Severini seems to have sought as the essence of modern life in *la ville lumière*.

Severini's obsession with dancers eventually led him to execute nearly one hundred drawings, pastels, collages, and oil paintings devoted to this theme during the period 1909 to 1916. If *La danseuse obsédante* still points to the postures, dress, and seductive gaze of a female dancer, the later works move progressively toward greater emphasis on the dynamic effects of "light-colors" within a vocabulary of nearly abstract shapes and forms. *Sea=Dancer*, exhibited in February 1914 at the Galleria Sprovieri in Rome, is one of the earliest of a series of works devoted to evoking the sensory equivalence between the swirling movements and luminous

effects of the sea and those of a dancer (color plate 23). Severini painted *Sea=Dancer* in January 1914 in Anzio (where he had gone with his young wife to recover from tuberculosis), during the period when he was also formulating his ideas for a manifesto titled “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism.”<sup>80</sup> In the manifesto Severini declared: “The sea dancing, its zig-zag movements and contrasting silver and emerald, evokes within my plastic sensibility the distant vision of a dancer covered in sparkling sequins in her world of light, noise, and sound. Therefore *sea=dancer*.”<sup>81</sup> Drawing on Marinetti’s literary theory of analogies, which Severini quotes in his manifesto, the artist set out to explore the pictorial possibilities of multiplying and intensifying the sensations provoked by an object. As the artist’s intuition conjured forth, first the “real” double of an object, and then a potentially open series of “apparent” (more abstract and distant) analogies, the object would be linked by an expanding chain of affinities and aversions to the universe of matter conceived as a magnetic field. According to Severini, such an expansion revealed the inherent dynamism of matter, the reciprocal influence of the object and its environment, and the fusion of immediate sensations with those evoked in memory. As he explained in his manifesto:

<EXT>the spiraling shapes, and the beautiful contrasts of yellow and blue, that are intuitively felt one evening while *living the movements of a girl dancing* may be found again later, through a process of plastic preferences or aversions, or through a combination of both, *in the concentric circling of an aeroplane or in the onrush of an express train*.<sup>82</sup>

Further, specific sensations of noise, sound, smell, heat, and speed, associated with the totality of an environment, would be conveyed through their synaesthetic equivalents as abstract forms and

the pure colors of the prism. Severini recognized that this multisensory network of analogies, which he viewed as a “complex form of realism,” inevitably “*totally* destroys the integrity of the subject-matter. . . . The abstract colors and forms that we portray belong to the Universe outside time and space.”<sup>83</sup> On this model, a deeper reality, which revealed the hidden correspondences between objects and their sensory equivalents (or contrasts), could only be grasped through an intuitive form of analogical perception.

In *Sea=Dancer*, the whirling, fragmented forms of a dancer fuse with those of the sea in a centrifugally expanding composition that destroys fixed boundaries and a sense of closure. A system of partly overlapping circles and concentric spirals alludes to the twirling of the dancer, the sea, and perhaps an airplane, while rising curved forms (blue/green/yellow at the upper left, lavender/blue/white at the upper right, yellow/ocher/white at the lower right) evoke cresting waves as they echo and meld with the dancer’s body (and her colored veils?). Despite the fragmentation and interpenetration of planes and forms, the artist retains a strong sense of volume, necessary to convey the dynamism of twirling and surging forms in space. Although Severini avoids the value gradations of chiaroscuro, and refuses to blend his colors, the juxtaposition of progressively varied hues (the passage from light blue to a darker blue for example) within distinct geometric areas establishes a strong sense of three-dimensional form in light. Yet because concave and convex volumes are distributed rhythmically throughout the composition, no clear figure/ground relation is allowed to emerge. Subject and environment fuse within the energized flux of matter.

Severini’s technique of applying individual touches of color to his canvas enabled him to evoke both the shimmering, luminous surface of the sea and the sparkling of the dancer’s sequined dress. Circular and oval areas of yellow and white flecks suggest the presence of



spotlights on a stage. As many scholars have noted, Severini seems to have been inspired by Loïe Fuller's electrically illuminated, colored veils, which largely masked her body. Severini's painting achieves a similar displacement of erotic investment, with only a few, isolated parts of the dancer's body becoming legible amid the abstracted, partly overlapping forms. The presence of a rose-colored lower leg and red high heel intersecting a yellow circle near the lower edge of the picture reveals a lingering fetishistic attachment to isolated fragments of the dancer's body. Other parts of her body coalesce around the green cylindrical torso and red, violet, and blue upper garment. The dancer casts her yellow right arm over a red, crescent-shaped head, while stretching her left arm, in lavender and pink, toward the upper right corner of the canvas. But unlike *La danseuse obsédante*, this dancer haunts Severini through her radiant colors and swirling movement, through her ability to appear and disappear in an expanding series of analogical equivalents, rather than through the implied immediacy of touch or gaze. Here even the conventional association of women with water, and in particular of erotic nudes with the sea (as in numerous paintings representing the birth of Venus) takes on new significance, charging the figure with a sense of frenzied movement rather than languorous sensuousness and sexual availability.

Severini's "The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism" echoed Marinetti in declaring the author's enthusiasm for speed, which "has given us a new conception of space and time." As a result, Severini asserted that it would be necessary to "*ban*, as we banned the *nude* in our first manifesto of Futurist painting, *the human body, still-lives and rural landscapes considered as objects of feeling.*"<sup>84</sup> Rather than isolated objects, whole complexes of dynamic elements were to be seized in order to offer the viewer an accelerated lyricism. Velocity provided yet another weapon against the *passéiste*, erotic experience of the human body, substituting the thrill of

speed for sexual pleasure. <fig. 6.17 about here>

*Serpentine Dance*, a drawing originally titled *Sea=Dancer*, exemplifies this desire to suppress the body, except insofar as it can be represented analogically through its qualitative associations (fig. 6.17). Published in *Lacerba* in July 1914, this free-word drawing converts the multisensory ambience suggested by the analogy sea=dancer into its equivalents in swirling and interpenetrating shapes and pictorially arranged words and onomatopoeic sounds. Severini employs an entire arsenal of signifying elements, as if no single representational system or code could suffice to convey the complexity of his sensations and their intuited analogies, which he believed would generate a new reality. He mobilizes a surfeit of supplemental signs, which jostle one another for the reader/viewer's attention. Some are iconic, such as the curved lines that evoke the swirling movements of the dancer and sea, or the acute angles that convey a sense of the penetrating, raylike power of light, a Mauser pistol shot, and a burst of fireworks. Such forms and shapes seek to communicate through resemblance to their referents, thereby invoking the analogical principle of affinity through shared properties. Other signifiers are purely conventional, such as the words *BLEU* and *GIALLO*, which substitute for the colors blue and yellow without instantiating the experience of color or seeking to provide a pictorial equivalent. Here Severini sought a solution to the difficulty of finding formal analogies for color relations in a black and white drawing. At times he writes *VERDE VERDISSIMO* in capitals to suggest the growing intensity of green, or sets the diminishing letters *VIOLA* within an angle that evokes its spatial disposition or movement. Severini figures the sparkling of silver by composing the word *ARGENTO* out of little circles that suggest sequins, as well as by having this word emit a final onomatopoeic sizzle through the noise/form *stzssssss* conveyed in a curving line of ever-smaller letters. Even the brilliance of light multiplied by flashing shadows is conveyed linguistically

(*Esasperazione luce x Guizzare ombre*) and associated metonymically with the nearby reference to rapid steps and zigzags that appears at the lower left.

This translation of empirical sensory experience into conventional verbal forms allows Severini to add the rose hue of flesh to that of the sky in the analogical phrase “CARNE ROSA + CIELO ROSA.” The words *rosa rosa rosa*, which appear scattered throughout the drawing, signify the color of the dancer’s flesh and the sky in their iconic absence. Following a curve at the upper right, the artist further employs language to equate the tactile experience of being enveloped (in waves, the dancer in her veils, the viewer in the dancer, and so forth in an expanding chain) with the caresses of white kittens, in an analogy that recalls *La danseuse obsédante*. The words *occhi spettatori* (spectators’ eyes) followed by several indexical arrows, direct the viewers’ gaze from the lower left upward along a diagonal line toward the fetishized focal point of the composition—the absent center of the woman/drawing imagined and feared as a site of empathic and erotic entry. Under these words we find the ironic *POMPA ASPIRANTE*, a kind of verbal bachelor apparatus that refers both to a suction pump and to a male suitor. And below this, Severini inscribed a series of related, sexually charged terms: the repeated *bevere* (to drink), *LUCE* (light), *CALORE* (heat), and *ODORE* (smell). Yet, as in Loïe Fuller’s dance of colored veils, here the act of stripping the dancer is never fully accomplished. Her body, already banished in the artist’s manifesto, eludes the moment of revelation despite its fragmentary evocation in pictorial forms and textual allusions.

Amid the cacophony of onomatopoeic effects, the introduction of military analogies should also be noted. The repeated TTATTATTATTA, associated with machine-gun fire in Marinetti’s contemporary free-word poem *Zang Tumb Tuum*, along with the lacerating hiss of the Mauser pistol shot (in the triangular wedge at the upper left), conflate the dancer’s rhythmic

stamping and swirling with the noise and violence of weapons. These effects, in turn, may evoke the violence of the spectator's gaze. The speed and flashing brilliance of electric light, which issues forth on the other side of the pistol shot/luminous penetration/fireworks as the noise/form SZSZSZSZSZSZ, now evokes associations with the field of battle as well as the dance hall. Severini was undoubtedly inspired to imagine the analogy of the dancer/sea multiplying to include machine-gun fire or a pistol shot by Marinetti's many similar equations, but the manifestos and dances of Valentine de Saint-Point also played a role. The artist recalled being present at the tumultuous reading of Saint-Point's "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman," at the Salle Gaveau in Paris in June 1912.<sup>85</sup> Although she was "no longer young," Severini remembered that Saint-Point appeared on stage, still elegant and beautiful, wearing an enormous hat as wide as an umbrella and very tall, "a true edifice" covered in bright plumes, to read her "humorous" manifesto exalting lust. One wonders if she was not also spoofing the elaborate headgear worn by the cocottes in Boccioni's *The Laugh*, recently on view at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery exhibition. To Severini, she seemed "strong," and "capable of putting her manifesto to the test for a night of carnal play, and then spending an hour the following morning in fencing practice."<sup>86</sup> The artist also was present at the "Soirées Apolloniennes" Saint-Point held at her studio, with its Gothic-inspired, candle-lit decor: the first, on 17 February 1912, was attended by all of the Futurists who were in Paris for the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition, with Marinetti declaiming her poem "Hymne au soleil" ("Hymn to the Sun"); the second, on 12 June, featured music by Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, and Claude Debussy, a performance of Villier de L'Isle Adam's *La revolte*, and dances by Trouhanova.<sup>87</sup> In subsequent events, organized under the auspices of the journal *Montjoie!* and attended by a wide array of poets, artists, composers, and dancers, Saint-Point read her poems and manifestos and performed her *danses idéistes*.<sup>88</sup>

Saint-Point's "Manifesto of the Futurist Woman" constituted a polemical riposte to the Futurist scorn for women and for lust, issued from within the ranks of the movement. Although the manifesto was published as a leaflet in French and Italian, dated 25 March 1912, Saint-Point first read it on 3 June 1912 at the Salle Giroux in Brussels, where the Futurist exhibition of paintings had just opened.<sup>89</sup> The manifesto begins aggressively by declaring that "Humanity is mediocre," that men and women are equal, and that "both deserve the same disdain."<sup>90</sup> Having thus established a Futurist tone, Saint-Point discerns a lack of virility, necessary to the production of heroes, in both men and women. Like Marinetti, she rejects woman conceived as erotic slave and idol, as well as guardian of the home and family: "Enough of women, octopuses of the hearth, whose tentacles exhaust the blood of men and render children anemic, *women who are bestially in love and who exhaust the force of Desire to renew itself!*"<sup>91</sup> In the place of such female octopuses, who recall the conceit of Russolo's painting as shown in Boccioni's 1911 caricature of a serata, Saint-Point calls for a destructive, virile race of women-warriors, who fight more ferociously than males, incite their lovers to battle, and crush the weak, thereby assisting the process of natural selection in strengthening the race.<sup>92</sup> Like her fellow Futurists, she imagines woman as the "individuality of the crowd: she forms the procession for heroes, or when they are lacking, rebukes the imbeciles."<sup>93</sup> As such, she is integral to any revolution, which will require her powers of generating enthusiasm and multiplying believers. Seeking to counter the "scorn of women" that had provided a central tenet of Futurism while still adhering to the movement, Saint-Point finds herself affirming a series of violent clichés and stereotypes about femininity. Recasting the image of the femme fatale in a favorable (virile) light, she insists on the courage, destructive power, violence, and irrational passion of women, extolling the Amazons, Cleopatra, Messaline, Charlotte Corday, Joan of Arc, and Judith rather than their weaker but still

sinister, octopus-like sisters. She therefore rejects the demands of the feminists, which she believes will only distort or diminish the primordial instincts of women. To give women the vote and other duties will not lead to “*any of the disorder desired by the Futurists, but on the contrary, to an excess of order.*”<sup>94</sup> It would be preferable to allow women to rediscover their inherent powers of cruelty and violence, exemplified in their furious mutilation of vanquished enemies. Urging women to take their place among the natural elements, she triumphantly commands: “*Women, become again sublimely unjust, like all the forces of nature!*”<sup>95</sup>

Despite a few new twists and ironic reversals, this deliriously constructed scenario might have been scripted by Marinetti. Yet in concluding her manifesto, Saint-Point seeks to out-flank the Futurist leader by reclaiming lust as a force that could incite heroism and reward the victorious, rather than entrap and enervate the male warrior. She therefore declares: “*Lust is a force, because it destroys the weak, spurs the strong to an expenditure of energy, and hence to their renewal. Every heroic people is sensuous. For it, woman is the most exciting of trophies.*”<sup>96</sup>

Saint-Point’s contradictory definition of woman as both warrior and war trophy, instigator of violence and its victim, continued to mark her subsequent manifestos, poems, and dances. In January 1913, she issued the “Futurist Manifesto of Lust” as a response to her critics. Contending that lust must not be seen as a vice, but as dynamic life force, she writes ecstatically of its ego-expanding, boundary-dissolving power:

<EXT>Lust is the expression of a being projected beyond itself; it is the sorrowful joy of fulfilled flesh, the joyful pain of a flowering; whatever secrets unite these beings, it is a carnal union; it is the sensory and sensual synthesis that leads to the greatest liberation of spirit; it is the communion of a particle of humanity with all the sensuality of the earth; it

is the panic shudder of a particle of the earth.<sup>97</sup>

Arguing for the essential importance of both body and spirit, and for the equal creativity of each, Saint-Point seeks to reintegrate corporeal pleasure into the Futurist rhetoric of virile self-transcendence and domination over nature. At times her language evokes an ideal of true sensual reciprocity between men and women, or even, transgressing the Futurist fear of “pederasty,” between any two desiring individuals: “*We must stop despising Desire*, this attraction at once delicate and brutal between two bodies, of whatever sex, two bodies that want each other, striving for unity. We must stop despising Desire, disguising it in the pitiful clothes of old and sterile sentimentality.”<sup>98</sup> For Saint-Point, the lust that links two bodies should be an expression of both instinct and consciousness, like a harmonious work of art. She further asserts that, “We must choose intelligently. Directed by our intuition and will, we should compare the feelings and desires of the two partners and avoid uniting and satisfying any that are unable to complement and exalt each other.”<sup>99</sup> Yet in a deliberately shocking counterstatement, she also proclaims lust to be the sensuous flower of art and war, so that “*it is normal for the victors, proven in war, to turn to rape in the conquered land, so that life may be re-created.*”<sup>100</sup>

In her dances Saint-Point performed these contradictory notions, which sought to articulate a vision of a new, powerful, and virile Futurist woman by drawing on ancient stereotypes and myths.<sup>101</sup> In several manifestos, which appeared in *Montjoie!*, the journal published by her companion Riccioto Canudo, as well as other journals in 1913 and 1914, Saint-Point announced her invention of a rational, unsentimental, and impersonal meta-art form that she called *métachorie*.<sup>102</sup> She believes that this synthetic art, comprising music, dance, poetry, and static plastic form, would allow for the expression of spiritual “ideas” as graphic figures

without recourse to mimesis or a pantomime of gestures. As she explained in 1914, “*Métachorie* is the most complete art since it draws on immobile art with its geometric synthesis and mobile art with its balance.” Like Mallarmé, who also understood dance as an art of disembodied, hieroglyphic gestures, Saint-Point described her dances as a mode of writing. Rather than an arbitrary set of signs, however, her movements were motivated by the rational language of geometry: “I dance graphically, as one writes an orchestral score, not in a conventional or arbitrary manner, but in a rational way.”<sup>103</sup> Severini was clearly inspired by her notion of an “ideographic” dance in creating his free-word drawing *Serpentine Dance*. In an essay published in *Lacerba* in July 1914, the artist explained his goal of “creating a new *ideography*, a geometric expression of universal ideas.”<sup>104</sup> For both Saint-Point and Severini, the suppression of the material sensuousness of the dancing body in favor of more universal and abstract “ideas” conveyed through a system of geometric figures, went hand in hand with its increasing militarization. Yet the system of disembodied analogies between a dancer’s steps and machine-gun fire for example, or between a dancer and the idea *war* were more difficult to maintain in the corporeal art of dance, where the actual body of the dancer threatened to break through its graphic and material armor.

Reviews of Saint-Point’s dances emphasized her sober, gymnastic dancing style, which relied on the impersonal interplay of physical volumes—the torso, arms and legs, and head—rather than on seductive surfaces as she interpreted her poems line by line.<sup>105</sup> In order to avoid sentimentality and draw attention to the total geometric configuration of her body, Saint-Point covered her face with a veil and wore a series of exotic costumes.<sup>106</sup> For one dance, she adopted the medieval dress of a Valkyrie in order to suggest the recovery of a chivalrous aesthetic with overt racial overtones.<sup>107</sup> To emphasize its northern pedigree, Saint-Point allowed



a thick braid of blonde hair to escape from her headdress and fall nearly to the ground. For another dance, Saint-Point wore a helmet surmounted by several enormous feathers, armorlike casings on her arms, and a thick mantle that left her legs exposed. To the delight of her reviewers, these and other costumes, including a Greek-inspired costume for *Poème d'amour* and an orientalizing one for *Poème d'atmosphère*, allowed Saint-Point's bare limbs to be visible as she executed a series of precise geometric figures or traced the path of a geometric form on the floor (figs. 6.18 and 6.19).<sup>108</sup> As Saint-Point performed with a repertoire of movements that included brisk, rhythmic steps, pushing, crawling, kicking, flapping her arms like a bat, running in a zigzag, flying, sprawling, and a set of contrasting, more flowing and graceful gestures—beams of multicolored light projected triangles, rectangles, circle, trapezoids, parallelograms, and various polyhedrons onto large, white drop cloths behind her. Florent Schmitt's *La guerre dans les airs*, Debussy's *Demoiselle élue*, Satie's *Les pantins dansent* and *Hymne au soleil*, and Pratella's *La guerra* further accompanied her dances. In an effort to provide a total synaesthetic experience, the scent of exotic perfumes wafted throughout the hall. <figs. 6.18, 6.19 together about here>

Most of Saint-Point's performances featured her epic poem *La guerre: Poème héroïque* [*War: Heroic Poem*], composed in May 1911 to honor the French soldiers departing for Morocco aboard the *Iméréthie* and first recited at the Futurist soirée at the Salle Gaveau in 1912. *La guerre* conjures the dockside scene in Marseilles as an imaginary dialogue among two collectivities and a third voice, representing their synthesis: lighthearted, singing soldiers who seek heroic adventure and glory; a feminized crowd of mothers and lovers, sons and old men, who remind the soldiers of their duties at home and of the possibility of death; and the "race," embodied in the figure of the poet. The poem celebrates violence as an eternal human drive, claiming that

rather than allow individual acts of destruction, the “voice of the race” authorized great, collective crimes in order to foment heroes.<sup>109</sup> Mocking the notion, advanced by the crowd, that all men are brothers, the soldiers denigrate their “black” and “yellow” brothers with grimaces and hand gestures, and ironically invoke “the whistle of bullets” as the language that all men understand.<sup>110</sup> The soldiers’ sadomasochistic desire to “open wounds,” to let blood (including their own) flow everywhere, is echoed in the poet’s oracular pronouncement that “the brutal death of young males / Is but a transformed force / That flows over the race.”<sup>111</sup> Such sentiments were easily aligned with the Futurist glorification of war and violence, and particularly with the myth of war as collective festival and ritual. Saint-Point’s *La guerre* also exemplifies one of the central paradoxes of Futurism: its simultaneous exaltation of the will to power and of submission to the demands of “race” and “fate,” which decree endless cycles of ruthless destruction and renewal. Although she announced a break with Futurism in early 1914, Saint-Point remained in contact with Marinetti and other members of the movement throughout the war.<sup>112</sup>

On 3 April 1917, just as the United States entered World War I, Saint-Point brought her “Festival de la Metachorie [*sic*]” to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The program included her *Poèmes d’amour*, *Poèmes ironiques*, *Poèmes panthéïstes*, and *Poèmes de guerre*, thus taking up the themes of love, irony, pantheism, and war. The latter comprised *My Ancestors*, *The Poppies of Blood* (symbolizing the war in Europe and the blood of fallen French soldiers), and *La guerre*.<sup>113</sup> Before each dance, Wallace Cox, seated in the orchestra pit, recited one of her poems in French, and then translated into English. The program as a whole was organized around the struggle between love and heroism, love and life, in which ultimately, love figures as a trap—much as it did for Marinetti. In an interview of 1916, Saint-Point referred to her refusal of “obvious attitudes” and “mincing gestures” in a dance set to a love poem: “If, for

example, the lover in the poem says, ‘Come to me,’ I do not hold out my arms. . . . I see two imaginary poles, one representing all of life which calls to me; the other, love which holds me, and I dance between these two poles.”<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in one of Saint-Point’s poems, a woman declares to her lover, “I have desired / the gentleness of being prisoner,” yet after they have “bitten into oblivion,” the lovers will awaken, recalled to “some other destiny.” The poem concludes with the lines “And we shall go<m->taking of the two roads. / You<m->yours, I<m->mine<m->indifferent, each one his own.”<sup>115</sup> Her poems and dances thus alternate between expressing the desire for mutual erotic pleasure, fantasies of violence and submission, and the assertion of an independent will and destiny. They inscribe her aspiration to assume the virility usually accorded exclusively to men, but only insofar as she remained subservient to the cause of creating a stronger, heroic race.<sup>116</sup> Hence the contradictory identifications and poses assumed in her dances, which combined a cold, mechanical, rationalized dancing style, executed by a veiled and partly armored body, with the erotic spectacle of bare limbs and exotic, bejeweled costumes.

Marinetti, who had featured Saint-Point reading her manifestos and poems at many of the serate where he declaimed his own free-word war poem *Zang Tumb Tuum* in 1913, remained baffled by her approach to dance, seeing in it a *passéiste* sensibility still indebted to Richard Wagner. In his 1917 “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” written shortly after Saint-Point’s performance in New York, he criticized her aesthetic for its coldness and lack of dynamism:

<EXT>Valentine de Saint-Point conceived an abstract, metaphysical dance that was supposed to embody pure thought without sentimentality or sexual excitement. Her *métachorie* consists of mimed and danced poetry. Unfortunately it is *passéist* poetry that navigates within the old Greek and medieval sensibility: abstractions danced but static,

arid, cold, emotionless. Why deprive oneself of the vivifying element of mime? Why put on a Merovingian helmet and veil one's eyes? These dances express a monotonous limited elementary and tedious sensibility bathed in the old absurd atmosphere of fearful mythologies that are no longer meaningful. A cold geometry of poses that have nothing to do with the great dynamic simultaneous sensibility of modern life.<sup>117</sup>

Surely the revival of orientalizing and northern medieval, and especially German mythologies, could have no place within a patriotic Futurist sensibility, especially once the war against Germany and Austria was underway. Perhaps more interesting is Marinetti's demand for mimicry, as a mode of dynamic expression that allowed for the expression of heroic passions and an identification with metals and war machines. In this time of war, Marinetti declared, "Italian Futurist dance can have no other purpose than to immensify heroism, master of metals, and to fuse with the divine machines of speed and war."<sup>118</sup> Corporeal mimicry and noise effects would allow the Futurist dancer to perform the fusion of the body and of human song with the thrilling explosions of shrapnel, the mechanical hammering of machine guns, and the vibrations, jerks, and circling movements of the war monoplane. The substitution of the machine for the femme fatale here reaches its apogee, only to be reversed, as the female dancer returns to her role as a "divine" idol of destruction. Wearing long silver thimbles to simulate the silvery explosions of shrapnel, her body vibrating and weaving to enact the flux and reflux of echoes in ravines, her hands full of white and red roses to imitate machine-gun fire, a white orchid between her lips, and a flower on her breast to signify a propeller, Marinetti's dancer revives old romantic stereotypes to glorify death at the hands of a beautiful, seductive woman.

Marinetti's ambivalent attachment to the outmoded Symbolist tropes he wished to

destroy also resurfaces in his invocation of the stars. The “Manifesto of Futurist Dance,” begins by tracing the sacred origins of dance to “oriental” pantomimes pervaded by “religious terror,” which reproduced the “rotary movements of the stars.”<sup>119</sup> For Marinetti, a related astronomical significance still attaches to certain dances such as rounds, and can even be discerned in the movements and gestures of Catholic priests as they celebrate Mass. Futurist dance will assert both its mythic resonance and its modern character by overturning this traditional, fear-laden imagery. Initially, Marinetti reconfigures the symbolism of the stars so that they evoke a violently exploding, *masculine* firmament, rather than feminine seduction and unfulfilled desire. His manifesto describes the more than twenty million men who fought in the war as forming with their battle lines a “fantastic Milky Way of exploding shrapnel stars that surround the earth.”<sup>120</sup> Yet later in the text, a lighthearted and indifferent dancer-as-aviatrix will break through a dark-blue paper representing a feminine “starry night,” and then “will scatter golden stars on the ground around her (gay ironic thoughtless).”<sup>121</sup> Although they have been cast down from a pierced and shattered night sky, these stars still retain their golden glow, and their power over the Futurist imagination.

The intertwined themes of love, luxury, and lust continued to dominate Futurist discourse in the final years of the war and the tumultuous two years (the *biennio rosso*) that followed. The journals *L'Italia Futurista* (Florence, 1916-18), which had a large number of women contributors due in part to the absence of men during the war, and *Roma Futurista* (1918-20), journal of the Futurist Political Party, were especially important for fostering debate about the emergence of the emancipated “new woman,” the role of women as intellectuals and combatants, the abolition of matrimony, free love, and most importantly the role to be played by women in the postwar period. A number of female authors contributed to *L'Italia Futurista* in order to criticize

Marinetti's volume *Come si seducono le donne* (*How to Seduce Women*) of 1916, as well as Futurist views of women generally. Among the most prominent were Maria Ginanni, Irma Valeria, Rosa Rosà (the Austrian Edyth von Haynau), Shara Marini, Magamal (Eva Kuhn Amendola), Mina della Pergola, and Enif Robert. Writing for *Roma Futurista*, Robert, Magamal, Futurluce, Vetta, Vera, Fulvia Giuliani, and Anna Questa Bonfadini returned to debates initiated in *L'Italia Futurista*, but also responded to Alberto Vianello's demand that women choose whether to be *femmine* (passive, traditional housewives) or *donne* (militant activists and *ardite*, alongside their men).<sup>122</sup>

Futurism attracted and welcomed the participation of a growing number of women artists, dancers, poets, and novelists, even as it continued to define itself as anti-femme fatale and antifeminist. Its embrace of modernity and of anticlerical political positions (including the affirmation free love and divorce) encouraged women to move beyond traditional gender roles as mothers, wives, nurses, and muses. However paradoxically, Futurism offered a space within which women could articulate their experiences and desires, see their work published, exhibited, and performed, and thereby contribute to the formation of the "woman of tomorrow." Simultaneously, the related themes of "scorn for women," for romantically conceived lust, and for feminine luxury, continued to provide most Futurist men with vehicles for affirming their collective virility and brotherhood. These topoi would be played out repeatedly in the postwar years, often echoing and sometimes contesting the Fascist condemnation of the femme fatale and regressive celebration of a docile femininity, strict marriage laws, and motherhood.

<CHN>Chapter 7

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Return of the Repressed: Vicissitudes of the Futurist Machine Aesthetic under Fascism

<CHEPI>Unfurl the Futurist banner! Ever higher, to exalt the aggressive, forgetful will of man, and to affirm once again the ridiculous nullity of nostalgic memory, of myopic history and the dead past.

<m->F. T. Marinetti, "The Birth of a Futurist Aesthetic," 1911<sup>1</sup>

<CHEPI>These twenty years of work have created in the generations of youth a consciousness in harmony with this time<m->the triumph of the principles of Futurism has attenuated the need for that polemical intransigence that was necessary in the hostile prewar atmosphere.

This is why we approach art today with a changed spirit (in comparison to the first Futurists), no longer obsessed with the anxiety of inventiveness, but already rich in "our" tradition. We approach art with constructive goals, more liberated than before from the weight of the past.

<m->Fillia, "Landscape in Futurist Painting," 1930<sup>2</sup>

In the nearly twenty years that separate these two statements, Futurism evolved from a subversive avant-garde movement that advocated total rupture with tradition, to one that sought to reestablish harmony between the past and present. During the intervening period, Italy experienced the First World War, its aftermath of social turmoil and labor strikes, and the advent of Fascism. Although originally more libertarian and anarchist in its political views, Futurism eventually cast its lot with Fascism, seeing in it an acceptable "minimum program."<sup>3</sup> Given

differences in the attitudes of the Futurists and Fascists toward tradition, the role of the state, the sanctity of the family, the value of productive labor, and religion, the two movements cannot be collapsed into a single, ideologically coherent whole. Tensions and ambivalence continued to put pressure on their alliance, even as the Futurists gradually sought to synthesize elements of their own more “revolutionary” political and cultural stance with that of the regime.

Here I will follow several threads in this complex story, to focus on trends in the transformation of the Futurist machine aesthetic and their links to a surprising resurgence of traditional religious sentiment and imagery. The latter had been officially banished, but was never fully absent from prewar Futurism. As we have seen, before the war, the Futurists extolled the machine as the very emblem of modernity, the vehicle with which the past would be overthrown. Fetishized in works of art and literature, the machine displaced both the idealized woman and the religious icon, triumphing over these now superseded divinities with its cold, hard, and metallic forms. By the later 1920s, however, we witness the irruption of the never fully repressed contents—especially erotic desire and religious faith—into the very heart of the machine aesthetic. The strange effects of this uncanny return are not well known, but nonetheless comprise a revealing chapter in its history. What happened to Futurist avant-gardism and *machinolatry* under Fascism?

<TBR>

For the prewar Futurists, the “criminal” connection between an art of museums and religious belief was axiomatic, and doubly to be rejected because it fostered unquestioning veneration for timeworn dogmas and habits (and thereby prevented accession to new and exhilarating forms of modern experience), and because it induced passive forms of contemplation. In 1910, Boccioni announced the Futurist program of destruction in these strident terms:



<EXT>We want ruthlessly to combat religious fanaticism, unconscious snobbism of the past, nourished by the dangerous existence of museums. We rebel against the supine admiration for old canvases, old statues, old objects and against the enthusiasm for all that is worm-eaten, filthy, corroded by time. We judge the habitual disdain for everything that is young, new, and pulsating with life, unjust and criminal.<sup>4</sup>

Innovations in artistic and literary form<m->including collage, kinetic and multimedia sculpture, and free-word poetry<m->>went hand in hand with the categorical rejection of traditional subjects, including the nude, the femme fatale, tranquil landscapes, and religious themes. Instead, the Futurists favored the speeding automobile or train, the city under construction, rioting crowds, or the shattering brilliance of electric light. In a text of 1913, with the provocative title “Art of the Fantastic within the Sacred,” Gino Severini explained that the subjects of Futurist art stand in direct opposition to those of Italian religious art: rather than *Descent from the Cross*, *Adoration of the Virgin* or *Crucifixion*, the Futurists painted *An Argentine Tango* (Severini), *Electric Lamp* (Balla), and *The Galleria of Milan* (Carrà).<sup>5</sup> As the “primitives” of a new sensibility, the Futurists played a role analogous to that of the great Italian “primitive” masters of religious art in creating metaphysical art with a social role. But for Severini, Futurism had the advantage of being of its time, of appealing to current beliefs and contemporary experience:

<EXT>To the great Christian error, which left the artists of the last centuries skeptics and dreamers, we oppose our Futurist ethic and aesthetic, in which unshakable beliefs and

certitudes are the result of our century of speed, of mechanical creations, of individualism, of instinctual heroism.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than adore “puppets in wax, symbols of a false conception of creation and of human instinct,” man would adore himself, as figured in symbols derived from the world of machines.<sup>7</sup>

Within Futurist fantasies of autogenesis and ego-expanding power, war functioned as the ultimate arena for the triumphant fusion of flesh and metal, man and machine.<sup>8</sup> Yet the experience of World War I, when it arrived, proved anticlimactic, as the number of fallen and wounded soldiers grew and the army retreated in a disastrous defeat to the Austrians in the 1917 Battle of Caporetto. The nation took stock of its losses in what many came to feel was an unfulfilled or “mutilated victory” in 1918.<sup>9</sup> With over 600,000 Italians dead, the international rejection of much of Italy’s territorial claim to Dalmatia, an acute economic crisis and food shortages, unprecedented labor strife, and a shifting political landscape shaken by the violence of opposing factions, the fate of the nation was very much at stake. <fig. 7.1 about here>

Not a combatant himself, Balla represented the sense of broken promises and shattered ideals—both political and aesthetic—in a painting of late 1918 titled *Mutilated Trees* (fig. 7.1). Elica Balla tells us the canvas was her father’s response to heartrending news reports and first-person narratives of the war, including a volume of letters from wounded soldiers to their nurses.<sup>10</sup> Rather than illustrate these stories literally, however, Balla sought to grasp the larger pathos of the period through an anthropomorphic vision of conflict between the organic forms of nature and those of a hostile, metallic environment. At the center right of the composition, two trees with amputated branches stand on a small hillock, in vulnerable isolation amid a vortex of swirling forces. Gone is the joyful exuberance conveyed by many of Balla’s earlier motion

paintings and collages in which abstract “lines of velocity” (sometimes rendered in metallic foil) spin through the atmosphere or traverse brightly lit fields. Instead, as Elica Balla notes, the artist employed a limited range of muted colors—green, brown, black, and white, with violet-tinged shadows—to render “the dramatic sensations of the war.”

Here is her description of *Mutilated Trees*, which is informed by the artist’s memories: “In the somber penumbra of the forest, the small and luminous cut sections of the branches stand out and give the sensation of wounds. Departing from the point of the cut, lines of force pass over the dark green mass of the woods, dominated by the sinister flashing of the blade that wounds; the woods suffer . . .” Rather than imagine the prosthetic integration of flesh and metal, or the identification of the body with explosive machines, Balla pictures a scene of anguished disempowerment. The agents of this violence, however, remain unnamed and all pervasive. The war and its destructive weapons take the form of a gleaming metal blade—a castrating scythe cutting through a forest with implacable force. Calling her father “a lover of nature,” Elica further explains, “The woods grieve like the heart of the artist who looks and feels—there is the crash of the felled branches and the painful wounds of the great mutilated tree.”<sup>11</sup> According to this account, the trees must be read as living hieroglyphs, as visual signs evoking multisensory experience. The “voice” of the woods resonates through a pantheistic language of symbolic correspondences, in which forms and colors signify sounds and cries, movement, and physical sensations. Like Baudelaire’s “forests of symbols,” in whose mysterious depth “perfumes, colors, tones answer each other,” Balla’s painting is described as drawing upon the motivated but secret language of nature.<sup>12</sup>

Yet it is by adopting the “melancholic” formal structure of allegory, in which a specific set of conventionally determined meanings is imposed on a ruined sign or emblem, that Balla’s

*Mutilated Trees* ultimately conveys the artist's sense of loss.<sup>13</sup> Whereas in Balla's earlier work nature had usually figured as a harmonious whole, now there were shattered trees and a universe riven by hostile forces. Strangely, in a painting signed *Balla futurista*, the passage of time points toward the antiheroic frailty of human flesh, the transience of nature, and the pain associated with war. In so doing, *Mutilated Trees* seeks to arouse an empathic response to sentiments that ostensibly had been banished from the Futurist repertoire. But these sentiments could not be allowed to intimate defeat or unredeemed death; the wounds themselves must invite reflection and become the vehicles of spiritual (and patriotic) renewal. Hence "lines of force" emanate from the cut vertex of the foreground "great mutilated tree" to form a somber beacon that transcends the dark masses of the forest, whose "grief" is embodied in crestlike volumes that cluster (and perhaps even wail) at the foot of the trees like so many Mary Magdalenes. According to this allegorical reading, *Mutilated Trees* evokes a crucifixion scene and thereby superimposes a Christian narrative of sacrificial death and resurrection on an image of a wounded natural world. This invocation of a future spiritual resolution to immediate social conflict and suffering announces a trend that would become increasingly central to Futurism, as disparities between political reality and the triumphant rhetoric of the state became harder to reconcile. <fig. 7.2, 7.3 together about here>

Although artists and poets continued to address the Futurist dream of the fusion of man and machine, after the war one observes the gradual disappearance of the last remnants of the human agent as mechanic/father/lover as well as record-breaking driver/pilot. Ivo Pannaggi's 1922 painting *Speeding Train*, for example, pictures an enormous train hurtling toward the viewer on a diagonal (fig. 7.2). The arrival of this hard, phallic projectile, rendered through geometric forms and gleaming metallic surfaces, is further dramatized by the first rays of dawn

in the distance. Only the faintest, abstract references to the surrounding landscape persist, so that rather than an image of the interpenetration of object and environment, we now witness the latter's near obliteration. Comparison with Boccioni's early *Passing Train* (fig. 3.3), or *States of Mind II: Those Who Go* (fig. 1.7), reveals the extent to which both nature and the not-yet fully mechanized human subject vanish before the mysterious, godlike power of the machine.

Fortunato Depero's *Train Born of the Sun* of 1924 similarly depicts a speeding train, whose simplified and windowless steel forms follow a curving trajectory through a crystallized landscape (fig. 7.3). Here the "masculine" energy of the sun engenders the machine without the intervention or collaboration of the engineer; the presence of the stork emphasizes the absence of human gestation. But if the sun is the natural source of this birth, Depero presents it as already transfigured into hard-edged, regular forms that negate a sense of organic flux, variation, and even warmth. Nor do the trains of Pannaggi and Depero seem capable of sudden spontaneous caprices, explosions, jolts, or collisions. As such they mirror the newly fortified stimulus shield of the postwar subject, erected in response to a world of fragmented bodies, violent labor strikes, competing political ideologies, and general social destabilization. The light-repelling, blank steel cover of Fedele Azari and Fortunato Depero's *Machine Book* of 1927 addresses its readers in a similarly indurated, mechanical language; emptied of the markers of unique authorship, it refuses to reveal anything of the interior pages it armors (fig. 7.4). <fig. 7.4 about here>

Yet such resistant surfaces often contained and masked inner tension and aggressive impulses seeking release in acts of ruthless destruction. Depero's 1925 wall hanging, *War=Festival*, represents the Futurist ideal of permanent war/revolution as a form of hygienic, collective ritual (color plate 24). Executed primarily in the white, red, and green of the Italian flag, and with a decorative border comprising stylized flags, daggers piercing hands, and

bleeding masklike heads, this mural aestheticizes the daily acts of bloodletting required of a fully militarized nation. Its appropriation of imagery derived from “primitive”<m->perhaps Aztec<m->>representations of ritualized sacrifice, makes explicit the analogy between ancient and modern cults of “sacred” violence and game playing, thereby giving the festival of war a historical pedigree (while also suggesting that such rituals are regularly occurring, timeless, and natural). The three Blackshirts in the center of the composition refer to the Fascist squads, in a celebration of their brutal role in bringing the regime to power. Whereas before the war the Futurists and other interventionists had threatened Italy’s neutralist government with the slogan “War or Revolution,” here the war and Fascist “revolution” are conflated and presented as the virile, lighthearted play of mechanized subjects. Such an aestheticized treatment of violence serves the political purpose of inuring the nation to the quotidian loss of life (of both enemies and patriotic Fascists), while simultaneously allowing for the “heroic” discharge of unmastered, sadistic inner drives. As Marinetti proclaimed in 1919: “We want a spirit of revolt and of war to circulate like impetuous blood in Italian youth. The nation, which has violent origins, can only be strengthened by this double circulation of rushing blood . . .”<sup>14</sup> Depero won a gold medal for *War=Festival* at the 1925 International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris; remarkably, the shocking theme of this work did not disturb the jury.

The Futurist demand for dehumanized, armored forms of subjectivity had already intensified during the war, as exemplified in Marinetti’s 1916 manifesto “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation,” which called for the poetic declaimer to “disappear” in an apotheosis of “mechanical splendor.”<sup>15</sup> In a related development, Marinetti elevated speed from its former status as a new principle of beauty to that of a substitute for religion. If in the past, Christian morality had shaped the moral life and beliefs of individuals, today Marinetti claimed, it was in

conflict with the heroic ethos of war. Echoing Nietzsche, Marinetti exalted the sovereign individual, whose self-legislating autonomy required the death of god. In a manifesto of 1916 titled “The New Religion-Morality of Speed,” Marinetti declared that “Christian morality served to develop man’s inner life. Today it has lost its reason for existing, because it has been emptied of all divinity.”<sup>16</sup> In its stead he celebrated the ego-expanding transcendence afforded by speed: “If prayer means communication with the divinity, running at high speed is a prayer. Holiness of wheels and rails. One must kneel on the tracks to pray to the divine velocity.”<sup>17</sup>

Marinetti’s rejection of Christian morality and anticlericalism held sway even through the social upheavals of the immediate postwar period (although, as we have seen, spiritual themes were already prominent in the works of Balla). They governed his political alliance with Mussolini, which culminated in their standing together for election in 1919 with a platform that demanded the “devaticanization” of Italy.<sup>18</sup> In “Beyond Communism” of 1920, an essay that attempts to come to terms with the rise of an organized left in Italy, with the Communist revolution in Russia, as well as with the defeat of the Futurist/Fascist political platform, Marinetti could still declare: “We want to free Italy from the Papacy, the Monarchy, the Senate, marriage, Parliament. [ . . . ] We want to abolish standing armies, courts, police, and prisons, so that our race of gifted men may be able to develop the greatest number of free, strong, hard-working, innovating, swift men.”<sup>19</sup> By this time, however, taking note of the voting strength of the Catholic Partito Popolare in 1919, Mussolini had opportunistically abandoned his denunciation of the Church as well as that of the monarchy. According to Marinetti, it was this reactionary turn in Mussolini’s political strategy that led him to withdraw from the Fascist Combatants Group in May 1920.<sup>20</sup> As late as 1924, although Marinetti had rejoined the Party, he reminded Mussolini of the glorious days of 1919, when Fascism had stood for individual

freedom against the Church and the monarchy. His remarks at the Milan Futurist Congress of November 1924, organized in his honor, were addressed to the Fascist leader:

<EXT>With a gesture of force by now indispensable, liberate yourself from Parliament. Restore to Fascism and to Italy the marvelous spirit of 1919: disinterested, ardent, antisocialist, anticlerical, antimonarchical. Concede to the Monarchy only its provisional unifying function; refute that of suffocating and drugging the greatest, the most spirited, and the most just Italy of tomorrow. [. . .] Crush the anti-Italian, clerical opposition of Don Sturzo [of the Partito Popolare], the anti-Italian socialist opposition of [Filippo] Turati [. . .] with an iron-willed, dynamic aristocracy of armed thought, to supplant the existing demagoguery of arms without thought.<sup>21</sup>

The transformation of the Futurist machine aesthetic during this postwar period of political uncertainty and realignment is crystallized in the “Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art,” published by Ivo Pannaggi and Vinicio Paladini in June 1922.<sup>22</sup> The authors declare the machine to be the distinctive feature of modern life and the source of new and vital sensations: “Gears purify our eyes from the fog and from indecisiveness, everything is *sharper, decisive, aristocratic, distinct*. We feel mechanically and we feel ourselves constructed of steel, we too machines, we too mechanized by the atmosphere.”<sup>23</sup> Despite their Communist affiliations, Pannaggi and Paladini emphasize the aristocratic quality of the sensations they seek, just as Marinetti had extolled “a dynamic aristocracy of armed thought” in his appeal to Mussolini cited above. For Paladini in particular, embracing the machine aesthetic in life and in art signified the hygienic overthrow of a putrefying bourgeois world order, and of the intelligentsia that sustained



it. Paladini's enthusiasm for revolution is strongly colored by revulsion toward what he regarded as the abjection of official art, and his desire to create a "noble" race:

<EXT>We want a new world, not a transition. Transitions are always disgusting and are degenerations and perversions. Destroy everything or putrefy in the cerebral miasma of the capitalists.

What today is the pride of the ruling class, and of the intelligentsia who move in its orbit, must be thrown off like a decomposing cadaver. We must destroy the glories of official art if we want a new, aristocratic and noble race that Communism must give us.<sup>24</sup>

The artist's utopian desire to synthesize his political and artistic goals demands the total destruction of existing society to clear a space for the emergence of a virile, mechanized man of steel, resistant to the corrosive (indeed cadaverous) effects of desire and sentiment. One may also speculate that insistence on the "aristocratic and noble" character of the man/machine hybrid functions to allay anxiety that the mechanized world of the future (whether Communist or Fascist) will have a leveling effect, and that its subjects will be mere automatons devoid of all individuality and distinction. <fig. 7.5 about here>

Two drawings accompanied the "Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art," as first published in *La Nuova Lacerba* (fig. 7.5); Paladini contributed a "proletarian" man/machine constructed of rods, gears, a flywheel, cylinders, and other machine parts, while Pannaggi provided an image of a work station composed of similar elements. If Paladini and Pannaggi shared Marinetti's vision of an aristocratic new machine culture, this was due to their fascination with the machine's promise of allowing men to transcend the desires and limitations of the body.

Paladini's proletarian man is already a Nietzschean superman: built of steel, he will never experience fatigue, weakness, or nostalgia. Nor will "feminine" sentiment or desire ever cloud his vision.<sup>25</sup> He is conceived as a conduit of energy, with gears ready to engage other gears, and cylinders leading to other mechanical elements; although he remains a center or node of action, he is implicitly connected to the larger dynamic apparatus (Communist society). If Paladini's proletarian man is one worker among many, the artist does not emphasize the productive or collective task to be carried out, but only the construction of a new, postbourgeois type. Attention is focused on the body, its metallization, standardized anonymity, and fragmentation into distinct though interconnected parts, and the interchangeability of these parts with the mechanical tools they engage. Yet the irrational basis of this image surfaces if one considers the impossible conjunction of disparate machine parts, whose function can only be aesthetic and ideological. <fig. 7.6 about here>

Paladini's proletarian finds his mirror image in *Mechanical Rhythms*, an industrial landscape painted the same year (fig. 7.6). Conceived as the property of the worker, Paladini's factory represents the site of revolutionary struggle and the means of achieving material happiness. In an essay titled "The Intellectual Revolt" of 1922, the twenty-one-year-old Paladini exalted the machine and factory as allies of the liberated proletarian:

<EXT>Polished steel and molded bolts, from the factories, source of our modern life and our great revolt.

We love the tranquil movements of flywheels and locomotives with all our boundless passion, just as the proletariat will love them once they are no longer the property of the capitalists and cease to be instruments of exploitation, to become

wonderful machines that will work to improve the material well-being of the new humanity.<sup>26</sup>

Like the landscape it depicts, this work is assembled out of familiar mechanical forms: factory smokestacks, girders, the repeated pitched roofs of industrial buildings, and simplified walls that echo the zigzag pattern of hills and sky. Paladini's technique emphasizes precisely rendered flat or graduated tones, although some atmospheric effects and interpenetrating planes still appear, especially in the grays, blues, and tans of the sky traversed by shafts of light. *Mechanical Rhythms* seems inspired primarily by the example of Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant's Purism, by Fernand Léger's related works, and by Juan Gris's Cubist still lifes; it may even bear the distant traces of Picasso's *Factories at Horta de Ebro* of 1909. Its subdued, silvery, tan, gray, light blue, and black color scheme; restrained brushwork; and rhythmic play of abstract patterns across the surface could not be more different from Boccioni's earlier factory images.<sup>27</sup> In a subsequent commentary on the machine aesthetic of 1923, Paladini clarified that the art he envisioned favored cold, eternal, and metallic geometries, rather than the radiant "liquefaction" of forms achieved in Impressionism. The surprising term he invoked to describe this Futurist art of "indestructible equilibrium" was *classical*.<sup>28</sup>

Paladini published his remarks of 1923 in the May issue of *Noi*, edited by Enrico Prampolini. They appeared as a rejoinder to the greatly revised version of the "Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art" of 1922, which Prampolini also published in the same issue, adding his own signature to that of the original two authors. In appropriating Pannaggi and Paladini's earlier manifesto, without their express permission, Prampolini sought to redefine its proposals, bringing them more in line with his own current thinking, and pointing to the direction the

Futurist machine aesthetic would take in the mid-1920s with the rise of Fascism. Between the publication of the original and later versions of the manifesto, Mussolini had accomplished his March on Rome, and had installed himself in power. Significantly, the later version is dated Rome, October 1922, no doubt in order to associate it with this “revolutionary” event.

Prampolini’s version registers the impact of Fascism’s victory in its turn toward more mystical and mystifying language, seeing in the machine “the most exuberant symbol of the mysterious human creative force.” The manifesto also clearly refutes the productivist thrust of Fascist (and Communist) ideology, in favor of a more heroic and “disinterested” relation to the machine. In terms that suggest the intervention of Marinetti, the manifesto declares: “We Futurists demand that the Machine tear itself away from its practical function, rise up in the spiritual and disinterested life of art, and become a lofty and fertile muse.”<sup>29</sup> It was not enough to celebrate the precise and cold metallic harmonies of the machine, as described by Pannaggi and Paladini; for Prampolini (and Marinetti), one must penetrate beyond external appearances to express the machine’s lyrical “interiority,” its “spirit.” The irony that attended Marinetti’s 1916 description of the “new religion-morality of speed” disappeared under the pressure of the new political reality. The “Rome, October 1922” version of “L’arte meccanica” concludes by elevating the machine to an object of religious (nonproductive, nonrationalized) veneration; it echoed the Fascist quest for spirituality and hierarchy without, however, embracing Fascist support for the Church. If prewar Futurism had emphasized man’s mastery of the machine he had “fathered” in order to enhance his own power and godlike status, postwar Futurism saw in the machine an autonomous, mysterious entity to whose authoritarian demands the human subject must submit: “The Machine is the new divinity that illuminates, dominates, distributes its gifts, and punishes, in this our Futurist time that is devoted to the great Religion of the New.”<sup>30</sup> That “this our

Futurist time” was consonant with the new reality of Fascism and its own demands for a new divinity to be located, however, primarily in the State is also clear. As one young Fascist put it: “Fascism was presented to me, and I presented it to myself, as a total concept, a religion, a divinity all its own: the State, with its own supreme worship; . . . The State was all. It was the divinity to which everything should be sacrificed.”<sup>31</sup>

Not all Futurists, however, regarded the divinization of the machine as a utopian development. Ruggero Vasari’s play *L’angoscia delle macchine* (*The Anguish of Machines*), written in 1923 and published two years later, exemplifies the growing ambivalence toward the machine that emerged in the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> As the author, who was active as a playwright, poet, and art dealer in Italy and Germany, and who edited the Berlin journal *Der Futurismus*, explained in a letter of 1931, “I go beyond Futurism because although on the one hand I exalt the machine . . . on the other I experience horror! And why? Because mechanization destroys the spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Despite Vasari’s unorthodox views, Marinetti praised *L’angoscia delle macchine*, calling it “one of Futurism’s most important works,” and Pannaggi designed the cover of the published text.<sup>34</sup> As noted by Roberto Tessari, the play realizes the movement’s dream of a fully technological planet from which women (and hence eros and the human “spirit”) are banished.<sup>35</sup> Vasari’s text offers this scenario: “The scene is dominated by the Machine-Brain, a synthesis of the thought of three despots, Bacal, Singar and Tonchir. Men, the condemned, and machines follow the orders given by this machine that transmits the will of the sovereigns.”<sup>36</sup> Eventually, however, the Machine-Brain usurps the role of autonomous master, to demand the subordination, and ultimately the self-annihilation, of its prisoners. Tonchir, the engineer/scientist who aspires to become a god, is the only one of the triumvirate of despots to suffer the “anguish” of his dehumanization. When the women return aboard a fleet of airplanes to request hospitality and

the right to bear “new heroes,” they are massacred by Bacal in an “amazing spectacle” with musical accompaniment. The women’s ambassador, Lipa, who has been taken hostage, watches their destruction on a screen. She then visits Tonchir in his laboratory to ask about the ultimate purpose of the creation of a mechanized universe. Her colloquy with Tonchir causes him to recognize that submission to the machine<m->his god and only offspring<m->requires his own suicide. For Vasari, the fetishization of the machine, and the longed-for fusion of flesh and metal, leads inexorably to the destruction of humanity: “Tonchir. (Kneels religiously and kisses the Machine. His voice chokes with emotion) My creature . . . my beloved . . .<m->I am going forever. You are the victorious one<m->I the vanquished. Your spirit is of metal<m->mine<m->regrettably human!”<sup>37</sup> Tonchir’s death, however, results in the implosion of the Machine-Brain, which in turn causes a delirium of malfunctioning robots, flames, and sputtering noises. As Günter Berghaus observes, it is unclear who will survive this apocalypse, and whether the women, who symbolize the human spirit and nature, will return to create a more balanced, if less exalted and virile, society.<sup>38</sup> In an interview of 1925, Vasari affirmed that he regarded Tonchir as a tragic hero, who lives the agonizing conflict between “his mechanized and human souls.”

<EXT>The sentence of condemnation is the categorical imperative of his superhuman heroism. He falls and draws the whole mechanical world with him into the abyss . . . my hero does not fall because of his impotence (he has, in fact, already risen beyond himself), but because his creation, his artificial, superhuman and anti-human world, is in disharmony with the great Everything.<sup>39</sup>

<fig. 7.7 about here>

Pannaggi’s watercolor sketches and one photomontage for the costumes and sets of

*L'angoscia delle macchine*, made on his own initiative and liked by Vasari, were not realized when the play was performed in Paris in April 1927 (with Constructivist sets by Alexandra Exter's student, Vera Idelson, and music by Silvio Mix). A photograph taken by Pannaggi offers a view of *Condemned to the Machine No. AG/H2*, the only costume to be constructed, as worn by the Russian dancer Mikhailov at Bragaglia's Teatro degli Indipendenti in Rome, on 27 April 1927 (fig. 7.7).<sup>40</sup> Mikhailov's performance, which took place during an intermezzo in a program of works by Guillaume Apollinaire and Leonida Repaci, was introduced by Marinetti and accompanied by the music of Igor Stravinsky.<sup>41</sup> As shown in the photograph, Pannaggi's costume completely encases the dancer in mechanical forms that blur the distinctions between machine parts, protective armor, and anonymous prison clothing. Intentionally cumbersome, it only allowed Mikhailov to move in constrained, robotic jerks and staccato rhythms like a machine but hardly a heroic one. A contemporary review described the performance as a mechanical dance in which "a man, half deep-sea diver, half submarine, simulates with slow or frenetic gestures the throbbing life of a machine."<sup>42</sup> Rather than experience the intoxicating thrill of speed or of a multiplied ego, Pannaggi's *Condemned* merely serves the central dynamo that has usurped the will to power. Related designs for the set imagine an electrified mechanical environment in which engineers and the condemned are dwarfed by the machine-gods they designed and constructed.<sup>43</sup> Vasari's stage notes confirm the anti-*superuomo* ethos of his drama, to be enacted by *supermarionettes* in the form of a pantomime. Indeed, they are to move as if commanded by "invisible strings," their instructions received through antenna attached to their headgear.<sup>44</sup> Rather than employ the Futurist literary style of words in freedom to endow his figures with "mechanical splendor," Vasari instructs his actors to deform their words, as a sign of their automatism and estrangement from human spirituality:

<EXT>Interpretation and recitation. Neither stylization, nor naturalism. Rather deformation: they are not men who speak, but supermarionettes, understood not as beautiful and rigid idols, but as cosmic forces, with mechanical dispositions, beyond the appearances and the forms of the spirituality of man. Recitation without emphasis, without declamation, without pathos: but certainly metallic.<sup>45</sup>

Vasari's *Anguish of the Machines* shines a harsh light on Futurist themes in order to contest the divinization of the machine. Yet like the contemporary celebration of the "machine idol," Vasari's fundamentally pessimistic and irrational attitude is driven by anxiety. Just as in the contemporary works of Fillia, Gerardo Dottori, Balla, Benedetta, and other Futurists, here the machine appears as a "cosmic force" that inevitably dominates its worker/subjects. As two sides of a single coin, these attitudes must be interpreted within the historical context of the defeat of Italian Socialism, Fascism's rise to power, and the regime's call for a disciplined, patriotic workforce to achieve its goal of accelerated industrial and military production. Even Vasari's impassioned defense of what he viewed as an authentic, free human spirit is inflected by the regime's appropriation of spirituality to ideological ends. Although he rejected Futurism's cult of the machine, he remained to a large extent captured by the terms of its discourse.

As Emilio Gentile has observed, during the period from 1923 to 1926 the government strongly emphasized the religious impulse within Fascism as a means of legitimizing its monopoly on patriotism, and therefore its claims to power.<sup>46</sup> The State promoted, in the words of its most influential ideologue, Giovanni Gentile, "A cult born of the whole soul of the nation."<sup>47</sup> Despite certain points of resistance, by the mid-1920s most Futurists sought to define themselves



as prototypical Fascists, and to synthesize elements of their more libertarian and anticlerical program with the overtly spiritual and historicist cultural ideals of the regime. In the remaining part of this chapter I focus on the work of Fillia and on the Futurist leader's wife, Benedetta Cappa Marinetti, as paradigmatic of the contradictions and shifts that the embrace of Fascism imposed on Futurist artists. Yet the resurgence of spiritual themes, and even of Catholic religious imagery in their work of the later 1920s and 30s may also be interpreted as a response to the failure of Fascism to create an ideal world. The paintings of Fillia and Benedetta suggest a longing for an otherworldly utopia that Fascist Futurism could point to, but never realize.

Luigi Colombo, who worked under the pseudonym of Fillia (his mother's maiden name), exemplifies the gradual transition from a "left" or politically revolutionary position in the early 1920s, to an enthusiastic embrace of Fascism by the later 20s. Like Paladini and Pannaggi, he was associated with Communist circles in the early postwar period. In the spring of 1922, he contributed to *I + I + I = I. Dynamite. Proletarian Poetry. Red + Black*, a small collection of free-verse poems published anonymously by the Turin Institute of Proletarian Culture (a section of the International Proletkult of Moscow).<sup>48</sup> These poems exhort workers to revolutionary violence, both in order to avenge the injustices of the past and to achieve a society of equals. The demand for a new society, however, must be founded on the destruction of the past and the creation of a heroic collective will. One poem declares: "The atavistic cowardice of the slaves will change into a formidable dictatorship and we will burn and destroy everything that is linked with the present and the past."<sup>49</sup> In this brief moment of alliance between Communists and Futurists in Turin, the authors of *I + I + I = I* defined themselves as "Against egoism and against religion."<sup>50</sup> Machines, weapons, and electricity appear throughout the poems as metaphors for the power to destroy and create anew, to be seized by the proletariat. "The

instruments of your work are your weapons / the tools that you employ daily / to maintain in luxury / in vice / in pleasure / the parasites / (and in misery your children) / serve for their death.”<sup>51</sup> Despite this emphasis on class war, the authors also extolled the exuberance of youth and a revived, healthy patriotism in terms that would find favor with emerging Fascism.

All such calls to violence, and the association of machines with the arms of workers in open revolt, vanished by the mid-1920s along with the fragile alliance of the Turin Futurists and the Communist Proletkult.<sup>52</sup> Precluded by Fascism (and by his own evolving ideological stance) from promoting the fusion of proletarian and avant-garde ideals, Fillia now aligned himself with the attitudes adumbrated by Prampolini’s 1923 version of the “Manifesto of Futurist Mechanical Art,” in which the machine becomes an object, not of violent revolution, but of cultic (and erotic) veneration. In 1925, Fillia published a manifesto titled “The Mechanical Idol,” in which he asserted that the aesthetic of the machine, “adored and considered a symbol,” had spiritual repercussions beyond the realm of art.<sup>53</sup> Understood as the “synthesis and summation of nature,” the machine held forth the promise of completing human evolution in the realization of a new world without lack: “We can therefore believe in a whole material and moral complex that will finally resolve human evolution with a definitive perfection.”<sup>54</sup> Drawing perhaps on his earlier political affiliations, Fillia further argued that the machine aesthetic—more powerful and absolute than existing particular traditions—would be collective, impersonal, and universal, and therefore beyond the monopoly of any State.<sup>55</sup> The artist, endowed with the power of formal interpretation, would give concrete shape to spiritual ideals that emanated directly from the people. The “mechanical idol” would have an immediate and essential connection to society, fulfilling its dreams and aspirations. <fig. 7.8 about here>

Fillia’s *Bicycle: Fusion of Landscape, Mechanical Idol* of 1925 (fig. 7.8), pictures the

imagined synthesis of mechanical and natural forces. In his notes on this painting, Fillia emphasizes the fusion of the rider and his machine, an instance of the man/machine hybrid, and its function as the creative center of the image: “the machine and its rider represent an indivisible complex of mechanical forces that dominate the center of the picture: the volume and colors of the landscape depart from this center to expand according to the form of velocity.”<sup>56</sup> The bicycle/rider motif generates a set of overlapping concentric circles that visualize waves of expanding energy, while ordered rows of trees align diagonally with radiating force lines. A church, with its emblematic tower, appears in the distance at the upper left; its presence suggests an affinity between the function of the new idol and traditional religion. <fig. 7.9 about here>

Similarly, in *Mechanical Landscape*, also of 1925 (fig. 7.9), a centrally placed machine (evoking a turbine) floats in space, usurping the position and role of religious imagery. This strangely humanoid mechanical being hovers over a terrain that seems barren, although electric wires transmit the power generated by the “idol” to locations beyond the frame. In both paintings, then, the machine functions as a mystical godlike source of infinitely expanding energy that dominates and reorders the traditional landscape, transforming its irregular organic forms and rhythms into precisely rendered geometrical patterns. The softer, more fluid and decorative forms of Impressionism, now construed as feminine, are rejected in favor of what we might call “multiplied nature,” a mechanized analogue of the “multiplied man.” Both are taken to exemplify the new spiritual sensibility wrought by the advent of the machine, in which the traditionally understood human subject and its relation to the world was superseded:

<EXT>The “religion of velocity” and the “mechanical sensuality” clearly indicate the spiritual factors that, beyond simple aesthetic form, inevitably modify our thought and

our senses. We affirm therefore that the MACHINE annuls the old spiritual and human world in its entirety to create another, superhuman and mechanical, where MAN loses his own individual superiority to merge with the environment.<sup>57</sup>

Despite this assertion of a desire for an oceanic experience of fusion with forces superior to the self, Fillia also continued to emphasize the magnified power of the man/machine hybrid over the environment, at times invoking “violent possession of the atmosphere.”<sup>58</sup> A hierarchical order, in which the mechanical idol (or the man/machine hybrid) dominated its world, was always preserved. Moreover, the viewer was encouraged to imagine the psychic accord of man and machine, attributing spiritual significance to his experience, as an instance of the technological sublime. According to Fillia, the viewer of *Bicycle* would not receive the impression of a merely speeding object, but of the “spiritual importance” of velocity on the rider. The image, understood as a rigorously constructed machine in its own right, was to be centered and expansive simultaneously, and to inspire a strange form of devotion mingled with “an atmosphere of sensuality”<sup>59</sup> the new virile, metallic sensuality Fillia also celebrated in his contemporary novels.<sup>59</sup> In his 1925 collection of poetry, *Lussuria radioelettrica: Poesie meccaniche* (*Radioelectric Lust: Mechanical Poems*), Fillia treated this familiar Futurist theme with a deliberately ironic, even absurdist tone. One of the poems, “Futurist Adultery,” centers on a “he” who betrays a “she” by running off with “the thin, feminine and extremely seductive body of a metallic bicycle.”<sup>60</sup> But the effort to defeat the claims of sexual desire, to become more machinelike, cold, and metallic, was real enough. Even Fillia’s irony might be understood in this light as a means of achieving emotional detachment. The “spiritual” union of man and bicycle implied the sublimation of erotic feeling and its transformation into an ego-shattering experience

of dispersal that was simultaneously expansive and heroizing. Hence the unstable oscillation between, and fusion of, the opposed meanings of “idol”<m->religious and erotic<m->in these works.

Fillia enhanced the religious connotations of his machine idols through stylistic references to selected examples of the spiritual art of the past. In *Mechanical Landscape*, the static frontality of the centralized machine, its abstracted background, and its rigid geometry evoke not only the world of modern mechanized forms but also the formal character of a Byzantine icon, in however reductive and schematic a way. Even the glowing semicircular orange forms around the head suggest a halo. Such allusions were clearly intentional, despite Fillia’s ostensibly secular, even blasphemous subject. In a 1931 essay titled “Futurist Spirituality,” Fillia declared that only the arts of Egypt, the High Medieval period, and Byzantium were alive in the present because they had been created in an atmosphere of pure religiosity. By contrast, Greco-Roman and Renaissance art aimed only for immediate sensuous beauty and idealization, and therefore represented spiritual decadence:

<EXT>Egypt and the High Middle Ages are for us the living exemplars of History; we find greater health in the breath of Memphis and Byzantium than in the breath of Athens and of Florence.

This sensibility of ours does not have revolutionary significance because everyone knows that the first Christians hated and forgot the civilization of the Greeks and Romans, whose character did not accord with their renovated spirit. It was only in the “quattrocento” that Greco-Roman art was discovered and that consequently the values of the Middle Ages fell out of general favor. Today, because we believe we are ready for

another great religious period, we understand our sympathy for the Byzantines and our indifference toward the whole of the Renaissance.<sup>61</sup>

In Fillia's view, one could admire the Madonnas of Raphael, but not pray before them, for they were devoid of mystery and of divinity.<sup>62</sup> Rather than see in the machine the culmination of reason and of streamlined, functional forms, as other advocates of the machine aesthetic did (including most prominently the French Purists and Le Corbusier),<sup>63</sup> Fillia emphasized its irrational and transcendent qualities:

<EXT>To sum up: mechanical civilization . . . is not a purely material phenomenon. Mechanical civilization generates an atmosphere of mystery, of the unknown, of the unpredictable; it has all the characteristics of a force superior to all human logic that directs and dominates our life.<sup>64</sup>

Such a view clearly was intended to divorce the machine from its role as a tool of material production within industrial capitalism, under the control of the managerial class. Perceived as mysterious and unpredictable, the machine also bore no relation to those human beings who had conceived its structure, assembled its parts, or made necessary repairs in order to accomplish precise, rationally defined tasks. (This is in distinct contrast to the views of Le Corbusier, who emphasized "the statement of the problem and its realization" in the construction of the machine and its aesthetic qualities.<sup>65</sup>) As such, the machine was also liberated from any connection to class struggle or to the reality of oppressive work conditions, and hence from the materialist theory that provided an analysis of these conditions. If the machine appeared as a "superior"

force to the workers, “dominating and directing” their lives mysteriously, this might also be seen as fully consonant with an ideology that wished to render the social relations of production invisible. Such an ideology took on greater urgency in the years following the war in Italy, when the threatening example of the 1917 Communist revolution in the Soviet Union was keenly felt. The advent of Fascism, with its rhetoric of “producers” (which blurred the distinction between classes), and its corporative model, also served to mask the inequity of class relations—although along somewhat different lines. Unlike Fascism, Futurism did not extol the virtues of productive labor, but it did seek to fetishize the machine, overestimating its symbolic value in order to create a new deity for its time.

Although Fillia’s veneration of the “mechanical idol” is consistent with Futurism’s “heroic,” nonutilitarian enthusiasm for the machine, it still seems astonishing in the context of its long-standing anticlericalism. It also reveals the extent to which postwar Futurism had abdicated its revolutionary demand to destroy the museums and the aura that attended traditional works of art. Whereas before the war Futurism had defined itself as an oppositional social force, the movement now strove to identify with the regime, and to reassert the ritual function of art. But even in the prewar period, many Futurists, including Marinetti, Balla, and Boccioni, had been fascinated by occult science. If the dogmas of the Catholic Church, its authority, and its humanitarian ethics had been rejected, the quest for experience of otherworldly mysteries had not. This undercurrent of Futurist thought became more overt after the war, as the Futurists found themselves increasingly barred from a political role within the regime, and as the spiritual life of the Fascist became a matter of concern to government ideologues.

By 1929, at the time of Fascism’s Concordat with the Catholic Church, Fillia’s art became more manifestly linked to the religious art of the past. Significantly, 1929 is also the year

Futurism issued its first manifesto of *aeropittura*, or aerial painting, dedicated to expressing the exhilarating sensations and perspectives afforded by flight.<sup>66</sup> (Fillia and Benedetta were among the signatories of this manifesto when it was reissued in 1931.) The theme of aviation as a symbol of visionary leadership and military prowess also began to be more vigorously promoted in Fascist propaganda at this time, with Mussolini himself often photographed or depicted as a triumphant pilot/conqueror. Tropes long associated with Futurism and its early cult of flight, but also circulating in popular culture, were easily fused with those of the Fascist regime. Beginning in 1929, for example, *L'Ala d'Italia*, the national journal of Fascist aviation, put a winged ax on its cover.<sup>67</sup> A similar commingling of Futurist and Fascist symbols can be discerned in much contemporary *aeropittura*, which often linked aviation both to thrilling sensations of speed and power and to mystical transcendence. <fig. 7.10 about here>

In *Spirituality of the Aviator* of circa 1929 (fig. 7.10), the machine appears only obliquely, through the theme of flight. Whereas some Futurist aerial painters emphasized the technical feats made possible by the airplane, often shown soaring above a well-known site while executing spectacular stunts, Fillia's painting seeks to convey an otherworldly vision of the psychosomatic transformation of the aviator. Not surprisingly, the hard-edged geometries of the earlier machine aesthetic have been abandoned. Just as Fillia's mid-1920s style owed a great deal to Purism and the international machine aesthetic, by the later 20s his work had absorbed the more organic and fluid forms adopted by Léger, Ozenfant, and Le Corbusier in response to a growing loss of confidence in the machine.<sup>68</sup> Fillia's aviator is a loosely configured biomorphic shape set into a semitransparent, tilted plane; his central aperture may be an attempt to visualize the idea that transcendent beings are simultaneously physically present and dematerialized, having permeable bodies with indeterminate or fluid boundaries. Cloudlike forms rush through



this circular opening, carrying in their stream a small group of simple buildings—the embryo or nucleus of a city that appears almost to be born from the aviator’s mystical body. Architecture played a crucial role in Fillia’s dream of realizing a new spirituality throughout these years, and he was in contact with most of the major architects of the period. His essay of 1930, “Relations between Futurism and Fascism,” asserts: “Architecture is the summit of the power, the solidity, the richness of the work and genius of a people. For this reason we Futurists maintain the absolute necessity for Fascism to have its own constructive physiognomy.”<sup>69</sup> Here, as in other cultural debates, Fillia found himself equivocating between the notion that any truly spiritual art would have universal resonance, and the imperative, both Futurist and Fascist, that it nonetheless affirm its unique Italian origins; it must spring from the “genius of a people,” determined more by presumed racial characteristics, climate, available materials, and technology than by tradition, although the latter also played a role. In 1931, Fillia published an anthology of architects’ writings, designs, and photographs of important architectural projects, titled *La nuova architettura*, to demonstrate the universality of the modern aesthetic while nonetheless championing Antonio Sant’Elia as a pioneer.<sup>70</sup> In this and other Futurist texts written during this period, history returns as a mode of self-reflexive affirmation; the recent past is adduced to promote the central role played by Futurists both in the founding of Fascism and in the invention of by now “universal” avant-garde practices. The modernist machine aesthetic in architecture could be understood as both Italian and cosmopolitan if its progenitor were the Futurist Sant’Elia.

In 1931 Marinetti published his truly strange “Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art” (later cosigned by Fillia) on the occasion of the International Exhibition of Sacred Christian Art held in Padua, with the participation of Fillia, Pippo Oriani, Mino Rosso, and Gerardo Dottori. In an

effort to negotiate Futurism's intransigent rejection of religion and religious art, and its new foray into this traditional territory, it opens with the premise that one need not practice the Catholic religion in order to create masterpieces of sacred art. Yet Marinetti declares that only the Futurists, who had developed an art of simultaneity, could successfully visualize the mystic dogmas of the Church, including the Holy Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, and the Crucifixion.<sup>71</sup> <fig. 7.11 about here>

Fillia's religious themes of the early 1930s revolve around the image of the Holy Family, usually hovering in cosmic space next to a metallic tower. The opened profile of this tower frequently reveals a layered cityscape evoking an archaeological view into a historical continuum. In *The Holy Family* of 1931 (fig. 7.11), we find fragments of skyscrapers clustered together with part of a Roman aqueduct, a classical temple facade, and domed structures that probably allude to the vernacular shrines of Libya<m->Italy's colony in North Africa. References to the continuity of the past in the present coexist with references to the geographical range of the regime's dream of a Mediterranean empire. In other works, a more evolutionary schema is at work, so that Futurist architecture represents both the synthesis and culmination of all past architectural styles. In a 1931 letter to a fellow Futurist, Fillia explained that in his painting *Madonna and Child*, all the figurative elements were enclosed within the sphere of the world, "upon whose profile appear, as if by divine intuition, the constructive lines of the churches (from the cavern of the catacombs to Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance architecture, etc. up to the architecture of Futurist churches."<sup>72</sup> Rather than suppress or forget the past, here Fillia invokes it in order to refer to the continuity of Christian religious architecture, whatever its specific geographic or temporal form. He thereby seeks to justify the quest for a contemporary architecture that would be suitable to "the imperial religion" (the title

of another painting of 1931).

In *The Holy Family* and related works, material juxtapositions also establish the harmonious marriage of past and present: a pyramid of chiseled stone represents the “rock” on which the Church was metaphorically built, and possibly Mt. Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, while smooth aluminum and a polished red circle suggest the language of modern industry and as well as a mystical geometry. In his essay “Sacred Futurist Architecture” of 1932, Fillia called for the use of modern materials, mentioning especially glass, iron, steel, aluminum, reinforced concrete, and crystal. Such materials, he claimed, could be interpreted lyrically, and could constitute the modern equivalent of more traditional, noble materials. The modern materials were not to displace the older ones, but to be added wherever they could fulfill a new aesthetic or structural demand. Their use would obviate the need for simulacra of noble materials when obtaining them proved difficult or costly. Arguing that counterfeit materials were unacceptable in religious architecture, Fillia advocated the use of iron, aluminum and glass in order to enhance a sense of spiritual purity.<sup>73</sup> Yet he seemed untroubled by the painterly simulation of different material substances. His paintings of this period present the paradox of constructing a semiabstract language of pure form from illusionistically rendered, textured and polished elements.

Fillia intended a specific use of color and forms and a painterly evocation of materials to enhance the expressive power of his religious themes. In *The Holy Family*, a vibrant red circle plays a prominent visual and symbolic role. In a text of 1925 titled “Spiritual Alphabet,” Fillia had established what he believed to be a precise color code, in which red stood for “creation<m>thought<m>force-domination<m>originality<m>intelligence.”<sup>74</sup> If the color red represents creativity as well as force-domination, it may allude both to God’s original creativity and to the

dominating power of the regime. The circle in *The Holy Family* is a similarly multivalent form, symbolizing unity, perfection, and expansiveness in both a religious and secular sense. Marinetti had employed the motif of the expanding circle to articulate a notion of the ideal shape of the patriotic nation in his essay of 1920, *Beyond Communism*. According to Marinetti: “The affective circle of our Italian heart expands and embraces the fatherland, that is, the greatest maneuverable number of ideals, interests, and private and common needs linked together without contrasts.”<sup>75</sup> In *The Holy Family*, the red circle conjoins this ideal of patriotic unity and expansion with the essential unity of God’s creativity in making the world. The theme of the Holy Family is further fused with that of the Crucifixion. The mutually reinforcing ideals of family, sacrifice and redemption adumbrated here draw on Christian iconography to support the imperial ideology of the regime. <fig. 7.12 about here>

Finally, in *The Adoration* of 1931 (fig. 7.12), these themes are synthesized with an allusion to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Fillia draws on his color alphabet and on Christian symbolism to suggest that the red sphere, emblem of the spirit, of pure creativity, and of the nation, will spring forth from the dark tomb of sacrifice and death. A brilliant, golden glow emanates from the central, iconic elements, which seem both to rest securely on an absent ground and to hover mysteriously in cosmic space. The work thus is simultaneously hyperreal<m->its various elements depicted in a dramatically illusionistic mode<m->and fantastic, like a sudden apparition of divine revelation.

It is evident from the title that Fillia intended viewers to respond to this work with devotion. As such, the image was meant to have a ritual or cult value, that is, to serve as an icon for religious (rather than merely aesthetic) contemplation and to be invested with “aura.” In 1936, Walter Benjamin famously defined the aura of the ritual work of art through the natural

metaphor of the mountain, which is perceived as distant no matter how close it might be.<sup>76</sup> For Benjamin, the spatial and temporal category of distance was a way of describing the phenomenon of “inapproachability,” which preserves social and religious hierarchies.<sup>77</sup> In contrast, the impulse of the contemporary (revolutionary) masses was to favor a new perception of the “universal equality of things,” by bringing them closer, spatially and humanly.<sup>78</sup> To this end, Benjamin argued, the masses accepted the mechanically reproduced image (prints, photography, film), in which the aura of the unique, historical original was inevitably lost.

Fillia’s *The Adoration*, with its own metaphorical “mountain,” aspires to function like a traditional cult object, to promote a sense of authority, inviolability, and truth. As such it reinstates what for Benjamin were “a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery—concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense.”<sup>79</sup> Not surprisingly, despite Fillia’s celebration of the machine and of modern materials, most of his religious works are executed in a traditional medium—oil on canvas. They reclaim historical precedent and the ritual function of art not only through their subjects but also through this return to the format and medium of the unique easel painting, intended to serve as a devotional image.<sup>80</sup>

Ironically, however, important members of the Church, including Pope Pius XI, were critical of the effort to create a Futurist sacred art. In a discourse of 28 October 1932, the Pope declared that these works “do not recall and make present the sacred because they disfigure it to the point of caricature, and frequently to the point of actual and true profanation.”<sup>81</sup> Although these remarks were prompted in part by the Pope’s aversion to avant-garde art, his suspicion of Futurist sacred art was not entirely misguided. The transition from Fillia’s earlier machine idols (the term “idol” inevitably suggesting a false god) to the more recent religious imagery must

have seemed opportunistic, and potentially ironic. Arguably, the Futurist empyrean, populated by vibrant red spheres and floating atmospheric crucifixes and navigated by “spiritual aviators” and other semiabstract figures whose identity was not always certain, simply departed too much from Catholic dogma. From the point of view of the Church, religion had not so much been embraced but hopelessly distorted. Alfredo Busa wrote that, “Fortunately this art has been banished by the Church,” and indeed it was not included in the Second Exhibition of Sacred Art in Rome of 1934.<sup>82</sup>

Benedetta’s Futurist paintings of the early and mid-1920s, influenced by the work of her teacher Giacomo Balla as well as by that of Boccioni, also participate in the machine aesthetic, and in particular, celebrate the velocity of trains and boats. *Velocity of a Motorboat* of 1924 departs from Balla’s increasingly abstracted series of speeding race cars (fig. 7.13). Zooming into the distance, her fiery red motorboat generates geometric waves that proliferate across the entire sea. As in certain prewar works picturing the thrill of accelerated movement, here one senses that the world is laid out before the sovereign traveler, who rides on the crest of sparkling blue and yellow waters like a projectile, the wind in his or her face. <fig. 7.13 about here>

Benedetta’s work of the early 1930s, like Fillia’s, seeks a synthesis of aeropittura with a new sense of spirituality and the totalizing order of the Fascist state. The *X* that dominates her painting of circa 1931, *The Great X* (fig. 7.14), was probably inspired by this passage from the “Manifesto of Futurist Aerial Painting”:

<EXT>While airplanes turn, the folds of the vision-fan (green hues + brown hues + diaphanous celestial hues of the atmosphere) close, in order to launch themselves vertically against the vertical formed by the craft and by the earth. This vision-fan

reopens in the form of an *X* during the nosedive, maintaining the intersection of the two angles as the only ground.<sup>83</sup>

If so, the presence of the *X* implies that the painting represents the exhilarating, destabilized optics of a sheer vertical drop through space. Yet Benedetta's work seems too hierarchically organized and static to conform completely to a trope invented by Marinetti, who enjoyed imagining the letters of the alphabet as visual equivalents for specific sensory experiences or emotional states. Although alluding in part to a plunging aerial perspective (though not invoking the speed of a nosedive), the *X* may also refer to the approaching ten-year anniversary of the March on Rome and the enormous exhibition planned to celebrate the occasion in Rome. Since Marinetti served on the planning committee for this exhibition, we can assume that Benedetta was well aware of its aesthetic program. The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution adopted the *X* as its special symbol.<sup>84</sup> The *X* or Roman numeral ten, links modern Fascism to the Imperial language of Romanitas, thereby alluding to Mussolini's pretensions to Roman imperial glory, and to the State's adoption of a new revolutionary calendar beginning with the 1922 March on Rome. As Jeffrey Schnapp has observed, the *X* also associates the Fascist revolution with Christian sacrifice, the *X* of Christ's cross.<sup>85</sup> The facade of the exhibition was flanked by two symbolic six-meter-tall black *X*s, mounted on red boxes; the visitor who climbed the central stairway to enter an imposing arcade would finally have approached the Mostra's doorway, dominated by the three jutting *X*s; another *X* appeared on the back cover of the exhibition guidebook where it overlapped a pattern of expanding verbal cries of "DU-CE DU-CE"; and an *X* was suspended from the ceiling of one of the exhibition's rooms, the Hall of Honor, where it presided over the visitors. <fig. 7.14 about here>

Benedetta's *X* also hovers high in space in order to structure an aerial view of a futuristic city thereby conflating the perspective of the leader/aviator with spiritual transcendence. The junction of the *X* is pierced by a slender vertical projection, recalling a church spire, which links the lower earthly domain with the heavens in a single ascending movement. If we peer down into the aperture that opens up below us, we glimpse a fragment of the modern city—clean, efficient, its severe, metallic-gray geometry enlivened only by red and yellow linear patterns and lights. Mysteriously, it is unpopulated, without even a tram or automobile to signal human habitation. Floating light-filled spheres, which evoke Dante's Paradise, pervade the higher plane at left, while on the right side, vaguely defined figures seem suspended in ether. Thus Benedetta's *X* divides her painting into opposing but complementary realms: the material world of the state below, and above, a heavenly vision of luminous spheres and ascending souls, perhaps martyrs of the First World War or the Fascist Revolution.<sup>86</sup> As in Fillia's work, architecture expresses the ideal union of the "two cities": an earthly "Rome" redeemed as a purified urban domain of clean, rationalized forms including an emblematic church spire, and the transcendent spiritual community of the blessed, who are understood to have sacrificed their lives to achieve the new, harmonious, Fascist order.

The 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution had a circular room called the Sacramarium dedicated to these martyrs, around whom a cult had sprung up. At the center of this chamber rose a metallic cross, inscribed with the words *Per la Patria Immortale!* (For the Immortal Fatherland!); the cross was framed and surrounded by six elevated, backlit tiers, bearing the glowing words *presente* (present) one thousand times, to signify the eternal presence of the martyrs in this mystical roll call. As George Mosse has observed, the cult of the *caduti di guerra*, the fallen in war, played an important role in the postwar period. It masked the horror and



finality of death by elevating it to a form of spiritual sacrifice akin to Christ's own death. Within Italian mythology, the cult of the fallen soldier was frequently merged with the cult of the martyrs of the Fascist Revolution: both were deemed necessary to the palingenesis of the Fascist State.<sup>87</sup> This theme would have had special significance for Benedetta, whose father had died of nervous trauma as a result of his experiences in the First World War. In her novel *Le forze umane* (*The Human Forces*), she described his death in terms of Christian sacrifice and redemption.<sup>88</sup> <fig. 7.15 about here>

Benedetta's *Mystical Interpretation of a Landscape* of 1934 (fig. 7.15) derives from a similar impulse to project redemption into the future. The viewer confronts a path lined by two facing columns of strangely elongated, slender trees, which bear mechanical, axlike forms in the place of leaves. These trees recall the solemn procession of *fasci* in Sironi's *Galleria dei fasci* for the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, recasting their monumental forms as organic elements in a landscape setting. Indeed, they suggest that the congealed symbol of the Roman lictorial *fascies*, comprising a bundle of sticks or rods bound together with an ax, could be returned to the language of living, natural form. Benedetta's alley of trees also evokes the postwar practice, promoted by Dario Lupi (a Fascist deputy and undersecretary of public education), of honoring the memory of the fallen by having schoolchildren in towns throughout Italy plant a park or avenue of trees, one for every local soldier killed in the Great War. These parks of remembrance, or "votive woods," were intended as living monuments, which would symbolize the spiritual community of the survivors with those who had died for the nation. Lupi's decree of November 1922 was embraced with enthusiasm; 2,217 remembrance parks or avenues were planted in 8,703 communes by 1924. Another decree of 13 February 1923 required that the trees also be dedicated to the martyrs of the Fascist Revolution, since "the faith that led these to the supreme

sacrifice was the same as that which glorified the holy massacre of those who fell in war.”<sup>89</sup>

The trope of ascending steps, bordered by mystical trees cum fasci, further invites the viewer to engage in a spiritual journey toward salvation guided by Fascist dogma. A related use of steps was a dominant feature of several important monuments to the war dead, including one designed by Giuseppe Terragni in 1932 for the city of Erba Incino, where the processional steps are framed by trees, as well as his simpler *Monument to Roberto Sarfatti*. In Benedetta’s painting, ethereal forms at the far right play a mysterious role, perhaps alluding to the souls of those who are about to embark on a journey, and who must choose between meandering deviant paths or the centered, straight path leading to salvation.

Works such as these by Benedetta and Fillia exemplify what Emilio Gentile has called the “sacralization” of Fascism and its symbols, achieved by linking traditional Christian themes and rites to Fascist ideology.<sup>90</sup> The paintings of both artists, however, also inadvertently reveal the extent to which Fascism had failed to accomplish its goals. As Fillia expressed it in 1931:

<EXT>We understand art to have a spiritual function, to be a means of rendering images of a mysterious superhuman world. Man has a need to detach himself from the earth, to dream, to desire eternal happiness, continually to forget everyday reality.<sup>91</sup>

For Fillia, Benedetta, and others, fulfillment of the desire for social happiness and spiritual transcendence could never be convincingly pictured in the present; instead, it was projected into the future and took the form of mystical faith.

The utopian dream of the Futurists to address and mobilize a mass public to political and cultural revolution through a deliberate rupture with the past was thus absorbed and transfigured.

The early celebration of the machine had been a means of refusing the authority of history and tradition, and indeed of claiming a triumphant power over nature, including the dream of autogenesis. The transformation of the prewar cult of the machine into the cult of the “mechanical idol” of the mid-1920s already signals an important ideological shift; for the idol is seen as mysterious and superhuman, a force of domination over humanity requiring devotion. The desire for mystery that inspired veneration for the new idols, however, did not delay long in rediscovering the old religious symbols as well. Yet the traditional Christian themes invoked by some Futurist paintings in the 1930s also betray a loss of confidence in the availability of that tradition. The melancholic mood, otherworldly atmosphere, and enigmatic meanings of much of this art convey a sense of rupture and confusion even as the art seeks to reaffirm the continuity of a largely mythified past with the Fascist present. The future also is redefined, becoming the locus of dreams and desires that cannot be realized in everyday reality, despite the Fascist aspiration to “actualism,” to rendering visible the process of forging history.<sup>92</sup> That which had been repressed in early Futurism—history, nature, the idealized woman, religion, and the cultic function of the work of art—return with renewed and uncanny force. By the early 1930s, most Futurists affirmed the values of a tradition-bound moral and spiritual order under the sign of the Fascist regime.

<CHN>Chapter 8

<recto or verso>

<CHT>Epilogue

In an autobiographical note written sometime in 1909, Boccioni describes the sense of uncertainty and confusion that modern life aroused in him, leading to a chaotic eclecticism of ideas and a loss of self.

<EXT>This eclecticism this dilettantism disturbed me and made me suffer. They gave me the malaise of he who feels attached to nothing; they gave me the doubt of he who does not believe he will triumph; it [*sic*] gave me apathy, skepticism, the intolerance of the scientific temperament.

I have gathered together all that I have observed of the character of our time and I have found that what renders us uncertain is the lack of a faith, that is, of an indisputable principle. We who are always at the same point before the infinite, lack a new finitude that would be the symbol of our new conception of the infinite.<sup>1</sup>

In Nietzschean tones, Boccioni proclaims that “the concept of God as creator and judge” has been demolished, with the consequence that his representatives on earth are no longer held in high esteem. Inevitably, art too suffers from “these demolitions and proceeds blindly.”<sup>2</sup> In the absence of a secure faith in established forms of religion, society, and art, Boccioni calls for a new belief system to provide the ground for the construction of a great art. Although at times, like most young men of his age, Boccioni professes himself a Socialist, adherence to a political party or credo seems not to have satisfied his quest for indisputable truth. His demand for a

dogma, a transcendental signified erected on the basis of sheer will, echoes Marinetti's own irrational embrace of "artificial optimism."

<EXT>Thus we are without religion, without society, without art.

It is necessary, then, that a philosophy for a new religion rise up, and hence the necessity for a dogma; it is necessary that the ambition and the will of someone or many cause a new society to rise up; as soon as this happens, the era of a great art will be initiated. We have a need to define something in which we will then believe.<sup>3</sup>

As these diary notes reveal, Boccioni experiences the collapse of the traditional structures of faith and society as a series of inner "conflicts" in which his critical faculties constantly "assault" his own previous beliefs. "This I can say, that in me nothing is left standing, nothing. I have uprooted everything and that which still stands is faltering."<sup>4</sup> Most of all, Boccioni fears becoming a skeptic, and losing himself in the dogmas of others.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is the absence of a stable subjective core, a kind of inner scaffolding on which to center and express a dynamically unfolding self, that renders him vulnerable to the strife of competing ideas. Generalizing from the "badly digested" ideas of others, the artist feels himself to be "losing the concept of myself or losing my way temporarily, remaining disarmed and at the mercy of the first comer."<sup>6</sup>

This anxious feeling of being disarmed, vulnerable to attack from within and without, can be understood as a traumatic effect of the destruction of social norms and religious beliefs that attended the rise of industrial, secular modernity. Boccioni's language, full of extreme sentiments and metaphors (even prior to his adherence to Futurism), bespeaks a profound sense of psychic crisis. The artist responds to this crisis with "a spasmodic search for reconstruction,"

guided by the constant internal vigilance of his critical mind.<sup>7</sup> The defensive armor he sought to weld to his ego/edifice, through this act of repressive surveillance, must of necessity correspond to his inner desires and will:

<EXT>All my work of these recent years has been a search for the first cause: in art and hence in life. I have tried to make every act of my will respond as much as possible to the *motives* that I feel construct my inner edifice.

I studied so that the responses to the questions of why that I posed myself would correspond to the architectonic necessities of the sketch that was in me.<sup>8</sup>

This sketch, however, was rough and lacked distinctive features. At times the artist describes the self as a work of art under perilous construction; at others as a natural given, a mysterious entity to be discovered and empowered. Influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer's pessimism and by Friedrich Nietzsche's exhilarating demand for self-transcendence, Boccioni gives voice to ambivalent sentiments:

<EXT>Man, so great, reveals himself to be so impotent that one understands the aspiration to detach oneself; to flee, to augment oneself . . . but perhaps to live and *to create* is the only revenge, the only possible insult against the unknown that has already marked us and from which we cannot escape.<sup>9</sup>

At once great and impotent, full of a desire to flee as well as to face the unknown, Boccioni's "man" is a field of warring impulses. Despite certain initial reservations, within a

year Boccioni would respond to the appeal of Futurism, with its promise of participation in a collective avant-garde, its heroic rhetoric extolling the sovereign individual and patriotism, and its embrace of the art-action formula. Suffusing and determining the character of this appeal was the ideal of a rediscovered virility. In identifying with this aestheticized notion, Boccioni (like Marinetti and the other Futurists who assumed its mantle), found a thrilling countermodel to the vulnerable self of his pre-Futurist days. Rather than experience a fragile, tottering ego, constantly assailed by inner doubt, unfulfilled desires, and the rejection of others, Boccioni could constitute himself as a dynamic force, a “flame-idea.”<sup>10</sup> If in 1907 he had longed for “a virility made of precision and of exactitude and of positivism,” by late 1913 he would affirm the reawakening of idealism.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically, this entailed a necessary subordination of individual freedom (born of positivist materialism), in favor of an idealist discipline and the maintenance of what Boccioni called “style.”<sup>12</sup> As he defined it, style was the expression of an idea; it gave shape and meaning to life, just as “a liquid takes form in the form that contains it, otherwise it falls and spills and is absorbed is rendered void.”<sup>13</sup> As such, style constituted a kind of mold or armor, in which the fluid, indeterminate chaos of inner life took on a new architectonic structure. This new structure promised a sense of unity and continuity of the self, without disruptive fissures, absences, or intervals. As Boccioni explained, he aspired to realize “an idea that lives in duration and that negates nature. Liberty as commonly understood is an arbitrary action, chance, impression. It negates architecture that is coordination and willfulness. All that is great is architectonic.”<sup>14</sup>

Boccioni’s writings and art, like that of most of the other Futurists, wavered between assertions that the future held the utopian possibility of freedom from the strictures of the past and therefore of godlike self-creation and the desire to ground the newly constructed self on preexisting laws, determined by feeling, the “innate” qualities of the race, or even a sense of fate. The *will* must

dominate nature, but must never fall into the terrifying abyss of the merely arbitrary.

The sense of crisis that Boccioni describes in his diary was shared by many in his generation as they confronted the erosion of traditional beliefs and social structures in early twentieth-century Italy. Apart from Marinetti, who was wealthy, most of the Futurists were members of the petite bourgeoisie, with aspirations to become modern artists or poets and to contribute to the cultural and political revitalization of their nation. Acute frustration with the economic backwardness of Italy, its failed 1896 colonial war in Ethiopia, its corrupt parliament and lack of prestige on the world stage, drove the desire for revolutionary change. At the same time, the Futurists experienced the rising power of the masses (and their own uncertain social position vis-à-vis these masses), the collision of the new factories and mechanized forms of labor with rural ways of life, the destabilizing yet ego-expanding sensations of accelerated travel and communication, the growth of commodified urban culture, and the apparent loss of masculine power due to the allure of feminine luxury and the demands of the feminists.

The shifting political allegiances of the Futurists derive in part from a sense of fractured identity, which allowed them to seek alliances with workers and anarchist insurgents, while also making them susceptible to appeals to nationalist sentiment, the will to power, and the myth of violent palingenesis. Ultimately, patriotism, understood as the quest for virility on a grander, more heroic scale, trumped all other ideals; even the dream of the sovereign individual, the godlike artist/warrior, must subordinate his (or her) will to that of the state in a catastrophic act of self-annihilation. The contradiction between the heroic freedom and elasticity of the *superuomo* and the homogenizing regimentation of the factory worker and soldier was fundamental to Futurism from its earliest days, but only with the advent of the Fascist regime did its repercussions become fully visible. <fig. 8.1 about here>



Balla captured the sense of struggle between the forces of negativity and those leading to a utopian future in his 1923 *Pessimism and Optimism* (fig. 8.1). The painting stages a battle between the dark, jagged vectors of Pessimism and the luminous blue and violet swirling forms of Optimism. Elica Balla recalls that her older sister Luce helped their father prepare the colors, lightening the blues, and adding more Prussian blue to certain tones. As Elica explains, “the blue that in the painting must invade pessimism, had always helped him in life.”<sup>15</sup> Marinetti, who praised *Pessimism and Optimism* as a miraculous postwar masterpiece, declared that all Italians who had not yet understood Futurist painting could “usefully observe that funereal, toothlike and membranous passatista pessimism that will certainly be vanquished by the elastic, transparent, crystalline Futurist optimism.”<sup>16</sup> Although rendered in an ostensibly abstract idiom, the forces of Pessimism and Optimism in this work suggest dueling figures. It is not entirely clear though, *pace* Marinetti, that Optimism will be victorious. For the figure of Pessimism, its aggressive armor bristling with flashing daggers and swords, closely resembles the figure in a sketch Balla executed for a metallic costume (presumably for a mechanical ballet).<sup>17</sup> In its guise as a spiked metallic costume, this figure exemplified the Futurist man/weapon hybrid—simultaneously cold and hot, impenetrable and exploding. By contrast, the figure of Optimism is almost “feminine,” but here too one senses a tension between centrifugally spinning energies and their carefully delineated, bound forms. Throughout *Pessimism and Optimism*, the use of precise contours, relatively muted colors, and impersonal, flat, varnishlike surfaces (achieved by allowing the painting to dry in a horizontal position), reveals the subordination of unruly sentiment and spontaneity to the discipline of a “virile” machine aesthetic. The opposing forces of Pessimism and Optimism, each seeking to expand while retaining its center of action, come to resemble each other as dialectical counterparts within an already mechanized universe.

Optimism, artificially and agonistically constructed, requires the constant threat of Pessimism, as the very ground from which it emerges and against which it seeks to articulate a utopian<m->now Fascist<m->vision of the future. In *Pessimism and Optimism*, the implicit violence of Optimism bears the marks of a defensive, self-arming posture, even as its luminous vortex “invades” the surrounding space with hygienically clarified rays.

Marinetti defined Futurism’s effort to combat pessimism as a struggle against the ruinous forces of everyday life in a lecture of 1924: “It is life that is the great enemy of Futurism, life with its burdens, decadence, defeats, with all its badly turned out conflicts, with its attacks, with what we call the tentacular minutia of the quotidian.” Rather than succumb to its debilitating rhythms, Marinetti urged his listeners to engage the “enemy” in battle:

<EXT>Pessimism! Here is the enemy of Futurism, here is the great, dangerous enemy to combat! [. . .] What must be fought is precisely the resurgence of pessimism that is the burden of centuries, the burden of literature, the burden of already completed forces, the burden of all the sufferings of humanity that the artist carries within himself, like a tragic central electric plant that constantly accumulates energy against all the forces of innovation.<sup>18</sup>

Defined in relation both to the crushing weight of the past and to the ever-growing sorrow of humanity, Futurism’s “artificial optimism” arises as the defensive strategy of a tragically conceived artist-as-electric-plant. Rather than “accumulate” and mirror the losses and defeats of past and present, the Futurists strove to liberate new productive forces toward the creation of a utopian world. Yet the sense of anxiety and ambivalence toward modernity that gave birth to

Futurism would never be fully mastered, just as the realization of a Futurist utopia would be endlessly deferred.

## &lt;BMH&gt;Works Cited

<BIB>Agnese, Gino. *Vita di Boccioni*. Florence: Camunia, 1996.

Altomare, Libero. *Incontri con Marinetti e il futurismo*. Rome: Corso Editore, 1954.

Antliff, Mark. "The Fourth Dimension and Futurism: A Politicized Space." *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 4 (2000): 720-33.

*Archivi del Futurismo*. Edited by Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori. 2 vols. Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958, 1962.

Balla, Elica. *Con Balla*. 3 vols. Milan: Multhipla, 1984, 1986, 1986 respectively.

Ballo, Guido. *Boccioni: La vita e l'opera*. 2nd ed. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1982.

Ballo, Guido, ed. *Boccioni a Milano*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1982.

Barrows, Susanna. *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Baudelaire, Charles. "L'invitation au voyage." In *The Flowers of Evil*. Edited by Marthiel and Jackson Mathews. New York: New Directions, 1955.

<3m->. "The Painter of Modern Life." In *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*. Translated by P. E. Charvet. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.

<3m->. "Correspondences." In *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*. Translated by Geoffrey Wagner. New York: Grove Press, 1974.

Benedetta [Benedetta Cappa Marinetti]. *Le forze umane: Romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche*. Foligno: Campitelli, 1924. Reprinted in the trilogy comprising Benedetta's three novels: *Le forze umane; Viaggio di Gararà; Astra e il sottomarino*. Preface by Simona Cigliana. Rome: Edizioni dell'Altana, 1998.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*.

Edited and introduced by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York:

Schocken Books, 1969.

<3m->. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. Manchester: Verso, 1985.

Benzi, Fabio. "Balla and Photography: The Modern Gaze." In *Balla: The Biagiotti Cigna*

*Collection*. Edited by Fabio Benzi. Moscow: Pushkin State Museum of Figurative Arts,

1996.

Berghaus, Günter. *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

<3m->. "Dance and the Futurist Woman: The Work of Valentine de Saint-Point (1875-1953)."

*Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 11, no. 2 (1993): 27-42.

<3m->. *The Genesis of Futurism: Marinetti's Early Career and Writings, 1899-1909*. Leeds: The Society for Italian Studies, 1995.

<3m->. *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944*.

Providence, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Boccioni, Umberto. "Pene dell'anima, prologo, Romanzo fisiologico-sociale-filosofico del

XXXXII secolo." 1900. In *Boccioni prefuturista*. Edited by Maurizio Calvesi, Ester

Coen, and Antonella Greco. Exhibition: Rome, Palazzo Venezia. Milan: Electa, 1983.

<3m->. *Pittura e scultura futuriste (Dinamismo plastico)*. 1914. Edited by Zeno Birolli. Milan:

SE SRL, 1997.

<3m->. *Gli scritti editi e inediti*. Edited by Zeno Birolli. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971.

<3m->. *Umberto Boccioni: Altri inediti e apparati critici*. Edited by Zeno Birolli. Milan:

Feltrinelli, 1972.

Blum, Cinzia Sartini. "Introduction." Special Issue: Futurism and the Avant-Garde. Edited by

Cinzia Sartini Blum. *South Central Review* 13 (Summer<n->Fall 1996): 1-12.

<3m->. *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Bois, Yve-Alain. "Perceiving Newman." In *Painting as Model*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

Bragaglia, Anton Giulio. "L'arte nella fotografia." *La Fotografia artistica* (Turin) 8, no. 4 (1912).

<3m->. *Fotodinamismo futurista*. Rome: Nalato Editore, n.d. [1913].

Braun, Emily. "Futurist Fashion: Three Manifestoes." *Art Journal* 54 (Spring 1995): 34-41.

<3m->. "Renaissance and Renascences: The Rebirth of Italy, 1911-1921." In Laura Mattioli Rossi and Emily Braun, *Masterpieces from the Gianni Mattioli Collection*. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997; Milan: Electa, 1997.

<3m->. *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<3m->. "Vulgarians at the Gate." In *Boccioni's Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris*. Edited by Laura Mattioli Rossi. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004.

Braun, Marta. *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Brewster, David. *The Kaleidoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction with Its Application to the Fine and Useful Arts*. London: John Murray, 1858.

Brocchi, Virgilio. *Luce di grandi anime: Ricordanze*. Verona: Mondadori, 1956.

- Buck-Morss, Susan. "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered." *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3-41.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated by Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Buzzi, Paolo. "Toute la lyre." *Poesia* 5 (February-March 1909): 61.
- Calvesi, Maurizio. "Dinamismo e simultaneità nella poetica futurista." *L'arte moderna* 5, nos. 37-45. Milan: Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1967.
- <3m->. "Lecture iconologiche. *La città sale* di Umberto Boccioni. Un cantiere galoppante." *Art e Dossier* 93 (September 1994): 22-25.
- Calvesi, Maurizio, and Ester Coen. *Boccioni: L'opera completa*. Milan: Electa, 1983.
- Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. Translated by Carol Stewart. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.
- Capano, Leonardo, and Antonello Negri. Appendix 3. "Via Adige 23." In *Boccioni 1912 Materia*. Edited by Laura Mattioli Rossi. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004.
- Carandini, Silvia. "'One Evening Experiencing the Action of a Dancer': Gino Severini, Paris, and the Dance." In *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*. Edited by Daniela Fonti. Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2001.
- Cardano, Nicoletta. "La mostra dell'Agro Romano." In *Roma 1911*. Edited by Gianna Piantoni. Rome: Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, 1980.
- Carollo, Sabrina. *I futuristi*. Florence and Milan: Giunti Editore, 2004.
- Carpi, Umberto. *Bolscevico immaginista: Comunismo e avanguardie artistiche nell'Italia degli anni venti*. Naples: Liguori, 1981.

<3m->. *L'estrema avanguardia del Novecento*. Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985.

Carrà, Carlo. *Guerrapittura*. Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia," 1915.

<3m->. *La mia vita*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981.

Caruso, Luciano, ed. *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1914*. Florence: SPES, 1990.

Cavacchioli, Enrico. "Rivoluzione." In *Cavalcando il sole*. Milan: "Poesia," 1914. Reprinted in *I poeti del futurismo, 1909-1944*. Edited by Glauco Viazzi. Milan: Longanesi, 1978.

Chiti, Remo. "Words." In *Futurist Performance*. Edited by Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986.

Clair, Jean. "'Sous le signe de Saturne': Notes sur l'allégorie de la mélancholie dans l'art de l'entre-deux-guerres en Allemagne et en Italie." *Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* 7-8 (1981): 179-207.

Coen, Ester. *Umberto Boccioni*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1988.

Colla, Ettore. "Balla futurista." *Spazio 2* (1951): n.p.

<3m->. "Pittura e scultura astratta di G. Balla." *Arti Visive: Rivista della "Fondazione Origine"* (September<n->October 1952): n.p.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

<3m->. "Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Grey Room* 9 (Fall 2002): 5-25.

Crispoliti, Enrico. *Il secondo futurismo<m->5 pittori + 1 scultore*. Turin: Pozzo, 1962.

<3m->. *Il mito della macchina e altri temi del futurismo*. Rome: Editore Celebes, 1969.

Crispoliti, Enrico, ed. *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*. Milan: Mazzotta,



1988.

<3m->, ed. *Pannaggi e l'arte meccanica futurista*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1995.

<3m->. *Futurismo, 1909-1944*. Milan: Mazzotta, 2001.

Da Costa Meyer, Esther. *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia: Retreat into the Future*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.

Daftari, Fereshteh. *The Influence of Persian Art on Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky*. New York: Garland, 1991.

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Leonardo on Painting*. Translated by Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

De Duve, Thierry. "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint." *Artforum* 24 (May 1986): 110-21.

De Felice, Renzo, ed. *Futurismo, cultura e politica*. Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988.

<3m->. *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883-1920*. 1965. Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1995.

De Grand, Alexander J. *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Nomadology: The War Machine*. Translated by Brian Massumi. New York: Semiotext(e), 1986.

Del Puppo, Alessandro. "*Lacerba*," 1913-1915: *Arte e critica d'arte*. Bergamo: Lubrina, 2000.

De Maffei, Fernanda. *Le arche Scaligere di Verona*. Verona: Edizioni "La Nave," [1966].

De Marchis, Giorgio. *Balla*. Exhibition: Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Rome: De Luca, 1972.

<3m->. *Giacomo Balla, L'aura futurista*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1977.

Denis, Maurice. "De Gauguin, de Whistler et de l'excès des théories." *L'Ermitage* (15 November 1905). Reprinted in *Théories, 1890-1910*. 4th ed. Paris: L. Rouart and J. Watelin, 1920.

- Dijkstra, Bram. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Dorazio, Virginia Dortch. *Giacomo Balla: An Album of His Life and Work*. New York: Wittenborn, [1969].
- Dowd, David Lloyd. *Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1948.
- Duranti, Massimo. *Aeropittura e aeroscultura futuriste*. Città di Castello: EFFE Fabrizio Fabbri Editore; Alitalia, 2002.
- Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio. *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*. Rome: Bulzoni, 1968.
- <3m->. *Hoffmann: "Mobili semplici" <m->Vienna, 1900-1910*. Rome: Emporio Floreale, 1977.
- <3m->. *Giacomo Balla: Opere dal 1912 al 1930; Tipologie di astrazione*. Modena: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1980.
- <3m->. *Balla: The Futurist*. Translated by Margaret Kunzle. New York: Rizzoli, 1988.
- Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio, ed. *Futur natura: La svolta di Balla, 1916-1920*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1998.
- Fergonzi, Flavio. *The Mattioli Collection: Masterpieces of the Italian Avant-Garde*. Milan: Skira; New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2003.
- <3m->. "On the Title of the Painting *Materia*." In *Boccioni: Materia, A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris*. Edited by Laura Mattioli Rossi. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004.
- Fillia. *Lussuria radioelettrica: Poesie meccaniche*. Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925.
- <3m->. *La morte della donna. Novelle*. Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925.
- <3m->. *Sensualità, teatro d'eccezione*. Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925.

- <3m->. "Sensualità meccanica." *La Fiamma* (Turin) 2 (4 April 1926).
- <3m->. *L'uomo senza sesso*. Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1927.
- <3m->. "Spiritualità Futurista." In *Fillia pittore futurista*. Turin: A.R.S., 1931. Reproduced in *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1914*. Edited by Luciano Caruso. Florence: SPES, 1990.
- Fillia, ed. *La nuova architettura*. Turin: UTET, 1931.
- Fillia, Caligaris, and Curtoni. "L'idolo meccanico, arte sacra meccanica, Manifesto Futurista." *La Fiamma*. 2 May 1926. Reproduced in *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1914*. Edited by Luciano Caruso. Florence: SPES, 1990.
- Fogu, Claudio. *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Fonti, Daniela, ed. *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*. Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2001.
- <3m->. *Luce + velocità + rumore: La città di Gino Severini*. Exhibition: Rome, Auditorium Parco della Musica. Milan: Skira, 2005.
- Foster, Hal. "Prosthetic Gods." *Modernism/Modernity* 4 (April 1997): 5-38.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: Liveright Publishing, 1950.
- <3m->. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Translated by James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1959.
- <3m->. *The Ego and the Id*. Translated by Joan Riviere. Edited by James Strachey. New York:

- W. W. Norton, 1962.
- Futurismo*. Edited by Umbro Apollonio. Milan: Mazzotta, 1970.
- Futurist Manifestos*. Edited by Umbro Apollonio. Translated by Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall. Boston: MFA Publications, 2001.
- Gentile, Emilio. "Il futurismo e la politica: Dal nazionalismo modernista al fascismo (1909-1920)." In *Futurismo, cultura e politica*. Edited by Renzo De Felice. Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988.
- <3m->. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Translated by Keith Botsford. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Ginex, Giovanna. "Fotografia e pittura nel laboratorio divisionista." In *L'età del divisionismo*. Edited by Gabriella Belli and Franco Rella. Milan: Electa, 1990.
- Golan, Romy. *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Golding, John. *Boccioni: Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1985.
- Golsan, Richard J., ed. *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Guglielmi, Anna. "Conversando con Giuseppe Sprovieri sul futurismo." "A Conversation with Giuseppe Sprovieri on Futurism." *Lotta Poetica* 1, no. 4, series 2 (1982): 21-30.
- Hanson, Anne Coffin. *Severini futurista: 1912-1917*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995.
- Henderson, Linda Dalrymple. "Vibratory Modernism: Boccioni, Kupka, and the Ether of Space." In *From Energy to Information*. Edited by Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple

- Henderson. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Hoffmann, Josef. "Einfache Möbel." *Das Interieur* (Vienna) 2 (1901): 193-208.
- Irigaray, Luce. "Women on the Market." In *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Translated by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Isnenghi, Mario. *Il mito della grande guerra*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989.
- <3m->. *L'Italia del Fascio*. Florence: Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 1996.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. 1914. New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961.
- Krauss, Rosalind. *Grids*. New York: Pace Gallery, 1978.
- <3m->. *The Optical Unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.
- Kromm, Jane. *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850*. New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Labriola, Arturo. *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*. 2nd ed. Lugano: Egisto Cagnoni, Società Editrice "Avanguardia," 1906.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage." In *Écrits*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: W. W. Norton, 1977.
- Landis, Linda. "Futurists at War." In *The Futurist Imagination*. Edited by Anne Coffin Hanson. New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1983.
- Le Bon, Gustave. *Psychologie des foules*. Paris: Alcan, 1895. Translated as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. London: Ernest Benn, 1952.
- <3m->. *L'évolution de la matière*. Paris: E. Flammarion, 1905. Translated as *The Evolution of Matter*. 3rd ed. Introduced by F. Legge. London and New York: Walter Scott Publishing, 1907.

Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. Translated by Frederick Etchells. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982.

Lemoine, Serge, ed. *Aux origines de l'abstraction, 1800-1914*. Paris: Musée d'Orsay; Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2003.

Lépine, Louis. *Mes souvenirs*. Paris: Payot, 1929.

Lista, Giovanni. *Marinetti*. Paris: Seghers, 1976.

<3m->. *Arte e politica: Il Futurismo di sinistra in Italia*. Milan: Multhipla, 1980.

<3m->. *Balla*. Catalogue raisonné. Modena: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1982.

<3m->. "Marinetti et les anarcho-syndicalistes." In *Présence de Marinetti*. Edited by Jean-Claude Marcadé. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1982.

<3m->. *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1984.

<3m->. *La scène futuriste*. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989.

<3m->. *F. T. Marinetti, L'anarchiste du futurisme*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Séguiet, 1995.

<3m->. *Cinema e fotografia futurista*. Geneva and Milan: Skira, 2001.

<3m->. *Lo spettacolo futurista*. Florence: Cantini, 1989.

Lista, Giovanni, ed. *Futurisme. Manifestes, documents, proclamations*. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1973.

<3m->. *Marinetti et le futurisme: Études, documents, iconographies*. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1976.

Locke, Nancy. "Valentine de Saint-Point and the Fascist Construction of Woman." In *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*. Edited by Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Lombroso, Cesare. *Criminal Man, According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso, Briefly Summarized by his Daughter Gina Lombroso Ferrero*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911.

Lombroso, Cesare, and Guglielmo Ferrero. *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale*. Turin: L. Roux, 1893. Translated as *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*. Translated and introduced by Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Lupi, Dario. *Parchi e viali della rimembranza*. Florence: R. Bemporad e Figlio, 1923.

<3m->. *La riforma Gentile e la nuova anima della scuola*. Milan and Rome: Mondadori, 1924.

Mannoni, Laurent. *Etienne-Jules Marey: La mémoire de l'oeil*. Exhibition: Paris, Cinémathèque Française. Milan: Mazzotta, 1999.

Marinetti, F. T. "Les émeutes milanaises de mai 1898." *La Revue Blanche* 22, no. 173 (1900): 561-76.

<3m->. *La conquête des étoiles: Poème épique*. Paris: Éditions de La Plume, 1902.

<3m->. *Destruction: Poèmes lyriques*. Paris: Léon Vanier, 1904.

<3m->. *Les dieux s'en vont: D'Annunzio reste*. Paris: E. Sansot, 1908.

<3m->. *La ville charnelle*. Paris: E. Sansot, 1908.

<3m->. *Mafarka il futurista*. Translated from the French by Decio Cinti. Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia," 1910. The French edition has been reprinted as *Mafarka le futuriste*. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1984.

<3m->. *Le futurisme*. Paris: E. Sansot, 1911. Reprinted as *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1980.

<3m->. *L'alcova di acciaio*. 1921. Milan: Serra e Rive Editori, 1985.

- <3m->. “Il futurismo mondiale.” 24 May 1924. Reprinted (excerpts) in *Il Verri* 33-34 (1970): 26-31.
- <3m->. “La prima affermazione nel mondo di una nuova arte italiana: L’aeropittura. Un manifesto di Marinetti.” *Il Giornale della Domenica* (Rome) (1-2 February 1931).
- <3m->. “Manifesto dell’arte sacra futurista.” *La Gazzetta del Popolo* (Turin) (23 June 1931), and in “La Provincia di Padova,” 23 June 1931; later signed also by Fillia, in *Il Piccolo della Sera*, Trieste, 8 July 1931, and in *Aeropittura arte sacra futurista*, La Spezia, 1932. Reproduced in *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1914*. Edited by Luciano Caruso. Florence: SPES, 1990.
- <3m->. *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista: Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto*. Milan: Mondadori, 1969.
- <3m->. *Marinetti: Selected Writings*. Edited by R. W. Flint. Translated by R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971.
- <3m->. *Stung by Salt and War: Creative Texts of the Italian Avant-Gardist F. T. Marinetti*. Edited and translated by Richard J. Pioli. New York: Peter Lang, 1987.
- <3m->. *Let’s Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*. Edited by R. W. Flint. Translated by R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991.
- <3m->. “Selections from the Unpublished Diaries of F. T. Marinetti.” Introduction and notes by Lawrence Rainey and Laura Wittman. *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 1-44.
- <3m->. *Teoria e invenzione futurista*. 1968. Edited by Luciano De Maria. Milan: Mondadori, 1996.
- Masheck, Joseph. “The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness.” *Arts Magazine* 51 (September 1976): 82-109.



- Masoero, Ada. *Umberto Boccioni: La città che sale*. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003.
- <3m->. *Universo meccanico: Il futurismo attorno a Balla, Depero, Prampolini*. Milan: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 2003.
- Masoero, Ada, Renato Miracco, and Francesco Poli. *L'estetica della macchina da Balla al futurismo torinese*. Exhibition: Turin, Palazzo Cavour. Milan: Mazzotta, 2004.
- Mattioli, Laura, ed. *Boccioni 1912 Materia*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1995.
- <3m->. *Boccioni: Materia, A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris*. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004.
- Meier-Graefe, Julius. "Matisse, das Ende des Impressionismus." In *Matisse: A Retrospective*. Edited by Jack Flam. New York: Park Lane, Random House, 1990.
- Michels, Roberto. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. 1911. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1962.
- Miller, Margaret. "Géricault's Painting of the Insane." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1940/41): 151-63
- Milman, Estera. "Futurism as a Submerged Paradigm for Artistic Activism and Practical Anarchism." *South Central Review* 13 (Summer->Fall 1996): 157-79.
- Mondello, Elisabetta. *La nuova italiana: La donna nella stampa e nella cultura del ventennio*. Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987.
- <3m->. *Roma futurista: I periodici e i luoghi dell'avanguardia nella Roma degli anni venti*. Milan: Franco Angeli Libri, 1990.
- Morasso, Mario. *Uomini e idee del domani: L'egoarchia*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1898.
- <3m->. *L'imperialismo artistico*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903.

- <3m->. *La nuova arma (La macchina)*. Introduction by Carlo Ossola. Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1994. Originally published by Fratelli Bocca in 1905.
- Mosse, George L. *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality*. New York: H. Fertig, 1980.
- <3m->. "Futurismo e culture politiche in Europa: Una prospettiva globale." In *Futurismo, cultura e politica*. Edited by Renzo De Felice. Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988.
- <3m->. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Neff, John H. "Matisse and Decoration: An Introduction." Part 1, *Arts Magazine* 49 (May 1975): 59-61; "Matisse and Decoration." Part 2, *Arts Magazine* 49 (June 1975): 85.
- Negri, Antonello. "Milano 1881-1914: *La città che sale*." In *Boccioni a Milano*. Edited by Guido Ballo. Milan: Mazzotta, 1982.
- <3m->. "Uno sguardo circolare." In *Boccioni 1912 Materia*. Edited by Laura Mattioli Rossi. Milan: Mazzotta, 1995.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Nuzzaci, Antonella. *Il teatro futurista: Genesi, linguaggi, tecniche*. Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 1995.
- Nye, Robert A. *The Origins of Crowd Psychology*. London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975.
- Panteo, Tullio. *Il poeta Marinetti*. Milan: Società Editoriale Milanese, 1908.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of*

- Rupture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Petrella, Fausto. "La 'materia' inquieta e le sue trasformazioni: Appunti per una ricerca." In *Boccioni 1912 Materia*. Edited by Laura Mattioli Rossi. Milan: Mazzotta, 1995.
- Petrie, Brian. "Boccioni and Bergson." *Burlington Magazine* 116 (March 1974): 140-47.
- Picabia, Francis. "Lettre ouverte à Monsieur H. R. Lenormand" (1920). In *Francis Picabia*. Edited by Jean-Hubert Martin and Hélène Seckel. Paris: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1976.
- Poggi, Christine. "*Lacerba*: Interventionist Art and Politics in Pre-World War I Italy." In *Art and Journals on the Political Front, 1910-1940*. Edited by Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997.
- <3m->. "The Paradox of the Futurist Woman." In *La Futurista: Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*. Edited by Lisa Panzera. Philadelphia: The Galleries at Moore College, 1998.
- <3m->. "Picturing Madness in 1905: Giacomo Balla's *La pazza* and the cycle *I viventi*." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 47 (Spring 2005): 38-68.
- Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated by Gerald Fitzgerald. New York: Harper and Row, Icon Editions, 1968.
- Pontiggia, E. "Una lettera futurista." *Questarte* 49 (March 1986): 5-42.
- Puchner, Martin. *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Quesada, Mario. "Storia della secessione romana." In *Secessione romana, 1913-1916*. Edited by Rossana Bossaglia, Mario Quesada, and Pasqualina Spadini. Exhibition: Rome, Ente Autonomo Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale D'Arte Roma. Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1987.

Ragghianti, Carlo L. *Mondrian e l'arte del XX secolo*. Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1962.

Re, Lucia. "Futurism and Feminism." *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989): 261-71.

<3m->. "Valentine de Saint-Point, Ricciotto Canudo, F. T. Marinetti: Eroticism, Violence, and Feminism from Prewar Paris to Colonial Cairo." *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 24, no. 2 (2003): 37-67.

<3m->. "Futurism, Seduction, and the Strange Sublimity of War." *Italian Studies* 59 (2004): 83-111.

Richard de la Fuente, Véronique. *Valentine de Saint-Point: Une poétesse dans l'avant-garde futuriste et méditerranéiste*. Céret: Éditions des Albères, 2003.

Rousselet, Louis. *L'Exposition Universelle de 1900*. Paris: Hachette, 1901.

Rudé, George. *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964.

Rumi, Giorgio, Adele Carla Buratti, and Alberto Cova, eds. *Milano nell'Italia liberale, 1898-1922*. Milan: Cariplo, 1993

Saint-Point, Valentine de. *La guerre: Poème héroïque*. Paris: Figuière, 1912.

<3m->. "Chorégraphie nouvelle." *Montjoie!* 1, nos. 9-10 (1913).

<3m->. "Mes danses idéistes." *Le Journal* (20 December 1913).

<3m->. "La métachorie." *Le Miroir* n.s., 7 (11 January 1914); also published in *Montjoie!* 2, nos. 1-2 (1914).

Salaris, Claudia. *Storia del futurismo: Libri, giornali, manifesti*. Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985.

<3m->. *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*. Milan: La Nuova Italia, 1988.

<3m->. *Artecrazia: L'avanguardia futurista negli anni del fascismo*. Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1992.

<3m->. *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*. Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997.

Satin, Leslie. "Valentine de Saint-Point." *Dance Research Journal* 22 (Spring 1990): 1-12.

Schiaffini, Ilaria. *Umberto Boccioni: Stati d'animo, teoria e pittura*. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2002.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Schnapp, Jeffrey T. "Politics and Poetics in Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tuum*." *Stanford Italian Review* 5, no. 1 (1985): 75-92.

<3m->. "Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution." In *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*. Edited by Richard J. Golsan. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992.

<3m->. "Propeller Talk." *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (September 1994): 153-78.

<3m->. *Staging Fascism: 18 BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.

<3m->. "Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)." *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 1-49.

<3m->. "The Mass Panorama." *Modernism/Modernity* 9, no. 2 (2002): 243-81.

<3m->. *Anno X* <m-> *La mostra della rivoluzione fascista del 1932*. Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003.

Selvafolta, Ornella. "Le strutture per un progetto di modernità." In *Milano nell'Italia liberale, 1898-1922*. Edited by Giorgio Rumi, Adele Carla Buratti, and Alberto Cova. Milan: Cariplo, 1993.

Severini, Gino. "Art du fantastique dans le sacré." 1913. In *Écrits sur l'art*. Preface by Serge Fauchereau. Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1987.

<3m->. “Ideografia futurista,” *Lacerba* (7 July 1914).

<3m->. *The Life of a Painter*. Translated by Jennifer Franchina. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Shell, Oliver. *Cleansing the Nation: Italian Art, Consumerism, and World War I*. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998.

Sighele, Scipio. *La folla delinquente*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1891.

<3m->. *La coppia-criminale: Studio di psicologia morbosa*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1893.

<3m->. *Contro parlamentarismo: Saggio di psicologia collettiva*. Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1895.

<3m->. *I delitti della folla*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1902.

<3m->. *L'intelligenza della folla*. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903.

Silk, Gerald. “‘Il Primo Pilota’: Mussolini, Fascist Aeronautical Symbolism, and Imperial Rome.” In *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Edited by Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” In *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Edited by Donald N. Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

*Sipario: Staged Art, Balla, de Chirico, Savinio, Picasso, Paolini, Cucchi*. Texts by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, Laura Cherubini, Elena Gigli et al. Translated by Marguerite Shore. Exhibition: Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 1997. Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1997.

Somigli, Luca. *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

- Sorel, Georges. *Reflections on Violence*. 1908. Translated by T. E. Hulme. New York: Peter Smith, 1941.
- Spackman Barbara. *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- <3m->. "Mafarka and Son: Marinetti's Homophobic Economics." Introduction and notes by Lawrence Rainey and Laura Wittman. *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (September 1994): 89-107.
- <3m->. *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Spate, Virginia. "Mother and Son: Boccioni's Painting and Sculpture, 1906-1915." In *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity*. Edited by Terry Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Sternhell, Zeev, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Asheri. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Stringa, Nico. "'... l'amato fecondo Manifesto': Cenni sulla diffusione del futurismo in Italia nel febbraio del 1909." In *Futurismo, 1909-1944*. Edited by Enrico Crispolti. Milan: Mazzotta, 2001.
- Tagliapietra, Franco. "Dalla suggestione simbolista alla teorizzazione e produzione futurista: incisioni e dipinti." In *Luigi Russolo: Vita e opere di un futurista*. Edited by Franco Tagliapietra and Anna Gasparotto. Milan: Skira, 2006.
- Tarde, Gabriel. *Les lois de l'imitation*. Paris: Félix Alcan, Editeur, 1890. 2nd ed., 1895. Translated from the second French edition as *The Laws of Imitation*. Translated by Elsie Clews Parsons. New York: Henry Holt, 1903.

- Temkin, Ann, ed. *Barnett Newman*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002.
- Tessari, Roberto. *Il mito della macchina: Letteratura e industria nel primo novecento italiano*. Milan: U. Mursia, 1973.
- Theweleit, Klaus. *Male Fantasies*. 2 vols. Translated by Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 1989.
- Valerio, William. *Boccioni's Fist: Italian Futurism and the Construction of Fascist Modernism*. Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996.
- Varnedoe, Kirk. *Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture and Design*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Boston: Little, Brown, 1986.
- Vasari, Ruggero. *L'angoscia delle macchine*. Turin: Rinascimento, 1925. Reprinted in *Teatro Italiano d'avanguardia: Drammi e sintesi futuriste*. Edited by Mario Verdone. Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1970.
- Vercelloni, Virgilio. "La città e l'idea di città." In *Milano nell'Italia liberale, 1898-1922*. Edited by Giorgio Rumi, Adele Carla Buratti, and Alberto Cova. Milan: Cariplo, 1993.
- Verdone, Mario. *Teatro Italiano d'avanguardia: Drammi e sintesi futuriste*. Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1970.
- <3m->. *Teatro del tempo futurista*. 2nd ed. Rome: Bulzoni, 1988.
- <3m->. "Pannaggi e il teatro." In *Pannaggi e l'arte meccanica futurista*. Edited by Enrico Crispolti. Milan: Mazzotta, 1995.
- Verhaeren, Emile. *Les villes tentaculaires*, preceded by *Campagnes hallucinés*. Paris: Mercure de France, 1920.
- Villers, Jean-Pierre A. de. *Le premier manifeste du futurisme, édition critique avec, en fac-similé, le manuscrit original de F. T. Marinetti*. Ottawa: Editions de L'Université



d'Ottawa, 1986.

Viola, Gianni Eugenio. *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: Lo spettacolo dell'arte*. Palermo: L'Epos, 2004.

Wolf, Georg V. "Von Ausstellungen München." *Die Kunst für Alle* (November 1910): 68-70.

Wollen, Peter. "Tanks." In *Paris Manhattan: Writings on Art*. New York: Verso, 2004.

---

<BMH>Notes

<I>Preface

1. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
2. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (New York: Harper and Row, Icon editions, 1968), 72-74.
3. Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 69.
4. Ibid., 69.
5. On the neglect of Futurism in Anglo-American scholarship and criticism, see Cinzia Sartini Blum, "Introduction," Special Issue: Futurism and the Avant-Garde, ed. Cinzia Sartini Blum, *South Central Review* 13 (Summer<n->Fall 1996): 1-12.
6. For an analysis of the assumptions guiding the formation and interpretation of the art historical canon in the post<n->World War II period, see Estera Milman, "Futurism as a Submerged Paradigm for Artistic Activism and Practical Anarchism," *South Central Review* 13 (Summer<n->Fall 1996): 157-79.
7. Roberto Tessari, *Il mito della macchina: Letteratura e industria nel primo novecento italiano* (Milan: U. Mursia, 1973).
8. See especially Giovanni Lista, *Marinetti* (Paris: Seghers, 1976); "Le futurisme Marinettian," preface to F. T. Marinetti, *Le futurisme* (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980); *Arte e politica: Il futurismo di sinistra in Italia* (Milan: Multhipla, 1980); *F. T. Marinetti: L'anarchiste du futurisme* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Ségquier, 1995). See also Lista, *La scène futuriste* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique,

---

1989).

9. Among the many relevant studies of these scholars, see especially Umberto Carpi, *L'estrema avanguardia del Novecento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985); George L. Mosse, "Futurismo e culture politiche in Europa: Una prospettiva globale," in *Futurismo, cultura e politica*, ed. Renzo De Felice (Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988), 13-29; and Emilio Gentile, "Il futurismo e la politica: Dal nazionalismo modernista al fascismo (1909-1920)," in *Futurismo, cultura e politica*, ed. De Felice, 105-59.

10. F. T. Marinetti, "Nous renions nos maîtres les symbolistes, derniers amants de la lune," in *Le futurisme* (Paris: E. Sansot, 1911); reprinted in his *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 121. "Au déterminisme sceptique et pessimiste, nous opposons en conséquence le culte de l'intuition créative, la liberté de l'inspiration et l'optimisme artificiel." See also, in the same volume, "La guerre électrique," 143. "Nous avons entrepris dans ce but la propagande du courage contre l'épidémie de la lâcheté, la fabrication d'un optimisme artificiel contre le pessimisme chronique." All translations, unless otherwise attributed, are by the author.

## <I>Chapter 1. Futurist Velocities

1. F. T. Marinetti, first published as a flyer, then with the title "Primo manifesto politico futurista per le elezioni generali del 1909" in *Guerra sola igiene del mondo* (Milan: Edizioni futuriste di "Poesia," 1915); and in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (1968; repr., Milan: Mondadori, 1996), 337-38. Hereafter cited as *TIF*.

2. For an account of these first serate, see Claudia Salaris, *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997), 76-88; and Günter Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*

---

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 85-155. See also Marinetti's memories of the first serata in Milan: F. T. Marinetti, "Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 197-99.

3. Carlo Carrà, *La mia vita* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981), 72.

4. Marinetti, untitled, in *TIF*, 339. "Sia cancellato il fastidioso ricordo della grandezza romana, con una grandezza italiana cento volte maggiore."

5. For an account of the rise of nationalist groups in Italy during these years, see Alexander J. De Grand, *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

6. Marinetti, "Programma Politico Futurista," in *TIF*, 339-40.

7. *Ibid.*, 340.

8. Marinetti, "Manifesto del partito futurista italiano," *L'Italia futurista* 3 (11 February 1918); in *TIF*, 153-58.

9. This date coincides with that of Marinetti's famous car crash of 1908, which he subsequently converted into a mythic event as discussed below. If Marinetti referred to the date of 11 October, rather than 15 October when the crash actually occurred, it is because eleven was a significant number for him. There were eleven points in the first Futurist manifesto, and most manifestos were dated the eleventh of the month.

10. Marinetti, "Prime battaglie futuriste," in *Guerra sola igiene del mondo*; in *TIF*, 235. "Bisognava assolutamente cambiar metodo, scendere nelle vie, dar l'assalto ai teatri e introdurre il pugno nella lotta artistica."

11. *Ibid.*, 236. "Devo dire, tuttavia, che moltissimi di coloro che c'ingiuriarono, non

---

compresero mai nulla, assolutamente, della violenza lirica ed alquanto sibillina di quel gran grido rivoluzionario.”

12. The poet Paolo Buzzi recalled Marinetti reading the manifesto to him, just as news of a catastrophic earthquake in Reggio and Messina was announced on 28 December 1908. See “Toute la lyre,” *Poesia* 5 (February-March 1909): 61.

13. The free-verse poet Gian Pietro Lucini wrote to Marinetti on 5 February 1910 to report that he had received the manifesto the previous day, and that he could only offer partial adherence, preferring to support ideas rather than “schools.” For the text of this letter, see Gianni Eugenio Viola, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: Lo spettacolo dell’arte* (Palermo: L’Epos, 2004), 44-45.

14. Giovanni Lista, *Marinetti* (Paris: Seghers, 1976), 84-85; and *F. T. Marinetti, L’anarchiste du futurisme* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Séguiet, 1995), 78-83. See also Salaris, *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*, 58-67; and with substantial quotations from the earliest published commentary and reviews, Nico Stringa, “. . . l’amato fecondo Manifesto’: Cenni sulla diffusione del futurismo in Italia nel febbraio del 1909,” in *Futurismo, 1909-1944*, ed. Enrico Crispolti (Milan: Mazzotta, 2001), 195-211. As Stringa observes, newspapers in Milan and Rome declined to publish the manifesto, although a lengthy critical review appeared in the Milanese *Perseveranza* (19 February), while a more amicable if ironic response, written by a woman after the publication of the manifesto and prologue in *Le Figaro*, appeared in Rome’s *La Tribuna* (15 March). The manifesto was initially printed as a flyer in Italian and French and translated into other languages for publication by particular journals and newspapers, often to be republished in *Poesia* for the widest possible diffusion. For example, the English translation of the manifesto, without the prologue, first appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun* (New York), and was

---

reprinted in *Poesia* 5 (April<n->July 1909). Similarly, several Spanish translations appeared, in *El Liberal* (Madrid), *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), and *El Diario Español* (Buenos Aires), while German translations were published in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin); these were also reprinted in the April<n->July 1909 issue of *Poesia*. The Portuguese version appeared on 5 August 1909 in *Diario dos Açores* accompanied by an interview with Marinetti. The Russian version, including the prologue, appeared on 8 March 1909 in the daily *Vecer*. The Japanese journal *Subaru* referred to the manifesto in May 1909. For reproductions of some of these translations, see Jean-Pierre A. de Villers, *Le premier manifeste du futurisme, édition critique avec, en fac-similé, le manuscrit original de F. T. Marinetti* (Ottawa: Editions de L'Université d'Ottawa, 1986), 105-39.

15. Lista, *F. T. Marinetti, L'anarchiste du futurisme*, 78-79.

16. F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 49, 47; "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 46, 45. "Noi vogliamo cantare l'amor del pericolo, l'abitudine all'energia e alla temerità"; "Avevamo vegliato tutta la notte<m->i miei amici ed io . . ."

17. The draft of the prologue, written in part on paper from the Grand Hôtel in Paris, employed the pronoun *je*, but Marinetti crossed it out in favor of *nous*, also making other changes to emphasize the presence of a group. For a discussion of changes to the manuscript, now preserved at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, as well as facsimiles of the various drafts, see de Villers, *Le premier manifeste du futurisme*, 22-27, 40-101.

18. For an excellent discussion of the manifesto as a self-authorizing, theatrical speech act addressed to a public it seeks to constitute, see Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 23-

---

32. See also Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 81-115; and Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885-1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), especially 93-161.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 57-58.

20. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 59.

21. F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 47 (translation amended); Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 44. "Avevamo vegliato tutta la notte<m->i miei amici ed io<m->sotto lampade di moschea dalle cupole di ottone traforato, stellate come le nostre anime, perché come queste irradiate dal chiuso fulgore di un cuore elettrico. Avevamo lungamente calpestata su opulenti tappeti orientali la nostra atavica accidia, discutendo davanti ai confini estremi della logica ed annerendo molta carta de frenetiche scritte."

22. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 47; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 44. ". . . ci sentivamo soli, in quell'ora, ad essere desti e ritti, come fari superbi o come sentinelle avanzate, di fronte all'esercito delle stelle nemiche . . ."

23. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 47-48; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 44. "Sussultammo ad un tratto, all'udire il rumore formidabile degli enormi tramvai a due piani, che passano sobbalzando. . . . Poi il silenzio divenne più cupo. Ma mentre ascoltavamo l'estenuato borbottio di preghiere del vecchio canale e lo scricchiolar dell'ossa dei palazzi

---

moribondi sulle loro barbe di umida verdura, noi udimmo subitamente ruggire sotto le finestre gli automobili famelici. . . . Non v'è cosa che agguagli lo splendore della rossa spada del sole che schermeggia per la prima volta nelle nostre tenebre millenarie!"

24. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 48; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 45-46. "La Morte, addomesticata, mi sorpassava ad ogni svolto, per porgermi la zampa con grazia, e a quando a quando si stendeva a terra con un rumore di mascelle stridenti, mandandomi, da ogni pozzanghera, sguardi vellutati e carezzevoli."

25. This text is cited in translation in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)," *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 6. Schnapp also cites the Italian from Claudia Salaris, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti* (Milan: La Nuova Italia, 1988), 69.

26. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 48; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 46.

<NEX>Usciamo dalla saggezza come da un orribile guscio e gettiamoci, come frutti pimentati d'orgoglio, entro la bocca immensa e tôrta del vento! . . . Diamoci in pasto all'Ignoto, non già per disperazione, ma soltanto per colmare i profondi pozzi dell'Assurdo!

Avevo appena pronunciato queste parole, quando girai bruscamente su me stesso, con la stessa ebrietà folle dei cani che voglion mordersi la coda, ed ecco ad un tratto venirmi incontro due ciclisti, che mi diedero torto, titubando davanti a me come due ragionamenti, entrambi persuasivi e nondimeno contraddittorii. Il loro stupido dilemma discuteva sul mio terreno . . . Che noia! Auff! . . . Tagliai corto, e, pel disgusto, mi



---

scaraventai colle ruote all'aria in un fossato.

27. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 48; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio,

46. "Oh! materno fossato, quasi pieno di un'acqua fangosa! Bel fossato d'officina! Io gustai avidamente la tua melma fortificante, che mi ricordò la santa mammella nera della mia nutrice Sudanese. . . . Quando mi sollevai cencio sozzo e puzzolente di sotto la macchina capovolta, io mi sentii attraversare il cuore, deliziosamente, dal ferro arroventato della gioia!"

28. Jeffrey Schnapp argues that Marinetti inverts the normative psychological profile of the shocked subject, who neurotically fixates on the traumatic event, rehearsing its details and erecting a psychic stimulus shield in the form of a pose of aloofness or indifference. Instead, for Schnapp, Marinetti recasts trauma "as ecstasy, accident as adventure, death drive as joy ride." See "Crash," 6-8.

29. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 49; Marinetti, "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio,

46. "Usciamo dalla saggezza come da un orribile guscio. . . . Diamoci in pasto all'Ignoto, non già per disperazione, ma soltanto per colmare i profondi pozzi dell'Assurdo! [. . .] col volto coperto della buona melma delle officine impasto di scorie metalliche, di sudori inutili, di fuliggini celesti noi, contusi e fasciate le braccia ma impavidi, dettammo le nostre prime volontà a tutti gli uomini *vivi* della terra . . ."

30. Schnapp's analysis of the thrill afforded by speed as a modern version of the sublime is persuasive. See "Crash," 3-5. Yet the quest for constantly renewed thrills, coupled with the desire to fuse flesh with metal, can be seen as a new kind of "stimulus shield," one designed to reaffirm domination over nature and the self. Pleasures here are not easily distinguished from

---

defense mechanisms, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

31. For a historical review and discussion of the theorization of trauma and of a protective “stimulus shield” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in relation to the history of modern travel and railway accidents, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 134-70. See also Jeffrey Schnapp’s critique of this theoretical construct, which includes important work by Sigmund Freud, Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and others, in “Crash,” 3-5. I discuss these theories further below.

32. Mario Morasso, *La nuova arma (La macchina)*, intro. Carlo Ossola (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1994), 37. “Vi è qui qualche cosa di eroico; l’uomo assiso sul rigido seggio, come un re barbaro, col viso ricoperto da una dura visiera, come un guerriero, con il corpo proteso in avanti quasi a incitare la corsa e a scrutare, più della strada, il destino, con la mano sicura sul volante inclinato, con tutte le sue facoltà vigili, sembra invero il signore di un turbine, il domatore di un mostro, il reggitore sereno, assoluto di una forza nuova, colui che sta ritto nel vortice.” The book was first published in Turin by Fratelli Bocca in 1905.

33. Morasso, *La nuova arma*, 54. “Anzi tutto trasmigra in noi la rude potenza vitale della macchina e si aggiunge alla nostra, e per tale unione ci sentiamo straordinariamente ingranditi e fortificati, non siamo più uomini come eravamo prima, come sono tutti gli altri, noi siamo terribilmente armati e gli altri sono gli inermi, noi siamo esseri nuovi fortissimi, di una specie ignota, centauri di carne e di ferro, di ruote e di membra.”

34. *Ibid.*, 55. “. . . noi ci sentiamo tratti a partecipare alla vita della macchina come se fossimo parte di essa . . . al tenace corpo metallico, così che tutta la sua azione, il suo robusto palpito gioioso, la sua instancabilità, la sua indifferenza superba si riflettono in noi.”

---

35. Ibid., 73.

36. Ibid., 75. “. . . domani non si rifiuterà davanti alla necessità grande, davanti al sacrificio completo per il più nobile ideale, si seppellirà sotto la mina incendiata dalla sua mano che non trema, si inabisserà nel fondo del mare con la sua nave, arderà nell’incendio per la difesa della patria e degli altri uomini.”

37. Ibid., 75-76. See also Morasso’s *L’imperialismo artistico*, in which he defines mercantile, bourgeois civilization as an intermediate, transitional phase, between a barbarous, servile, inferior civilization and a dominant, military, superior civilization. *L’imperialismo artistico* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), 11.

38. Mario Morasso, *Uomini e idee del domani: L’egoarchia* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1898), 36. “. . . assumere la ricchezza come scopo a sé.”

39. Morasso, *La nuova arma*, 77.

40. Lista, *F. T. Marinetti, L’anarchiste du futurisme*, 20-21.

41. F. T. Marinetti, *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista: Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969), 243; cited in Salaris, *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*, 18.

42. See Salaris, *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*, 29.

43. Arturo Labriola, article first published in *Avanti*, and reprinted in *Poesia* 1 (November<n>December 1905); cited in Salaris, *Marinetti: Arte e vita futurista*, 28. “Molti di noi lo sanno frequentatore delle assemblee socialiste, delle radunate politiche, delle agitazioni popolari e partecipe anche di certi commovimenti nazionali, che rasentano lo stato rivoluzionario. Forse ci viene come esteta in cerca di emozioni e forse anche come un dubbioso ed uno scettico non tranquillo in cerca di fede. Ma certo non l’ha trovata, perché anzi il

---

conoscere quelle fedi novelle e il contatto delle folle esaltate hanno aggravato il suo pessimismo e reso piú amaro il sarcasmo col quale lo esprime.”

44. This essay is included in F. T. Marinetti, *Les dieux s'en vont, d'Annunzio reste* (Paris: E. Sansot, 1908), 87. “Hélas, les foules vivent dans une ignorance parfaite des poètes.”

45. Emile Verhaeren, *Les villes tentaculaires*, preceded by *Campagnes hallucinés* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1920).

46. F. T. Marinetti, *Destruction, poèmes lyriques* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1904), 124. “O plaines molles du passé, trempées de larmes, / hantées par les fantômes voûtés du souvenir, / je vous enjambe, sur mon train empanaché d'orguei . . .”

47. Marinetti, *Destruction*, 132. “Un choc lourd! . . . un grand trémoussement de charnières! . . . / Maudite carapace! Mon train est enchaîné! Je m'évade/ hors du train dont je brise la vitre ainsi qu'un loup / qui file, abandonnant sa queue<m>objet de luxe<m> / aux mâchoires d'un piège! Et j'entre dans la ville . . .”

48. Ibid., 133-34. “Aube sinistre et macérée d'angoisse! . . . Aube crispée! . . . [. . .] Les rues se gorgent de foule bitumeuse / embuée de ténèbres, qui semble secouer / péniblement la corpulence des façades. / [. . .] Des panaches croulants de lourde fumée grasse / engluent affreusement la cohue de la foule / qui développe autour de moi ses tentacules / de pieuvre colossale aux ventouses puantes . . . / Mâles et femelles . . . ils me ressemblent tous!”

49. Ibid., 134. “C'est toujours toi, Démon des Frénésies, / qui dévoras leurs faces . . . O la lèpre éternelle! . . . / . . . Comme moi? Comme moi! . . .”

50. Ibid., 129. “. . . dans cette ville contractée par la haine.”

51. Ibid., 130. “Serrez les freins! . . . les freins rompus? que faire? . . . / Il faut donc que je livre la frénésie hagarde/ de mon train aux glissières hostiles de la voie? . . .”

---

52. Jeffrey Schnapp convincingly differentiates between the ego-expanding, individuating thrill of accelerated movement when experienced from the point of view of the driver, who can envision himself as the author his own velocity, and the experience of the passenger, who often felt like a mere commodity, in “Crash,” 18-20.

53. Marinetti, *Destruction*, 134. “Nul ne sentait l’angoisse / et le poignant remords d’avoir ainsi perdu / ses traits . . . son masque . . . son visage, / aux mains d’un inconnu . . .”

54. *Ibid.*, 83. “. . . l’immense éteignoir / du ciel livide, qui écrase à loisir / tous mes désirs flambant droit . . .”

55. *Ibid.*, 80. “Là! . . . non, la vie est à brûler comme un falot de paille. / Il faut l’ingurgiter d’une lampée hardie, / tels ces jongleurs de foire qui vont mangeant du feu / d’un coup de langue, escamotant la Mort dans l’estomac! . . .”

56. *Ibid.*, 85. “Les revoilà! . . . les revoilà! . . . grandissant à miracle / leur allure agressive, de soubresaut en soubresaut, / montant toujours, par secousses dorées, / horriblement contre mes yeux, contre mon front, sans cesse, / tels des noyaux embrasés de comètes! . . .”

“Oh! l’angoisse cruelle! . . . et ce coeur qu’a-t-il donc / à bondir coup sur coup, / dans ma poitrine, dans ma gorge, entre mes dents? . . . / Hallucinants tramways, tout ruisselants de feu, / ah! roulez donc vos roues puissantes sur mon cœur, / broyez-le donc contre les rails, comme une taupe! . . .”

57. *Ibid.*, 84. “. . . ils sont innombrables, les grands yeux violets, / verts et rouges des fantasques tramways, / les grands yeux qui glissent, sombrent en foule, / et s’entre-choquent, entre-croisant leurs cils de feu . . .”

58. *Ibid.*, 225. “. . . au fond des rues que leur ladre industrie / plafonne de nuit de suie et de mortel ennui? . . .”

---

“De Ciel? . . . en voulez-vous, ô rats présomptueux? . . . / Le ciel n’est plus pour vous qu’un soupirail,/ grillé de fils téléphoniques!”

59. This essay, originally written on the occasion of Giuseppe Verdi’s funeral in Milan in 1901, was later reprinted in Marinetti, *Les dieux s’en vont*, 14-15.

<NEX> [At six in the morning, the time of Verdi’s funeral, Milan is] moins mathématique et moins crispant. Dès dix heures, Milan devient la gare d’une ville gigantesque qui n’existerait pas. C’est le règne de l’électricité et de la vapeur: sonneries, trompettes d’alarme, bicyclettes agressives, fumée et fracas. A Milan, il n’y a pas d’horizon, pas de ciel. A cette ville plate et murée comme un cachot, on a mis des barreaux de prison en guise de plafond: pour les tramways électriques dit-on; pour empêcher les bonds du génie, disent les malins. Le fait est qu’un artiste italien s’y trouve exilé, hors de l’Italie, et, pour ainsi dire, comme un poisson hors de l’eau. Avec des mailles de fer sur la tête, l’on se sent absolument comme dans un grand filet.

Oh! qu’il fait bon d’en sortire, en sautant en plein ciel, avec le déclanchement subit d’une anguille, pour tomber sur les plages divines de Gênes ou de Naples!

60. Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903), in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 326. Hal Foster also discusses Simmel’s theory of a protective shield, which predates that of Freud, in “Prosthetic Gods,” *Modernism/Modernity* 4 (April 1997): 14, 34n36.

61. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 328.

62. Several accounts of Marinetti composing poetry while swimming in the sea exist. See, for example, Tullio Panteo, *Il poeta Marinetti* (Milan: Società Editoriale Milanese, 1908), 174-75.

---

63. F. T. Marinetti, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” (1912), and “Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and the Numerical Sensibility” (1914), in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 92 and 105-6 respectively.

64. Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, and Gino Severini, *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters* (London: The Sackville Gallery, March 1912); reprinted in *Archivi del futurismo*, ed. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, vol. 1 (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958), 110.

65. Morasso, *La nuova arma*, 105-10.

66. Guido Ballo, *Boccioni: La vita e l’opera*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1982), 124.

67. Boccioni et al., *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters*, 109.

68. Maurizio Calvesi, “Dinamismo e simultaneità nella poetica futurista,” *L’arte moderna*, 5, nos. 37-45 (Milan: Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1967); cited in Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 122.

69. Boccioni executed two versions of this triptych, a first expressionist one in the spring and summer of 1911, followed by a Cubist-inflected one after his trip to Paris in the fall 1911. In the preparatory pencil drawings made for the second series, as well as in ink drawings and woodcuts made after this series, Boccioni renders the embracing couples in greater detail, revealing more distinctions between them. One of the drawings portrays a variety of old and young men and women, although the relations between them are difficult to read; in the woodcut, the embracing couple at the lower right comprises two men, suggesting a reference to male friendship and perhaps to homosexual desire. For reproductions of the drawing and woodcut, see Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni: L’opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 1983), no. 728 and no. 730. Such references, although not publicly acknowledged by the artist,

---

who performed the role of the ladies' man and boasted of his conquests, do seem to surface in a variety of ways in the artist's work. For an interpretation of homosexual desire as expressed in Boccioni's work, see William Valerio, *Boccioni's Fist: Italian Futurism and the Construction of Fascist Modernism* (PhD diss., Yale University, 1996).

70. Boccioni et al., *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters*, 109.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. Gino Severini, "Processo e difesa di un pittore d'oggi," *L'Arte* 5 (Rome) (September–November 1931); cited in Daniela Fonti, *Luce + velocità + rumore: La città di Gino Severini* (exhibition: Rome, Auditorium Parco della Musica) (Milan: Skira, 2005), 22.

<NEX>. . . questa tela aveva la smisurata ambizione di sorpassare assolutamente l'impressionismo, distruggendo l'unità di tempo e di luogo del soggetto. Invece di prendere l'oggetto nel suo ambiente, nella sua atmosfera, insieme agli oggetti o alle cose che gli erano vicini, io lo prendevo come un essere a parte, e lo riunivo ad altri oggetti o cose che apparentemente non avevano nulla a che fare con lui, ma in realtà gli erano legati dalla mia immaginazione, dai miei ricordi o da un sentimento. Nella stessa tela riunii l'Arco di Trionfo, la Tour Eiffel, le Alpi, la testa di mio padre, un autobus, il palazzo municipale di Pienza, il boulevard.

74. Fonti, *Luce + velocità + rumore: La città di Gino Severini*, 22.

75. Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 52-64.

76. Giovanni Lista, *Balla*, catalogue raisonné (Modena: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1982), 49.

77. F. T. Marinetti, "La mort tient le volant . . .," in *La ville charnelle* (Paris: E. Sansot,



---

1908), 228. “La folie souffla si violemment dans le pneumatique immensurable du circuit, qu’il prit la forme d’un colimaçon, montant en vis vers le Zénith.”

78. Giorgio Nicodemi, *Il dono di Carlo Grassi al Comune di Milano* (Milan: Comune di Milano, 1962), 124; cited in Giorgio De Marchis, *Balla* (exhibition: Paris, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris) (Rome: De Luca, 1972), 68.

79. Schnapp discusses this effect in “Crash,” 22-23.

80. Virginia Dortch Dorazio offers this reading of the projecting angles about a closely related painting by Balla. Her interpretation was informed by interviews with Balla’s daughters and represents the ideas of the artist, who elsewhere expressed his desire to render invisible forces palpable. See *Giacomo Balla: An Album of His Life and Work* (New York: Wittenborn, [1969]), n.p., cat. no. 107.

81. Marinetti, “La mort tient le volant . . . ,” 226. “. . . le coup de vent du démarrage.” *Spessori d’atmosfera* is the title of a lost 1913 work by Balla. For a reproduction, see Lista, *Balla*, 195, no. 310.

82. One of Balla’s paintings of a speeding automobile was exhibited in 1913-14 at the Esposizione Lacerba in Florence with the title *Disgregamento d’auto in corsa*. This work has not been securely identified. In 1913 and 1914, Balla also executed many works on the theme of “abstract velocity.”

83. Marinetti, *Destruction*, 135. “Autour de moi la foule automatique et bitumeuse / se mêle et se confond avec la houle de la mer.”

84. Marinetti, “Les funérailles d’un dieu,” in *Les dieux s’en vont*, 11-27.

85. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920, rev. 1921), trans. James Strachey (New York: Liveright Publishing, 1950), 3-4. Freud and Breuer first discussed the

---

“constancy principle” in *Studies in Hysteria* of 1895.

86. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 7-10.

87. *Ibid.*, 9.

88. *Ibid.*, 11-17.

89. *Ibid.*, 31.

90. *Ibid.*, 32.

91. Lacan’s theory that the ego of a young child begins to form in relation to a mirror image that provides an anticipatory view of a unified and coherent self—although one that is alienated and already “other” (reversed, framed, distanced)—is also relevant here. Lacan points out that the child responds to the imaginary coherence of its image with joy. However, the subsequent “armoring” of the self first intimated in the mirror stage requires repeated acts of binding a fantasized “body-in-pieces,” which results in a rigid body-ego image and leads to aggression toward others. Here the defensive erection of a unified, armored ego-image results in both pleasure at self-mastery and in hostility. See Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage,” in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 2-4. Foster theorizes that the notion of an armored self articulated here may be specific to the historical period of Fascism, rather than universal. See “Prosthetic Gods,” 9-10, 32nn14, 19.

92. Marinetti, “La mort tient le volant . . . ,” 223-29.

93. *Ibid.*, 228-29.

<NEX>Plus vite que le vent! Plus vite que la foudre! . . . Plus vite que le curaro lancé dans le circuit des veines! . . . [. . .] Il s’agit de vouloir! Se détache que veut! . . . Monte au ciel qui désire! . . . Triomphe qui croit! . . . Il faut croire et vouloir! . . . O désire, ô désir, éternelle magnéto! . . . Et toi, ma volonté torride, grand carburateur de rêves! . . .

---

Transmission de mes nerfs, embrayant les orbites planétaires!... Instinct divinateur, ô boîte des vitesses! . . . O mon coeur explosif et détonnant, qui t'empêche de terrasser la Mort? . . . Qui te défend de commander à l'Impossible? . . . Et rends-toi immortel, d'un coup de volonté! . . .

94. On Marinetti's simultaneous desire to shatter the ego and to develop a stimulus shield, see the discussion by Hal Foster in "Prosthetic Gods." For an analysis of Walter Benjamin's concern with the *anaestheticizing* of modern experience, caused by the alienation and deadening of the shocked senses, and his related denunciation of Marinetti's ability to take pleasure in his own destruction, see Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 3-41.

95. F. T. Marinetti, letter to Gino Severini of 20 November 1914, in *Archivi del futurismo*, 349. "Voglio parlare di una espressione ampia, non limitata a un piccolo cerchio di intenditori; di una espressione talmente forte e sintetica da colpire l'immaginazione e l'occhio di tutti o di quasi tutti i lettori intelligenti. [. . .] ma credo che la grandissima guerra, vissuta intensamente dai pittori futuristi, possa produrre nella loro sensibilità delle vere convulsioni, spingendoli a una semplificazione brutale di linee chiarissime, spingendoli insomma a colpire e ad incitare i lettori, come essa colpisce e incita i combattenti."

## <I>Chapter 2. *Folla/Follia*: Futurism and the Crowd

1. In *Psychologie des foules* (Paris: Alcan, 1895); translated as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896; repr., London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1952), 102.

2. F. T. Marinetti, "The Birth of a Futurist Aesthetic," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun

---

and Moon Classics, 1991), 88; “La guerre électrique,” in F. T. Marinetti, *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L’Âge d’Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 134. “. . . le droit de grève, l’égalité devant la loi, l’autorité du nombre, la force usurpante de la foule, la vitesse des communications internationales. [. . .]”

3. George Rudé points out that the term *mob* derives from the Latin *mobile vulgus*, a term that associates a fickle “mobility” with the masses, thereby revealing more about the fears of the possessing classes than about the characteristics of the crowd. See *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), 252-53.

4. F. T. Marinetti, “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation” (11 March 1916), in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 151; “La declamazione dinamica e sinottica,” in *TIF*, 123. “Ho sperimentato sufficientemente la femminilità delle folle e la debolezza della verginità collettiva, nell’imporre i versi liberi futuristi.”

5. F. T. Marinetti, “Les émeutes milanaises de mai 1898,” *La Revue Blanche* 22 (15 August 1900): 569. “Tous les établissements industriels furent évacués ainsi, suivant la psychologie des foules.” Marinetti probably met Sighele through the latter’s prominent role in the founding of the Nationalist Association in 1910. In the fall of 1911, Marinetti traveled with Sighele and several Italian and French journalists to Libya to cover the war. Giovanni Lista reproduces a photograph of the group taken in Bu-Meliana by Sighele in *Cinema e fotografia futurista* (Geneva and Milan: Skira, 2001), 135.

6. Marinetti, “Les émeutes milanaises,” 561. “. . . des forces psychologiques à la fois lointaines et complexes.”

7. *Ibid.*, 564. “Voilà des événements impressionnants que (outre la famine) les horizons,

---

le climat, les atavismes expliquent.”

8. Ibid., 575. “. . . nul pays au monde ne se prête moins que l’Italie à une réforme sociale par voie de faits révolutionnaires.”

9. Marinetti offered this gloss on his play in his essay “Beyond Communism,” written after he and Mussolini were defeated by the Socialists in the November 1919 elections, and at a time when Mussolini was rejecting the libertarian elements of their political platform. See F. T. Marinetti, “Al di là del Comunismo,” in *TIF*, 485. See also Antonella Nuzzaci’s analysis of this later interpretation by Marinetti in *Il teatro futurista: Genesi, linguaggi, tecniche* (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 1995), 12-16.

10. Antonella Nuzzaci makes this point in *Il teatro futurista*, 14.

11. Letter in French by F. T. Marinetti, of summer 1905, to Giovanni Pascoli. Published in *Marinetti et le futurisme: Études, documents, iconographies*, ed. Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L’Âge d’Homme, 1976), 63. “Avec un intarissable pessimisme sur l’irréductible imbécillité populaire et sur la férocité de la nature humaine, j’y démontre burlesquement la victoire tragique et fatale de l’individualisme idéaliste sur la masse brutale. Bref, je conclus avec la faillite du socialisme, la gloire de l’anarchie et la complète ridiculisation des bonimenteurs, réformistes et autres “marmitons du Bonheur universel.” Lista also reprints part of this letter in his excellent analysis of *Le Roi Bombance*. See *F. T. Marinetti: L’anarchiste du futurisme* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Séguier, 1995), 43-46.

12. In “Electrical War” (1911) Marinetti proclaimed the need “to create an artificial optimism against chronic pessimism.” See preface, this volume, note 10.

13. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio; trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston:

---

MFA Publications, 2001), 22; “Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 48. “Noi canteremo le grandi folle agitate dal lavoro, dal piacere o dalla sommossa: canteremo le maree multicolori e polifoniche delle rivoluzioni nelle capitali moderne; canteremo il vibrante fervore notturno degli arsenali e dei cantieri incendiati da violente lune elettriche; . . . e il volo scivolante degli aeroplani, la cui elica garrisce al vento come una bandiera e sembra applaudire come una folla entusiasta.”

14. For more information on this monument and its place within the larger complex of sarcophagi to the Scaligeri, see Fernanda de Maffei, *Le arche Scaligere di Verona* (Verona: Edizioni “La Nave,” [1966]). De Maffei sees the equestrian monument to Cansignorio as an inferior copy of a monument Bonino da Campione had executed twenty years earlier for Bernabò Visconti, and therefore as a workshop product.

15. One can compare this subject and its treatment to another drawing on a theme with class ramifications that Boccioni executed in 1908: *The Mining Disaster of Rabdob in Westfalia*. Published on 22 November 1908 in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, this drawing depicts the anguish of the miners' wives and children before the bodies of the dead men, laid out on the ground in a row and sheathed in white. Although overcome by grief, this crowd does not succumb to violence or hysteria. For a reproduction of this drawing, see Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 1983), 259, no. 352.

16. “Universal manhood suffrage” was only enacted in 1912 and exercised for the first time in the elections of 1913.

17. Significantly, the artist joined the Futurist movement after attending a serata in Milan, where Marinetti and a few other poets harangued their audience with a combination of patriotic, bellicose, and avant-garde rhetoric. Marinetti seems to have fulfilled the role of the heroic,

---

dynamic leader Boccioni sought.

18. For an excellent discussion of the development of crowd theory, especially as it emerges out of the French context of nineteenth-century social philosophy and literature, see Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

19. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 23.

20. *Ibid.*, 28.

21. *Ibid.*, 35-36.

22. Freud took Le Bon's theories as a point of departure for his book of 1921, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Freud praised many aspects of Le Bon's study of the crowd, including his "identification of the group mind with the mind of primitive people" (11). Yet Freud also points out that Le Bon's understanding of the unconscious does not coincide with his own, which, in addition to residues of the "archaic heritage" of the human mind, comprises the "unconscious repressed." See *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 6-7, and 7n1.

23. Scipio Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), 4. "... la folla<m->come la donna<m->ha una psicologia *estrema*, capace di tutti gli eccessi, forse capace solo di eccessi, mirabile alle volte di abnegazione, spaventosa spesso di ferocia, mai o quasi mai mediocre e misurata nei suoi sentimenti." See also the final chapter of *La coppia-criminale: Studio di psicologia morbosa* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1893; 2nd ed., 1897; 3rd. ed., 1909). Also relevant are Sighele's other books on the criminal crowd: *La folla delinquente* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1891), and *I delitti della folla* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1902).

24. Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla*, 66. "La psicologia collettiva,<m->in questo simile

---

alla psicologia femminile (mi perdonino le signore) è fatta di crudeltà e di contraddizioni, e passa, o meglio, salta, velocissimamente da un dato sentimento al sentimento opposto.”

25. Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla*, 87. “La folla insomma è una collettività eminentemente *barbara* ed *atavica*: il pubblico è una collettività eminentemente *civile* e *moderna*.”

26. Ibid., 87. “. . . orda selvaggia,” “informe agglomerato umana.”

27. Ester Coen notes that this painting was first exhibited with the title *Una baruffa* in late 1910 and early 1911 at the Famiglia Artistica in Milan, where a critic for *La Perseveranza* observed: “*The Brawl* is set under an arcade near a café; the crowd runs, it gets excited, thereby exciting the shadows under the arc lamps.” In late 1916, the painting was reproduced in the catalogue of a posthumous retrospective of Boccioni’s work held in Milan under the title *La Rissa* [*The Riot*]. In the exhibition checklist however, it appears under the title *Baruffa in galleria* (*Brawl in the Galleria*). The painting acquired its present title only in 1952. For a discussion of the title and exhibition history of this painting, see Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 93-94. It is likely that Marinetti was responsible for changing the title in 1916, thereby giving the violence depicted in the work more political resonance than it initially had. Although the painting is consonant with Marinetti’s enthusiasm for violence and for the crowd as phenomena characteristic of modernity, as originally conceived *La baruffa* did not directly address the rhetoric and demands of the irredentist movement in Italy.

28. This painting, now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, was formerly owned by Louis Lépine, prefect of police in Paris. Lépine purchased this painting on the occasion of the Futurist exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris (February 1912). His



---

memoirs, published in 1929, contain numerous accounts of the violence of crowds. See *Mes souvenirs* (Paris: Payot, 1929).

29. Marinetti, “Les émeutes milanaises,” 567. “Vers huit heures du soir, sur la vaste place du Dôme, toute incendiée de petites lunes électriques, une marée humaine, hérissée de poings brandis et de clameurs, déferlait.”

30. *Ibid.*, 569. “Milan haletait, toutes ses fenêtres ouvertes en une atmosphère exaspérée de lumière et d’attente.” The trope of the electrified crowd was common in nineteenth-century literature. In “The Painter of Modern Life,” Baudelaire writes: “Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy.” See *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 400. Baudelaire’s fascination with the crowd, as well as that of Gabriele D’Annunzio, Edgar Allan Poe, and other Decadent writers, is analyzed by Barbara Spackman in *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D’Annunzio* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), chap. 2.

31. Boccioni dated and numbered this and the subsequent sketch “18 April 1911 U.B. I” and “18 April 1911 U.B. II” respectively. Neither the sketches nor the oil painting now called *The Riot* were exhibited in Boccioni’s lifetime, and we therefore do not have the artist’s title or any contemporary critical commentary on this work. This painting entered the collection of Boccioni’s friend Vico Baer in 1911. When first exhibited in 1924, it was titled *La retata* (*The Raid*, or *The Police Raid*).

32. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters,” dated 11 February 1910 and signed by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, although Boccioni is credited with being its major author. In *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 25.

---

33. Umberto Boccioni, “Genio e cultura” (1916), in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. Zeno Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 226. “La gloria! Ah! La gloria! . . . Sono forte! Sono giovane! Posso affrontare tutto! . . . Oh! divina luce elettrica! . . . Sole . . . Elettrizzare le folle! Incendiarle! Dominare! . . .”

34. Gabriel Tarde, *Les lois de l'imitation* (Paris: Félix Alcan, Editeur, 1890; 2nd ed. 1895); *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons, from the 2nd French ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 1903), 2-3.

35. Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, 7-8. Similar analogies occur throughout Tarde’s book. On page 11 we read: “Imitation plays a role in societies analogous to that of heredity in organic life or to that of vibration among inorganic bodies.”

36. *Ibid.*, 12.

37. *Ibid.*, 87.

38. *Ibid.*, 79.

39. *Ibid.*, 80.

40. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 30.

41. *Ibid.*, 31.

42. In addition to *Les lois de l'imitation*, Sighele also cites the following works by Tarde: *Les crimes des foules* (Lyons: Storck, 1892) and “Foules et sectes au point de vue criminel,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 November 1893).

43. Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla*, 8. “. . . la fisonomia esprime assai bene le emozioni dell’anima, e le può esprimere non in un modo vago ed indefinito, ma definito e preciso: si può leggere sul volto di una persona la gioia, la paura, l’odio, quasi tutti gli affetti del cuore.”

44. Tarde, cited in *ibid.* “. . . è una legge universale in tutto il regno della vita intelligente

---

che la rappresentazione d'uno stato emozionale provoca la nascita di quest'identico stato in colui che ne è testimoniaio.”

45. Sighele quotes Maudsley in *L'intelligenza della folla* (8), but does not give a reference. In *Les lois de l'imitation* (87), Tarde also quotes Maudsley, citing Henry Maudsley, *La pathologie de l'esprit*, trans. Garmont (Paris: Georges Baillièrè, 1883), 73. The original English version was published as *The Pathology of Mind: A Study of Its Distempers, Deformities, and Disorders*, 3rd ed. of the second part of *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (London: Macmillan, 1879).

46. Robert A. Nye makes this point about Gustave Le Bon in *The Origins of Crowd Psychology* (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1975), 70-71.

47. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 31.

48. *Ibid.*, 54.

49. *Ibid.*, 39.

50. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 73.

51. For an illuminating analysis of fascist formations of mass subjectivity and their links to prewar prototypes, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Staging Fascism: 18 BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

52. Balbo crossed the Atlantic twice: first in 1930-31 in a flight from Italy to Brazil (10,400 kilometers) in six stages, with twelve hydroplanes and forty-four men; then again in 1933 in a flight to the United States, with twenty-four hydroplanes and about one hundred military personnel. The first crossing comprised Balbo in a I-Balb hydroplane, at the head of a squadron of Siai S.55 hydroplanes, the first four painted (Fascist) black, followed by eight in the

---

colors of the Italian flag. The longest stage of the crossing consisted of eighteen consecutive hours of flight in formation, a severe test of endurance; as Balbo noted of his earlier collective crossings in the Mediterranean, such feats substituted the “freedom, speed and security” of solitary flight with the demand for “permanent control, not only of the self, but also of others.” Italo Balbo, *Da Roma à Odessa sui cieli dell’Egeo e del Mar Nero: Note di viaggio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1930), 198-99; cited in Mario Isnengi, *L’Italia del fascio* (Florence: Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 1996), 244.

53. Linda Landis, “Futurists at War,” in *The Futurist Imagination*, ed. Anne Coffin Hanson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1983), 60-75.

54. Most of these fragments were culled from articles published in *Lacerba*, including several of Carrà’s own prior manifestos, and the free-word poems of Marinetti.

55. Oliver Shell, *Cleansing the Nation: Italian Art, Consumerism, and World War I* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998), chap. 2.

56. Carlo Carrà, *Guerrapittura* (Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di “Poesia,” 1915), 51. “La folla, la plebe, non intenderà mai l’uomo superiore. Lasciamo alla massa i suoi balordi guidatori. Noi abbiamo sempre insolentita [*sic*] la folla.”

57. Similarly, in his manifesto “Battaglie di Trieste” (April->June 1910), Marinetti proclaimed: “In politics, we are very far from international and antipatriotic socialism<m->ignoble exaltation of the rights of the stomach . . . ,” in *TIF*, 249. “In politica, siamo tanto lontani dal socialismo internazionalista e antipatriottico<m->ignobile esaltazione dei diritti del ventre.”

58. Remo Chiti, “Words,” in *Futurist Performance*, ed. Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 258.

---

59. David Lloyd Dowd discusses the important symbolic role attributed to morning rays of light in the pageants organized by David to celebrate the French Revolution in *Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1948), 111. According to David's plan: "All Frenchmen who wish[ed] to celebrate the Festival of Unity and of Indivisibility [were to] rise before the dawn, so that the touching scene of their gathering [might] be illumined by the sun's first rays . . . [which were to] be for them the symbol of Truth to which they would address their songs of praise."

60. In his book of 1911, *Political Parties*, Roberto Michels analyzed the strategy adopted by traditional monarchies to affirm their power: "The logical basis of every monarchy resides in an appeal to God. God is brought down from heaven to serve as a buttress to the monarchical stronghold, furnishing it with its foundation of constitutional law<m->the grace of God" (43). With the rise of mass democracies, however, Michels observes that this appeal may be supplemented with an appeal to the popular will: "Our age has destroyed once and for all the ancient and rigid forms of aristocracy, has destroyed them, at least, in certain important regions of political constitutional life. . . . Where its power is still comparatively unrestricted, as in Germany, it appeals exclusively to the grace of God. But when, as in Italy, it feels insecure, it adds to the appeal to the deity an appeal to the popular will" (44). See *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1962). Michels was already living in Turin when he first published this influential book in German, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der Modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die Oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt, 1911). It appeared in Italian the following year, as *La sociologia del partito politico nella democrazia moderna: Studi sulle tendenze oligarchiche degli aggregati politici*,

---

trans. Alfredo Polledro (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1912).

61. Barbara Spackman discusses this passage from D'Annunzio's novel in *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 99-101.

62. Enrico Cavacchioli, "Rivoluzione," in *Cavalcando il sole*, section titled "A gola spalancata!" (Milan: "Poesia," 1914); reprinted in *I poeti del futurismo, 1909-1944*, ed. Glauco Viazzi (Milan: Longanesi, 1978), 139.

63. In his essay "Les émeutes milanaises," Marinetti wrote that he had visited the barricades in the center of Milan, but then decided "to avoid the mishap of being hit by a stray bullet. So I went home and observed the drama from above from my balcony" (pour éviter la malechance d'une balle perdue. Je rentrais chez moi, pour contempler du haut de mon balcon le drame") (571). Günter Berghaus discusses this essay in *The Genesis of Futurism: Marinetti's Early Career and Writings, 1899-1909* (Leeds: The Society for Italian Studies, 1995), 9-10.

64. F. T. Marinetti, "The Variety Theater," (29 September 1913), in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 126; "Il teatro di varietà," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 180. "E poiché il pubblico collabora così colla fantasia degli attori, l'azione si svolge a un tempo sul palcoscenico, nei palchi e nella platea."

65. The term *fisicofollia* occurs in Marinetti's manifesto "The Variety Theater," where it opposes conventional psychology. In *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 128.

66. Marinetti, "Les émeutes milanaises," 566. "Quand j'arrivai devant l'établissement, MM. Rondani et Turati, députés socialistes, avaient obtenu du questeur ce que réclamait la foule. Ils venaient exhorter les factieux au calme. Turati, le geste bref et monotone, parlait. . . . Puis la foule s'éparpilla."

---

67. Marinetti, “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 151 (translation amended); “La declamazione dinamica e sinottica,” in *TIF*, 123.

<NEX>Questa declamazione passatista, anche quando è sorretta dai più meravigliosi organi vocali e dai temperamenti più forti, si riduce sempre ad una inevitabile monotonia di alti e di bassi, a un andirivieni di gesti [. . .] Per troppo tempo, io mi sono divertito a sedurli e a commuoverli meglio e con maggior sicurezza di tutti gli altri declamatori di Europa, introducendo nei loro cervelli ottusi le immagini più strabilianti, accarezzandoli con raffinatissimi spasimi di voce, con mollezza e brutalità vellutate finché, domati dal mio sguardo o allucinati da un mio sorriso, essi sentivano il bisogno femminile di applaudire ciò che non avevano capito e che non amavano.

68. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 112-13.

69 Ibid., 64.

70. Ibid., 68.

71. Ibid., 66.

72. Marinetti cites Sorel’s ideas three times in “Democrazia futurista” of 1919, reprinted in *TIF*, 345-469. In one section, he derides him for not being more critical toward German transcendental philosophy, exemplified by Kant and Hegel (to whom Marinetti compares Sorel), and for confusing art, philosophy, and religion. Marinetti asserts that philosophy and religion are two police headquarters created by fear, proposing instead the Futurist formula “art-action.” In a section of the text that reproduces in revised form Marinetti’s 1910 “Discorso sulla bellezza e la necessità della violenza,” Sorel is associated positively with an anti-intellectual attitude. See “Democrazia futurista,” *TIF*, 364-65, 448.

73. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: Peter Smith,

---

1941), 130-31. Sorel's book, first published in French in 1908, comprised a number of articles that had appeared previously in the Italian review *Il Divenire Sociale*.

74. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 137.

75. *Ibid.*, 145.

76. After the failed general strikes of 1904 and 1908, Sorel's faith in a working-class victory began to falter; instead, he came to envision a united, "proletarian" nation, whose forces would be galvanized through colonial conquests and war against "bourgeois nations," a position that brought him closer to Marinetti. For further discussion of Sorel's transformation from syndicalist to nationalist, see Zeev Sternhell, with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Giovanni Lista, "Marinetti et les anarcho-syndicalistes," in *Présence de Marinetti*, ed. Jean-Claude Marcadé (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1982), 74-83; and Mark Antliff, "The Fourth Dimension and Futurism: A Politicized Space," *Art Bulletin* 82 (December 2000): 720-33.

77. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 136-37.

78. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 66.

79. F. T. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (11 May 1912), in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 93; "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 106. "L'analogia non è altro che l'amore profondo che collega le cose distanti, apparentemente diverse ed ostili."

80. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," 93; "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 106. "Esempio: Uomo-torpediniera, donna-golfo, folla-risacca . . . bisogna fondere direttamente l'oggetto coll'immagine che esso evoca,



---

dando l'immagine in iscorcio mediante una sola parola essenziale.”

81. Marinetti, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature,” 97; “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 112. “ODIARE L’INTELLIGENZA, ridestando in voi la divina intuizione, dono caratteristico delle razze latine.”

82. Marinetti, “Destruction of Syntax<m->Imagination without Strings<m->Words-in-Freedom,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 98.

83. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 124.

84. Marinetti, “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 151; “La declamazione dinamica e sinottica,” in *TIF*, 124. “. . . spasmosa e completa umanizzazione dell’universo.”

85. Marinetti, “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation,” 151-52.

86. *Ibid.*, 152.

87. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 107.

88. *Ibid.*, 61-62.

89. *Ibid.*, 69.

90. This collage was published in *Lacerba* on 1 August 1914. Many other Futurist collages and typographically innovative free-word poems appeared in this journal as well. For a discussion of Carrà’s *Patriotic Festival* and its publication in *Lacerba*, see Christine Poggi, “*Lacerba*: Interventionist Art and Politics in Pre<n->World War I Italy,” in *Art and Journals on the Political Front, 1910-1940*, ed. Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 41-44.

91. For a discussion of the proliferation of crowd imagery in popular Fascist journals, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “The Mass Panorama,” *Modernism/Modernity* 9 (April 2002): 243-81.

---

<I>Chapter 3. Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises*: Picturing the Futurist Metropolis

1. In “Ce déplorable Ruskin,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 94. “L'on ne parle pas assez du formidable développement industriel et commerçant de la Lombardie, de la Ligurie et du Piémont,<m-  
>Milan, Gênes, Turin! Voilà pourtant la nouvelle Italie renaissante, voilà ce que nous aimons!”

2. Diary entry of 29 May 1907, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 245. “A Milano ci vado con l'intenzione rapace di vincere e conquistarla.”

3. Boccioni, letter to a lady friend (probably Ines), 1910 (but listed as 1911), in Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, eds., *Archivi del futurismo*, vol. 1 (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958), 233. “In grande, come sempre, ho moltiplicato l'ispirazione e il quadro è divenuto più popolato più violento di prima. La folla è aumentata e spero di dare in tutte anche alla più piccola figura quel senso di *andare fatale* che hanno le folle che lavorano.”

4. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 22; “Fondazione e Manifesto el futurismo,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 48. “Noi canteremo le grandi folle agitate dal lavoro, dal piacere o dalla sommossa; canteremo le maree multicolori e polifoniche delle rivoluzioni nelle capitali moderne; [. . .] le officine appese alle nuvole pei contorti fili dei loro fumi; i ponti simili a ginnasti giganti che scavalcano i fiumi, balenanti al sole con un luccichio di coltelli; [. . .] le locomotive dall'ampio petto, che scalpitano sulle rotaie, come enormi cavalli d'acciaio imbrigliati di tubi.”

5. Marinetti, Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo, “Against Past-Loving Venice,” in F. T.

---

Marinetti, *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 63 (translation amended); “Contro Venezia passatista,” in *TIF*, 33-34.

<NEX>Noi ripudiamo l'antica Venezia estenuata e sfatta da voluttà secolari, che noi pure amammo e possedemmo in un gran sogno nostalgico.

Ripudiamo la Venezia dei forestieri, mercato di antiquari falsificatori, calamita dello snobismo e dell'imbecillità universali, letto sfondato da carovane di amanti, semicupio ingemmato per cortigiane cosmopolite, cloaca massima del passatismo.

Noi vogliamo guarire e cicatrizzare questa città putrescente, piaga magnifica del passato. [. . .]

Noi vogliamo preparare la nascita di una Venezia industriale e militare che possa dominare il mare Adriatico, gran lago Italiano. [. . .]

Bruciamo le gondole, poltrone a dondolo per cretini, e innalziamo fino al cielo l'imponente geometria dei ponti metallici e degli opifici chiomati di fumo, per abolire le curve cascanti delle vecchie architetture.

Venga finalmente il regno della divina Luce Elettrica, a liberare Venezia dal suo venale chiaro di luna da camera ammobigliata.

6. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 173; *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, 3. “. . . sempre per tutti gli italiani la centrale delle energie e degli ottimismo d'Italia.”

7. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” 176; *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, 7. “Scapigliatura gioconda di versi dialettali beffatori ironici scollacciatissimi che nello scaraventare lontano ogni riservatezza di linguaggio sperano far sconfinare la marciante

---

città e contro i pudibondi astemi infagottati imporre nell'arte e nella vita i ventosi orizzonti.”

8. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” 176. *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, 10.

<NEX>Tra le grazie rurali e signorili della antica vita milanese di mezzatinta sfumatura in conciliabolo con fiori e sogni ecco s'impianta la burbera poesia fragorosa della Grande Industria Metallurgica

Snocciolamento di salari eccitanti

La turbinosa rissa dei torni e delle ruote.

Tribù tribù tribù di fumi sublimi pellirosse s'impadroniscono di più della metà dell'orizzonte un dì familiare

Sconfinante vocione scarlatto degli altiforni tronfi

Il tono finanziario deride le gemebonde campane a dondolo di lagrime medioevali

[. . .]

Solenne sgomitamento di bitumi in cielo e notte mattina sera lento dilagare e riassorbirsi di colate di operai

9. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” 176; *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, 10. “Gli echi milanesi non sono più conchiglie alabastrine orecchie di bambine colle dolci manine sui baffoni del nonno ma pareti di case senza occhi alte cento metri e affumicate di Destino.”

10. Marinetti, “La guerre électrique,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 134-35. “. . . le noctambulisme du travail et du plaisir n'a-t-il pas déjà presque fondu ensemble le jour et la nuit?”

11. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” 174; *La grande Milano*

---

*tradizionale e futurista*, 4. “. . . lo Sciopero questo profeta della rivoluzioni.”

12. Marinetti, “Great Traditional and Futurist Milan,” 177; *La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista*, 22. “Prepotente prepotente poesia delle dure Acciaierie Breda.”

13. Marinetti, “La guerre électrique,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 135-36.

<NEX> “Rien n’est plus beau que l’échafaudage d’une maison en construction.”

L’échafaudage, avec ses passerelles couleur de danger, embarcadères d’aéroplanes, ses innombrables bras griffant et peignant étoiles et comètes, ses dunettes aériennes et d’où l’oeil embrasse un horizon plus vaste . . . L’échafaudage avec le rythme des poulies, des marteaux et d’heure en heure le cri déchirant et le choc lourd d’un maçon qui tombe, grosse goutte de sang sur le pavé . . . l’échafaudage, symbolise notre brûlante passion pour le devenir des choses. Fi des choses réalisées et construites, bivouacs de sommeil et de lâcheté! Nous n’aimons que l’immense échafaudage, mouvant et passionné, que nous saurons consolider à chaque instant, toujours différemment, selon les allures changeantes des rafales, avec le rouge ciment de nos corps pétris de volonté. (ellipses in original)]

14. Virgilio Vercelloni, “La città e l’idea di città,” in *Milano nell’ Italia liberale, 1898-1922*, ed. Giorgio Rumi, Adele Carla Buratti, and Alberto Cova (Milan: Cariplo, 1993), 177-79.

15. Vercelloni, “La città e l’idea di città,” 189-91.

16. Boccioni, letter to Gino Severini, October or November 1907, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 338. “. . . una città che fa onore all’Italia anzi la rappresenta lei sola.”

17. Boccioni, diary entry of 14 March 1907, in *ibid.*, 235-36. “Sono stato in campagna per lavorare e non ho trovato nulla. Le solite linee mi stancano, mi nauseano sono stufo di campi e di cassette. . . . Bisogna che mi confessi che cerco, cerco, cerco, e non trovo. Troverò? Ieri ero stanco della gran città, oggi la desidero ardentemente. Domani cosa vorrò? Sento che voglio

---

dipingere il nuovo, il frutto del nostro tempo industriale. Sono nauseato di vecchi muri, di vecchi palazzi, di vecchi motivi di reminescenze: voglio avere sott'occhio la vita di oggi.”

18. Boccioni, diary entry of 14 March 1907, in *ibid.*, 236. “I campi, la quiete, le casette, il bosco, i visi rossi e forti, le membra dei lavoratori, i cavalli stanchi ecc. tutto questo emporio de sentimentalismo moderno mi hanno stancato. Anzi, tutta l’arte moderna mi pare vecchia. Voglio del nuovo, dell’espressivo, del formidabile! Vorrei cancellare tutti i valori che conoscevo che conosco e che sto perdendo di vista, per rifare, ricostruire su nuove basi! Tutto il passato, meravigliosamente grande, m’opprime io voglio del nuovo!”

19. In a diary entry dated 1 February 1908, the artist records his disappointment: “La testata per *Il Lavoro Italiano* dopo ripetuti cambiamenti e correzioni me è stata rifiutata.” (The letterhead for *Lavoro Italiano* after repeated changes and corrections was refused.) In *ibid.*, 277.

20. Boccioni, diary entry of 17 October 1907, in *ibid.*, 265.

21. Boccioni, diary entry of 13 November 1907, in *ibid.*, 267. “Ho battuto alla porta di tutti gli Stabilimenti industriali senza trovar da far nulla. Ricordi non è contento delle copertine che io ho fatto con grande cura. Chiattonne promette molto ma non capisco come uno stabilimento così grande non abbia nulla per me. . . . Ma mancano i denari per tutto.”

22. Boccioni, diary entry of 5 April 1908, in *ibid.*, 300. “Alla fine del mese mi tocca di lasciare la camera. Forse andrò da mammà ma ho paura di non resisterci . . . Come farò a trovare l’energia di muovermi dal centro per la campagna?” (ellipsis in original).

23. Boccioni, diary entry of 13 May 1908, in *ibid.*, 305. “In quella casa ho finito un autoritratto che mi lascia completamente indifferente.”

24. Twenty-four nations participated in the 1906 Exposition, which comprised pavilions devoted to industrial arts, agriculture, fine arts, hygiene, and aeronautics. Also included was an

---

exhibition celebrating the modern transformation of Milan, with maps, plans, photographs, statistical tables, and models of the first workers' quarters, renovated school buildings, the network providing potable water, the sewage system, the network of electric plants and lines, and so forth, all destined to demonstrate the "gradual and truly imposing [development] of the city in the last twenty years." See the discussion and citation in Ornella Selvafolta, "Le strutture per un progetto di modernità," in *Milano nell' Italia liberale*, 215.

25. *Factories at Porta Romana* was included in neither the Famiglia Artistica exhibition of December 1909, in which the artist showed both *Morning* and *Twilight*, nor in Boccioni's one-man show organized by Nino Barbantini at Ca' Pesaro in Venice, which opened on 16 July 1910. Barbantini requested the most recent works for the latter show, and Boccioni agreed. (See the letter from Boccioni to Barbantini of 21 June 1910, cited in Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa* [Milan: Electa, 1983], 314.) This strongly suggests the painting was not yet completed. In style and subject, the painting belongs to the transitional period of spring/summer 1910. Probably because it was quickly superseded by *The City Rises* and other more explicitly Futurist works, it was not exhibited until December 1916, in the retrospective held after Boccioni death.

26. For a comparison of Boccioni's *Factories at the Porta Romana* to Mario Sironi's far more pessimistic postwar images of Milan's industrial periphery, see Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chap. 3.

27. Flavio Fergonzi makes this connection in *The Mattioli Collection: Masterpieces of the Italian Avant-Garde* (Milan: Skira; New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2003), 148. Ada Masoero also emphasizes the importance of Previati's two triptychs, which

---

Boccioni would also have seen at the Italian Divisionist exhibition in Paris in 1907. See *Umberto Boccioni: La città che sale* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), 12-13.

28. Umberto Boccioni, *Pittura e scultura futuriste (Dinamismo plastico)* (1914), ed. Zeno Birolli (Milan: SE SRL, 1997), 109. “La luce, che è una qualità dell’atmosfera ed ha sempre forme e volumi definibili e perciò plasmabili. . . . Questa corrente di luce è considerata nel quadro futurista come una direzione di forma che si può disegnare, che vive come forma e che ha il valore tangibile di qualsiasi altro oggetto.”

29. Arturo Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, 2nd ed. (Lugano: Egisto Cagnoni, Società Editrice “Avanguardia,” 1906), 114. “Il nemico è la libertà di contratto, la quale permette che il lavoratore, stretto dal bisogno, accetti tutte le condizioni, che il capitalista reputa interesse suo imporre all’operaio.”

30. Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, 116-17. “. . . il diritto dell’essere umano.”

31. Boccioni, letter to Nino Barbantini, September 1910, in *Archivi del futurismo*, 1986, 36. “Ho quasi finito tre lavori. Un quadro di metri 3 x 2 dove ho cercato una gran sintesi del lavoro, della luce e del movimento. E forse un lavoro di transizione *e credo uno degli ultimi!*”

32. Virginia Spate, “Mother and Son: Boccioni’s Painting and Sculpture, 1906-1915,” in *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity*, ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 122-23.

33. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 24; Marinetti, “Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 50. “Ritti sulla cima del mondo, noi scagliamo, una volta ancora, la nostra sfida alle stelle!”

34. Boccioni, diary entry of 17 October 1907, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 265. “Il quadro è questo. Nei pannelli laterali i due figli. Uno lavora e interroga la scienza; dalla finestra



---

si vede la vita moderna. L'altra lavora al lume della lampada e dalla finestra si vede un cielo di sera nuvoloso e la luna che occhieggia. Nel pannello centrale la madre stanca con due figure ai lati simboleggianti gli affetti dei figli, le due adorazioni. Una dolce, femminile e le bacia la mano con devozione, l'altra più fiera in atto di corrucchio e di difesa virile. Sfondo: tramonto chiesa e rovine.”

35. Umberto Boccioni, “Pene dell’anima, prologo, Romanzo fisiologicol-sociale-filosofico del XXXXII secolo,” in Maurizio Calvesi, Ester Coen, and Antonella Greco, *Boccioni prefuturista* (exhibition: Rome, Palazzo Venezia) (Milan: Electa, 1983), 44. “Incertezza! Questo è il premio, allorché voi ingaggiate la lotta sapete ciò che vi aspetta, sapete d’essere il più debole di cadere. Ciononostante accettate, combattete e perite! Lotta titanica del pigmeo contro l’*inafferrabile*! Lotta nobile, quotidiana, eterna, senza la quale l’uomo sarebbe l’ultimo degli animali!”

36. Boccioni executed numerous studies of horses, most often harnessed, both early in his career, and again in 1910.

37. Flavio Fergonzi makes this argument persuasively, as does Ada Masoero, in the most detailed studies to date of *The City Rises* and its related sketches. See Fergonzi, *The Mattioli Collection*, 151; and Masoero, *Umberto Boccioni: La città che sale*, 50.

38. Giovanni Lista, *Arte e politica: Il futurismo di sinistra in Italia* (Milan: Multhipla, 1980), 8.

39. The text of the “Discorso” survives only in revised form, as published in “Democrazia futurista,” of 1919, now in *TIF*, 443-60. The phrase quoted here appears on page 451. “L’Italia dovrà sempre più attivare in sé il doppio fervore di una possibile rivoluzione proletaria e di una possibile guerra.” Similar sentiments are expressed throughout the “Discorso,”

---

and appear as the basis for Marinetti's effort to link the hygienic value of proletarian revolt and war.

40. Marinetti delivered his "Discorso sulla bellezza e necessità della violenza," on three occasions in 1910: at the Sala d'Arte Moderna in Milan, at the Borsa del Lavoro of Naples, and at the syndicalist Camera del Lavoro in Parma. For an analysis of the response to Marinetti's "Discorso," including long citations from contemporary reviews, see Giovanni Lista, "Marinetti et les anarcho-syndicalistes," in *Présence de Marinetti*, ed. Jean-Claude Marcadé (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1982), 78-85.

41. Boccioni, letter to Nino Barbantini, July or August 1910, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 341. "Comincio mercoledì un quadro di 2 metri x 3 e altri due poco meno della metà. Vede che c'è carne al fuoco: speriamo bene e morte al passatismo!"

42. Boccioni, letter to a lady friend, 1910, cited in Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 94-95; part of this letter is published in *Archivi del futurismo* (where it is dated 1911), 233. "Sento realmente di creare qualche cosa e il lavoro ora mi viene con una tal febbre che non so cosa pensare di tanti lavori passati fatti con fiacca e scoraggiamento. Il modo col quale lavoro ora si riallaccia al modo col quale ho lavorato in soli due o tre lavori in vita mia. Ora comprendo la febbre, la passione, l'amore, la violenza delle quali si parla quando si dice: creare! . . . Come comprendo le parole di Marinetti: nessun'opera che non abbia un carattere aggressivo può essere un capolavoro!" This is the same letter as is cited in note 3.

43. Boccioni, diary entry of 21 December 1907, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 270. "Le parole che dice su Leonardo Michelangelo Bramante Raffaello mi fanno scomparire come la neve al sole. Come posso credermi qualche cosa davanti a simili giganti?"

---

44. Boccioni, diary entry of 1 February 1908, in *ibid.*, 278. “Dürer è immenso, è grande è un titano è terribile quanto può esserlo il genio nella sua creazione. . . . Michelangelo! Come posso arrischiarmi con le mie parole a parlare di Lui. Chi sono io?”

45. Boccioni, diary entry of 21 December 1907, in *ibid.*, 270. “Oggi un articolo sul *Crepuscolo degli Dei* di Wagner mi ha gettato a terra. Come saranno stati questi grandi? che anima? che corpo? che desideri? Io divengo sempre più stupido e mediocre. E tuttavia spero . . . cosa?”

46. Boccioni, letter to a friend, n.d. Milan, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Umberto Boccioni: Altri inediti e apparati critici* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), 104. “Sono contento ma ho un’apprensione terribile perché si ha un bel dire di fare un’opera con la febbre . . . v’è una parte materiale di castrazione che richiede un lavoro paziente quasi materiale questo temo mi distolga dall’insieme di violenza che voglio dare! E così grande che dà spavento!” (ellipsis in original). Although undated, this letter seems to follow the earlier letter, probably also to Ines, describing feverish work on a very large canvas. See note 42.

47. Marinetti no doubt had something like this in mind when he observed, ironically, some time in 1913 on a visit to Boccioni’s new apartment/studio, that rather than leading the life of a “great gentleman,” the artist was “becoming a workhorse.” See F. T. Marinetti, “Futurist Memoirs,” in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 284.

48. Boccioni, letter to Nino Barbantini, ascribed to September 1910, but more likely from 1911 as the artist claims the painting is nearly finished, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 343-44.

<NEX>E fatto completamente senza modello e tutte le abilità del mestiere sono

---

sacrificate alla ragione ultima dell'emozione. . . .

Se potrò (e spero) l'emozione sarà data ricorrendo il meno possibile agli oggetti che l'hanno suscitata. L'ideale per me sarebbe un pittore che volendo dare il sonno non corresse con la mente all'essere (uomo, animale ecc.) che dorme, ma potesse per mezzo di linee e colori suscitare l'*idea* del sonno, cioè il sonno universale al di fuori delle accidentalità di tempo e di luogo.

E questo con sensazioni pittoriche, cioè bei colori e belle forme.

49. See Leonardo Capano and Antonello Negri, Appendix 3, "Via Adige 23," in Laura Mattioli Rossi, *Boccioni 1912 Materia* (exhibition: Milan, Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta) (Milan: Mazzotta, 1991), 255-59.

50. Ornella Selvafolta, "Le strutture per un progetto di modernità," in *Milano nell'Italia liberale*, 220-21. See also Antonello Negri, "Milano 1881-1914: *La città che sale*," in Guido Ballo, ed., *Boccioni a Milano* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1982), 50.

51. Selvafolta, "Le strutture per un progetto di modernità," 222.

52. *Ibid.*, 223-24.

53. *Corriere della Sera*, Milan (16 August 1910); cited in Capano and Negri, 258. "Nel giugno scorso centinaia di sterratori e migliaia di carrettieri cominciarono a togliere e a condurre lontano tutto il terreno del piazzale Trento e della larga Via Crema."

54. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 22. For the Italian text, see note 4. Ada Masoero suggests that Boccioni may have included the bridge in homage to Marinetti's description of modern bridges in the founding manifesto. See Masoero, *Umberto Boccioni: La città che sale*, 34.

55. Masoero notes Boccioni's inclusion of the bridge as an invention, and speculates that

---

it might have been based on bridges seen in Paris. She observes that it is not likely to have been the Ponte Flaminio in Rome, a suggestion made by Maurizio Calvesi on the assumption that the painting is set in Rome, as this bridge was inaugurated in May 1911. See Masoero, *Umberto Boccioni: La città che sale*, 33-34, and Maurizio Calvesi, “Lecture iconologiche, *La città sale* di Umberto Boccioni: Un cantiere galoppante,” *Art e Dossier* 93 (September 1994): 23-25.

56. For reproductions of these drawings, which are undated but placed in the section of works from 1910, see Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L’opera completa*, 352, no. 606 (*Ferrovia*); 353, no. 610 (*Studio con impalcature e locomotiva*); 353, no. 611 (*Studio di ponte, palo telegrafico e tram*).

57. For a discussion of Sant’Elia’s drawings of electric plants, see Esther da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant’Elia: Retreat into the Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 108-10.

58. Marinetti, “Electrical War,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 112; “La guerre électrique,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 138.

<NEX>Par un réseau de câbles métalliques, la double force de la Méditerranée et de l’Adriatique monte jusque sur la crête des Monts Apennins, pour se concentrer en de grandes cages de fer et de cristal, redoutable accumulateurs, énormes centres nerveux disposés de distance en distance sur l’épine dorsale et montagneuse de l’Italie. À travers les muscles, les artères et les nerfs de la péninsule, l’énergie des vents lointains et les révoltes de la mer, transformées par le génie de l’homme en plusieurs millions de kilowatts, se répandent partout, sans fils conducteurs, avec une abondance fertilisante que règlent des claviers jouant sous les doigts des ingénieurs.

59. Marinetti, “Electrical War,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 113-16.

---

60. Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini, “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 28, 30.

61. Gustave Le Bon, *L'évolution de la matière* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1905); *The Evolution of Matter*, trans. from the 3rd ed., introduction and notes by F. Legge (London and New York: Walter Scott Publishing, 1907), 9. For a discussion of some of the scientific theories of matter and of the “ether” during this period in relation to Boccioni’s painting *Materia* of 1912, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, “Vibratory Modernism: Boccioni, Kupka, and the Ether of Space,” in *From Energy to Information*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 126-49, 390-97.

62. Le Bon, *The Evolution of Matter*, 6.

63. *Ibid.*, 11.

64. Lista, *Arte e politica*, 34-43.

65. In order find a space large enough to paint *Lavoro*, Boccioni sought the support of his friend, Dr. Augusto Osimo, general director of the Società Umanitaria. Osimo allowed him to work in a hall on the ground floor of the Convent of Santa Maria della Pace on the Via Daverio, where the Società Umanitaria had its offices. Gino Agnese, *Vita di Boccioni* (Florence: Camunia, 1996), 206-7. On the foundational role of Alessandrina Ravizza at the Società Umanitaria, Università del Popolo, and Camera del Lavoro, see Virgilio Brocchi, *Luce di grandi anime: Ricordanze* (Verona: Mondadori, 1956), chap. 1. The writer and professor Brocchi was a Socialist, close to the reformist and social humanitarian circles. Boccioni painted his portrait while in Padova in 1907.

66. Lista, *Arte e politica*, 36-37.

67. “Lettera-Invito per l’Esposizione d’arte libera,” reprinted in Lista, *Arte e politica*,

---

126. “. . . che il senso artistico, ritenuto privilegio di pochi, è innato nella natura umana, e che le forme con le quali esso si manifesta sono semplici esponenti della maggiore o minore sensibilità di chi le concreta.” This text is also reprinted in *Archivi del futurismo*, 102-3.

68. Ibid. “Per questa ricerca di un’arte più ingenua, più istintiva, più sincera, riportata alle sue sane origini, noi pur non disperando di accogliere qualche lavoro che assurga da espressione incompleta o intenzionale a valore significativo.”

69. Ibid. “Invitiamo però, sia ben inteso, quanti intendono affermare *qualche cosa di nuovo*, lungi cioè da imitazioni, derivazioni e contraffazioni, e coloro che tentano esprimersi diversamente da ciò che è comune e convenzionale.”

70. Carlo L. Ragghianti calls attention to the precedent of the 1909 shows organized by the Società di Previdenza, which excluded professional artists. See *Mondrian e l’arte del XX secolo* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1962), 142-44.

71. “Lettera-Invito,” in Lista, *Arte e politica*, 126. “È un’esposizione libera a tutti: così ai ragazzi che spesso riflettono inconsciamente, ma con vivacità di segno, ciò che colpisce la loro immaginazione, come agli operai, agli uomini che adoperano il linguaggio universale delle forme e dei colori per fissare ciò che la parola mal saprebbe esprimere, così ai molti che sono portati a definire il vero, quale loro apparve in un istante, come a quelli che traggono dalla sensibilità propria e dalla natura, un mondo di forme e di colori, in contrasto con la realtà, ma in armonia con la mente.”

72. According to Ragghianti, Carrà taught courses for several years to both young and adult workers at the Umanitaria. See *Mondrian e l’arte del XX secolo*, 143.

73. “Lettera-Invito,” in Lista, *Arte e politica*, 125. “In questo ambiente speciale [the Società Umanitaria] al quale giungono tutti i giorni tipi svariatiissimi umani, è stato provato la

---

grandissima capacità che alcuni di essi hanno rivelato nell'assimilare con una facilità veramente sorprendente, lavori nuovi che loro venivano affidati e che essi, per la prima volta eseguivano. Specialmente nel Riparto dei giocattoli, si ebbe moltissime volte l'occasione di ammirare la meravigliosa spontaneità colla quale, persone ignare quasi del disegno e della pittura, riuscivano a creare degli oggetti che risvegliarono l'interesse del pubblico." The Società Umanitaria offered art courses at various levels through its Scuola di disegno (School of Drawing/Design), and Scuola di plastica del laboratorio d'arte applicata all'industria (School of Applied Industrial Art). There was also a "Corso superiore" in decorative design, metal workshops, and so forth. See Raghianti, *Mondrian e l'arte del XX secolo*, 143-44. Raghianti also reproduces some of the artistic products of these courses, including a toy.

74. "Lettera-Invito," in Lista, *Arte e politica*, 126. ". . . caldo appello a tutti coloro che sapranno valutare la sincerità e la serietà della presente iniziative. . . . Siano gli espositori i nostri primi collaboratori."

75. Neither Severini, who was in Paris and probably did not have the time or money to execute and send new work, nor Balla, who was in Rome painting images of peasants for the Exhibition of the Agro Romano, participated.

76. *Il Secolo* (2 May 1911); cited in Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 374. "Boccioni si riafferma con più solide audacie di disegno e di colore. . . . *Il lavoro*, con la città che sorge, e l'ansia convulsa dei cavalli al traino, e i trams che passano in una linea di contorno lontana, e gli operai che faticcano, o sprofondano in una nube azzura di polvere, riesce a darci sempre una visione d'arte personalissima." Gino Agnese suggests Sprovieri, who introduced himself to Marinetti at this exhibition as a Futurist enthusiast, was the young journalist for *Il Secolo*. Agnese, *Vita di Boccioni*, 220.



- 
77. *La Perseveranza* (1-2 May 1911); cited in Fergonzi, *The Mattioli Collection*, 143.
78. *L'Uomo di Pietra* (6 May 1911); cited in Masoero, *La città che sale*, 52.
79. Nino Barbantini, *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, 19 May 1911; cited in Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, 96.
80. Letter from Boccioni to Nino Barbantini, cited in Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, 96.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Umberto Boccioni, "La pittura futurista" (text of a lecture given in Rome in May 1911), in Birolli, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, 26. ". . . la volontà che determina il movimento, la sensazione del gesto, cioè il gesto nel suo estrinsecarsi."
84. Boccioni, "La pittura futurista," 21. ". . . ogni segno anche minimo reca in sé l'impronta dell'individuo."
85. Libero Altomare, *Incontri con Marinetti e il futurismo* (Rome: Corso Editore, 1954), 22. ". . . ammirava il capo del futurismo e che in Arte simpatizzava col di lui programma, pur serbando in politica le proprie convinzioni marxiste."
86. F. T. Marinetti, "Mostra collettiva di Umberto Boccioni" (July 1910), in *Archivi del futurismo*, 101.
87. Boccioni, diary entry of 22 March 1909, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 295. ". . . oggi alla vigilia dell'affratellamento universale."
88. Umberto Boccioni, letter to Gino Severini, after 1 August 1910, in *ibid.*, 342.
89. Leonardo Dudreville, *Scritti*, 1980; cited in Ballo, *Boccioni a Milano*, 34-35.
90. Boccioni, *Pittura e scultura futuriste*, 36-37. ". . . un pubblico democratico di intellettualoidi anarchici e socialisti... Si dovrebbe attendere qualche cosa da questa estrema

---

sinistra della vita e della politica. . . . Al contrario, sono i piú volgari assertori di banalità tradizionali, di luoghi comuni morali e reazionari. Noi futuristi li abbiamo sempre trovati violentemente contrari ed insensibili davanti a tutte le ricerche rivoluzionarie dell'arte, le quali, logicamente, avrebbero dovuto trovare delle analogie elementari nei loro cervellacci da Camera del Lavoro. . . . Puah! che schifo!”

91. Boccioni, diary entry of 13 January 1908, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 277.

“Sento il bisogno di lavorare per qualche cosa per qualcuno uomo, donna, amico, amante vecchi o giovani non so! Forse se quello che faccio servisse a qualc'uno a un individuo a una comunità, ad una città, una nazione, alla umanità . . . non so, forse sarei un po' sollevato ma cosí, ignorante, solo, sconosciuto, è imbecille e maialesco il vivere” (ellipses in original).

92. Boccioni, “La pittura futurista,” in Birolli, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, 23. “. . . l'ansare degli opifici che producono incessantemente la ricchezza per i forti.” For a comparison of the two versions of “La pittura futurista,” originally the text of a lecture Boccioni gave at the Circolo Artistico Internazionale of Rome on 29 May 1911, see Ilaria Schiaffini, *Umberto Boccioni: Stati d'animo, teoria e pittura* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2002), 158-81, especially 174 (first version) and 165 (second version with new text inserted). Schiaffini assumes that the second amplified text constituted the final lecture. Yet, this text, at seventy-five loosely written manuscript pages, is far too long for a lecture and includes several newly inserted statements that seem anachronistic in 1911, including the one cited here. It may be that it was loosely written, not so that it might be easily read, as Schiaffini supposes, but so that it could be revised and edited for publication. The first version comprises thirteen more densely written pages. Both include numerous cancellations and additions, including some written on the back of the pages. A third variant phase carries the text to 107 pages, later recopied by Decio Cinti. Zeno Birolli

---

reprinted the second version in *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, cited here. All versions of this text are housed at the Getty Research Institute.

<I>Chapter 4. Photogenic Abstraction: Giacomo Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*

1. In Zeno Birolli, ed., *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 265 (translation amended). “Ho visto una fotografia che gareggiava con qualunque altro quadro. La meccanica fa tali passi nella riproduzione del vero che all'uomo non resta che lo *spirito*. Tutto va verso lo *spirito*.”

2. “The Late Balla<m->Futurist Balla,” (exhibition: Sala d'Arte Angelelli, Rome [December 1915]), in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 206; “Fu Balla<m->Balla Futurista,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 269-70.

<NEX>Col perfezionamento della fotografia, la pittura statica passatista ha perso ogni prestigio; il cinematografo uccide la contemplazione statica. . . . La pittura statica passatista viene battuta perché costretta a fermare un punto solo degli infiniti aspetti della natura. La meccanica ha sorpassato il pittore passatista facendolo divenire un miserevole imitatore di forme statiche esteriori. Necessario dunque non fermarsi a contemplare il cadavere tradizionale, ma rinnovarsi creando un'arte che nessuna macchina potrà imitare, che solo il Genio Creatore artistico concepirà.

3. Balla visited Düsseldorf twice in 1912 to work on the decorations commissioned by the Löwensteins, from 11 July to 10 August, and from late October to mid-December. Grethel Löwenstein (née Margherita Cahn Speyer), the daughter of a wealthy Austrian banker, had been a student of Balla and also played the piano; her husband Arthur, a widower with two daughters,

---

was a lawyer and violinist. The couple had recently married when they invited Balla to decorate their newly built summer home in Düsseldorf. Balla returned briefly in the summer of 1914 to hang a show, but left with his works due to the outbreak of the war. Unfortunately, the Löwensteins' house was destroyed after their flight from Nazi Germany in 1934.

4. Giovanni Lista claims that, "In reality Balla's 'iridescent interpenetrations' are the first works of geometrical abstraction in modern art. The artist thought directly about painting in these research works as is testified to by the correspondence he sent from Düsseldorf at the time." See Giovanni Lista, *Balla* (Modena: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1982), 43.

5. An exception is Serge Lemoine, ed., *Aux origines de l'abstraction, 1800-1914* (exhibition: Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 3 November 2003-22 February 2004) (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2003).

6. According to the artist's second daughter, Elica Balla, *Compenetrazione iridescente n. 1* was shown in the Futurist Exhibition held in the foyer of the Costanzi Theater from 21 February to 21 March 1913. See Elica Balla, *Con Balla*, vols. 1 and 2 (Milan: Multhipla, 1984, 1986), 1: 293. Elica Balla was born in 1914, and bases her biography of her father on what he and other family members told her, his autobiographical notes, letters, and interviews with friends and others who played a role in Balla's life. Her assertion that *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 1* was exhibited in 1913 is vulnerable to the charge that it reflects her father's desire to establish an early date for its execution. The few exhibition reviews of this show do not mention this work. See also Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1968), 43. The *Iridescent Interpenetrations* were not exhibited again until the early 1950s. The artist Ettore Colla curated the first exhibition of these works at the Fondazione Origine in Rome in April 1951, and published two articles: "Balla futurista," *Spazio 2* (1951), and "Pittura e

---

scultura astratta di G. Balla,” *Arti Visive: Rivista della “Fondazione Origine”* (September<n>  
>October 1952). Some of them were subsequently shown at the Amici della Francia in Rome in 1951, at the Galleria d’Arte Contemporanea in Florence in 1952, and at the Rose Fried Gallery in New York in 1954. Contemporary with these exhibitions in the 1950s, a number of works purporting to be prewar *Iridescent Interpenetrations* by Balla, but different in style and facture, appeared on the market. This has caused considerable confusion, raising questions about whether Balla himself, or others with access to his studio and sketchbooks, executed these works in the 1950s when they had become marketable. In one case, two similar works have been published with the same title by the same scholar. Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco published a work he titled *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 1* in his catalogue of 1968, mistakenly claiming it to be in the Winston-Malbin Collection, and the work generally recognized as *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 1* (which was formerly in the Winston-Malbin Collection), in a later catalogue. See Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 43, and Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Balla: The Futurist*, trans. Margaret Kunzle (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 72. More research would have to be done, including close examination of suspect works, to determine which were executed at a later date, or were not made by Balla at all. In the absence of more documentation, analysis of style and technique can still provide strong evidence as to which works the artist executed during the prewar and early wartime periods. The *Iridescent Interpenetrations* in the Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna, Turin, which were acquired from Balla’s daughters through the Galleria L’Obelisco in 1968 (including many pages from the Düsseldorf sketchbooks as well as watercolors and paintings), and which are stylistically consistent with Balla’s prewar work, are reliable in my view. I have based own my analysis, whenever possible, on works I have been able to study firsthand at the Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna in Turin, at the Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna,

---

Milan, and at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. I have also relied on Giovanni Lista's catalogue *Giacomo Balla, futuriste* (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1984), which includes *Iridescent Interpenetrations* not published in his 1982 catalogue raisonné. I thank him for answering my questions on this subject.

7. Giorgio De Marchis claims that the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* were only meant as studies for the decor of the Löwensteins and were never intended as abstract paintings. He argues that evidence of these works exists only in the letters and notebooks of the period, and that they were never exhibited as independent paintings. Instead, the designs appeared on decorative objects and on Balla's design for a manifesto for the Roman Secession Exhibition of 1913. "Nothing else survives that can make us believe that Balla considered or used these studies as autonomous works of painting, and even less that he regarded them as problems of abstract painting." ("Null'altro resta che ci possa far credere che Balla abbia considerato o utilizzato tali studi per autonome opere di pittura, tanto meno che se li sia posti come problemi di pittura astratta.") Giorgio De Marchis, *Giacomo Balla, L'aura futurista* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1977), 3. Yet Balla's letters indicate that *Iridescent Interpenetrations* were especially important to him, and that he expected them to have repercussions in his *paintings*. The previously unpublished remarks of Giuseppe Sprovieri, discussed at length later in this chapter, show that Balla had also executed some *Iridescent Interpenetrations* as paintings by summer 1913 at the latest, and that his contemporaries received them as such. Moreover, Balla made less of a distinction between his paintings and his decorative works than criticism of the 1970s typically allowed.

8. See, for example, Josef Hoffmann, "Einfache Möbel," *Das Interieur* (Vienna), 2 (1901): 193-208. For an Italian translation and analysis of this manifesto and the works that

---

correspond to it, see Maurizio Fagiolo, *Hoffmann: "Mobili semplici" <m->Vienna, 1900-1910* (Rome: Emporio Floreale, 1977). Balla expressed his own belief in simplicity in a letter of 1898 to his future wife, Elisa Marcucci: "Simplicity (a word that is often used but almost never correctly) is the basis of beauty, which is always produced by the perfect *truth* of the elements. And all great works were achieved with the most simple technical means because these means were obtained through long, profound, and constant study, by avoiding all that has the slightest hint of falsity and accepting all that that is pure and true." Cited in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 55. ". . . la semplicità (parola che si usa moltissimo ma quasi mai messa a posto) è la base della bellezza, la quale è sempre prodotta dalla perfetta *verità* degli elementi, e tutte le opere grandi sono manifestate con mezzi tecnici semplicissimi perché questi mezzi sono ottenuti da lunghi studi profondi e costanti, e allontanando tutto ciò che ha il minimo dubbio di falso e accettando tutto ciò che ha di puro e di vero."

9. The Third Italian Congress of Photography was held in Rome from 24 to 30 April 1911. Two related events included an International Photography Exhibition that celebrated the triumph of pictorialism, and an International Competition of Scientific Photography that referred to Marey's chronophotography. For a discussion of these and related events, see Giovanni Lista, *Cinema e fotografia futurista* (Geneva and Milan: Skira, 2001), 148-54.

10. For this argument, see Thierry de Duve, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint," *Artforum* 24 (May 1986): 110-21. What is missing in this brilliant analysis is a recognition of the important role played by photography within avant-garde painting, often as a hidden source of composition, realist lighting, accurate detail, and even of fashionable poses. The Italian Divisionists, for example, frequently based their paintings on photographic studies, and one of Balla's early portraits also falls into this aesthetically "dubious" category, in which a Divisionist

---

application of color is laid over a photographically conceived composition. Yet, given the scientific and indexical status of photography, it is hardly surprising that it appealed to many Divisionists. For a discussion of the role of photography in Divisionism, and other late nineteenth-century art in Italy, see Giovanna Ginex, “Fotografia e pittura nel laboratorio divisionista,” in *L’età del divisionismo*, ed. Gabriella Belli and Franco Rella (Milan: Electa, 1990): 232-95. For an analysis of Balla’s engagement with photography, including fashion photography, see Fabio Benzi, “Balla and Photography: The Modern Gaze,” in *Balla: The Biagiotti Cigna Collection*, ed. Fabio Benzi (Moscow: Pushkin State Museum of Figurative Arts, 1996), 29-49.

11. In a text of 1926 titled “Demolition of Balla’s House,” the artist recalls that immediately after renting some rooms in a long block of houses in the Via Parioli, he painted *Proprietor*, a work of great success that was later stolen. This text is reprinted in Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 32. For another account of the disappearance of *Proprietor*, see Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 198. Here Elica Balla states that the painting was taken from her father’s studio by some “strangers” for exhibition in St. Petersburg in 1909, and never returned. Lista’s 1982 catalogue raisonné lists this work as belonging to the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, but a letter to the Tretyakov elicited the response that the gallery did not own non-Russian works.

12. The painting was exhibited at the Esposizione Amatori e Cultori from February to June 1905.

13. Elica Balla recounts that the juxtaposition of the two works gave rise to “interminable discussions,” and that Mancini accused Balla of having deliberately hung the paintings together, whereas that year he had not served on the jury. See Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 128.



---

14. Ibid., 1: 127. “Tommaso Sebastiani, questo padrone del vecchio convento e delle vigne intorno, era un uomo rude ma intuitivo il quale spesso diceva al pittore di prendersi per poco un pezzo di quei terreni che col tempo sarebbero diventati preziosi. Gli diceva spesso: ‘Queste terre sono tutti biglietti da mille. Prenditi un pezzo di terreno!’”

15. Ibid. “. . . mentre guardava invece l’uomo, il ‘proprietario’ che seduto vicino alla finestra in una giornata calda d’estate, guarda le sue terre con espressione consapevole e compiaciuta, quei campi dorati dal grano su cui sorgeranno palazzi e ville, strade e giardini del quartiere Sebastiani.” She interprets this work as a psychological portrait, pointing to the features of both the man and his environment that Balla captured: Sebastiani’s collarless white shirt, loose around his tanned and sweaty neck, the fields shimmering with golden grain, the flies, the faded flower wallpaper, the water stains on the wall (127-28). This is a man whose prosperity is recent, and whose links to the land are still evident.

16. According to Elica Balla, during this period her father became a friend and admirer of two carpenters, Erasmo and Mariano. Under the artist’s guidance, they would make the new frames that he invented for his paintings. See *ibid.*, 1: 130.

17. At the exhibition, an entire village was constructed, with small huts like those the peasants lived in, a school, a smaller tent-school in which the students’ work was shown, and the large exhibition pavilion. Conferences and poetry readings were held in this pavilion during the five months of the exhibition. For more information on this exhibition, see Nicoletta Cardano, “La mostra dell’Agro Romano,” in *Roma 1911*, ed. Gianna Piantoni (Rome: Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, 1980), 71-96. See also Emily Braun, “Renaissance and Renascences: The Rebirth of Italy, 1911-1921,” in Laura Mattioli Rossi and Emily Braun, *Masterpieces from the Gianni Mattioli Collection* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997; Milan:

---

Electa, 1997), 26-27.

18. Aleramo, Cena, and other Socialists had founded the schools for itinerant peasants in the Agro Romano in 1907. Alessandro Marcucci was director of the schools.

19. For Alessandro Marcucci's description of the Mostra dell'Agro Romano and its intent, see Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 222-23.

20. For an illustration of this work, which depicts Tolstoy before a plow in a field, see Lista, *Balla*, 162, no. 192.

21. In 1870, Marey had bought a house on the outskirts of Naples, at Posilipo. From that time on he spent his winters in Italy, where he set up a studio for working much like the one he had in Paris. He also frequently gave lectures on his work. His chronophotographs continued to be exhibited in Italy after his death in 1904. For a further discussion of Marey's work as it came to be known in Italy, see Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 293-96.

22. Etienne-Jules Marey, "La station physiologique de Paris," *Revue Scientifique* (1894): 804; cited in Laurent Mannoni, *Etienne-Jules Marey: La mémoire de l'oeil* (exhibition: Paris, Cinémathèque Française) (Milan: Mazzotta, 1999), 168-69. "La chronophotographie peut être considérée comme la forme la plus parfaite de la méthode graphique."

23. This passage from Marey's *La méthode graphique* (Paris: G. Masson, éditeur, 1885) is cited in Mannoni, *Etienne-Jules Marey: La mémoire de l'oeil*, 131. "Tous ces changements dans l'activité des forces, la méthode graphique les traduit sous une forme saisissante que l'on pourrait appeler le langage des phénomènes eux-mêmes, tant elle est supérieure à tous les autres modes d'expression."

24. Marey published some of these early chronophotographs in *La Nature* on 29

---

September 1883. He included photographs of a man walking, as well as graphic line drawings based on these photographs. Eventually he came to speak of “skeletal man” [*l’homme squelette*] and of “skeletal trajectories” [*trajectoires squelettiques.*] For an informative account of Marey’s work in this manner, see Mannoni, *Etienne-Jules Marey: La mémoire de l’oeil*, 163-90.

25. Bragaglia’s book, *Fotodinamismo futurista*, explicitly rejected the work of E.-J. Marey, citing it as a counterexample to his own quest to capture the “intermovemental stages” of motion, rather than merely the objective, coldly analytic sequence of static phases. Hence his use of long exposure, rather than of Marey’s chronophotographic technique. He claimed for his *fotodinamismo* the status of a distinct art medium, to be confused neither with painting nor with photography. See “L’arte nella fotografia,” *La Fotografia Artistica* (Turin) 8, no. 4 (1912), and *Fotodinamismo futurista*, 1st ed. (Rome: Nalato Editore, n.d. [1913]).

26. Braun, *Picturing Time*, 300.

27. Although Balla claimed, in a letter of 1954 to Alfred Barr, that he painted *The Street Lamp* in 1909, there is no evidence to support this. The arguments of Giovanni Lista and Giorgio De Marchis, both of whom believe Balla painted this work for the Bernheim-Jeune show of February 1912, are convincing. See Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*, 26-31 and De Marchis, *Giacomo Balla, L’aura futurista*, 18-19.

28. In his 1915 text “The Late Balla<m->Futurist Balla,” the artist refers to his “First plastic researches in movement (speeding automobiles people in movement).” In *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 206.

29. Marey too had imagined a similar convertibility and condensation of signs. Describing his graphic transcription of walking, Marey speaks of a kind of musical notation in which there would be two vertical lines on which one would inscribe “cette musique si simple où

---

il n’y aura que deux notes qui s’appelleront: *pied droit, pied gauche*” (this music, so simple that there would be only two notes which would be called, *right foot, left foot*). Cited in Mannoni, *Etienne-Jules Marey: La mémoire de l’oeil*, 73.

30. After his father’s death, Balla began to work for a typographer in Turin, continuing until just before his departure for Rome.

31. *Macchina tipografica*, Balla’s first work for theater, was never performed on stage. However, a rehearsal was held in the salon of Serge Diaghilev and Michel Semenov in Rome in 1916. According to Virgilio Marchi, who took part in the event,

<NEX>The author placed us in geometric order, and with the unfailing grey-rectangular walking stick, directed our machinelike movements and the gestures that we each had to carry out in order to represent the spirit of the single pieces of a rotary newspaper press. I was assigned a “STA” to be reiterated violently with an arm, gymnastically. I felt as if I were in the courtyard of a training barracks. Balla, needless to say, reserved for himself the hissings, the onomatopoeias, the most delicate verbalizations, that emerged from his lips intermingled with that memorably Piemontese “neh” and the uncorking of bottles of Frascati by the incorrigible, bearded Semenov, which turned everything into an extremely intelligent and amusing grotesque.

Virgilio Marchi, in *La Stirpe* (Rome) (March 1928): 159-63; reprinted in Italian (with an English translation) in *Sipario: Staged Art, Balla, de Chirico, Savinio, Picasso, Paolini, Cucchi*, texts by Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, Laura Cherubini, Elena Gigli, et al., trans. Marguerite Shore (exhibition: Castello di Rivoli, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, 1997) (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1997), 51 (translation amended).

32. Balla frequently depicted figures in doorways, in which the play of light and shadow

---

assumed both a pictorial and symbolic role. See, for example, *Elisa in the Doorway* of 1904, and *The Madwoman* of 1905, which depicts a woman standing on the threshold of the same doorway that appears in *Girl Running on a Balcony*, in Lista, *Balla*, 133, no. 102; and 140, no. 122, respectively.

33. Balla, letter to his family of 18 November 1912, in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 281. “Lo studio nel giardino è già in costruzione e intendiamo far delle meraviglie di novità. La sala è quasi al termine.” (The study in the garden is already in construction and we intend to do something marvelously new. The salon is almost completed.)

34. Such viewing also had voyeuristic possibilities. Balla wrote to his family in July 1912 of his impressions while traveling on a train toward Düsseldorf: “Villages and valleys pass by and with my friend the binoculars I stare into the closest windows; semi-undressed people who wash themselves, bedding on balconies, clean almost empty rooms, a stupendous white shoulder of a woman who, with a nude arm opens a door and goes inside.” (“E passano paesi e valli e col mio amico cannocchiale scruto dentro alle finestre più vicine; gente che si lava semisvestita, coperte dei letti sui balconi, camere pulite di bucato quasi vuote, una stupenda spalla bianca di donna, con braccio nudo apre una porta e va nell’interno.”) Reprinted in *ibid.*, 1: 269.

35. I refer here to the definition of aura given by Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”: “The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch” (222-23). See “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

---

Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

36. Balla, letter from Düsseldorf to his family, July 1912. Reprinted in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1; 269-70. Some excerpted passages from this long letter read:

<NEX>Il Reno con due braccia allungate si distende e si perde tra insenature e colline, i battelli dei gitanti e dell’industria fumano bianco, nero e grigio e, piccoli, piccoli, sembra che quasi non si muovano; le acque argentate, chiarissime, trasparenti contrastano con tutto il resto, placato e ordinato. . . . l’acqua gorgoglia, i fianchi del battello sono schiumeggianti, molti si salutano, i fazzoletti bianchi si agitano dall’alto . . . gli alberghi, le bandiere, le iscrizioni, le colline e le punte aguzze dei campanili, tutto mi sembra irreal, intoccabile.

<TBR>

(The Rhine, with two long branches, stretches out and loses itself among inlets and hills, the boats of tourists and of industry smoke, white, black, and gray, and small, small, seem almost not to move; the silver, clear, transparent water, calm and ordered, contrasts with all the rest. . . . the water gurgles, the sides of the boat are covered in spray, many people greet each other, white handkerchiefs are waved from on high . . . the hotels, the flags, the inscriptions, the hills and the pointed tips of the bell towers, everything seems unreal, untouchable.)

37. Balla, letter from Düsseldorf to his family, dated 18 November 18 1912; cited in *Futur natura: La svolta di Balla, 1916-1920*, ed. Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco (Milan: Mazzotta, 1998), 11. “Intanto ò aperto un momento la finestra per cambiar l’aria lontano si vede il Reno col ponte in ferro ogni cosa e velata e l’Italia com’è lontana.” See also Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 281, with

---

minor variations of spelling and punctuation.

38. Balla, letter to his family, 5 December 1912. Reproduced in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 283-84. “Me ne sto qui nella mia camera al calduccio, seduto a questo tavolino con luce elettrica. Una squadra, due scatole di colori, cannocchiale, un compasso, calamaio lucente di terracotta fiorito, dei libri; Dante, Leonardo, Hugo, Giacomo, Alfonso, Lucifero che eternamente stanno chiusi, meno quest’ultimo che, detta fra noi, basta il titolo per comprendere la medicina.” (“I am here in my warm room seated at this little table with electric light, a set square, two boxes of colors, binoculars, a compass, a polished inkwell of flowered terracotta, some books: Dante, Leonardo, Hugo, Giacomo, Alfonso, Lucifer, which are forever closed, except this last one that between us, the title suffices to explain its medicine.”) Even if Balla did not open his Leonardo, the model of the artist as an experimental scientist and keen observer of nature would have appealed to him.

39. See Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo on Painting*, ed. Martin Kemp, trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 76-88.

40. It is likely, however, that Balla was executing studies for what would become the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* even earlier. Part of a letter home from his first visit to Düsseldorf, dated 3 August 1912, appears on the verso of a study for an *Iridescent Interpenetration* in one of his sketchbooks. Further, Balla’s letter of 5 December to his family refers to “an infinity of studies,” suggesting he had been executing them for some time.

41. Postcard from Balla to Gino Galli, addressed to the artist’s own address in Rome, postmarked 21 November 1912 (Galli, Balla’s favorite pupil, was staying with his family in his absence). Reproduced in Lista, *Balla*, 178, nos. 247 and 247a. “Ecco Gino, un tipo di IRIDE guardiamo di perfezionarlo e renderlo ancora migliore di fusione.” Balla sent another similarly decorated postcard to Sibilla Aleramo on 8 April 1913. For a reproduction of the latter postcard,

---

see Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Balla: The Futurist*, 70.

42. *Rhythm of a Violinist*, executed at the same moment in Düsseldorf, has a similar shape, determined by its subject. In this case, the literal shape of the canvas, and the black and white frame Balla gave it (on its sides only), functions to enhance the implied outward expansion of the depicted musical “rhythms.” The close-up views of the hands, and their evocation of motion through sequential positions, clearly derive from a photographic model, however loosely interpreted.

43. Balla, letter from Düsseldorf to his family, dated 5 December 1912; the first page is reproduced in Virginia Dortch Dorazio, *Giacomo Balla: An Album of His Life and Work* (New York: Wittenborn, [1969]), 74. For a partial Italian text, see *Archivi del futurismo*, ed. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, vol. 1 (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958), 255. “Molto carissimi, O prima di tutto godetevi un pochetto quest’iriduccio perché son più che certo vi piacerà; dovuto tale risultato ad un’infinità di prove e riprove e trovando finalmente nella sua semplicità lo scopo del diletto. Altri cambiamenti porterà nella mia pittura tale studio e l’iride potrà mediante l’osservazione del vero avere e dare infinità di sensazioni di colori.” The complete letter, with minor revisions to Balla’s spelling and punctuation, is reprinted in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 283-86.

44. References to the rainbow and iris can also be found in Leonardo’s writings. See *Leonardo on Painting*, 72-73: “If you wish to ensure that the proximity of one color should give grace to another color which ends beside it, apply that rule which can be seen in the rays of the sun in the composition of the celestial rainbow, otherwise called the iris.”

45. For a reproduction of this drawing (flipped left to right), see Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Giacomo Balla: Opere dal 1912 al 1930; Tipologie di astrazione* (Modena: Galleria Fonte d’Abisso, 1980), 13.



---

46. Letter from Balla to his family, written during his first trip to Düsseldorf, ca. 15 July 1912; reprinted in Fagiolo Dell'Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 29. "Specialmente prima di arrivare al Gottardo i laghi con i grandi monti che si riflettono nelle acque dai colori iridescenti sono di quegli effetti che è meglio considerarli indipingibili quando si pensa e si vede la proporzione di un uomo in relazione alle cose che lo circondano."

47. Rosalind Krauss discusses the conversion of all sensations to a purely optical register as exemplary of the modernist quest for pictorial purity and autonomy, in *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), chap. 1. Especially relevant in this context is her brilliant analysis of Mondrian's attempt to transfigure the unstable, "open" effect of the ocean into a planar field of pure relationships in the plus and minus pictures: "And the rage for abstraction that would appear there would be a passion to remake the object, shaping everything about it in the lens of the optical continuum, all of experience condensed into a single, luminous ray" (11).

She also quotes Fredric Jameson's interpretation of Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon*, in *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 230: "At its most intense," he writes, "what we will call Conrad's sensorium virtually remakes its objects, refracting them through the totalized medium of a single sense, and more than that, of a single 'lighting' or coloration of that sense. The possibility of this kind of sensory abstraction is, to be sure, at first given in the object<m->the unearthliness of the sea<m->but then returns upon that object to remake it anew as something never dreamed on heaven or earth" (11).

48. Despite the dedication to Cangiullo inscribed vertically in the lower left corner, this work has been reproduced horizontally to make it conform to several related works, including *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 9* (which Balla signed at the lower left) and the watercolor study

(fig. 4.15), which includes the drawing of a head in the lower right. For this head to be seen upright, the sketch must be viewed horizontally. See Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Balla: The Futurist*, 75. Lista reproduces the work vertically, in Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*, 167, no. 1084. This work is extremely close to one of Balla's 1913 studies for the manifesto of the Roman Secession exhibition. See Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futurista*, 183, no. 269.

49. See Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 43-44, in which numbers 1, 8, and 9 were previously published "al contrario," despite signatures at the bottom left of all three.

50. The lack of a single determinate orientation for many of Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations* is interesting to consider in relation to the work of other abstract artists, for whom establishing a correct orientation is essential. Barnett Newman's works, for example, for the most part depend upon a vertical orientation in order to appeal phenomenologically to the verticality and bilateral symmetry of the viewing subject. It is therefore even more surprising that he experimented with horizontal bands in four works, one of which, *Horizon Light* of 1949, was originally exhibited vertically. See the discussion of this work in Ann Tempkin, ed., *Barnett Newman* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002), 168. For a phenomenological reading of Newman's work, see Yve-Alain Bois, "Perceiving Newman," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 186-213. Bois cites Newman's statement "all my paintings have a top and a bottom" (198). One could not, in my view, make the same definitive claim for many of Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*.

51. Discussions of Balla's *Iridescent Interpenetrations* frequently use the adjective "kaleidoscopic." An invention of the early nineteenth century, the kaleidoscope enjoyed great popularity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. For an exposition of the invention of the kaleidoscope and its artistic uses, see Sir David Brewster, *The Kaleidoscope: Its*

---

*History, Theory, and Construction with Its Application to the Fine and Useful Arts* (London: John Murray, 1858). It is not surprising that an enormous kaleidoscope was exhibited in the “palais de l’optique” at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900, which Balla visited. For a description, see Louis Rousselet, *L’Exposition Universelle de 1900* (Paris: Hachette, 1901), 282-83. For a consideration of the kaleidoscope as emblematic of modernity and its disintegration of the “unitary subjectivity” of the viewer, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 113-16.

52. Toward the beginning of November, Balla writes: “I have returned to my usual habits, and so also in my work I’ve begun the paintings of the Rhine. The room is not yet prepared but now we have an understanding with the carpenter.” From an undated letter from Balla to his family, probably sent shortly after his arrival in Düsseldorf at the beginning of November 1912. A fragment of this letter is reprinted in Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 31. “O ripreso le solite abitudini, e così pure nel lavoro ho cominciato i dipinti del Reno. La Sala non è ancora preparata ma ora ci comprendiamo col falegname.”

53. Balla, letter to his family of 18 November 1912, in Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 31. “Ho finito quattro dipinti per la sala [. . .]. La sala è quasi al termine ed è di una eleganza intangibile, mi si passi il termine. Ogni cosa che poi si deve fare vengono da me per il parere ed anche le mie sciocchezze sono apprezzate [. . .].”

54. Grethel Löwenstein wrote to Balla on 11 April 1913, to invite him once again to return to her home and complete the two paintings still missing from the salon. She also tells him that the study in the garden is nearly finished and that she hopes to work [paint] in it. Cited in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 304.

55. For reproductions of these drawings, see Lista, *Balla*, 177, nos. 243-46.

---

56. Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 274: “Creerà poi con questi originali motivi le decorazioni colorate nel salone dei signori Lowenstein [*sic*] in cui ha ideato pure dei mobili neri, lucentissimi sui quali questi piccoli motivi di colore si staglieranno come gioielli.”

57. Letter from Grethel Löwenstein to Balla, 11 February 1913, reprinted in *ibid.*, 1: 287-88. “. . . le scrivo dal mio scrittoio nero, della sala, non le dico niente, venga a vedere, ma venga presto . . . tutti restano a bocca aperta e non ne capiscono niente tale è la meraviglia!”

58. See note 43 above.

59. The entrance to the Wiener Werkstätte exhibition in Berlin, autumn 1904, may have been known to Balla. It was illustrated in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (1905), III, 206. Hoffmann and Moser’s 1904 design for the interior of the Casa Piccola, the Flöge Sisters’ Fashion Salon, also exemplifies this style. For an illustration, see Kirk Varnedoe, *Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture and Design* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Boston: Little, Brown, 1986), 100.

60. Letter from Balla to his family, from July 1912, reprinted in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 265. “Il letto, seggiole, toilette, guardaroba, tutto lucente e chiaro, perché bianchissimo con un semplice ornamento [disegno dell’ornamento] che gira come anello tutto intorno alle pareti; spazio ovunque, per cui meglio di così non saprei.”

61. Ettore Colla, “Pittura e scultura astratta di G. Balla,” n.p. Colla, a friend of Balla, reproduces *Iridescent Interpenetration No. 1*, another painting from the series, and four studies, along with a photograph of the artist sitting before one of his paintings of a speeding automobile. His information about the “grandi affreschi” painted for the music study in Düsseldorf presumably came from discussions with the artist.

62. To this extent, his interests run parallel to those of various Secessionist movements,

---

with which Balla was familiar. Yet, I believe that the *Iridescent Interpenetrations* owe more to the legacy of Divisionism, to the Symbolist motif of the window, and to the model provided by Marey's chronophotography than to Secessionist or Jugendstil decorative prototypes.

63. Letter from Balla to his family, 18 July 1912: "I miei vestiti hanno fatto un vero furore, specialmente quello ultimo chiaro a quadretti, nientemeno non me lo hanno fatto più togliere . . ."; and letter from Balla to his family, 18 November 1912: "Il vestito nero con striscia bianca fa furore." Cited in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 266 and 280 respectively.

Giovanni Lista sees Balla's use of black and white patterns, and his renewed interest in geometry and color theory, as inspired by the Secessionist milieu he encountered through the Löwensteins in Germany. See Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*, 35-41. Lista cites a letter in which Balla tells his family that he has been to an exhibition with "white rooms decorated in black," according to current Secessionist taste (38-40). This letter of 18 July 1912 is cited in full in Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 267, where we learn that far from admiring this exhibition in Cologne, he found it an abomination. "Altro automobile ci porta alla famosa esposizione di Moda ove, ben disposte, le opere nelle sale bianche decorate in nero ci appaiono nel loro contenuto, quello che c'è di più malsano e corrotto. Le tele mi sembrano pezzi di stracci rossi, o verdi, o gialli, mal lavati e che vorrebbero significare immaginazioni nudeggianti, poesie di fiori o prati o paesaggi o ritratti, pittura o tentativi che non possono persuadere nemmeno chi è abituato alla buona occupazione dell'indulgenza plenaria." ("Another automobile took us to the famous exhibition of Fashion where the works well hung in white rooms decorated in black appeared to us as most unhealthy and corrupted in their contents. The canvases seemed to me like badly washed pieces of red, green, or yellow rags, which wished to signify fantasies of nudes, poems of flowers or meadows or landscapes or portraits, painting or experiments that cannot persuade even those

---

who are used to the good offices of plenary indulgence.”) As Lista suggests, however, Balla may have been inspired by the installation decor, if not the exhibited works.

64. Emily Braun discusses the Futurist interest in fashion, and Balla’s important role in this domain, in “Futurist Fashion: Three Manifestoes,” *Art Journal* 54 (Spring 1995): 34-41. For reproductions of two coat racks with patterns linked to the *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, see Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*, 179, nos. 249-50.

65. For an excellent account of Balla’s role in the founding of the Roman Secession in January 1912, and of his reasons for not exhibiting in its first exhibition (despite the fact that his name was already printed in the catalogue), see Mario Quesada, “Storia della Secessione romana,” in *Secessione romana, 1913-1916* (exhibition: curated by Rossana Bossaglia, Mario Quesada, and Pasqualina Spadini, Rome, Ente Autonomo Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale D’Arte Roma) (Rome: Fratelli Palombi, 1987), 10-11.

66. Sprovieri’s remarks were made to Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, who published them in *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, 18, and 47n13. According to Sprovieri, the hallway linked the rooms devoted to four artists: Vittorio Grassi, Duilio Cambelloti, Umberto Bottazzi, and Aleardo Terzi.

67. Rosalind Krauss has analyzed the paradoxical phenomenon of repetition in modernist works that seek to find a pure origin in the grid. See *Grids* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1978-79).

68. See note 25 above. There is some evidence that Anton Giulio Bragaglia published *Fotodinamismo futurista* first as a pamphlet, and then as a small book in mid-1912. An undated “first edition” was published in July 1913, generating a polemic in the pages of *Lacerba* (1 October 1913), and Boccioni’s denunciation of Bragaglia’s work. In his essay, Boccioni specifically sought to refute the views of those who attacked Futurist work for being

---

“photographic, iconoclastic and cinematic.” He cites the French critic Roger Allard, who wrote that the Futurist attempt to “fix movement and narrate an analysis of such movement” was doomed to failure (*Revue Indépendante* 3 [August 1911], 34). Boccioni further declared: “We have always rejected with disgust and scorn even a distant relationship with photography because it is outside art. Photography is valuable in one respect: it reproduces and imitates objectively, and, having perfected this, it has freed the artist from the obligation of reproducing reality exactly.” See “Futurist Dynamism and French Painting,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 107-10. Originally published as “Il dinamismo futurista e la pittura francese,” *Lacerba* (1 August 1913).

69. Letter from Boccioni to Giuseppe Sprovieri, 4 September 1913, reprinted in *Archivi del futurismo*, 288.

<NEX>Mi raccomando, te lo scrivo a nome degli amici futuristi, escludi qualsiasi contatto con la fotodinamica del Bragaglia<m->É una presuntuosa inutilità che danneggia le nostre aspirazioni di liberazione dalla riproduzione *schematica o successiva* della statica e del moto.

Per l'iniziazione elementare quello che Balla HA FATTO. Quello che farà sarà certamente superiore. [. . .] immagina dunque se abbiamo bisogno della grafomania di un fotografo positivista del dinamismo. . . . Dinamismo sperimentale.

Il suo libercolo mi è sembrato, e così agli amici, semplicemente mostruoso.

Grottesca la prosopopea e l'infatuazione sull'inesistente<m->

70. Letter from Giuseppe Sprovieri to Umberto Boccioni, 5 September 1913. Boccioni Archive, box 1, list 7, letter 37RS, Getty Research Institute. After discussing a number of other artists, Sprovieri writes:

---

<NEX>Altro valore di ricerca ha l'opera di Balla di cui è sempre commovente lo sforzo di rinnovarsi e di migliorarsi. Ha egli raggiunto la via buona? Egli ondeggia fra quel suo appassionato versimo degli anni passati ed un'astrazione che gli fa dimenticare la compattezza, la corposità degli oggetti per entrare in una sterile e fredda ricerca di combinazioni coloristiche. Anch'Egli è ossessionato dalla ricerca del soggetto inconsueto, strano, affascinante e del raggiungimento tutto esteriore di una piacevolezza cromatica. I suoi quadri mancano di organicità, sono talvolta una pura esercitazione decorativa. Così la 'Sensazione d'Eucaliptus' (profondissima nelle intenzioni) cade nell'arabesco del tappeto orientale con una geometrizzazione di triangoli colorati che dovrebbero aver valore di equivalenti coloristici naturali. Migliore, più costruttiva, ma anch'essa incorporea e senza solidità è la "Visione dal cannocchiale."

71. For an informative historical overview of this debate, and its relations to theories of the decorative and of the formal autonomy and flatness of painting, see Joseph Masheck, "The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness," *Arts Magazine* 51 (September 1976): 82-109. For a discussion of French debates on the decorative ca. 1900, see John H. Neff, "Matisse and Decoration: An Introduction," *Arts Magazine* 49 (May 1975): 59-61, and (Part Two) *Arts Magazine* 49 (June 1975): 85.

72. Maurice Denis, "De Gauguin, de Whistler et de l'excès des théories," *L'Ermitage* (15 November 1905); reprinted in *Théories, 1890-1910*, 4th ed. (Paris: L. Rouart and J. Watelin, 1920), 207-8. "Dès l'entrée de la salle qui lui est consacrée, à l'aspect de paysages, de figures d'études ou de simples schémas, tous violemment colorés, on s'apprête à scruter les intentions, à connaître les théories; on se sent en plein dans le domaine de l'abstraction. . . . Toutes les qualités du tableau autres que celles du contraste des tons et des lignes, tout ce que la raison de



---

peintre n'a pas déterminé, tout ce qui vient de notre instinct et de la nature, enfin toutes les qualités de représentation et de sensibilité sont exclues de l'oeuvre d'art."

73. J. F. Schnerg, "Exposition Henri Matisse (Galerie Bernheim-Jeune)," *Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité* (19 February 1910): 59; cited in Fereshteh Daftari, *The Influence of Persian Art on Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky* (New York: Garland, 1991), 158. ". . . confondu deux genres: l'art du peintre et l'art du tapissier."

74. Georg V. Wolf, "Von Ausstellungen München," *Die Kunst für Alle* (November 1910): 70. Wolf further declared that Kandinsky's "indiscriminating agglomeration of color" was incomprehensible and had no relation to life.

75. Sprovieri recalls meeting "a curious German by the name of Meier-Graefe who wrote any number of books on French Impressionism and who was the driving force behind a large German publishing company: 'Piper Publishers.'" During his trip to Paris in 1906-7, Sprovieri mentions also meeting Fernand Léger, Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris, André Dérain, and Maurice de Vlaminck, along with Italian artists including Giuseppe de Nittis and Giovanni Boldini. See Anna Guglielmi, "Conversando con Giuseppe Sprovieri sul futurismo," "A Conversation with Giuseppe Sprovieri on Futurism," *Lotta Poetica* 1, no. 4, series 2 (1982): 23.

76. Julius Meier-Graefe, "Matisse, das Ende des Impressionismus," *Faust* (Berlin) (1923-24); text reproduced in translation in *Matisse: A Retrospective*, ed. Jack Flam (New York: Park Lane, Random House, 1990), 218.

77. Meier-Graefe, "Matisse, das Ende des Impressionismus," 218.

78. Lista proposes that Balla may have been influenced by Johann Heinrich Lambert's color pyramid, which, like many of the artist's *Iridescent Interpenetrations*, was based on a system of triangles and demonstrated the relative intensity of color and light across a continuous

spectrum based on mixtures of white, red, yellow, and blue. Yet there is no evidence that Balla was familiar with Lambert's diagrams, as Lista admits. See Lista, *Balla*, 39-43. The artist's frequent inclusion of green along with the primaries indicates that, while undoubtedly aware of various color theories and diagrams, he followed none of them very exactly. Nineteenth-century color charts would most likely have provided an indirect, although valuable, model, not only for the study of the mutual relations of colors, but also for their organization into repetitive, geometric, impersonal schemas rather than into more purely subjective or spontaneous patterns still linked to the experience of nature.

79. As Yve-Alain Bois has persuasively argued, "modernism in the broad sense of the term was not merely an operation of ontological reduction<m->Greenberg's canonical interpretation<m->but rather a vast enterprise of motivation, of *motivation of the arbitrary*." See "Strzeminski and Kopro: In Search of Motivation," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 126.

80. This is a note scrawled on a page of notebook no. 5, which also contains a depiction of an automobile and the word "Futurista." Lista dates it to 1910. See Lista, *Balla*, 170, no. 209. A part of this page, with the inscription, is reproduced in Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Compenetrazioni iridescenti*, n.p., fig. 2, who dates notebook 5 to 1912-13. A date of spring<n->fall 1912 seems convincing given that the notebook includes static views of automobiles as well as motion studies similar to those undertaken in spring 1912. The Italian text reads: "Tutto si astrae con equivalenti che dal loro punto di partenza vanno all'infinito."

81. Cited in Lista, *Balla*, 39. "Compenetrazioni astratte."

82. In a later interview, however, Sprovieri recalled that Futurism had developed in an atmosphere in which "the possibilities of equivalence between line and color was already an old

---

problem,” one that had been addressed earlier by Hogarth’s book in which he discussed “the value of these esthetic elements when they’re freed from reality . . .” See Guglielmi, “A Conversation with Giuseppe Sprovieri on Futurism,” 21-22.

83. Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 400.

84. Sprovieri, in Guglielmi, “A Conversation with Giuseppe Sprovieri on Futurism,” 29.

85. Cited in Enrico Santamaria, “Conversando con Balla,” *Griffa* 1, no. 10 (1920); reproduced in Lista, *Giacomo Balla, futuriste*, 143. “Io tentai con la mia arte di eguagliare la macchina e di precederla nel suo perfezionamento.”

86. See, for example, Carlo Carrà, “La pittura dei suoni, rumori e odori,” 11 August 1913, published in *Lacerba* (1 September 1913); in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 111-15.

87. This was a risky move that caused his family serious financial suffering, at a time when Balla, who was over forty years old, had begun to achieve recognition for his works. Balla’s most important pre-Futurist works were rescued from the sale by his wife, Elisa, who would not allow them to be lost for both artistic and monetary reasons. She sought the assistance of Ernesto Nathan, the mayor of Rome and a family friend, who used his authority to dissuade the dealers from buying out the sale for artificially low prices. For an account of this event, see Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 300-304. Despite his newly affirmed allegiances, Balla continued to exhibit in official salons such as the Amatori e Cultori.

88. On 8 April 1913, Balla sent a postcard to Sibilla Aleramo, a sign that he did not intend his new allegiance to Futurism to cause a schism with his friends. See note 41 above.

89. Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 304.

90. Cited in *ibid.*, 298. “. . . cominciando quell’arte che sarà l’espressione sincera di una

---

vita futura.”

91. Elica Balla cites this undated statement by her father in *ibid.*, 175. “. . . un immenso diamante prismairidetrilucetissimo, arcipulitissimo, elegantissimo, abitato da una folgorante umanità bellissima, genialissima, ordinata, felice, sanissima, spiritualizzata da nuovi IDEALI . . . [ellipsis in original] e con una superstrafede indistruttibile; arriverci presto fra qualche secolo.”

92. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1914; repr., New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961), 37. “Ineluctable modality of the visible; at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: colored signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them colored. How? By knocking his sconce against them, sure. Go easy. . . . Limit of the diaphane in. Why in? Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it, it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see.”

#### <I>Chapter 5. Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body

1. In *L'alcova di acciaio* (1921; repr., Milan: Serra e Rive Editori, 1985), 139. “Sento la materia del mio cuore trasformarsi, metallizzarsi, in un ottimismo d'acciaio.”

2. In *Nomadology: The War Machine*, trans. Brian Massumi (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986), 103.

3. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 16.

4. Although an earlier version of this chapter was in press at the time Hal Foster's important essay “Prosthetic Gods” appeared in *Modernism/Modernity* (April 1997), I have profited from his analyses in my revisions.

---

5. F. T. Marinetti, "Destruction of Syntax<m->Imagination without Strings<m->Words-in-Freedom," in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 100. "Distruzione della sintassi<m->Immaginazione senza fili<m->Parole in libertà," *Lacerba* (15 June 1913), in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 148. ". . . l'ossessione dell'*io* che i poeti hanno descritto, cantato, analizzato e vomitato fino ad oggi." See also "The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (11 May 1912), in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 95. "Destroy the *I* in literature: that is, all psychology. The man sidetracked by the library and the museum, subjected to a logic and wisdom of fear, is of absolutely no interest. [. . .] To substitute for human psychology, now exhausted, the lyric obsession with matter." "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in *TIF*, 50. "Distruocere nella letteratura l' "io", cioè tutta la psicologia. L'uomo completamente avariato dalla biblioteca e dal museo, sottoposto a una logica e ad una saggezza spaventose, non offre assolutamente più interesse alcuno. [. . .] Sostituire la psicologia dell'uomo, ormai esaurita, con *l'ossessione lirica della materia*." See also "Geometric and Mechanical Splendour and the Numerical Sensibility" (18 March 1914), in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 106. "We systematically destroy the literary "I" in order to scatter it into the universal vibration and reach the point of expressing the infinitely small and the vibrations of molecules." "Lo splendore geometrico e meccanico e la sensibilità numerica," in *TIF*, 100. "Noi distruggiamo sistematicamente l'io letterario perché si sparpagli nella vibrazione universale, e giungiamo ad esprimere l'infinitamente piccolo e le agitazioni molecolari."

6. Marinetti, "The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in *Let's Murder the*

---

*Moonshine*, 95; “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista,” in *TIF*, 50. “I suoi differenti impulsi direttivi, le sue forze di compressione, di dilatazione, di coesione, e di disgregazione, le sue torme di molecole in massa o i suoi turbini di elettroni.”

7. Marinetti, “The Variety Theater,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 129. “Il teatro della varietà,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 182. “. . . cosa e parola immonde.”

8. Marinetti, “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine” (1911), in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 99 (translation amended); “L’homme multiplié et le règne de la machine,” in F. T. Marinetti, *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L’Âge d’Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 112. “Les moteurs [. . .] sont vraiment mystérieux. . . . Ils ont des caprices . . . des fantaisies inattendues. . . . On dirait qu’ils ont une personnalité, une âme, une volonté . . . [. . .] bien plus et bien mieux que tout ce que laissaient prévoir les calculs de son constructeur: son père.”

9. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Propeller Talk,” *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (September 1994): 161.

10. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 47.

11. Marinetti, “Electrical War,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 114; “La guerre électrique,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 140. “L’idée pure du record ascensionnel.”

12. Francis Picabia, “Lettre ouverte à Monsieur H. R. Lenormand” (1920), in *Francis Picabia* (Paris: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1976), 87-88.

<NEX>C’est dans les phénomènes physiques qu’il faut en trouver l’explication davantage que dans les autres: les ions magnétiques qui sont les déterminants de l’équation des sexes influent puissamment sur l’homme toute sa vie: notre cerveau est un champ magnétique d’une intensité d’un nombre de gauss considérable, et c’est ce qui

---

explique que la production intellectuelle soit en rapport direct avec les phénomènes magnétiques naturels, notamment les taches du soleil et les aurores boréales. Et tout ceci est si manifeste que vous avez pu remarquer que j'avais incrusté de métal mes tableaux du dernier salon: ce n'était pas un vain ornement, mais bien une puissante signification.

Picabia had exhibited *The Child Carburetor* in the Salon d'Automne of 1919.

13. Marinetti, *L'alcova d'acciaio*, 138. "Penso che l'audace volontà di vincere è una forza che si proietta fuori dai muscoli con slanci e potenza enormi."

14. Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 102 (translation amended); "La nuova religione-morale della velocità," in *L'Italia Futurista* 1 (11 May 1916), in *TIF*, 130. "L'uomo rubò l'elettricità dello spazio e i carburanti, per crearsi dei nuovi alleati nei motori. L'uomo costrinse i metalli vinti e resi flessibili mediante il fuoco, ad allearsi coi carburanti e l'elettricità. Formò così un esercito di schiavi, o stilli e pericolosi ma sufficientemente addomesticati, che lo trasportano velocemente sulle curve della terra."

15. Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 103; "La nuova religione-morale della velocità," in *TIF*, 131. "Io spero di vedere presto il Danubio correre in linea retta a 300 km. all'ora. Bisogna perseguire, frustare, torturare tutti coloro che peccano contro la velocità."

16. Marinetti, "Electrical War," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 114. "La guerre électrique," in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 140. "L'homme devenu aérien, n'y pose les pieds que de temps en temps!"

17. For an analysis of the long-standing association of male aesthetic creation with autogenesis, and with the cult of the warrior, see Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (Fall 1992): 7-10.

---

18. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 47-48; "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 44-45. "Avevamo lungamente calpestato su opulenti tappeti orientali la nostra atavica accidia," [. . .] "gli automobili famelici," and "Ci avvicinammo alle tre belve sbuffanti, per palparne amorosamente i torridi petti. Io me stesi sulla macchina come un cadavere nella barra, ma subito risuscitai sotto il volante, lama di ghigliottina, che minacciava il mio stomaco."

19. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 48 (translation amended); "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 45. "Eppure non avevamo un'Amante ideale che ergesse fino alle nuvole la sua sublime figura, né una Regina crudele a cui offrire le nostre salme."

20. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 48; "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 46. For the Italian text see chapter 1, note 26. For further commentary on this narrative reworking of Marinetti's car crash, see chapter 1.

21. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 49; "Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 46. "Credevo che fosse morto, il mio bel pescecane, ma una mia carezza bastò a rianimarlo, ed eccolo risuscitato, eccolo in corsa, di nuovo, sulle sue pinne possenti!"

22. Foster, "Prosthetic Gods," 8. For Foster's discussion of Marinetti's car crash, see 10-14.

23. *Ibid.*, 13. Here Foster draws on Lacan's 1958 essay "The Meaning of the Phallus."

24. Marinetti, "Battle of Tripoli," quoted in "The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 94; "Battaglia di Tripoli," quoted in "Manifesto



---

tecnico della letteratura futurista,” in *TIF*, 49. “Eh sì! voi siete, piccola mitragliatrice, una donna affascinante, e sinistra, e divina, al volante di un invisibile centocavalli, che rugge con scoppii d’impazienza.”

25. Marinetti, “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 98 (translation amended); “L’homme multiplié et le règne de la machine,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 111-12: “Ne les [des mécaniciens] avez-vous jamais observés quand ils lavent amoureusement le grand corps puissant de leur locomotive? Ce sont les tendresses minutieuses et savantes d’un amant qui caresse sa maîtresse adorée.”

26. On the technical and cultural history of the tank, invented in England in 1916, see Peter Wollen, “Tanks,” in *Paris Manhattan: Writings on Art* (Verso: New York, 2004), chap. 3, 35-50.

27. Marinetti, *L’alcova d’acciaio*, 52. “Non conoscete la mia nova amante? Ve la presenterò. Intendiamoci, quella preferita, che escluderà tutte le altre e sarà forse definitiva. [. . .] La mia 74 ha una salute di ferro, anzi d’acciaio, una meravigliosa sensibilità, ma blindata. [. . .] Ma la mia è la più agile di tutte, ha un cuore-motore più forte, e il fuoco delle sue ironie mitragliate non ha debolezze né distrazioni.”

28. *Ibid.*, 19. “Poi sentiamo la danza furibonda e il ta-ta-ta-ta-tà capriccioso, spietato, ironico e femminile della mitragliatrice.”

29. There are, of course, elements drawn from other myths and narratives of humans usurping godlike powers of creation through art and technology, including the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea and that of Frankenstein. One might also note that Marinetti’s engineer, Mafarka, is more a primitive *bricoleur* than a modern engineer.

30. Barbara Spackman, “Mafarka and Son: Marinetti’s Homophobic Economics,”

---

*Modernism/Modernity* 1 (September 1994): 90. Spackman cites the following text from the preface: “L’esprit de l’homme est un ovaire inexercé. . . . C’est nous qui le fécondons pour la première fois!” Marinetti, *Mafarka le futuriste* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1984), 17. The Italian version of this novel was published as *Mafarka il futurista*, trans. Decio Cinti (Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di “Poesia,” 1910). Further references to this novel will be to the Italian version.

31. Marinetti, *Mafarka il futurista*, 303. “. . . bello e puro di tutti i difetti che provengono dalla vulva malefica e predispongono alla decrepitezza e alla morte! . . . Si! tu sei immortale, figlio mio.”

32. *Ibid.*, 237. “E possibile procreare dalla propria carne senza il concorso e la puzzolente complicità della matrice della donna, un gigante immortale.”

33. *Ibid.*, 313-14. “Ti ho creato così con tutta la forza della mia disperazione, poiché l’intensità dell’energia creatrice si misura dalla grandezza della disperazione che lo genera.”

34. Marinetti, diary entry for 31 March 1917, in “Selections from the Unpublished Diaries of F. T. Marinetti,” ed. Lawrence Rainey, *Modernism/Modernity* 1 (September 1994): 4-5: “Sempre sempre, nella mia vita si alternarono questi due stati d’animo torturanti: Nel letto più voluttuoso e felice mi sono ad un tratto strappato alle braccia d’una amante deliziosa e buona, e seduto fremente ho teso l’orecchio ad un lontano immaginario bombardamento. Nostalgia desiderio d’eroismo e di violenza. Nella trincea fango broda delle bombarde mostruosa edera rampicante di corpi nudi di donna dalle mie tempie fino alla luna. Nostalgia torrida di lussuria. Perché? Perché?”

35. Marinetti, “Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 100; “L’homme multiplié et le règne de la machine,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 115. “L’immense amour romantique est réduit ainsi à la simple copulation pour la

---

conservation de l'espèce, et le choc des épidermes est enfin délivré de tout mystère piquant.”

36. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 and 1989).

37. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2: 178-81. Theweleit, 179, cites Ernst von Salomon in *Die Kadetten (The Cadets)*, who describes the pleasure of annihilation and its implications for the soldier's body: “It was as if I myself could feel every jolt that shook the metal parts of the gun as a bullet slicing into warm, living human bodies. A wicked pleasure; was I now perhaps one with the weapon? Was I not machine<m->cold metal?”

38. Marinetti, “Let's Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 54; “Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!” in *TIF*, 16. “Bisogna che l'anima lanci il corpo in fiamme, come un brulotto, contro il nemico, l'eterno nemico che si dovrebbe inventare se non esistesse!”

39. Marinetti, “Let's Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 61-62 (translation amended); “Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!” in *TIF*, 26. “Ecco la furibonda copula della battaglia, vulva gigantesca irritata dalla foia del coraggio, vulva informe che si squarcia per offrirsi meglio al terrifico spasimo della vittoria imminente! E nostra, la vittoria . . . ne sono sicuro, poiché i pazzi lanciano già al cielo i loro cuori, come bombe!”

40. Marinetti, *L'alcova d'acciaio*, 118; F. T. Marinetti, *Come si seducono le donne* (Rocca San Casciano: Tipografico L. Cappelli, 1918), 5. “Alla granata austriaca che. . . mi adornò faccia cosce gambe dei soli tatuaggi degni di noi futuristi, barbari civilizzatissimi.”

41. Marinetti, *L'alcova d'acciaio*, 118. “Ferito da una grossa scheggia all'inguine, caduto sotto il pietrame e i sacchi a terra della batteria sfasciata, mi rialzai con la faccia bruciata e calandomi i calzoni inzuppati di sangue ammirai lo straordinario viola della mia coscia e del mio ginocchio pesto.”

---

42. Ibid., 103. “. . . una lotta si era scatenata fra il mio cervello volitivo pieno di idee di guerra e di prossima offensiva e il mio cuore tremante, vinto, liquefatto, napoletano.

Irritatissimo, sconvolto, con le lagrime in gola, traballavo nella carrozzella traballante pei vicoli notturni.”

43. Ibid., 109. “Un demonio assurdo mi costringe ad avvilirmi, annientarmi. Forse ho troppo sofferto della pienezza esuberante di forze e della rigidità costrittrice.”

44. On the warrior as exterior to the state, and as inhabiting or traversing a “smooth” rather than striated and territorialized space, see Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*.

45. Marinetti, *L’alcova d’acciaio*, 195. “Vibra l’elegante forma rosea sulla carta! Non è più carta, diventa carnosa!”

46. Ibid. “L’impeto virilissimo di questo mio motore che è insieme cuore, sesso, genio ispirato e volontà artistica, entra in te, con rude delizia per te, per me, lo sento! Sono lo strapotente genio-sesso futurista della razza tua, il tuo maschio prediletto che ti ridà penetrandoti la rifecondante vibrazione!”

47. Ibid., 225. “Primitività stramba del mio temperamento vergine, selvaggio, schietto, elastico, pieno di barbarie crudele e di profonda umanità civilizzata. Temperamento che s’avventa, colpisce ma subito comprende perdona tutto, con alta bontà indulgente e serena.”

48. Boccioni’s interest in Henri Bergson’s theories has been much discussed in the literature. John Golding points out that Bergson first appeared in Italian translation in 1909, in a volume titled *La filosofia dell’intuizione*, edited by Giovanni Papini. This volume included the entire text of Bergson’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1903, as well as extracts of other texts. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson writes of “absolute motion,” “states of mind,” and the faculty of intuition. Golding suggests that Boccioni first came into contact with these ideas

---

through Papini's friend Ardengo Soffici, whom he met in 1911. See *Boccioni: Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1985), 10-11. An undated note by Boccioni contains the call number for *La filosofia dell'intuizione*, available at the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense of Milan. See Flavio Fergonzi, "On the Title of the Painting *Materia*," in *Boccioni: Materia, A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris*, ed. Laura Mattioli Rossi (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2004), 50-52. Other authors who consider this relation include Brian Petrie, "Boccioni and Bergson," *Burlington Magazine* 116 (March 1974): 140-47; Mark Antliff, "The Fourth Dimension and Futurism: A Politicized Space," *Art Bulletin* 82 (December 2000): 720-33; and Alessandro Del Puppo, "*Lacerba*" 1913-1915: *Arte e critica d'arte* (Bergamo: Lubina Editore, 2000), esp. 193-97.

49. For a discussion of Boccioni's public adherence to Marinetti's principles, which nonetheless conflicted with his feelings toward the real women in his life, see Virginia Spate, "Mother and Son: Boccioni's Painting and Sculpture, 1906-1915," in *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity*, ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107-38.

50. This interpretation takes issue with the prevalent understanding of *Horizontal Construction* and *Materia*, which sees in them the culmination of Boccioni's fascination with "circular" or total vision on the part of the depicted observer, as in *The Street Enters the House* and *Simultaneous Visions* of 1911. See, for example, Antonello Negri, "Uno sguardo circolare," in *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, ed. Laura Mattioli Rossi (Milan: Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta, 1995), 27-42. I believe that, whereas in the earlier works the woman at the balcony functioned as a surrogate for Boccioni, in the latter two works the artist distinguishes his own act of viewing from that of his subject.

---

51. Marinetti, “L’homme multiplié et le règne de la machine,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 115. “Nous verrons disparaître ainsi non seulement l’amour pour la femme-épouse et pour la femme-amante, mais aussi l’amour pour la mère, lien principal de la famille et comme tel opposé à l’audacieuse création de l’homme future.” This passage is omitted in the substantially rewritten Italian version of 1915, and hence is not reported in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*.

52. Boccioni, diary entry for 25 April 1908, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 304. “E il terrore della materia che mi soffoca.”

53. *Materia* was at first nearly square, measuring 161 x 150 centimeters. Boccioni altered this format by adding a canvas strip of 26 centimeters to the top, and two canvas strips totaling 39 centimeters to the lower section of his painting. The final work then measured an imposing 226 x 150 centimeters. On this change and some of the stylistic and iconographic consequences, see Negri, in *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, 27-28, 222.

54. Virginia Spate, whose 1997 publication of “Mother and Son” coincided with the publication of the first version of this chapter in *Modernism/Modernity*, offered a similar analysis of Boccioni’s depiction of his mother as instantiating the passivity of matter: “She is a supreme embodiment of the massively immobile, mindless state of being indicated by the title, *Matter*, the materiality of nature, which culture must shape if the modern is to triumph” (130).

55. Boccioni’s male nude bears some resemblance to Marcel Duchamp’s Marey-inspired nudes, especially the paintings *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*, of early 1912 and *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes* of May 1912. It is possible he saw one or both these works during his visits to Paris in February/March 1912 and in November 1912. For remarks on this possibility, see Negri, “Uno sguardo circolare,” 39, and Emily Braun, “Vulgarians at the Gate,” in *Boccioni: Materia, A Futurist Masterpiece*, 8-9, 19n60. In my view Boccioni’s striding nude,

---

who seems to ascend a stairway, is closest to *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2*. It is also entirely possible he derived this figure from his own interest in motion studies, as Negri suggests.

56. Spate, "Mother and Son," 129-30.

57. See, for example, the remarks of Fausto Petrella, "La 'materia' inquieta e le sue trasformazioni: Appunti per una ricerca," in *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, 85-86.

58. Boccioni, letter to Giuseppe Sprovieri of 4 September 1913, in Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, eds., *Archivi del futurismo*, vol. 1 (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958), 287. "*Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*. E il lavoro mio ultimo ed è il più liberato."

59. Jacques Lacan provides an illuminating account of psychic defense mechanisms against the perceived disintegration of the self, in "The Mirror Stage," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 4. "This fragmented body . . . usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecution."

60. Marinetti, "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 99; "L'homme multiplié et le règne de la machine," in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 112-13.

<NEX>Il faut préparer aussi la prochaine et inévitable identification de l'homme avec le moteur, facilitant et perfectionnant un échange continu d'intuitions, de rythmes, d'instincts et de disciplines métalliques, absolument ignorées aujourd'hui par le plus grand nombre [. . .] nous aspirons à la création d'un type inhumain, en qui seront abolis la douleur morale, la bonté, la tendresse et l'amour, seuls poisons corrosifs de l'interminable

---

énergie vitale, seuls interrupteurs de notre puissante électricité physiologique.

Nous croyons à la possibilité d'un nombre incalculable de transformations humaines, et nous déclarons sans sourire que des ailes dorment dans la chair de l'homme.

[. . .]

Le type inhumain et mécanique construit pour une vitesse omniprésente sera naturellement cruel, omniscient et combatif. Il sera doté d'organes inattendus: des organes adaptés aux exigences d'une ambiance faite de chocs continus. Nous pouvons prévoir dès aujourd'hui un développement du bréchet sur la face externe du sternum, qui sera d'autant plus considérable que l'homme future sera meilleur aviateur.

61. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology*, 101-4, on metal as the archetypal form of matter within the ideology of the “war machine.”

62. See Boccioni, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 369.

63. Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* was executed in plaster and exhibited in that form at the Galerie la Boétie. No doubt the artist was prevented from casting it in bronze by lack of expertise and funds, as well as by his denunciation of bronze as a “passéiste” material in his “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture” dated 11 April 1912, but not published until very late September. For Boccioni's letter to Vico Baer of early July 1913, see Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 369.

64. Interestingly, Boccioni drew a series of racing automobiles during his pre-Futurist years for reproduction on the covers of the Touring Club magazine. But during his Futurist period, this theme is absent from his work, perhaps in part because Balla was at work on a series of race cars in motion during 1912 and 1913.

65. For a brilliant analysis of this most famous of Marinetti's free-word poems, see



---

Jeffrey Schnapp, "Politics and Poetics in Marinetti's Zang Tumb Tuuum," *Stanford Italian Review* 5 (Spring 1985): 75-92.

66. Major parts of the Italian version of the text appeared in *Lacerba* between 15 March 1913 and 1 January 1914. The free-word poem was ostensibly based on Marinetti's experience as a war correspondent for the Parisian daily *Gil Blas* in October 1912, and it appears that much of it was initially composed in French. A facsimile of the standard Italian version, published in 1914 by Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia," appears in *TIF*, 41-779. The spelling of the title appears in multiple variations, on the cover, title page, throughout the text, and differently again in the French version.

67. Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914), in *TIF*, 700. ". . . eccitazione dell'atmosfera 3 miliardi di vibrazioni nuove sensibilità irrrritata degli echi affaccendati sotto l'assalto dei frastuoni pesanti perforatori *zang tumb-tumb-tumb* [ . . . ]"

68. *Ibid.*, 704-5. ". . . particelle sospese di nerofumo detriti minerali e organici"; and 702: "dispersione di 40 milioni di miliardi molecole-fuggiaschi-polverosi senza gambe senza testa senza braccia sulle colline e nelle valli dell'atmosfera agitata dal molle frenetico tremito dell'aria [ . . . ]"

69. Marinetti, "Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 143; "La declamazione dinamica e sinottica," in *TIF*, 124. ". . . il nostro *io* letterario brucia e si distrugge nella grande vibrazione cosmica."

70. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 97; "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in *TIF*, 54. ". . . fuori dal corpo, nell'infinito dello spazio e del tempo."

---

<I>Chapter 6. Futurist Love, Luxury, and Lust

1. In *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 50; “Fondazione e Manifesto del futurismo,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 48. “Noi vogliamo glorificare la guerra<m->sola igiene del mondo<m->il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna.”

2. In Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 73-74 (translation amended); “Manifeste futuriste de la luxure,” first published as a flyer in French and Italian dated 11 January 1913, reprinted in French in Giovanni Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations* (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 1973), 334. “La Luxure est au corps ce que le but idéal est à l'esprit: la Chimère magnifique, sans cesse étreinte, jamais capturée, et que les êtres jeunes et les êtres avides, enivrés d'elle, poursuivent sans répit. La Luxure est une force.”

3. “Contre le luxe féminin, manifeste futuriste,” first published as a flyer dated 11 March 1920, then published in French in *Roma Futurista* 75 (21 March 1920), followed by an Italian version in the same journal, no. 77 (4 April 1920), reprinted in French in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 336. “Au nom du grand avenir viril, fécond et novateur de l'Italie, nous autres futuristes nous condamnons le débordant crétinisme des femmes et l'imbécillité dévouée des mâles, qui collaborent ensemble au développement du luxe féminin, de la prostitution, de la pédérasie et de la stérilité de la race.”

4. Charles Baudelaire, “L'invitation au voyage,” in *The Flowers of Evil*, ed. Marthiel and Jackson Mathews (New York: New Directions, 1955), 54.

5. F. T. Marinetti, “Down with Tango and Parsifal” (11 January 1914), in *Let's Murder*

---

*the Moonshine*, 77; “Abbasso il tango e Parsifal!” *Lacerba* 2 (15 January 1914), reprinted in *TIF*, 95. “Ultimi sforzi maniaci di un romanticismo sentimentale decadente e paralitico verso la Donna Fatale di cartapesta.”

6. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 80 (from the Italian translation of 1915, in *TIF*); originally published in French as “Le mépris de la femme,” in F. T. Marinetti, *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L’Âge d’Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 105.

<NEX>C’est cette haine contre l’amour tyrannique que nous avons exprimée par cette phrase laconique: le mépris de la femme.

Oui, nous méprisons la femme-réservoir d’amour, engin de volupté, la femme-poison, la femme-bibelot tragique, la femme fragile, obsédante et fatale, dont la voix lourde de destinée et la rêveuse chevelure se prolongent et se continuent dans les frondaisons des forêts baignées de claire de lune.

Nous méprisons l’horrible et pesant Amour qui encombre la marche de l’homme et l’empêche de sortir de son humanité, de se redoubler, de se surpasser pour devenir ce que nous appelons: l’*homme multiplié*.

7. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 80.

8. Ibid., 81 (translation amended); “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 106. “Dans cet effort de libération, les suffragettes sont nos meilleures collaboratrices, car plus on obtiendra de droits et de pouvoirs à la femme, plus elle sera appauvrie d’amour, plus elle cessera d’être un foyer de passion sentimentale ou un engin de plaisir.

9. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*,

---

81; “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 106. “Quant à la prétendue infériorité de la femme, nous pensons que si le corps e l’esprit de la femme avaient subi, à travers une longue série de générations, une éducation identique à celle reçue par l’esprit et le corps de l’homme, nous pensons, dis-je, qu’il serait possible de parler raisonnablement d’égalité entre les deux sexes.”

10. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 81; and 82 (translation amended); “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 106, “. . . dans son état actuel d’esclavage intellectuel et érotique . . .”; and 108, “Que les femmes se hâtent de faire, avec une foudroyante rapidité, ce grandiose essai d’animalisation totale de la politique.”

11. Marinetti, “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 108. “Nous, qui méprisons profondément la politique, nous sommes heureux de la livrer aux griffes rancunières des femmes; car c’est bien aux femmes, c’est bien à elles qu’est réservé la noble rôle de tuer définitivement le Parlementarisme.”

12. Scipio Sighele, *Contro parlamentarismo: Saggio di psicologia collettiva* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1895), 34. “La Camera insomma è psicologicamente una femmina e spesso anche una femmina isterica.”

13. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 81-81 (translation amended); “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 107, “. . . l’argent corrupteur et l’astuce accapareuse,” “l’ éloquence creuse, grandiose falsification des idées, triomphe des phrases sonores, tam-tams de nègres et gestes de moulins à vent”; and 108, “La femme telle qu’elle a été façonnée par notre société contemporaine ne peut que pousser en splendeur le principe de corruption qui est intimement attaché au principe du vote.”

---

14. Marinetti, “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 106. “. . . le développement prodigieux du luxe féminin a fait de l’amour un pauvre esclave plus ou moins révolté sous les poings lourds de l’Argent.” (This line was omitted from the 1915 Italian version of the text, and hence is not in *TIF*.)

15. Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 426.

16. Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” 424.

17. *Ibid.*, 427.

18. Marinetti, “Destruction of Syntax<m->Imagination without Strings<m->Words-in-Freedom,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 97 (translation amended); “Distruzione della sintassi<m->Immaginazione senza fili<m->parole in libertà,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 145. “Semi-uguaglianza dell’uomo e della donna e minore dislivello dei loro diritti sociali.” “Deprezzamento dell’amore (sentimentalismo o lussuria) prodotto dalla maggiore libertà e facilità erotica nella donna e dall’esagerazione universale del lusso femminile . . . tutto l’ignoto dell’amore nella scelta di una toilette straordinaria, ultimo modello, che le sue amiche non hanno ancora. L’uomo non ama la donna priva di lusso. L’amante ha perso ogni prestigio, l’Amore ha perso il suo valore assoluto.”

19. Marinetti, “Song of the Mendicant of Love,” in *Stung by Salt and War: Creative Texts of the Italian Avant-Gardist F. T. Marinetti*, ed. and trans. Richard J. Pioli (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 23 (ellipses in original).

20. Marinetti, “La chanson du mendiant d’amour,” in *Destruction, poèmes lyriques* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1904), 65-66 (ellipses in original).

21. Marinetti, “To My Pegasus,” in Pioli, *Stung by Salt and War*, 35; “A mon Pégase,” in

---

*La ville charnelle* (Paris: E. Sansot, 1908), 172. “. . . je vole en souplesse / sur la grisante plénitude / des Astres ruisselants dans le grand lit du ciel!”

22. Marinetti, “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 54; “Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna!,” April 1909, in *TIF*, 15. “. . . i nostri nervi esigono la guerra e disprezzano la donna, poiché noi temiamo che braccia supplici s’intreccino alle nostre ginocchia, la mattina della partenza!”

23. Marinetti, “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 58-59; “Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna!,” April 1909, in *TIF*, 21. “. . . eravamo quasi in cielo, su l’altipiano persiano”; “la Luna carnale, la Luna dalle belle cosce calde, abbandonarsi languidamente sulle nostre schiene affrante.” (Translation amended; the French text, “Tuons le clair de lune,” in *Le futurisme*, includes this variant: “nos échine brisées de fatigue.” See *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 165.)

24. For a discussion of the “broken back” motif, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 104-19.

25. Marinetti, “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 59; “Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna!,” in *TIF*, 22. “Fu così che trecento lune elettriche cancellarono coi loro raggi di gesso abbagliante l’antica regina verde degli amori.”

26. Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini, “Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 30 (the final paragraph, absent in the original manifesto, is quoted here from the catalogue of the “Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters,” Sackville Gallery, London, March 1912); “La pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 58. “Contro il nudo in pittura, altrettanto stucchevole ed opprimente

---

quanto l'adulterio nella letteratura.”

27. All the names of cabarets and café-concerts are given here as they appeared in a letter Boccioni sent to his mother and sister on 17 April 1906. See Zeno Birolli, ed., *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 335.

28. Boccioni, letter to his mother and sister, 17 April 1906, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 335.

<NEX>A Parigi di segnate in questura ce ne sono 80000!!!!!! E questo credetemi è la cosa caratteristica di Parigi. Io ho veduto donne come non avrei mai immaginato che esistessero! Sono tutte dipinte: capelli, ciglia, occhi, guance, labbra, orecchi, collo, spalle, petto, mani e braccia! Ma dipinte in un modo così meraviglioso, così sapiente, così raffinato da diventare opere d'arte. E notate che questo fanno anche quelle di basso rango. Non sono dipinte per supplire alla natura, sono dipinte per gusto, con colori vivissimi: immaginate: capelli del più bell'oro con sopra dei cappellini che sembrano delle canzoni: meravigliosi! Il volto pallido, d'un pallido di porcellana bianca; le gote leggermente rosee, le labbra di puro carminio tagliate nette e ardite, le orecchie rosee; il collo, la nuca e il seno bianchissimi. Le mani e le braccia dipinte in modo che tutte hanno mani bianchissime attaccate con polsi dolcissimi a braccia musicali. Taratan taratan taratan!!!

29. Ibid. “. . . queste donne non hanno per me alcuna attrattiva sensuale; sono troppo diverse dalle donne che ho sempre osservate e queste mi sembrano oggetti.”

30. Ibid., 333.

31. Ibid., 336. “Ognuno cerca inventare una posizione di ballo e ognuna è più voluttuosa dell'altra. Le donne erano leggerissime, vaporose; sembrava un ballo di duchesse e tre quarti

---

erano antique sartine e modelle. . . . Domani sera torno. Vorrei portar via un quadro di tale spettacolo!”

32. Boccioni, diary entry of 26 July 1907, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 251. “E un buon segno l’indifferenza assoluta che s’impossessa di me verso la donna salvo in dati periodi in cui il maschio di 24 anni si fa sentire? E buono ch’io non senta in me né il desiderio né la facoltà di amare? E buono che non senta nel mondo nessun legame nessun affetto *assolutamente*, salvo molto (il massimo ch’io possa) per mia Madre e mia Sorella? E buono il desiderio di restar solo?”

33. Boccioni, diary entry of 16 November 1907, in *ibid.*, 268. “Mi ha detto riguardo a Cinto cose che non sospettavo. Voluttà intensissime di quelle che io ho sempre lette o immaginate ma mai provate. Notti di desiderio insoddisfatto per l’immenso desiderio dell’uno per l’altra. Io non ho mai provato nulla di questo . . . quelle poche donne che mi hanno dato momenti di voluttà (mai piú di momenti) sono state all’ultimo posto della mia valutazione morale e intellettuale. E curioso ed è così.”

34. Boccioni executed an oil painting, pastel, and drypoint of the prostitute Giselle in 1907. See Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni: L’opera completa* (Milan: Electa, 1983), 217-18, cat. nos. 263, 264, and 265 respectively. In the oil painting he gave her a strangely shaped nose, pouting mouth, and masculine chin, features that point toward those he would exaggerate even further in *Modern Idol*. In the pastel and drypoint, Giselle, dressed in a loosely fitting chemise, slouches in the corner of a chaise longue. Her face is now feminine, but her flaccid body and inelegant posture mark her as less than ideal.

35. Boccioni, diary entry of 23 March 1907, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 237. “Il piacere mi allontana dalla Gran Madre? Non so speigare niente!”



---

36. Boccioni citing Ibsen, diary entry of 21 December 1907, in *ibid.*, 271. “Essere un carattere avere la forza di vivere senza amici soli col proprio ideale: ecco la libertà vantata... a questo si oppongono le convenzioni umane il rispetto ai parenti la famiglia . . .” (ellipses in original).

37. Boccioni, diary entry of 21 December 1907, in *ibid.*, 271. “La vera Libertà al di sopra di tutte le miserie. L’impossibilità, la serenità, la contemplazione in alto nel silenzio nel gelo forse (beata solitudo<m->sola beatitudo) e giù le lotte le fatiche brutali, l’amore, la guerra, la morte.”

38. Two undated pencil drawings reproduced in Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L’opera completa*, clearly relate to this male figure: 323, cat. nos. 485 and 486.

39. *Ibid.*, 310. Sabrina Carollo, citing Calvesi, also refers to Marinetti’s text as the inspiration for all three paintings. See *I futuristi* (Florence: Giunti Editore, 2004), 34.

40. Marinetti, “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 58 (translation amended); “Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna!” in *TIF*, 19-20. “. . . una verdura singhiozzante sorse per prodigio dalla terra increspata di onde inattese. Dal fluttuare azzurro delle praterie, emergevano vaporose chiome d’innunerevoli nuotatrici, che schiudevano sospirando i petali delle loro bocche e dei loro occhi umidi. Allora, nell’inebbriante diluvio dei profumi, vedemmo crescere distesamente intorno a noi una favolosa foresta, i cui fogliami arcuati sembravano spossati da una brezza troppo lenta. Vi ondeggiava una tenerezza amara . . .”

41. For a discussion of the classical theory of madness in relation to the excess or loss of corporeal humors and related vapors, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 90, 102, 122, 137-42.

---

42. Marinetti, "Let's Murder the Moonshine," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 58; "Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna!" April 1909, in *TIF*, 22. ". . . le tigri caricarono gli invisibili fantasmi di cui ribolliva la profondità di quella foresta di delizie. . . . Finalmente, fu aperto un varco: enorme convulsione di fogliami feriti."

43. For an illuminating discussion of the themes of narcissism and feminine self-encirclement, see Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, especially chap. 5, "Women of Moonlight and Wax; the Mirror of Venus and the Lesbian Glass."

44. See, for example, Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 310. "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 29; "La pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 57. ". . . tutti si accorgeranno che sotto la nostra epidermide non serpeggia il bruno, ma che vi splende il giallo, che il rosso vi fiammeggia, e che il verde, l'azzurro e il violetto vi danzano voluttuosi e carezzevoli!"

45. Cited in Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 315.

<NEX>Umberto Boccioni ha esposto con anticipata 'marca futurista'; secondo l'aspettativa del pubblico, i suoi quadri dovevano essere perciò elementi di massima attrazione per la Mostra odierna. Invece sono riusciti una delusione da questo punto di vista. Il Boccioni ha infatti dimostrato nelle opere esposte una sensibilità equilibrata di impressionista e di divisionista: ha dato qualche vivido tocco a qualche ritratto. Si aspettava dell'acrobatismo pittorico, della stranezza ideologica, un po' di rivoluzione insomma; ma invece nulla.

46. "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 29; "La pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico," in *Futurismo*, ed. Apollonio, 57. "Come si può ancora vedere roseo un volto umano, mentre la nostra vita si è innegabilmente sdoppiata nel

---

nottambulismo? Il volto umano è giallo, è rosso, è verde, è azzurro, è violetto. Il pallore di una donna che guarda la vetrina di un gioielliere è più iridescente di tutti i prismi dei gioielli che l'affascinano.” See the discussion in Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 112.

47. Charles Baudelaire, “The Lamentations of an Icarus,” in *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Geoffrey Wagner (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 127.

48. Marinetti refers to the “old European sun” with its “great torch of incandescent purple,” which strikes the Futurists only to “flare out” and “vomit itself to infinity,” in “Let’s Murder the Moonshine,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 53.

49. Marinetti, “Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism,” in *ibid.*, 80; “Le mépris de la femme,” in *Le futurisme*, preface by Lista, 107. “. . . laisse immense par laquelle le soleil tient peut-être enchaînée dans son orbite la Terre courageuse, qui voudrait sans doute bondir au hasard pour courir tous ses risques sidéraux.”

50. Marinetti, “The Variety Theater,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 127; “Il teatro di varietà,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 181 (translation amended). “. . . divertentissima battaglia fra il chiaro di luna spasmodico, tormentato da infinite disperazioni, e la luce elettrica che rimbalza violentemente sui gioielli falsi, le carni imbellettate, i gonnellini multicolori, i velluti, i lustrini e il sangue falso delle labbra. Naturalmente, l’energica luce elettrica trionfa, e il molle e decadente chiaro di luna è sconfitto.” The paragraph begins by stating that the Variety Theater and its spectacles promote “amori facili, leggeri e ironici.”

51. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 122-23.

52. Arthur Symons, “Clair de Lune,” in *Selected Poetry and Prose* (Cheadle Thelme: Carcanet Press, 1974), 49; cited in Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 127.

---

53. Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. from the second French edition by Elsie Clews Parsons (New York: Henry Holt, 1903), 83-84.

54. On the representation of monomania in the work of Géricault, see Margaret Miller, "Géricault's Painting of the Insane," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1940-41), 151-63, and Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 232-41. See also the insightful remarks of Jonathan Crary, in "Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Grey Room* 9 (Fall 2002): 15-16.

55. For a discussion of the image of the female hysteric in both French and Italian late nineteenth-century contexts, see Christine Poggi, "Picturing Madness in 1905: Giacomo Balla's *La pazza* and the cycle *I viventi*," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 47 (Spring 2005): 38-68.

56. Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, trans. and intro. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 240 (translation amended); Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (Turin: L. Roux, 1893), 268.

57. Cesare Lombroso, Introduction, in *Criminal Man, According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso, Briefly Summarized by His Daughter Gina Lombroso Ferrero* (New York: B. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1911), xv.

58. Lombroso and Ferrero, *La donna delinquente*, 162-63, 178-80.

59. *Ibid.*, 348-50.

60. Anonymous review in *La Perseveranza* (7 May 1911); cited in Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, 107.

61. A draft of this telegram, signed by Carrà, Russolo, Datta (Matta?), Cavacchioli,

---

Buzzi, and Cinti, is preserved in Boccioni's papers. It is cited in Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, 107-8.

62. Nino Barbantini, "L'Esposizione Libera di Milano," *L'Avvenire d'Italia* (Rome) (19 May 1911); cited in Coen and Calvesi, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 385. "Uno di questi quadri (*La risata*) raffigura un gruppo di femmine e di viveurs che conversano molto allegramente intorno ad una tavola di caffè mentre una delle donne, che sono tutte vestite bizzarramente, prorompe in una risata scrosciente e questa si comunica intorno. La scena è vista con acutezza e rappresentata con una pittura di efficacia irresistibile: l'effetto è in gran parte dovuto alla violenza del colore, al ravvicinamento accecante di toni fortissimi e luminosi: nel centro del gruppo un'enorme piuma gialla sembra un fuoco d'artificio"; translation cited in Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, 109.

63. Cited in Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 385. "La scena avviene intorno al tavolo di un ristorante dove l'atmosfera è allegra. I personaggi sono studiati da tutti i lati e sia gli oggetti di fronte che quelli dall'altra parte devono essere visti, in quanto tutti presenti nella memoria del pittore, così che il principio dei raggi di Roentgen viene applicato all'immagine."

64. Boccioni, diary entry of 16 June 1907, citing Oscar Wilde, from *De profundis*, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, 246-47: "Sotto il riso e la gioia ci può essere un'anima ruvida e rozza ma sotto il dolore ci sono sempre le lacrime! Il dolore al contrario del piacere, non porta maschera alcuna. . . . La verità nell'arte è l'unità di una cosa con se stessa: ciò che è esterno fatto espressione di ciò che è interno: lo spirito fatto carne con il corpo e il corpo animato dalla spirito. Per questa ragione non c'è verità che possa paragonarsi al dolore."

65. Nino Barbantini, cited in Coen and Calvesi, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 365. "Il Boccioni espone anche fra le opere recenti un *Lutto* espressivo ma soverchiamente caricaturale."

---

66. See, for example, the preparatory drawing and the painting titled *Discomposition of Figures at a Table* of 1912, which return to the theme of *The Laugh* to focus on the relation of its two central figures, the disconsolate viveur and the laughing cocotte. In the later painting, all hilarity, along with the cocotte's plumed hat, has been banished. The two figures sit at a café table provided with a siphon bottle, glasses of wine, and a plate of fruit. Although in the drawing they lean intimately against each other, the man bears a sorrowful expression, and the couple fails to communicate. This effect is enhanced by the fracturing play of electric light in the oil painting, which nearly obliterates the woman's expression while further fragmenting the man's. See Calvesi and Coen, *Boccioni: L'opera completa*, 447, cat. nos. 796 and 797.

67. Petrella, "La 'materia' inquieta e le sue trasformazioni: Appunti per una ricerca," in *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, ed. Laura Mattioli Rossi (Milan: Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta, 1995), 99.

68. Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, trans. Jennifer Franchina (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 92.

69. Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 106-7,

70. *Ibid.*, 107.

71. Marinetti, "Selections from *Great Traditional and Futurist Milan*," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 203.

72. On the "exchange of women," who are used and circulated as commodities and signs among men, see Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market," in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 170-91.

73. Franco Tagliapietra argues that Boccioni's cartoon represents Russolo's *La musica*, and that this further demonstrates that *La musica* was exhibited in the Arte Libera exhibition of

---

1911. See “Dalla suggestione simbolista alla teorizzazione e produzione futurista: Incisioni e dipinti,” in *Luigi Russolo: Vita e opere di un futurista*, ed. Franco Tagliapietra and Anna Gasparotto (Milan: Skira, 2006), 41n50. In rendering his caricature, Boccioni also seems to have drawn on other Russolo works, including Russolo’s *Self-Portrait with Heads* of 1908 (which pictures the artist surrounded by skulls), or in which women are figured as animals, as in *Woman Bat* of 1907-8.

74. Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 53.

75. *Ibid.*, 139.

76. See Anne Coffin Hanson, *Severini futurista: 1912-1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), 65-67. Hanson notes the similarities in style and color between *The Black Cat* and *La danseuse obsédante* (which she translates as *The Obsessive Dancer*, a title that makes the dancer the one who is obsessed). She observes that although the catalogue to the Bernheim-Jeune exhibition describes *The Black Cat* as expressing “the sense of morbid oppression after reading Edgar Poe’s tale,” the title may also be associated with the cabaret Le Chat Noir.

77. Hanson notes the possible reference to Toulouse-Lautrec’s images of May Belfort, who carried a black cat whenever she performed, as well as the fact that Severini, when questioned by Marianne Martin, author of *Futurist Art and Theory* of 1968, said the dancer in *La danseuse obsédante* was not a specific person, but “c’était ce qu’on appelle une ‘girl.’” *Severini futurista*, 65. My point here is only that the black cat is a well-known symbol of female lust in turn-of-the-century French culture.

78. Severini, letter to Boccioni, 1910, reprinted in E. Pontiggia, “Una lettera futurista,” *Questarte* 49 (March 1986): 5-42, and E. Pontiggia, “Il primo rapporto sul cubismo: Lettera di

---

Severini a Boccioni,” *Critica d’Arte*, 52 (January-February 1987): 62-70; cited in translation in Daniele Fonti, “Gino Severini, The Dance,” in *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916* (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Collection, 2001), 15.

79. Severini’s ideas about color continued to develop in the years following his adherence to Futurism. By 1913, he attributed to color the ability to awaken sensations of sound, noise, odor, heat, and speed. In “Le grand art religieux du XXème siècle, peinture de la lumière, de la profondeur, du dynamisme: Manifeste futuriste,” he claims that the sounds of a waltz evoke “light blue, light violet, and emerald green” (43). Similarly, the “couleurs odeurs” of a prostitute are “light blue-green, light blue-violet, and emerald” (43). As Daniela Fonti has argued, this text appears to be the first version of Severini’s 1913 manifesto, “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism: Futurist Manifesto,” which Marinetti rejected as insufficiently polemical. Both texts are reproduced, in their original French and in Italian translation, in Daniela Fonti, *Luce + velocità + rumore: La città di Gino Severini* (exhibition: Rome, Auditorium Parco della Musica) (Milan: Skira, 2005), 42-47.

80. Daniela Fonti has observed that this painting was most likely executed in January 1914 because of its similarity to an india ink drawing that Severini dedicated to his friend Jannot, describing it as the “first drawing of the plastic analogies in memory of Anzio/January 1914.” Severini probably signed the painting and dated it to 1913 sometime later. See *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*, 132-35.

81. Gino Severini, “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism-Futurist Manifesto,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 123. Severini sent Marinetti a version of this manifesto (in French) in October 1913, then two revised versions in January 1914, a further revised Italian translation in February, and a “definitive copy” in April. Marinetti, however, never considered



---

this manifesto sufficiently Futurist in tone and content, and it was not published until 1958.

82. Severini, “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 121.

83. *Ibid.*, 122.

84. *Ibid.*, 125.

85. Severini seems to conflate memories of Valentine de Saint-Point’s two most famous manifestos, the 1912 “Manifesto of the Futurist Woman,” read at the Salle Gaveau in Paris on 27 June 1912, and the 1913 “Futurist Manifesto of Lust,” published in *Lacerba* 6 (15 March 1913). In his memoirs he refers to the latter as having been read at the Salle Gaveau in late June 1912. See Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 105.

86. Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, 105.

87. Günter Berghaus, “Dance and the Futurist Woman: The Work of Valentine de Saint-Point (1875-1953),” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 11 (Autumn 1993): 28. See also Véronique Richard de la Fuente, *Valentine de Saint-Point (1875-1953): Une poétesse dans l’avant-garde futuriste et méditerranéiste* (Céret: Éditions des Albères, 2003), 100-01.

88. Silvia Carandini, ““One Evening Experiencing the Action of a Dancer’: Gino Severini, Paris, and the Dance,” in *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*, 50.

89. The Futurist exhibition had opened on 1 June with lectures by Marinetti and Boccioni. Saint-Point’s manifesto was published in German in *Der Sturm* 108 (May 1912) (Berlin).

90 Valentine de Saint-Point, “Manifeste de la femme futuriste,” reprinted in French in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 329. “L’humanité est médiocre. La majorité des

---

femmes n'est ni supérieure ni inférieure à la majorité des hommes. Toutes deux sont égales.

Toutes deux méritent le même mépris.”

91. Saint-Point, “Manifeste de la femme futuriste,” in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 330. “Assez des femmes, pieuvres des foyers, dont les tentacules épuisent le sang des hommes et anémient les enfants, *des femmes bestialement amoureuses qui, du Désir, épuisent jusqu'à la force de se renouveler!*”

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid. “Elle est l'individualité de la foule: elle fait cortège aux héros, ou, à défaut prône les imbéciles.”

94. Ibid., 331. “*Il ne faut donner à la femme aucun des droits réclamés par les féministes. Les lui accorder n'amènerait aucun des désordres souhaités par les Futuristes, mais au contraire, un excès d'ordre.*”

95. Ibid. “*Femmes, redevenez sublimement injustes, comme toutes les forces de la nature!*”

96. Ibid. “*La luxure est une force, parce qu'elle détruit les faibles, excite les forts à la dépense des énergies, donc à leur renouvellement. Tout peuple héroïque est sensuel. La femme est, pour lui, le plus exaltant des trophées.*”

97. Valentine de Saint-Point, “Futurist Manifesto of Lust,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 71 (translation amended); “Manifeste futuriste de la luxure,” in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 332. “La luxure, c'est l'expression d'un être projeté au-delà de lui-même; c'est la joie douloureuse d'une chair accomplie, la douleur joyeuse d'une éclosion; c'est l'union charnelle, quels que soient les secrets qui unifient les êtres; c'est la synthèse sensorielle et sensuelle d'un être pour la plus grande libération de son esprit; c'est la communion d'une

---

parcelle de l'humanité avec toute la sensualité de la terre; c'est le frisson panique d'une parcelle de la terre."

98. Saint-Point, "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 72; "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure," in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 333. "Qu'on cesse de bafouer le Désir, cette attirance à la fois subtile et brutale de deux chairs quels que soient leurs sexes, de deux chairs qui se veulent, tendant vers l'unité. Qu'on cesse de bafouer le Désir, en le déguisant sous la défroque lamentable et pitoyable des vieilles et stériles sentimentalités."

99. Saint-Point, "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 73; "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure," in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 334. "Il faut choisir savamment. Il faut, guidé par l'intuition et la volonté, évaluer les sensibilités et les sensualités, et n'accoupler et n'accomplir que celles qui peuvent se compléter et s'exalter."

100. Saint-Point, "Futurist Manifesto of Lust," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Apollonio, 71; "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure," in Lista, *Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 333. ". . . *il est normal que les victorieux, sélectionnés par la guerre, aillent, en pays conquis, jusqu'au viol pour recréer de la vie.*"

101. For a historically informed analysis of Saint-Point's contradictory positions on lust, luxury, and violence, see Lucia Re, "Valentine de Saint-Point, Ricciotto Canudo, F. T. Marinetti: Eroticism, Violence and Feminism from Prewar Paris to Colonial Cairo," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 24, no. 2 (2003): 37-67. Re's analysis is a welcome corrective to the overly simple reading of Saint-Point as "Fascist," but is not entirely convincing in proposing that her "ideas and narratives constitute a set of liberatory fantasies, the imaginary staging of 'another woman' (44)."

---

102. Valentine de Saint-Point, “Chorégraphie nouvelle,” *Montjoie!* 1 (September<n->October 1913); “Mes danses idéistes,” *Le Journal* (20 December 1913); “La métachorie,” *Le Miroir* (n.s.) 7 (11 January 1914); “La métachorie,” *Montjoie!* 2 (January<n->February 1914): 5-7.

103. Valentine de Saint-Point, “La métachorie,” *Montjoie!* (1914); cited in English translation by Carandini, in *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*, 55n25.

104. Gino Severini, “Ideografia futurista,” *Lacerba* (7 July 1914).

105. Vivien Postel du Mas, “Les caractères géométriques du danseur modern,” *Montjoie!* 1-2 (January 1914); cited in Carandini, in *Gino Severini: The Dance, 1909-1916*, 51.

106. In “La métachorie,” Saint-Point explained that, “To avoid distracting the gaze from the total line of the body, I veil my face which, by its stereotypical or multiple expressions, too similar to the ordinary expressions of small daily sentiments, would harm the whole.” “La métachorie,” *Le Miroir*, reprinted in Lista, *Futurisme: Manifestes, documents, proclamations*, 255. “Pour ne pas distraire le regard de la ligne totale du corps, je voile la figure qui, par son expression stéréotypée ou trop multiple et trop semblable aux expressions ordinaires des petits sentiments quotidiens, nuirait à l’ensemble.”

107. For a discussion of Saint-Point’s collaboration on the journal *Montjoie!* and its cult of chivalrous ideals and of Celtic nationalism as a return to the pure (non-Latin) origins of the French race, see Nancy Locke, “Valentine de Saint-Point and the Fascist Construction of Woman,” in *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, ed. Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 84-86.

108. Locke, “Valentine de Saint-Point and the Fascist Construction of Woman,” 87. In an illustrated account of Saint-Point’s performance of *métachorie* at the Salle Poirier de la Comédie

---

des Champs-Élysées, on 20 December 1913, the text explains that Saint-Point wore a variety of eccentric costumes, from the “tender gypsy” to the “Parsifalesque knight.” See Giovanni Lista, *Lo spettacolo futurista* (Florence: Cantini, 1989), 39. One reviewer described Saint-Point, in her performance at the Comédie des Champs Élysées in December 1913, as “presque nue” (almost nude), and another referred to her diaphanous tulle veils. See Berghaus, “Dance and the Futurist Woman,” 33.

109. Valentine de Saint-Point, *La guerre: Poème héroïque* (Paris: Figuière, 1912), 23-24.

110. Saint-Point, *La guerre*, 25. “Le sifflement des balles.”

111. Ibid. “. . . la mort brutale des jeunes mâles / N’est qu’une force transformée / Qui s’étend sur la race.”

112. Several scholars cite Saint-Point’s “Lettre ouverte,” *Journal des débats* (7 January 1914), but I have not been able to find this reference.

113. Leslie Satin, “Valentine de Saint-Point,” *Dance Research Journal* 22 (Spring 1990): 9. Satin here relies on information given in the program for this event.

114. Saint-Point, in interview with Nixola Greeley-Smith, “Geometric Dancer Doesn’t Believe in Love: Interprets Love Poems on the Square,” *Toledo Blade* (18 November 1916); cited in Satin, “Valentine de Saint-Point,” 9.

115. Saint-Point, *Poèmes, drames idéistes du premier festival de la métachorie*; cited in Satin, “Valentine de Saint-Point,” 10.

116. In a 1916 interview with Nixola Greeley-Smith, Saint-Point clarified her ideas on love, marriage, and the duty of women to bear children. She claimed that she did not believe in love, or in anything that caused an individual to become a “slave” or an “animal,” and thereby to lose “cerebral control.” And although she affirmed that it was women’s “supreme duty” to have

---

children, she also stated that this did not mean they *must* do so. Interestingly, Saint-Point rejected the role of mother in her own life. See Greeley-Smith, “Geometric Dancer Doesn’t Believe in Love; Interprets Love Poems on Square” ; cited in Satin, “Valentine de Saint-Point,” 2.

117. Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 146 (only part of the Italian text is reproduced here); “Manifesto della danza futurista,” *L’Italia Futurista* 21 (8 July 1917); reprinted in *TIF*, 146-47.

<NEX>Valentine de Saint-Point concepì una danza astratta e metafisica che doveva tradurre il pensiero puro senza sentimentalità e senza ardore sessuale. La sua *métachorie* è costituita da poesie mimate e danzate. Disgraziatamente sono poesie passatiste che navigano nella vecchia sensibilità greca e medievale; astrazioni danzate ma statiche, aride, fredde e senza emozione. Perché privarsi dell’elemento vivificatore della mimica? Perché mettersi un elmo merovingio e velarsi gli occhi? La sensibilità di queste danze risulta monotona limitata elementare e tediosamente avvolta nella vecchia atmosfera assurda delle mitologie paurose che oggi non significano più nulla. Geometria fredda di pose che non hanno nulla a che fare con la grande sensibilità dinamica simultanea della vita moderna.

118. Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 146-47 (translation amended); “Manifesto della danza futurista,” in *TIF*, 148. “. . . la danza futurista italiana non può avere altro scopo che immensificare l’eroismo, dominatore di metalli e fuso con le divine macchine di velocità e di guerra.”

119. Marinetti, “Manifesto della danza futurista,” in *TIF*, 145. “Le prime danze orientali pervase dal terrore religioso erano pantomime ritmate e simboliche che riproducevano ingenuamente il movimento rotatorio degli astri.” (Not in the *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*.)

---

120. Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 146 (translation amended); “Manifesto della danza futurista,” in *TIF*, 148. “. . . una fantastica via latte di stelle-shrapnels esplose che fascia la terra.”

121. Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 149; “Manifesto della danza futurista,” in *TIF*, 152. “. . . cospargerà il suolo intorno a sé di stelle d’oro (allegro ironico spensierato).”

122. For analysis of these debates, see Elisabetta Mondello, *La nuova italiana: La donna nella stampa e nella cultura del ventennio* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987), 13-51; Lucia Re, “Futurism and Feminism,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 7 (1989): 261-71; Elisabetta Mondello, *Roma futurista: I periodici e i luoghi dell’avanguardia nella Roma degli anni venti* (Milan: Franco Angeli Libri, 1990), 37-109; Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti’s Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 106-10; Christine Poggi, “The Paradox of the Futurist Woman,” in *La Futurista: Benedetta Cappa Marinetti*, ed. Lisa Panzera (Philadelphia: The Galleries at Moore College, 1998), 17-24; and Lucia Re, “Futurism, Seduction, and the Strange Sublimity of War,” *Italian Studies* 59 (2004): 83-111.

<I>Chapter 7. Return of the Repressed: Vicissitudes of the Futurist Machine Aesthetic under Fascism

1. In F. T. Marinetti, *Let’s Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), 91; “La guerre électrique,” in F. T. Marinetti, *Le futurisme*, preface by Giovanni Lista (Lausanne: Éditions L’Âge d’Homme; Milan: Mondadori, 1980), 137. “Haut le drapeau futuriste! Toujours plus haut! pour exalter la volonté agressive et oublieuse de l’homme, et affirmer une fois de plus

---

le néant ridicule du souvenir nostalgique, de l'histoire myope et du passé trépassé.”

2. “Il paesaggio nella pittura futurista,” *Oggi e Domani* (Rome) 1 (18 August 1930): 5; reprinted in *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, ed. Enrico Crispolti (Milan: Mazzotta, 1988), 76.

<NEX>Questi vent'anni di lavoro hanno creato nelle generazioni giovani una coscienza in armonia col proprio tempo<m->il trionfo dei principî futuristi ha attenuato il bisogno di quell'intransigenza polemica che era necessaria nell'ambiente ostile dell'anteguerra.

Ecco perché noi ci avviciniamo oggi all'arte con uno spirito modificato (a confronto dei primi futuristi), non più ossessionati dall'ansia inventiva, ma ricchi già di una “nostra” tradizione. Ci avviciniamo con fine costruttivo, più liberi di allora dal peso del passato.

3. Marinetti, *Futurismo e fascismo* (1924), in *TIF*, 494. “Vittorio Veneto e l'avvento del Fascismo al potere costituiscono la realizzazione del programma minimo futurista.” (Vittorio Veneto and the coming to power of Fascism constitute the realization of the minimum program of Futurism.)

4. Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, “Manifesto dei pittori futuristi,” in *Futurismo*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Milan: Mazzotta, 1970), 51. “Noi vogliamo combattere accanitamente la religione fanatica, incosciente e snobistica del passato, alimentata dall'esistenza nefasta dei musei. Ci ribelliamo alla supina ammirazione delle vecchie tele, delle vecchie statue, degli oggetti vecchi e all'entusiasmo per tutto ciò che è parlato, sudicio, corroso dal tempo, e giudichiamo ingiusto, delittuoso, l'abituale disdegno per tutto ciò che è giovane, nuovo e palpitante di vita.”



---

5. Gino Severini, “Art du fantastique dans le sacré” (written in 1913 but unpublished until 1960), in *Écrits sur l’art*, preface by Serge Fauchereau (Paris: Éditions Cercle d’Art, 1987), 51.

6. Severini, “Art du fantastique dans le sacré,” 52. “À la grande faute chrétienne, qui laissait les artistes de ces derniers siècles sceptiques et songeurs, nous opposons notre éthique et esthétique futuristes, dont les croyances et certitudes inébranlables sont le résultat de notre siècle de vitesse, de créations mécaniques, d’individualisme, d’héroïsme instinctif.”

7. Ibid. “. . . poupées en cire, symboles d’une fausse conception de la création et de l’instinct humain.”

8. For an analysis of the widespread celebration of the myth of war, by nationalists, Futurists, syndicalists, and other interventionists, see Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989).

9. Renzo De Felice discusses the myth of the “vittoria mutilata” in *Mussolini il rivoluzionario, 1883-1920* (1965; repr., Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1995), 489-90. See also his discussion of the defeat at Caporetto, and the inglorious conclusion to the war, 288-544. Further analyses of the relations of Futurism to the emergence of Fascism, and the crises of the postwar period include Emilio Gentile, “Il futurismo e la politica: Da nazionalismo modernista al fascismo (1909-1920),” in *Futurismo, cultura e politica*, ed. Renzo De Felice (Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988); and Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38-41.

10. Elica Balla, *Con Balla*, vols. 1 and 2 (Milan: Multhipla, 1984, 1986), 1: 416-27. Among the books mentioned by Elica Balla are Carlo Delacroix’s *Guerra di popolo*, and *Lettere di soldati alle loro infermiere*, a small volume of letters gathered and illustrated by one of Balla’s pupils, Pierina Levi, who had volunteered as a nurse in Rome’s hospitals. Levi gave a copy of

---

the book to Balla, with a dedication dated September 1918; Ada Negri, who wrote the preface, also wrote a dedication, in which she compared reading the book to “saying a prayer” (425).

11. See Balla, *Con Balla*, 1: 427. The passage reads:

<NEX>con l’animo ancora emozionato dalle sensazioni drammatiche della guerra l’artista, amante della natura, nei rami amputati dei suoi amatissimi alberi sente amputazione di arti. Dalla penombra cupa del bosco le sezioni dei rami tagliati si stagliano piccole e luminose e danno la sensazione di ferite, dal punto del taglio partono linee di forza che passano sulla massa dei verdi profondi del bosco dominato dal sinistro luccichio della lama che ferisce: il bosco ne duole come il cuore dell’artista che guarda e sente, c’è lo schianto dei tronchi abbattuti e le ferite dolorose del grande albero mutilato. Verde, nero, bianco ed un tono d’ombra violaceo costituiscono i pochi colori del quadro.

12. Charles Baudelaire, “Correspondences,” in *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Geoffrey Wagner (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 23.

13. There seems to be little doubt that Balla wished to endow his allegory with the immediate force of a mimetic symbolism, in which colors and forms “naturally” evoke a sense of melancholy and suffering. Yet the cut tree as emblem of human fragmentation and pain is an arbitrary, cultural artifact that assumes a particular resonance in countries with a strong Christian tradition. For the by-now canonical theorization of allegory as a melancholic mode of representation, see Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (Manchester: Verso, 1985). For studies that analyze the emergence of allegory in post-World War I Italian art, see Jean Clair, “‘Sous le signe de Saturne’: Notes sur l’allégorie de la mélancolie dans l’art de l’entre-deux-guerres en Allemagne et en Italie,” *Cahiers du Musée National d’Art Moderne*, nos. 7-8 (1981): 179-207, and Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian*

---

*Modernism*, chap. 4, 68-89.

14. Marinetti, “Democrazia futurista” (1919), in *TIF*, 452-53. “Vogliamo che uno spirito di rivolta e di guerra circoli come un sangue impetuoso nella gioventù italiana. La nazione, che ha origine violenta, non può che essere rafforzata da questa doppia circolazione irruente di sangue.”

15. Marinetti, “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 151.

16. Marinetti, “The New Religion-Morality of Speed,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 102; “La nuova religione-morale della velocità,” in *TIF*, 130. “La morale cristiana servì a sviluppare la vita interna dell’uomo. Non ha più ragione d’essere oggi, poiché s’è vuotata di tutto il Divino.”

17. Marinetti, “The New Religion-Morality of Speed,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 104; “La nuova religione-morale della velocità,” in *TIF*, 132. “Se pregare vuol dire comunicare con la divinità, correre a grande velocità è una preghiera. Santità della ruota e delle rotaie. Bisogna inginocchiarsi sulle rotaie per pregare la divina velocità.”

18. In his “Discorso di Firenze,” improvised at the Fascist Congress of Florence early in October 1919, Marinetti remembered setting forth this demand to great applause: “Noi dobbiamo domandare, volere, imporre, l’espulsione del papato, o meglio ancora, per usare una espressione più precisa, lo ‘svaticanamento.’” (We must demand, desire, impose, the expulsion of the Papacy, or better yet, to employ a more precise expression, “devaticanization.”) In *TIF*, 532.

19. “Beyond Communism,” in *Let’s Murder the Moonshine*, 161; “Al di là del comunismo,” in *TIF*, 482. “Vogliamo liberare l’Italia dal papato, dalla monarchia, dal Senato, dal matrimonio, dal Parlamento. [. . .] Vogliamo l’abolizione degli eserciti permanenti, dei

---

tribunali, delle polizie e dei carceri, perché la nostra razza di geniali possa sviluppare la maggior quantità possibile di individui liberissimi, forti, laboriosi, novatori, veloci.”

20. Marinetti, “Futurismo e fascismo,” in *TIF*, 508. “Il 29 maggio 1920, Marinetti e alcuni capi futuristi escono dai Fasci di combattimento, non avendo potuto imporre alla maggioranza fascista la loro tendenza antimonarchica e anticlericale.” (On 29 May 1920 Marinetti and several other Futurist leaders left the Fascist Combatants, not having been able to impose on the Fascist majority their antimonarchical and anticlerical tendency.)

21. Marinetti, “Dichiarazioni politiche acclamate dal congresso,” 23 November 1924, in *Il Futurismo* 11 (11 February 1925); in *TIF*, 614.

<NEX>Con un gesto di forza ormai indispensabile liberati dal parlamento. Restituisci al fascismo ed all’Italia la meravigliosa anima diciannovista, disinteressata, ardita, antisocialista, anticlericale, antimonarchica. Concedi alla Monarchia soltanto la sua provvisoria funzione unitaria, rifiutale quella di soffocare o morfinizzare la più grande, la più geniale e la più giusta Italia di domani. [. . .] Schiaccia l’opposizione clericale anti-Italiana di Don Sturzo, l’opposizione socialista anti-Italiana di Turati [. . .] con una ferrea dinamica aristocrazia di pensiero armato che soppianti l’attuale demagogia d’armi senza pensiero.

See also the discussion of this episode in Claudia Salaris, *Artecrazia: L’avanguardia futurista negli anni del fascismo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, Scandicci, 1992), 63.

22. For a discussion of the Futurist machine aesthetic that extends into the postwar period, see Ada Masoero, *Universo meccanico: Il futurismo attorno a Balla, Depero, Prampolini* (Milan: Galleria Fonte d’Abisso, 2003) and Ada Masoero, Renato Miracco, and Francesco Poli, *L’estetica della macchina da Balla al futurismo torinese* (exhibition: Turin, Palazzo Cavour)

---

(Milan: Mazzotta, 2004).

23. Ivo Pannaggi, and Vinicio Paladini, “Manifesto dell’arte meccanica futurista,” *La Nuova Lacerba* (Rome) 1 (20 June 1922); reprinted in *Pannaggi e l’arte meccanica futurista*, ed. Enrico Crispolti (Milan: Mazzotta, 1995), 178. “Gl’*ingranaggi* purificano i nostri occhi dalla nebbia e dall’indeciso, tutto è più *tagliente, deciso, aristocratico, distinto*. Sentiamo meccanicamente e ci sentiamo costruiti in acciaio, anche noi macchine, anche noi meccanizzati dall’atmosfera.”

24. Vinicio Paladini, “La rivolta intellettuale,” *Avanguardia* (Rome) 15 (23 April 1922); reprinted in Giovanni Lista, *Arte e politica: Il futurismo di sinistra in Italia* (Milan: Multipla, 1980), 195.

<NEX>Un nuovo mondo vogliamo, non una transizione. Le transizioni fanno sempre schifo e sono degenerazione e perversione. Distruggere tutto, se no vale meglio putrefarci di bassezza nei miasmi cerebrali capitalisti.

Ciò che oggi forma l’orgoglio della classe dominante, l’ambiente dove la sua intelligenza si muove, dovremo rigettarlo come cadavere decomposto.

Le glorie ufficiali artistiche dovremo distruggere se vogliamo sulla terra una nuova razza aristocratica e nobile quale il Comunismo ci deve dare.

25. Paladini and Pannaggi’s manifesto accompanied a Futurist theatrical production they put on for the Circolo delle Cronache d’Attualità at the Casa d’Arte Bragaglia in Rome in June 1922. Their “Ballo meccanico futurista” (Futurist mechanical ballet) comprised three actors dressed in metallic robotlike costumes. Performed by three Russian dancers to the varied noise rhythms of two motorcycles, the “ballet” dramatized the dilemma of a proletarian worker torn between his attraction for a machine and for a woman. This struggle pitted the values of

---

mechanical virility against “feminized” tradition and sentiment, although the woman, like the “machine” and the robot-man, wore a costume made of cardboard, shiny polychrome papers, and other colored and metallic materials. The “aristocracy” of the proletarian was linked to his ability to overcome the claims of physical desire, and to become one with the hard, cold, geometric, and precise tools of production. Paladini had been associated with the Communist Party in Rome, and maintained his Russian connections. His enthusiasm for the Communist Revolution, and his conviction that once the workers controlled the means of production, technology would improve the human condition, are determining factors in his attitude toward the machine. For a discussion of Paladini’s attempt to integrate his Communist views with Futurism, see Günter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction, 1909-1944* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 197-217; Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 417-30; and Umberto Carpi, *Bolscevico immaginista: Comunismo e avanguardie artistiche nell’Italia degli anni venti* (Naples: Liguori, 1981).

26. Vinicio Paladini, “La rivolta intellettuale”; reprinted in Lista, *Arte e politica*, 196.

<NEX>L’acciaio pulito ed i bulloni plastici, dalle fabbriche fonte della nostra vita moderna e della nostra grande rivolta.

Amiamo i volani tranquilli e le locomotive con tutta la nostra sconfinata passione come le amerà il proletariato quando non saranno più proprietà di capitalisti e strumenti di sfruttamento, ma macchine meravigliose che lavoreranno per il benessere materiale dell’umanità nuova.

27. For a rare color reproduction of *Mechanical Rhythms*, see Carpi, *Bolscevico immaginista*, color insert, n.p. See also Carpi’s excellent discussion of Paladini’s effort to integrate Communist and Futurist political and aesthetics ideals, which faltered over the

---

contradiction between nationalism and internationalism, as well as between an art created by and for the proletariat versus an art created by and for an elite avant-garde in the name of the proletariat (chap. 3).

28. Vinicio Paladini, “Estetica meccanica,” *Noi* (Rome) series 11, vol. 1, no. 2 (1923): 2; reprinted in *Pannaggi e l’arte meccanica futurista*, 175-76.

29. Enrico Prampolini, Ivo Pannaggi, and Vinicio Paladini, “L’arte meccanica: Manifesto futurista,” (Rome, October 1922), *ibid.*: 1-2; reprinted in *Pannaggi e l’arte meccanica futurista*, 174-75. “La Macchina non è forse oggi il simbolo più esuberante della misteriosa forza creatrice umana? . . . Noi futuristi imponiamo alla Macchina di strapparsi alla sua funzione pratica, assurgere nella vita spirituale e disinteressata dell’arte, e diventare un’altissima e feconda ispiratrice.”

30. Prampolini, Pannaggi, and Paladini, “L’arte meccanica: Manifesto futurista,” 175. “La Macchina è la nuova divinità che illumina, domina, distribuisce i suoi doni e punisce in questo nostro tempo futurista, cioè devoto alla grande Religione del Nuovo.” This line is, of course, absent in the far shorter manifesto written by Pannaggi and Paladini.

31. *Autobiografie di giovani del tempo fascista* (Brescia: 1947); cited in Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. Keith Botsford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 61-62.

32. Ruggero Vasari, *L’angoscia delle macchine* (Turin: Rinascimento, 1925). Reprinted in Mario Verdone, ed., *Teatro italiano d’avanguardia: Drammi e sintesi futuriste* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1970), 168-87. *Der Futurismus* appeared in five issues, from May to December 1922.

33. Ruggero Vasari, letter to Guglielmo Jannelli of 14 February 1931; cited in Roberto

---

Tessari, *Il mito della macchina: Letteratura e industria nel primo novecento italiano* (Milan: U. Mursia, 1973), 263. “Io vado al di là del Futurismo perché mentre da un lato esalto la macchina . . . dall’altro ne provo orrore! E perché? Perché la meccanizzazione distrugge lo spirito!”

34. Marinetti, lecture at the Sorbonne in Paris; cited in Mario Verdone, *Teatro del tempo futurista*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988), 250. “. . . una delle opere più importanti che il futurismo abbia dato.”

35. For an excellent analysis of Vasari’s play see Tessari, *Il mito della macchina*, 263-66. See also Mario Verdone, “Pannaggi e il teatro,” in Enrico Crispolti, ed., *Pannaggi e l’arte meccanica futurista* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1995), 106-11.

36. Vasari, *L’angoscia delle macchine*, in Verdone, ed., *Teatro italiano d’avanguardia*, 180. “La scena è dominata dalla Macchina-cervello, sintesi del pensiero dei tre despoti Bacal, Singar e Tonchir. Uomini, condannati e macchine operano secondo gli ordini impartiti da questa macchina che intercetta la volontà dei capi.”

37. *Ibid.*, 186. “Tonchir. (s’inginocchia religiosamente e bacia la Macchina. La sua voce è strozzata dalla commozione) Mia creatura . . . mio amore . . . <m->me ne vado per sempre. Tu sei la vittoriosa<m->io lo sconfitto. La tua anima è di metallo <m->la mia<m->purtroppo umana!”

38. Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*, 498-99.

39. Ruggero Vasari, “Il teatro della supermarionetta” (interview by Jo Lherman), *L’Impero* (10 March 1925): 5; cited in Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*, 499. Giovanni Lista also cites part of this text in French translation in *La scène futuriste* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), 279.

40. The costumes were not realized due to lack of resources, but Pannaggi’s watercolor



---

sketches and the costume for *Condemned to the Machine* No. AG/H2 were shown at the Deutsche Theaterausstellung in Magdeburg in May 1927.

41. Enrico Crispolti, *Il mito della macchina e altri temi del futurismo* (Rome: Editore Celebes, 1969), 390-91. The other plays on the bill included Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and Leonida Repaci's *Il peccatore*.

42. Enrico Rocca, "Repaci, Marinetti e Guillaume Apollinaire alla ribalta degli Indipendenti," *Il Lavoro d'Italia* (29 April 1927); cited in Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*, 422.

43. See Crispolti, *Pannaggi e l'arte meccanica futurista*, 273-75.

44. Vasari, *L'angoscia delle macchine*, in Verdone, ed., *Teatro italiano d'avanguardia*, 180. "Portano in testa un casco sul quale brilla una piccola antenna. [. . .] Sono come esseri inanimate, sospesi nello spazio, che ubbidiscono a fili invisibili."

45. Vasari; cited in Verdone, ed., *Teatro del tempo futurista*, 255. "Interpretazione e recitazione. Né stilizzazione, né naturalismo. Piuttosto deformazione: non sono uomini che parlano, ma supermarionette, intese non come bellezze rigide e idoli, ma quali forze cosmiche, con caratteri meccanici, sconfinamento delle apparenze e delle forme della spiritualità dell'uomo. Recitazione senza enfasi, senza declamazione, senza pathos: bensì metallica."

46. Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 55.

47. Giovanni Gentile, *Che cosa è il fascismo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1925), 145; cited in Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 58.

48. This collection of poems is reproduced in the appendix of Claudia Salaris, *Storia del futurismo: Libri, giornali, manifesti* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985), 261-83. According to Enrico Crispolti and Pierro Valducci, the three authors were Fillia, Pasquali, and Galezzi. Fillia

---

contributed five poems: “Visione simbolica” (“Symbolic Vision”), “Noi” (“We”), “Rivolta” (“Revolt”), “Ghigno” (“Grimace”), and “Prima luce” (“First Light”). See Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 135.

49. These lines are from the poem “Noi,” in Salaris, *Storia del futurismo*, 269. “La viltà atavica degli schiavi si cambierà in dittatura formidabile e incendieremo e rovineremo tutto quello che si collega al passato e al presente.”

50. From the poem “Visione simbolica” (“Symbolic Vision”), in *ibid.*, 267. “Contro l’egoismo e contro la religione.”

51. From the poem “Al popolo” (“To the People”), in *ibid.*, 266. “Gli strumenti del lavoro ti siano armi / gli arnesi che giornalmente adoperi / per mantenere nel lusso / nel vizio / nei divertimenti / i parassiti / (nella miseria i tuoi figli) / servono per la loro morte.” This poem was not written by Fillia, but is consistent in tone and imagery with his poems.

52. The Communist Proletkult in Turin was founded on 6 January 1921 by Carlo Emanuele Croce and Giovanni Casale (members of Antonio Gramsci’s circle), for the social and cultural emancipation of the proletariat. For a close analysis of the failed alliance between the Futurists and Communist workers in Turin during the immediate postwar period, see Lista, *Arte e politica*, 54-114.

53. Fillia, “L’idolo meccanico,” *L’Impero* (July 1925); reprinted in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 72; reproduced Luciano Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1944* (Florence: SPES [1990]), no. 174.

54. Fillia, “L’idolo meccanico”; in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 72. “Noi possiamo perciò credere a tutto un complesso materiale e morale

---

che risolverà finalmente l'evoluzione umana, con un perfezionamento definitivo.”

55. Ibid. “Questa forza inesorabile sorpassa la semplice volontà individuale, limitata tra tendenze diverse, e rappresenta una legge espansiva, più assoluta delle tradizioni viventi, in quanto il nostro progresso meccanico e costruttivo non è monopolio di uno Stato ma possiede la medesima capacità d'azione in ogni parte del mondo.”

56. Fillia, “L'idolo meccanico, arte sacra meccanica, manifesto futurista,” *La Fiamma* (Turin, 2 May 1926); reproduced in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo, 1909-1944*, no. 179, n.p. A variant of this manifesto was published in “Vetrina Futurista,” 2nd series (Turin: 1927), and is reprinted in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*. The passage cited here is substituted with another description in the later version of the manifesto.

57. Fillia, Caligaris, Curtoni, “L'idolo meccanico, arte sacra meccanica, manifesto futurista,” n.p., in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 73. “La ‘religione della velocità’ e la ‘sensualità meccanica’ indicano chiaramente i fattori spirituali che, al di sopra della semplice forma estetica, modificano fatalmente il nostro pensiero e i nostri sensi<m->afferriamo cioè che la MACCHINA annulla tutto il vecchio mondo spirituale ed umano per crearne un altro superumano e meccanico, dove l’UOMO perde la propria superiorità individuale fondendosi con l’AMBIENTE.”

58. See this comment on the “Airplane” of Curtoni, in *ibid.* “. . . l’elica addenta ferocemente l’aria annullando le distanze<m->l’apparecchio intero si svilluppa, possedendo violentemente l’atmosfera.”

59. Fillia, Caligaris, Curtoni, “L'idolo meccanico, arte sacra meccanica, manifesto futurista,” n.p. Among his contemporary writings that deal with the issue of mechanical

sensuality, see *La morte della donna, novelle (The Death of Woman, Short Stories)* (Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925); *Sensualità, teatro d'eccezione (Sensuality, Exceptional Theater)* (Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925); *Lussuria radioelettrica: Poesie meccaniche (Radioelectric Lust; Mechanical Poems)* (Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1925); “Sensualità meccanica” (*Mechanical Sensuality*), *La Fiamma* (Turin) 2 (4 April 1926): 2; and *L'uomo senza sesso (The Man without Sex)* (Turin: Edizioni Sindacati Artistici, 1927). In brief, Fillia's attitude toward sensuality was consistent with that of Marinetti. In *La morte della donna*, he argued that woman no longer has a reason to exist given that the advent of machines had rendered the physical differences, and hence the superiority of men, irrelevant. Progress had shattered the chains of tradition and masculine fantasies of the eternal feminine. One had to dispense with love as a “compensation” between masculine and feminine poles and arrive, therefore, at the “death of woman” and at the “man without sex” (a version of the man/machine hybrid). The mechanical idol would displace the feminine idol, and eroticism would be reduced to a physical and reproductive need.

60. Cited in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 64. “. . . il corpo magro, femminile, seducentissimo di una bicicletta metallica.”

61. Fillia, “Spiritualità futurista,” in *Fillia pittore futurista* (Turin: A.R.S., 1931); reproduced in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo*, no. 195, n.p.

<NEX>L'Egitto e l'Alto Medioevo sono per noi gli esempi vivi della Storia: troviamo maggiore sanità nel respiro di Menfi e di Bisanzio che nel respiro di Atene e di Firenze.

Questa nostra sensibilità non ha importanza rivoluzionaria, poiché tutti sanno che i primi cristiani odiarono e dimenticarono la civiltà dei greci e dei romani il cui aspetto

---

non confaceva con il loro spirito rinnovato. Fu soltanto nel “quattrocento” che si scoprì l’arte greco-romana e alla loro volta i valori del Medioevo decaddero dal gusto generale. Oggi, poiché crediamo di essere maturi per un altro grande periodo religioso, comprendiamo le nostre simpatie per i bizantini e la nostra indifferenza verso tutto il Rinascimento.

62. Fillia, “Spiritualità futurista,” n.p. “Le Madonne di Raffaello e di tanti altri sono meravigliose donne vive, che si possono ammirare ma non pregare, perché non trasfigurate dal mistero, perché prive di divinità.”

63. Fillia painted a series of still lifes of bottles and vases on tables in the mid-1920s that are clearly inspired by Purist (and Cubist) work. As his ideas evolved toward an emphasis on lyrical expression in the 1930s, he argued that “French” architects Le Corbusier and Mallet-Stevens, unlike Gropius, understood the importance of “poetic emotion” in architecture. See “Lirismo e razionalismo” (“Lyricism and Rationalism”), *Il Secolo XIX* (Genoa) (15 March 1933); reprinted in Crispolti, ed., *Fillia, fra immaginario meccanico e primordio cosmico*, 79-80.

64. Fillia, “Spiritualità futurista,” n.p. “Riassumendo: la civiltà meccanica . . . non è un fenomeno puramente materiale. La civiltà meccanica provoca un’atmosfera di mistero, di ignoto, d’imprevedibile: ha tutti i caratteri di una forza superiore a qualsiasi logica umana che dirige e domina la nostra vita.”

65. Fillia was in contact with Le Corbusier, and there are many parallels in their thinking on the “new spirituality” occasioned by the advent of the machine. Nonetheless, Fillia’s approach to the machine is fundamentally irrational, while Le Corbusier celebrated the engineer, who applies the laws of logic, as the inspiration and point of departure of the new aesthetic. In his book of 1923, *Towards New Architecture*, Le Corbusier famously declared: “The airplane is

---

the product of close selection. The lesson of the airplane lies in the logic which governed the statement of the problem and its realization. The problem of the house has not yet been stated. . . . The house is a machine for living in.” See Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), 10.

66. Marinetti, “Prospettive di volo e aeropittura,” *La Gazzetta del Popolo* (Turin) (22 September 1929); revised and published as “La prima affermazione nel mondo di una nuova arte italiana: L’aeropittura. Un manifesto di Marinetti,” in *Il Giornale della Domenica* (Rome) (1-2 February 1931), and Marinetti, Balla, Benedetta, Depero, Dottori, Fillia, Prampolini, Somenzi, Tato, “Le manifeste de l’aéropeinture,” *Comoedia* (Paris) (14 February 1931); in *TIF*, 197-201. For an overview of a wide range of Futurist aerial works, see Massimo Duranti, *Aeropittura e aeroscultura futuriste* (Città di Castello: EFFE Fabrizio Fabbri Editore; Alitalia, 2002).

67. Gerald Silk, “‘Il primo pilota’: Mussolini, Fascist Aeronautical Symbolism, and Imperial Rome,” in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 67-81.

68. For an analysis of this period of crisis in the machine aesthetic in France, see Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), chap. 3.

69. Fillia, “Rapporti tra futurismo e fascismo,” in *Arte Futurista: Pittura, scultura, architettura, ceramica, arredamento* (exhibition: organized by S.G.U.F., Alexandria, Egypt, 22-31 March 1930); reproduced in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo*, no. 196, n.p. “L’Architettura è il vertice della potenza, della solidità, della ricchezza, del lavoro e del genio di un popolo. Per questo noi futuristi sosteniamo l’assoluta

---

necessità che il fascismo abbia una propria fisionomia costruttiva.”

70. Fillia, ed., *La nuova architettura* (Turin: UTET, 1931). The cover of this book is metallic silver. Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mallet-Stevens are among the many architects whose works and essays are included.

71. Marinetti, “Manifesto dell’arte sacra futurista,” *La Gazzetta del Popolo* (Turin) (23 June 1931) and “La provincia di Padova,” *Padua* (23 June 1931); later signed also by Fillia, in *Il Piccolo della Sera* (Triest) (8 July 1931), and in the catalogue of the exhibition: *Aeropittura arte sacra futurista*, La Spezia (1932); reproduced in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo*, no. 202, and in *TIF*, 201-5.

72. Fillia, letter to Tullio d’Albisola, n.p. “Tutto l’insieme è chiuso dalla sfera del mondo sulla cui sagoma appaiono, come per divina intuizione, le linee costruttive delle chiese (dalla caverna delle catacombe alle architetture romane, bizantine, romaniche, gotiche, del Rinascimento, ecc. fino all’architettura della chiesa futurista).”

73. Fillia, “L’architettura sacra futurista,” *Futurismo* (Rome) 1, no. 4 (2 October 1932): 219; reproduced in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo*, no. 219.

74. Fillia, Bracci, Maino, “Alfabeto spirituale,” in *Sale futuriste* (exhibition: Turin, Palazzo Madama, January 1925); reprinted in Enrico Crispolti, *Il secondo futurismo <math>\langle m \rangle 5</math> pittori + 1 scultore* (Turin: Pozzo, 1962) and in Caruso, ed., *Manifesti, proclami, interventi, e documenti teorici del futurismo*, no. 175.

75. Marinetti, “Al di là del comunismo,” *TIF*, 474. “Il cerchio affettivo del nostro cuore italiano, allargandosi, abbraccia la patria, cioè la massima quantità manovrabile di ideali, interessi, bisogni miei, nostri, legati e senza contrasti.”

---

76. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Henry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 222-23.

77. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 243n5: "The definition of the aura as a 'unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be' represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image."

78. *Ibid.*, 223.

79. *Ibid.*, 218.

80. In one case, a painting by Fillia titled *Nativity* <math>m\rightarrow</math> *Mystical Motherhood* of 1932, served as the basis for a mural in the Church of Lourtier in Switzerland. This church, in the Canton of Vallese, was constructed by Alberto Sartoris, a Rationalist architect who had many ties to the Futurists and whom they often claimed as one of their own.

81. "Discorso di Pio XI del 28 ottobre 1932," in *Arte Sacra* (Rome) (July <math>n\rightarrow</math> December 1932): 293-95; quoted in Salaris, *Artecrazia*, 115. ". . . che il sacro non sembrano richiamare e far presente se non perché lo sfigurano fino alla caricatura, e bene spesso fino a vera e propria profanazione."

82. Alfredo Busa, *Classicismo e futurismo* (Enna: Il Littorio, 1933); quoted in Salaris, *Artecrazia*, 114. "Per nostra fortuna quest'arte è stata bandita dalla Chiesa." The Futurists had exhibited their works in a room devoted to them at the First Exhibition of Sacred Modern Christian Art held in Padua in May 1931, an exhibition promoted by the Church. Fillia exhibited *The City of God* and *Adoration* among other works. Marinetti first issued the "Manifesto of



---

Sacred Futurist Art” to coincide with this show.

83. Balla, Benedetta, Depero, Dottori, Fillia, Marinetti, Prampolini, Somenzi, Tato, “Manifesto della aeropittura,” in *TIF*, 200. “Nelle virate si chiudono le pieghe della visione-ventaglio (toni verdi + toni marroni + toni celesti diafani dell’atmosfera) per lanciarsi verticali contro la verticale formata dall’apparecchio e dalla terra. Questa visione-ventaglio si riapre in forma X nella picchiata mantenendo come unica base l’incrocio dei due angoli.”

84. For a discussions of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution,” in *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture*, ed. Richard J. Golsan (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 1-37, and by the same author, *Anno X <math>\rightarrow</math> La mostra della rivoluzione fascista del 1932* (Pisa, Rome: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003). See also Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 132-78.

85. For an analysis of the various meanings of the X as a symbol in the program and architecture of this exhibition, see Schnapp, “Epic Demonstrations,” 26-30.

86. Marinetti, in a modified version of his preface to Benedetta’s novel of 1931, *Viaggio di Gararà*, published as a flyer (probably also in 1931), commented on *Il grande X*, exhibited that year at the Quadriennale di Roma. He saw the painting as “the plastic synthesis of the collision of four realities: Worlds, Atmosphere, Feeling, Everyday social reality.” See “Note ai Testi,” in Benedetta, *Le forze umane; Viaggio di Gararà; Astra e il sottomarino* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Altana, 1998), 229. “*Il grande X*, sintesi plastica dell’urto di quattro realtà: Mondi, Atmosfera, Sentimento, Quotidianismo sociale.”

87. See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*

---

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

88. See Benedetta (), *Le forze umane: Romanzo astratto con sintesi grafiche* (Foligno: Campitelli, 1924); reprinted in *Le forze umane; Viaggio de Gararà; Astra e il sottomarino*. In the chapter titled “Totali Raggiunti,” Benedetta writes: “Ecstatic emotion. . . . He was neither weight nor density, my father, but a radiant, dilated, luminous expression of Achieved Reconciliation, like the universe on a dark night. . . . For the being elevated to harmony, nothing has been in vain, nothing is vain. Every vibration has its light. Every faith its resurrection. To love life means to accept the crucifixion, because only this nullifies all the miserable agonies, liberates the forces for the apotheosis” (96). (“Commozione estatica. . . . Non era più né peso né densità, mio Padre, ma una espressione irraggiata dilatata luminosa del Raggiunto, come l’universo in una notte cupa. . . . Per l’essere assunto ad armonia nulla era stato vano, nulla è vano. Ogni vibrazione ha la sua luce. Ogni fede la sua risurrezione. Amare la vita significa accettarne la crocifissione, poiché solo essa annienta tutte le misere agonie, libera le forze per l’apoteosi.”)

89. Dario Lupi, *La riforma Gentile e la nuova anima della scuola* (Milan and Rome: Mondadori, 1924), 230-31; cited in Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 35. See also Dario Lupi, *Parchi e viali della rimembranza* (Florence: R. Bemporad e Figlio, 1923), and George L. Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: H. Fertig, 1980), chap. 11.

90. See Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*.

91. Fillia, “Spiritualità futurista,” n.p. “Intendiamo perciò l’arte come una funzione spirituale, come un mezzo per rendere le immagini di un misterioso mondo superumano. L’uomo ha bisogno di staccarsi dalla terra, ha bisogno di sognare, di desiderare eterne felicità, di dimenticare continuamente la realtà quotidiana.”

---

92. The Fascist imperative to make history visible or “actual” in the present is the subject of Fogu’s excellent study of Fascist culture, *The Historic Imaginary*.

<I>Chapter 8. Epilogue

1. Umberto Boccioni, (Appunti per un diario), ca. 1909, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Umberto Boccioni: Altri inediti e apparati critici* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), 62.

<NEX>Questo eclettismo questo dilettantismo mi davano noia e sofferenza. Mi davano il malessere di chi si sente di non essere attaccato a nulla; mi davano il dubbio di chi non ha una fede di trionfare; mi dava l’apatia, lo scetticismo, l’insofferenza del temperamento scientifico.

Ho raccolto tutto quello che avevo osservato nel carattere del nostro tempo ed ho trovato che quello che ci rende incerti è la mancanza di una fede, cioè di un indiscutibile. Noi che siamo sempre allo stesso punto di fronte all’infinito manchiamo di un nuovo finito che sia simbolo della nostra nuova concezione dell’infinito.

2. Boccioni, (Appunti per un diario), in Birolli, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, 62.

“Filosoficamente abbiamo demolito il concetto di un Dio creatore e giudice e di conseguenza socialmente sono scaduti dal nostro rispetto i suoi rappresentanti in terra. L’arte risente naturalmente di queste demolizioni e cammina alla cieca.”

3. Ibid. “Dunque noi siamo senza religione, senza società, senz’arte.

“Bisogna dunque che sorga una filosofia per una nuova religione e quindi necessità di un dogma; bisogna che l’ambizione e la volontà di qualcuno o di molti faccia sorgere una nuova società; appena avremo questo l’era di una grande arte sarà iniziata. Noi abbiamo bisogno di definire qualche cosa alla quale poi credere.”

---

4. Ibid., 61.

<NEX>Sarebbe difficile in poche righe spiegare e manifestare tutte le lotte che si combattono in me presentemente e poter dare un'idea degli assalti che continuamente la mia critica muove a tutto quello che formava la mia conoscenza di ieri.

Questo posso dire, che in me non è rimasto in piedi nulla. Ho tutto sradicato e quello che è in piedi tentenna.

5. Ibid., 62. “. . . più di tutto temo il divenire scettico.”

6. Ibid. “Queste idee mal digerite mi spingevano a generalizzare. Generalizzando perdevo il concetto di me o lo smarrivo temporaneamente rimanendo disarmato e alla mercé del primo venuto.”

7. Ibid., 61. “Però se c'è una tendenza predominante in me in questo tempo è la ricerca spasmodica della ricostruzione. La quale ricostruzione è continuamente sorvegliata dalla mia critica che m'impedisce di cadere in un dogma già superato.”

8. Ibid.

<NEX>Tutto il mio lavoro di questi ultimi tempi è stato la ricerca della causa prima: nell'arte quindi nella vita. Ho cercato che qualunque atto della mia volontà rispondesse il più possibile ai *motivi* che sento costituire il mio edificio interno.

Ho studiato a che le risposte ai perché che mi ponevo fossero corrispondenti alle necessità architettoniche dell'abbozzo che era in me.

9. Ibid., 60. “L'uomo così grande si mostra così impotente che si comprende l'aspirazione a staccarsi; a sfuggire, ad aumentarsi . . . ma forse vivere e *creare* è la sola vendetta, il solo insulto possibile contro l'ignoto che ci ha già segnati e al quale non sfuggiremo” (ellipsis in original).

- 
10. Boccioni, "Appunti," ca. late 1913/14, in Birolli, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, 44. "Quindi lo stile contiene il rinnovarsi della fiamma-idea."
11. Boccioni, "Secondo taccuino," 21 September 1907, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), 260. ". . . una virilità che è fatta di precisione e di esattezza e di positivismo."
12. Boccioni, "Appunti," ca. late 1913/14, in Birolli, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, 44.
13. Ibid. "Come un liquido prende forma nella forma che lo contiene altrimenti cade e si sparge e si assorbe si annulla."
14. Ibid., 45. ". . . un'idea che vive nella durata e nega la natura. La libertà comunemente intesa è arbitrio, caso, impressione, nega l'architettura che è coordinazione e volontarietà. Tutto ciò che è grande è architettonico."
15. Elica Balla, *Con Balla*, vols. 1 and 2 (Milan: Multhipla, 1984, 1986), 2: 133. "L'azzurro che nel dipinto doveva invadere il pessimismo, lo aveva sempre aiutato nella vita."
16. F. T. Marinetti, cited in Elica Balla, *Con Balla*, 2: 133. "Tutti gli italiani che non hanno ancora penetrato le realizzazioni e le infinite possibilità della pittura futurista possono utilmente osservare quel funebre dentato e membranoso pessimismo passatista che certamente sarà vinto dall'elastico, trasparente, cristallino ottimismo futurista."
17. See Giovanni Lista, *Balla*, catalogue raisonné (Modena: Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1982), 345, no. 747. Lista dates this sketch, which is lost, to 1926/27, without giving a rationale. Other scholars have proposed a date of 1918. Even if the work dates from later than 1923, the use of the same figure to represent a Futurist metallic man and the passatista forces of Pessimism is telling.
18. F. T. Marinetti, "Il futurismo mondiale," a conference held at the Sorbonne in Paris in

---

spring 1924, in *L'Impero* (24 May 1924); reprinted (excerpts) in *Il Verri*, nos. 33-34 (1970): 27-28. <NEX>É la vita che è la grande nemica del futurismo, la vita con tutti i suoi pesi, le decadenze, le disfatte, con tutte le sue lotte mal riuscite, con i suoi attacchi con tutto quello che noi chiamiamo [*sic*] le forze tentacolari, minuziose del quotidiano [. . .] il pessimismo! Ecco il nemico del futurismo, ecco veramente la grandezza nemica pericolosa da combattere! [. . .] Ciò che bisogna combattere è precisamente il pessimismo rinascete che è il peso dei secoli, il peso della letterature, il peso degli sforzi già compiuti, il peso di tutti i dolori dell'umanità e che l'artista porta lui stesso, in qualche maniera, come una centrale elettrica tragica e che accumula continuamente contro tutti gli sforzi novatori.