Emotions of Modernity: the Portrait of Feelings in Umberto Boccioni’s States of Mind I

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Abstract

In this thesis I will argue the difference that exists between Boccioni’s triptych and his other canvases, as well as the artist’s States of Mind I and the other Futurists’ artistic production: to do so, the three paintings will be examined under the light of several topics and considerations, which will enhance and question the meaning of each of the triptych’s canvas. Moreover, the peculiarity of the paintings will be drawn near to Boccioni’s own uniqueness in the Futurist group, which made him surpass the already marked limits of his avant-garde. The thesis consists of two distinct parts: the first section focuses on the analysis of Umberto Boccioni’s triptych States of Mind I (1911), and on the distance between the triptych and the rest of the Futurist production. Each analysis of the three canvases is linked to and shaped by different and specific themes, including Henri Bergson’s ideas, Gaetano Previati’s production, and Symbolist art, which allow to better understand the artist’s intentions and the messages that are concealed in the canvases. The second part aims at highlighting an aspect of Boccioni’s artistic character: even though imbued with a strong futurist ideology, he maintained a marked anti-Futurist sensibility, which allowed him to analyze his contemporaries’ inner-world with particular care. These main two sections are preceded by a description of the social and political situations that were going on before and during the artistic creation of Umberto Boccioni, as well as the Italian and European artistic production that had an impact on the artist’s production, and in particular on States of Mind I.
Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my parents.

Thank you for having ruined the 24th April 2015: this was probably the best decision ever.

Henri Matisse is witness of it.
# Table of Contents

Introduction................................................................................................................................................. 1

Humanitarian Socialism................................................................................................................................. 7

Feeling/Colour: The Influence of European Trends from Expressionismo to Fauvism............................. 13

Chapter I: States of Mind I: Emotional Architecture .................................................................................. 16

The Farewells: Depicting Departure........................................................................................................... 22

Those Who Go: Modernism in the State of Mind I..................................................................................... 27

Those Who Stay and the Legacy of Symbolism......................................................................................... 32

Chapter II: The Limits of Futurism: Boccioni’s Explanation of the Inner-world................................. 39

Boccioni and F.T Marinetti: the Two Facets of Futurism........................................................................ 43

The Representation of the Modern Century............................................................................................. 49

Boccioni’s Anti-Futurist Shadow: the Redicovery of Italian Art, Religion, and Music.......................... 53

Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 57

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................................. 59

Illustrations ................................................................................................................................................. 63
List of Figures

Figure 1 (1a – 1b – 1c) States of Mind I. The Farewells. Those Who Go. Those Who Stay ...... 66
Figure 2 Little Street Under the Sun................................................................. 67
Figure 3 Mirror of Life .................................................................................. 67
Figure 4 Factories at Porta Romana............................................................... 68
Figure 5 The Laugh....................................................................................... 68
Figure 6 The Haunting Dancer ...................................................................... 69
Figure 7 The Hands of the Violinist .............................................................. 69
Figure 8Estaque ............................................................................................ 70
Figure 9 Despair ......................................................................................... 70
Figure 10 Simultaneous Visions ................................................................... 71
Figure 11 Mèmoires du Voyage ................................................................... 71
Figure 12 Elasticity ....................................................................................... 72
Figure 13 (13a – 13b – 13c) States of Mind II. The Farewells. Those Who Go. Those Who Stay .............................................................................................................. 72-73
Figure 14 The Return of the Pious Women .................................................. 74
Figure 15 The Ascent of the Pious Women ................................................... 74
Figure 16 Street-Light .................................................................................. 75
Figure 17 The City Rises ............................................................................. 75
Figure 18 The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli .............................................. 76
Figure 19 Study for ‘Mourning’ ................................................................... 76
Figure 20 Homage to Mother ...................................................................... 77
Introduction

The triptych *Stati d’Animo: The Farewells, Those Who Go, Those Who Stay* (Fig. 1a-1b-1c), series I, was painted in 1911 by the Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni, and it is preserved at the Civico Museo d’Arte Contemporanea in Milan. The fairly small format allows a specific and more intimate dialogue between the spectator and the artwork. Since their first appearance in public in the Parisian art gallery Bernheim-June in 1912, they have always been shown together.¹ The artwork was long meditated by the artist, as the numerous preparatory studies can confirm.² Because the three paintings were unprecedented works in the panorama of modern Italian art, already in the years of their production and their first appearance in public, they earned the interest of art critics, and they quickly gained a certain amount of critical press.³ Since he had always refused to sell them, Boccioni was clearly fond of these canvases for several reasons:⁴ firstly, the theme of the ‘states of mind’ was a new part of his poetic, which allowed him to get closer to reality, and to portray modernity in an Expressionist way; secondly, he almost certainly attached personal emotions and memories to these works. For the triptych, the artist took inspiration from the feelings he felt during the departure of his extremely beloved mother in a train station, just like the ones that he used as setting.⁵ The artwork is composed of three paintings: each of them gives a shape, with a powerful Expressionistic style, to the deep and

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complicated sentiments that travelers might feel during their departure and their journey. Moreover, the last picture expresses the melancholic emotions that those who stay endure, while they see their beloved leaving.

This dissertation aims to analyze the topic of emotions, the main characters in Boccioni’s canvases that give meaning to all composition; however, the present thesis does not take the form of a psychological research: the theme will be analyzed through sources that belongs to the art history field. The artist lived in a period that tends to be overshadowed by his Futurist colleagues in strong and sometime aggressive ways: despite this background, Boccioni was able to make emotions emerge, and treat them differently from the other Futurist painters, making them emerge in a technological and male-centered society. In order to give an exhaustive explanation of the topic some important sources will be exploited: the ideas of the French philosopher Henry Bergson about memory are a relevant means to comprehend the understanding of feelings that Boccioni’s contemporaries and the artist himself had. These concepts deeply impacted the reception of the couple memory/emotions: Boccioni could wave Bergson’s ideology in his triptych, delivering at the same the strength of emotions and their memory. The understanding of emotions was delivered in the canvases by specific colors and forms carefully selected by the artist: the quality of the feelings could be delivered by shade of colors and lines. Those pairs can be analyzed through color theories, which can shed light on their meaning.

The *Stati d’Animo* triptych is an unexpected element in Boccioni’s artistic production: the praise of modernity was put aside to give space to the analysis of emotions: a surprising theme, since it clearly was not one of the main Futurist themes and concerns; moreover, Boccioni’s choice was
arguably connected to the research that was being conducted in the field of psychoanalysis, which Sigmund Freud was establishing at the time. By those years, the Austrian doctor had already published ‘The Psychopathology of Everyday Life’ (1904), ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ (1909), and ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming’ (1909), which might have influenced Boccioni. The subjective character that flows from the volumes of Freud resonates in the canvases of the States of Mind I: each canvas expresses the personal experience and feelings that Umberto Boccioni felt during farewells, and the loss that detachment made him feel. However, the subjective element of this experience becomes exemplar, and can be shared by all who might have found themselves in the same situation.

The organization of the canvas changed to match the substitution of the topic: the triptych shows just outlined characters, and twisting lines that give a sense of the spaces and situations. Through the Stati d’Animo Boccioni permitted the spectators to find themselves in the new field of modern art: the triptych created a solid connection with spectators, who saw themselves in the canvas in place of the departing figures. Boccioni’s work represented situations and feelings that were becoming widespread during the times of the creation of the triptych: the improved transportation made detachment and departure common conditions, which affected people’s psyche. The Stati d’Animo represented a new path for Umberto Boccioni: the Futurist artistic manner is put aside by the description of human sensibility. Through the analysis of each canvas guided by different issues and arguments, it will be possible to understand how the artist delivered, through his paintings, the analysis of the humanity that was impacted by modernity and was deeply changed by it. In the triptych’s canvases, by means of forms and colors, the artist gave to human inner-world a new dignity, that the hostile and threatening Futurist credo
overshadowed. The changes that Boccioni’s style was facing were motivated and pushed by the Futurist group that was formed in 1910: the *Stati d’Animo* was anticipated by the ‘Manifesto of the Futurist Painters’ (‘Manifesto della Pittura Futurista’) and ‘Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto’ (Manifesto Tecnico della Pittura Futurista’), in which the Futurist group stated, ‘Everything is in movement, everything rushes forward, everything is in constant swift change’: the improvements in Boccioni’s style and the consequent creation of his masterpieces have to be considered as the natural evolution of his artistic path, which was also enhanced by the growing Futurist awareness.

The Italian and English names of the triptych might cause some perplexities: the Italian artwork’s name is *Stati d’Animo*, the English one is *States of Mind*. Whereas ‘state of mind’ means ‘A person's mood, and the effect that mood has on the person’s thinking and behavior’ (Cambridge Dictionary); the Italian label refers to the soul or psyche, the innermost part of human beings, to their emotions and fears. The English word ‘mind’ directs to the field of intellect and reasoning; while Boccioni himself stated that, with the ‘stato d’animo’, he wanted to catch and paint pure sensation. With the painting of this elusive notion, he could stop the idea, before it took a definite form and would eventually result in any sensory experience. In order to prevent the misinterpretation of the triptych, a less deceiving and more appropriate title for the artwork might be ‘*States of The Soul*’: in this way, both the real focus of the paintings and their authentic meaning would be easier to understand.

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6 Coen, *Boccioni*, 93.
In order to approach this subject, I will base my analysis on a number of sources. Christopher Duggan’s ‘The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796’ focuses on the chaotic history of the Italian Unification, and the difficult period that the newly born state had to go through to find balance, before they dragged Italy into its destructive role during World War I.

I looked at various monographic works, which include: ‘Umberto Boccioni’ by Ester Coen, which documents the retrospective exhibition of Boccioni’s creations in the United States and introduces the overview of the artist’s accomplishments, including a complete survey for both his art and writings; ‘Umberto Boccioni: The Artist Who Challenged Future’ (‘Umberto Boccioni: l’Artista che Sfidò il Futuro’), by Agnese Gino, is an exciting biography of Boccioni, where the artist is followed in all aspects of his life, from the beginning of his artistic formation and his artistic achievements, to the formation of the Futurist group; and ‘Boccioni: The Myth of Modernity’ (‘Boccioni: Il Mito del Moderno’) by Raffaele De Garda, analyzes the artist’s personality through the lens of Futurism. The volume ‘Pittura Scultura Futuriste. Dinamismo Plastico’ written by Boccioni himself represented a huge help, since it is a clear and coherent treatise about the main Futurist artistic theories. Moreover, while I do not explore Freud’s writings in detail, his work on the unconscious and the psyche act as an undercurrent throughout this dissertation which brings together personal feelings within a specific sociopolitical context.

The work of the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer has been very valuable to understand the abstraction present in the canvases. In the work of the art historian, this element is associated to empathy and emotion: the thinker argued that, ‘whereas the precondition for empathy is a pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the external world’s phenomena, the urge of abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired by man by the same
phenomena. Both the elements of empathy and abstraction are present in Boccioni’s triptych: the abstraction becomes the medium with which the temporariness and quickness of the situations are delivered; moreover, abstraction merges together the setting and the characters, whose belonging to this place of farewells is highlighted. The strong connection between characters that abstraction creates clearly shows the emotional charge that is displayed through both colors and lines.

In the years that precede and follow the creation of the *Stati d’Animo*, it is possible to witness rich artistic productions both in Italy and in Europe: despite the diverse socio-economic and political situations, the art of the Italian peninsula as well as the European one, contributed to the formation of the Futurist sensibility, and more specifically to the formation of Umberto Boccioni. Additionally, this period witnessed the Italian need to catch up with the European artistic discoveries, in particular in France: Italian artists took inspiration from the artistic techniques of their European neighbors. Several pivotal art movements and artists emerged during the years of Modernism, roughly between the second half of nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century: the artistic innovations that those artists and artistic groups developed profoundly changed the subsequent European art, and started the path that eventually led to the creation of the Futurist movement.

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8 Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 86.
Humanitarian Socialism

Despite the Futurists’ claim, ‘to be the primitives of a new sensibility’, their art was inspired by previous artistic currents. In Boccioni’s case, he began as an amateur artist at the turn of the century in Rome. Eventually he created a new sensibility, able to catch the meanings of the modern world that was unfolding in front of him. The artist challenged the idea of dedicating his life to art: at the beginning of his career, Boccioni often asked himself if the path of drawing and painting was right for him. However, the meeting with the Piedmontese Giacomo Balla, master of the Post-Impressionist and Divisionistic styles, in 1902, represented a turning point for Boccioni: Balla directed the young artist to the Divisionist technique; therefore, to the juxtapositions of quick brushstrokes, and the importance of light in the canvas. In order to understand the aesthetic of the avant-garde, it is necessary to analyze the preceding art movements’ techniques and how Futurism both exploited and challenged them. In particular, the Macchiaioli group and the Divisionist technique had an important part in the shaping of this new movement.

In 1856, in a still rural and undeveloped Tuscany, the Macchiaioli group took its first steps. They created their canvases through the juxtaposition of colors: this accent on color, as well as the gestural brushstroke, will come back in Futurists canvases, which became the space of the fierce clash of vivid pigments that intensified the emotions that the painting delivered. Giuseppe Abbati’s painting *Little Street Under the Sun* (1863) (Fig. 2) stands as an example of the Macchiaioli technique, bearing all the key elements of the artistic current: the static and dull

composition, and the plain pigments. The tranquil static, and almost-romantic settings were what Boccioni and his comrades sought to challenge with their Futurist art. In this juvenile strong willingness of Boccioni to move away from this kind of representation, it is already possible to glimpse the ideas that eventually composed the ‘Technical Manifesto of the Futurist Painting’ (‘Manifesto Tecnico della Pittura Futurista’), in 1910: here the artist, with his Futurist comrades, harshly condemn the both the past art and the figures who gravitated around this world, such as: archeologists, art critiques, and scholars. At the same time, the Manifesto served to open up the way to a new conception of art which could be appropriate for the new age.

The group lived in a troubled moment of Italian history, which made them choose as main characters those who were most affected by the economic crises: the lower social classes. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Italy was witnessing a problematic period: the unification of Italy, as well as the great socio-political dissimilarities between the country’s regions created an unruly and unsafe atmosphere, which was made more difficult by a severe economic crisis that reached its peak in 1880s. Because of the critical atmosphere, in a variety of form and organization, anarchism, radicalism, and socialism grew strong in the peninsula: in particular, in 1870s, anarchism was acquiring a huge following. The words of Mikhail Bakunin, the great Russian revolutionary, were resonating in Italy: the peninsula was considered by the thinker as the area with all the appropriate socio-political conditions for the burst of a revolution. The artists who adhered to the Macchiaioli school, even if they did not take part in the political discourse, reacted to this difficult atmosphere, acquiring a new mindset, and felling

more than others the need for a new art. The lower classes depicted in the Macchiaioli’s works, despite their apparent distance from the political scene of the time, was indeed part of noteworthy future political changes: during the 1880s and 1890s, socialism, and in particular the ‘Revolutionary Socialist Party’, prepared the ground for a working-class revolution through education, organization, and economic, social and political reforms. The Socialist Party grew into a powerful political force in the country, and it chose to place its main strongholds in the Po valley, where the agricultural crises hugely worsened the conditions for many rural workers and landowners, and where Socialist could actively help people.15 This period of chaos created a longing for stability: because of the persistent gap between the masses and the institutions, the shortcomings of the parliament, and the Italian inability to assert itself as a major power of the international stage, Italians were infused with a sense of dismay, not finding something to believe in.16 It was at that point that Socialism, with clearer organization and goals, stepped in: the spread of the socialism was largely due to the improved conditions of the Italian economy, which allowed the country to start its path toward a period of innovations and improvements. Among the most important changes there are: the end of the agricultural depression, the following upturn of prices, the protectionism and the state support; and the creation of the first hydro-electric plants in Northern Italy.17

The appearance of the Socialist Party influenced some of the new Futurist artists: for instance, Boccioni and his friend Gino Severini were introduced to the socialist world by the Roman Roberto Basilici a young man enrolled in the ‘Juvenile Socialist Circle’ (‘Circolo Giovanile

Socialista’). Basilici put the two artists in contact with peers who enjoyed the republican or socialist credos: after these meetings, Severini and Boccioni were oriented toward humanitarian socialism: the works of Marx, Bakunin, and Labriola, which was very easy to hear in the artistic circles they attended, caught them. In particular, Boccioni, after his move to Milan, had the chance to meet exponents of this ideology, such as the Neapolitan Arturo Labriola, who in 1902 moved to the city to get closer to the thrilling economic and technological dynamism. However, if on the one hand their canvases reacted to the socialist atmosphere, they did not take an active part in the enhancing of the political movement. Despite the attraction that socialism had on some artists during their first production, all of them abandon its ideas very soon.

Despite Boccioni’s initial dependence on the teachings of Balla, Boccioni clearly expressed the desire to break away from his master’s Divisionist and slightly Macchiaiolo style: his art, as well as the Roman art was still tied to the nineteenth century formulas, and painting followed the general taste for gloomy realism. In Boccioni’s Futurist period, the rapid Divisionist brushstrokes and the poor characters, will be replaced with pastier brushstrokes and with a range of themes. The portrayal of the vibrant nightlife with its viveurs and cocottes found a place in The Laugh (1911) (Fig. 5), where he gave a face to the new and fashionable life, reuniting in one canvas all the main aspects found in those chic and popular restaurants. Nonetheless, even though the Macchiaioli were hugely minimized by the avantgarde, they started the artistic revolution that brought to the disappearance of the traditional way of organizing the artwork.

18 Coen, Boccioni, xiii.
19 Duggan, The Force of Destiny, loc. 6835 of 15842.
20 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 26.
21 Coen, Boccioni, xvi.
At the beginning of his artistic career, Boccioni attended Giacomo Balla’s school in Rome, which was the artistic space in which he started to shape his first techniques and interests: during this period, Boccioni assimilated the capacity of taking inspiration from everything that the humble life of workers, poor people, and the lower middle class could offer him, which became his favorite subjects. The opening up to the search of new and unexpected subjects represented one of the most valuable lessons that Boccioni received from his master. The Piedmontese artist did not impose aesthetical canons on his students; instead, he urged them to follow their tastes and inclinations. The frankness that Balla wanted his student to use in their paintings is also enhanced by his suggestion of not including in the canvases the picturesque, and those themes that were considered conventionally pleasing. In particular, Boccioni located all these elements that he had to avoid in the current Italian art production, as well as in the Macchiaioli canvases.

The new features of Boccioni’s art can be observed in Peasants at Work (1908) and in Factories at Porta Romana (1909) (Fig. 4), which display both the work of humble people and the rise of industrial Italy. Already in 1907, the artist stated that the Verismo, the movement started in Sicily thanks to the work of Giovanni Verga, which was focused in the realistic and loyal representation of reality, did not satisfy him anymore as he demonstrated with his canvases, whose style was extremely different from the Mannerism that was one of the main styles of those ages. Even during his depictions of the Lombard countryside, Boccioni did not completely adhere to Verismo to which those subjects belonged: the artist was already giving the colors typical of the countryside a clear symbolic charge, through the use of unnatural colors. The first

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22 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 105.
23 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 40.
24 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 40.
25 De Garda, Boccioni, 51.
Divisionistic approach was quickly replaced with the Symbolist style, which will represent a more stable characteristic in the works of the artist. However, he did not accept all its facets: he welcomed the ‘character with content’ (‘carattere contenutistico’) of it, but he did not exploit the style.26

Boccioni’s States of Mind I was preceded by the heterogeneous production of the artist’s Futurist comrades: Gino Severini, who at first adhered to the Divisionist style, developed a scathing and dynamic style, which is clearly visible in the painting The Haunting Dancer (1911) (Fig 6). Giacomo Balla’s entrance in the Futurist group is more complex: at first, his paintings showed Macchiaioli inspired scenes, he shifted to the Divisionist style, and then he dedicated his works to the new Futurist avantgarde. His artistic turn is evident in The Hands of the Violinist (1912) (Fig. 7), which displays a deep analysis of the dynamism of a living being. Carlo Dalmazzo Carrà was met by Boccioni during his stay in Milan in 1907: Carrà’s energetic and colorful canvases immediately earned him a place in the Futurists group. Some Futurist artists investigated and innovated other kinds of art. Luigi Russolo explored the field of music: he wrote the manifest ‘Art of Noises’, in which he theorized the use of noises and discordant sounds to compose music. Antonio Sant’Elia explored the field of architecture, substituting the traditional buildings with utopian and highly technological cities. In the Futurist phase of his career, Boccioni stated that, ‘(…) the Futurists are the primitives of a new sensibility, which is completely transformed’:27 with this statement he depicted his avantgarde as a completely new concept, driven by entirely new artistic values. However, Boccioni and his group widely reacted to the Italian and European art of their times, acquiring and merging in their canvases the

26 De Garda, Boccioni, 51.
27 Boccioni, Pittura Scultura Futuristi, 371.
elements of the styles they met that seemed more appropriate, using them as a nest for his later Futurist technique.\textsuperscript{28}

**Feeling/Color: The Influence of European Trends from Expressionism to Fauvism**

Edvard Munch, one of the main exponents of the Expressionist movement, was a very valuable source for Boccioni: during his first artistic period, the artist turned to him both to detach himself from obsolete modes of painting and because he was caught by the quality of inward analysis.\textsuperscript{29} Even though Munch’s highly existential pessimism did not find a place in Boccioni’s canvases with the same intensity, the Italian artist was no doubt inspired by this negative charge and by the treatment of melancholic and disturbing emotions through the swirling lines, seen in the third canvas of his triptych *Those Who Stay* (1911) (Fig. 1c). The Norwegian artist heightened the dramatic lyrism of his canvases also employing the artistic innovations that the artist of the Viennese Secession and the Symbolist movement developed. His artworks showed the facets of a scared society and its anguish: these aspects were expressed by violent and unreal colors, sinuous lines, and images consumed and deformed by people’s inner torments. Above all, Boccioni hugely reused both the winding lines and their colorful richness: choosing these elements, the artist also adopted the Expressionist style, which he enriched with his personal Symbolist touch. Boccioni was hugely inspired by these European currents and artists: his connection with the European artistic situation can be highlighted with the comparison between Munch’s *Despair* (1892) (Fig. 9) and Boccioni’s first canvas of the triptych, *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a). The two artworks echo each other with their twisting lines that express, because of their gloomy and sick

\textsuperscript{28} De Garda, *Boccioni*, 18.
\textsuperscript{29} Coen, *Boccioni*, xix.
palette, sentiments of melancholy and discouragement. These gloomy feelings that Munch’s canvases, and later Boccioni’s one, suggest were probably inspired by Freud’s ideas, which later influenced Boccioni: the paintings of the two artists deliver the complicate net of emotions that were felt by their contemporaries, and which were detected and explained for the first time by Freud.

Munch’s art was also influenced by the sensibility of German Expressionism: because of the connection that the Norwegian artist had with this current, its characteristics will be eventually seen in Boccioni’s art. This movement was focused on the understanding of reality through emotions and spirituality, filtering the real world through the personal interpretation of it: this was delivered, from the stylistic point of view, by contrasting and aggressive colors and the decisiveness of the sign. The dissonance of pigments, as well as the scathing signs were meant to express the growing uneasiness of the current society, which was approaching a period of great changes. The encounter with these artistic currents eventually led Boccioni to move away from his former, still uncertain interests, and pushed him to the creation of paintings with a deeper psychological level.

At the same time, the Fauvist movement was making progress: its innovations were so long-lasting that it is fair to say that Fauvism was the first artistic revolution of the twentieth century, which introduced a completely new understanding of art. The current introduced the extravagant and savage use of colors, whose dissonance permitted the artists to better express the complicated net of people’s emotions. The Fauvist artists depicted reality with unnatural and contrasting colors, following their personal taste rather that what they saw; with the Fauvist
artists, perspective started to lose its importance, overtaken again by the primacy of color.

Derain’s *Estaque* (1905) (Fig. 8) displays a realistic environment transfigured by the Fauvist colors: the trees become orange yellow and red, the sky is dyed with yellow and green, and the people almost disappear in the colorful atmosphere, taking the same warm pigments of the nature around them.

The environment in which Boccioni’s *States of Minds I* emerged was heterogenous and full of ideas that inspired the Italian artist: the theories of Freud, Bergson, and Worringer provided an intellectual background for the triptych; while the Macchiaiola school as well as the Symbolist, Expressionist, and Divisionist techniques guided the actual creation of the canvases. The examination of the three *States of Mind I*’ paintings will be conducted keeping in mind all these relevant aspects: the analysis of the first canvas, *The Farewells*, will feature the theories of memory of Bergson and the ones of abstraction and emotion of Worringer; the analysis will also highlight the Expressionist and Symbolist characters of the canvas. *Those Who Go*’ examination will underline its difference from the other canvases, due to the resoluteness that its horizontal and quick lines, which outdistances this painting from the emotional renderings of the first and third canvases. *Those Who Stay*’ analysis will focus of the Symbolist aspects of the canvas, inherited by Gaetano Previati’s painting; additionally, Worringer’s ideas will be relevant in the investigation of the canvas, since in this painting the union between abstraction and feelings is particularly clear.
I. **States of Mind I: The Architecture of Memory and Emotions**

During the first half of the twentieth century, in which Boccioni created his *States of Mind I*, the themes of memory and time were hugely widespread, mainly thanks to the works of the French philosopher Henri Bergson: his masterpiece ‘*Matter and Memory*’, written in 1896, not only reached the thinkers of his age, but also a huge section of population. Among those who read the volume, Boccioni certainly took inspiration from it.\(^{30}\) The concept of memory was acknowledged in new ways: remembrance was not considered as an intellectual function, but it was thought to be activated according to certain states of mind. Because of this consideration of memory, it started to be important also in the field of European Symbolism, as the origin of the inner vision that was intended to counteract the rendering of the sensible world.\(^{31}\) After Boccioni’s detailed study on the philosopher, the artist wove the concept of memory with the concept of time. According to the philosopher, the different parts of the time-flow, that are past, present, and future, were different in kind but not in degree: \(^{32}\) this means that time does not flow in a straightforward and linear order; rather, its sections coexist and intersect. In other words, time is simultaneous instead of sequential: ‘the pure past is contracted, actualized into a present.’\(^{33}\)

This concept of simultaneity will constitute an important part of Boccioni’s ideology: in his fully Futurist paintings, the viewer will witness in one canvas the combination of situations and

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\(^{30}\) Agnese, *Umberto Boccioni*, 185.  
\(^{31}\) Ilaria Schiaffini, *Umberto Boccioni: Stati d’Animo, Teoria e Pittura* (Silvana, 2002), 140  
\(^{33}\) Mullarkey and De Mille, *Bergson and the Art of Immanence*, 262.
moments that, in reality, took place in a lapse of time and in a number of spaces. A good example is Boccioni’s *Simultaneous Visions* (1911) (Fig. 10): the woman who is looking at the street is not observing just a definite scenery, but she manages to see buildings, streets, and trees that probably are far away from her home. The figure of the woman herself is composed by broken and curvilinear lines, while her reflection is visible in the wall of the building in front of her house. The philosopher’s ideas resonate in the *Stati d’Animo*: when the viewer looks at the painting, he is exposed to a unique moment, unfolded in three canvases, that concentrates the present, the past, and the future of those who go and those who stay. The canvases do not show what is happening in the actual reality; on the contrary, they depict what is happening in the characters’ souls, which are molded by their sadness. The characters in *Those Who Go* (Fig. 1b) and *Those Who Stay* (Fig. 1c) live in the same moment and move in opposite directions, the train takes the first to their duties, and the latter return to their homes: both regret their separation and constantly relive the moment of the farewells, which represented the last moment of closeness with those they love. Each painting shows situations that are not fixed and times in which the external time, the one blocked by schedules and properly articulated, clashes with the character’s interior time, which revolves around, goes back, and ultimately follows the emotions of its owner.

The triptych *States of Mind I* evokes the ambivalence between the overwhelming power and velocity owned by the brand-new vehicles, and the almost insignificant human characters. The ‘state of mind’ kind of canvas is a great statement for all Futurist art: on the one hand, they represent a great Futurist achievement for Boccioni; on the other, they enrich the analysis of the modern world, expressing the individuals’ complex inner turmoil caused by their meeting with
the modern world. Modern situations are here depicted as tumultuous: everything is blurred and hidden by the visible feelings of the characters, and by the presence of technology, which here stands as the threatening sign of the modern age. The triptych’s first paintings, *The Farewells*, shows particularly well this condition: all is hidden by the smoke emitted by the train’s engine and threatened by its imposing figure, symbol of progress. Instead of expressing faith for a brilliant future, strengthened by the fruit of technology, the atmosphere delivers loss and melancholy: the train, while able to conquer time and space also intensifies the division between those who go and those who stay.\(^{34}\) The undulating rhythm delivered by the ‘line-forces’, which expresses both the traveler’s melancholy and their confusion, serves to bind the figures within an enveloping net of emotions, and to evoke the overwhelming nature of speed, which pull the characters apart.\(^{35}\)

In his artistic analysis, Boccioni did not only consider the tangible and visible changes that were taking place around him: he was careful to grasp the transformations that modernity caused to people’s inner-world. Some of his canvases show the artist’s concern and anxiety for the modern industrial and mechanized world around him. As artist and as Futurist, Boccioni underlined and praised the rise of the brand-new technological discoveries, interpreting it and promoting its spread through his art; as a man, Boccioni grasped the disquieting smallness that the new century gave to human beings, who at that moment were at the mercy of an impersonal and faster world, which forced its inhabitants to evolve in order to live in it, or to disappear because of their inadequacy towards the contemporary environment. The artist lived in a period of noteworthy changes: the social and political transformation, which involved the growing complexity of the

\(^{34}\) Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 21.  
Italian and European political situations that already threatened the possibility of a conflict, had to be added to the already-mentioned technological news. All those changes contributed to make people’s lives different and sometime uneasy, adding to concern to their existences.

In particular, the transportation field underwent a huge development in this period, since vehicles became better and more functional: from their improvements, new modes of thinking about the way of experiencing space and time appeared.\(^\text{36}\) Because of this transformation, one of the main characteristics that the modern world acquired was distance: the appearance of the modern and faster vehicles made travels easier and more frequent, undermining human bonds. The industrialization of travels served to accelerate the damaging of affective bonds, producing sensations of loss and melancholy, because of the shattering of the previously known boundaries of the self and the world.\(^\text{37}\) With his *Stati d’Animo*, Boccioni focused his attention on the impact that the introduction of technological innovations had on people’s feelings, describing with his evocative canvases the troubles that this new reality caused to the modern people’s inner-word. In Boccioni’s poetic, the concept of distance was linked with the element of dynamism and speed: both these elements are pivotal in his production, and, unlike the component of ‘distance’, they always have a positive and energetic meaning in the artist’s canvases. These new features of modernity were usually rendered in the canvas through abstraction: the paintings that host dynamism and speed tend to deliver animated and lively scenes that merged together the characters depicted, which eventually were able to convey the sense of energetic and vigorous chaos.

\(^{36}\) Humphrey, *Futurism*, 15.  
The avant-garde’s attraction for speed found its place also in the 1909 ‘Futurist Manifesto’: ‘We affirm that the world magnificence was enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.’ 38 In the Futurist ideology, speed was the embodied of the new main absolute rule of modernity, which couldn’t be ignored by any genuinely modern temperament. 39 This concept was clearly highly widespread in the production of the Futurist artist: however, it was Boccioni who found the most surprising and innovative way to convincingly transfer it in the canvas. 40 The artist, ‘sought a synthetic form, a single image which could express the fusion of the object and its surrounding environment’: in the works from his last production, Boccioni reached an unprecedented abstraction which, however, did not prevent the recognition of the subjects built only by their dynamic tension. 41 Boccioni also considered that, ‘dynamism could make simultaneous perceptible, and through a strong process of abstraction, could represent the sensation of speed, not merely the evolution of states of motion.’ 42

Thanks to the need of the artist to theorize his ideas, probably inherited by Gaetano Previati, it is possible to find a coherent and clear explanation of what a state of mind (‘stato d’animo’) is in his book ‘Pittura Scultura Futuriste. Dinamismo Plastico’, written in 1914. According to the artist, ‘(…) the composition of a sculptural state of mind (‘stato d’animo plastico’) is not based on the disposition of the figures’ gestures or in their expressions (…); but it consists in the rhythmical distribution of the forces of objects, (…) which also gives form to the emotion.’ 43 Boccioni put the accent on the fact that the states of mind constituted the principle of the

43 Boccioni, *Pittura Scultura Futurista*, 305.
pictorial emotion, organized in their dynamism and not according to literary and philosophical ideas. The artist also highlighted the importance that colors, shapes, and lines had in his painting: the combination of shapes and colors, united in the so called ‘color-forms’ (‘forme-colore’), allowed the artist to express a wide range of emotions without recurring to actual and recognizable forms. Each canvas of the *Stati d’Animo* shows forms and colors that are suitable for the emotion that has to be delivered and the situation that must be depicted. Therefore, for those who went away, Boccioni chose rapid lines and dark colors to underline the nostalgia of the travelers; while for the sad people who stayed, he opted for feeble lines and weak colors. Thanks to these pairs, the artist could avoid using concrete and realistic characters to deliver messages and outline situations, in agreement with the Symbolist style, which delivers emotions and states of mind through the use of forms and colors.

In addition to Bergson’s ideas about memory’s features, Boccioni appears to have exploited Freud’s theory about the subconscious: the exploration of the psyche operated by the Austrian doctor deeply affected the modern consideration of human psychology and behavior, which was considered to be guided by more complex and hidden reasons. Arguably, Freud’s research represented a great help for the artist, since he could count in a clearer analysis of the innermost aspects of the human soul: his paintings, being centered in how the travelers live the moment of detachment from their loved ones and how they intimately manage this separation, appear to plumb the depths of the unconscious. The three canvases can be considered snap-shots of the human subconscious: each of the situations depicted take the dramatic form of a dream, also acquiring their contorted gait, showing the powerful moments of clash of emotions.

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The poetic sensibility of Umberto Boccioni can be seen also in the preparatory drawings of the States of Mind I: the sketches of each of the three canvases are accompanied by words which at once deliver the sense of the painting. The Farewells, sketch is marked by the word ‘still’ (‘ancora’) that highlights the presence of those who are about to live, cutting out a private space in which the characters are still a psychological and physical whole, rendered in the canvas by the merging couples. In Those Who Go, sketch, ‘passengers find themselves merely carried, like suitcases, rather than in a position of power’: their suspended and confused state is marked by the word ‘maybe’ (‘forse’). Lastly, Those Who Stay, sketch’s characters experience an infinite melancholy, and the word ‘without’ (‘senza’) suggests their longing for those who went away.

I.I The Farewells: Depicting Departure

The first canvas, entitled The Farewells (1911) (Fig. 1a), is the one that is closest to abstraction, and, therefore, its meaning is only reachable through an attentive analysis and some effort of the imagination. The entire canvas is full of swirling, twisting, curvilinear lines, which show a wide range of colors: most of them are directed toward the upper left corner of the picture. Additionally, in the middle, the lines change their directions, because their motion is stopped by an oval dark-outlined figure, whose function and identity are not clear. The presence of these vital and dynamic lines gives the general impression of an agitated sea of colorful flames: in it, no human figure is visible. There may be a hint of a small human-like figure in the upper left

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46 Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 24.
corner. In the lower right corner, it is possible to see the signature of the artist in brown, almost hidden by the reddish dancing lines.

Even though this is the most abstruse and mysterious among the three paintings, thanks to the help of the canvas’ title *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a), it is possible to gauge the real atmosphere and message of the painting. All the elements contained in the canvas are invisible at first gaze: the travelers, the people, the engine and its smoke, as well as the physical places are all transformed and changed, twisted by the artist’s mind and brush. This canvas displays a typical train station environment, changed and transformed by the hand of the artist, who is using an expressionist and symbolic style: the swirling lines stand for the smoke that comes from the train’s engine in the background, which is not depicted and can only be imagined. These lines are prevented by the concrete positive objects of the mechanical society: therefore, the spectator is asked to imagine an environment and its time and place.\(^47\) The train’s engine depicted in the background is threatening and severe, representing the grim reminder of the imminent separation: the element does not want to express the positivity of the technological innovation that was taking place in those years.

In this case, the ideas of Wilhelm Worringer are relevant: Boccioni’s canvases are rendered with abstract lines and forms, which do not leave space for any figurative and recognizable element: anyhow, these pictures deliver intense emotions, which make the viewer immediately guess the state of mind of the characters. The connection between abstraction and empathy was also enhanced by other exponents of the German Expressionism, in particular Franz Marc and Ernst De Garda, *Boccioni*, 86.
Ludwig Kirchner. Even though their canvases did not present the same level of abstraction of the *Stati d’Animo* ones, those artists followed the same ideas of the Italian artist: Marc and Kirchner entrusted the delivery of meaning and emotions to chaotic and colorful situations. Kirchner’s canvases were closer to Boccioni’s ones because they portrayed the vibrant public life with warm and imposing colors: for instance, in *The Street, Dresden* (1908) (Fig. 21), the German artist depicted the city as a vital but nervous and disquieting place; moreover, the characters and the situation are depicted with sinuous lines, very similar to the ones found in Munch’s paintings.\textsuperscript{48} As the canvases of the Norwegian painter, *The Street, Dresden* communicates the same sense of anxiety and disquiet, which was eventually found in Boccioni’s canvases.

This detail can be compared with the one found in *Memoires Du Voyage* (1911) (*Mémories of The Journey*) (Fig. 11) by Gino Severini, who elaborated too the theme of travel through the lenses of Symbolism. The two works present a very different treatments: if the one depicted by Boccioni deeply examines the painful sensations that the travelers feel during the journey, Severini’s work seems more of a fable, a pleasant summary of the places visited by the artist during his time in Paris.\textsuperscript{49} However, Severini’s canvas also displays an engine: this element is not as menacing and imposing as the one in *The Farewells* (first canvas) (Fig. 1a); in Severini’s painting, the engine, with its bright grey, seems shiny and brand new, the jewel of modern times.

In Boccioni’s canvas, the atmosphere is very gloomy, expressing a sense of confusion and dismay. The negative impression that the atmosphere suggests is due to the fact that the smoke is mixed with the physical representation of the characters’ sadness in the foreground. These

\textsuperscript{48} Foster, *Art Since 1900*, 87.  
\textsuperscript{49} Poggi, *Inventing Futurism*, 23
couples do not normally stand, but they are depicted bent, as if the vivid waves of emotions are pushing them. These departing characters, invisible in the canvas in their human form, are outlined by the shape of their emotions. Because of the issues that came from the depiction of human bodies, the artist started quite quickly to turn away from Divisionism. The best explanation of this problem is given by Severini, ‘with the Divisionistic technique, it was easy to create landscapes; however, it was very difficult to paint human bodies, because it was necessary to abandon every representative concern to place in the face of the subject red, green, and yellow shades’, as the Post-Impressionistic Divisionism dictated. The realistic features that this element needed prevented Boccioni from exploiting the human figure in the ways he needed to express specific concepts. *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a) displays the new artistic solutions that the artist found for the depiction of the body as means to express emotions.

The artist had to find other ways to deliver messages, since, in modern art, the human figure was not considered anymore as the privileged vehicle for the transmission of themes, or specific feelings. The element that replaced the human body in importance in Boccioni’s art was architecture: the paintings that he created after 1910 deliver a sense of monumentalism, expressed by the careful planning of the forces that compose the canvases. In Camporesi’s words, ‘(...) architecture became the key of the Boccionian poetic that is a particular way of thinking about the formal anatomy of a work of art, which also influences the organization and choice of artistic materials.’ The culmination of Boccioni’s concept of architecture is clearly explained in the ‘Technical Manifesto of the Futurist Sculpture’ (‘Manifesto Tecnico della

50 Agnese, *Umberto Boccioni*, 43.
Scultura Futurista’): the notion of Boccionian architecture was understood both as an organizing and planning principle of art, and as a constructive dimension of the work of art. The coexistence between the concepts of ‘states of mind’ and architecture hides a subtle contradiction: Boccioni is trying to attach to the sentimental character of the so called ‘states of soul’, which are intrinsically part of an emotional field, the schematic and fixed concept of architecture. This is very unusual, also considering that the artist himself unleashes in his canvases, and in particular in the Stati d’Animo, the strength of the human inner-world. From a certain point of view, also Freud can be considered the architect of the psyche: by means of his studies he organized the intricate world of the mind, and he constructed that which cannot be seen.

The Stati d’Animo, and in particular The Farewells (Fig. 1a), shows the innovative rendering of human beings: the canvas displays human figures, but their bodies are never visible; what the viewer sees are the bodies reorganized and transformed according to the emotions that the people feel. The Farewells (Fig. 1a) is controlled by the melancholy that rises from the departure of beloved ones: the feeling of detachment is expressed both by the train station itself, a place always inhabited by farewells, and by the travelers hugging in the foreground. In De Garda’s words, ‘(...) the figures return to be anecdotal dots, they then disappear under the waves (...) of emotions. The space continues hopelessly toward infinity to highlight the eternity of detachment: the moment that will never happen again, but that will accompany those who stayed and those who went away like a Hertzian wave’. These kind of sound waves, or ‘waves of instinct’, can

52 Camporesi, L’architettura e il Dinamismo, 20.
53 Boccioni, Pittura Scultura Futuriste, 309.
54 De Garda, Boccioni, 86.
be compared to the result of the action of throwing something into the water: the action will result in a series of concentric circles that, as they move away from the center, become bigger and disappear. However, if those rings disappear, the waves emitted by the feelings of loss of those who go and those who stay do not vanish: they continue to be emanated, as symbol of the pulsating pain of detachment.

### I.II Those Who Go: Modernism in the States of Mind I

In the second canvas that composes the triptych, *Those Who Go* (1911) (Fig. 1b), it is possible to witness a sudden change in the content, atmosphere, and style. The painting is organized in three layers: the first one presents a series of short, brownish, green, blue, and orange horizontal lines that go from the right side of the painting to the left one. Three vertical purple segments, which are slightly curved toward the left side of the canvas, are depicted: they all give a strong sense of speed and motion. The second layer, which is rarefied and difficult to analyze, displays the orange outline of three male faces: the first has his gaze turned to the spectator, who feels observed by two light blue eyes, despite the only sketched facial features it is possible to notice that they are quite straight and severe; the other two faces are even more vague. Between the three faces, two yellow lines are depicted, which, with their bright color, breaks the pattern of the canvas rendered by the dark colors.

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The last layer is clearly visible only in the top section of the painting: the top corners show two clusters of small houses inside a wood painted in light green, since the houses acquire the colors that surround them. With the unnatural houses’ colors, the artist recalls a situation that always happens inside vehicles in movement: when a traveler looks outside while train is in motion, the colors of the external environment tend to be indefinite, while they merge with each other. These houses do not follow the rules of perspective: as all the canvas’ composition, they are bent toward the right side of the painting, since they are also affected by the sense of speed that the lines in the first layer express. In the upper section of the canvas, a hint of sky is portrayed though different shades of blue: relying on how little the space dedicated to the blue is, it is possible to support that the reduced space dedicated to the sky reinforces the idea of necessity and melancholy that accompanies the travelers. In art history, the color blue has come to be associated with different elements: because of its clear association with the sea and the sky, it was connected with freedom, inspiration, and sensibility, and it was considered able to induce rest, tranquility, and inner balance. The lack of sky and the absence of its blue, suggest unrest that travelers feel during their detachment from their known spaces and from their loved ones. The absence of this color strengthens the total absence of inner-peace, or balance, of the canvas’ characters, which is even more highlighted by the thoughtful expression of the face on the canvas’ extreme left corner. Freedom, which is probably the essential element that the color expresses, is now trapped in the cage of duty that acquires the form of the train, which brings the travelers toward their responsibilities.

As in the first picture, the title helps the understanding of the canvas: in Those Who Go (Fig. 1b), the travelers have started their journey, using the train that was depicted in the previous canvas’
background. In the current painting, the uncertain balance found in *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a) is broken, and its place is taken by a dialectical confrontation of the ‘line-forces’ (‘linee-forza’), which are the directions of the ‘color-forms’ (‘forme-colore’): these dynamic lines that represent the moving away plunge into the hearts of those who are abandoned by the travelers. The so called ‘color-forms’ correspond to a specific sensorial emotion: Boccioni would select specific matches between forms and colors, in order to deliver a particular message, a sense of synesthesia. The artist is really careful to explain how these elements come to him while he creates the artwork: it is necessary that the ‘natural feelings’ that the painter feels suggest to him, literally, ‘states of colors and state of shapes’, so that the shapes and colors express directly by themselves themes, without recurring to the formal representation of the objects or parts of them.

Going back to the canvas’ analysis, the sense of speed delivered by the train is given both by the horizontal lines and vertical purple segments. In this non-representational image the only figurative elements are the small yellow lines, which may be handles attached to the back of train seats. Except for this detail and for the sense of motion, the train in which the characters sit is not even outlined: the space must be interpreted through the few elements provided, and imagined by the viewer. The three faces depicted all belong to the same person: the multiplication of the traveler’s face is due to the speed of the train. Thus, the artist analyzes the connection between time and speed through the face of the traveler. The structure of the painting does not only refer to the physical, actual world, but it also gives a visible form to the human inner-world in a

50 Boccioni, *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, 211.
51 De Garda, *Boccioni*, 86.
fragmented and disoriented way. The canvas’ dynamism delivers a strong sense of kinesthesia, the stillness of the seated characters is mixed with the movement of the train: the instability created by the juxtaposition of these two states adds to the psychological unrest of the travelers.\footnote{Foster et. al., Art Since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 90.}

The same sense of dynamism is given by Severini’s Mémoires Du Voyage (Fig. 11) which can be compared to Boccioni’s second canvas: Severini destroys all the semblance of spatiotemporal continuity, presenting the voyage as a metaphor of consciousness, through the panoramic vision, using a technique called ‘Dynamic Current’.\footnote{Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 27.} This approach is delivered by depicting the actions that take place in the canvas as a continuous flow, in which both characters and actions are merged together in a lively way. However, if Severini’s painting is flooded with warm colors, which deliver the impression of a pleasant journey; Boccioni’s one underlines the negative charge that the detachment caused to people, expressing it with the gloomy palette of the canvases, as well as the twisting lines. The delivery of these two opposite ideas is enhanced by the different styles of the two painters: while in Mémoires Du Voyage, the canvas setting as well as the characters are rendered with a clear Pointillist style, with bright spots of paint, Boccioni uses dark and discouraging colors and a fragmented style. Additionally, the painting’s chaos suggests a strong synesthesia,\footnote{Foster, Art Since 1900, 90.} throwing the viewer a number of different impressions of sight, sound, and touch: Those Who Go (Fig. 1b) breaks the boundaries between senses, delivering the image of a tumultuous entity.
The sense of vital chaos that the canvas expresses was suggested to the artist by the north areas of Italy, which were highly industrially, politically, and artistically active: that activity was transferred to the canvas and rendered with highly dynamical design. Among the northern cities, Milan stood out and became the new industrial and cultural center of the peninsula. For the emerging Futurist artists, Milan came to be the utopian city of the future, announcer of modernity, which was completely devoted to shaping of the modern man and his modern mind. Milan was one of the first cities that could be proud of such a modern industry, also considering that it was one of the first cities that had a central electricity generating plant since 1883.63

Another element that actively symbolized the rising of Milan’s modernity was the emergence of the automobile industry: the combination of the Piedmont and Lombard engineering traditions with the establishment of electrical, steel, and rubber manufacturing led to a sudden increase in car production. The city was also a crossroads for new political ideas: the political group that prevailed was the socialist one. Lombardy experienced a large growing of popular favor toward socialists: the region became the stronghold of the new socialist party led by Filippo Turati, which rapidly gained strength and support.64 Boccioni, who lived closely to the growing and evolving city, was becoming aware of the pivotal importance that science was acquiring in those days, considering it as the real great news of the modern epoch. The artist’s canvases also hosted the praise of modern technology and the industrial society: the rider in Elasticity (1912) (Fig. 12) is encircled by trellis, whose forms and physical structure are broken down by the artist’s futurist decomposition. Another example is in the first canvas’ background of the triptych States of Mind

63 Duggan, The Force of Destiny, loc 6591 of 15842.
64 Duggan, The Force of Destiny, loc. 6572 of 15842.
II (1911) (Fig. 13a-13b-13c), where a train’s engine dominates the composition as an austere monument.

The first and the second paintings are really different from one other: The Farewells (first canvas) (Fig. 1a) is imbued with a sense of sadness, and need to accept fate, expressed through the soft lines; on the other hand, Those Who Go (second canvas) (Fig. 1b) is much more resolute in its composition, delivering a strong sense of necessity. The travelers are more strong-willed: they are conscious voyagers, who are not necessarily nostalgic. Nonetheless, the gaze of the character on the left is caught in his thoughts. In this spontaneous moment, the man gives a particular gaze that suggests a hint of nostalgia: therefore, even in this canvas ruled by inflexibility, the character admits the void that the separation from his beloved ones has created inside him. To use the words of De Garda, ‘(…) those who go enter in a sidereal world, to which travelers are connected not by the ‘force-lines’ unleashed by the train, but by the eternal wave of sentiments and memory.’ Therefore, Those Who Go’s loud resoluteness and dynamism hide other, more subtle, characteristics that give the way to a concealed sadness, which will be further explained in the third canvas of the triptych, Those Who Stay.

I.III Those Who Stay and the legacy of Symbolism

The third canvas of the series, Those Who Stay (1911) (Fig. 1c), breaks the rhythm of the triptych and goes back to an expressionist style. The last canvas presents a ghost-like atmosphere: the

65 De Garda, Boccioni, 87.
picture is dominated by long, feeble, and weak vertical lines, expressing immobility and the complete absence of positivity and hope. The lines are depicted with disturbing greenish-blue, light-blue, white, with some tiny black details. The colors seem to progress from the right part of the canvas, which presents slightly darker pigments, to the left one, where they fade reaching eventually a pearl-white color. The lines depicted are merged with the human figures, who are rendered by juxtaposing black and dark-green brushstrokes that come together to give a delicate sense of the human silhouettes. They are sadly walking toward the right side: these characters are clearly disposed in different layers; therefore, even though the painting does not follow the rules of perspective, it is possible to hint a kind of depth. Some of the figures are small and child-like, while others are more similar to adults: regardless of their age, all the figures are walking with their backs and heads bent toward the ground, suggesting that they are exhausted by a huge psychological burden and a sadness that they can barely contain and bear. The weak, thread-like characters and their movement from the darker side to the lighter one brings to mind another theme: the one of death. The figures, with their bent and desperate positions recall the metaphysical dimension of afterlife, as well as the peculiar suspended status that human souls gain in the uncertain realms of hereafter.

For the creation of this atmosphere, Boccioni took inspiration from Gaetano Previati’s Symbolist The Return of The Pious Women (1910) (Fig. 14), a canvas dedicated to the depiction of the Via Crucis: the women’s bodies and the setting are composed by long and gestural brushstrokes that are rendered with the divisionistic technique. Boccioni, like Previati, used the long and thread-like brushstrokes as a clue to a character’s inner-world. Previati’s painting also provide

66 Schiaffini, Umberto Boccioni, 140.
Boccioni with the religious, death-connected character that is found in the third canvas: the advancing figures seems to leave their human characteristics and become weightless penitent souls that silently leave a layer of reality to reach another one. Boccioni turned to Gaetano Previati in an effort to discover new ways of interpreting reality, and painting it, and more importantly freeing himself from the artistic modes linked with the past.\textsuperscript{67} the meeting with the artist pushed Boccioni to another level of his artistic education. In particular, in the \textit{States of Mind I}, the artistic lending from Previati’s production are minimized by the intensification of the color and forms’ expressive value that decontextualize the scenes depicted, unhooking them from time and space, giving the canvases an archetypical value.\textsuperscript{68}

The figure of the Emilian artist fulfilled an importance that was equal to the one of Boccioni’s first master, Giacomo Balla: in fact, Balla introduced Boccioni to the Divisionistic style; while Previati taught him the Symbolist style, which eventually became one of Boccioni’s main resources. Although Previati was an important exponent of the Italian Divisionist current, and Boccioni highly enjoyed his technique, the Futurist artist mainly absorbed from him the Symbolist style, as well as his idealistic-symbolic and plastic-volumetric lessons.\textsuperscript{69} The idealistic and spiritualistic elements in Previati’s paintings, which wanted to be scientific treatments of reality, reflected the contradictions of the Italian situation in the first decade of the new century, a time dominated both by the nineteenth century heritage and modern apprehensions and by hope for new improved lifestyles. These contrasting currents will flow both into Milan, the modern

\textsuperscript{67} Coen, \textit{Boccioni}, xix.
\textsuperscript{68} Schiaffini, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 140.
\textsuperscript{69} Schiaffini, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 142.
peak of Italy, and into Boccioni’s canvases, who depict the subtle contradiction between the rise of technology and the increase in people’s concern for the new life that was taking shape.

So great was the formative debt that was established between Boccioni and Previati that the young artist stated, ‘(…) [Previati] is the only Italian artist who conceived art as a representation where visual reality only serves as a starting point (…).’

Although the esteem and respect for Previati were enormous, Boccioni did not take from the master the content he was looking for: the symbology of the Emilian artist clashed with Boccioni’s Futurist need to introduce the reality of modern life into the canvas. Even though Previati’s paintings displayed an advanced style, the themes were still connected to the contemporary Italian context: two good examples are: *The Madonna of Lilies* (1893-1894) and the *Ascent of the Pious Women* (1901-1902) (Fig. 15). Both the paintings, created with a clear Divisionist style, show religious themes with particular delicacy, which recall the pastoral paintings of the Macchiaioli group. These themes were exactly those from which Boccioni was trying to escape, and to whom war will be declared in the Futurist Manifesto of 1909. To better understand Previati’s ideas, Boccioni could count on ‘*The Scientific Principles of Divisionism*’ (*I Principi Scientifici del Divisionismo*), written by the artist himself: here Previati explains the mechanisms that allow to reduce reality to colored spots and lines. According to Previati, it allowed the viewer to identify a specific object in a certain combination of colors are the senses of perspective, and memory.

The only non-human element in the canvas is what can be interpreted as a street-light: among the walking silhouettes, a line is more emphasized, with, at its top a semi-circular luminous shape.

70 Schiaffini, *Umberto Boccioni*, 143.
71 Schiaffini, *Umberto Boccioni*, 143.
The object is rendered in an uncertain way, as if the waves of sadness that dominate the canvas are able to melt a physical object: the street-light. This element is very helpful to understand the different position that Boccioni assumed inside the futurist group, and the different path that he took with this triptych. This detail can be compared with another, more famous, street light: Giacomo Balla’s one. In the Street-Light (1909) (Fig. 16), the focus is dedicated to the street-light’s top section: this common object here is depicted as an energetic, ferocious, and glorious element that is even able to cast the light of the moon in the shade with its flickering light.

Balla’s interpretation is much closer to the Futurist approach: the praise of the new technology is clear and it is delivered with the strength own of the Futurist movement. This picture follows a famous and aggressive article written by F.T Marinetti, a figure who can be considered the manager and organizer of the Futurist group, giving an image to his ideas. In the text, ‘Let’s Murder the Moonlight’, the moonlight stands for the natural world, and, from the Futurist point of view, obsolete. On the contrary, the street-light stands for the emerging science that was being developed during those times: its light is not the one of a cold object, but it is warm, strong, reassuring, and vital, representing the high hopes and pride that people felt toward the rising technology. This positivity is absent in Those Who Stay (Fig. 1c): here, the street-lamp does not even fulfil its duty of illuminating the way for the picture’s characters, and there is no trace of the beneficial charge that Balla’s street-light expressed.

While in Those Who Go (second canvas) (Fig. 1b), everything had a clear and strong direction; in Those Who Stay (third canvas) (Fig. 1c), the atmosphere and the characters seem merged in water, where everything is blurred, slow, and unclear: the resoluteness of the previous canvas is

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far from the melancholic immobility that those who stay express. This canvas shows those who, in the first painting, let go of someone leaving on a journey, some of them are going back alone, some are in company: they all share the sense of solitude and abandonment that the leaving of the travelers has provoked them. This canvas is probably the most direct in terms of emotions: in *Those Who Stay*, it is extremely easy to grasp what is going on and to guess the pessimistic thoughts that contaminate the inner reality of each character. Even though the painting unites the characters through their feelings, creating a sort of communal situation, each person appears distant from the others, imprisoned in his own minds. According with Worringer’s view, the abstraction present in the canvas enhances and makes almost tangible the sorrow of the characters: therefore, the lack of clearly figurative elements does not prevent the delivery of meaning, but it makes it immediate, thanks to the colors and the shapes used. Despite the atmosphere of departure and consequent detachment, in *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a), the characters were almost united by the strength of their embraces; on the contrary, in *Those Who Stay* (Fig. 1c), each person is impenetrable. Boccioni wants to escape from the uncertain visions that he created in the previous paintings to reach the ‘Plastic Abstract Totalities (‘Insiemi Plastici Astratti’)’\(^73\): in other words, the ‘totalities’ (‘insiemi’) do not answer to vision, but to the sensations born from sounds, noises, smells, and from all the unknown forces that embrace us.\(^74\)

The three canvases give a comprehensive view of the numerous, contrasting and deep emotions that travelers might feel during the detachment with those who love and their travel: these feelings are rendered with an Expressionist style, which is particularly appropriate since it gives even more strength and meaning to the events than are shown, while it enhances the humanity of

the situations depicted. The peculiarity of the style matches the distinctiveness of the artist who used it: Umberto Boccioni was a particularly interesting figure, considered alone, as theorist and agitator of his group, and as part of his avant-garde, merged in a vibrant and heterogeneous atmosphere. The triptych *States of Mind I* clearly shows the importance of emotions in the culture that Futurists were creating; this anti-Futurist character that emerges in the triptych, which was own of the figure of Umberto Boccioni will be analyzed in the next chapter.
II. The limits of Futurism: Boccioni’s exploration of the Inner-World

The Futurist avantgarde did something unforeseen, revealing the power of a new intellectual formation: a small collectivity, buttressed by publicity and spectacle, was able to produce cultural artifacts connected to virtually all the fields of the arts, which were constructed in accordance with a coherent body of theoretical precepts, not grounded in arbitrary aesthetic preferences but in a systematic reading of the contemporary society.\(^{75}\) In particular, the movement could be proud of its two main pillars, those individualities who greatly enhanced the growing of the artistic current, taking care of every facet, in different and always surprising ways: Umberto Boccioni and F.T. Marinetti. For the two Futurists the renewal of Italian culture, through the introduction of Futurism, was a matter of international as well as national importance:\(^{76}\) they did not only want to make the Italian artistic field rise again to the European level, but they also had the ambition to make Italian culture excel in the International environment. They were sure that the creation of the Futurist avant-garde, as well as the literary movement and the life-style related to it, would result in a cultural and political regeneration of Italy.\(^{77}\)

\(^{75}\) Poggi et al., *Futurism*, 1.  
\(^{76}\) Coen, *Boccioni*, xxxvii.  
\(^{77}\) Poggi et al., *Futurism*, 1.
Boccioni and Marinetti, so different in their backgrounds and personalities, were united by a deep friendship and by their serendipitous artistic association: both Boccioni’s artistic renovations, and Marinetti’s managerial skills plus his daring and innovative advertising techniques made Futurism known to the public. However, the literature around the artistic movement has had the tendency to blur the differences between the two men, flattening their peculiarities and true personalities in order to make their Futurist facet emerge. Despite their fortunate collaboration in the artistic field, Boccioni and Marinetti were guided by highly divergent credos and goals. According to De Garda, ‘(…), cannot be confused with the psychological portrait of the fascist Italian who was the leader of Futurism: F.T. Marinetti.’

Even though the current dissertation does not want to indicate Marinetti, as well as the Futurist movement, as the incunabulum of Fascism; it is not possible to negate that the figure of Marinetti represented the most aggressive and warmongering aspect of the artistic current, while Boccioni was more focused onto a serious and organized artistic analysis directed towards an understanding of modernity.

The primacy of emotions in Boccioni’s artwork is rather surprising if the Futurist context in which the work was created is considered: the artist was merged in the aggressive and warmongering atmosphere of the Futurist avantgarde, which promoted and exalted, as the Manifesto stated, the slap and the punch. The Futurist strongly asserted their need to enhance, ‘movement and aggression, feverish insomnia, the racer stride, and the mortal leap’, both in their life and in their art. In that atmosphere of fervent changes, the artistic production of the group

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78 De Garda, Boccioni, 17.
79 Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 51.
80 Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 51.
was coherent with the combative and fierce beliefs: *The City Rises* (1910) (Fig. 17) by Boccioni, as *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (1910-1911) (Fig. 18) by Carrà, show from different points of view the anger, the dynamism and the power that groups of humans can generate. According to the Futurist sensibility, the speed created by people’s constant movements and actions constituted the new real beauty of modernity, and it was considered the characteristic that better described the twentieth century brand new human. From different points of view, the pictures deliver the sense of a modern world, which is mainly composed by the strong and resolute action of men and women, whose behavior was being reshaped by the new age.

However, there is no trace of fierce wars or aggressive characters in the *Stati d’Animo* triptych: the canvases display unimportant, normal moments of peoples’ life. The meaning of these scenes is given by the people’s feelings: the only battles that the three canvases show are the inner ones that the characters are facing inside their thoughts, while they wait for the moment of detachment from their loved ones. The three canvases show them in different but clear ways: *The Farewells* (Fig. 1a) delivers the sense of imminent division through the blazing colored lines, *Those Who Go* (Fig. 1b) attaches to the resoluteness of the travelers the sense of loss they feel, and, lastly, the characters of *Those Who Stay* (Fig. 1c) are trapped by the sadness that the departure of their beloved provoked them. Although the private, inner struggles do not create the same powerful vitality that is found in *The City Rises* (Fig. 17), they do create visual dynamism. Boccioni managed to catch the dynamism of people’s emotions, giving form to the motions of the soul, which can generate and manifest as much movement and force as the group of the restless workers in *The City Rises*.

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Boccioni’s difference from the other Futurists artists was highlighted by his research that crossed the main Futurist topics. The artist’s analysis expanded to fields that were not mentioned in the Futurist Manifesto, and which did not fit in the revolutionary intent of the movement: Boccioni’s personal research, which acquired a humanist and anti-Futurist facet, shed light in the field of human sensibility and emotions, which was a surprising exception to the rule of Futurism.

Moreover, despite the co-existence of Boccioni’s examination of human inner-word and Freud’s studies, very little scholarship has connected Futurism, and specifically Boccioni’s production, with Freud’s analysis of human psyche: the two seemed to went reciprocally unnoticed. Boccioni’s work was particularly valuable because it was able to underlined the limit of the Futurist ideology and overcoming it, examining the field of human soul: however, what was a relevant aspect of Boccioni’s poetic, it was also what set the paradox that distanced the artist from the other components of the Futurist avant-garde.

Inside the Futurist group, Boccioni also covered the role of theorist, since with the publication of his book ‘Pittura Scultura Futuriste. Dinamismo Plastico’ in 1914, he consistently delivered the group’s ideology: in seventeen chapters, all the ideas of the Futurist aesthetic, mainly organized and refined by Boccioni, were exposed in a definitive form.82 This work was both one of Boccioni’s personal main achievements, which sealed his role of theorist of the movement, and a great way to enhance the movement itself that could be proud of a clearer and more sophisticated system of ideas. Boccioni’s main intent his artistic research, was flanked by his need to deliver the Futurist artistic and technical studies to the wider public, in order to make the artistic

82 Coen, Boccioni, xxxi.
achievements known to the general public and to present his group as a methodical organism. In other words, Boccioni wanted to make his discoveries available and understandable to those who saw his canvases, in order to create a solid dialogue between them and the viewers. The willingness of Boccioni to create a dialogue between the art of the avant-garde and the public through his consistent delivery of Futurist artistic ideology, despite the distance that the group itself was creating between itself and the contemporary artistic world, demonstrates his difference from his Futurist comrades, setting him aside from his group.

II. I Boccioni and F.T. Marinetti: the Leading Artist and the Manager of the Group

Boccioni, completely and exclusively dedicated to the field of art, was driven by his brilliant Futurist intuition toward a new artistic understanding of modernity, which was always associated and enriched by his personal sensibility. Nonetheless, even though he was enthusiastic about the enterprise that he and his Futurist comrades were creating, Boccioni, from time to time, stopped to look back, and consider which changes progress and modernity were causing to the human inner-world. This attitude is underlined by his artistic production, which, in De Garda’s words, ‘the artist’s mastery was enhanced by his vibrant and always dramatic human potential contained in his works, model of a century that seemed without clear principles.’83 Boccioni always questioned himself regarding the character of the new century: he lived through the turn of the new century, and he could see the new features that the twentieth century was acquiring, and the overwhelming differences between the two periods.84

83 De Garda, Boccioni, 18.
84 De Garda, Boccioni, 35.
In the artist’ production, the aspiration to modernity is not delivered by the change of subjects and situations, but with the proposal of new contents that suggested renovated ways of expression: in other words, what represents the brilliance of Boccioni is the idea that the product of the modern and technological contemporary society functioned as the new space where the real meaning of the new century could be found. Boccioni’s production had an active part in the shaping of the modern man and his mind, who learnt to live in contact with the new ‘tramvai’ and automobiles, and who, for the first time, see an almost post-human connection between the pain of man and the suffering of a lamp.

As artist, Boccioni grasped the complexity of the modern century: the almost sudden change of cities to metropolis; the appearance of the factories, which changed the urban outline; and the slow disappearance of the trace of the Risorgimento that vanished into modernity, were elements that had a lasting impression on him. His canvases portrayed these changes, which were set, at first in the rural Lombard countryside, then in the threatening emerging factories, and lastly in the chic Milanese nightlife. His canvases were so precise in their commentary of his times because the vitality of his ideas was not due to abstracts reasonings, but to annotations of the real and vibrant life, which he himself experienced. In a section of his book, ‘Pittura Scultura Futuriste. Dinamismo Plastico’, the artist states, ‘It is vital only that kind of art that finds its elements in the surrounding environment. (…) We have to take inspiration from the tangible miracles of contemporary life. (…) We cannot remain indifferent toward the frenetic activity of

85 De Garda, Boccioni, 35.
86 Boccioni, Pittura Scultura Futurista, 367.
87 De Garda, Boccioni, 39.
88 De Garda, Boccioni, 40.
great capitals, to the brand-new psychology of nighthawks, of the feverish figures of the viveur, cocotte, apache, and of the alcoholic.  

On the other hand, Marinetti, who helped to spread Futurism thanks to his masterful organizational skills, was fully devoted to enhancing of a new kind of life for the twentieth century man, dedicated to aggressiveness and technology, according to the main Futurist sensibility. Marinetti craved for an abrupt and complete change of the current Italian political and artistic situations: he was determined to reject the traditional values and norms that were serving as prototypes for the present, since he was convinced that a new Italy could only be born from the ashes of the destroyed past. His main fields of actions were the ones of mundanity and poetry, which was as all the other disciplines of art, transfigured by Marinetti’s Futurist activity: his Futurist lines sang the praise of war and violence, which opened the way to the modern man. Despite Marinetti’s conviction, his works did not have the same impact of Boccioni’s production, and they did not produce a long-lasting change in people’s sensibility: in fact, while Boccioni’s artistic news remained after his premature death, the Futurist literature that Marinetti introduced ceased to be relevant after the end of his efforts in this discipline.

Boccioni had the chance to exercise the critical eye that allowed him to catch the changes that were taking place: because his parents travelled throughout Italy, he was exposed to a variety of environments, which gave him a sense of the different situations in the peninsula, and their huge socio-economic discrepancy. Very soon, Boccioni started to question his times: his inquiry was

89 Boccioni, Pittura Scultura Futurista, 357.
90 Poggi et all., Futurism, 1.
91 Selena Daly, Italian Futurism and the First World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 11.
enhanced by his job as correspondent at the Catanese ‘Gazzetta della Sera’, an intellectual space that hugely molded his first formation. Boccioni’s activity as journalist revealed his inclination to witness changes and look for answers in first person, and, more importantly, to have a concrete and immediate feedback with reality: this attitude was relevant in his Futurist phase, and was employed by the artist in the attentive analysis of the situations that wanted to depict. The rich world of journalism made Boccioni realize the path that he wanted to undertake: the world of arts, literature, and mundanity, where talent was evident and praised. From this point of view, Boccioni’s love for public recognition of his artistic capacity and public life was similar to the attitude of Marinetti, who also enjoyed the stage of modern life, as he never failed to demonstrate with his sumptuous meetings.

On the other hand, since a young age, Marinetti shown his provocative and enterprising characters: he did not fail to show his adversity toward the past literature and art, and his willingness to create something new that was more appropriate with the twentieth century. The considerable wealth of the Futurist poet was not only used to hold parties, it was also exploited to promote the expansion of the Futurist group: according to the correspondence he exchanged with Gino Severini, the millionaire frequently lent money to the artists not worrying about being repaid. Moreover, what mainly contributed to this noteworthy growing were three main elements: the extension of the movement to the field of visual art, music, and photography, thanks to the heterogeneous artists who adhered to Futurism, and the development of the Futurist

92 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 14.  
93 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 14.  
94 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 144.  
95 Poggi et al., Futurism, 7.
‘evenings’ (‘serate’), where mainly Marinetti and Boccioni could deliver the group’s ideas and present their new artistic discoveries.96

The first production of Marinetti was mainly Symbolist; however, he quickly turn to a topic more related to his Futurist ideology: ‘The Demon of Speed’ (1908) and ‘La Ville Charnelle’ (‘The Carnal City’) (1908) are focused both in journeys and metropolitan perambulations, and they present the city as a gigantic feminine space opulent, threatening yet alluring.97 The negativity of the female figure eventually returned in his mature Futurist works, such as ‘Let’s Murder the Moonlight!’ of 1909. Many of Marinetti’s early works presented a rhetoric of extraordinary violence, charged with elements of the grotesque and the macabre: however, this cynical aspect is balanced by the treatment of lighter topics.98 This huge oscillation between the elation and horror was a keynote in much of his best writings: this attitude was nourished by the fin de siècle obsession with aestheticism and cruelty.99 On the contrary, the production of Boccioni was never characterized by particularly disturbing elements: his artistic research was focused in the portrayal of the new age, and even in the canvases in which he analyzed emotions Boccioni concentrated to the expression and gesture of the figures, without showing singularly concerning pictures, such as in the Study for ‘Mourning’ (Fig. 19).100

Boccioni’s impetuosity, intellectual liveliness, and critical spirit had a pivotal part in the formation of the Futurist group: the artist considered the vigor of the movement, as well as the

96 Poggi et all., Futurism, 7.
97 Poggi et all., Futurism, 3.
98 Poggi et all., Futurism, 3.
99 Duggan, The Force of Destiny, loc. 6744 of 15842.
100 Coen, Boccioni, 90-91.
shared faith in rebellion, the elements that could allow his comrades and him to succeed in the spread of the artistic group and in the delivery of their new combative life-style. Together with Marinetti, he became the chief agitator of the movement: both shared the same boldness that allowed them to become icons of the new Futurist behavior.\textsuperscript{101} The Futurist group slowly came together, its formation was mainly led by Umberto Boccioni, who, during the years of his artistic formation, brought together the group’s main components. The artists were all characterized by singular and defined ideas and they were expert in different fields, but they all shared the need to create an art own of the new century. They found the embodiment of their need of change in Umberto Boccioni, whose innovative way to look at reality thrilled and inspired them: therefore, the artist managed to bring them together thanks to his engaging charisma, which never failed to attract sympathy.\textsuperscript{102}

The most interesting and meaningful connection in the Futurist group was without any doubt the one between Boccioni and F.T. Marinetti. Boccioni and his group already know about the literary activity of the millionaire, who, thanks to his resources he had been publishing his sumptuous poetic magazine ‘\textit{Poesia}’ completely at his expenses since 1905.\textsuperscript{103} Boccioni closely followed Marinetti’s moves, until the ‘poetry evening’ at the Teatro Lirico in Milan, which eventually turned in an anti-Austrian demonstration, where the poet declaimed the ‘Futurist Manifesto’.\textsuperscript{104} After this event Boccioni was resolute to contact the poet and start a concrete artistic association: in 1910 in the Milanese Stazione Centrale, enveloped in the smokes of the departing trains, Boccioni and Marinetti started their partnership, which eventually had a massive

\textsuperscript{101} Coen, \textit{Boccioni}, xxii.
\textsuperscript{102} Agnese, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 143.
\textsuperscript{103} Poggi et all., \textit{Futurism}, 4.
\textsuperscript{104} Agnese, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 146.
impact in the twentieth century, and in varying degrees changed both the artists.\textsuperscript{105} This meeting was followed by the Futurist group’s lavish expansion that culminated in the pivotal exhibition of Futurist painting in Paris in February 1912.\textsuperscript{106}

\section*{II. II The Representation of the Modern Century}

Boccioni’s quest for the creation of his new style began in 1907, when he started to consider more seriously the ‘problem of a poetic of modernity’ as a highly necessary development.\textsuperscript{107} The Futurist artist thought that the artistic production of his times lacked ‘universality’ and his peer artists were too focused on their documentary intentions: according to the artist, what was needed was, ‘a talent that could accept everything that modern science renovated in the field of Art, (…) and, therefore, could synthetizes the dream of the modern soul’.\textsuperscript{108} Boccioni exploited all his artistic expertise for the creation of meaningful canvases, which were able to deliver a consistent meaning: the artist’s canvases were obsessively accompanied by Boccioni’s doubts and questions about their meaning. The Futurist challenged his paintings, asking himself if they were the right interpretations of the reality around him: those burning doubts uncovered his urgency to reach new personal artistic formal solutions to portray the real world, which could lead him to a better artistic delivery of the modernity around him.\textsuperscript{109}

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\textsuperscript{105} Agnese, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 149.  \\
\textsuperscript{106} Poggi et all., \textit{Futurism}, 7.  \\
\textsuperscript{107} Agnese, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 117.  \\
\textsuperscript{108} Agnese, \textit{Umberto Boccioni}, 119.  \\
\textsuperscript{109} Coen, \textit{Boccioni}, xviii.
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According to most of Boccioni’s works, the artist was clearly drawn to a kind of depiction of modernity that enhanced its most lively, wild and overwhelming aspects. His canvases are influenced by the ideas of Marinetti, suggesting the idea that the modern world was not made for everyone, because its relentless developments and modifications can’t be sustained by all. This elitist character of the Futurist credo was well expressed in the ‘Manifesto of the Futurist Painters’ of 1910: the document harshly claimed the need for the detachment from the past art world, and the urgency to live the new modern life with a strength and a resoluteness worthy of the new age.\textsuperscript{110} The document took inspiration from the ‘Futurist Manifesto’ of 1909 written by Marinetti, whose rhetoric suggests an anti-humanist psychology, and the desire to direct human power to a new perceptual horizon.\textsuperscript{111} In the poet’s opinion, embracing these kinds of challenges required indifference for the human fate: building modernity meant also fortifying its new inhabitants through a process of constant transformation. These convictions were supported by, at first, the Futurist goal to destroy the stillness expressed by their contemporary artistic productions, and then by opening up a new sensibility that could seal the primacy of the modern world they saw.

At the same time, Boccioni’s production was influenced by the atmosphere created by the concept of the ‘New Man’: it eventually became a solid notion in the collective conscious, in particular in the Soviet Russia and the Fascist Italy. The ‘New man’ was very similar to the new kind of being that the Futurist were trying to create: this improved creature was considered as the example that people had to follow to learn how to live in the new century; moreover, this figure abandoned the humanity that is own of the human being, and it was associated the ideas of

\textsuperscript{110} Boccioni, \textit{Pittura Scultura Futurista}, 360-361.
\textsuperscript{111} Poggi et all., \textit{Futurism}, 49.
progress, violence, and aggressiveness. The ‘Futurist New Man’ was very close with machines and the new technologies of the twentieth century: this connection was due to the fact that they could render this new being even more powerful and perfect. In the Futurist writings, the idea that the destination of man’s evolution resided in the ‘mechanized-man’ or ‘cyborg’ being\textsuperscript{112} is highly present, underlining the Futurist attraction for the couple human-machine.

The Futurist praise of violence and war is probably the most expected element in their production: in fact, even though the celebration of new technology was a big part of their poetic, the Futurist mind saw in the war and in every violent act an expression of superiority, a beauty appropriate for the new age. The Futurist Manifesto stated that, ‘There is no beauty that does not consists of struggle. No works that lacks an aggressive character can be considered a masterpiece.’\textsuperscript{113} The group aimed to portray the force and aggressiveness of a new age, which was one of its most suitable masks, leaving out the gentle ornaments that previous artists attached to reality. In the Futurist canvas, musicality is substituted by the uproar; the chaos takes the place of the formal order.\textsuperscript{114} Boccioni’s depiction of the modern world finds its main example in \textit{The City Rises} (Fig. 17), which reunites the image of workers and the sense of a ferocious and magnificent creation: in the canvas, the man is harshly challenged by the force of modernization that he has unleashed, but which he cannot control anymore; since Innovation, in the form of the horses, has already broke free and cannot be stopped. The tiny men around this insuperable force are ferociously dragged and rattled around: they try to take control, but they just make clearer their inferiority. The unbearable energy of modernity, in the form of the

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\textsuperscript{112} Boccioni, \textit{Pittura Scultura Futurista}, 337 \\
\textsuperscript{113} Poggi, \textit{Inventing Futurism}, 51. \\
\textsuperscript{114} De Garda, \textit{Boccioni}, 84.
\end{flushleft}
animal, became the symbol of a renewed age, devoted to progress. What highlights the potency of *The City Rises* is also the flashy and warm colors that compose the canvas: the pigments that compose the artwork are dominated by the violent and imposing red, enriched by the yellow and orange, of the horse in the center. The symbolic nature of this animal is enhanced by these vibrant colors, which recalls the chaos of a building site and the atmosphere of foundry, filled with the effort of craftsmen and the bright gold of fused metal.

The painting was eventually used by the Futurist group to visualize the utopian dream of the Futurist metropolis, which emerges as a polycentric constellation of symbolic sites, ‘each having its typical forms of pleasures and work, mass psychology, and violent movement.’ The painting, whose title was suggested by Marinetti himself to the artist, was equally relevant for the figures of Boccioni and Marinetti: while the artist, taking inspiration from Milan’s self-promotion as nation’s capital of industrial production and commerce, depicted the prototype of the modern city, showing also his interest for the working crowd; Marinetti exploited the work as a visual form of the themes announced in the 1909 Futurist Manifesto. *The City Rises* was the crowning of the joint efforts of the two men: Marinetti described his idea of the ‘rising modernity’ as, ‘(...) an energy that emerges and overtakes as the upsurge of a wild and frightening force, which destroys the rhythms of the past in order to command new forms of movement and labor. Workers are reduced to a kind of collective raw material.’ Therefore, Boccioni gave life in his canvas to the pictures Marinetti imagined, depicting the urban construction, the scaffoldings, the force of modernity in the form of a horse, and the almost insignificant workers. The canvas not only shows the new imagery and consideration of

115 Poggi, *Futurism*, 84.
116 Poggi et all., *Futurism*, 84.
modernity, but it also makes clear how the artistic collaboration between Boccioni and Marinetti was effective. However, *The City Rises* mainly shows the Futurist facet of the artist, the one that resonated with Marinetti’s enhancement of the new century: this canvas’s vigor and passion overshadow the softer and pensive aspects of Boccioni’s personalities, which were shown by the *States of Mind I*, and allowed him to admire aspects that were considered unworthy by his group.

II. III Boccioni’s Anti-Futurist Shadow: the Rediscovery of Religion, Italian Art and Music

The main Futurist and progressive facet of Umberto Boccioni hides other attitudes that were in contrast with his group’s credos, and demonstrated that the artist was not only dedicated to the enhancement of progress and technology, but also to a more personal and intimate dialogue with art. Boccioni’s role as agitator and co-leader of the Futurist movement also blurred his personal respect toward aspects that, according to the Futurist credo, had to be forgotten and crumbled: the old masters of European and Italian art, religion, and music. The consideration toward older art appeared very soon in his artistic path: it served as model for Boccioni’s drawing exercises, as his early studies on subjects of Rubens, Pontormo, and Hals’s works can confirm.\(^{117}\) The attraction to the old masters was not only part of Boccioni’s artistic formation, but it represented for a great part of his career a stable term of comparison: during a short stay in Padova in 1907, the artist studied and admired again Mantegna, Giotto, Titian, and Giovanni Pisano.\(^ {118}\) Boccioni was particularly attracted to Donatello’s production, so much that he was present at conferences

\(^{117}\) Coen, *Boccioni*, xiv.
\(^{118}\) Agnese, *Umberto Boccioni*, 113.
about him: the artist attended them hoping to find some ideas that could be useful for the renewal of the current Italian art, as well as in the one that he was creating.119

Additionally, Boccioni inherited the triptych format from the history of art: the inspiration came from the Divisionist exhibition in Paris, in particular, from the canvases of Segantini and Previati.120 This format is recurring in Boccioni’s production, the sketches from Boccioni’s Roman period include rough drawings for a painting divided in three parts, *Homage to Mother* (1907-1908) (Fig. 20), of which we have only drawings.121 Then, in 1911, the triptych format came back with the *States of Mind*, series I and II: however, while the three canvases from the *Homage* are strictly connected together physically because each of the canvases would not make sense if considered individually; the canvases of the *States* are physically independent, even though they are connected by a singular narrative.122 Therefore, *Homage to Mother* exhibits both a traditional format, with the side canvases smaller and the central one bigger, and content structure. On the other hand, the *States of Mind* I just vaguely recall the old kind of triptych, which is instead modernized and transformed. Religion represented for the artist another important element, both from the personal and artistic points of view. This theme found place in the artist’s existential analysis: Boccioni has always been challenged by doubts about his own activity as artist, as well as his capacities: he was afraid to be an artist only potentially, to be a hopeless dreamer, author of inevitably mediocre works.123 The account of his inner thoughts, which comes from his personal notebooks, shed light to the complex sensitivity of the artist.

\[\text{References}\]

120 Coen, *Boccioni*, 36.
which expressed a deep humanity: even though the artist was well-aware of his limits and uncertainties, always pushed himself to the creation of the new. During the search for his answers, he turned to religion: in his private notebooks, after confessing his past disagreement with this field, he admitted his attraction to religion, which he later saw as, ‘the most profound expression of human ambitions and perplexity toward infinity.’

Boccioni’s connection with religion was also enhanced by the meeting with Gaetano Previati; the production of this artist greatly influenced Boccioni: for the creation of his Stati d’Animo, Boccioni took inspiration from two of Previati’s paintings The Return of the Pious Women (Fig. 14) and The Ascent of the Pious Women (Fig. 15). The canvases are related to the biblical event of the Via Crucis: in particular, with a fascinating and captivating expressionist/symbolist style, they display the painful path of the women who, at first, went toward the place of Christ’s crucifixion, and, later, they painfully returned to their homes. Boccioni draw from this biblical pain the inspiration for creating his Stati d’Animo, and, in particular Those Who Stay (Fig. 1c): the third painting recalls Previati’s canvases not only for their emotional charge, but also for the rendering of the characters, whose emotions are not expressed by specific figurative elements but by the colors and the lines that compose the figures.

Boccioni’s renovated connection with spirituality was also enhanced by sacred music: music in general has been a valuable inspiration for Boccioni, since he always dreamt to give to his paintings the, ‘arousing force’ (‘forza suscitatrice’) of Music.’

124 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 110.
125 Agnese, Umberto Boccioni, 111.
his love for the old masters of Italian and European art, as well as for music and religion not only demonstrates the sensibility and curiosity of the artist, but they also shows his willingness to create a connection with his Italian artistic culture.
Conclusions

Umberto Boccioni was deeply inspired by both the Italian and European animated artistic situations: Boccioni selected a number of thematic and technical innovations, such as: the Macchiaiola and Divisionist techniques, Edvard Munch’s analysis of human sorrow, and the Expressionist painting, which he considered as necessary for the enhance of the current Italian art and relevant for his production. The transformations that were going on in Italy resulted in new artistic situations in the Italian peninsula: in particular, the States of Mind I grew from Milan, the city symbol of the Italian progress. The artist drew heavily from this industrial and renovated atmosphere: the study of modernity present in his canvases was enriched with a close study of the human soul, impacted and moulded by modernity. In the Futurist artist’s triptych, the analysis and depiction of the human inner-world greatly surpasses the commentary of the results of the new industrialized Italy, attracting attention to fields that were not examined by his Futurist colleagues. The Farewells, Those Who Go, and Those Who Stay not only represent something unforeseen in the panorama of the Futurist art, but they also stand as tribute to emotions, expressing their importance in a period dominated by progress and technology. Freud’s ideas represented for Boccioni a door into the world of human sensibility, and a way to get closer and understand its complex psyche: despite the distance between the artist and Freud, thanks to Boccioni’s approach the doctor’s ideas, it has been possible to bring out overlooked psychological aspects that are present in Boccioni’s production, and more specifically in States of Mind I.
The examination of the three canvases that compose the triptych, which were shaped by the ideas of Bergson on time and memory, as well as the rules of Expressionism and Symbolism, the themes of separation, and the ideas of simultaneity, speed, and dynamism, have highlighted the artist’s care in the account and delivery of human inner reality, and how it faced external situations. Through memory and travel, human sensibility is molded, and exposed in the artist’s canvases. As his triptych, also Umberto Boccioni was an exception in his group: the Futurist avant-garde could count on a variety of knowledgeable and brilliant artists; however, even though they shared with Boccioni the need of renewal of Italian art, their production focused on a more aggressive and complete revolution is not present in the States of Mind I. The analysis of the two pillars of Futurism, Umberto Boccioni and M.T Marinetti, revealed their importance and deep difference: while the latter was the manager and promoter of the group, enhancing the resolute revolution that Futurism wanted to pursue; the former, although being a convinced Futurist, persevered in the analysis of the new artistic sparks that the new century suggested, and he decorated his artistic production with the study and depiction of modern emotions. With the current thesis, I have demonstrated how Boccioni’s triptych represents an exception in the production of the Futurist: its theme and artistic rendering are very different from the ones of works like Unique Forms of Continuity in Space (1913) and Dynamism of a Cyclist (1913), which represent in a clear way the Futurist facet of the artist. Moreover, I highlighted that the ideology that supports the States of Mind I had nothing to do with the warmongering credo that was behind the artistic creation of majority of the Futurist avant-garde: Boccioni’s triptych was based in the symbolist and expressionist techniques, which allowed the artist to tell in an emotional and fascinating way the life of the inner-world.
Bibliography


Worringer, Wilhelm. *Abstraction and empathy: a contribution to the psychology of style.*

Illustrations

(Fig. 1a) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I. The Farewells*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm

(Fig. 1b) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I, Those Who Go*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm

(Fig. 1c) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I. Those Who Stay*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 1a) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I. The Farewells*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 1b) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I, Those Who Go*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 1c) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind I. Those Who Stay*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 2) Abbati Giuseppe, *Little Street Under the Sun*, 1864, Oil on Table, 39 x 42 cm

(Fig. 3) Pellizza da Volpedo Giuseppe, *Mirror of Life*, 1898, Oil on Canvas, 132 x 288 cm
(Fig. 4) Boccioni Umberto, *Factories at Porta Romana*, 1909, Oil on Canvas, 75 x 145 cm

(Fig. 5) Boccioni Umberto, *The Laugh*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 110.2 x 1454 cm
(Fig. 6) Severini Gino, *The Haunting Dancer*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 54 x 73.5 cm

(Fig. 7) Balla Giacomo, *The Hands of the Violinist*, 1912, Oil on Canvas, 56 x 78.3 cm
(Fig. 8) Derain André, *L’Estaque*, 1905-1906, Oil on Canvas, 35 x 45 cm

(Fig. 9) Munch Edvard, *Despair*, 1892, Oil on Canvas, 92 x 72.5 cm
(Fig. 10) Boccioni Umberto, *Simultaneous Visions*, 1911-1912, Oil on Canvas, 60.5 x 60.5 cm

(Fig. 11) Severini Gino, *Memories of the Journey*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 47 x 75 cm
(Fig. 12) Boccioni Umberto, *Elasticity*, 1912, Oil on Canvas, 100 x 100 cm

(Fig. 13a) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind II. The Farewells*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 13b) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind II, Those Who Go*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm

(Fig. 13c) Boccioni Umberto, *States of Mind II. Those Who Stay*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm
(Fig. 14) Previati Gaetano, *The Return of the Pious Women*, 1910, Oil on Canvas, 71 x 54 cm

(Fig. 15) Previati Gaetano, *The Ascent of the Pious Women*, 1901-1902, 71 x 54 cm
(Fig. 16) Balla Giacomo, *The Street-Light*, 1909, Oil on Canvas, 174.7 x 114.7 cm

(Fig. 17) Boccioni Umberto, *The City Rises*, 1910, Oil on Canvas, 199.3 x 3.01 cm
(Fig. 18) Dalmazzo Carrà Carlo, *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli*, 1901-1911, Oil on Canvas, 1.99 x 2.59 cm

(Fig. 19) Boccioni Umberto, *Study for 'Mourning'*, 1910, Ink on Paper, 15.6 x 18.7 cm
(Fig. 20) Boccioni Umberto, *Homage to Mother*, 1907-1908, Pencil on Paper, 39.1 x 57.8 cm

(Fig. 21) Kirchner Ernst Ludwig, *The Street Dresden*, 1908, Oil on Canvas, 1.5 x 2 m