

**Harmony or Fragmentation: a study of simultaneity in the poetry of Blaise  
Cendrars and the art of Umberto Boccioni**

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Gary Harris, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this analysis is to assess by means of a comparative study the ways in which simultaneity, as defined by the Futurist movement, is practised and demonstrated in the art of Umberto Boccioni and the poetry of Blaise Cendrars.

More explicitly, its aim is to illustrate that the poetry of Cendrars applies to a significant extent Boccioni's and the Futurists' ideal of simultaneity, while transcending it in certain key respects.

The objective is to pinpoint how and to what extent their bodies of work are defined both by their interconnectedness and disconnectedness, along a continuum that ultimately feeds from one point on the stratum to another.

This assessment examines a range of antecedents encompassing the legacy of Nietzsche, Cubism, Symbolism and Impressionism, stating the impact of these influences on the respective visions of both practitioners.

The thesis discusses how both Boccioni and Cendrars were influenced by the aesthetics of film, photography and photomontage; building on this, it examines the cinematic technique of montage and the extent to which it emulates the overall precept of simultaneity.

The phenomenon of Henri Bergson's 'durée' (duration) is subsequently assessed, as is the extent to which the French philosopher's representation of the plurality of successive events underpins the canons of Boccioni and Cendrars.

The spiral shape is the predominant linking factor between the artist and poet and their respective conceptions of form. How both draw upon this trope, and its subsequent connection to the sequential view of time and space, forms the final part of the comparative investigation.

The thesis aims to show that both practitioners operate in parallel to an extent through the prism of corresponding influences and experiences, filtering their concepts through various mechanisms, including the spiral form, interpenetration, and elasticity.

The extent to which harmony prevails over fragmentation in the oeuvre of both Boccioni and Cendrars, as interpreted through the filter of simultaneity, is the impetus for this analysis.

## **Contents**

List of Appendices	p.8
Introduction	p.11
1 <u>The legacy of Symbolism</u>	
1.i    Symbolism & Boccioni	p.44
1.ii   Symbolism & Cendrars	p.68
2 <u>Other foundations</u>	
2.i    Science	p.81
2.ii   Cubism and Delaunay	p.91
2.iii  Nietzsche	p.118
2.iv   Circular Movement and Dance	p.127
3 <u>Technological Influences</u>	
3.i    Photography	p.133
3.ii   Cinema and Montage	p.149
4 <u>Memory and the Debt to Bergson</u>	
4.i    Intuition	p.184
4.ii   Durée	p.202
4.iii  Mémoire Pure	p.214

5	<u>Conscious Creativity</u>	
5.i	A Centre of Consciousness	p.222
5.ii	Consciousness and the Spatial Map	p.235
5.iii	The Spiral Form	p.245
5.iv	Interpenetration	p.262
5.v	Elasticity	p.280
	Conclusion	p.295
	Bibliography	p.308
	Exhibition catalogues	p.332
	Appendices	p.336

## List of Appendices

Plate one: Umberto Boccioni, <i>La città sale</i> (1910-11) and Blaise Cendrars 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles' (1913-14)	p.307
Plate two: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Elasticità</i> (1912)	p.308
Plate three: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Paesaggio al tramonto</i> (around 1906)	p.309
Plate four: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Materia</i> (1912)	p.310
Plate five: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Le forze di una strada</i> (1911) and Blaise Cendrars 'Contrastes' (1913)	p.311
Plate six: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Il lutto</i> (1910)	p.312
Plate seven: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Antigrazioso</i> (1912-13)	p.313
Plate eight: Umberto Boccioni, <i>La strada entra nella casa</i> (1911)	p.314
Plate nine: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo</i> (1914)	p.315
Plate ten: Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delanay, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913) – courtesy Marc Litzler collection	p.316
Plate eleven: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Sotto la pergola a Napoli</i> (1914)	p.317
Plate twelve: Robert Delaunay, <i>Fenêtres</i> series (April-December 1912)	p.318
Plate thirteen: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Visioni Simultanee</i> (1911)	p.319
Plate fourteen: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Cavallo+Cavaliere+Caseggiato</i> (1913-14)	p.320
Plate fifteen: Gino Severini, <i>Danseuse bleue</i> (1912)	p.321
Plate sixteen: Oscar G. Rejlander, <i>The Two Ways of Life</i> (1857)	p.322
Plate seventeen: Paul Cézanne, <i>Montagne Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine</i> (around 1887)	p.323



Plate eighteen: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Io-Noi</i> (1905-07)	p.324
Plate nineteen: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Dinamismo di una testa di donna</i> (1914)	p.325
Plate twenty: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Stati d'Animo first version, The Farewells, Those Who Stay, Those Who Go</i> (1911)	p.326
Plate twenty-one: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Stati d'Animo second version, The Farewells, Those Who Stay, Those Who Go</i> (1911)	p.328
Plate twenty-two: Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, <i>The Polyphysiognomical portrait of Boccioni</i> (1913)	p.330
Plate twenty-three: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Autoritratto</i> (1908) and Blaise Cendrars 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913)	p.331
Plate twenty-four: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Due Figure</i> (1910)	p.332
Plate twenty-five: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Carica di Lancieri</i> (1915)	p.333
Plate twenty-six: Umberto Boccioni, <i>La madre che legge</i> (around 1909)	p.334
Plate twenty-seven: Umberto Boccioni, <i>La madre che cuce</i> (1909-10)	p.335
Plate twenty-eight: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Trittico: Veneriamo la madre</i> (1907-08)	p.336
Plate twenty-nine: Umberto Boccioni, <i>La signora Massimino</i> (1908)	p.337
Plate thirty: Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles'	p.338
Plate thirty-one: Blaise Cendrars, 'OpOetic'	p.339
Plate thirty-two: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Paesaggio lombardo</i> (1908)	p.340
Plate thirty-three: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Treno che passa</i> (1908)	p.341
Plate thirty-four: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Studio per l'antigrizioso</i> (1912)	p.342
Plate thirty-five: Umberto Boccioni, <i>Dinamismo di un ciclista</i> (1913)	p.343

Plate thirty-six: Umberto Boccioni, *Sintesi del Dinamismo Umano* (1913) p.344

Plate thirty-seven: Umberto Boccioni,  
*Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (1912) p.345

Plate thirty-eight: Umberto Boccioni,  
*Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (1913) p.346

## Introduction

La simultaneità è per noi l'esaltazione lirica, la plastica manifestazione di un nuovo assoluto: la velocità; di un nuovo e meraviglioso spettacolo: la vita moderna; di una nuova febbre: la scoperta scientifica.<sup>1</sup>

Simultaneity in the art of the Italian Futurists involves the dissolution of time and space under the influence of velocity; this process, which unites events by depicting successive phases of movement in one image, is intended to make all actions and events occur at the same instant within Futurist paintings created largely between 1909 and 1920. This simultaneous fusion of space, time and energy at the same instant underpins the Futurist concept of simultaneity. In depicting the energy of the machine and attempting to capture the motion of objects as they move through space, Futurist art drew upon prevailing scientific and philosophical thought to try and create a new 'fourth' dimension. Motion and dynamism play an integral part in this new dimension as simultaneity of time and space with movement is represented for the Futurists by the interconnectedness of objects in space. Crucially, motion and dynamism are inextricably linked in Futurist art:

Simultaneità è la condizione nella quale appaiono i diversi elementi che costituiscono il DINAMISMO. E dunque l'effetto di quella grande causa che è il dinamismo universale.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'For us simultaneity is lyrical exaltation, a plastic manifestation of a new absolute, speed; a new and marvellous spectacle: modern life; a new fever: scientific discovery.' Umberto Boccioni, 'Simultaneità' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste (Dinamismo Plastico)*, Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia, 1914, p.263/'Futurist Painting and Sculpture (extracts)', transl. Robert Brain and J.C. Higgitt in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson,1973), p.178.

<sup>2</sup> 'Simultaneity is a condition in which the various elements which constitute dynamism are present. It is therefore an effect of that great cause which is universal dynamism.' *Ibid.*

The focus of this analysis is to examine by means of a comparative study the degree to which simultaneity is practised and demonstrated in the art of Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916) and how it subsequently infuses the poetry of Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961). The thesis examines works made by Boccioni dating from 1905 (the photographic self-portrait *Io-Noi*, plate eighteen) to the painting *Carica di Lancieri* (1915), charting his evolution as an artist working mainly according to Divisionist and Symbolist aesthetics in the period before 1909. Indeed, his brushwork remains mainly divisionist until 1911 when after a visit to Paris in the autumn with Carlo Carrà, he looks to and is influenced by Cubism. He joined the Futurist movement in 1910 after meeting Marinetti and was a leading proponent of the school over the next six years until his death in 1916 aged 33. It is subsequently logical to divide Boccioni's canon into pre- and post-Futurist phases, exemplified by the harsh jolt into modernity epitomised by *La città sale* (1910-11; plate one) which was created in the aftermath of the Founding Manifesto of Futurism of 1909. Two sculptures, which unravel to reveal the most Modernist of forms and shapes, are particularly pertinent to this survey: Umberto Boccioni, *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (1913; plate thirty-eight) and *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (1912; plate thirty-seven). Throughout the analysis, Boccioni's collection of theses on Futurist art (*Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, 1914) also acts as an intercalating tool throughout.

Indeed, it is also important to note how the Futurist manifestos produced after 1909 also act as a benchmark for analysis. These manifestos pertain to an enlarged global perspective that takes into account an overview of the world underpinned by

the simultaneity of time and place propagated by both protagonists. This survey underlines how the Futurist manifestos form a basis for a comparative overview, beginning with the *Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo* of 1909, the tenets of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 1.i. These agendas of intent are crucial to this study as they espouse an internationalist outlook akin to globalisation, an aspect examined via the *Manifesto dei Pittori Futuristi* (1910) in Chapter 1.i also. I put forward the proposition that the manifestos gradually align with the sentiment and voice of Blaise Cendrars: the tone of the statements in the post-1909 manifestos reaches its climax, bringing to mind the ideas of the poet, in the *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1912). What becomes noticeable here is the similarity in both tone and content between Marinetti's and Cendrars's statements. The manifestos also act as a connecting thread between Boccioni and Cendrars with their Nietzschean undertone. Crucially, Boccioni's *Pittura Scultura Futuriste (Dinamismo Plastico)* is referred to as a cornerstone text throughout the analysis; this collection of theses on Futurist art (*Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, 1914) outlines the utter integrality of dynamism and movement, with its capability for interpenetration, in relation to the workings of simultaneity. The version used throughout of *Pittura Scultura Futuriste* is the 1914 print edition published by Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia.

The primary texts by Cendrars referred to include *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924* (Éditions Denoël, 1947). This volume comprises 'Les Pâques à New York' (1912), 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913), and 'Le Panama ou les aventures de mes sept oncles' (1913-14), along with the later series 'Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques' (1913-19) and 'Documentaires' (1924). This

compendium approximately aligns chronologically with the advent of Futurism, reflecting how the phenomenon of simultaneity is borne out within Cendrars's poetic discourse. This evaluation will therefore consider whether Cendrars's conception of simultaneity is as prescriptive as Boccioni's which crucially is underpinned by Futurist tenets. The essays 'Profond Aujourd' Hui', 'L'A B C du cinéma', 'La Perspective' and 'Principe de l'Utilité', drawn from the collection *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de essais et réflexions 1910-1916* (1917-29), also help give context to Cendrars's brand of modernism, providing further evidence that the strain of modernity promulgated by the Futurists aligns with the poet's radical vision.

It is important to note that 'Documentaires' was initially published under the title Kodak in 1924 after Cendrars and his publisher, Éditions Stock, were threatened with legal action by the Eastman-Kodak company, who claimed that the title and design of the book infringed on its trademark rights. Éditions Stock says in a statement printed in the 1947 Éditions Denoël version that 'the use of this word, far from promoting [Eastman-Kodak], is harming it by undermining the specific uses of the products presented'.<sup>3</sup> Cendrars responds with the below declaration which in itself serves the purpose of further reinforcing a precept of this survey, that of charting a new form of visual-verbal interplay as evinced in the poet's description of 'Documentaires' as verbal photographs. This comingling of disciplines introduces a

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<sup>3</sup> Blaise Cendrars, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1947), p.133.

new element of spatial and temporal awareness that comes into play throughout this examination:

La poésie n'est pas dans un titre mais dans un fait, et comme en fait ces poèmes, que j'ai conçus comme des photographies verbales, forment un documentaire, je les intitulerai dorénavant "Documentaires". Leur ancien sous-titre. C'est peut-être aujourd'hui un genre nouveau.<sup>4</sup>

Another collection viewed as a primary reference series is *Feuilles de Route* (1924-28), a collection inspired by his travels to Brazil and his 'Brazilian modernist friends'.<sup>5</sup> This series, referred to sporadically, will prove an important reference point for an examination of all the montage-driven structure of Cendrars's verse later in his career (after the death of Boccioni, the series reflects the poet's ongoing innovations in developing and expanding the notion of simultaneity). The thesis also assesses the series *Au Coeur du monde*, comprising nine works, the majority of which were written in 1917. In terms of mapping the dynamics of the Bergsonian concept of *durée*, this collection acts as a useful base mark for assessing how Bergsonian 'durée' systematically underpins Cendrars's perspective (a simultaneous and uninterrupted flow of information from memory and intuition that combines the homogeneous and the heterogeneous within one organic arrangement). In order to truly grasp the scale and innovative nature of Cendrars' poetry, the thesis will also look at how he carves a niche as a prospective filmmaker, bringing in to play

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<sup>4</sup> 'Poetry is not in a title but in a fact, and since in fact these poems, which I conceived as verbal photographs, form a documentary, I will call them Documentaries from now on. Their former subtitle. It is perhaps a new genre today' [my translation]. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Thaïs Chang Waldman, 'Espaços de Paulo Prado: Tradição e Modernismo', in: *Arteologia* 1 (2011), (dossier thématique *Brésil, Questions sur le Modernisme*), 1-18, (p.9).

montage as an important aspect of the procedure of simultaneity. Film projects referred to *La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange* (1919) and *La Perle Fiévreuse* (1923). *La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange N.D.* (1919) was originally developed as a screenplay by Cendrars, but it was published as a novel when funding for the film project fell through.

The first chapter looks at how both Boccioni in particular is the product of his time, the result of a heritage shaped by Impressionism, Divisionism and especially Symbolism. I present evidence in the first chapter that demonstrates Boccioni was preoccupied by the precedents established by Symbolism. The influence of Divisionism on the artist is also evinced, focusing in particular on the teachings of Gaetano Previati. The thesis unpicks at the same time Cendrars's place within the Modernist milieu of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This link to Modernism, which establishes subsequently a connection with Boccioni, is most clearly seen in the Marinettian invective employed by Cendrars. Chapter 1.ii also makes the case that Cendrars is also an heir to primarily Symbolist philosophies, thereby highlighting a commonality with his Italian counterpart. Chapter two examines other significant antecedents and corresponding developments across art and science. It is fundamental that the overlap with Nietzsche's ideals and Cubism is analysed at the same time. In Chapter three, photography and cinema are discussed as 'dovetailing phenomena' which evolve in parallel with the practices of the respective practitioners.

In the most important section of the thesis (Chapter four), the reader is shown how the philosophy of 'durée' espoused by Henri Bergson is the bridging element



between Boccioni and Cendrars, and how this is reflected in their interpretations of temporal and spatial sequences dependent upon rhythmic multiplicity. How both Boccioni and Cendrars unconsciously engineer the ideal of 'conscious creativity' underscores the first four chapters; as I reiterate throughout, the debate at the centre of this thesis is how a union of the instinctive and the conscious underpins the technical and aesthetic approach of Boccioni and Cendrars. The reader is given a detailed outline in the final chapter of the devices and phenomena that brings him/her towards the 'centre of consciousness'. This occurs when simultaneity is all-encompassing in the way that Bergson advocated, gaining access to the inner substance of an object by means of the convergence of several, dissimilar defining phenomena. Multiple factors aid this process, from the predominant linking factor that is circularity, as exemplified by the spiral motif, along with elasticity which is also a conduit for different dimensions of consciousness.

The aim of the thesis is therefore to illustrate that the poetry of Cendrars replicates to an extent Boccioni's and the Futurists' ideal of simultaneity, while transcending it in certain key respects. This evaluation considers whether Cendrars's conception of simultaneity is as prescriptive as Boccioni's, which is underpinned by Futurist precepts. The thesis aims to illustrate that both practitioners operate in parallel to an extent through the prism of corresponding influences and experiences, referencing a vast range of antecedents encompassing among other criteria the legacy of Nietzsche, Cubism, Symbolism and Impressionism.

The analysis will demonstrate Cendrars's exploration of the phenomenon of simultaneity and its progression in tandem with Futurist aesthetics. Two predominant issues need to be addressed in this investigation: the determining factor in this analysis is to what extent both Boccioni and Cendrars endow their work with a (1) unifying consciousness while presenting (2) the dismemberment and interrelatedness of their subject so as to suggest more than one temporal and spatial level in a single poem/painting. The Futurist artistic ideal of 'la compenetrazione dei piani', (interpenetration of planes, see footnote six), whereby the form and detail of the work appears to take place on several different levels depicting a plurality of successive events, aims to communicate this multiplicity of actions that transpire on ultimately the one plane. This is a primary directive behind the Futurist conception of simultaneity.

As objects move through space, they enter and interpenetrate different spatial spheres. Futurist objects are however never disentangled in their entirety from their environment. Speed leaves traces of movement; this rapid repositioning across the course of an object or subject's path of motion results in the confluence of colour and form as the two merge in the object's or subject's wake. Movement is achieved through fluctuation, which in turn creates a cinematographic effect. Traces of movement inspired by speed produce juxtapositional segments. The end result is the representation of successive stages of motion in a broadly linear sequence that is liable to shift and move. Boccioni's essay on simultaneity in his collection of theses on Futurist art (*Pittura Scultura Futurista*, 1914) outlines the integrality of dynamism in relation to the mechanics of simultaneity. Simultaneity is divided into a

series of five steps from 'dinamismo' ('dynamism') to 'compenetrazione di piani' ('interpenetration of planes').<sup>6</sup> These planes progress from the amalgamation of relative motion with absolute motion to the affiliation of memory and time initiated by the simultaneity of internal and external spatial factors.

The thesis thereby examines Cendrars's thematic and technical features through the prism of Futurist theory which in itself needs to be examined as a new way of presenting and emblematising the modernist image. In this evaluation, the Futurist manifestos can act as the basis for an exploration of Cendrars's furthering of the modernist agenda in poetry. In this sense, the thesis will subsequently acknowledge Cendrars as one of the leading experimental writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking into account how the poet experimented with free verse and imagery (in the form of inserted examples drawn from advertising, for instance, introducing new narrative structures that amalgamate both historical and fabricated elements). Cendrars was a pioneer of poetic modernism because, as Yannis Livadas outlines, 'he was one of the few poets who gave a distinctive emphasis to the handling of the poetical subject, rather than the subject itself'.<sup>7</sup>

This in turn eschewed conventional verbal-visual methodologies due to 'the parallel and simultaneous correlations, wherein the poem reflects at least two opposite forces whose relation constitutes the meaning'.<sup>8</sup> The emergence of modernist ideals at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century entailed a disruption of language and form, centred on a re-ordering of the sequential reading of time, stream of

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>7</sup> Yannis Livadas, 'Blaise Cendrars: A Poet for the Twenty-First Century', *hyperallergic.com*, New York: Hyperallergic, 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/382414/blaise-cendrars-a-poet-for-the-twenty-first-century/> (accessed 16 July 2020).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

consciousness and the subversion of the gaze (as opposed to a succession of phenomena that underpinned literature and painting until around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which were generally linked to classical models). Engaging with modernist ideas about the image hinges on simultaneity as a change of mindset in relation to the debunking of temporal succession. In other words, 'all past, present, and future occurrences enter into a simultaneous relationship centred in the present conscious of the poet', an epithet which can easily be applied to Cendrars.<sup>9</sup> But the Futurists also brought every aspect of their thinking to bear on the present simply by inaugurating the manifesto as a poetic form that stands alone as a resonant document that carves a niche in actuality.

The modernist idea of the 'image' needs to be unravelled, going back to antecedents such as Cézanne (p.136). The Founding Manifesto of Futurism of 1909 stands as a textual totem, bordering on punk, that foregrounds elements of 20<sup>th</sup>-century performance art. In this sense, the modernist image has been reconfigured as a textual call to arms, changing the way artists conceived of their relationship to popular culture. This transformation of the modernist experience and image was further revolutionised at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 when the Dada movement was born. 'Now that performance art is finally under a spotlight and fully embraced by museums and academia, Dada is being rediscovered and understood as the Big Bang, along with Futurism, that it was," says RoseLee Goldberg, director of the New

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<sup>9</sup> José Manuel Losada Goya, 'Poetic Image and Tradition in Western European Modernism: Pound, Lorca, Claudel', *CLC Web: Comparative Literature and Culture* 1.2 (1999), pp.1-10 (p.4).

York-based Performa performance art festival.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Cendrars's voice is just as visionary and transformative, making verse much more anarchic, lending itself to performative interpretations (p.60).

W.J.T. Mitchell establishes ground rules for comparative textual and visual theorising which in essence looks at images from the viewpoint of visual language:

The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or, for the believer, actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence. The word is its 'other', the artificial arbitrary production of human will that disrupts natural presence by introducing unnatural elements into the world—time, consciousness, history, and the alienating intervention of symbolic mediation.<sup>11</sup>

Despite Mitchell's detailed hypothesis, few other publications offer credible frameworks for comparative readings of textual and visual works (in other words, art and literature). Furthermore, by depicting the word as the 'other', Mitchell is highlighting the chasm that exists between the image as a sign and its 'false' signifier, that is, the word. He develops this link between text and imagery by saying that 'there is the word which is a natural image of what it means (as in onomatopoeia) and the word as arbitrary signifier'.<sup>12</sup> This analysis will first focus on the aural properties of both the verse formulated by Marinetti, and following this precedent, the traces of Marinettian invective to be found in the poetry of Cendrars. By this, I mean that the semantic arrangements on the page, by both practitioners, lend themselves to a visual interpretation as evinced in the shape and outline of the

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<sup>10</sup> RoseLee Goldberg, 'Dada; 100 Years On', [theartnewspaper.com](https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/dada-100-years-on), London: The Art Newspaper, 2016 <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/dada-100-years-on> (accessed 16 July 2020).

<sup>11</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44

poem. Crucially, this process is aided by the aural properties of the works: for instance, the composition of Marinetti's *parole in libertà*, a concoction of advertising slogans, fragments of popular song and onomatopoeia. There is subsequently aural montage in Cendrars's verse that relies on a system of juxtaposing and ultimately uniting sounds; the make-up of Marinetti's works will be examined, focusing on how the Futurist leader's creation of visual playgrounds, where the eye follows the ear in moving around spatial arenas constructed, is echoed in the practice of Cendrars. An excellent starting point for an investigation into the relationship between visual and verbal modes of expression in the poet's work is the poem 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913).

I propose using a verbal-visual methodology that unpicks how both Cendrars and Boccioni 'cross the gaps'; by this, I mean to show that fusing the various connecting parts is a component of the intuition-based interpretive process involved in assimilating the poetry and art in question. An innovative part of this analysis involves for instance the study of newsprint employed in Boccioni's work and Cendrars's choice of diction which positively promotes a 'cross-reading' of the work. This process subsequently endows the reader with the ability to decode the messages presented by Cendrars and Boccioni. At this point verbal-visual cues come into play, analysed through the prism of montage, calling into question the value system behind the use of newsprint in Futurist art. This phenomenon is discussed by Clara Orban who is right to say that 'by introducing a new semiotic system on the canvas, Boccioni seems to want to force us into action. We cannot passively accept these objects but must move from one sign-system to the other [...] We are literally,

actively, forced to “read” all the parts of the message.’ She talks about ‘decoding the messages and trying to assemble a third message from them’. This third element, to my mind, heralds the ideal of ‘virtuality’ which I believe mimics simultaneity in its move from unity to multiplicity; ‘virtuality’ is a way of describing how Boccioni and Cendrars draw on different cues. There is dislocation in Cendrars’s poetry through various devices such as rhythm and imagery that indicate a shift to a new dimension which makes different demands on the reader’s/viewer’s perceptive senses. I posit the argument that the poet strives to engineer isolated verbal units, presenting a continual self-generating autonomous imagery. There is, to a degree, a mastery of language that moves into the realm of linguistic acrobatics but Cendrars’s cinematographic vision for his poetry relies heavily on the reader’s/viewer’s fragmented reading of the work and the subsequent parity that arises from the dysfunctionality between contrasting parts. This thesis looks at the verbal idiom against the backdrop of a discourse centred on the dynamics and principles of the new nascent language of the time, that of cinema and the moving image, which lends itself to scrutinising simultaneity as a unifying and disunifying concept.

Chapter One is a preface to the main bodies of the work as it introduces the principal tenets of the argument through a presentation of the common historical and aesthetic contexts from which the respective visions of Boccioni and Cendrars emerged. The need to overhaul mimetic realism led the Futurists to initiate a theory of simultaneity, proposing a new idea of representation that synthesises visual and psychological components (primarily through intuition), the dual perception and memory of objects (subjective experience) and the objective and subjective aspects

of the relationship with reality into a single whole (simultaneity). The purpose of Chapter One is to demonstrate that the aesthetic approach of both artists can be elucidated according to a genealogical study of possible influences on both protagonists. Key to understanding the Futurists' perception and use of simultaneity is the meaning given to the term from the end of the nineteenth century to the development of the phenomenon during its apogee in the second decade of the twentieth century. This includes the discourse on the marriage of art and science that took place at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Futurists consistently claimed that their interpretation of simultaneity was essentially an aesthetic ideal, their aim being to present 'la simultaneità degli stati d'animo'<sup>13</sup> (simultaneity of states of mind) through their art. This brings into question the degree to which theme takes precedence over form during any creative process and the effectiveness of analysing art, sculpture and poetry from a purely technical perspective. Simultaneity, according to Boccioni, is a matter of not only 'costruzione (conoscenza)' (science) but also 'sensazione (apparizione)' (appearances), therefore marrying both technical and aesthetic criteria.<sup>14</sup>

Each sub-headed section in chapters one and two elaborate on this pairing to show how science, Symbolism and Divisionism all fuelled the evolution and momentum of simultaneity. The input of each of the following contributory components is fundamental: Einstein's Theory of Relativity (1905) radically reordered the temporal/spatial axis, propagating an essential Futurist dictum, that

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<sup>13</sup> Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, 'Prefazione al Catalogo della Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste* (1914), p.380.

<sup>14</sup> Boccioni, *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.107.



under conditions of extreme speed, space and time disappear as constraints; by at least introducing an element of experimentation across verse and painting, Symbolism acted as a platform from which to launch Futurism, with the Futurist manifesto simultaneously embracing and repudiating the movement; Divisionism is of significance as it brought about a disjointed flow of paint across the canvas, prompting careful reading of works conceived commonly as a jagged set of brushstrokes that shape the imagery in question. This uneven flux was initiated by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Macchiaioli school which relied on the painting surface itself, rather than any inherent narrative or thematic basis, to involve and arouse the viewer. Their experimental use of colour pre-empted Impressionism, which is discussed as a conduit of lyricism. The Futurists were adamant that elements pertaining to lyricism pervaded their brand of simultaneity. Portraying this new simultaneous state of being required a lyrical interpretation of the world that conveyed the multiplicity of dynamic forms:

La peinture futuriste entendait capter la matière sous forme d'énergie pulsionnelle et cherchait à briser toute logique naturaliste des apparences de la réalité pour atteindre, à travers la compénétration des corps et la simultanéité des espaces et du temps, les manifestations pluralistes du dynamisme dans le monde moderne. Ses postulats préconisent l'avènement d'un 'art lyrique', c'est-à-dire un art polyphonique exaltant le vertige dionysiaque de la vie cosmique.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Futurist painting intended to capture matter in the form of pulsating energy and attempted to break all naturalistic logic regarding appearances pertaining to reality to achieve, by means of the interpenetration of bodies and the simultaneity of spaces and time, pluralist demonstrations of dynamism in the modern world.

Integral to this analysis of the manifold state of dynamism, science and art is Nietzsche, whose 'free spirit' ideal is predominantly founded on science and technology. Yet the German philosopher also projects a new perspective of intuition and intellect, the exploration of which forms a pivotal part of this analysis that requires further assessment.

It is fundamental also that the most obvious legacies of Cubism are acknowledged in Chapter one; these are intuition; interpenetration of planes; the notion of multiple perspective; and concreteness, not to mention the obvious technical effects of Cubism on the Italian school, such as the transmogrification of the linear Cubist grid into the Futurist 'lines of force' and the fusion of the figure with its environment. These Cubist innovations prompt a process of experiential contemplation on the part of the viewer, raising questions about how the spectator ultimately navigates a Futurist work. Another important Cubist issue is the legacy of its collage artists such as Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. The breakdown of a sign-system as engendered by collage practitioners calls into question the value system behind the use of newsprint in Futurist art.

The same sub-section (2.ii) then focuses on the art of Robert Delaunay because like Cubist artists, the French painter was concerned with progressing towards depth by means of a discordant amalgamation of parts. Moving from dissimilitude to assimilation is the overarching stratagem of Cubism, Futurism and Delaunay. Lucy Flint, writing on the website of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, explains

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Its postulates advocate the advent of "lyrical art", a polyphonic art exalting the dionysiac fever of cosmic life.' [my translation] Giovanni Lista (preface), *F.T. Marinetti, Le Futurisme* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1980), p.29.

how Delaunay's chaos is illusory: "As in visual perception of the real world, perception of Delaunay's painting is initially fragmentary, the eye continually moving from one form to others related by hue, value, tone, shape, or direction. As focus shifts, expands, jumps, and contracts in unending rhythms, one senses the fixed borders of the canvas and the tight interlocking of its contents."<sup>16</sup> The art of Boccioni and Delaunay, as well as the poetry of Cendrars, display a multiplicity of disparities though there is an inherent progression towards conformity of forms.

Photography and cinema are discussed in a separate chapter (three), 'Dovetailing phenomena', as they evolve in parallel with the aesthetics of Boccioni and Cendrars. The Boccionian canvas provides a cinematographic version of events that depict a situation through simultaneous viewpoints. By presenting a series of highly contrasting elements in their works, the Futurists anticipated the creation of a state of perception based on the intuitive deciphering of divergent conditions. Much of Futurist art relied upon dichotomy and diversity by presenting opposing parts on both technical and thematic levels. Boccioni, whose paintings throughout his career prove to be both a subtle and explosive mix of contrasts, presents contrasting planes of action thereby drawing attention to the central action of certain paintings. There is, for instance, the finely drawn distinction between the horse-like image in the foreground of *La città sale* (1910-11; plate one) and the lighter shading of the ground underneath the figure, drawing attention to the curve of its head. The tonality of Boccioni's art is a mixture of light and shade as planes interconnect and

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<sup>16</sup> Lucy Flint, analysis of works from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection (Peggy Guggenheim Collection): Robert Delaunay, *Windows Open Simultaneously 1st Part, 3rd Motif*, 1912.

push against each other, refusing to cancel each other out but dovetailing together to produce complementary prisms of colour. The interpenetration and overlapping of elements in his scenes create a fabricated series of contrasts that flicker round the canvas. This chromatic effect across the paintings was inspired, in part, by the photographic sequences of Eadweard Muybridge, as demonstrated in chapter three which investigates Boccioni's adherence to the aesthetic of photomontage, along with Cendrars's debt to the linear chronophotography of Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey.

The advancements in the field of X-ray science are also discussed as a subsidiary matter which nevertheless supplements the ideal of producing a simultaneity of the self, reflected in Boccioni's photographic self-portraits, that extends into a possible fourth dimension. The Futurists were especially impassioned about how X-rays can penetrate the surface and inner folds of objects, stressing in their Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting (1910) that they now believe themselves capable of seeing straight through matter: 'Chi può credere ancora all'opacità dei corpi, mentre la nostra acuita e moltiplicata sensibilità ci fa intuire le oscure manifestazioni dei fenomeni medianici? Perché si deve continuare a creare senza tener conto della nostra potenza visiva che può dare risultati analoghi a quelli dei raggi X?'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Who can still believe in the opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensitiveness has already penetrated the obscure manifestations of the medium? Why should we forget in our creations the doubled power of our sight, capable of giving results analogous to those of the X-rays?' Umberto Boccioni et al, 'La Pittura futurista, Manifesto tecnico' in 'La Pittura Futurista, Manifesto tecnico' in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009), p.72/'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto', English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912), in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.28.

The theme of photography feeds into an evaluation of the cinematographic aspect of both artists' respective imaginations. A highly significant aspect of this area is the proposal that the cinematic technique of montage imitates the overall precept of simultaneity. The juxtaposition of images in close succession, a basic requisite of montage, is an important aspect of the procedure of simultaneity. Simultaneity is a process that attempts to remove the joins and seams between corresponding parts, creating in turn an unfettered, seamless transition between each aspect. X-ray and photography helped boost this development. Crucially, Stephen Kern points out that: 'X-ray must have had something to do with the Cubist rendering of the interior of solid objects.'<sup>18</sup>

Dalrymple Henderson takes up the baton, subsequently demonstrating the parallels between the advent of X-ray and the Futurists' all-seeing innovations in photography:

Stephen Kern has pointed to X-rays as one factor contributing to a changed concept of the relation of space and objects in modern culture. He also sensed a possible relation between X-rays and the Cubism of Picasso and Braque [...] More frequently, the scholarly references to X-rays have occurred in studies of other modern styles, such as Italian Futurism (Aaron Scharf, Germano Celant) [...] Celant discusses X-rays in the course of his analysis of the Futurists'

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.147.

interest in spirit photography and chronophotography which, like X-rays, were considered a means of capturing invisible reality.<sup>19</sup>

This deconstruction of discrete elements within one frame or contained field is analysed in relation to Bergsonian 'durée' (4.ii).

The idea of rupture never resulting in complete dissolution across a painting or poem remains at the core of this dissection of cinema, the disjunction of which permits both fragmentation and harmony. Montage calls for new reading strategies; it is a key concept and driver promoting, for instance, a 'backwards/forwards' reading of a body of work, introducing a new idea of temporality. Various bodies of work are presented in chapter two to substantiate this ideal including an exploration of Boccioni's sketches and Cendrars's 'scripts'. Cinema is examined especially as a visual representation of the plurality of successive events, which is the essence of 'durée'.

The idea that this simultaneity of dynamism, time and space is experienced most effectively through an intuitive state was advocated by Henri Bergson. His ideas about the infinite continuity of time and his theories relating to reality as a constant state of flux informed the Boccionian ideal of simultaneity. With Bergson's notion of 'durée', particular forms at given moments are defined both by their interconnectedness and disconnectedness, along a continuum that feeds from one point on the stratum to another. It is not a succession of occurrences but rather a continuous dimension of consciousnesses. This is demonstrated by Boccioni through

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<sup>19</sup> Linda Dalrymple Henderson, 'X Rays and the Quest for Invisible Reality in the Art of Kupka, Duchamp and the Cubists', *Art Journal*, Vol. 47, No.4 (Winter 1988), pp.323-340 (p.323). Germano Celant discusses X-rays in *Futurism and the International Avant-Garde*, co-authored by Anne d'Harmoncourt (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1980).

his use of a fragmented but single form in motion so that the eye perceives 'at the same time the object and the setting that grasps and absorbs it [...]'.<sup>20</sup> At this point, highlighting the bridging aspects between the philosophy of Bergson and both Cendrarsian and Boccionian aesthetics is paramount. Futurist, Cendrarsian and Bergsonian concepts demonstrate a certain commonality that forms the basis of the third chapter. This derives from the French philosopher's prevailing thesis of 'durée' which binds together the poet and the painter in a number of ways. Crucially, these become more lucid by stating what they do not consist of before enunciating what they actually are: 'durée' is not a strictly successive series of movements across space and time but a sequence dependent on rhythmic multiplicity, remaining multiple and heterogeneous yet constant. It is formed initially by a partnership of thought processes, that of intuition, which powers the process of 'durée', and habitual action based on unconscious recollection (*mémoire pure*), which is almost virtual in its subconscious grasp on reality; this virtuality is not able to present a complete or the whole scenario but only fragments of it. 'Durée' is a theory of time duration that manages to convey both the past and present in an instant yet also elongates this process so that the brevity and, consequently, distance that time communicates can be easily transposed onto the canvas or page, and subsequently assimilated.

*Memory and the Debt to Bergson* (Chapter Four) draws parallels between Bergson's theory of 'durée', the synthesis of heterogeneous moments in the past that join together in one's conscience to form a continuum that impacts on present

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<sup>20</sup> Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, exhibition catalogue New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988-89 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), p.136.

actions, and the implicit and identifiable action ignited by Boccioni's objects. By this, we mean the passage from one time scale to another so that the acts of being and creation, the very essence of matter, are seen to transpose themselves through time and space. The issue explored in this chapter is thus the effectiveness of both Boccioni's and Cendrars's efforts to provoke a subjective response embodying 'durée' by creating unity of mental states on the part of the spectator/reader. The subject of this chapter will be the temporal relationship and the effect of memory. To this effect, the chapter will be divided into three sub-sections: intuition, 'durée' and *mémoire pure*. The first aspect, intuition, aids the fusion of varying levels of consciousness and thus, encourages a unified reading of the painting or poem.

In this sense, the thesis aims to evince how intuition and multiplicity are co-dependent with an individual's intuitive reading of all pertaining, fragmented parts of a work facilitating an understanding of the internal reality of the piece. 'Durée', the following sub-section, focuses in particular on the idea of Boccionian simultaneity as a matter of what one sees and experiences, underscoring the significance of the heterogeneous, precise moment as a completely distinct unit. These separate points ('durée' is first and foremost a sequence of heterogeneous occurrences) not only add themselves to the storeroom of one's memory but also amalgamates with and evokes related memories, evoking a multilayered range of differentiated experiences. *Mémoire pure* is subsequently a tangent factor in the exploration of durée, existing as a source of pure 'virtuality' and providing context for 'durée' by filtering memory, which is registered as 'pure' perception (memory that is not conscious and remains indecipherable).



The purpose of the first four chapters is to inform the overriding concept of this thesis: that of 'conscious creativity' practised by both Boccioni and Cendrars with the aim of emulating a centre of consciousness through linking indiscriminate parts. The debate at the centre of this thesis is how a union of the instinctive and the conscious underpins the technical and aesthetic approach of Boccioni and Cendrars, achieving an alliance of unfettered and controlled components, leading to an intuitive appreciation of spatial and temporal considerations. This procedure is subsequently the focus of Chapter Five. The conflux of different, defining images is intended to gain access to the inner substance of objects. Several factors aid this process such as dynamism, which can be broken down into three constituent parts—the interaction between the environment and the object; the quest for a single defining form to aid continuity; identification with the object itself through a succession of stages—and the use of the spiral motif, the predominant common factor between the two relating to their conception of form, which proves to be a common thread. This circular movement unites several principles of this examination: it allows a dual motion reading of both Cendrars's verse and Boccioni's art, prompting movement backwards and forwards not only spatially but temporally, invoking simultaneity through the concept of 'durée', via the looped structure of the spiral. Of equal significance is the process of interpenetration practised by both artists whereby they help transform the object's relationship with its adjoining space by utilising every part of that mass, be it occupied or unoccupied. Both Boccioni and Cendrars connect with under-utilised areas through a range of techniques.

Finally, it is fitting that the examination concludes with a study of the issue of 'elasticity' across the oeuvres of both figures. This phenomenon of transformation and expansion introduces an ideal of rhythmic multiplicity, the heterogeneous structure of which aids 'durée'. The most appropriate starting point for a discussion of the elasticity of Boccioni's pictorial forms, represented through his art's shifting, controlled boundaries, is his painting *Elasticità* (1912; plate two) which shows a black-booted horse rider tearing over a landscape populated by factory chimneys. This portrays the sequential movement, both up and down and forward, of a constricted subject kept in check, however, by the confines of the surrounding landscape and the borders of the painting, though as Robert Rosenblum points out, Boccioni is keen to give the impression that not even the edges of the work can contain his galloping, frantic figure:

'[...] vestiges of an Impressionist viewpoint may be sensed here, especially in the way the extremities of horse and rider lie beyond the picture's edge. By using this Impressionist compositional technique, Boccioni implies not only that his tightly compressed subject is so dynamic that it must burst its four-sided confines, but that it is a fragment of a constantly changing visual experience.<sup>21</sup>

A parallel can be established here between the need to move beyond the limitations of both the page and the canvas and the use of intuition as a conductive medium in this process. Elasticity is a concept that thereby encompasses many of the most important issues to be examined in this thesis, including its main function

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), p.55.

as a springboard for intuition and as an aid to the mechanics of the different dimensions of consciousnesses that constitute 'durée'. Elasticity can be a viable interface for the different facets of 'durée'. Elasticity as a concept, nonetheless, depends upon a flexibility of verse and paint bolstered by techniques such as the use of analogy. In this respect Marinetti lays the foundations as Heumann observes:

Tying these syntactic rules together is Marinetti's conception of 'analogy': the layering of object upon object, noun upon noun [...] Marinetti terms the analogic process 'l'immaginazione senza fili', which literally translates 'imagination without strings', but which is also translated as 'wireless imagination'. In this instance, 'imagination' and 'wireless' both suggest the same thing: namely, freedom from physical limitations. It is this freedom that is at the heart of Futurist art and Marinetti's interest in technology.<sup>22</sup>

To this end I have selected a number of works that share common features in order to reveal that the principles of composition which both Boccioni and Cendrars applied to create the effect of simultaneity are in fact largely analogous, and interconnected through the common filament of 'durée' as formulated by Henri Bergson. The issue driving this thesis is how a union of the instinctive and the conscious, via conduits such as elasticity and 'durée', underscores the technical and aesthetic approach of both Boccioni and Cendrars, bringing about a dual reception encompassing a controlled and unregulated assemblage of constituents, prompting an intuitive analysis of spatial and temporal considerations initiated by both artists (the viewer processes the data provided by the practitioners). The object of the

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Heumann, 'Ghost in the Machine: Sound and Technology in 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature', unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, Riverside, 1998, pp.108-109.

examination is ultimately to ascertain whether, and to what extent, the poetry of Cendrars in conception and formation is indebted to the Boccionian ideal of simultaneity.

How this analysis complements and supersedes existing bodies of research on the issue of simultaneity is outlined thus. Giovanni Lista's epochal compendium on Futurism, *Marinetti et le Futurisme - Etudes, documents, iconographie, réunis et présentés par Giovanni Lista*, describes in detail how Bergson propelled and shaped Futurist sensibilities. The most important text in this collection is an essay written by Luciano de Maria entitled 'Marinetti, Poète et Idéologue'<sup>23</sup> which raises the issue of 'l'ensembles des images' perceptibles propagated by Henri Bergson. The author contends that this ideal also underpins the thinking of Marinetti. In the following summation, De Maria edges towards what is in essence the crux of this survey:

A ce stade, on pourrait parler de matérialisme absolu, d'ailleurs les extraits de ses oeuvres que Marinetti propose comme exemples d'appréhension de la matière, outre la référence au cinéma, montrent à quel point pour Marinetti comme pour Bergson, la matière, c'est précisément l'ensemble des images perceptibles.<sup>24</sup>

From this basis, I develop the argument into a full assessment of the dynamics of instinct, prefiguring the idea that both men strive to create a 'centre of

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<sup>23</sup> Luciano de Maria, 'Marinetti, Poète et Idéologue' in Giovanni Lista, *Marinetti et le Futurisme - Etudes, documents, iconographie, réunis et présentés par Giovanni Lista* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1977), p.95.

<sup>24</sup> 'At this stage, we could speak of absolute materialism, moreover the extracts from his works that Marinetti offers as examples of misgivings about the material, in addition to the reference to cinema, show to what extent the material is precisely the set of perceptible images for Marinetti as for Bergson.' [my translation]. *Ibid.* De Maria is referring to Bergson's statement in *Matière et mémoire* (PUF: Paris, 1965). ('J'appelle matière l'ensemble des images, et perception de la matière ces mêmes images rapportées à l'action possible d'une certaine image déterminée, mon corps').

consciousness' at the core of their practices. This occurs when the simultaneity is all-encompassing in the way that Bergson advocated, gaining access to the inner substance of an object by means of the convergence of several, dissimilar defining images. I have outlined how a unifying consciousness prevails in the poetry of Cendrars while simultaneously engendering the interrelatedness of his subjects, thereby prompting an awareness of more than one temporal and spatial dimension within the universe of his verse. This research aspect, focused especially on Cendrars, is at the core of the analysis; the conclusion will answer how the poet has fared in this respect. There have been numerous studies centred on the Futurists' ideal of simultaneity but there has not been detailed engagement with these two figures, using Futurism as the initial springboard, enabling further investigation into how Cendrars was shaped by the prevalent philosophies of his time. The key point I elaborate, moving beyond the aforementioned body of literature, is that this results in a definitive point of intuitive enlightenment.

But the most direct reference to Bergson's links to Futurism are outlined by Guido Montana in his essay 'Le Futurisme, Esthétique de l'Impérialisme de la Première Guerre Mondiale'; he states that 'l'intention d'attribuer à l'intuitionnisme de Bergson quelque influence sur le futurisme apparaît donc extrêmement ambiguë.'<sup>25</sup> In Chapter four, I give a comprehensive rebuttal of this assertion, pointing out that certain facets of intuition act as an interpretative device for simultaneity. It is Bergson's theory of convergence through intuition that begins a chain of related

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<sup>25</sup> 'The aim of attributing to Bergson's intuitionism some influence on Futurism therefore appears extremely ambiguous.' [my translation]. Guido Montana, 'Le Futurisme, Esthétique de l'Impérialisme de la Première Guerre Mondiale' in Giovanni Lista, *Marinetti et le Futurisme - Etudes, documents, iconographie, réunis et présentés par Giovanni Lista* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1977), p.131.

phenomena, provoking 'l'intuition de la durée'. However, in terms of representation, Bergson realises that perception cannot ever be totally objective. One of the most incisive studies of Bergson's thinking and impact is Mark Antliff's *Inventing Bergson* (Princeton University Press, 1993). His expert analysis is enlightening, especially his argument that "the intuitional merger of one's ego with some object external to it was also at the heart of Boccioni's theory of absolute and relative motion, which he derived from Bergson's discussion of intuition's intersubjective capacities in 'The Introduction to Metaphysics.'<sup>26</sup> However, I move beyond Lista's and Antliff's evaluations by showing how it follows thus that an individual's intuitive reading of all pertaining parts of a work permits a complete grasp of the internal reality of the work through external reality. I also demonstrate how Boccioni strove to reorder the relationship between the sculpted piece and its environment by re-examining the relationship between absolute/relative motion and the conjoining space.

It is worth pointing out also that in Lista's compendium, the author himself emphasises in the essay 'Marinetti et le Futurisme Politique' that Futurism is anchored to sensibilities in the present, preventing it from projecting to the future:

Fixer un but, phantasmer concrètement le future, signifierait pour Marinetti réduire l'élan révolutionnaire qui doit rester concrètement ancré dans le present [...] Le vitalisme irrationaliste du futurisme est donc suppression de l'histoire, negation du passé et effacement de toute utopie ou finalisation, pour

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.165.

l'instauration violente d'un champ de possibilités ouvertes à l'avènement du future.<sup>27</sup>

But according to my findings, Futurism did seek a new forward-thinking platform via the stance of 'virtuality'. I believe that my research demonstrates that both Boccioni and Cendrars adhere to 'durée' by opening up new spheres of 'virtuality' combining unity and multiplicity, which are in evidence as discrete memories. This ultimately is not a suppression but an opportunity for exploration. The idea is propagated that the present is quashed, putting Futurism at odds with Bergson's basic tenet of 'élan vital'. The question of vitality springs from the philosophy of Bergson whose *élan vital* (life force) theory links up the notion of elasticity across the work of both men. I advance the argument beyond the concept that Futurism shuts down possibilities for advancement into new spatial and temporal realms; the point is that the new kind of virtuality I posit mimics simultaneity in its move from unity to multiplicity.

It is true especially that Clara Orban's publication *The Culture of Fragments, Words and Images in Futurism and Surrealism* (Editions Rodopi B.V., 1997) is one of the pithiest and most astute analyses of Boccioni's innovations, examining adroitly the impact of Bergson on Boccioni. I use her central assertion (footnote 298) as a starting point but systematically deconstruct and evaluate this principle, unpacking how 'durée' operates as an underpinning element of works such as *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight). The survey extends into a detailed assessment of

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<sup>27</sup> 'Setting a goal, concretely imagining the future, would entail Marinetti reducing the revolutionary momentum which must remain concretely anchored in the present [...] The irrationalist vitalism of futurism is therefore the suppression of history, negation of the past and the erasure of any utopia, for the violent establishment of a field of possibilities open to the advent of the future.' [my translation]. Lista, *Marinetti et le Futurisme - Etudes, documents, iconographie, réunis et présentés par Giovanni Lista*, p.16.

subconscious memory with all its irregularities and dimensions as part of the intellectual substructure of 'Prose du Transsibérien'. Orban's survey is also a good introduction to the pre-1909 life and practice of Boccioni, fashioning an informative narrative on how Boccioni and Severini became friends. My thesis gives an equally enlightening account of the influences that crafted Boccioni's vision under the chapter headings of 'Science' and 'Other Foundations'. Moreover, Orban's view of motion, and how it is presented in Boccioni's works, is also invaluable because it highlights how the artist depicts and dramatises movement on canvas, showing 'bodies not in motion but in one of the phases of motion, in a moment of potential movement'.<sup>28</sup> But the summation falls short in giving a complete picture of how the artist achieves this 'potential for action'.<sup>29</sup> In my discussion of preparatory sketches made around 1912 for instance (Chapter 5.v, Elasticity), I dissect further the impermeability of Boccioni's forms, giving more context to the artist's portrayal of movement, which ultimately re-orders the relationship between absolute/relative motion. Orban's other areas of study are valid and illuminating, encompassing the fragmentary rupture caused by *linee-forze* (force-lines) and why Einstein's theories no doubt galvanised the Futurists. Orban also brings to the fore the innovative use of newsprint by Boccioni in collage formats. In Chapter 2.ii, my discussion deepens the idea of newsprint as an alien format, its points of disparity making it symptomatic of a montage process, underlying the mechanism of simultaneity.

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<sup>28</sup> Clara Orban, *The Culture of Fragments, Words and Images in Futurism and Surrealism* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1997), p.57.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.



As part of this literature review, Marjorie Perloff's publication needs to be assessed in addition because it underplays the impact of Futurism on Blaise Cendrars though the author makes numerous salient observations on the interlinking channels between the two. Perloff says that 'Cendrars, not himself a Futurist, his assumed French identity coupled with a fierce internationalism precluding rapprochement with any national movement, was, paradoxically, the prototype of the new "total" Futurist artist, as Germano Celant describes him.' Every aspect of my argument evinces that Cendrars's exploration of the phenomenon of simultaneity evolves in progression with Futurist aesthetics, while crucially transcending it in certain key respects. Perloff's thesis is important because of the examination of the self in 'Prose du Transsibérien' ('Je gives way to Tu', she says<sup>30</sup>) but this body of work left me frustrated. I aim to show how Cendrars edits his canon; it is what is lacking as part of the poetic process, placing the onus on the reader, which brings to the fore Cendrars's strategy of making implicit the 'missing' element of his work. If we can consider *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, for instance, to be 'hastily edited'<sup>31</sup>, then this implies a process of selection on the part of the poet who singles out and alternately omits material as he thinks fit in order to achieve the maximum effect.

This examination will be conducted through a series of research questions, subsequently evaluating in depth Cendrars's conception of simultaneity, analysing if his forays in the field are as prescriptive as Boccioni's. I plan to explore the extent to

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<sup>30</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.41.

<sup>31</sup> Jay Bohner, *Blaise Cendrars: Discovery and Re-creation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p.131.

which Cendrars duplicates the artist's application of the phenomenon, and by extension, the Futurist ideal of simultaneity. This assessment will therefore pivot around two factors which are reiterated throughout: the degree to which Cendrars adheres to a (1) unifying consciousness while simultaneously (2) engendering the interrelatedness of his subject, thereby sparking an awareness of more than one temporal and spatial dimension within the universe of his verse. This research aspect, focused especially on Cendrars, is at the core of the analysis; the conclusion will answer how the poet has fared in this respect. A second research question evaluates how corresponding influences and experiences impact on the respective practitioners. The extent to which Nietzsche projected a new perspective of intuition and intellect is integral to this survey. The extent to which the German philosopher infiltrated the ways of seeing of both Boccioni and Cendrars is evaluated. It is also crucial that the impact of Cubism is evaluated, especially the degree to which its legacies are reflected in both their practices through facets such as the notion of multiple perspective. The question here is whether these common fonts impinge upon the ideal of simultaneity ultimately precipitated by Nietzsche and Cubist proponents.

A third research area in this thesis explores how the question of montage initiates the overall precept of simultaneity addressed in the survey. I aim to demonstrate that a plurality of successive events, echoed in the phenomenon of montage, fundamentally underpins the canons of both Boccioni and Cendrars. Montage as a tool for evaluating this process is measured, feeding into my proposal that a continuous dimension of many consciousnesses underscore the canons of both

practitioners. If we are going to examine simultaneity as a phenomenon that presents consciousnesses as a series of unconnected events, then we must take on board how montage brings to the fore the idea that simultaneity foregrounds the formation of a whole unit with the “joins visible”; consequently, the viewer and reader must read across the gaps to form a coherent entity. This aspect will be evaluated in detail throughout.

In the most important part of this analysis, I propose that ‘durée’, as propagated by Henri Bergson, is the means by which both Boccioni and Cendrars evoke a synthesis of heterogeneous moments in the past that join together in one’s conscience to form a continuum that impacts on present action. This feeds into how both practitioners promote an intuitive reading and unification of pertaining fragmented parts, a process I have labelled ‘conscious creativity’. At the end of this analysis, I will focus on how ‘durée’—perceived as a simultaneous and uninterrupted flow of information from memory and intuition that combines the homogeneous and the heterogeneous within one organic arrangement—acts as a benchmark against which Boccioni and Cendrars worked. The final, and fifth, research question determines whether a conflux of different phenomena act as conductive mediums in this overall process. These factors include the circular structure of the spiral—linking to the backwards/forwards reading of verse and painting constituents across a heterogeneous continuum—and a study of the issue of elasticity across the oeuvres of both figures. Their effectiveness as conduits need to be ascertained.

## **Chapter One: Common Origins**

### **1.i Symbolism & Boccioni**

As discussed in the Introduction, a specific socio-cultural and aesthetic climate moulded the work of Boccioni and Cendrars, with the same influences informing the visions of both men. This chapter subsequently outlines Boccioni's and Cendrars's common literary and artistic heritage. It is important to state first that the Modernist aesthetic was set in motion by F.T. Marinetti, the founder of Futurism and a crucial catalyst for both figures. Marinetti's ideals can be seen to hold sway over the aesthetic of Cendrars and Boccioni in three ways: i) the emancipated tone of Marinetti's statements prefigures Cendrars's and Boccioni's global outlook; ii) there is an affiliation between internal and external states with the sensory aspects of both Boccioni's and Cendrars's creations annulling the demarcation of the threshold between interior and exterior spaces; iii) Marinetti's cutting and slashing across the page is a literal and visual representation of different, often jarring, temporal states, which may be considered a common denominator for both Boccioni and Cendrars.

Although the Futurists directly refuted the Symbolist and Romantic tradition, it can be argued that they were very much affected by the Symbolist past as illustrated by Lista's quotation (a new simultaneous state of being which required a lyrical interpretation of the world, footnote fifteen), reinforcing the Symbolist notion of cosmic harmony. Crucially, it is true also that the Futurists were intent on 're-branding' what they viewed as lyricism, adapting it to their own aesthetic programme. Boccioni endows speed with lyrical properties (he says that "simultaneity is for us lyrical exaltation, the plastic manifestation of a new absolute:

speed,” footnote one). This is possibly the most radical aspect of the Futurists’ programme: how to couple the more brutish aspects of encroaching technology with a representation of the elegiac qualities of existence and humanity. Futurism founder F.T. Marinetti’s ideal of an all-encompassing sensory experience assists in our understanding of how this new form of lyricism was to take shape:

Ho ideato inoltre il lirismo multilineo col quale riesco ad ottenere quella simultaneità lirica che ossessiona anche i pittori futuristi, lirismo multilineo, mediante il quale io sono convinto di ottenere le più complicate simultaneità liriche. Il poeta lancerà su parecchie linee parallele parecchie catene di colori, suoni, odori, rumori, pesi, spessori, analogie.<sup>32</sup>

Ubiquity (‘[...] the sense of being everywhere at once’<sup>33</sup>), a core tenet of simultaneity, applies to the textual, visual and projected panoramas of the poet and the artist, and informs what the reader is incited to picture after viewing or reading the works of both. The textual and visual strands are evidently what can be seen directly on the page or canvas. These are compacted experiences in themselves. Edited, cut and fragmented, Cendrars’s and Boccioni’s images and expressions are dynamic, autonomous and simultaneous. What they impart in the same instant are various zones of time and experience that straddle different instances, locations and emotions.

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<sup>32</sup> ‘I have conceived a multilinear lyricism from which I have derived this lyrical simultaneity that also obsesses the futurist painters; multilinear lyricism, through which I am convinced I can obtain the most complicated form of lyrical simultaneity. The poet will throw down on to many parallel lines sequences of colour, sounds, smells, noises, analogies.’ [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, ‘Distruzione della Sintassi Immaginazione Senza Fili Parole in Libertà’ in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.132.

<sup>33</sup> Perloff, p.13.

Yet how did the historical and aesthetic context of Modernism prompt both men to assimilate the mechanics of simultaneity? The manifestations of Modernism were numerous, overwhelming and complex. The exotic, primitivism, the significance of an urban aesthetic and the rejection of bourgeois values, along with new scientific theories, all impacted upon the entire spectrum of the arts at the turn of the twentieth century. This was coupled with the emergence of a new capitalist class that aimed to change the industrial and social fabric of European countries. This is especially true of Italy where this nascent sector saw the opportunity to transform society through a fresh 'futurist' way of seeing and doing:

La nouvelle classe montante, la bourgeoisie industrielle, avait besoin d'un art qui soit 'futuriste', prônant une adhésion inconditionnelle aux valeurs qu'exprimaient la machine et l'avancée de la révolution technologique: fonctionnalisme, vitesse, synthèse, énergie, modernité, expansion nationale.<sup>34</sup>

These developments shaped the Modernist explosion, resulting in a far-reaching alliance between sensation and science in art. The Modernist revolution provoked Boccioni to declare that 'l'era delle grandi individualità meccaniche è cominciata.'<sup>35</sup> This sea-change was no doubt facilitated by figures such as the Turin-born essayist Mario Morasso, a Nietzsche enthusiast who helped usher in the all-new, Marinettian,

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<sup>34</sup> 'The new emerging class, the industrial bourgeoisie, needed art that was "futurist", advocating an unconditional adherence to the values of the machine and the advance of the technological revolution: functionality, speed, synthesis, energy, modernity, national growth.' [my translation] Lista, p.9.

<sup>35</sup> 'the era of great mechanical individuality has begun.' Boccioni, 'Contro il paesaggio e la vecchia estetica' (1914) in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.24/Introduction, transl. Robert Brain in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.8.

sharp-edged age of the machine, boldly pronouncing in 1903 that the car is the 'modern monument' which 'has no antecedent in history'.<sup>36</sup>

There is evidence to suggest, however, that Boccioni was preoccupied with the precedents set by Symbolism until at least 1910. In his introduction to the English translation of the *Manifesti*, Umbro Apollonio states that 'Symbolism propogated in Italy by Marinetti's journal *Poesia* had made its mark on Boccioni.'<sup>37</sup> Guido Ballo makes the case that this publication epitomised the pre-Futurist experimental ethos born from Symbolism:

Ma nel clima prefuturista particolare importanza assume l'ambiente attorno a *Poesia*, la rivista internazionale che Marinetti fonda a Milano nel 1905 e che costituisce una premessa allo sviluppo del futurismo da spinte decadenti e simboliste.<sup>38</sup>

Marinetti's earlier body of work also includes some French-language poetry that was Symbolist-inspired in its imagery and form, including *La Conquête des Étoiles* (1902), *Destruction* (1904) and *La Ville Charnelle* (1908). In addition, Golding accentuates the indecisiveness of the Futurists who were not the vanguards of Modernism they ceaselessly aspired to be, remaining in reality dependent on Symbolism:

For a while the Futurists flaunted the concept of modernity like a banner, their attitude towards the nineteenth century was equivocal; they could never make up

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<sup>36</sup> Mario Morasso, *L'imperialismo artistico* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1903), p.210.

<sup>37</sup> Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, p.15. Marinetti was director of the international journal *Poesia* from 1905-1909.

<sup>38</sup> 'But in the pre-futurist climate, Marinetti's international journal *Poesia* was particularly important. Founded in Milan in 1905, its decadent and Symbolist origins established a basis for the development of Futurism.' [my translation] Guido Ballo, *Boccioni a Milano* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1982), p.31.

their minds what they wanted to take from it and what to reject. Their visual starting point was in Symbolism and Impressionism [...].<sup>39</sup>

Marinetti's debt to the poetry and writings of the Symbolists is indeed well documented. Poggi's appraisal, *The Symbolist Legacy*,<sup>40</sup> succinctly outlines the advancements heralded by Mallarmé and Gustave Kahn that championed a more fluid and lyrical style as a result of breaking apart the constrictions of the traditional alexandrine. Kahn especially advocated an organic progression of poetry, with his *vers libre* encouraging 'the natural coherence of rhythm and meaning.'<sup>41</sup> Kahn was, however, against all forms of typographical experimentation and believed that the aural aspect of verse should have precedence over visual considerations. Kahn was also essential in inspiring Marinetti's vision of a mass of lights, activity, noise and movement that bleeds and filters into one organically mutating vision of the metropolis. Kahn's *L'Esthétique de la rue* (1901) feeds through Marinetti towards Boccioni and Cendrars in its raw and encapsulating view of the contemporary urban landscape:

Pour Gustave Kahn la rue moderne est devenue un 'tableau mobile éphémère' où les taches multicolores qui recouvrent périodiquement les murs se combinent avec l'architecture des façades, les emblèmes et les 'lueurs de féerie' [...] Ainsi une grande capitale telle que Paris peut apparaître 'comme masse, comme foule, comme vacarme, comme symphonie puissante et multiple' [...] Ses pages sur 'les joyeuses féeries des murailles', sur les bruits et sur

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<sup>39</sup> John Golding, *Cubism A History and an Analysis* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968), p.10.

<sup>40</sup> Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the Invention of Collage* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp.201-204.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203.



l'animation des cafés, ou encore sur la banalité de la rue rectiligne, annoncent maintes propositions futuristes [...] Pour Marinetti le spectacle futuriste devait en effet être réalisé comme un ensemble simultané de bruits, sons, couleurs, lumières, mouvements, dont l'archétype formel était bien la rue de la métropole moderne, sa vie grouillante et multiple, son action polyphonique et son vitalisme fait de contrastes, de chocs et de rebondissements continuels.<sup>42</sup>

This is a complete re-evaluation of the modern spectacle, a rejection of the linearity of the street in the sense that it overhauls the city's characteristics through a pulsating sequence of reverberatory elements, such as noise, light, colour and sounds. Both Jules Romains (*La Vie unanime*, 1907) and Henri-Martin Barzun (*La Terre tragédie*, 1907) later elaborated on the burgeoning array of experiences, movements and rhythms that constitute contemporary urban life. It is a moving mass placed within a shifting, yet framed, viewpoint that is carried through by Boccioni and Cendrars who take forward this revitalised perspective.

Kahn's innovations were Marinetti's cue for a complete overhaul of the poetic form, a transition from the mellifluousness of Symbolist verse to the constructed discord of *Parole in Libertá* (1914). By this stage also, Marinetti certainly felt the need to rupture further the Symbolist-inspired boundaries he had adopted and

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<sup>42</sup> 'For Gustave Kahn, the modern street has become an 'ephemeral moving tableau' where the multicoloured marks that periodically cover the walls blend with the architecture of the façades, the symbols and the 'glow of the spectacle' [...] So a great city like Paris appears to be "a mass, a crowd, a roar, a powerful and multi-faceted symphony" [...] His pages on the "joyous spectacle of the city walls", on the noises and activity in cafés, even his description of the ordinary street, herald many futurist principles [...] For Marinetti, the futurist spectacle is a simultaneous body of noises, sounds, colours, lights, movements, the best example of which is the modern street of the contemporary city with its swarming and multiple life, its polyphonic action and a vitality made up of contrasts, shocks and constant developments.' [my translation] Lista paraphrases Kahn's descriptions, adding his own citations in his preface to *F.T. Marinetti, Le Futurisme* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1980), pp.18-19.

cautiously trialled since the birth of Futurism was announced to the world in *Le Figaro* on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909. Andrew Hewitt suitably captures the schizophrenic mood of the Founding Manifesto (*Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo*, 1909), citing the ‘decadent orientalism’<sup>43</sup> of the atmosphere in which this first manifesto was conceived under mosque lamps and on oriental rugs. Marinetti’s eventual aim was to overturn the Romantic values imbued by this Oriental setting (beginning instantaneously and rather ambitiously with an exhilarating and frenzied drive through the night in three cars) but it is evident ‘that Symbolism exerted a paternalistic influence and impact upon Futurism at its inception’.<sup>44</sup> Yet the manifesto itself rejects Symbolism as soon as it embraces it, the instant it is conceived and announced. Only by confronting the loathed irony-free, nostalgic and sentimental verse of D’Annunzio could Futurism work out what it wanted to acknowledge and take forward as a doctrine. Hewitt has appropriately underlined that the main consequence for the Futurists of this filtering of Symbolist theory is the glorification of the passing moment:

The temporality of Futurism is a temporality of deferral. Far from being the simplistic ‘presentism’ deplored by Poggioli, it celebrates the emotion not for the here and now, but for the moment of its disappearance.<sup>45</sup>

If futurity in its purest form is the overriding legacy of this first manifesto, that is to say the present is experienced only to negate each moment that exceeds it, then *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) moves this forward so that each instant experienced on the

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism, Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.107.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

page continually nullifies the last in a process of subsummation. However, elements common to Symbolism continue to pervade Marinetti's initiatives. These constituents are summarised by Claudia Salaris:

Nel codificare le modalità d'una nuova comunicazione poetica, Marinetti tuttavia mutua alcuni elementi dal simbolismo: le sinestesie, le corrispondenze, l'analogismo, la teoria del *poeta veggente*, la riduzione dell'io, anticipata nella formula di Rimbaud 'io è un altro', nonché l'abolizione della punteggiatura, compiuta da Mallarmé.<sup>46</sup>

Some of these components prevail in *Zang Tumb Tumb* but were initially expounded in the *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1912), and other from 1909 to 1912. During this period, it is intriguing to see how Futurist writing expands and embellishes its field of seeing and sensing. There is a sensibility in these manifestos pertaining to an enlarged global perspective that takes into account an overview of the world that is synthesised according to this new simultaneity of time and place. In the founding Manifesto, the sound of the trams outside jolts the group into thoughts of external industry and bustle, while the motor car is apotheosised as the ultimate arbiter of speed. These indicate a desire to shift from one temporal and spatial situation to another. It is the final aim out of the eleven, enunciated from the main body of this first manifesto, that evinces how the world is becoming a miasma of smoke, light and cacophony that binds together the masses of the global village in rippling coalescence:

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<sup>46</sup> 'In codifying the means to a new form of poetic communication, Marinetti nevertheless borrows some elements from Symbolism: the synaesthesias, the harmonies, analogism, the idea of the travelling poet, the sublimation of "I", established by Rimbaud with his "I is another" formula, along with the abolition of punctuation, all carried through by Mallarmé.' [my translation] Claudia Salaris, 'La Rivoluzione della Parola' in *F.T. Marinetti Arte-Vita* (Rome: Edizioni Fahrenheit 451, 2000), pp.24-25.

Noi canteremo le grandi folle agitate dal lavoro, dal piacere o dalla sommossa; canteremo la marea multicolori e polifoniche delle rivoluzioni nelle capitali moderne; canteremo il vibrante fervore notturno degli arsenali e dei cantieri incendiati da violente lune elettriche; le stazioni ingorde, divoratrici di serpi che fumano; le officine appese alle nuvole pei contorti fili dei loro fumi; i ponti simili a ginnasti giganti che scavalcano i fiumi, balenanti al sole con un luccichio di coltelli; i piroscafi avventurosi che fiutano l'orizzonte, le locomotive dall'ampio petto, che scalpitano sulle rotaie, come enormi cavalli d'acciaio imbrigliati di tubi, e il volo scivolante degli aeroplani, la cui elica garrisce al vento come una bandiera e sembra applaudire come una folla entusiasta.<sup>47</sup>

Those prevailing features of the Marinettian invective, including the use of analogy and deletion of the 'I', are launched here with astonishing audacity. Other Futurist manifestos from the period 1910 to 1912 voice this new aesthetic of globalisation:

Come i nostri antenati trassero materia d'arte dall'atmosfera religiosa che incombeva sulle anime loro, così noi dobbiamo ispirarci ai tangibili miracoli della vita contemporanea, alla ferrea rete di velocità che avvolge la Terra, ai transatlantici, alle *Dreadnought*, ai voli meravigliosi che solcano i cieli, alle

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<sup>47</sup> 'We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by rebellion; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives who paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo' (1909) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.43.

audacie tenebrose dei navigatori subacquei, alla lotta spasmodica per la conquista dell'ignoto.<sup>48</sup>

The tone of the statements in these manifestos reaches its climax in the *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1912). What becomes noticeable here is the similarity in both tone and content between Marinetti's and Cendrars's statements. Clive Scott has picked up on this point: 'Certain statements made by Cendrars seem to coincide very much with the position outlined by Marinetti [...].'<sup>49</sup> Perloff usefully outlines the similarities in the content and tone of the positions adopted by Marinetti and Cendrars:

But the urge to communicate directly with the masses, to play to the crowd – the urge that makes Cendrars, like Apollinaire and like Marinetti, extol advertising [...].<sup>50</sup>

Here, once again, [re: Vladimir Tatlin's corner reliefs, 1914-15] we meet the Futurist longing to make an art coterminous with life, the longing reflected in Marinetti's demand for an 'imagination without strings' or in Cendrars's insistence in his *Sturm* manifesto that 'Je n'écris pas par métier. Vivre n'est pas un métier.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'As our forefathers drew material from art of a religious flavour that threatened their souls, so we must be inspired by palpable miracles of contemporary life, from railways to speed that envelops the Earth, to transatlantic crossings, to the Dreadnought, to the marvellous flights that streak across the sky, the bold darkness of sub-aqua navigation, and the spasmodic fight in our triumph over the unknown.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Manifesto dei pittori futuristi' (1910) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.68.

<sup>49</sup> Clive Scott, *Reading the Rhythm, The Poetics of French Free Verse 1910-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.81.

<sup>50</sup> Perloff, p.10.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.

The *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* indeed echoes Cendrars's sentiments with a parity of statements. These are based on the need to realise the elemental aspect of the unrefined intuitive sense that underpins literature. Both men evoke, in a similarly rambunctious vein, a spirituality powered by unimpeded emotion and instinct though Marinetti is the more belligerent of the two. These corresponding sets of statements exemplify their, at times, paradoxical take on existence which is dually uninhibited and permeated with a strain of lyricism:

Tout être vivant est une physiologie. Et si j'écris, c'est peut-être par besoin, par hygiène, comme on mange, comme on respire, comme on chante. C'est peut-être par instinct; peut-être par spiritualité. *Pangue lingua*. Les animaux ont tant de manies! <sup>52</sup>

Noi vogliamo dare, in letteratura, la vita del motore, nuovo animale istintivo del quale conosceremo l'istinto generale allorchè avremo conosciuto gl'istinti delle diverse forze che lo compongono.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 'Every living thing is a physiology. And if I write, it's perhaps out of necessity, to be hygienic, eating, breathing, singing. It's perhaps because of instinct, perhaps a spirituality. *Pangue lingua*. Animals have so many of these habits!' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France' (1913) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de Essais et Réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), p.195.

<sup>53</sup> 'We want to give to literature the life of an engine, a new animal instinct which will make us aware of our instinct in general after grasping the many strengths that make up this kind of instinct.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Manifesto Tecnico della Letteratura Futurista' (1912) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.116.

Le lyrisme est une façon d'être et de sentir, le langage est le reflet de la conscience humaine, la poésie fait connaître (tout comme la publicité un produit) l'image de l'esprit qui la conçoit.<sup>54</sup>

Sostituire la psicologia dell'uomo, ormai esaurita, con l'ossessione lirica della materia.<sup>55</sup>

The latter statement of Marinetti's follows his call to abandon the 'I' in literature and substitute it with this new intuitive psychology of matter, a principle inspired through finding himself 'in aeroplano, seduto sul cilindro della benzene [...]'.<sup>56</sup> The fragmentation of the first person singular and the all-consuming effects of modern travel on the artist's psyche parallel Cendrars's own aspirations. Crucially there are more illustrations of this affinity:

Il n'y a pas de spécialisations. Je ne suis pas homme de lettres. Je dénonce les bûcheurs et les arrivistes. Il n'y a pas d'écoles. En Grèce ou dans les geôles de Sing-Sing, j'écrirais tout autrement. J'ai fait mes plus beaux poèmes dans les grandes villes, parmi cinq millions d'hommes – ou à cinq mille lieues sous les mers en compagnie de Jules Verne, pour ne pas oublier les plus beaux jeux de mon enfance. Toute vie n'est qu'un poème, un mouvement. Je ne suis qu'un

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<sup>54</sup> 'Lyricism is a way of being and feeling, language is a reflection of the human consciousness, poetry makes one aware (just like advertising a product) of the image of the mind that conceives it.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Publicité=Poésie' (1927) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de Essais et Réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), p.118.

<sup>55</sup> 'Replace the psychology of man, exhausted by this point, with the lyric obsession of material.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista' (1912) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.116.

<sup>56</sup> 'in an aeroplane, sitting on the petrol tank [...]'. [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.111.

mot, un verbe, une profondeur, dans le sens le plus sauvage, le plus mystique,  
le plus vivant.<sup>57</sup>

This aforementioned 1913 essay may be seen as an extension of Marinetti's eleven numbered declarations of the 1909 Founding Manifesto. The repeated 'Il n'y a pas...' refrain connects with the outlandish and dictatorial announcements of the Futurist firebrand:

Noi vogliamo distruggere i musei, le biblioteche, le accademie d'ogni specie, e combattere contro il moralismo, il femminismo e contro ogni viltà opportunistica o utilitaria.<sup>58</sup>

Nonetheless, if we return to Marinetti's publication *Zang Tumb Tumb*, we discover that it provides a helpful reference point for analysing the crossover between the internal and external states of feeling through an altered system of poetics. The Italian versions of Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tumb* (there are several versions also in French) were first published in *Lacerba* from 15 March, 1913, to 1 January, 1914. Marinetti's *parole in libertà*, a concoction of advertising slogans, fragments of popular song and onomatopoeia, form a multiple-sensory experience. The lack of punctuation and its replacement with mathematical symbols in the *parole* result in a montage of nouns that hurtle across the page, smashing apart traditional form,

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<sup>57</sup> 'There are no specialisations. I am not a man of letters. I denounce hard workers and go-getters. There are no schools. In Greece or in the jails of Sing-Sing, I would write everything quite differently. I have written my best poems in the biggest cities, among five million men – or in five thousand leagues under the sea in the company of Jules Verne so that I wouldn't forget my best childhood games. All of life is only a poem, movement. I am only a word, a verb, depth in the wildest sense, the most mystical and alive.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de Essais et Réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), p.195.

<sup>58</sup> 'We want to destroy the museums, libraries, all kinds of academies and fight against moralism, feminism and every other opportunistic and utilitarian cowardice.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo' (1909) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.43.



syntax and logic. The traditional linear order of typographic arrangement on the page is what Marinetti rails against:

La mia rivoluzione è diretta contro la così detta armonia tipografica della pagina, che è contraria al flusso e riflusso [...].<sup>59</sup>

Clara Orban elucidates how Marinetti challenges this regulation: '*Parole in libertà* create action through a fragmentation of logic and discourse.'<sup>60</sup> Without the introduction of syntax, 'language becomes a series of nouns connected by certain *threads* which are governed by the principle of intuition'.<sup>61</sup> This therefore involves the reader embarking upon a decoding process. Infinitives litter the verse and most words are in nominal form. The groundbreaking effect of this poetry is the fact that the work exists simultaneously as a poem and as an image. The reader deals with a literary interpretation of pictures, which means that the habitual sign-system is subverted. If words become images, then the signifier does not function in its usual way: it is supposed to elicit a signified in the mind of the reader but this transposition from signifier to signified incites motion from what would normally be a stable state because of both the linguistic and iconic guises the poem now adopts. Poggi even argues that 'ideally the sign was to efface itself in the consciousness of the spectator/reader as it was transformed into pure sensation'.<sup>62</sup>

Marinetti attempts to carve out images instead of allowing the reader to visualise a scene out of the material provided. This is not to say that the reader cannot choose

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<sup>59</sup> 'My revolution is directly against the so called typographic harmony of the page that is the opposite of flux and reflux [...]'. [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Distruzione della Sintassi Immaginazione Senza Fili Parole in Libertà' in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.131.

<sup>60</sup> Orban, p.25.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>62</sup> Poggi, p.225.

to construct other images though this form of poetry certainly blurs the distinctions between verbal and aural properties. It is meant to be seen and heard with the latter dependent upon the many forms of onomatopoeia in the verse. Marinetti was stringent about employing several different types of onomatopoeia, from imitative onomatopoeia to indirect and intricate structures for the device. In giving language both an auditory and visual thrust, Marinetti is depleting the gap between signifier and signified. The substitutive function of his onomatopoeias makes parts of his poetry turn into sounds through words. 'Pallone Frenato Turco' (1914) is very much an all-around sound experience. There is a wonderful symmetry of noise and sight in the poem; space interacts with vertical columns of letters so that we read back and forth across an ordered canvas until one sign-system illuminates the other. The typography moves the image/text up the page, almost like a ladder as the reader jumps from one onomatopoeia to the next. 'Vibbbrrrrrrrarre' cuts across the page, slashing through the time/space divide, ultimately pushing the reader towards the centre of the image. What we witness here is the interpenetration and dissolving of perspective similar to that practised so effectively by Boccioni and Cendrars in their works. Moving around the work is a frenzied time-arresting activity that challenges the eye and ear to pin down the Futurist sign.

It is the importance of analogies in *Zang Tumb Tumb* that sets a precedent for the following evaluation of internal/external simultaneity. Noise, weight and smell are made explicit elements in Marinetti's poetic formations. His verse is poetry for all the senses that unites different spheres (made up of varying spatial and temporal parts) in its quest for the complete synaesthetic experience. We 'see' the sounds on

the page. Michael Webster convincingly presents the argument that 'Marinetti sought in a groping way to unite the interior, isolated (white) spaces on the page with the exterior, social event that is oral performance.'<sup>63</sup> Hewitt takes this argument a step further, stating that Marinetti's 'process-oriented and productive'<sup>64</sup> typography has succeeded in making the discourse the performance itself:

Rather than accepting that all reality is text and bemoaning the loss of the referent, Marinetti's writing demands that we stress the reality of all texts and the irrepressibility of the concrete text itself as referent. The shift from the reified dyadic sterility of signifier and signified leads, in the case of Marinetti, to a poetics of the performance, or indeed to performance itself. The futurist 'text' is the performance.<sup>65</sup>

There is thus a benchmark established through Marinetti's need to unite the internal and external spaces that his poetry occupies, with his attempts to merge different temporal and spatial frames through the synaesthetic experience his verse induces. Simultaneity was therefore accompanied by a need for synthesis. There is a very strong desire here to unite the page and the outside space it desires to transcend. Performing the words, bringing them together with a spatial extension in a physical arena so that they splice over actual differing time ranges, is essentially what Marinetti advocated should be at the root of Futurist poetry and drama. In placing Futurist theatre in its historical, intellectual and cultural context, Bert Cardullo shows how Futurist theatre kick-started the avant-garde with its insistence

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<sup>63</sup> Michael Webster, 'Words-in-Freedom and the Oral Tradition', *Visible Language*, volume 23, no. 1 (Winter, 1989), pp.65-87 (p.77).

<sup>64</sup> Hewitt, p.37.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

on cutting through the communicative properties of art so that the essence of a situation is presented. This mirrors the motor of Marinetti's poetry that is urgent and dismembered:

Movement, gesture, sound, and light became as important as the written word, and in some cases came to replace words altogether.<sup>66</sup>

Cendrars's 'Prose du Transsibérien' also came to be 'performed' regularly: 'It became not only a poem but an event, a happening [...] Performance art, we would now call it.'<sup>67</sup> So the physical act of reading the verse for both Marinetti and Cendrars allowed movement from one point in time to another, dissolving time and space through aural communication.

The need to fuse the internal space of the page with the external arena of action is a common strand of this analysis. The Futurists continued to exploit intuition and lyricism as conduits in this process by emphasising the power of emotional intelligence: 'Noi creiamo così, in qualche modo, un ambiente emotivo, cercando a colpi d'intuizione le simpatie e gli attaccamenti che esistono fra la scena esterna (concreta) e l'emozione interna (astratta).'<sup>68</sup> At this point, it is important that Boccioni's pre-Futurist phase, until 1911, is examined more closely to establish if any other movements, apart from Symbolism, aided this process that use intuition and lyricism as connecting devices. This period bears the imprint of a sensibility

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<sup>66</sup> Bert Cardullo, *Theater of the Avant-Garde 1890-1950, A Critical Anthology* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Perloff, p.11.

<sup>68</sup> 'We thus create a sort of emotive ambience, seeking by intuition the sympathies and the links that exist between the exterior (concrete) scene and the interior (abstract) emotion.' Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Prefazione al Catalogo della 1a Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.388/'Exhibitors to the Public', English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912) in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.50.

shaped considerably by Divisionism (Boccioni was heavily influenced first by Giacomo Balla in Rome from 1901, and then Gaetano Previati in Milan from 1907, who both taught him the basics of Divisionism), Art Nouveau, and the graphic art of Aubrey Beardsley. Divisionism is the most essential ingredient in the mix, however. Boccioni was inspired by this school, the Italian equivalent of Pointillism, which emphasised the juxtaposition of unmixed dabs or threads of colour that fuse optically at a distance. The fragmented particles and filaments of Divisionist art, with its jagged strokes and iridescent surfaces, set a precedent for Boccioni's early technique:

Divisionism's influence proved to be enduring. Most important was its example for the Futurist movement, whose artists employed its shimmering palette and broken brushstrokes in their earliest attempts to capture the dynamic flux of the modern world.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, the influence of Previati (whose key texts include *La tecnica della pittura*, 1905, and *Principii scientifici del divisionismo*, 1906) is obvious in the thread-like brushstrokes and the division of colour in Boccioni's *La città sale* (1910-11; plate one). In her essay for the catalogue of the exhibition 'Radical Light', Simonetta Fraquelli summarises how the scientific basis of Divisionism was interpreted by the Futurists in a wholly instinctual way:

[...] for the most part, they [the Futurists] were to adapt the Divisionist method in an intuitive rather than a scientific manner. The Divisionists' individual brushstrokes of colour, applied in a free and 'directional' manner, followed the

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<sup>69</sup> Roberta Cremoncini, *Painting Light, Italian Divisionism 1885-1910*, exhibition catalogue, London: Estorick Collection, 4 June-7 September 2003 (Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta), p.7.

contours of the objects portrayed while simultaneously seeking to expand into the space beyond, as if to suggest movement or life. This effect, together with the luminous vibrations created by the separation or 'division' of tones in the Divisionist paintings, offered a stepping stone to the fragmentation of the object and the basis for the dynamism of the young artists' canvases depicting speed, the hallmark of Futurism.<sup>70</sup>

This reading is significant because it touches upon the ideal of converting the logical and empirical approach of Divisionism into organic, more free-flowing forms. The instinctive means of letting movement and colour flower on a canvas was set in motion by the new dynamism initiated by Divisionism. Aurora Scott Tosini contends in the same catalogue whether this welding of planes and objects, whereby surfaces begin to interpenetrate with each other through a shimmering, dissolving collision of contours, occurs because of 'this [new] dynamism of light'.<sup>71</sup> She is correct to state that Divisionist art thereby began the process of disintegrating space; they broke up the canvas, allowing the Futurists to express speed and movement. Divisionists introduced the propeller-like motion that makes the canvas turn and radiate with layer after layer of vibrating colour waves. Boccioni turned the propeller further, so to speak, in paintings such as *La città sale* which is intriguing to view close-up; its thickly painted daubs, which all move in the same circular direction, have a life-force of their own when seen from afar.

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<sup>70</sup> Simonetta Fraquelli, *Italian Divisionism and its Legacy*, essay in exhibition catalogue *Radical Light, Italy's Divisionist Painters*, London: National Gallery, 18 June-7 September 2008 (London: National Gallery Company Limited), pp17-18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

But the luminous rendering achieved by the Divisionists, and initiated by the Macchiaioli school, is a rutted flux but a flux nevertheless as it inspires an irregular traverse across a sea of disjointed parts; Vittore Grubicy de Dragon, Giovanni Segantini and Angelo Morbelli sought a new emotional vocabulary through colour, using this element to construct a representation. Moving from part to part is not a completely seamless exercise in Divisionist art; for instance, Plinio Nomellini's *Garibaldi* (1906-7) is, on first viewing, a harsh and brittle work that forces the viewer to cut the canvas up into clearly delineated areas. Yet, a closer analysis reveals that each section flows into the other, with the subtle ground foliage embracing and unifying all areas.

From 1907-11, Boccioni's work is increasingly influenced by Expressionism though he is still experimenting with different forms of Symbolism and Divisionism. *Il Sogno - Paolo e Francesca* (1908-9) shows Boccioni's attempt at Expressionism, a painting that demonstrates a new linearity through its flowing currents of colour and forms. It is evident however that all sources, from Symbolism to Divisionism, combine in certain works. *Paesaggio al tramonto* (around 1906; plate three) draws upon strands of Previati's symbolic Romanticism as well as Munch's expressionist forms. Boccioni creates the most understated of impressions in the painting that the viewer should not struggle to discern, with its fluid delicacy later duplicated in the *Stati d'Animo I first version* (1911; plate twenty). Each of these works reflects the Futurist ethos of the necessity to interconnect objects in space so that the figures represented never extract themselves completely from their milieux. The threads of their being move out into space, the figures defined by their rhythms and motion.

Being demarcated by rhythm and motion means that they are intuitively conceived as almost abstract forms that signify an emotion, in turn evoking sensations by means of forms and colours. Maurice Denis enunciates the process:

Nous affirmions que les émotions ou états d'âme provoqués par un spectacle quelconque, comportaient dans l'imagination de l'artiste des signes ou équivalents plastiques capables de reproduire ces émotions ou états d'âme sans qu'il soit besoin de fournir la copie du spectacle initial [...] <sup>72</sup>

It is significant that Boccioni acknowledges Futurism's debt to Impressionism which amplified a new aspect of painting by imbuing art with a lyricism that derives from a new expressivity brought about by the sinuous combination of chromatic colour, movement and light vibrating throughout the canvas:

Con gl'Impressionisti , le pietre, gli animali cominciamo a cambiare forma e soprattutto colore. E, quello che è importante, cominciamo a perdere il loro valore sentimentale d'immagine. Si crea così il motivo Impressionista [...] hanno per sempre conquistato e creato un nuovo corpo: l'atmosfera. Per la prima volta un oggetto vive e si completa con l'ambiente dando e ricevendone le influenze.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 'We asserted that the emotions or spiritual states caused by any spectacle bring to the imagination of the artists symbols or plastic equivalents capable of reproducing these emotions or spiritual states without the need to provide the reproduction of the initial spectacle.' [my translation] Maurice Denis, 'De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme, L'Occident' in *Theories: 1890-1910* (Paris: Rouart et Watelin, 1920), pp.267-268.

<sup>73</sup> 'With the Impressionists, stones, animals began to change their form and colour. And significantly, they began to lose their sentimental value as images. The Impressionist motive was born [...] they once and for all seized and made a new form: atmosphere. For the first time, an object lives and develops through an environment that gives and receives influences.' [my translation] Boccioni, 'Perché non siamo impressionisti' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.116.



Ma tornando agli elementi fondamentali della struttura dei corpi, noi non neghiamo, come fa la teoria cubista, quelle che furono le conquiste degli Impressionisti: l'atmosfera, il moto e il lirismo.<sup>74</sup>

Gl'Impressionisti, che io ho chiamato temperamenti scientifici, sono stati i veri iniziatori del distacco del passato. Dopo il loro apparire una nuova luce colorò il mondo [...] i loro oggetti sono già il nucleo di una vibrazione atmosferica [...] <sup>75</sup>

Boccioni's espousals become even more explicit in their championing of Impressionism as a force for binding together the technical and aesthetic strands of his art:

L'ispirazione del nostro manifesto tecnico era Impressionista, perché, volendo continuare l'impressionismo, esso propugnava il lirismo, che per noi equivale a soggetto e dinamismo.<sup>76</sup>

[...] se carattere degl'Impressionisti fu la preoccupazione della luce e del colore, dando le forme come degli abbozzi dinamici, carattere nostro è la

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<sup>74</sup> 'But if we return to the fundamental elements of bodies, we cannot deny, as Cubism did, what the achievements of Impressionism were: atmosphere, motion and lyricism.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>75</sup> 'The Impressionists, who I have called temperately scientific, truly detached themselves from the past. A new way of colouring the world came after them [...] their objects are already the nucleus of an atmospheric vibration [...]' [my translation] Boccioni, 'La pittura futurista' in *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), p.22.

<sup>76</sup> 'The inspiration behind our technical manifesto was Impressionism, because it championed lyricism which is for us the equivalent to dynamism.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'Fondamento plastico della pittura e scultura futuriste' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.141.

preoccupazione di dare stile alla luce e al colore impressionista e creare perciò una forma definitivamente connaturata al colore.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, Ardengo Soffici underlines the Impressionists' revolutionary use of light and its significance as a generator of chromatic vibrations that flood across the painting:

For these painters, a body, whether a human figure, an animal, or a tree, does not have a fixed, definite shape of its own, but is constantly undergoing modifications according to the light in which it appears, the reflections which strike it and the proximity of other coloured objects. Such a body therefore does not present itself to the eye of the Impressionists as a tangible thing, but rather as a nucleus of diffusion, a source of luminous and iridescent vibrations, which differ only because of a greater or lesser chromatic intensity.<sup>78</sup>

Such declarations are significant because they illustrate a predilection for lyricism through the interpretation of the dynamic forms of their art. This discussion of the chromaticism of Impressionism incites a number of issues upon which strands of this thesis are based including the layering and superimposition, especially in the light of photography's ability to dissect an image into parts, and using a single form to assist continuity. It is subsequently significant though that Flavio Fergonzi recognises in his essay for the exhibition catalogue 'Italian Futurism 1909-1944:

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<sup>77</sup> '[...] if a characteristic of Impressionism was its preoccupation with light and colour, giving form to dynamic outlines, our aim is to give style to the light and colour of Impressionism and create a form deeply rooted in colour.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'Solidificazione dell'impressionismo' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.159.

<sup>78</sup> Soffici, A., 'Chicchi del Grappolo' in *Scoperte e massacri* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1919), p.241 (name of translator unknown).

Reconstructing the Universe', held at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2014, the enduring quality of lyricism in Boccioni's oeuvre:

In April 1913, a widely read review of the Costanzi show [Prima esposizione di pittura futurista at the Ridotto del Teatro Costanzi in February 1913] by the promising art historian Roberto Longhi appeared in *La Voce*, spurring a great deal of debate. Longhi recognised in Boccioni's paintings, especially in 'Elasticity' [*Elasticità*], a contour line able to project itself 'in the essential directions required by movement and matter'. He noted especially the pure lyricism the line evoked [...] <sup>79</sup>

Futurist proponents of the time, including Boccioni, do however express reservations with regard to Impressionism's neglect of the fundamental reality of their subjects, which is instead sacrificed for superficiality. Fernanda Wittgens raises the point that Boccioni was frustrated by the overly decorative effect of Impressionism that hampered the movement's true emotional capacity:

Ricondurre la pittura a sensi umani – e specialmente al gagliardo amore della civiltà moderna – dal naturalismo sentimentale e descrittivo degli epigoni ottocentisti, riscattare la pennellata impressionista degli effete decorative che avevano fiaccato la sua potenza lirica, integrando il colore con la forma in uno stile costruttivo, furono le aspirazioni e i risultati della prima maniera artistica di Boccioni.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Flavio Fergonzi, 'The Question of Unique Forms: Theory and Works' in *Italian Futurism 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2014), p. 129.

<sup>80</sup> 'To take painting back to human senses – especially back to a deep love for modern civilisation – from the sentimental and descriptive naturalism of nineteenth-century followers, to set free the Impressionist brush stroke from the decorative effects that had weakened its lyrical potential, integrating colour with form

## 1.ii Symbolism & Cendrars

Is Cendrars therefore an heir to Divisionist, Symbolist, even Impressionist, philosophies? The first thing to be stated here that is that Cendrars experimented with verse recalling Symbolist content and form with his early collection *Séquences* (1913):

À sa parution, en 1913, après *Les Pâques*, ce recueil témoignait, de fait, d'une allégeance au Symbolisme qui surprit ses rares lecteurs, avec son goût des mots rares, ses adjectives antéposés, son érotisme mystique et pervers.<sup>81</sup>

Based on a form of religious poetry written in Latin between the tenth and twelfth centuries, these deliberately archaic works seem to be almost written as a parody. Hyperbole is used too frequently, the erotic scenarios evoked are hackneyed, even comical, and the poetic structure is clumsy. What is useful about this small collection is that it fleetingly gives glimpses of the Cendrarsian technique that will emerge. Poem number XVI, for instance, introduces his inspiring play on language that results in the verse almost wrapping itself around its syllabic constituent parts:

Murmures et lamentos tout au long des piliers.

Chapelets. Et brouhaha lointain des chaises.<sup>82</sup>

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in a constructive style, these were the aspirations and results of Boccioni's early artistic style.' [my translation] Fernanda Wittgens, 'Umberto Boccioni 1882-1916', *Domus*, May (1932), pp.264-267, (p.264).

<sup>81</sup> 'Following its publication in 1913, after *Les Pâques*, this collection showed an allegiance to Symbolism which surprised its few readers, with its taste for unusual words, its adjectives [placed in front of the word], its perverse and mystical eroticism.' [my translation] Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.1* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2001), p.401.

<sup>82</sup> 'Murmurs and laments along the pillars/Rosaries. And the distant hubbub of chairs' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.300.

There is interplay between sound and sense, an undulating and fragmented rupture through the phonetic translation of the text that he later exploits to fuller effect:

Tout l'amour de la terre est si sincère, ce soir,

Que tu es couchée, telle une colline, couverte de vignes.<sup>83</sup>

Cendrars nonetheless dabbles with and even teases the reader with his manipulation of Marinettian aesthetics. It is the publication *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de essais et réflexions 1910-1916* that unfurls the many possibilities for gauging Cendrars's input to the Modernist debate. What is given primacy in the work is the complete overhaul of the poetic experience owing to his revolutionising of perspective. By this, it is meant that his contribution is a deeply personal discourse structured around three main strands that forcibly strike a tone of modernity into the poetic experience: firstly the nascent cinematographic arts which are underpinned by the phenomenon of montage as a fusing thread; secondly, displacement and thirdly, globalisation. The first and most obvious link between the poet and Futurist theory is their combined enthusiasm for the possibilities opened up by the machine and technology. The short poetic text in prose, 'Profond Aujourd'hui', is devoted to expanding our perception, a microcosmic spatial arena that becomes limitless where a star is comparable with a drop of water. The poet's attitude thrives on its irregularity; he is dually excited and mystified by technology. Central to his discussion is the question 'où est l'homme'?<sup>84</sup> Man is threatened by the changing dynamics of his new cosmos, yet the progression of the new world makes

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<sup>83</sup> 'The earth's love is so sincere, this evening/How you lie, like the hill, covered in vines' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.307 (poem XXV in the *Séquences* series).

<sup>84</sup> Blaise Cendrars, 'Profond Aujourd'Hui' (1917) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de Essais et Réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), p.11.

the poet more aware of the nuances of our actions that in turn define humanity. This throws the human psyche into confusion as it becomes displaced yet there is also a heightened sense of awareness as it is rendered more sensitive to phenomena at the same time. The technological achievements brought about by humanity therefore also bring about a re-evaluation of man's place in the wider scale of evolution.

The fact that Cendrars excels in investing his poetry with a quasi-instinctive approach is due to the fact that he opens up pockets of 'virtual space' by evoking a kind of exoticism, be it geographical or temporal. Displacement through various devices such as rhythm and imagery indicate a shift to a new dimension which makes different demands on the reader's/viewer's intuitive skills as one moves from the textual/pictorial medium to a new imaginary space. Francis Boder's detailed evaluation of the Cendrarsian phrase structure illuminates how the poet combines both regular and irregular properties across his works. By analysing key sentences from the travel journal *Mon voyage en Amérique* (1912), Boder underpins how Cendrars's 'syntaxe dynamique' retains a degree of order while generating new spheres of imagination in three ways:

- la prédominance de la coordination,
- la construction sur éléments parallèles de même rang,
- la syntaxe dynamique qui laisse la phrase ouverte à l'expression de l'affectivité.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> 'the predominance of coordination,  
the construction of parallel elements on the same line,  
the dynamic syntax which leaves the phrase open to the expression of affectivity'  
[my translation] Francis Boder, *La Phrase Poétique de Blaise Cendrars, Structures Syntaxiques, Figures du Discours, Agencements Rythmiques* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2000), p.39. Format of citation referenced in same format as in the original text.

By intertwining a series of 'prédications secondaires incidentes' ('incidental secondary preachings') around a principal subject ('un seul actualisateur') and setting in place 'la concordance entre la structure syntaxique de base et la ligne mélodique générale'<sup>86</sup>, Cendrars realises new explorative triggers for the reader. This is achieved through the combination of regular verse techniques along with more inventive poetic construction and content that inspires movement across previously unexplored spatial and temporal levels. The poet emphasises the 'trickle-down' effect of interlinking imagery and its accompanying sensations:

The process of writing is a conflagration which sets ablaze a whole confusion of ideas and makes associations of images flare up until it reduces them to crackling embers and falling ashes.<sup>87</sup>

This 'other-worldliness' (in that it implies the foundation of a new, unseeable domain that is web-like in its reliance on association) is reminiscent of the Symbolist aesthetic, as Bernard Weinberg states:

A symbolist poem was one in which a half-metaphor served as the basis of the structure; that is, the object or the person represented throughout the poem was one which, in a metaphorical structure, would have been analogical to another object or person [...] only that other object or person was nowhere specifically identified.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> 'indicating the agreement between the basic syntactic structure and the general melodic line'. [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.38 & p.39.

<sup>87</sup> Monique Chefdor, 'Cendrars et le Simultanéisme', *Europe*, no.566 (June 1976), pp.24-29 (p.24).

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Anna Balakian, *The Symbolist movement in the literatures of European languages* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiado, 1984), p.27.

Both Cendrars and Boccioni dip into this world of 'half-measures'. The imaginary space that is 'virtual space' is never fully realised with the reader and viewer left in a mid-visualisation stage, especially in Cendrars's work. The link here between the artist and the poet is palpable. The symbols used by the Symbolists, Cendrars and Boccioni are of another nature to a certain extent. This is to say that they are uncertain and ambiguous in meaning; they are expected to be understood not rationally but through an emotional and intuitive approach. The poetic method of the Symbolists relies on the use of intuitively comprehended symbols. This dependence on intuition is only one of the two kinds of attitudes typical of works within the Symbolist movement. The intellect dominates the first strand, as in the works of Mallarmé and Baudelaire, while an emotional and sentimental element is pre-eminent in the second. The latter is based on a sensitivity to impressions such as we find in the ethereal verse of Verlaine and Rimbaud. Such dual strands lead to the ideals of Futurism which strives to be almost geometric in its approach yet also bears the imprint of a sentimental viewpoint.

It is therefore the element of mystery in Symbolism, the object remaining hidden, with feeling or idea as the starting point and impetus for a work of art, which resembles the extra dimension described in Cendrars's verse, though, as far as the poet is concerned, his preoccupation with everyday urban reality does place him at a distance from the aesthetics of Symbolism. There exists nonetheless a common feature in the sense that in both bodies of poetry, the space between the language utterance and the prescribed situation certainly assists in abolishing the separation between the object and internal and external worlds. Language is no longer used as



a means of exchange; an insurmountable barrier in the reader's mind is prevalent no more as the power of suggestion has created a new area of exploration. This is because it recovers what Mallarmé called its 'virtualité'<sup>89</sup>, its original creative and evocative force equipped with a power to find a name for all things visible and invisible. Symbolist poets believed poetry was capable of evoking complex emotional states in much the same way as music. Feeling and thought should be presented in such a way as to prevent the reader from defining precisely what those feelings are. The purpose is consequently to create a new reality founded on intuition, appealing to the reader's imaginative powers. The basic premise is the production of a discrete network of interlinking sensations and ideas, which arguably finds its genesis in Symbolist poetry and is in operation in the œuvre of Cendrars. In the sense moreover, that Boccioni and the Futurist collective wanted to convey 'stati d'animo' ('states of mind'), it is evident that this absorption in the guise of a subconscious association with an invisible, shifting dimension is a viable connection.

Under discussion here is the fact that Cendrars uses absence as an instrument of deduction and inspiration. What is missing consequently in terms of content forms the defining issue. Chefdor examines this issue by appraising the 'elasticity' of the *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques* where the poetry becomes 'a series of apparently unrelated words, acquiring poetic strength from the effect of visual and mental

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<sup>89</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Au contraire d'une fonction de numéraire facile et représentatif, comme le traite d'abord la foule, le dire, avant tout, rêve et chant, retrouve chez le Poète, par nécessité constitutive d'un art consacré aux fictions, sa virtualité.' *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p.368.

elasticity achieved by the simple act of juxtaposition'.<sup>90</sup> Henry Miller, with whom Cendrars corresponded for more than 25 years, underlines how Cendrars's poetry is powered by pithiness rather than what is actually not stated:

Le plus remarquable, c'est que ce même Cendrars, dans ses poèmes en vers ou en prose, nous a livré quelques-unes des expressions les plus ramassées qui aient jamais été écrites. Là, sur un rythme staccato – le musicien en lui, ne l'oublions pas, précéda l'écrivain – il triomphe dans le style télégraphique – on pourrait dire: télésthétique [...] Cette technique singulière crée une sorte d'exorcisme, elle nous délivre de la pesanteur de la prose [...]<sup>91</sup>

This argument chimes with Gaston Bachelard's postulations in *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960), when he underlines how the poetic metaphor opens up new and boundless areas of exploration. Dee Reynolds emphasises how 'both Bachelard and Ricoeur place great emphasis on the future-oriented character of the poetic image/metaphor which is not looking back to something already known or experienced, but a looking forward, an opening of undetermined possibilities'.<sup>92</sup> Bachelard indeed insists that the poetic image is a fully functioning metaphysical property: 'L'image poétique n'est pas soumise à une poussée. Elle n'est pas l'écho d'un passé. C'est plutôt l'inverse [...]

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<sup>90</sup> Monique Chefdor, *Blaise Cendrars* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), p.49.

<sup>91</sup> 'The most remarkable thing is that Cendrars in his poems and prose has given us some of the most popular things that have ever been written. With his staccato rhythm – the musician in him precedes the writer, don't forget – he triumphs with his telegraphic style – or you could say: telesthetic [...]. This remarkable technique creates a sort of exorcism which relieves us of the heaviness of the prose [...]. [my translation] Henry Miller, *Blaise Cendrars-Henry Miller, Correspondance 1934-1979: 45 ans d'amitié*, edited by Miriam Cendrars (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1995), p.331.

<sup>92</sup> Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist aesthetics and early abstract art: sites of imaginary space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.18.

Dans son nouveauté, dans son activité, l'image poétique a un être propre, un dynamisme propre.'<sup>93</sup>

This certainly alludes to the extended scope conjured up in Cendrars's poetry. Significantly, Bachelard's 'espace intime' may be seen to resemble and describe this new qualitative state. Moreover, Freddie Jones's analysis of the development of the modern Italian lyric during its Symbolist phase has a bearing on the mechanics of simultaneity and merits examination.<sup>94</sup> The link to Marinetti is established through the works of Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) whose use of analogy as the basis of deduction for the reader inspired Marinetti's determination to break apart the traditional use of language so that it is open to interpretation in the way Bachelard divulged. Pascoli wanted to keep language as raw, spontaneous and untouched as possible, yet his metaphors move out from this very real basis to provoke a mass of associated thoughts. Marinetti saw this use of analogy as a way of regenerating language and of imbuing his lyrical slant with a streak of realism.

Jones begins logically by citing Pascoli's poetry as an effective example of the new kind of 'suspended perspective'<sup>95</sup> to be found in the transition period between Symbolism and hermeticism. This new dimension constitutes a sense of feeling-within objects and landscapes, transforming objects into symbols 'of completely suspended emotion'.<sup>96</sup> This evidently foreshadows modernist procedures in that multiple insights arise from a new source of poetic emotion, which permits an object

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<sup>93</sup> 'The poetic image is not liable to be influenced. It is not linked to the past. It is rather the opposite [...] In its newness and activity, the poetic image has its own existence and dynamism.' [my translation] Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957/2007 reprint), pp.1-2.

<sup>94</sup> Frederic Jones, *The Modern Italian Lyric* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1986), pp.12-15.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

to take on an intense emotional resonance. Jones uses the example of the abandoned farm machine in Pascoli's 'Lavandare' (1896) to illustrate how 'the physical existence of the plough dissolves into an atmosphere of 'absolute emotion'.<sup>97</sup> It is what is lacking as part of the poetic process, placing the onus on the reader, which invites comparison with Cendrars's strategy of making implicit the 'missing' element of his work. If we can consider *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, for instance, to be 'hastily edited'<sup>98</sup>, then this implies a process of selection on the part of the poet who singles out and alternately omits material as he thinks fit in order to achieve the maximum effect. His practice of shedding some of the trappings of grammar leads to the reader's heightened awareness of the voice of the poem. The poet continues to weave a fairly dense web of ambiguous analogies though the example below highlights how, from the world of 'half-measures' or abridgements and ambiguity, Cendrars prompts us to draw relevant patterns and infer relationships:

J'envie ton repos  
Grand paquebot des usines  
A l'ancre  
Dans la banlieue des villes<sup>99</sup>

There is identification of poet and subject whereby objects do not lose their identity and vanish completely into the reader's imagination. Even though Cendrars takes his work to the point of total transparency, his objects maintain their own sense of reality which proves to be a tenable point of contact and interpretation for the

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> Jay Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars: Discovery and Re-creation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p.131.

<sup>99</sup> 'I envy the way you lie/Large factory liner/At anchor/In the suburbs of the towns' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'F.I.A.T', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.95.

reader (this is also true of Pascoli and Marinetti whose works remain rooted in actuality and call upon the reader's intuitive capacity to unwind what their unembellished scenarios enkindle). This intimate relationship between the symbol and the perceiving mind is the principal method adopted by the Symbolists for the purpose of bringing about a unification of the reader's sensibility. The consequent result is that the reader is incited to pass from 'a world of spatial extension to one of emotional intension'.<sup>100</sup> There are thus analogies here between the Symbolist aesthetic and both Cendrars's and Boccioni's ideals. Moving from one concrete sphere on the behalf of the poets and artists to another more mysterious dimension by means of a unique alchemy produces an overpowering shift into an exotic new arena, which can even be likened to a type of virtuality in its creation of a new emotional and spatial realm.

A comparative example demonstrates the viability of such a proposal. Freddie Jones elucidates how these intuitively understood metaphors usher in a new lyrical world in Pascoli's 'Gelsomino notturno' (1903):

La Chiocchetta per l'aia azzurra  
va col suo pigolío di stele<sup>101</sup>

There is an inspired correlation between the terrestrial and the celestial, as the synaesthetic device in the word 'pigolío' compresses a stellar arrangement aurally rather than visually. The effect of this metaphorical language is to transmogrify reality by creating changes according to a new level of emotion and involvement.

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<sup>100</sup> Jones, p.14.

<sup>101</sup> 'The chicken goes through the blue farmyard with its chirping of stars' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.15.

Compare this with the following passage from 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France':

Je pressentais la venue du grand Christ rouge de la révolution russe [...]  
Et le soleil était comme une mauvaise plaie  
Qui s'ouvrait comme un brasier.<sup>102</sup>

As in Pascoli's verse, the use of synaesthesia provokes a reaction across all senses and assists in the liaison between the habitual and the irregular. This is a common alliance that thrives on its contrasting elements which is Cendrars's most powerful impetus for simultaneity. Jay Bochner validates this point:

Contrast, as Cendrars explains it, is the artist's way to movement and depth, since it obliges different forms to come together, forces gravitation, which is Cendrars's unity, a sort of multiple and synchronic dialectic – 'le contraste simultané'.<sup>103</sup>

Chefdor reiterates how Cendrars engineers opposites in 'Prose du Transsibérien' to produce a multilateral experience that actually grounds the poem by establishing in the reader's mind a mid-point somewhere between the extremes he presents:

Certes, une des formes d'expression du simultané se trouve dans les contrastes de mots ou d'images, saisissants par l'immédiateté du rapprochement entre

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<sup>102</sup> 'I sensed the coming of the great red Christ of the Russian revolution [...]/And the sun was like a terrible wound/Which opened like an inferno' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.28.

<sup>103</sup> Bochner, p.102.

deux réalités opposes ([...] 'les moulins à vent sont les béquilles qu'un mendiant fait tourner'; 'le train avance'/'le soleil retarde').<sup>104</sup>

In the example from Pascoli cited (footnote 101), comparison motivates image (metaphor in this instance) while synaesthesia provides the overarching framework. Cendrars is here using historical allusion to open up the poem, that is to say he decontextualises the Russian revolution by alchemising it with forces of nature so that a rational event in time is transformed into a personal and poetic mode of existence. To revert to the original tenet of the analysis, intuition has been disseminated by a pattern of lofty sensations. By rendering as normal the contrasts between differing elements through the use of synaesthesia, Cendrars allows new spaces to overlap visually with each other. It is the all-around sensation inspired by Marinetti that encourages a simultaneity of both internal and external points of reference.

It is important to emphasise that Cendrars is as capable of provoking a concrete situation as these obscure, more evocative scenarios. His principal preoccupation is the portrayal of a new and technological world ablaze with the inventions of the modern age. The other-worldly ambiance of his work is due in part to displacement which operates in the structure of his poems, necessitating a reading process based on mobility; it is this which causes the formation of far-off spaces in the reader's mind where we can move as freely and imaginatively as we wish. In this sense therefore, both Symbolist verse and Cendrars's poetics work both rationally and

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<sup>104</sup> 'Certainly, one of the modes of expression of simultaneity is the contrast of words and images which is striking because of the immediacy of the relationship between two opposing realities ([...] 'the windmills are the crutches that a beggar twirls'; 'the train moves on'/'the sun is set back'). [my translation] Monique Chefodor, 'Cendrars et le Simultanéisme', *Europe*, no.566 (June 1976), pp.24-29, (p.28).

irrationally. Cendrars permeates his work with references to the bizarre and exotic, providing the reader with original, even alien, points of reference. Cendrars thus expands his spatial terrain in this way. Its reduction at the same time is activated by the cultural experience of the reader, which in effect rationalises the poetic journey, making it digestible geographically and aesthetically. In the same way, Symbolist verse depends upon the familiar and the unknown. Both parties provide hence a 'centre of consciousness', which is attainable and relies on the pre-supposed knowledge of the reader. Intuition is required as both sets of imagery are bipartite; they divest the reader by degrees of his/her poetic task as the sense is so clearly delineated though the images continue to work as metaphors because an element of deciphering must still take place on the part of the reader. It is still necessary for the reader to imbue the poetic text with meaning, reducing his/her passivity in the transaction between poet and reader.



## Chapter Two – Other Foundations

### 2.i Science

Boccioni's acknowledgement of Impressionistic traits, however, highlights a lack of faith in the sensations of dynamism and energy which are at odds with the basic precepts of Futurist and particularly Boccionian philosophy. Boccioni makes numerous references to the validity of the dynamic moment: 'Il gesto per noi non sarà più un momento fissato del dinamismo universale: sarà decisamente la sensazione dinamica eternata come tale.'<sup>105</sup> Futurism is dynamism. In Cubism, the object remains essentially in a static position whereas the Futurists relied on the superimposition of objects on one another, dismantling them into dynamic components that mirrored the surrounding forces of movement. This ultimately depends on the use of several axes. Cubism accordingly depends on the one axis, which perpetuates the motion inherent in the representation of an object from several viewpoints while Futurism, on the other hand, projects the motion of the object's surrounding area. All of Boccioni's essays in the *Manifesti* are powered by the need to 'penetrate'. By this, we mean interpenetration in a physical, artistic sense and henceforth in terms of an emotional reaction on the part of the viewer. The entire framework of Boccioni's proposals is dominated by the ideal of the fusion of an object with its environment. The purpose of this is to ensure continuity by splitting 'open the figures and placing the environment inside them (spalanchiamo

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<sup>105</sup> 'The gesture for us will no longer be a fixed moment of universal dynamism: it will be decisively the dynamic sensation as such.' [my translation] Boccioni, 'La Pittura futurista. Manifesto tecnico' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.7.

la figura e chiudiamo in essa l'ambiente)'<sup>106</sup> so that the canvas detonates as a refracted prism of colour and form. This is exemplified in *La strada entra nella casa* (1911; plate eight) by Boccioni, which depicts figures and buildings caving in on themselves, presenting an incurvate, frantic hub of activity and motion.

By welding a figure so completely to its environment by means of motion cutting overwhelmingly through so as to form a new unfathomable, energised sphere of activity, Boccioni is acknowledging his debt to revolutionary scientific hypotheses dating from the early nineteenth century through to Einstein's findings. It is undoubtedly true that Einstein's theory of relativity (1905) provided a new set of parameters for investigation of the time/space divide with its proposal that under conditions of extreme speed, space and time disappear as constraints. A passage that recurs in the first *Fondazione e manifesto del futurismo* recalling Einstein's theory of relativity is:

Perché dovremmo guardaci alle spalle, se vogliamo sfondare le misteriose porte dell'Impossibile? 'Il Tempo e lo Spazio morirono ieri. Noi viviamo già nell'assoluto, poiché abbiamo già creata l'eterna velocità onnipresente.'<sup>107</sup>

The theory of relativity rejects the concept of absolute motion and instead presents the idea of relative motion between two frames of reference alone. One consequence of the theory is that space and time are no longer viewed as separate, independent entities but rather are seen to constitute a continuum that is four-

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<sup>106</sup> Umberto Boccioni, 'Linee-forza' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste (Dinamismo Plastico)*, Milan: Edizioni Futuriste di Poesia, 1914, p.213.

<sup>107</sup> 'Why should we look behind us if we want to smash down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We are already living in the realms of the Absolute, for we have created infinite, omnipresent speed.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo' (1909) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.43.

dimensional. In relativity, one cannot uniquely distinguish space and time as components that act simply as descriptions of events. Space and time are joined together in an intimate combination in which time becomes an extra dimension:

Einstein's theory of relativity toppled the accepted model of stable matter inhabiting fixed space over constant time. He revealed that rather than disparate entities, matter and energy are manifestations of a larger, dynamic whole, as also are space and time, with the character of each being determined by relative points of view.<sup>108</sup>

Some critics contend though that Marinetti is debasing Einstein. In 'Futurism and the Technological Imagination', Marja Härmänmaa argues that 'with this allusion to Time (footnote 107), Marinetti trivialises relativity theory according to which time will stop when the speed of light has been attained'.<sup>109</sup> I postulate instead that Marinetti is acknowledging his debt to Einstein, recognising and furthering the theoretical physicist's thinking that time and space are not as constant as everyday life would suggest.

Nonetheless, Edward Jacobson encapsulates how space, matter and movement function as the key rudiments of the theory of relativity. Boccioni's imagery is intent on conveying a very strong sense of light, energy, mass and volume that reminds the viewer of Einstein's equation. His figures swim in their own pools of energy. The compenetration of planes in works such as *Materia* (1912; plate four) slice through the characters portrayed but they resist being subjugated by other elements in the

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<sup>108</sup> Edward Jacobson, 'Umberto Boccioni: Discovering the Theorist of Futurism', *The World and I* (US print magazine), no. 2 (1989), (pp.44-47), p.44.

<sup>109</sup> Marja Härmänmaa in 'Futurism and the Technological Imagination', edited by Günter Berghaus (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 2009), p.343.

painting. Boccioni's figures remain immune to the fields of force being emitted around them. This in turn results in a purely stepped and staged delineation of motion on the canvas.

If time and space die according to Marinetti, then Boccioni's works can be analysed according to this new dictum that expunges time and space. In *Le forze di una strada* (1911; plate five), the outline of a tram is subsumed into the geometric forms shaped by the artist (this is another refracted prism of colour and form, exploding but remaining sufficiently self-contained, in so doing reducing the viewer's experiential absorption of the action). If we refer back to Marinetti's declaration that time and space are annihilated in the wake of Einstein, it becomes obvious that the tram and streetlights in turn are presented as connecting points in the scheme of the picture that have dissolved due to their omnipresent speed, prompting a negation of time and space (this process is not altogether successful, with the stepped pattern across the canvas a little too uneven, with the levelled landscape making it hard to view the painting as a complete unit). Another effective example of the time/space axis being subverted can be seen in *Dinamismo di un ciclista* (plate thirty-five), which epitomises Einstein's theory by becoming a single depiction; in other words, the bicycle, figure and the surrounding space seemingly coalesce together in a single form.

In light of Einstein's configuration of light and space and the above evaluation of the new kind of radiated energy evident in Boccioni's paintings, Virginia Spate's discussion of the advent of electric light is also of great value at this point:

Light embodied essential aspects of 'la vie moderne'. Painters and poets were imaginatively affected by the hypothesis that the smallest particle of matter, the atom, is animated by electrical impulses, and their imagination was further stirred by the electric lights which were being installed in the streets of Paris and by the electrical transmission of radio waves into space.<sup>110</sup>

By isolating and concentrating on particles of matter that make up the universe, from the minuscule elements to the most infinite, modernist artists and poets were able to view the individual as part of a universal scheme that relayed one person's consciousness across the realm of multiple dimensions. Light is therefore both literally and metaphorically the transmitting agent for the interpenetration of different states. The Futurists described how the movements of a figure are prolonged like 'waves in space'<sup>111</sup> while Jules Romains's 'Le Présent vibre' and Jacques Barzun's poetry employ the motif of the circular extension of light. Circular swirls of light were also an essential component of Delaunay's art. The significance of circularity and the spiral form is presented in chapter five.

A consequence of Einstein's summation is that simultaneity is no longer an intrinsic relation between two events; it exists in the form of time as a relative event to the observer, a subjectivity that also permeates Henri Bergson's theory of 'durée'. This reordering of the temporal/spatial axis runs throughout the works of the featured artists. Cendrars's poetry is dependent upon a stabiliser in the form of a principal voice that attempts to combine several differing ratios of time/space but

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<sup>110</sup> Virginia Spate, *Orphism, The evolution of non-figurative painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.12.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

controls the action by continually rerouting it back to a central, yet frequently disguised voice. His poetry is tiered; it operates on a number of different levels, and there is interpenetration between unrelated temporal and spatial orbs though how effectively it mimics the Futurist model of supposedly absolute absorption by space into motion is debated in the course of the thesis.

Debra Kelly succinctly surmises how Cendrars encapsulates the subversion of the time-space pattern simply by breaking with traditional French meter, pointing out that “it is in the structuring of a new time-space dimension that modern poetry and modern painting are at their closest”.<sup>112</sup> She cites Pierre Daix who stresses that ‘there existed an intuitive correspondence between the disruption of Einstein of Newtonian space and absolute time and the destruction of the order of perspective pushed to its limit by Picasso and Braque is all the more likely because such revisions of the space-time continuum spring up in parallel fashion in [...] Blaise Cendrars’s break with French meter’.<sup>113</sup> By inserting into his poetry the tropes of advertising and journalism, Cendrars gives his verse a truly contemporary resonance. But the diaristic style, devoid of metaphors, makes him an avant-garde poet in every sense. For his truly liberating and liberated style, it is worth noting how he uses rhymed alexandrines in ‘Les Pâques à New York’, only to rupture every now and then this rigour by slipping out of this form, as evinced in the couplet below. In this instance, Cendrars rather mischievously reminds the reader that the regularity of chronological development can be abandoned, making the poetic

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<sup>112</sup> Debra Kelly, *Pierre-Albert Birot, A Poetics in Movement, A Poetics of Movement* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p.288.

<sup>113</sup> Pierre Daix, *Journal du Cubisme* (Paris: Editions d'Art Albert Skira, 1992), p.96 (as cited by Kelly).

instant more memorable than regular progression, echoing Einstein's disruption of absolute time:

Je suis seul à present, les autres sont sortis

Je me suis étendu sur un banc contre le mur.<sup>114</sup>

Nonetheless, as a consequence of the vast expansion of the globe and simultaneous reduction of the world due to the spread of technology, the appreciation of the more poetic aspects of existence now becomes an issue as advancing impersonality in the form of machinery simultaneously fosters the bonds that unite humanity and also risk undermining them. This technological revolution does not, however, just consist of the 'heavy' industries and technologies of the nineteenth century such as the internal combustion engine, the diesel engine and the steam turbine, coupled with new sources of power such as electricity, oil and petroleum. Jeff Wallace points out that technology was also impinging on everyday lives in more discernible ways, with science taking hold not only in large-scale enterprises such as factories but also across domestic home settings:

Modernist technologies seem poised between these moments, on the one hand still representing an onward march of technology and in an increasingly interventionist way in ordinary lives, yet on the other hand signalling a transition towards the smaller, the cleaner, the intimate and insubstantial. The significances of modernist technologies might therefore accompany [Alan] Bullock's list as follows: invisible forces, electricity, X-rays and radiation; more obtrusion into the fabric of everyday life - streets, shops the home - rather than

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<sup>114</sup> 'I'm alone now, the others are out/I laid on a bench against the wall' [my translation], Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Pâques à New York', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.23.

simply being confined to industrial locations such as factories; more personalised uses and applications – motor car, telephone, telegraph, radio, household gadgets – consistent with the economic shift from production to consumption.<sup>115</sup>

This infiltration into domestic life, whereby an interactive and intimate relationship develops between contemporary science and members of the public, means that technology becomes an even more pervasive issue for artists. Cendrars is adept at bringing the grand and vast scale of scientific progress down to a more human, and ultimately less intimidating, level. For instance, in 'Prose Du Transsibérien' the poet both amplifies and reduces the human experience through the prism of poetic invention. Here, the expansive, world-widening feel of the new train is counteracted by the more domestic element of the gramophone, bringing the poetry, and reader, back down to earth:

Le train tonne sur les plaques tournantes

Le train roule

Un gramophone grasseye une marche tzigane

Et le monde, comme l'horloge du quartier juif de Prague, tourne éperdument à rebours.<sup>116</sup>

Another example pairs personal predilections with the burgeoning possibilities afforded by the new ways to circumnavigate the globe:

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<sup>115</sup> Jeff Wallace, *Beginning Modernism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.95. Wallace references 'The Double Image', Alan Bullock in *Modernism 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

<sup>116</sup> 'The train weighs on the revolving plates/The train rolls/A grasseye gramophone a gypsy march/And the world like the Jewish quarter in Prague deliriously turns backwards' [my translation]. Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, pp.39-40.



La Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits et des Grands Express

Européens m'a envoyé son prospectus [...]

J'ai des amis qui m'entourent comme des garde-fous<sup>117</sup>

Notably, the sentiment and diction of 'Prose Du Transsibérien' swerves between elements pertaining to technology and deeply personal reminiscences that offset the unfurling voyage:

Les sonneries électriques de la bibliothèque de New York

Les campagnes de Venise

Et les cloches de Moscou, l'horloge de la Porte-Rouge qui me comptait les heures quand j'étais dans un bureau

Et mes souvenirs<sup>118</sup>

It is true meanwhile that the Futurist renewal of the human element is based on the union of the individual with the work of art while Cendrars is concerned with the individual's stance in the overwhelming global economy. The poet's awe for the developing modern age is underscored by a very real concern for the encroaching and undermining power of capitalism. Technology is seen to engender anonymity:

Dans ce désordre apparent une forme de société humaine s'impose et domine tout le tumulte. Elle travaille, elle crée [...] C'est une force formidable qui

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<sup>117</sup> 'The International Company of Sleeping Cars and Europeans Express Trains has sent me their brochure [...] I have friends who surround me like guardrails.' Ibid., pp.44-45.

<sup>118</sup> 'The electric rings of the library bells in New York/The Venice countryside/And the bells of Moscow, the clock of the Red Door that counted for me my hours in an office/And my memories'[my translation] Ibid., p.39.

aujourd'hui étreint le monde entier, et le façonne, et le pétrit. C'est la grande industrie moderne à forme capitaliste.<sup>119</sup>

The most intriguing aspect of the aforementioned essay is the poet's evaluation of a new aesthetic revolution through technology: 'Enfin l'on respire. L'automatisme compénètre la vie quotidienne. Évolution. Progrès géométrique. [...] C'est un ensemble nouveau de lignes et de formes, une véritable œuvre plastique.'<sup>120</sup> This outlook ultimately gives way during the course of *Aujourd'hui* to the theme of displacement which poetry is capable of reconciling in the most public and modernist manner:

On ne recherche pas une vérité abstraite mais le sens véritable de la vie.<sup>121</sup>

Et ici la publicité touche à la poésie.<sup>122</sup>

Boccioni's art is equally capable of achieving this partnership of dislocation and dignity. The *Stati d'Animo I first version* (1911-12; plate twenty), *Le forze di una strada* (1911; plate five) and *Il lutto* (1910; plate six) are all hymns to suffering in light of the onslaught of the modern age. The latter is a particularly good example of a Munch-inspired work that primarily uses Divisionist techniques. A human undercurrent is therefore in evidence in Boccioni's figurative works (the latter) and his more abstract paintings (both of the former works). Crucially, even though Boccioni wants his mother to appear as 'anti-graceful' in the 1912 sculpture (plate

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<sup>119</sup> 'In this apparent disorder a form of human society is essential and overcomes the chaos. It works, it creates [...] It is an incredible force which embraces the entire world and shapes it. It is the great modern capitalist industry.' [my translation] Cendrars, 'Le Principe de l'utilité' (1924) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, p.49.

<sup>120</sup> 'One finally breathes it. Automatism interpenetrates everyday life. Evolution. Geometric progress [...] It's a new body of lines and forms, a true work of art.' [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> 'We are not looking for an abstract truth but the real sense of life.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>122</sup> 'Here publicity is connected with poetry.' [my translation] Cendrars, 'Publicité = Poésie' (1927) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, p.118.

seven) and 1913 portrait of the same name (*Antigrizioso*), the opposite sentiment is actually in evidence, in that the sculpture especially may be considered exquisitely structured, its 'rough features winding like an uneven staircase' in what is essentially an affectionate depiction of the matriarch.<sup>123</sup> His mother's bulky, fleshy forms are cut through by a series of planes that pick up their own momentum, gaining their own dynamic to move fluidly across the surface mass. Ultimately, Boccioni, like Cendrars, is not completely consumed by the new machine age; humanity underpins his motives.

## **2.ii Cubism & Delaunay**

It is fitting to begin this examination of Cubism's influence on the protagonists of the thesis with Charles Harrison and Paul Wood's analysis of what Cubism meant in terms of modernist development:

Cubism's technical innovations were rapidly assimilated by avant-garde artists. However, the question as to what Cubism meant, how it was to be thought of and understood remained a focus for conflict. The autonomous decoration of a surface; penetration below surface appearance to the constants of 'true' reality; a modern Realism of 'conception', transforming the terms, but none the less retaining the critical interest, of a tradition derived from Courbet; a Kantian transcendental idealism in which the picture could achieve what language could not, namely the representation of the *Ding an sich*; a

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<sup>123</sup> Jackie Wullschlager, *Financial Times*, 20 June 2009, review of Tate Modern's 'Futurism' exhibition, June-September 2009.

Nietzschean imposition of a new beauty, moulding the masses to the artist's own Truth; a Bergsonian epistemology of flux.<sup>124</sup>

Many of the aspects above are present in the techniques employed by both Boccioni and Cendrars (Bergson, Nietzsche and penetration of surface appearance are principal strands of this evaluation) though what is highly significant at this juncture, and what the passage above makes blatantly clear, is that Cubism inspired an explosion in the exploration of new forms of expression. Boccioni's art undergoes a telling change parallel to the escalation of Cubism. Before 1909, Boccioni's paintings had reflected Divisionist and Symbolist influences. His brushwork remains mainly divisionist until 1911 when after a visit to Paris in the autumn with Carlo Carrà, Cubist perspectives permeate his canvases. The pair visited the Kahnweiler gallery, saw pieces by Braque and Picasso and met Apollinaire. Didier Ottinger explains the impact of the trip on Boccioni's approach:

De retour à Milan, sa découverte du cubisme conduit Boccioni à peindre une seconde version de ses *Etats d'âme* (1911). La comparaison des deux triptyques montre une évolution aux enjeux plus que stylistiques. Des premières études empreintes des sinuosités de l'art symboliste, aux secondes, qui intègrent la cristallographie cubiste, se lit une translation dans l'art de Boccioni, qui passe d'un modèle marqué par l'art de l'Europe centrale (Vienne, Munich) à un autre, attentif aux avancées de l'avant-garde parisienne.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.129.

<sup>125</sup> 'On his return to Milan, his discovery of Cubism led Boccioni to paint a second version of *States of Mind*. A comparison of the two triptychs shows an evolution which is more than stylistic. From the first studies, which have overtones of sinuous Symbolist art, to the second, which integrate a cubist crystallography, a shift can be seen in Boccioni's art, which moves from a model influenced by central

John Nash's and John Golding's respective accounts of the technical effects of Cubism on Futurism remain valid. Rather than the cube structure, Nash isolates the 'facet' as the basis of Cubist painting: the 'small area bordered by straight or curved lines, two adjacent edges defined with a light tone and two opposite edges with a dark tone, and the area modulating between these extremes.'<sup>126</sup> Futurist art relies at least on equivalent modulations of tone and colour. Golding points out that the linear Cubist grid was adapted to become a model for the Futurist 'lines of force':

The fusion of the figure and its surroundings on which the Italians insisted was something that the Cubists had already achieved, and although the Futurists went further and added that the painting must be a synthesis of things seen and things remembered, visible and invisible, this had very little effect on the means employed.<sup>127</sup>

It is still crucial then that the most obvious legacies of Cubism are acknowledged; the notion of multiple perspective; interpenetration of planes; concreteness; and intuition. It is the mechanics of intuition that permit the reconstruction of 'the elements of an experience in order to create a new synthesis and so represent it more truly',<sup>128</sup> so that it 'answers to Picasso's description of a painting as a "sum of destructions"'.<sup>129</sup> This underlines that there is a degree of coherence in Cubist art as

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European art (Vienna, Munich) to another, mindful of the advances of the Parisian avant-garde.' [my translation] Didier Ottinger, 'Cubisme+Futurisme=Cubofuturisme' in *Le Futurisme à Paris: une avant-garde explosive*, exhibition catalogue, Paris: Centre Pompidou, 15 October 2008-26 January 2009 (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou & Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2008), p.27.

<sup>126</sup> John Nash, *Cubism, Futurism and Constructivism* (Thames & Hudson: London, 1974), p.9.

<sup>127</sup> Golding, pp.42-43.

<sup>128</sup> Babette Deutsch, *Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1962), p.42. Cited in L.C. Breunig, *The Cubist Poets in Paris: An Anthology* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), pp.xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>129</sup> Breunig, *Ibid.*

order is not completely relinquished so that images are, as L.C. Breunig suggests 'presented in a seemingly disordered but considered fashion'.<sup>130</sup> There is a fragmentation that is in essence harmonious; the extreme of anarchy across the canvas is avoided as the spectator is provoked into rearranging the fragmented parts of the painting's reality. The tension thus arises from the spectator's quest to discover unity amongst such multiplicity. Other critics have noted that Futurist art makes more effort to solidify the canvas whereas Cubism is more arbitrary in nature. In presenting the varied divisions of an image it is possible that the interactive planes of Cubist art appear looser in nature but that Futurism is more tightly controlled:

Così la compenetrazione dei piani che nel Cubismo non è spesso che un arbitrario prolungamento lineare, in lui (Boccioni) è vera e propria compenetrazione materiata di piani colorati, vibranti, pulviscolari, atomici [...] sovrapporsi di piani che si sfogliano, che si smallano come intorno un compatto nucleo centrale.<sup>131</sup>

This is explicitly presenting the case for a governing central core at the heart of Boccioni's art and is backed up by Guido Ballo: 'Boccioni ha un suo mondo chiaro, dove la dinamica spaziale sarà sviluppata senza annullare il nucleo organico,

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<sup>130</sup> Breunig, *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> 'So the interpenetration of planes, that is often only an arbitrary linear extension in Cubism, is truly present in Boccioni's art with an interpenetration of coloured, vibrating, atomic planes that unite around a compact central nucleus.' [my translation] R.Longhi, 'La Voce', *I Pittori Futuristi* (1913). In the second part of the quotation, Longhi refers to the work *Materia e Elasticità*. Cited in Giovanna Bonasegale (editor), *Sul Dinamismo, Opere di Umberto Boccioni dal The Metropolitan Museum of Art di New York e dalle Civiche Raccolte d'Arte del Castello Sforzesco di Milano*, exhibition catalogue, Roma: Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, 14 December 1999-20 March 2000 (Roma: Edizioni De Luca, 1999), p.19.

centrale, dell'oggetto figurativo.'<sup>132</sup> It is apparent, especially through examination of the line drawing studies for the finished works, that his organic creations seem to be regulated from an innermost point.

What therefore immediately springs to mind is the perspective adopted in a Futurist canvas whereby the spectator remains static while moving objects run across his/her field of vision. Conversely, in a Cubist work, the spectator by implication moves around static objects. This is reiterated by Edward Lucie-Smith whose description stresses the altogether more rhythmic aspect of navigating a Cubist work:

A Cubist picture [...] actually encourages you to move around the objects of the personage represented [...] the object unfolds before you from viewpoint to viewpoint. It's almost as if you walked around it.<sup>133</sup>

The premise of this statement is, however, essentially contradictory. In browsing the work of art, there must be a concerted effort on the part of the spectator to unite the underlying concepts, be they theoretical or in their physical form. If an object 'unfolds', it is initially in parts. The work is divided into separate bodies yet, and this is a common theme of the thesis, it adopts the form and rhythm of 'montage' technique. This is because the viewer is subsumed by the theoretical whole and welds together the different segments whilst moving. Lucie-Smith's assessment is important as it implies the resistance that Cubist dislocation of form generates. This

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<sup>132</sup> 'Boccioni has his own well-defined world, where a special dynamism is developed without cancelling out the central organic nucleus of the figurative object.' [my translation] Guido Ballo, *Boccioni, La vita e l'opera*, (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1982), p.89.

<sup>133</sup> Edward Lucie-Smith, *A concise history of French painting* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), p.30.

forces the viewer to decode the images more slowly than when she/he is shown a single-perspective, totally figurative work. Reading 'across the gaps' results in a less effective absorption of the image presented. With Cubist art, it is increasingly clear that the lacunae are more prominent and ultimately more problematic. The episodic ethos of the Cubist work is discussed by Timothy Mathews:

The Cubist objective is to allow the observer/painter to visualise an object or a figure in its totality. But the Cubist artefact realises this objective by creating an entirely different present for the object. It offers it to the viewer from a multiplicity of points of view, a multiplicity of angles in perspective, simultaneously [...] but paradoxically, simultaneity is itself a fiction; two points of view or a multiplicity of aspects cannot be perceived simultaneously but only sequentially – though not in the sense that one perception is preserved and received intact in juxtaposition with another.<sup>134</sup>

A 'replacement' motion is taking place in that both spatial and temporal instants follow one another rather than presenting a whole unit. The definite contours of the Cubist work demand a sequential reading rather than a simultaneous one. What is being debated here is the Futurist need to represent the canvas in such a way that the concepts of simultaneity and dynamism override the act of self-conscious detection and alliance with the work through a dissolving rather than a defining of form on the part of the viewer who is incited to track the unfurling consecutive steps. By employing images that break down differences, the

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<sup>134</sup> Timothy Mathews, *Reading Apollinaire: theories of poetic language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.107.



Futurists hoped to ignite the simultaneous process, not in an analytical and discursive manner, but through a series of contexts that evoke analogy. Returning again to the idea of concentric movement, the viewer moves around the Futurist canvas in a more fluid fashion to achieve a connection with the data presented. Cubist form, with its harsher geometrical outline, asks for a conscious analytical and quasi-mathematical examination from the viewer, arousing in turn the process of experiential contemplation discussed above.

If the Futurist perception of simultaneity only nudges the viewer's sensibilities, then are the dynamics of Cendrars's work consequently closer to the Cubist or Futurist aesthetic? 'Crossing the gaps' is an issue in Cendrars's poetry; by this, I mean that fusing the various connecting parts is part of the intuition-based interpretive process involved in assimilating his verse. Timothy Mathews's description of Apollinaire's dislocation of the parameters of the poetic body proves to be an equally valid summation of Cendrars's methods. The fragmentation and displacement that characterise Apollinaire's work offer an example of how poetry might attempt to approximate the amorphous, shifting nature of memory:

No difference emerges between feeling and writing, or between reading and interpreting, and in this the poem brings us into contact with some of the most familiar experiences in word and gesture.<sup>135</sup>

There certainly is much conflation of the poet (Cendrars) who writes and the protagonist who acts and feels. This is not to say that Cendrars's poems are

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

autobiographical but rather that the boundaries between self and other, living and writing are no longer clear-cut. In his preface to the *Oeuvres autobiographiques complètes* published in 2013, Claude Leroy describes how Cendrars expunges the divisions between his art and his existence:

Mais le jeune poète de 1911 que hantait le désir d'écrire ne se proposait pas de construire une oeuvre. Dans son esprit, l'écriture et la vie ne se séparaient déjà plus, mais il lui restait à imaginer, à élaborer les formes de leur rencontre et à construire ce que, bien plus tard, il appellerait un 'monde à part'.<sup>136</sup>

Consequently, as a result the poetry defies a single interpretation of reality and replaces it with a multiple interpretation in much the same way that a Cubist painting remains semantically open. If a Cubist painting can be experienced in stages as it unfurls, then the syntactic truncations of a Cendrars poem prompts the reader to gradually glean the meaning of linguistic markers such as telegrams and 'faits divers'.

'Contrastes' is a poem that invites decoding and yet for the reader, the act of absorbing the work is a strangely meditative experience. It is the dynamism of the moment that distinguishes the Cendrars poem from the interpretative aspect of Cubism. It is true though that the deconstruction of the structural framework initiated by Cubism had a profound effect on the poet's technique. Yet the analytical

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<sup>136</sup> 'But the young poet of 1911 driven by the desire to write did not consider putting together a work. In his mind, writing and life were already bound together, but it remained [his task] to imagine, and outline the form of their union, building what he would much later call a "world apart".' [my translation] Claude Leroy (with the assistance of Michèle Touret), *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres autobiographiques Complètes* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2013), p.xi

position of Cubism prevents the work from bonding fully with the viewer's psyche. The Futurist conception of dynamism involves the 'individual's power to dominate his experience and the moment'.<sup>137</sup> This results in the erosion of so many vital distinctions that in their reduction contribute to simultaneity. Surface gives way to depth, shade and light merge without effort, a single moment remains an instant and fosters other moments at the same time in for example, Boccioni's *Le forze di una strada* (plate five) and Cendrars's 'Contrastes' (also plate five, both are shown on p.340). In the painting, foreground, middleground and background shapes interlock with one another on the picture plane yet also remain apart. The painting is characterised by an extraordinary nuancing of light and shade. Just as pockets of light temper the work, so images of light alleviate and solidify 'Contrastes'. Dividing the atmospheric space in the background from the flatly patterned foreground arena is the pyramid-shaped structure that amalgamates light forms. This painting encourages a concentric reading with its jutting planes of light suggesting a compressed spatial universe. The work is indeed conceived in terms of a basic 'macchia', that is a 'strong and clear light-dark effect'.<sup>138</sup> Of particular prominence are the two flashes of light that centre the painting. The darker area to the right of the work brings into focus the illuminated areas. There is total interpenetration of light and form with the pavement sinking into the centre of the work under the glare of the streetlights in the rain.

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<sup>137</sup> Mathews, p.5.

<sup>138</sup> Norma Broude, *The Macchiaioli Italian painters of the nineteenth century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p.5.

What *Le forze di una strada* therefore inspires to a degree is a 'block' reading of the painting. The above analysis elucidates a key point in relation to 'Contrastes': the unravelling of the poem is a simultaneously uncomplicated and paradoxically complex process. It is, for instance, a challenge to read across the disjointed syntax but the poem develops almost like a children's tale in its singular, unhurried telling of a story. It is an intelligent tactic on the part of the poet to make the metaphor of the first stanza the most digestible part of the opening verse. This is the anchoring aspect of the verse after the foray into the unfamiliar. Between this final sentence and the first declaration of the poet that establishes milieu, there is 'controlled arbitrariness'. This may sound far-fetched yet it is evident that Cendrars embraces both Cubism and Futurism with his dual outlook of enclosing and containing the scope of the poem. The most striking line of the poem is:

Tout est taches de couleur<sup>139</sup>

As with *Le forze di una strada*, the arena of the work is instantly condensed. Temporal and spatial divides no longer apply. Simultaneity seems to have been formed in this guise of several colours; it is nothing but a swathe of enveloping tints that blanket the entire poem, helping to conflate space and time for the reader. Moving beyond the Cubist trait of leaving the work semantically open, the poet has with a single utterance imbued the poem with an all-encompassing spatial and temporal centre, bringing about a reassessment of the object in relation to its

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<sup>139</sup> 'Spots of colour everywhere' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Contrastes', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.74.

adjoining space by establishing a more substantial and definable core, making the poem a unified unit.

Shutting down and subsequently sealing the action, rendering the voice of the protagonist mute, is made possible in ‘Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles’ by the poet’s firm stance. Towards the end of the narrative, Cendrars moves from declamatory, general sentiment—as evidenced in ‘Strindberg a démontré que la terre n’est pas ronde’<sup>140</sup>—to more defiant proclamations that resonate in their finality:

Mon septième oncle

On n’a jamais su ce qu’il est devenu

On dit que je te ressemble<sup>141</sup>

Almost every section of the poem reverts to the first person singular pronoun—‘Je comprends ton orgueil’ at the halfway point<sup>142</sup>—bringing the composition back to an anchoring host who distracts the reader with a myriad of details and adventures; the point of such a peripatetic text is to ultimately remind us of the role of the narrator.

There are parallels here with Boccioni’s technique. *La strada entra nella casa* (1911; plate eight) portrays the action from afar yet it invites closer analysis of its occupants in the centre, thereby achieving differing gradients on a number of levels: the physical act of visually flitting between the protagonist on the balcony and the

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<sup>140</sup> ‘Strindberg has shown that the world is not round’ [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, ‘Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.63.

<sup>141</sup> ‘My seventh uncle/We have never known what he became/It is said I look like you’ [my translation] Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> ‘I understand your pride’ [my translation] Ibid., p.52.

figures in the centre means that for the viewer, there is a continuous movement back and forth. This movement across different planes encountering elements alien to each other is particularly prevalent in those works by Boccioni that employ newsprint in collage formats.

Cubists Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso introduced the technique of collage in 1912, another important consideration in this section. By using newspaper on the canvas, art became a hybrid of the word and image, thus ensuring that the context of the words used was transformed through their absorption into the painting. Collage therefore ultimately implies the replacement of any single sign system with a series of different yet interdependent ones. Futurist collage, however, involves different methods of construction and interpretation. Clara Orban concludes that 'in the case of Futurist words on the canvas, fragmentation implies a physical break in the method of decoding the message'.<sup>143</sup> The newsprint is thus part of the entire 'message' imparted by the artist. This is true to a degree as the clippings Boccioni integrates tell of actual historical events such as the Balkan wars dating from 1912 to 1913. This is a crucial aspect of the montage discussion because it raises various points relating to what may be termed the 'across the gaps' assessment analysed previously. How easy is it to decode the messages presented by Cendrars and Boccioni? Do they provide enough points of reference to unify their work so that the viewer/reader can discern one sign after another in some sort of sequence or does the juxtaposition of signs remain paramount? This hypothesis will be examined through the prism of montage, *parole in libertà*, and superimposition in turn.

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<sup>143</sup> Orban, p.66.

A perverse symmetry governs the work *Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo* (1914; plate nine). Two sets of eyes, ears and mouths hang in a skewed fashion with a deceptively ordered trunk-like structure acting as a nasal substitute that binds the painting together. On closer analysis, the work can be seen to be made up of two separate images; what the viewer sees first are the discernible features of a face, from the protruding left ear to the unnerving delineation of two gaping eye sockets. Then the second layer of the picture moves into the foreground. This consists of the central trunk, the distinct four corner arcs of the painting and the newspaper print fragments. Of particular interest are the embellishments Boccioni adds to bring this second layer to prominence: the ink scribbling along the borders, especially the enclosed markings made with a pen in the upper left of the picture on the newsprint and on both ears, along with the playful ink drawings such as the eye located at the bottom of the trunk. These decorations give the work a casual feel, supplementing the newsprint to emphasise the artist's need to project an impression of the present in its most immediate form. Doodling is an instant reminder of the moment when the artist constructed the work. This calls into question the number of layers involved here as well as the different contexts and time scales induced. One could go so far as to say that the marks in ink form a third veneer, the top film over the facial features and then the corners, newsprint and centre structure. This third layer is actually meant to cover the segments of newsprint so that they are more difficult to read. This is Boccioni working at ironic cross-purposes; his scribbling draws attention to the newsprint items, it acts as his notepad in the painting on which he can indulge in the role of sardonic, even rebellious, observer.

The newsprint items are alien elements in the painting. Only the bottom right-hand piece forms part of a recognisable shape, that of the man's collar. Yet this is at least a fragment intended to be acknowledged and recognised. Boccioni's stance is a consistent one; he is prepared to push the boundaries but only partially. The top newsprint item is completely at odds with the other distorted areas of the painting while the other newsprint scraps at least hint at restoring stability with their familiar content (the centre piece is based on renting a room) and as part of a figurative mass (the third item that makes up the neckline). Only the latter newsprint area therefore actually denotes an object in the painting. The implication is therefore that the viewer jumps from object to object on looking at the painting, shifting from idea to idea in the sense that the inserted elements of the collages (newsprint pieces, etc) act as sounding boards for topical issues. They are consequently foreign elements that are intended to inspire a chain of unrelated thought processes. Their very disparity makes them symptomatic of a montage process, both in terms of their contrasting content and how they fracture the painting, causing a breakage of the image into its disfigured forms. These forms are nonetheless readable, principally because two layers are apparent to the spectator: the facial parts first and then the second wave of attributes such as the middle trunk along with the newsprint items. There is a unique amalgamation here of features constructed according to a process of superimposition, hence the effect of dual layers, and a carefully contrived sequence of detectable non-painting collage items that move the eye from part to part as with a montage sequence of juxtaposed



elements. There thus exists a bottom layer of recognisable constituents (facial features) along with a surface layer of non-identifiable parts (newsprint pieces).

This can be seen as simultaneity operating in its most fundamental way. To cite an example of contemporary artistic practice, Keith Tyson's conception of simultaneity, *Bubble Chambers: 2 Discrete Molecules of Simultaneity* (2002), presents two contemporaneous passages through time, showing how miscellaneous events come to pass at exactly the same time on a global basis. The logic behind this concept of simultaneity can be applied to Boccioni's and Cendrars's strain of the phenomenon. By bringing together in the same painting points of reference that allude to varying time scales, the artist is condensing and reducing these levels into one, demonstrating that all events are related by the sheer fact that they exist and are subsumed in the one arena. This is an instant reduction of time and space; even though the newsprint items refer to events of a different temporal nature, their positioning within a framed microcosm places all the activity therein on the same functioning stratum. This is the most basic of levellers. Time and space are solidified by the internal combustion of the painting's dynamics that brings deviating areas together as one. It is evidently the differences in the meaning of the signs employed that make Boccioni's collage works vehicles of the *parole in libertà* phenomenon. However, it is also apparent that Boccioni uses the newsprint items as figurative aids, as demonstrated by the collar item in *Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo*.

What does seem to be significant to Boccioni are the references he strives to introduce and the contexts he hopes to establish for his paintings. The topical nature of his choices and the necessity to establish some sort of social comment have been

evaluated with the above example. Why though is the jutting aside, in the form of what appears to be a poem, inserted in the painting *Sotto la pergola a Napoli* (1914; plate eleven)? The item does not alter the movement of the image, not decelerating it at least, and does not establish new perspectives. The body of text sits naturally within the scene, a concession to the idyll depicted, complementing the action. The print does however look clearly superimposed and its incongruity does underline the densely concentrated volume of the image; by veering the eye to the right, the spectator is then drawn back to and absorbs the blocks of colour that move outwards of the picture. The print therefore draws the heavy solidification of the piece into relief. The print's superfluity is actually part of its charm though it seems too quirky for any serious consideration.

So Boccioni uses his newsprint items as figurative props that lack homogeneity, and are dysfunctional to an extent (in the sense that they function as supplements or addenda, as in the latter example above). Rino Cortiana's<sup>144</sup> analysis of the newspapers mentioned in Cendrars's poetry is useful in this respect. He picks out many examples whereby the poet cites the titles of contemporary publications in his poetry. In 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles', for instance, he mentions the Daily Chronicle (line 47) and le Courier de Pampelune (line 38). In *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, L'Intransigeant is quoted in 'Contrastes' and 'Crépitements' while *Feuilles de route* contains several references to the 'journaux' themselves (in 'La Ville se réveille' and 'Banquet'). The proliferation of these modern reviews serves a number of purposes relating to the internal dynamics of his verse.

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<sup>144</sup> Rino Cortiana, 'Le Journal Dans le Poème' in *Cendrars au Pays de Jean Galmot, Roman et Reportage*, edited by Michèle Touret (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998), pp.57-68.

They are firstly an immediate and obvious link to the present-day world with all their associations of modernity, from their rapid delivery of current affairs to their use of advertising, one of the most important influences on Cendrars's poetic style. Their inclusion therefore reinforces their role also as figurative props in that they form part of the modern scene the poet attempts to picture. They contribute to the sound, movement and dynamic make-up of the scenarios presented. In 'La Ville se réveille' for example, Cortiana shows how the newspaper seller's ballet dance is fuelled by the car horns beeping and the rhythm engendered by the shortened titles of Brazilian newspapers (for instance, O Estado de São Paulo becomes 'stado'). He makes the astute observation that in cutting up these Brazilian newspaper titles, Cendrars is equating himself quite distinctly with collagists such as Picasso, Braque and Boccioni who employed the same technique. It would be difficult to argue that these insertions are intended to be dysfunctional however. They are focal elements of the scenes' figurative detail.

The content and form of *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques* is heterogeneous enough to justify its definition as a verbal collage. 'Aux 5 Coins' is an appropriate case in point, a poem written in both a rational and irrational vein:

Oser et faire du bruit

Tout est couleur mouvement explosion lumière

La vie fleurit aux fenêtres du soleil

Qui se fond dans ma bouche

Je suis mûr

Et je tombe translucide dans la rue

Tu parles, mon vieux

Je ne sais pas ouvrir les yeux?

Bouche, d'or

La poésie est en jeu<sup>145</sup>

Up to the final two lines, there is a semblance of order. The repetition of 'tout' as an anchoring device recalls the line cited previously from *Contrastes* (p.100) whereby space and time is conflated. A crescendo is taking place, following a logical route, using the flowering of language expounded by the poet as the basis for its progression. Cendrars does not abandon his deep-seated thread of the potential of poetry to transform and transpose the wider, vaster events of life onto the scale of the human and literary, as symbolised by the role of the poet. There is enough material here that is comprehensible and follows some sort of logical idea. However, just as Boccioni's work shows, there is a need on the poet's part to imbue the work with abstraction and illogicality. Pieces of the poem seem to hang at disjunctive points; the trajectory progresses, after all, from the 'windows in the sun' to the subject's mouth, and from the act of conversing to the frustration felt by the speaker at not being able to open his/her eyes. The term 'hang' here is intended to reflect the practices of painting because the poem does lend itself well to a comparison with painting.

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<sup>145</sup> 'To dare and make some noise/Everything is colour movement explosion light/Life flowers at the windows of the sun/Which melts in my mouth/I am ripe/And I fall translucent in the street'

'You said it, buddy'

'I don't know how to open my eyes?/Golden tongue/Poetry is at stake', transl. Ron Padgett, Cendrars, 'Aux 5 Coins', *Du monde entier Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.97.

Just as with *Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo*, the main thrust of the work moves towards an almost unseeable and imprecise point. Yet, the quarters are in place from which this impetus can spring, as in the case of the aforementioned painting. Reading across the gaps becomes again a priority with fragmentation acting as the bridge to harmony. This can be seen in the successive moves from the explosion of light and colour through to the exclamation of awe through the poet's eyes and mouth, back to the naming of poetry as the prime purpose for launching the poem. This is an intentionally disjointed process that fulfills its aim; that of a unified presentation through a considered unbalanced portrayal of the elements involved. Both the painting and the poem cited uphold this ideal; flitting back and fore across the disjunctive parts does not distract us from the whole but reinforces it.

It is Cendrars's choice of diction which positively promotes a 'cross-reading' of the work. There is an implicit link between 'couleur' and 'd'or', 'lumière' and 'translucide'. The more explicit link of the body (bouche/yeux) solidifies the action also while the poem alternates between a detached tenor and a deeply personal tone. In other terms, the basic body of the poem exists though it veers into uncharted territory for the reader. The effect is vaguely unsettling and invigorating. Binding the diverse divisions from amongst an assembly of seemingly ill-fitting parts may be thought of as a cinematographic trait because the reader/spectator is required to connect discrete areas.

There are examples of thematic unity parading as dysfunctionality in *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*. 'Sur La Robe Elle a Un Corps' is thought to refer to Sonia

Delaunay's *La Robe Simultanée*, worn in 1913, which had a profound impact on the poet:

The dress was worn, continuously unfolding itself in space through time; it contained the coloured arcs, distorted geometric shapes and spreads of colour found in her previous work but further deformed static shape through the movement of these coloured surfaces according to the rhythmic dance of the human body.<sup>146</sup>

Slevin also argues that Sonia Delaunay's 'corporeality is dematerialised into a rhythmically fluid subject within the environment it moves through, embodying simultaneous and relative dimension of existence'.<sup>147</sup> This dematerialisation is conveyed through the recurring references to different body parts—'mes yeux', 'le ventre', 'les bras'—with a seamless unification of colour and material layered together at a moment in time that is completely arrested by the simultaneous energy. This is encapsulated in the following lines that play on a shower of differing cacophonous elements:

Sous les bras des bruyères mains lunules et pistils quand les eaux se déversent  
dans le dos avec les omoplates glauques

Le ventre un disque qui bouge

La double coque des seins passe sous le pont des arcs-en-ciel<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Tom Slevin, *Visions of the Human: Art, World War One and the Modernist Subject* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015) p.124.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>148</sup> 'Under the arms moorlands hands lunules pistils when waters flow over the back with its blue-green shoulder blades/The belly a moving disk/The double hull of breasts moving under the bridge of rainbows' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Sur la Robe Elle a un Corps', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.83.

But as with other Cendrars compositions, the ill-fitting parts act as a bridge to some sort of fusion, moving from the disorienting lunules and pistils across lacunae of thought and action to the all-binding ‘breast moving under the bridge of rainbows’. Look at how the series of sounds fills the metaphorical gaps—‘o’ and ‘s’ skating through the narrative—subsequently buttressing the poem.

But how is this series of connections engendered? The introductory question asks whether simultaneity is a purely technical phenomenon devoid of a thematic and aesthetic basis. In the light of this assertion, it would be convenient to classify Cendrars as an exclusively technical poet concerned only with form instead of content. A contentious starting point for such an analysis is ‘Prose Du Transsibérien’ where Cendrars’s verse overlaps with Sonia Delaunay’s art to produce what Cendrars called ‘le premier livre simultané’ (plate ten).<sup>149</sup>

The concertina-esque work unfurls to reach almost two metres in length when fully unravelled, prompting the viewer to swerve between Delaunay’s painting and Cendrars’s text. The effect is exhilarating, mimicking the breakneck speed of the train with its glimpsed snatches of colour such as vermilion and blue punctuating the poem. It is a film in literary form, bringing to life the voyage depicted by splicing and cutting colours and prose, like an editor shifting around the action. The simulation of movement is achieved by the contrast of colours and the dynamic impetus of the shapes; it is worth focusing on certain sections so as to ascertain how the text and coloured daubs dovetail. The eye descends down, across the yellow blocks of colour at the point beginning ‘J’étais très hereux insouciant’ (foot of page

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<sup>149</sup> ‘the first simultaneous book’. [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, ‘Delaunay’ (1919) in *Aujourd’hui 1917-1929*, p.70.

one); the retina is forced to move even further to the right on the line 'Contre les khoungouzes, les boxers de la Chine' but this minor misstep across the page is tempered by a movement back towards the line, 'Et pourtant, et pourtant.' The natural pauses in the text alone fall on the truncated lines but the delineated slabs created by Delaunay add another rhythm to the action. The word 'Bariolé' is a natural cessation for both Cendrars and Delaunay (the artist brings us to a stop by placing this vocabulary point in between two stretches of colour: the red and yellow daubs; the poet's brevity in bold is a defiant caesura).

Cendrars's description of 'Prose Du Transsibérien' as 'le premier livre simultanée' suggests a harmony of ideals on the part of its creators which belies empathy on a stylistic level. Pär Bergman testifies to this: 'Il se peut aussi très bien que Cendrars ait essayé d'adapter son poème à la technique de Sonia Delaunay (qui est d'ailleurs celle de Robert).'<sup>150</sup> Robert Delaunay's technical approach is based primarily on 'couleurs simultanées' which constitute 'notre métier simultanée dans la peinture'.<sup>151</sup> Delaunay wrote that the dichotomy of colour formed the basis of painting: 'tout est couleur par contraste, tout est couleur en mouvement, tout est profondeur'.<sup>152</sup> Inspired by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century colour theories of Michel Eugène Chevreul and Ogden Rood and their concept of simultaneous colour contrast, Delaunay's *Fenêtres* series (April-December 1912; plate eleven) explores the impact of divergent hues on the viewer. Didier Ottinger describes the events that led up to Delaunay's *Fenêtres*:

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<sup>150</sup> 'It may be that Cendrars has tried to adapt his poem according to Sonia Delaunay's technique (which is Robert's in any case).' [my translation] Pär Bergman, *Modernolatria et Simultaneità* (Uppsala: Scandinavian University Books, 1962), p.318.

<sup>151</sup> 'our role of simultaneity in painting'. [my translation] Robert Delaunay, *Du Cubisme à l'art abstrait* (Paris: Franca Castel, 1957), p.21.

<sup>152</sup> 'everything is colour in contrast, everything is colour in movement, everything is depth'. [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.115.



Les papiers collés de Braque et de Picasso, l' évolution du cubisme dans sa phase "synthétique" avaient été, pour Apollinaire, les premières manifestations de cette "peinture pure". Cette "pureté" n'était toutefois encore que relative. En avril 1912, Delunay peint ses premières *Fenêtres*. Pour qualifier ces toiles, Apollinaire imagine le terme d' "orphisme". Cet art nouveau, pour lequel la couleur joue un rôle essentiel, réinvente les lois de la "dynamogénie" de Charles Henry, celle des "contrastes simultanés" de Michel Eugène Chevreul. Elle réconcilie la peinture d'avant-garde française avec l'héritage de l'impressionnisme et du postimpressionnisme, un moment confisqué par les futuristes.<sup>153</sup>

Ottinger makes the case for Delaunay as a conduit for the theories of both Henry (who propagated the expressive values of upward, moving lines and warm colours) and Chevreul. It is evident that Delaunay assimilated properties of post-1909 French art while around 1907, his early work conveys the impact especially of Post-Impressionism. His series of self-portraits, begun in 1905, also look to the violent use of colour in Fauvist works; meanwhile, he adopts a new, invigorated stance with regard to the formal element of the circle in pieces such as *Paysage aux disques* (1906-07). Colour contrast drives this new visual language; it is only natural then that the Futurists, envious of this champion of dissimilitude, were spoiling for a fight

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<sup>153</sup> 'The papier collés de Braque and Picasso [and] the evolution of Cubism during its "synthetic" phase were, for Apollinaire, the first manifestations of this "pure painting". This "purity", however, still remained relative. In April 1912, Delaunay painted his first *Fenêtres*. To describe these canvases, Apollinaire coined the term "Orphism". This new art, in which colour played an essential role, reinvented the "dynamogenic" laws of Charles Henry and the "simultaneous contrasts" of Michel Eugène Chevreul. It reconciles French avant-garde painting with the heritage of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, a point that was hijacked by the Futurists.' [my translation] Ottinger, 'Cubisme+Futurisme=Cubofuturisme', p.31.

on the stylistic front. The ensuing dispute, which revolved around the ownership of the term simultaneity, is astutely documented by Ester Coen:

Cette bataille est résumée avec une précision remarquable dans une lettre – organisée en huit points – écrite par Sonia Delaunay en novembre 1956. Le début de la controverse y est identifié dans un article d’Umberto Boccioni sur la Simultanéité futuriste, écrit à Milan le 25 novembre 1913, publié dans le numéro 190-191 de la revue *Der Sturm* du 15 décembre, dans lequel il ‘attaque directement R.Delaunay’. Son second temps vient naturellement avec la réponse de Robert Delaunay, publiée dans les pages de la même revue (no.194-195 du 15 janvier 1914). Ses troisième et quatrième points renvoient à deux articles de Guillaume Apollinaire auxquels se réfère la lettre de Delaunay (‘Chronique mensuelle’ dans le no.18 des *Soirées de Paris* du 15 novembre et ‘Le Salon d’Automne’ dans le no.19 du 15 décembre de la même revue). Comme cinquième étape, Sonia Delaunay cite la chronique d’Apollinaire ‘La Vie artistique’ de *L’Intransigeant* du 5 mars 1914, dans laquelle le poète évoque le tableau de Delaunay *Disque solaire simultané forme; au grand constructeur Blériot*, qu’il dit animé d’un ‘futurisme tournoyant’. Suit, au sixième point, la réaction immédiate de Delaunay réfutant l’usage du terme de ‘futuriste’ pour qualifier sa peinture dans ‘Au Salon des indépendants, Réponse à une critique’, *L’Intransigeant* du 6 mars 1914, en contradiction avec les deux articles parus dans *Soirées de Paris*, Au septième temps de la controverse vient la réponse de Carlo Carrà, Giovanni Papini et Ardengo Soffici, et au huitième et dernier point, Sonia Delaunay mentionne les extraits d’un manuscrit de Delaunay précisant

certaines de ses idées à l'égard des recherches qui le préoccupent ces années-là.<sup>154</sup>

Yet Virginia Spate qualifies how this dissension proved to be mutually beneficial:

The rivalries between Delaunay and the Futurists raged on until the outbreak of the war. As vehement as they were, they nonetheless reflected the close interconnection of both direct influences and parallel developments from the same sources.<sup>155</sup>

How is this possible? There is no denying the fact that Delaunay's emphasis on contrast engendering synchronisation makes him an essential source of inspiration for both Boccioni and Cendrars and vice versa. Buckberrough stresses how 'both Léger's and Delaunay's paintings bear striking affinities to certain statements made in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* [...]'<sup>156</sup> Crucially, the traffic of ideas and interchanges between Delaunay, Boccioni and Cendrars is evident according to other sources:

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<sup>154</sup> 'This battle is resumed with remarkable precision in a letter-organised in eight points-written by Sonia Delaunay in November 1956. The controversy starts in an article by Umberto Boccioni about "Futurist simultaneity", written in Milan on 25 November 1913 and published in number 190-191 of *Der Sturm* (15 December) in which he "directly attacks R. Delaunay". The second phase is naturally the response of Robert Delaunay which is published in the pages of the same journal (no.194-195, 15 January 1914). Her third and fourth points refer to two articles by Guillaume Apollinaire which refer to Delaunay's article ("Chronique Mensuelle" in no.18 of *Soirées de Paris*, 15 November, and "Le Salon d'Automne" in no.19 of the same journal, 15 December). For the fifth point, Sonia Delaunay cites Apollinaire's column "La Vie artistique" from *L'Intransigeant* of 5 March 1914, in which the poet recalls Delaunay's *Disque solaire simultanée forme; au grand constructeur Blériot* which, he says, is driven by a "swirling Futurism". Then the sixth point, the immediate response of Delaunay comes next whereby he refutes the usage of the term "futurist" to describe his painting in the "Salon des indépendants, Réponse à une critique", [from] *L'Intransigeant* of the 6 March 1914, contradicting the two articles that appeared in *Soirées de Paris*. The seventh point on which the row is based involves the response of Carlo Carrà, Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici, and for the final point, Sonia Delaunay mentions extracts from a manuscript of Delaunay's which specifies his ideas concerning the research which preoccupied him in his later years.' [my translation] Ester Coen, 'Simultanéité, simultanésisme, simultanisme' in *Le Futurisme à Paris: une avant-garde explosive*, exhibition catalogue, Paris: Centre Pompidou, 15 October 2008-26 January 2009 (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou & Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2008), p.53.

<sup>155</sup> Spate, p.223.

<sup>156</sup> Sherry A. Buckberrough, *Robert Delaunay, The Discovery of Simultaneity* (Epping: Bowker, 1982), p.58.

C'est très nettement à la peinture et surtout aux Delaunay que Cendrars emprunte sa conception de simultanésisme. Pour lui, il ne s'agit pas de theories littéraires mais d'une technique de métier, picturale.<sup>157</sup>

The first significant event of the year was the Futurist exhibition which opened on 7 February with much publicity. Between the time of the Futurist visit in October 1911 and the Salon des Indépendants in March 1912, Delaunay, Léger, and Duchamp each produced at least one painting that was almost an illustration of certain aspects of the Futurist programme [...] <sup>158</sup>

By overlaying translucent contrasting yet complementary colours, Delaunay ultimately reinforces two principal tenets of this analysis: first, his art, especially those works of the *Fenêtres* series, jumps and shifts across the viewer's field of vision as a succession of interminable rhythms, with all elements perceived as equally significant. This is a consequence of this process of moving backwards and forwards. Second, this may be considered dislocation of a successive object in the sense that he is essentially refracting a single form by means of an application of diaphanous colour. His aim, shared by the Futurists, is the collapse of space and time. The Futurists though aspired for this disintegration of space and time under the influence of velocity whereas Delaunay is altogether more preoccupied with possibly a less hurried presentation of those conjugal partners owing to less prominence on the aspect of speed drawing them together. However, as in the case

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<sup>157</sup> 'It is very clear that Cendrars has borrowed his concept of simultaneity from Delaunay and painting. For him, it is not a question of literary theories but an acquired pictorial technique.' [my translation] Chedford, *Blaise Cendrars et le Simultanésisme*, p.25.

<sup>158</sup> Spate, p.29.

of the aesthetic application of Boccioni and Cendrars, there is a sense of the fixed perimeter of the canvas and the rigid containment of its contents. This focus on movement within a painting is enhanced by Delaunay's recurring use of the disk motif, the circular form aiding the process of movement through space. By concentrating on internal and external states through his preference for window vistas, he crystallises a distinct strain of simultaneity:

La simultanéité des couleurs par des contrastes simultanés et par toutes les mesures (impaires) issues des couleurs selon leur expression dans leur mouvement représentatif, voilà la seule réalité pour construire en peinture.<sup>159</sup>

The anticipated move from contrast to integration is clearly in evidence in Delaunay's statement. With contrast as the catalyst, Delaunay progresses towards depth by means of a cacophonous combination. This approach no doubt swayed Boccioni who visited Paris in 1911; it is quite possible that he would have seen Delaunay's *La Ville* series of paintings (1909-11), which in turn had an impact on his *Visioni Simultanee* (1911; plate thirteen). The disintegration and integration of the houses at the centre of the picture may well have been inspired by Delaunay's splintered depictions of the Eiffel Tower. For Boccioni also, 'dinamismo', in essence simultaneity for the Futurists, consisted of 'il contrasto dinamico dei colori complementari'.<sup>160</sup> This conflict inherent in the use of different colours leads inversely to the presentation of a harmonious whole.

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<sup>159</sup> 'The simultaneity of colours through simultaneous contrasts and all other irregular ways through colours according to their expression in a representative movement, this is the only reality for building a painting.' [my translation] Robert Delaunay, *Der Sturm*, December 1912. Cited in Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Réalité, Peinture Pure', *Chroniques d'art 1902-1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), p.347.

<sup>160</sup> 'the dynamic contrast of complementary colours'. [my translation] Boccioni, 'Pittura Scultura Futurista' in *Manifesti* (Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta editore, 1970), p.24.

### 2.iii Nietzsche

It is not difficult to see the effect of Nietzsche's 'Superman' on Futurist theory. The basic thread of his philosophy, that of the will of power and domination as immortalised by his superhero, runs through Futurist theory. Nash claims that Nietzsche was Marinetti's 'true mentor'<sup>161</sup> while the philosopher's glorification of technology is in itself an ode to the future in both Cendrars's and Boccioni's work. The basis of Nietzsche's nature as reflected in his writings is underscored by optimism and the wish to live fully. Lara Vinca Masini underlines how the burgeoning industrial strength of contemporary society was boosted through the philosophy of Nietzsche and taken up by Boccioni, with the former's superior being majestically storming forwards through the tumult of a new era to carve his own place in a social order empowered by knowledge and communication:

Ma la concezione nicciana è presente in tutta l'attività di Boccioni: nella fiducia in un futuro creato e articolato per l'uomo superiore, per il genio; il solo capace di cogliere il valore esaltante di una vita basata sul 'nuovo, il frutto del nostro tempo industriale', di una vita tumultuosa e ardente, 'basata sulla rapidità e contemporaneità di conoscenza e di comunicazione', della cui concezione moderna il 'dinamismo universale è l'esponente lirico'.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Nash, p.33.

<sup>162</sup> 'Nietzschean tenets are present in all of Boccioni's work: in his faith in a future made and articulated by a superior man through his genius; the capability of grasping the stimulating values of a life based on the "new, the fruit of our industrial era", a tumultuous and ardent life, "founded on speed and contemporary knowledge and communication", the modern conception of which is "universal dynamism that has lyricism as its exponent".' [my translation] Lara Vinca Masini, (introduction), *Pittura Scultura Futuriste, Dinamismo Plastico* (Firenze: Vallecchi editore, 1977), p.xiv.

*The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) is the most important text in relation to Futurism. This evaluation of why Apollonian and Dionysian art are both significant in fulfilling spiritual and emotional intelligence is an indictment of humanity's need to uphold a sense of the heroic and glorious. The antithetical concepts of Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives are conceived to reflect a kind of intensification of our senses. The latter alerts the emotional system whereas Apollonian aesthetics ignites the eye. On a basic thematic level therefore, there are grounds for speculative affiliation in three distinct ways. Firstly, Cendrars is an experimental poet whose ethos is not unlike the 'free spirit' initiated and championed by Nietzsche. In Cendrars's emancipation from the constraints of traditional aesthetics, he projects a new perspective of intuition and intellect that like Nietzsche's 'free spirit' ideal, is predominantly founded on science and technology. However, just as this liberation turns out to be illusory as it ultimately entails a critique of the intellect preventing a complete commitment to the 'free spirit', so the driving impetus of Cendrars's poetry and Boccioni's art stop short of what could be deemed 'complete experimentation'. Secondly, simultaneity is as an assemblage of opposites. The Dionysian process as it unfurls in *The Birth of Tragedy* is both an ecstatic affirmation and the epitome of cruelty and lust, pleasure and denial. Intellect is all-powerful and all-destroying simultaneously while the Superman is ultimate vitality personified in reaction to the meaninglessness of existence. The Dionysian process is therefore represented as a form of simultaneity which pre-empts modernist simultaneity. Thirdly, the theme of transformation is a common element in Cendrars's and Boccioni's work as simultaneity is itself a transforming device.

The Dionysian and Apollonian aesthetics counterbalance each other; the former enters 'into any skin, into every emotion: [the Dionysian individual] is continually transforming himself'.<sup>163</sup> Adopting metaphorical masks and an underlying sense of mutation is a constant in Boccioni and Cendrars. The voice of Cendrars's poetry is often complex and multiple while Boccioni uses colour and form to coat his figures in an abstract garb that requires unravelling. *Cavallo + Cavaliere + Caseggiato* (1913-14; plate fourteen), for instance, is not impenetrable and permits translation of its form after an initial reading of its disorderly content. A large proportion of Boccioni's art indeed appears unreadable at first but his skill as an artist lies in drawing in the viewer, prompting him or her to discover the figurative depths beneath the abstraction.

What of the imagery chosen by Boccioni and its bearing, in a Nietzschean sense, on simultaneity? Grounded firmly in technology, the Futurists' choice of subjects created a new realm of symbols that were vehicles for modern man's fantasies and his sense of what belonged in the real world. Boccioni's central motif of the horse is an effective amalgamation of the real and imaginary. It manages to achieve, with its symbolic connotations of strength, the criteria of heroic fulfilment while remaining grounded in reality. The Futurists wish to cross the boundary into the worship of the brutish, with grandiloquent settings such as the city, typifying Nietzsche's gung-ho ideals. Cendrars in addition attempts to work from the familiar so that he can project into and develop other areas. The embracing of modernity in all its manifestations is certainly a point in common though the reasons are arguably radically different –

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<sup>163</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J.Hollingdale, published 1968 (London: Penguin, new edition 1990), p.84.



aesthetic for Cendrars and ideological (as well as aesthetic) for the Futurists. Cendrars is also fascinated, and at the same time wary, of the impact of modernity on society. Both the motor car and the train, prominent symbols in the works of the featured artists, are monuments to technology, acting as effective devices to generate movement both in the text and on the canvas. It is evident from Nietzsche's analysis that injections of reality are unavoidable (another legacy for the poet and artist of the thesis) though these doses of reality can be controlled, something of which Cendrars is acutely aware. The Greeks created a new gallery of gods (as in the *Iliad*) which transformed the heroic instinct into a spectacle, thereby ensuring a new-improved quality of life for the masses. Significantly, at this point, Nietzsche recognises how Greek painters made the ultimate sacrifice of at least contemplating reality so that it can be transformed into art.

The topic of heroism is especially pertinent for Boccioni and Cendrars with the latter's references to Nietzsche endorsing the basic tenet of the philosopher's theory. The poet's eulogy to the French Symbolist poet Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) is remarkable for its bravado and can be read in the Nietzschean context outlined above.<sup>164</sup> As with the majority of Cendrars's creations, there is an air of melodrama pervading the text. De Gourmont's myriad of identities, from poet to grammarian, is applauded and the impression created shifts and abandons points of focus to quickly exploit other aspects. This is a paradoxically controlled yet uninhibited assessment, the style of which is not dissimilar to Michael Tanner's assessment of Nietzsche's

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<sup>164</sup> Blaise Cendrars, 'Remy de Gourmont' (1912) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, pp.153-155.

approach: '[...] we have the feeling that [...] Nietzsche is making it all up as he goes along'.<sup>165</sup>

Everything presented is only surface; de Gourmont is 'un sensuel' and 'le premier écrivain qui ait créé ses lecteurs'.<sup>166</sup> This is a revelatory statement which links directly with the area of 'conscious creativity' (chapter five). A central question pertaining to simultaneity addressed in the fifth chapter is the idea of a conscious formation of a whole in spite of the dismemberment of the work generally. The poet's admiration for the deliberate production of an audience by de Gourmont embellishes the theory of conscious creativity. Cendrars's debt to the French poet is examined by Claude Leroy in his 2013 compendium, *Oeuvres autobiographiques complètes*. Leroy highlights de Gourmont's theory of 'dissociation d'idées', which comprises amalgamating true elements to create a false or unfounded concept that carries weight:

[...] Cendrars a repris a son compte une méthode d'analyse élaborée par Gourmont, la dissociation des idées. Il s'agit de révéler le revenu idéologique de certaines associations d'idées reçues sans contrôle comme autant de vérités, de les traiter en somme en idées-valises, comme il est des mots-valises, et de débusquer les bénéficiaires de ces constructions intéressées (les tenants de l'ordre établi).<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.12.

<sup>166</sup> Blaise Cendrars, 'Remy de Gourmont' (1912) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, p.154.

<sup>167</sup> '[...] Cendrars has adopted the method of analysis developed by Gourmont, the dissociation of ideas. It is a question of uncovering the ideological substance of certain associations of received unrestrained ideas without subjecting them to many truths, treating them in essence as carrier-ideas, bringing to light the beneficiaries of these relevant structures (with established tenets).' [my translation] Claude Leroy (with the assistance of Michèle Touret), *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres autobiographiques Complètes* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2013), pp.xx-xxi.

Moreover, it is almost as if Cendrars is himself orchestrating a reaction at this level in attempting to forge de Gourmont's reputation. The man, it is alleged, is a 'sensuel' in every way, caressing and finally moulding the subjects of his work and life into what he so desires. The poet highlights that de Gourmont sustains a sense of the heroic, though the fact that he creates his own market of readers suggests complete autonomy on his part. He has not completely forsaken his Oneness in order to project an image of himself in his work. It is suggested, however, that de Gourmont's abandonment to his art is complete and at the same time incomplete. It is fleeting and rhythmic, just as simultaneity is a convergence of several transitory actions. The stress here has to be on what is ephemeral, the parts provided and those that are omitted deliberately. This passage and the underlying sentiments are a forerunner to the general technique that the poet himself would adopt. Again, Nietzsche's influence of the ideal of the Dionysian reveller, ecstatic, sensuous and indifferent to space in time, is mirrored in this eulogy.

Yet is this complete abandonment of the soul to art necessary? Nietzsche's ideal of the will of power is the expression of the love and endorsement of life, of the wish to live wholly. It is the mention of Nietzsche in *Aujourd'hui* that connects him with Cendrars's thought and establishes the ideal that any creator can produce if one is in a conscious mode:

Comme les enfants, le génie, ce suprême enfant, veut rêver à des histoires dont il est le héros. C'est ce que Nietzsche appelait la volonté de puissance.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> 'Like children, genius, this supreme child wants to dream of stories in which he is the hero. That is what Nietzsche called the will of power.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Remy de Gourmont' (1912) in *Aujourd'hui*, p.153.

Aligned with the Apollonian ethos of logicality and detachment, the tone of the Manifestos is immediately Nietzschean. The diction of anarchy is pre-eminent in the *Manifesto Tecnico* (1910) – ‘noi proclamiamo’, ‘noi combattiamo’ (‘we declare’, ‘we fight’).<sup>169</sup> This is a comment on the morality that underscores both artists’ subject matter.

Crucially, the will to power is essentially a call for the right to create one’s own set of values. This again links to the conscious aspect inherent in the process of simultaneity. The most compelling argument made for a Nietzschean reading of Futurist aesthetics comes from Steven Cody who says:

Will to power, then, is Nietzsche’s way of talking about life as a plurality of forces that are constantly moving and constantly coming into contact with one another. Concepts previously considered absolute—the ‘self’, the ‘body’, ‘God’—all get swallowed up in this eternal undulating mass of becoming. He describes life as an ‘abyss’, a manifold of flux where nothing endures and the only law is the law of action. When the Futurists speak about life as ‘universal dynamism’ [footnote two], they are essentially describing the moral and authentic reality that reduces all objects, bodies, and forms to instances of its process. ‘Universal dynamism’ is an abyss, a constantly shifting manifold where every idea, every concept—except art—gets swallowed up in the speed of change.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Umberto Boccioni et al., ‘La Pittura futurista, Manifesto tecnico’ in ‘La Pittura Futurista’ in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009), p.74.

<sup>170</sup> Steven Cody, ‘Umberto Boccioni’s The City Rises: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future’, *Storia dell’arte*, 136 (2013), (pp.125-140), p.132.

Cody qualifies this summation by asserting that in *La città sale* (plate one), Boccioni 'attempts to suggest this sensational speed... the entire image is constantly becoming'.<sup>171</sup> This analysis, and subsequent conclusion that the image collapses completely before our eyes, is correct to surmise that the fixed moment is completely reduced by the artist with figures merging and transforming, while colours intermingle but never blend. In this sense, the work has become the 'dynamic sensation itself' (footnote two), reflecting simply an unfettered flux whereby everything that exists is active and dynamic (I would counteract Cody's assumption also that art is the only part of the manifold left untouched; the process totally extinguishes the painting as an aesthetic unit in its own right and form).

While Cendrars is undeniably interested in the individual consciousness, it is clear that superficially the dogmatic and elitist beliefs of Nietzsche are at odds with his thinking. Yet a thread of consciousness whereby every system must be reduced to its real value, which is that of an instrument in the struggle for existence, forms the sub-text of his poetry. It is difficult to maintain that the trappings of technology and modern fetishes depicted by Cendrars in poems such as 'Prose du Transsibérien' act as 'poetic allegories for the metaphysics of becoming and self-overcoming that underlie Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power'. Cody stresses that 'Marinetti's theme of speed, mechanized motions and animalistic motor cars'<sup>172</sup> conversely are undoubtedly allegories that reflect Nietzsche's belief system. Indeed, as Marinetti

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.128.

outlines, 'la furente scopa della pazzia ci strappò a noi stessi [...]',<sup>173</sup> indicating that riding in an automobile vanquishes and depletes the self in the name of speed. 'In The City Rises [*La città sale*], Boccioni attempts to suggest this sensational speed,' says Cody.<sup>174</sup> Throughout 'Prose du Transsibérien', there is never a sense that the poet is embarking on a road leading to complete subsumption of the first-person narrator.

This will to vanquish every conceivable system of governance is therefore clearly more blatant in Futurist work. It is worth considering the following passage and how convenient it would be to replace Stirner in the quotation below with Futurism so as to establish affinities:

Both Stirner and Nietzsche aim at the integral realisation of life; both aim at the highest possible exaltation of the individual [...] both believe in the Will of Power as the cardinal fact of existence. Both insist on the pre-eminence of the voluntary over the purely intellectual sentiments. Both consider the Will as the elementary factor, and both glorify force and power and the development, unchecked and unfettered of the strong man [...]<sup>175</sup>

Radical as this sounds, it is evident that Futurism could evidently be considered as an empty and ostentatious vehicle that was only vocal and not effective. It becomes obvious nonetheless that Boccioni and the German philosopher share a common unanimity: the triumph of will, which is altogether more explicit as a progressive

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<sup>173</sup> 'a furious sweep of madness [that] took us out of ourselves.' [my translation] F.T. Marinetti, 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo' (1909) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.40.

<sup>174</sup> Cody, p.132.

<sup>175</sup> G. C. Hill, *Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York: MSG Hask, 1971), p.241.

and active instrument in the art of the Italian painter than in the writings of Cendrars. The Futurists were intent on showing how speed was part of life as a dynamic, unfolding process, mimicking the core tenet of Nietzsche's philosophy that everything that exists is active; Cendrars does not get swallowed up however in the speed of change and the freneticism around the shattering of certainties and plurality of forces crafted as a centrifugal font of energy by Nietzsche. He admires the Superman as a revolutionary ideal but does not want to bring it fully to life.

#### **2.iv Circular Movement and Dance**

The most feasible link however between all three parties is the idea of rhythm and the ignition of sensory impressions. The acclamation of de Gourmont has already touched upon the ideal of the transient. The *Futurist Manifestos* reiterate how movement can inspire the process of simultaneity. This is more often than not represented by concentric movement and is highlighted by Gino Severini in the *Futurist Manifestos (The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism)*:

Inoltre le forme spiraliche e i bei contrasti di giallo e di bleu scoperti dalla nostra intuizione una sera vivendo l'azione di una danzatrice, possono essere ritrovati più tardi, per affinità o per avversione plastica, o per le une e le altre insieme, nei voli concentrici di un aeroplano o la corsa di un express.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> 'The spiralling shapes, and the beautiful contrasts of yellow and blue, that are intuitively felt one evening while living the movements of a girl dancing may be found again later, through a process of plastic preferences or aversions, or through a combination of both, in the concentric circling of an aeroplane or in the onrush of an express train.' Gino Severini, 'The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism', transl. by J.C. Higgitt in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.121.

By arousing a chain of analogies, any movement across space and time is immediately effective in that the circular motion permits a totally inclusive experience from one marked point to another. The emphasis is again on overlapping, so that time is experienced as a succession of discrete moments rather than a fractured chain of events. Severini's portrait *Danseuse bleue* (1912; plate fifteen) launches numerous associated ideas in the spectator's mind. The effigy is obviously that of a female dancer, yet the refracted image invites so many other temporal and spatial suggestions that 'what one remembers and what one sees'<sup>177</sup> ('quello che si ricorda e di quello che si vede') are brought to the forefront of the spectator's aesthetic consciousness. A collective analysis of Futurist works testifies that the concentric movement provides a viable means of reading their paintings. Boccioni's works in particular invite the eye to move clockwise around the canvas. *Elasticità* (1912; plate two), *Dinamismo di un corpo* (1913) and *Il lutto* (1910; plate six) can all be plotted according to a concentric pattern. The latter especially moves from one figure to another, providing multiple perspectives presented simultaneously of the female in mourning. The perspective established is that the spectator remains static while his point of vision shifts around him/her. In this sense, emotion finds its objective correlative in the movement incited, be it the sensation of grieving or the basic action of a body in motion.

Dance thus permits a shifting perspective of any experiential process. Timothy Mathews's description of how experience is itself an encircling and contradictory

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<sup>177</sup> Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Prefazione al Catalogo della 1a Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.380/'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto', English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912) in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.47.



movement that ebbs and starts fitfully underlines both the multiple nature of simultaneity (as in the sense of operating according to opposites) and its inherent dysfunctional sense of rhythm:

Experience itself is an unanswered question, a continuous fragmentation, a continuous articulation of separateness: the experience of experience [...] the sense of being, but a sense of distance in being.<sup>178</sup>

The work of Nietzsche is littered with references to dance and how it is able to assist in the learning process:

It is not fat but the greatest possible suppleness and strength that a good dancer desires from his nourishment – and I would not know what the spirit of a philosopher might wish more to be than a good dancer. For the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his service of God.<sup>179</sup>

For dancing in any form cannot be divorced from a noble education, being able to dance with the feet, with concepts, with words: do I still have to say that one has to be able to dance with the pen – that writing has to be learned?<sup>180</sup>

At this point, Cendrars's adoption of the trope of the dance is palpable and follows from the issues raised in relation to Boccionian aesthetics. Even though Futurism encourages a circular reading of the canvas that remains Apollonian in its emphasis on the line as the dynamic driving force, it is true that the dance aesthetic provides a

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<sup>178</sup> Mathews, p.4.

<sup>179</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), p.346.

<sup>180</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, p.77.

framework for manipulation of the canvas or the page. On the most ephemeral level, both Cendrars and Boccioni therefore ‘move’ around the space with a flourish that resembles the mechanics of dance.

Mon stylo caracole

Caltez!<sup>181</sup>

Et cette haute nouveauté

Blanc

Des feuilles de papier blanc<sup>182</sup>

This evidently is the most superficial reading of this analogy, yet Goldenstein furthers this by proclaiming how Cendrars simply celebrated the art of writing by moving the pen on the paper:

La danse célébrée par le poète, ‘sa’ danse serait alors avant tout celle de la plume sur la feuille de papier.<sup>183</sup>

Cendrars’s most overt reference to Nietzsche’s ‘danse’ also captures this basic desire to present dance as the very essence of being. What can only be described as a swirl is substantiated further by the final part of ‘Ma Danse’, a captivating work that invites interpretation on a number of levels. The circular again comes into play as

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<sup>181</sup> ‘My pen is frisky/Beat it!’, transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, ‘F.I.A.T.’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.96.

<sup>182</sup> ‘And that latest style/White/Sheets of white paper’, transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, ‘Natures Mortes’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.98.

<sup>183</sup> ‘The famous dance of the poet, his “dance” is above all the pen on paper.’ [my translation] Jean-Pierre Goldenstein, *19 Poèmes élastiques de Blaise Cendrars* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1986), p.50.

Cendrars describes the passing landscapes that dissolve into one simultaneous viewing:

Le paysage ne m'intéresse plus

Mais la danse du paysage

Danse-paysage

Paritititata

Je tout-tourne<sup>184</sup>

Jumping once more the divides of space and time, simultaneity is at the forefront of this poem that cites Nietzsche as an influence. If we understand simultaneity to be an idea of representation that combines visual and psychological components along with the objective and subjective characters of the relationship with reality into a single whole, then Cendrars recounts his travelling experiences in a way that pitches perfectly with the phenomenon of simultaneity. Goldenstein provides a reading that demonstrates how harmony derives from fragmentation as Cendrars seeks to reorder the relationship between the object and its environment by re-examining the relationship between absolute/relative motion and the conjoining space:

Pourquoi me charme 'l'Homme qui marche' sans tête et sans bras de Rodin?

Par le rythme du mouvement, l'harmonie de la vie. Dissonance, effet,

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<sup>184</sup> 'The landscape doesn't interest me anymore/But the dance of the landscape/The dance of the landscape/Paritititata/I all-turn', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Ma Danse', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.82.

dynamique. Immobile, il ne subjuguait guère. De même en chemin de fer, on ne s'intéresse guère au paysage, mais bien à la danse, à la ronde du paysage.<sup>185</sup>

His perception of the moving landscape as a 'danse' displays a commonality with Futurism in two ways. In describing the harmony evoked by the Rodin sculpture, Cendrars realises that sculpture should partake of its surrounding area just as the traveller merges with his/her environment. 'Danse' as an integrative tool allows active participation within any given space as this new perception of movement 'will carry its own environment within it'.<sup>186</sup> Producing truly interactive poetry and art that carves out new dimensions in the encircling area is thus a common approach to both Cendrars and Boccioni. This means that interrelated objects in the same environment cut through the both the sculpted and poetic piece to produce a form that interacts with its surrounding planes. This is the ultimate consequence of the poetics exemplified by 'Danse'.

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<sup>185</sup> 'Why does Rodin's headless and armless *Walking Man* charm me? By the rhythm of its movement, its harmony with life. Dissonance, effect, dynamics. Motionless, he is hardly striking. Just as with the railway, the landscape is not of much interest, but the dance is, the circle of the landscape.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, *Mon Voyage en Amérique* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2015), p.63.

<sup>186</sup> John Golding, *Boccioni's Unique Forms of Continuity in Space – Charlton Lectures on Art, Newcastle Upon Tyne* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1972), p.15.

## Chapter three: Technological Influences

### 3.i Photography

Photography, the contemporary medium that managed to delineate order, flux and the fragmentary as one, aimed to describe a new form of movement. Precursors to photomontage in the nineteenth century involve successively exposing individual images onto a single paper or exposing the component images simultaneously through superimposed negatives as demonstrated by the late nineteenth century pioneers of chronophotography, Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey. Futurism relays the consequences of this in painting, an example being the flickered style of Giacomo Balla's *Dog* (1912), conveying the multiple movements of the animal's limbs as if it were caught in motion on celluloid. Balla (1871-1958) focused on the detailed unravelling of his subject's physical minutiae so as to give much more precise and studied interpretations that unpeeled the figures of his paintings into more concentrated layers, separating his colours into minute brushstrokes thereby initiating Boccioni into the technique of Divisionism. This had a bearing on Boccioni's approach to movement and instilled an ethos of experimentalism into his work: 'In effetti Boccioni abbraccia l'universale, mentre Balla guarda al particolare.'<sup>187</sup> Visits to Balla's studio in Rome from 1901 to 1905 informed Boccioni of the naturalistic and divisionist traits that came to characterise his pre-futurist art, especially with regard to the use of light and the observation of nature through a realist eye. In 1907, however in a letter to Severini, Boccioni expressed his wish to

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<sup>187</sup> 'Boccioni embraces the universal while Balla concentrates on detail.' [my translation] Luigi Tallarico, *Boccioni dal Meridione all'Europa, Racconto critico* (Ferrara: Casa Editrice Belriguardo, 1997), p.13.

move beyond Balla's teachings. Other prominent Futurist theorists and influencers include Gino Severini who encouraged the potential of science as a partner to art aesthetics. Advocating the idea of an object's image being evoked through sight or touch, Severini was responsible for forging the alliance between sensation and science.

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Italy, a notable change of emphasis is apparent regarding the dynamics of portraiture that herald the techniques of photography. The ability of an object to adopt a plural stance begins to gain significance. The structure of an object could now be reassessed in the light of its capabilities for fragmentation. For the Futurists, the object is a structure that can be decomposed and broken into fragments yet the need to retain a central pivot is paramount. The intrinsic value of the object is therefore brought into question in the light of this transmogrification. This owed much to the Macchiaioli school of painting which redefined the parameters of structural composition. From the 1850s to the turn of the century, Tuscany was host to a flourishing group of painters, literally translated as the 'spotters', who felt it was important to break out of the stultifying conventions of tradition. The reason for assessing their significance is that this school may be considered the first movement to use techniques that herald photomontage.

The idea of penetrating surfaces and peeling away added superimposed layers connects with the Futurist ideal of linking the affective character of the spectator's perceptual existence with its representation via the technique of interpenetrative spatial disruption. It is significant that according to Nancy Troyer, the inconsistencies of space and scale in several of the Macchiaioli artist Giovanni

Fattori's works offers proof not only of usage of his photographic sources for his motifs but also of a process akin to photomontage for the construction of his paintings.<sup>188</sup> The layout of a Fattori work of art is reminiscent of Oscar G. Rejlander's *The Two Ways of Life* (1857; plate sixteen), a photomontage that is made up from more than thirty separate negatives. The figures of this work are clearly individualised as superimposed beings yet its elaborate stylised arrangement clearly aligns it with traditional painting. Boccioni's *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight) demonstrates how these forebears shape its make-up, while critics acknowledge that Boccioni is indebted to the pioneers of photography:

È (Boccioni) certamente attratto dalle sequenze fotografiche di Muybridge, le dinamografie di [Ernst] Mach, le cronofotografie di Marey, come traspare tanto nelle sue opere quanto nei suoi scritti.<sup>189</sup>

The above painting is tiered and when examined more closely, could easily be dissected with each part functioning autonomously. An appropriate analogy would be the removal of separate layers from a set of overhead transparencies. The painting is divided into three identifiable and independent areas. The curving outside perimeter encloses the space to convey a sense of claustrophobia. This border encircles an idyll of industrial order as the construction workers move purposefully; finally, the horses at the foot of the painting are disproportionate to

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<sup>188</sup> Nancy Troyer, 'The Macchiaioli: Effects of Modern Colour Theory, Photography and Japanese Prints on a Group of Italian Painters 1855-1900', unpublished PhD thesis, NorthWestern University, 1978, pp. 195-204.

<sup>189</sup> 'He [Boccioni] is certainly drawn to the photographic sequences of Muybridge, the "dinamografie" of Mach, the chronophotographs of Marey, and how to incorporate them into both his art and literature.' [my translation] Giovanni Lista, *I futuristi e la fotografia, creazione fotografica e immagine quotidiana*, exhibition catalogue, Modena: Galleria Civica, 7 December 1985-26 January 1986; Rovereto: Museo Depero, 14 February-16 March 1986 (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1985), p.119.

the scale of the painting which indicates that they are alien to the otherwise generally ordered environment. In other words, they could be considered almost superimposed on to the work. Imagine now, on viewing the work, how easily each of the aforementioned parts could be slotted in or removed from the painting in the form of overhead transparencies. This is a perfectly feasible analogous form of deconstruction of the work, which allows us to examine how closely Boccioni works according to an aesthetic of photomontage. The main feature of photomontage and montage generally is contrast between discordant elements. Fragmentation is the predominant effect sought initially and any harmony which might emerge is equal only to the fragmentation according to the artist/poet. Dissonance is the result of adding extra parts; it is the conscious act of superimposing that causes contrast as elements impose on the space before amalgamating with it. This prefigures the concept of 'conscious creativity', the dynamics of which are dissected in the main body of chapter five.

The technique of photomontage finds its correlative to a degree in the works of Cézanne. Foreground, middle-ground and background shapes in his paintings interlock yet also merge decisively with one another on the picture plane. This is in evidence in *Montagne Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine* (around 1887; plate seventeen) where a mountain range can be deciphered, and the colours run into each other to create a swirl of tints and lines not unlike the subtle hues and specks of brightness offered by the Impressionists. Even though this suggests a rigidity that does not invite interpretation, Cézanne's vision is concerned with the phenomenon of fragmentary vision in spite of its ordered appearance as he pursues a multiplicity



of perspective points in his art. There are certainly grounds for a debate on the potential of Cézanne's art for revealing multiple viewpoints, and in this sense he did fashion painting in a simultaneous vision, mainly through the technique of 'brisure' (redefining the volume of an object by 'the building of form through juxtaposed areas of clearly distinct tone'<sup>190</sup>). This means that the 'spectator's eye is forced to comprehend a variety of possibilities for the special placement of objects'.<sup>191</sup>

His art is certainly tighter than that of the Impressionists, its rhythms more persistent and his colours less diffuse with a superb sense of volume predominating. It is through the mechanics of motion and dynamism that Futurism advanced his techniques. However, Cézanne's work invites inspection on an intuitive level. He summarises this grasp of his subject as an innate connection between the eye and the brain:

Mais de quelles sensations parlez-vous? De celles de votre sentiment ou de celles de votre rétine?

Je pense qu'il ne saurait y avoir de separation entre elles; pourtant, étant peintre, je m'attache à la sensation visuelle, avant tout.<sup>192</sup>

Intuition is both a dynamic and arbitrary force that can only be controlled to a degree by the artist or poet. His art is an effective example of how, just as in

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<sup>190</sup> Buckberrough, p.23.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>192</sup> "But what sensations are you talking about? Your feelings or those on your retina?/I think there can be no separation between them; as a painter, I set great store to the visual sensation above all else." [my translation] An interview between Cézanne and Emile Bernard, *Mercur de France* (Paris), CLXVIII, 551, 1 June 1921, page number not cited.

Cendrars's poetry, a seemingly regular yet fragmentary framework can generate numerous interpretations. The question is whether the human presence imposes unity on the multiple facets of the painting or whether the human consciousness is affected by the fragmentation and rendered less stable. In this sense, Cézanne's art prefigures the interpretative dilemma of Futurist art and both Orphic art and poetry.

Is photomontage meant to be viewed as a series of images that are assembled to form one large organic representation? A photomontage is a collage using photographs that are put together to form the illusion of a single image. This combination of homogeneous and heterogeneous rudiments fusing varied temporal instances parallels the mechanics of 'durée' with montage acting as a pictorial equivalent. An analogy of a string with beads for 'durée' holds firm here. Just as the string is the constant on which the differing beads (be they memories or intuitive sentiments) hang, so the canvas and frame act as the structural reinforcements in the case of a painting or photograph. The definition of photomontage is a broad one. It is often attributed to the Dadaists and Surrealists as an art form in the 1920s and 1930s when composite images were made either by pasting together individual prints or parts of prints. There is considerable debate as to when artists associated with the Berlin Dada circle (especially Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz and John Heartfield), pioneered photomontage. Hausmann's *The Art Critic* (1920) is one of his first collages to make extensive use of photographs while the Futurist-inspired Grosz-Heartfield collaboration *Preisaußschreiben! Wer ist der Schönste??* (1919) intriguingly employs a fan as a background upon which are superimposed photographic members of the Ebert/Scheidemann Weimar government. Richard

Hiepe underlines that the earlier works of Dadaist artists such as Grosz and Heartfield emulate Futurist and Cubist collage practices and 'point [...] more to Cubist and Futurist forerunners than to the then not yet fully developed collages of the Zurich Dada movement, with which they would always be connected'.<sup>193</sup>

The techniques of Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey provided the basis for photomontage. Chronophotographical reproductions of a form to represent the idea of movement were present too in the caricatures of Leonetto Cappiello (1875-1942) and in the paintings of Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931). The mechanics of dynamism inherent in this scientific photography certainly equipped the Futurist artists to approach their painting with a new template as a means of formalising the structure of their art. Boccioni was intrigued by Marey's depiction of the complete cycle of a movement which certainly achieved in part, though was not completely successful in depicting: '([...] le condizioni di velocità nelle quali viviamo la fuga continua che gli oggetti fanno intorno a noi [...]).'<sup>194</sup> This statement is included in Boccioni's general hypothesis on pictorial dynamism and its subsequent execution in his work triggered Anton Giulio Bragaglia's notion of photodynamism that was occupied with how bodies are projected through space. The Bragaglia brothers' (Arturo and Anton Giulio) decision to render the drive behind the action of a sudden gesture is however more immediate than the altogether smoother, more linear, dynamics favoured by Marey. Futurist photography was more likely to have

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<sup>193</sup> Richard Hiepe, 'Über Photographie und Photo-Collage' in *Dada Photographie und Photo-Collage*, p.32, edited by Carl-Albrecht Haenlein. Exhibition catalogue, Hanover: Kestnergesellschaft, 1979.

<sup>194</sup> '[capturing] the conditions of speed in which we live, the continual rush of objects [...]'. [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, ed. By Z. Birolli (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1972), p.25.

stemmed from Futurist painting as it was already in the process of using elements from both chronophotography and cubist collage. Futurist art had in place those components, especially the suspension of form through space under the influence of velocity.

The superimposed aspect of chronophotography is however particularly applicable to Futurist photography which continues a tradition of photomontage as an amalgamation of different exposures and plate negatives. The pictorial character of 'Prose du Transsibérien', with its accompanying design by Sonia Delaunay (plate ten), is also indebted to the linear chronophotography of Muybridge and Marey by calling upon the viewer to read simultaneously parallel strips of images, with the crucial difference that Delaunay's designs are essentially abstract. One of the earliest examples of the 'layered' effect in photography is Camille Silvy's *River Scene* (1858). This gold-toned albumen print is so clearly 'terraced', that the differences between the several prints utilised are not subtle but perceptible. Other pioneers of this photomontage aesthetic include Rejlander whose *The Two Ways of Life* (plate sixteen) is a characteristic 'combination print' that became fashionable in the 1880s. It is viable to conclude that combination printing paved the way for the Futurist technique of making pictures from more than one negative or print. Elements that are common to both combination printing and Futurist photography are i) the printing of two or more negatives on the one sheet of paper ii) superimposing two negatives, albeit at times partially, printing them both together.

Anton Giulio Bragaglia's thesis of Futurist photodynamism (*Fotodinamismo futurista*, 1911) testifies to the effectiveness of these two methods of print

production. The photograph *Ritratto polifisiognomico di Umberto Boccioni* (*The Polyphysiognomical portrait of Boccioni*; 1913, plate twenty-two) by Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia conveys how content occupies the conscious mind by using the layered montage technique of multiple negatives. Furthermore, the Bragaglia brothers produced *Ritratto di Gino Gori* (1913) using a similar technique. Futurist photodynamism was accordingly able to produce 'a suspended and dilated vision of reality capable of expressing a movement perceived exclusively in terms of duration and memory'.<sup>195</sup> Giovanni Lista is explicit in his affirmation of the Futurist technique regarding photographic structure. We return once more to this aspect of superimposition of the image to convey a gesture broken down into its multiple parts:

Rather than the process of cut-out, which means the photographer must use a 'cut-and-paste' method resulting in a materialist version of photomontage, Futurism has always preferred the technique of partial superimposition of photographic details, or double exposure, which produces a more flexible and cinematographic structure and language.<sup>196</sup>

The combination print fostered its own version of montage in the form of cutting out parts of a number of different prints, pasting them on to a photographed background and photographing the finished result. To my mind, this is furthered by Futurist photography only during the 1930s when a proliferation of photocollages by artists such as Fortunato Depero and Bruno Munari dominate the Italian photographic landscape.

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<sup>195</sup> Giovanni Lista, *Futurism & Photography* (London: Merrell Publishers, 2001), p.26.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

Both Boccioni and Cendrars are indebted to these photographic innovations. How then do Boccioni and Cendrars subsequently 'edit' and structure their works, thereby mimicking techniques heralded by photography, so as to achieve the maximum impact and to what extent do their methods correspond? Why and how do they edit? There is firstly a real need to impart kinesis and dynamism, movement and energy albeit by means of manipulation of source material. This is apparent across the whole of Futurist photography whereby the forms of expression and experimentation by Italian photographers and artists from 1911 to 1939 testify to their genuine quest to capture on celluloid the continuity and complexities of life. Throughout this period, Futurist photography developed in numerous directions. In questioning the degree to which photography is capable of capturing reality, Futurism uncovered issues that are continually intrinsic to art and poetry in general. Giovanni Lista elaborates thus: '[...] the Futurist artist intuitively understood that photography was a medium that was ontologically hostile to any dynamic perception of reality [...]'.<sup>197</sup> The result was a splintering of the movement owing to the Futurists' sense of vulnerability in front of the camera. This dichotomy is an undercurrent that was to rupture the Futurists into two factions: those that accused the photograph of arresting time arbitrarily, thus freezing movement and vitality within one frame and the rival view that photography was capable of amplifying states of motion by giving form to the values of kinesis and dynamism. This is relevant to this chapter if the issue of artist/poet as conscious creator is to be examined.

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<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

Boccioni's attempts at combining experimental and human dimensions in his photographic self-portrait *Io-Noi* (1905-07; plate eighteen) are a case in point. The 'self-multiportrait' is both subjective and objective, the artist as guinea pig rendering the multiplicity of being with the objective of viewing his physique from every possible angle. This again recalls the 'unseeable dimension' that the Futurists were so determined to emulate but at this point, Boccioni's opinion on the function of photography differs greatly from that of the Bragaglia brothers. In attempting to capture the unseeable, Boccioni's perspective is meant to be all-encompassing:

Boccioni cerca la sensazione dinamica attraverso l'organizzazione dello spazio intorno a un nucleo plastico, poi compenetrato con altri spazi e percorso da linee di movimento. Boccioni insomma vuole la sintesi e la visione globale, mentre Bragaglia si ferma all'analisi [...] Forse Boccioni non vuole essere un occhio fotografico ma come una macchina di 'raggi x': non gli interessa il vedere *con* ma il vedere *in* [...] Insomma, la macchina fotografica può decidere circa l'esclusione: Boccioni invece non può rinunciare alla poetica corale dell'inclusione.<sup>198</sup>

The global vision required is, as discussed, all-inclusive. It binds together all the strands presented by directing one's line of vision straight through the subjects, presented in an X-ray format. It subsequently pulls together these different layers in

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<sup>198</sup> 'Boccioni sought dynamic sensation through the organisation of the space around a plastic nucleus which was then interpenetrated by other spaces and lines of movement. In brief, Boccioni looked for synthesis and a global vision, while Bragaglia opted for analysis [...] Boccioni possibly did not want a photographic eye but the vision of an X-ray machine; he was not interested in seeing with [the eye] but within [...] The camera can decide on what is excluded: Boccioni instead cannot give up the choral poetry of inclusion.' [my translation] *Maurizio Fagiolo Dell'Arco, Omaggio a Balla, Balla Futurista* (Roma: Mario Bulzoni Editore, 1967), p.24.

front of the spectator enabling him or her to view as many different standpoints at once. It is a truly comprehensive absorption of the scene displayed in this case.

There is thus an illuminating connection to simultaneity at this point. If the aim of the phenomenon of simultaneity is to show every possible facet by looking through the subject, then consequently time and space are compressed, and more detail is uncovered so aiding a more fluid memorial process on the part of the spectator and the artist along with potent synthesis of the image. This synthesis depends upon making perceptible the fusion of the object and its surrounding environment through the dynamic, high-velocity form of a single image rather than representing successive moments of action.

Just as Einstein's ideas provided the Futurists with the means to hurtle through the conventional limits set by time and space, so Wilhelm Röntgen's developments in the field of X-ray science (developed in 1895) offered another mode of seeing a figure from all sides, thereby altering the time/space axis to produce a simultaneity of the self that extends into a supposed fourth dimension, elongating both the artist's and viewer's processes relating to memory beyond the usual confines. Although this source is only formally acknowledged in 1910, it is significant that Boccioni's self-portrait introduces this ideal. As with the protagonist of *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight), the central figure of *Io-Noi* with his back turned, appeals to the observer to become involved in the photograph, while the other figures of the artist are the refracted images of the plural social self. Key paintings also demonstrate how Boccioni began to see 'through' the subjects of his art as if he wanted to reflect every facet from every angle thereby mirroring the basic science of an X-ray:



'*La Risata* [1911] dopo la ripresa cubistica, risulta uno spettacolo di strutture grafico-cromatiche che riflettono una sequenza di eventi esistenziali in uno specchio fatto di numerose incrinature. Come se la realtà esterna – un locale notturno – fosse percorsa da un attacco ottico-chimico sugli oggetti e le loro proprietà fisiche, piro-elettriche, con diffrazioni di raggi X, con effetti di polarizzazioni rotatorie.<sup>199</sup>

Boccioni is more interested in the internal combustion of his subjects which the advent of X-ray facilitated in terms of penetrating through his figures. The artist's pencil drawings are a very effective way of tracing the development of his currents of movement from the centre of the canvas outwards. A certain number of key factors are apparent when studying Boccioni's drawings. They are evolving masses that vibrate outwards, constructing and slotting different parts together in an organic fashion. The sketch *Studio di Figure* (1908) shows how the interlocking strips of the human figures come together, dovetailing with each other, moving out from the centre. This is taken further with the pencil drawings that pertain to light. The varied compartmentalised areas of *Le Forze di una Strada* (1911; plate five) move forward on the page because they are made up of lines that cut through each human form as they power towards the front of the page. The effect is that of viewing a scene placed on an X-ray lightbox and fulfills many Futurist criteria. It is a prototype for force-lines in action, a breathing, dynamic image that propels forwards

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<sup>199</sup> '*La Risata*, after the Cubist revival, is a graphic-chromatic structure that reflects a sequence of existential events in a mirror made of many cracks. It is as if the external reality – a nocturnal scene – is shot through by a chemical-optical attack on the objects and their physical "piro-electrical" properties, with X-ray diffractions and effects of rotational polarisations.' [my translation] Elda Fezzi, *Umberto Boccioni* (Milan: Aldo Martello Editore, 1974), p.14.

through the penetrative interaction of planes. The different perspectives become one as the car and street lights pierce the work.

Yet even with the photo-performance images of Fortunato Depero and later advancements such as Enrico Pedrotti's *Skier* (1927), basic Futurist instructions, such as 'pure rhythms of light and forms'<sup>200</sup>, remain as core principles. The common and imperative thread throughout Futurist photographic evolution is that the photographs are true experiments in movement, with images such as Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia's polyphysiological portrait of Boccioni and *Cambiamento di posizione* (*Changing position*, 1911) depicting decomposition of the subject's form. These experiments relay both a sense of stillness and continuous movement as do the majority of Futurist photographs.

Cendrars's poetry is episodic and in this respect resembles the 'layered' aspect of a Boccioni piece. A visual analogy which elucidates this theory may take the guise of a series of overlapping moments (rather like a cinematic split-screen effect). The Macchiaioli technique demonstrates that the photograph was an important and suggestive tool. Photography is regarded as the most mimetic form of visual representation, allowing two and three-dimensional interpretations in its reading. Photographic compositions can be divided either symmetrically or asymmetrically, providing deliberate pivots around which spatial areas are held in balance. In the light of this, intuition is able to function on several levels; the artist/photographer manipulates the scenario so that the subject(s) ignites a reaction on the part of the spectator; the viewer interprets the artistic/ photographic image through a purely

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<sup>200</sup> Lista, *Futurism & Photography*, p.54.

subjective filter, perhaps realising hitherto unseen elements not anticipated by the artist. In this respect, Cendrars's work relies on the reader pursuing a set of consciously invented signals that the reader is able to transmute thereby resulting in a purely intuitive experience on the latter's part. It is the poet's intention that the reader shares in his reality by absorbing or at least registering some of these signals.

The structure of the series *Documentaires* (previously entitled *Kodak*, see p.14; 1924) facilitates distributing these signals, more so than *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*. Forty-four out of fifty-five poems describe scenes in North America. Divided into chapters by geographical regions, the volume reads like a series of static moments captured on celluloid. The idea of 'conscious creativity' enters a new realm here in the sense that there is a honing down of what is to be given to the reader in the form of 'clues' which is more explicit. This may be seen as an extension of the collage technique perfected in the *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*. Taking a snapshot of the moment is made possible through the demarcation of prominent elements, rendered evocative though a finely controlled poetic vision that conveys more than the rational information on the page initially permits. Cendrars's tone switches between the descriptive and the metaphorical, moving from the sentiment of 'a photograph with a note on the back as it were'<sup>201</sup> to a mode more appropriate to conventional poetic discourse:

Visite des serres

Le thermo siphon y maintient une température constante...

La matinée est radieuse

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<sup>201</sup> Bochner, p.131.

Les bruyères d'une sombre couleur de pourpre et les genêts d'or ne sont pas encore défleuris<sup>202</sup>

Lines such as this lend weight to the theory that Cendrars is the creator of his own reality, a constant tenet and line of enquiry throughout this analysis. He provides the stimuli for an intuitive conversion (isolated verbal units which give the impression of self-generating autonomous imagery) while the reader has to furnish these catalysts with his/her own interpretation though only after being given the necessary tools to do so.

Controlling consciousness is in evidence more overtly in Boccioni's work. His works inherently guide the viewer with a two-fold process of intuition (the conscious artistry influencing the intuition of the spectator) in operation with, for instance, colour acting as the tool of direction. *Dinamismo di una testa di donna* (1914; plate nineteen) for instance, is a particularly effective example of blocks of colour shaping the spectator's vision so that the viewer discerns the outline of a face. The green foreground areas work in tandem with the red background mass to push the spectator's eye towards the other parts, namely the yellow outline of the nose and the blue shaded area that is the neck. Boccioni's method of attack is a dual one; red and green come first, blue and yellow second. It is a finely controlled work of art that is consonant with simultaneity; fragmentation is the initial effect though

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<sup>202</sup> 'Visiting the greenhouses/The thermo-syphon maintains a constant temperature.../The morning is radiant/The dark purple heather and golden broom still haven't shed their petals', transl. Ron Padgett, Cendrars, 'Laboratoire', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.141.

harmony ensues as he 'sought to overcome the arbitrariness he believed characterised Cubist works through the dynamism of an intuited central core'.<sup>203</sup>

A particular feature of Boccionian simultaneity indeed involves an initial technical analysis based on the spectator 'breaking up the canvas unity in such a way as to allow the spectator's own creative intuition to establish unity and so ascertain the painter's integral and intuitive conception'.<sup>204</sup> This implies that both the spectator and artist are aware of their treatment of the canvas and the space both are manipulating. In the poetry of Cendrars, this duality becomes even more fraught as the poet declares his poetry to be devoid of any simultaneous effects (in the poem 'Crépitements' (1913), he states, 'Il n'y a pas de simultanée'<sup>205</sup>), with the reader in a position of trust as she/he attempts to decode the simultaneous process inherent in the deliberately dysfunctional literature. The question here is the degree to which both Boccioni and Cendrars knowingly induce unity on the part of the spectator/reader through the dissection of their spatial dimensions.

### **3.ii Cinema & Montage**

In this analysis, Boccioni's and Cendrars's methods of structuring and the degree to which they are engineered are under scrutiny to establish whether they are indeed related. The message that resonates throughout any discussion of the structure and language of both artists is that a cinematographic effect (in the sense of the cinematic technique of montage imitating the overall precept of simultaneity)

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<sup>203</sup> Poggi, p.178.

<sup>204</sup> Antliff, p.52.

<sup>205</sup> 'There is no simultaneity.' [my translation] Cendrars, 'Crépitements', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.90.

underpins their respective visions. At this point, it is significant how simultaneity acts as an 'umbrella', an overarching principle that furthers discussion on two other principal areas of examination in the thesis, namely 'durée' and superimposition, by firstly, underscoring the language of the cinema. The art of Boccioni and the poetry of Cendrars embodies the idea of Bergsonian 'durée', a simultaneous and uninterrupted flow of information from memory and intuition that combines the homogeneous and the heterogeneous within one organic arrangement. Secondly, simultaneity aids superimposition which can be defined as the layering of detail, the final stages of an editing process that progresses from a pre-defined centre outwards to limits set at differing degrees by both Cendrars and Boccioni.

Cendrars saw the cinema as the epitome of the new age and the logical expression of a new communion of the individual and society. Boder outlines cinema's continued allure for the poet:

[...] Cendrars reste hanté par le cinéma. Il essaie successivement tous les rôles: scénariste (*La fin du monde*, 1916; *Panorama de la pègre*, 1934; *L'Eperon d'or*, 1939; *Films sans images*, 1959), essayiste (*L'ABC du cinéma*, 1917), acteur (*J'accuse*, 1920, d'Abel Gance), assistant (*La Roue*) et metteur en scène (*La Vénus noire*, 1920).<sup>206</sup>

As Richard Abel points out by referencing Cendrars's 'L'A B C du cinéma', cinema significantly serves a dual purpose which no doubt appealed to the sensibilities of the poet; that of 'editing' reality as such by bringing together parts that depict reality

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<sup>206</sup> [...] Cendrars remains haunted by the cinema. He successively took on all the 'cinema roles': scriptwriter (*The end of the world*, 1916; *Panorama of the underworld*, 1934; *The golden spur*, 1939; *Films without images*, 1959), essayist (*L'ABC of cinema*, 1917), actor (*I accuse*, 1920, with Abel Gance), assistant (*The Wheel*) and director (*Black Venus*, 1920).' [my translation] Boder, p.54.

as one continuous entirety and by uniting global pockets of people through watching the same film the world over:

In his elliptical, telegraphic prose style, Cendrars argued that film's fragmentation of reality gave the viewers an intensified experience of the simultaneous flux of life and that the worldwide exhibition of a film created a kind of 'global village' of simultaneous audience participation.<sup>207</sup>

Georgiana M.M.Colvile, meanwhile, underpins how Cendrars manipulates language, and especially syntax, in a way that merits the adjective 'cinematographic' by underlining especially the propensity of Cendrars's poetic language for isolating 'shots' of the passing world:

La structure du texte ('Ma Danse') présente certains aspects cinématographiques: le long chapelet de substantives ressemble à une série de plans, dont des gros-plans: 'la femme', 'je suis un monsieur [...]', et ils s'organisent en séquences, comme dans la deuxième strophe par exemple. On y discerne aussi des 'panoramiques' et des 'travellings': la danse, le train.<sup>208</sup>

The poet's terse comments on the cinematographic arts also mirror the scientific advancements heralded in certain works by Boccioni. *Le forze di una strada* (plate five), for instance, may be seen as an homage to scientific advancement and the new god of electric light:

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<sup>207</sup> Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.261.

<sup>208</sup> 'The structure of the text ("My Dance") presents certain cinematographic aspects: the long series of nouns resembles a sequence of shots, including close-ups: "the woman", "I am a man [...]", and they are organised in sequences, as in the second stanza for instance. There are also "panoramic" shots and zoom shots: dance, the train.' [my translation] Georgiana M.M. Colvile, *Blaise Cendrars, Écrivain Protéiforme* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1994), p.20.

Les derniers aboutissements des sciences précises, la guerre mondiale, la conception de la relativité, les convulsions politiques, tout fait prévoir que nous nous acheminons vers une nouvelle synthèse de l'esprit humain, vers une nouvelle humanité et qu'une race d'hommes nouveaux va paraître. Leur langage sera le cinéma.<sup>209</sup>

It is significant that cinema is presented by Cendrars as the final link in the evolutionary chain with literary achievements (the invention of printing) being the first segment, communication (as the medium of photography) and transport the second and cinema as the third. The chapter 'L'A B C du cinéma' in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, which is structured in parts, is so entitled because movement operates on three levels, progressing from mechanical to the human to global (the camera – the spectator – the crowds leaving the cinema). This thesis reflects Cendrars's idea of cinema as a new language and mode of expression. This is possibly analogous with the *Stati d'Animo I first version* (1911; plate twenty) of Boccioni. All three images, of which this series is composed, incorporate this movement from the individual to the frenetic, retreating from the electricity-driven second image that captures the electric lights to the intensely moving procession of the third painting. Note also the emphasis on the eye as the instrument of ultimate perception from both quarters: 'Battement d'une paupière.'<sup>210</sup> / 'L'aprirsi e il richiudersi di una valvola crea un ritmo altrettanto bello ma infinitamente più nuovo di quello di una palpebra

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<sup>209</sup> 'The latest achievements in science, the world war, the theory of relativity, political turmoil, these all anticipate a new synthesis of the human mind, a new humanity and a new race of men. Their language will be that of the cinema.' [my translation] Cendrars, 'L'ABC du cinéma' (1917/1921) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, p.38.

<sup>210</sup> 'Beating of an eyelid.' [my translation] Cendrars, 'J'ai tué' (1918) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929*, p.19.



animale!’<sup>211</sup> Both express the idea of a universe moving in instants as viewed through a camera shutter which records the constancy of life in an instant yet also portrays an elongated time sequence lasting longer than the moment captured. Indeed, the panorama of both a Boccioni painting and Cendrars poem is sweeping and enveloping, with both capable of being caught in one complete scan of the eye or alternately as a series of shots that link and overlap in a ‘montage’ style. The poem ‘Contrastes’ for instance, may be viewed as one scene or several, according to the chosen perspective of the reader. Boccioni’s scope is similarly all-encompassing such is the Futurist desire to capture the time/space divide as it is crushed by the Boccionian rush of movement.

It is worth pointing out at this stage the contradictory nature of Futurist proclamations relating to temporal and spatial criteria, and the inherent flaws in the school’s reasoning. Andreas Kramer points out the incongruity of Marinetti’s announcement, ‘Il Tempo e lo Spazio morirono ieri’ (footnote 107), which instils rigidity through its own rhetoric:

The Futurist assault on time and space, is, it seems, unable to free itself from the languages of time and space. If anything, then, notions of space serve to undermine notions of time, pinpointing the fundamental problem of a

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<sup>211</sup> ‘The opening and closing of a valve creates a rhythm which is just as beautiful to look at as the movements of an eyelid, and infinitely more modern.’ [my translation] Boccioni, ‘La Scultura Futurista’ (1912) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.83.

movement that sought to construct itself as an absolute point of origin; as a movement not coming 'after, but in place of' the culture which precedes it.<sup>212</sup>

Nonetheless does this Boccionian vigour have any precedents? Futurist cinema did attempt to further fundamental Futurist directives, but only to a lesser degree. In 1910, the brothers Arnaldo Ginna and Bruno Corra experimented with abstract cinema and produced Futurist films such as *La danza* (around 1914), which do not survive. Moreover, *The Futurist Cinema* manifesto of 1916 (Marinetti, Bruno Corra, Arnaldo Ginna et al.) views film as an autonomous art form that should extend the remit of painting:

Il cinematografo, essendo essenzialmente visivo, deve compiere anzitutto l'evoluzione della pittura; distaccarsi dalla realtà, dalla fotografia, dal grazioso e dal solenne. Diventare antigrazioso, deformatore, impressionista, sintetico, dinamico, parolibero.<sup>213</sup>

This depicts cinema as a form that in essence takes montage to the extreme. In exposing 'reality thrown together at random'<sup>214</sup>, this announcement calls for a celluloid product that stops short of complete disorder on screen. It is this breakdown and partial destruction of order that appealed to the Futurists, nonetheless. Meanwhile, Anton Giulio Bragaglia's silent film *Perfido Incanto* (1916)

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<sup>212</sup> Andreas Kramer, 'Geographies of Futurism: Mapping the First Avant-garde' in *One Hundred years of Futurism, Aesthetics, Politics and Performance*, ed. by John London (Bristol: Intellect, 2018), pp.49-78 (p.51).

<sup>213</sup> 'The cinema, being essentially visual, must above all fulfil the evolution of painting, detach itself from reality, from photography, from the graceful and solemn. It must become antigraceful, deforming, impressionistic, synthetic, dynamic, free-wording.' Marinetti et al., 'La Cinematografia Futurista' (1915/16) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018), p.227. 'The Futurist Cinema', transl. R.W. Flint in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.208.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

is a graceless series of sequential frames that looks and feels truly synthetic, thereby fulfilling Marinetti's aforementioned conditions. It resembles both the aesthetic of Cendrars's poetry and Boccioni's art in the sense that a female protagonist remains a constant in an unravelling universe (such as Jehanne in *Prose* or the figure on the balcony in *Visioni Simultanee*). The film does comply with a number of essential Futurist ideals, especially regarding the interpenetration of different spaces with the sharp contours of the scenery used adding to the 'spliced' effect of the film.

At this point, a brief evaluation of photography's role in aiding montage is required. Simultaneity is a question of dualities and the overall purpose of Futurist photography, especially in the case of the photodynamism advocated by the Bragaglia brothers, is a continual interchange between juxtaposed planes and the seamless merging of those same items. The *Polyphysiognomical portrait of Boccioni* (1913; plate twenty-two) by the aforementioned brothers places the face of the artist at the forefront of the photograph, rotating the head with multiple movements. The composition is not evenly spaced in that the right-hand image, the profile view of the artist, tends to overshadow the other two aspects of the figure. This is not to say that the photograph is unsuccessful in capturing the advancement of the gesture. It does achieve this, and is a masterly portrayal of what occurs during such a motion. There is a very real sense of viewing the three component parts of the image and the complete image simultaneously. The idea of transition across a number of individual planes means that there is juxtaposition and fluidity alternately, resulting in both dismemberment and reunification of the item. Lista comments on the conscious aspect of this process:

The technique used was formally to construct the image – no longer to capture it, but to organise the progression of the gesture through a succession of juxtaposed planes, which were to merge with one another seamlessly, so as to convey the movement itself and also what happened during the movement.<sup>215</sup>

However, according to Lista, the Futurists openly lamented the advancement of cinema: ‘Pour les futuristes, le cinéma et la photographie ne sont que des médias froids, qui n’exaltent pas l’intensité et l’unicité de l’acte de la création,’ with Boccioni even going so far as to reject cinema as an ‘anti-artistic manifestation’.<sup>216</sup> Lista, however, makes the valid judgement that Futurism, as a flagbearer of modernity, could not afford to ignore the technological merits of cinematography and its ability to turn accepted temporal and spatial ideals on their head:

Refusant à la fois le théâtre littéraire et le ‘film d’art’, se méfiant de l’image mécanique en tant que telle, c’est-à-dire de la photographie et du cinéma comme médias capables de transmettre l’élan vital, Marinetti et les futuristes pensent néanmoins que la photographie scientifique et le cinéma populaire sont en train d’opérer une révolution radicale du regard: d’abord par la possibilité de saisir des visions inédites qui échappent aux conditions perceptives normales de l’oeil humain, puis par le passage de l’image animée à l’animation de l’image, par l’enregistrement de la vie quotidienne en action, par la capacité à remonter dans le temps, à accélérer ou ralentir le mouvement, et donc à manipuler les données objectives de la réalité, ce qui signifie de fait

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<sup>215</sup> Lista, *Futurism & Photography*, p.24.

<sup>216</sup> ‘For the Futurists, cinema and photography are nothing but “cold media” which do not glorify the intensity and unicity of the act of creation.’ [my translation] Giovanni Lista, *Le Cinéma Futuriste* (Paris: Editions Paris Expérimental, 2008), p.12 & p.16.

changer l'intuition ontologique du rapport entre espace et temps, bouleverser le sens commun, abolir les conventions, déridier les idées solennelles et rhétoriques de la pensée humaniste.<sup>217</sup>

Lista's evaluation of photography as an instrument capable of circumventing and transforming reality means that the Bergson-inspired themes of pictorial dynamism come effectively into play at this point. What is evident from the points presented in relation to Futurist photography is that even though it is impossible to control and surmise a pattern of movement, as stated by Boccioni below, this formation can be captured on celluloid in all its different configurations:

Ogni suddivisione di moto è un fatto completamente arbitrario, come è completamente arbitraria ogni suddivisione di material. Henry Bergson dice: 'Toute division de la matière en corps indépendants aux contours absolument déterminés est une division artificielle.'<sup>218</sup>

If the visual equivalent of 'durée' is a question of following through an image in its various forms, then Boccioni emphasises how Futurism aimed to be the antithesis of photography's generally linear processes:

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<sup>217</sup> 'Rejecting at the same time literary theatre and the "art film", while mistrusting the mechanical image as such, that is to say photography and cinema as media capable of transmitting the "élan vital", Marinetti and the Futurists considered nonetheless scientific photography and popular cinema as introducing a radical way of seeing: first, with the possibility of capturing unedited visions which escape the usual perceptive field of vision of the human eye and then by shifting from the animated image to the animation of the image, by the recording of daily life in action, by the capacity to go back in time, to speed up or slow down movement and thereby manipulate the objective details of reality which signifies in fact the changing of the ontological intuition of the relationship between space and time, upsetting common sense, abolishing conventions, undoing the formal and rhetorical ideas of humanist thought.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>218</sup> 'Every subdivision of movement is a complementary arbitrary fact, as is the subdivision of matter. Henry Bergson said: "All division of matter into independent bodies according to strictly determined outlines is an artificial division".' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'Fondamento plastico della scultura e pittura futuriste' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.42.

Noi vogliamo al contrario avvicinarci alla sensazione pura, creare cioè la forma nell'intuizione plastica, creare la durata dell'apparizione, cioè vivere l'oggetto nel suo manifestarsi.<sup>219</sup>

At this stage, montage and simultaneity truly merge; Lista's comment on the paradoxical elements of photography, both seamless and disjointed, is, to my mind, an alternate but analogous description of Boccioni's and Bergson's above comments on the automatic pattern of movements. All parties analyse the dynamic stratagems at the heart of simultaneity; various pictorial and verbal elements are intended, across Boccioni's and Cendrars's poetry as well as early Futurist photographic experiments, to 'generate a dynamic tension stemming from the fundamentally different receiving activities they demand of the reader/viewer'.<sup>220</sup> If montage is a constant interplay of similarities and differences, then it is easily allied with this ideal of harmony engendered through differing factors. Cendrars's cinematographic vision for his poetry therefore relies heavily on the reader's/viewer's fragmented reading of the work and the subsequent parity that arises from the dysfunctionality between contrasting parts. The poet modelled his general poetic structure on a film-based vision that breaks up the works into a series of 'cuts'. This enabled him to treat his poems as a fragmented body to be 'operated' on in both a cinematographic and surgical sense. The ultimate aim of photodynamism was to 'capture the movement between decomposition and reunification of the form'.<sup>221</sup> This is a

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<sup>219</sup> 'On the contrary, we want to evoke pure feeling, make form through plastic intuition, create duration from appearance, live through the object and its manifestations.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>220</sup> Eric Robertson, 'Writing the Alphabet of Cinema: Blaise Cendrars' in *Literature and Visual Technologies, Writing After Cinema*, ed. by Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (Basingstoke: Houndmills, 2003), pp.137-154 (p.139).

<sup>221</sup> Lista, *Futurism & Photography*, p.24.

process that would generate a breakdown of the subject's constituent parts, presenting inconsistent elements that are reunified through a sequential progression to impart a whole (though it is often the one image being dissected here into several alien parts). This process finds another analogy in 'durée' that is founded on contrasting parts hanging together as one on a single thread.

Yet if 'Prose du Transsibérien' is studied in detail, it is crucial to note that the use of colour is the connecting factor in creating new movements. For instance, the infant ('une enfant') referred to as the poet's object of love and affection transmutes from a blonde and unsullied mortal into a separate subject, lauding other women which borders on the erotic. The presentation of such varied hues underscore the adulatory tone of the narrator as he grapples with such contradictory presentations of female identity.

Ce n'est qu'une enfant, blonde, rieuse et triste,

Elle ne sourit pas et ne pleure jamais; [...]

Car elle est mon amour, et les autres femmes

N'ont que des robes d'or sur de grands corps de flammes<sup>222</sup>

The parallel in Futurist art to this multifarious aspect pertaining to movement and ultimately simultaneity can be found in the Boccioni paintings *Autoritratto* (1908; plate twenty-three, shown alongside the relevant Cendrars text) and *La città sale* (1910-11; plate one). The former is a particularly good example of how the artist deploys the layout of different and distinct veneers to imitate a photographic

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<sup>222</sup> 'She is but a fair child who laughs/Is sad, doesn't smile, and never cries [...]/For she is my love, and other women/Are but big bodies of flame sheathed in gold', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.32.

backdrop. The artist himself is brought sharply into focus by his being so starkly contrasted with the next surface, the white wall behind him. This is a pre-Futurist work in origin and realisation that can be surveyed as a composite image consisting of four distinct parts: the background buildings, the sky, the wall and the artist. Yet this detachment of constituents has not necessarily produced an indigestible work. On the contrary 'in questo ritratto l'artista e l'ambiente hanno la stessa immersione nello spazio'.<sup>223</sup> *La città sale* is a rousing evocation of a city tumult. The shading of the central animal, the huge, reddish-brown horse, appears to flicker, drawing the remaining figures into the swirling mass. This flickering effect, due mainly to the divisionist brushwork, is reminiscent of the rapid and fleeting motion of the hands in Anton Giulio's and Arturo Bragaglia's *Dattilografia* (1913). In both art and photography of the time, there is thus the simple effect of conveying the idea of moving from one realm (temporal and spatial) to another within the one frame/canvas by following the physical trails left by the gesture of the object/subject portrayed. That is to say, form, in its prorogation, accomplishes basic Futurist dictates of interpenetration, pictorial dynamism, duration, and in the final analysis, simultaneity. *La città sale* is a skilful collusion between colour representation and form construction in that the areas shaded in purple assist in guiding the eye horizontally across the canvas, augmenting the liquefaction of the painting's configuration generally. There is thus a conscious attempt to physically render the 'trails' left by the movement of the physical object in both Futurist art and

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<sup>223</sup> '[...] in this portrait, the artist and the atmosphere are immersed in the same space'. [my translation] Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni, l'opera completa*, (Milan: Electa, 1983), p.237.



photography of the time. This could be considered almost a diluted form of montage because it shows the deconstruction of separate movements within one frame. Even though this separation is not strictly based on the montage aesthetic of juxtaposition, it still breaks up one part into divergent divisions, thereby enabling a physical and visual leap across a temporal and spatial divide.

So if this does not stick to the montage aesthetic of juxtaposition, how is it possible to apply it to simultaneity? Bergson stressed that the constituent parts of 'durée' may well be heterogeneous but they do not invite juxtaposition. Kitchin's proposal to reconciling this conflict is that cinematographic technique as an analogy allows for this juxtaposition but also takes into account the constituent parts of any film, or its equivalent of the different parts of 'durée'. A plurality of successive events can still be linked to the succession of events depicted in films, but a Bergsonian interpretation would insist on maintaining the intrinsic connection between supposedly juxtaposed episodes:

In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson introduces his remarkably effective comparison of the mechanism of our knowledge to a cinematograph. We can take as many snapshots as we like of a moving body, but each of these is immobile. However many we take and at whatever short intervals of time we take them, the result is the same – there is no movement. By turning the film we reconstitute the photographs into a representation of a moving body, but – and this is the important point – we have ourselves put the motion into the apparatus [...] The

mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind, and this cinema-method is the only practical method.<sup>224</sup>

This has important implications for this study of simultaneity. Simultaneity is a cinematic experience in that the whole is presented with the 'joins visible'. If montage in a cinematic sense is essentially about the rapid juxtaposition of contrasting shots, then the work of both Boccioni and Cendrars fulfils this basic criterion to a degree. *Le forze di una strada* (1911; plate five) by Boccioni is populated by human silhouettes that are dotted around a tableau dominated by a monument to light (the pyramid structure in the background). *Stati d'Animo I first version* (1911; plate twenty) is riddled with light imagery though this is so subtly executed, the viewer naturally absorbs these flecks of luminosity. Boccioni also uses light to generate the natural energy implicit within the human face and figure. Earlier works such as *Ritratto di Bice Procida* (1905) demonstrate how the artist literally swivels his subject from one perspective to another, delineating areas of light around the body to construct an organic, energised figure that switches position on the canvas owing to its luminosity. All, to my mind, are works that can be read as cinematic as they present juxtapositions of images in close succession.

This dialogue on montage as a precursor to cinematographic technique is lent insight by tracing Boccioni's artistic development through his sketches (*Groppa di cavallo, Cavallo, Cavalli al trotto e al galoppo* and *Studio di cavallo*<sup>225</sup>). The decisive factor during this part of the analysis that bridges Boccioni's and Cendrars's ideals

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<sup>224</sup> Darcy B. Kitchin, *Bergson for Beginners, A Summary of his Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Company Ltd., 1913), pp.115-16.

<sup>225</sup> Calvesi & Coen, p.198, all housed in private collections.

with regard to a photomontage aesthetic is the blending of the concrete and the abstract. Under examination, Boccioni's sketches veer between restraint and experimentation. His equine works all demonstrate a move towards a new kind of dynamic, which could be viewed as a new visual equivalent of internal combustion. These sketches move back and fore between many different styles – parody, abstract, figuration – becoming more courageous in their quest to confront the viewer face-on and achieve a quasi-cinematic effect by adopting a three-dimensional approach. There is always however a drawing back into a purely figurative mode that is also the case with Cendrars's poetry, though there are elements that escape straightforward explanation. The viewer/spectator is left with only partial impressions of the image (this stage is discussed earlier within the context of Symbolism as a 'halfway visualisation' phenomenon). This, as is consistently stated throughout this thesis, is due to the deliberate manoeuvring of the boundaries that Boccioni himself imposes. The artist is reluctant to commit to a complete abandonment of form. This is in evidence in *Due Figure* (1910; plate twenty-four), a piece that depends upon the interaction of distinct representational forms and imperceptible profiles. The shading-in of pre-defined areas is significant as it flouts the viewer's ways of seeing. The fact that the spectator has to grapple with ideas of perception reveals a conscious ordering of the artist's canvas. With Cendrars though, the interchange with the receiver becomes even more diffuse. In order to disentangle this exchange, it is necessary to examine those texts of the poet's that are principally woven around cinematic technique.

The narrative function of the 'mise en scène' of *La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange N.D.* (1919) can be subdivided into two categories: firstly, purely descriptive and secondly, factual material that reflects to an extent a 'stream of consciousness' process. For the former, the narrative occasionally provides explicit technical details such as camera angles. As an example of the latter, in part three of section one, the reader is given a preliminary insight into the thought process of the protagonist, 'Mais cela ne peut durer éternellement.'<sup>226</sup> This is a cognisant attempt to voice the sentiment of Dieu le Père. Isolated as this interjection is, it nevertheless allows a subjective direction to be set. There is certainly an affinity with Boccionian aesthetics here. If we cast an eye across the whole of Boccioni's œuvre, we will find numerous instances of human figures weighed down by an oppressive mechanical environment (*La strada entra nella casa / Stati d'Animo / La città sale*). As with *La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange N.D.*, technological advancements crowd the milieu. In part five of section one, Cendrars presents a sharply delineated series of modern landscape features that jostle for dominance:

Interlaken. La gare de Mars. Immenses bâtiments illuminés au pied de massif de la Jungfrau. Partout des usines dans la montagne. Installations industrielles. Mâts. Cheminées. Conduites d'eau gigantesques. Ponts, traverses, cables, pylons, réservoirs.<sup>227</sup>

The elements of a solitary human voice interacting with an unstoppable technological movement are typical of Boccioni's art. This oppressive atmosphere

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<sup>226</sup> 'But that cannot last eternally.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, *Œuvres Complètes, Vol. II* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1961), p.18.

<sup>227</sup> 'Interlaken. The station of Mars. Huge buildings lit up at the foot of the Jungfrau massif. Factories everywhere in the mountains. Industrial plants. Masts. Chimneys. Gargantuan water mains. Bridges, roads, cables, pylons, reservoirs.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.18.

whereby man is not always completely integrated into the new world is characteristic of Boccioni's and Cendrars's works. 'Prose du Transsibérien' is startling in its metaphoric ferocity with the poet struggling to overcome the oppressive mechanical power of the train's heat and noise:

Mais oui, tu m'énerves, tu le sais bien, nous sommes bien loin  
La folie surchauffée beugle dans la locomotive  
La peste le cholera se lèvent comme des braises ardentes sur notre route  
Nous disparaissions dans la guerre en plein dans un tunnel<sup>228</sup>

The effect is one of mounting claustrophobia, to the extent that "Prose du Transsibérien" is presented as an elaborate montage of sensations, images, and narrative fragments by means of which the poet tries to keep his ego intact.<sup>229</sup> Even though the poet embraces the modern age, there is a note of tension in his poetry that alludes to an uncertain future:

Ossification.  
Locomotion.  
Tout grouille<sup>230</sup>

The most direct correlative in Boccioni's work is *Stati d'Animo I first version, (Gli Addii, Farewells, 1911; plate twenty)* in which human figures are barely perceptible amongst the multi-coloured flames of an overwhelming inferno.

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<sup>228</sup> 'Of course we are, stop bothering me, you know we are a long way.'

'An overheated madness bellows in the locomotive/Plague and cholera rise like burning embers around us/We disappear right into a tunnel of war', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.35.

<sup>229</sup> Perloff, p.23.

<sup>230</sup> 'Ossification/Locomotion/Everything is teeming', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Construction', *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, p.104.

Chapter four of *La Fin du Monde* demonstrates how montage can microscope the action. The first shot is a general view of Paris, progressing then to the backstreets and hidden corners of the city. This microscoping is in essence a deconstruction of the whole. Boccioni's art is the result of such a process. The spectator can home in on certain aspects of his portraits without difficulty. In *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight), our eye is drawn to the intricate figures of the construction workers. In *Cavallo + Cavaliere + Caseggiato* (plate fourteen), we instinctively break down the painting into its constituent parts. Simultaneity demands this dismantling of structure, as does montage though it is important to remember that simultaneity is primarily an effect, while montage is a process which usually entails simultaneity. It is not difficult to imagine moving outwards, and conversely inwards, depending on one's chosen starting point in both Cendrars's poetry and Boccioni's art. The spectator can, for instance, focus on the construction workers in *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight) and then progress outwards until the eye reaches the lady on the balcony. With chapter four of *La Fin du Monde*, the 'camera' that is the poet swoops in and down on Paris. There is a heterogeneous group of different characters presented that is intuitively grouped together by the reader in a literal sense and also on a purely cerebral level. This means that the reader reads and imagines the varied scenes as separate occurrences and as disconnected events (fulfilling the criteria of both montage and simultaneity).

Several common threads merge at this point. Montage inspires a 'backwards/forwards' reading of the works. It does so by implying a temporal process which is concentrated into the layered composite. In this respect, it

foregrounds its dependence on sequence. The written work relies on the reading process, which is by definition sequential. As a result of this it permits and even invites the reader to move backwards over the action, thus allowing a more cohesive interpretation of how events are interconnected (see Clive Scott's later comment regarding this dual approach to reading, p.246). It is possible to argue that Cendrars's use of prolepsis and analepsis encourages such to-ing and fro-ing across temporal levels: the refrain in 'Prose du Transsibérien': 'j'étais si mauvais poète...', with its minor variations suggests continuity but also a degree of stasis, making us 'loop back' to its previous occurrences, or the simultaneous unfolding of the train journey and the embedded narrative of Blaise's story as told to Jehanne. This tracking of actions introduces the notion of time, hence providing a link to 'durée'. By dividing the work into parts, Cendrars leads us to see how these divisions overlap (the idea of different rhythms produced by different layers interlocking and moving together due to overlapping is also discussed later). These 'montage' techniques are closely allied to intuition; if the reader/spectator is forced to look at the constituent parts, then there should be a conscious ordering of the work.

Nowhere is the 'montage' aesthetic more in evidence than in Cendrars's attempt at a genuinely cinematic discourse, *La Perle Fiévreuse* (1923). This script is formulated into some eight hundred and fifty 'shots' with each frame presenting a sequential stage of the story. Technical instructions on the various camera angles and effects, and the different sizes of lens to be used, litter the text. The 'mise en scène' is small and intimate with a character list that parodies an English comedy of manners. Individual scenarios are outlined in sufficient detail so that the reader's faculties of

'remembering and seeing' need to be employed across the duration of the plot. Unifying 'flashpoints' bind the action such as Rougha's symbolic glances, the statue of Shiva and Lord Henry's role as an engineer of events. These events make the action of the plot cohesive. Yet they are particular to this story alone. Universal Cendrars motifs and themes reverberate throughout the plot. Dance emerges as a conductor of movement, space and energy:

829. Renchaîner. Elle danse.

830-840. Différents plans de cette danse passionnée, crescendo continué jusqu'à la frénésie en vertige, avec flash, stalles et en mouvement. Réflexes dans la salle, orchestre etc.<sup>231</sup>

This moment in time is halted through the single lightning action of Rougha. Through this action, the temporal process is arrested to the extent that we encounter the future, past and present as captured in the one frenetic point of contact with the character's positioning in time and space, the very essence of montage. Movement outwards, on a more panoramic plane, also causes the action to proliferate. Consequently, when the camera does pan in on certain details, the reader's/viewer's attention is brought into focus much more sharply. By using both panoramic and close-up shots of Rougha's dance midway through the third part, Cendrars displays an affinity once more with the overarching technicalities of simultaneity:

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<sup>231</sup> '829 Fade. She dances

830-840. Different shots of this passionate dance, a continual crescendo up to a giddy frenzy, with fast cuts, static and moving. Reactions in the stalls, orchestra etc.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'La Perle Fiévreuse', *Œuvres Complètes, Vol. IV*, p.61.



508. Renchaîner en plein vertige de la danse. Vitesse giratoire (essayer quelques perspectives renversées) en renversant l'angle de l'appareil.

509. Flash et divers gros plans, détaillés, de cette danse: un doigt, une omoplate, les orteils écartés, l'effort tendu du ventre, le halètement des flancs, etc.<sup>232</sup>

The scenario ends with two images superimposed in a single shot (precisely the montage effect referred to above).

It is worth noting that further clues to Cendrars's cinematic predilections can be found in the collection *Documentaires* (1924), that has often been cited as the series that most closely mimics the ideals of film technique. The definition of montage provided by Susan Hayward is a significant point of reference:

In his films of the 1920s, Eisenstein adapted Kuleshov's fundamental theory that collision of conflict must be inherent to all visual signs in film. Juxtaposing shots makes them collide or conflict and it is from this collision that meaning is produced [...] A first principle of montage editing, then, is a rapid alternation between sets of shots whose signification occurs at the point of their collision.<sup>233</sup>

The following three examples testify to Cendrars's belief in the use of montage as an instrument of explanation. This selection is however taken from *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques* so as to illustrate how Cendrars has subverted the traditional montage aesthetic in *Documentaires*. In 'Portrait', the reader is coaxed into insinuating that the

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<sup>232</sup> '508. Fade to the dance in all its dizziness. Giratory speed (try some inverse perspectives), inverting the angle of the camera.

509. Fast editing and various detailed close-ups of this dance: a finger, a shoulder blade, isolated toes, stomach muscles tensing, the heaving sides, etc.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>233</sup> Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies, The Key Concepts, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.96.

artist figure depicted has become omniscient, such is the power of his far-reaching responsibilities. Three graphic images are presented in succession:

La vachère

La sage-femme

Il y a des baquets de sang<sup>234</sup>

The idea of birth, be it of a movement, child or of the artist himself, is made implicit by splicing together these rapidly edited 'shots'. In 'Mardi Gras', an overwhelming sense of the poet's desire to retreat into the *faits divers* for inspiration is realised by combining the material existence of print and its almost airborne celestial delivery:

Les livres

Les messages télégraphiques

Et le soleil t'apporte le beau corps d'aujourd'hui dans les coupures de journaux<sup>235</sup>

The starkest example, however, expertly paints a concentric image of the protagonist's stomach in 'Sur la Robe Elle A un Corps' so that a third image is construed in the spectator's mind, that of the girl's complete immersion in her natural world:

Ventre

Disque

Soleil<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> 'The milkmaid/The midwife/There are tubs of blood', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Portrait', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.78.

<sup>235</sup> 'The books/The telegrams/And the sun brings you today's beautiful body in newspaper clippings', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Mardi Gras', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.88.

This connects with the previous discussion of Futurist photographic aesthetics in two ways. There is a sense of dissolution of form in this collection. Just as form in its deconstruction in images such as *Dattilografia* (1913) achieved Futurist anomalies of interpenetration, pictorial dynamism, duration and simultaneity, so this poetry leaves ‘trails’ as it consciously plots and then deposits its results. There is a tangible process from intention to consequence, which is explicit in its depiction of something being moved systematically (be it mental and physical as demonstrated by the above examples) and produced. The poet’s voice is in addition a strong presence, not unlike the stance established by Boccioni in his photograph *Io-Noi* (plate eighteen). As observer and creator, both Boccioni and Cendrars remain at the forefront of all their creations, taking on the role of both onlooker and creator. Yet in *Documentaires*, there is a shift towards a less complex montage effect, which resembles Hayward’s description of ‘deep focus editing’:

Shooting in deep focus means that less cutting within a sequence is necessary so the spectator is less manipulated, less stitched into the narrative and more free to read the set of shots before her or him.<sup>237</sup>

As with montage, the reader is responsible for translating what he or she sees. Yet Cendrars is intent during *Documentaires* to voice what the reader should be seeing and feeling. There is now a purpose to his juxtaposition.

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<sup>236</sup> ‘Belly/Disk/Sun’, transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, ‘Sur la Robe Elle a un Corps’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.83.

<sup>237</sup> Hayward, p.95.

Meanwhile, 'Travail' demonstrates how in one contained sequence, the poet draws in and out from the action, providing a cumulation of carefully observed detail. The execution of events is swift, fluid and rigid:

Des malfaiteurs viennent de faire sauter le pont de l'estacade

Les wagons ont pris feu au fond de la vallée

Des blessés nagent dans l'eau bouillante que lâche la locomotive éventrée<sup>238</sup>

This scene is presented in such a way that each event happens on the one plane and all within the same identifiable landscape. This is again redolent of the 'deep focus' aesthetic as it 'is a technique which uses fast wide-angle lenses and fast film to preserve as much depth of field as possible'.<sup>239</sup> In addition, it is evident that images fade out as other images fade in according to the cinematic technique of the same name. The transition from the rescue efforts to the waterfowl witnessing the scene in the grass is an effortless shift from one area to another with the incorporation of several different voices in the poem. There is the first-person narrative at the end of the poem along with Cendrars's subtle yet carefully constructed milieu founded on lyricism and realism:

Et les secours s'organisent avec une silencieuse rapidité [...]

L'aube tarde à venir<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> 'Some crooks have just blown up the railway bridge/The coaches caught fire at the bottom of the valley/The injured swim in the boiling water from the disemboweled locomotive', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Travail', *Documentaires, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, pp.138-139.

<sup>239</sup> Hayward, p.81.

<sup>240</sup> 'And the rescue is organised quickly and quietly [...]/Dawn is long in coming', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Travail', *Documentaires*, p.139.

It appears that the poet cannot resist expressing what would otherwise be considered 'invisible' facts in the sense that their place in the structure of the action is in theory superfluous (this could be described as 'aesthetic superimposition'). Further examples include:

Et c'est tout

C'est un pont

Un beau pont<sup>241</sup>

C'est par centaines maintenant que les crocos s'ébattent autour de nous [...]

Les passagers s'amuse à leur tirer dessus avec des carabines de précision<sup>242</sup>

This is not to say that the poet has completely abandoned montage as an instrument of temperance in his poetry. The other travel-based collection *Feuilles de Route* (1924-28) is very much montage-driven in the sense that it presents sharply defined and divided images in a staccato fashion without conjunctions. However, this is intercalated by a resonant personal voice that cuts through the collection, jarring with montage, which in essence is a process that presents sequential images promptly. The final stanza of 'Tu Es Plus Belle Que le Ciel et la Mer' is deliberately mawkish for instance, slowing down what has been a rapid delivery of events:

Je sors de la pharmacie

Je descends juste de la bascule

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<sup>241</sup> 'And that's it /It's a bridge/A beautiful bridge', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Trestle-Work', *Documentaires*, p.140.

<sup>242</sup> 'Now there are hundreds of crocs thrashing around us [...]/The passengers get a kick out of firing into them with hunting rifles', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Mississippi', *Documentaires*, p.152.

Je pèse mes 80 kilos

Je t'aime<sup>243</sup>

There is, though, a very good example of the montage aesthetic in full flow in 'A Bord du Formose'. By stating clearly the location of the action, Cendrars establishes a continuum that functions according to the clean cut of his clauses:

Sur le gaillard [...]

Sur la plage [...]

Sur le château [...] <sup>244</sup>

Each individual image is furnished with extra detail at the poet's own discretion. The most detailed description centres on the smoking lounge. The frenetic effect created by the lack of punctuation results in details dissolving into each other. The description of the 'gavrocharde qui s'occupe d'un tas de combines' relayed immediately, after the 'jeune théâtreuse de Ménilmontant'<sup>245</sup> gives the impression of fluidity if the sequence is envisaged as a film episode. Nonetheless, the narrative may be considered disjointed owing to the way in which it accumulates details without differentiating between the characters involved. The action that takes place within each allotted 'shot' has been investigated. Thus far, the analysis has focused on the content of certain poems and how they are structured according to either the montage or deep-focus editing criteria. How are the poems linked together as a series?

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<sup>243</sup> 'I come out of the drugstore/I've just stepped off the scale/I weigh my 176 pounds/I love you', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Tu Es Plus Belle Que le Ciel et la Mer', *Feuilles de Route*, p.306.

<sup>244</sup> 'On the fo'c'sle.../On the beach.../On the sterncastle...', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'A Bord du Formose', *Feuilles de Route*, pp.310-311.

<sup>245</sup> 'street girl busy with a thousand car deals/a young artist from Ménilmontant', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'A Bord du Formose', *Feuilles de Route*, p.311.

What seems like a random zigzagging across the United States is actually an ordered cross-global expedition. Beginning in the west, the action then moves further west and then proceeds to the Aleutian Islands. This latter segment is balanced with a later islands section (sequence VII, *Iles*). Episodes based around rivers intersperse the geographical descriptions. The collection ends with an elephant hunt and descriptions of various menus. Dissected episode by episode, it is not immediately clear where, if at all, unity can be detected. A degree of continuity is expressed through contrast, as is typical of montage. On a larger plane nevertheless, there would be a degree of concord as homogeneity derives from the treatment of geographical diversity. As a record of these places, the collection succeeds in presenting a complete 'photo album' of different shots, all linked by their respective place in this seemingly illogical chain. Yet, as with 'durée', the incongruous incidents form a homogeneous whole when viewed as one body. The general tenor of *Documentaires* is certainly less explosive than previous Cendrars collections. At the end of each sequence, for instance, there is a carefully controlled fade-out into the next cycle, which adds to the generally harmonised rhythm. The way in which tenses are deleted is striking, making the temporal perspective more open-ended, rooting the voice more firmly in the present. The narrative is hence rather more impersonal; it is, so to speak, 'de-voiced', so that the reader is left with a succession of stills and a series of rapidly executed images to ponder over.

So there is something more outward looking with Cendrars's work, brought about by this 'aesthetic' superimposing that takes place within each of the *Documentaires* poems. Just as with a photograph, the viewer may imagine what is taking place beyond the photo frame, so that scenes herald a new sphere. A

recurrent theme is that Cendrars moves outside the confines he establishes, yet never abandons the possibilities he creates internally. It is significant that the images he employs of the sea and the sky alternately enclose the action and enlarge its perceptual frame. There is a point to be made here regarding the poet's choice of material from Gustave Le Rouge's 18-volume adventure story of 1912-13, *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius* (Cendrars drew tropes and themes from the series in *Documentaires*). The most obvious links between the excerpts chosen by Cendrars are the preponderance of light imagery and the element of human interaction. Two groups of individuals are suddenly aware of their respective places in the naturally rhythmic universe, reinforced by the light that emanates from both industrial and natural sources. This is one of several features of the poem that collude with the 'deep focus editing' ideal. There is continuity by means of the recurring light imagery that succeeds in sandwiching and ultimately solidifying the action:

Et les massifs s'éclairent d'un million de petites lampes versicolores....

Ciel étoilé<sup>246</sup>

This is further substantiated by the continual referencing to the natural elements that border and contain the events so that the reader is thrown into an all-consuming flux. The murmuring sea adds to the cohesive effect, especially the note of finality it strikes in the last sentence. This is due to Cendrars's editing process that transposes Le Rouge's original script to his verse, continuing to fulfil the requirements of 'deep focus editing'. The poet utilises a number of techniques to

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<sup>246</sup> 'And the gardens are bright with a million little coloured lights.../Starry sky', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Roof Garden', *Documentaires*, pp.135-6.



purge the original material. The imperfect tense is transmuted into the present, the definite article is frequently omitted, as too are qualifying terms, such as adverbs:

La jeune fille portait une robe de crêpe de Chine bleuté qui accusait  
discrètement l'élégance et la richesse de ses formes.<sup>247</sup>

Légère robe en crêpe de chine

La jeune fille

Elégance et richesse<sup>248</sup>

The manner in which the source material has mutated into a much sparser version is testimony to the poet's need to introduce ellipsis as means of indicating that a period of time and action has been left out of the narrative. Conversely, the ellipsis may be considered the poet's way of turning Le Rouge's prose into poetry. The meagre details continue to quantify and qualify so that the reader does not have to 'fill in the gaps' (which is the case with *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*) and yet inversely, this creates the necessity to move outside the poem's limitations. The effect is thus two-fold. There is a stripping down, complying with 'deep focus editing', and paradoxically a movement outwards at the same time.

Comparisons can be drawn here with the superimposed aspect of Futurist art.

*Carica di Lancieri* (1915; plate twenty-five) shows how rippling undersurfaces

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<sup>247</sup> 'The young girl was wearing a crêpe de Chine dress which emphasised the elegance and richness of her form', [my translation], Gustave Le Rouge, *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius et autres œuvres de Le Rouge*, edited by Francis Lacassin (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1986), p.23.

<sup>248</sup> 'Light dress in crêpe de Chine/The girl/Elegance and wealth', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Jeune Fille', *Documentaires*, p.148.

combine to hit the spectator in one sweep just as the dynamics of 'Roof Garden' move the poem outwards to subsume the reader in a wave effect. With both the painting and poem in question, an invisible centre governs our response. The rippling effect is only made possible through movement in a concentric fashion around the undetermined centre. It is difficult to substantiate a focal point that cannot be seen. However, the movement outwards in *Carica di Lancieri* inversely means that an initial centre of gravity exists. This painting is made up of four surfaces that move out towards the eye of the viewer, indeed, the work literally ripples forward. It is a wonderfully engaging piece that incites motion in the most inventive way. The protagonist is seen to be almost cranking into action and is neatly framed by a symmetrical triptych of colour (brown shading). A corresponding centrality and terraced movement effect outwards can be seen in the sculpted piece *Fusione di testa e finestra* (*Studio per 1911-12, andata distrutta*). The fact that both the preliminary sketch of this work and the finished piece alternately mask and reveal the sculpture's facial features underlines how a nucleus at the heart of an object can provide the basis for the outwards flowing movement that follows the same course as detailed above in the form of the protruding side panels of the sculpture, as well as a 'common gauge' for an intuitive interpretation of the work, heralding conscious creativity. The ultimate effect is a piece that is visually balanced, though only just. As with all Boccioni pieces, there are parts the viewer is able to identify. 'Roof Garden' is similarly balanced by an opposing backwards and forwards movement, the most obvious point of reference being the roof garden as an architectural landmark itself with both natural and man-made forces compounding

the action. Both the literary and the artistic experience here may be defined in terms of montage in the sense that theoretically any movement forwards is always counteracted by its previous engendering action.

The different yet fundamentally intrinsic parts of a montage-based process easily find a counterpart in the notion of concentric circular movement. A clear thread throughout Clive Scott's exploration of Cendrars's elastic poems (*poèmes élastiques*) is their ability to 'ring the changes on certain basic structures, so that different kinds of rhythmic perceptions are built into the construction of the poem'.<sup>249</sup> His argument revolves around Cendrars's ability to contain the action by means of these carefully gradated 'rhythmic perceptions', developing a measured internal system of changes which does not break out of its established parameters. This internal dynamism creates its own energy in the form of the movement backwards and forwards described so that 'reading is itself a simultanisising process, a journey in Bergsonian *durée*'.<sup>250</sup> This is a prevalent trait in Cendrars's poetry and is especially applicable to *Documentaires*. As discussed, this backwards/forwards motion finds its counterpart in Futurist photographic experiments such as *Dattilografia* (1913).

Jacques Maritain summarises: 'Durée' is a journey that essentially has no destination if it is change without anything which changes, an activity without substratum; a creation without thing created.'<sup>251</sup> In one stroke, all the aforementioned elements in relation to montage are brought convincingly together; the concentric movement that operates dually backwards and forwards; the

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<sup>249</sup> Scott, p.143.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130.

<sup>251</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p.127.

progress from past to present within one contracted episode; the continuum of what Bergson calls 'pure heterogeneity'; multiplicity and interpenetration. Hence, 'time is reality itself'.<sup>252</sup> Montage requires an assembling of the image which is a gradual process. The Russian film-maker Kuleshov's theories on montage relate this process as a time-sensitive progression that relates to 'durée': 'The interaction of separate montage segments their position, and likewise their rhythmic duration, become the contents of the production and world view of the artist.'<sup>253</sup> Details (or segments) are provided by both Boccioni and Cendrars so that a result is produced which is the fruit of this assembly. Yet if time is reality itself, then simultaneity is the product of a chain that resists being categorised as a result of the past because it is the past lived as the present in one stroke. Montage similarly presents a new visual concept from two film pieces in juxtaposition. This is not to say the juxtaposition is not integral to the final piece. It is simply that, as with 'durée', the two sides of the process (assembly to product) are indistinguishable. Eisenstein's analogy makes this explicit:

I found it very difficult to remember the images of New York's streets and, consequently, to recognise the streets themselves. Their designations, neutral numbers like 'Forty-second' or 'Forty-fifth', failed to produce images in my mind that would concentrate my perception on the general features of one or the other street. To produce these images, I had to fix in my memory a set of objects characteristic of one or another street, a set of objects aroused in my

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<sup>252</sup> R.C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900-1914* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), p.26.

<sup>253</sup> Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film* (Berkeley: Levaco, 1974), p.194.

consciousness in answer to the signal 'Forty-second' and quite distinct from those aroused by the signal 'Forty-fifth'. My memory assembled the theatres, stores and buildings, characteristic of each of the streets I had to remember. This process went through definite stages. Two of these stages should be noted: in the first, at the verbal designation 'Forty-second street', my memory with great difficulty responded by enumerating the whole chain of characteristic elements, but I still obtained no true perception of the street because the various elements had not yet been consolidated into a single image. Only in the second stage did all the elements begin to fuse into a single, emerging image: at the mention of the street's 'number', there still arose this whole host of its separate elements, but now not as a chain, but as something single – as a whole characterization of the street, as its whole image.<sup>254</sup>

Boccioni's photcollages are a case in point. *Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo* (plate nine) imparts multitudinous actions in one single illustration. The many parts are however totally enclosed by the frame that very visibly sets up a line of demarcation for the viewer. There are two dominant compartments to the work; the eyes and chin areas immediately capture the viewer. What is intriguing is that these areas are fairly unsettling in their harsh aspect yet also manage to anchor the painting with their visual supremacy. Almost like an optic dot-to-dot, these fragments adhere together, such is our instinctive impulse to link these facets because of their pictorial authority. This layering in turn creates a cinematic effect because 'in one way or another, the series of ideas is built up in the perception and consciousness into a

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<sup>254</sup> Sergei Eisenstein and Jay Leyda, *Film Form [and] The Film Sense: Two Complete and Unabridged Works* (New York: Meridian Books, 1965), p.16.

whole image, storing up the separate elements'.<sup>255</sup> This clearly echoes the Futurist instruction of 'what one remembers and what one sees' in that it indicates the need to first assemble the image and second, to filter the data as a result of this assembly and its relevance to memory. Eisenstein's analogy of the midnight chime to outline how montage can act as the transmitter of this new strain of consciousness is appropriate: 'Combining in our perception, these individual groups of twelve strokes are built up into a general sensation of midnight. The separate representations are built up into a montage.'<sup>256</sup>

I believe there is an important point to be made here regarding Cendrars's use of imagery, the construction and realisation of which corresponds with the 'invisible' effect brought about by montage. As the separate entities are combined in one perception, so Cendrars's imagery is closely interwoven into his poetic language to such an extent that it becomes indistinguishable from it. The poet talks of 'destroying the image' (*L'Homme Foudroyé*)<sup>257</sup> and this intimates that the incorporation of imagery is not obvious but simply seamless, which is the ultimate aim of montage. This is true of Cendrars's poem 'Roof Garden' (*Documentaires*). The first stanza is completely self-sufficient. In other words, the actions presented merge without duress as in the 'chimes' analogy quoted above. A powerful life force is in evidence that moves between the plants and building structures. The energy portrayed is a striking hybrid of material and natural resources. The end line, 'le soir' condenses the preceding events in one movement. A number of Futurist

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<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>257</sup> Blaise Cendrars, *Œuvres Complètes, Vol. IV* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1960-65), pp.182-183.

measures are fulfilled here: there is interpenetration of the various shots presented; the poem is extremely evocative, conjuring up multiple states of time in the sense of remembering and seeing; the physical amalgamation of the colours and sounds is reminiscent of the Futurist 'force-line' ethos. The reader is cast in the role of an onlooker, not unlike the lady on the balcony in *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight). 'Roof Garden' is a poem that is presented on a truly panoramic scale with the individuals gathered there appearing as minute players within a larger picture. Boccioni, primed at least in photographic technique and undoubtedly aware of perspective, practices an analogous feat in *La strada entra nella casa* where the smaller figures of the construction workers are a correlative to Cendrars's isolated and hermetic rooftop dwellers.

## Chapter Four: Memory and the Debt to Bergson

### 4.i Intuition

Bergson's theory relating to intuition facilitates intuition's ability to act as an interpretative device for simultaneity. It is Bergson's theory of convergence through intuition that begins a chain of related phenomena, provoking 'l'intuition de la durée' for instance. This first stage of 'durée', which should in theory result in the viewer fusing with the object, is the consequence of many disparate elements causing a reaction on the part of the spectator:

Nulle image ne remplacera l'intuition de la durée, mais beaucoup d'images diverses, empruntées à des ordres de chose très différents, pourront, par la convergence de leur action, diriger la conscience sur le point précis où il y a une certaine intuition à saisir.<sup>258</sup>

This process plays a vital role in the accomplishment of simultaneity in that the viewer's intuitive understanding will allow him/her to reassemble meaningfully the content of the body of the work: '[...] de l'intuition on peut passer à l'analyse', states Bergson, 'mais non pas de l'analyse à l'intuition'.<sup>259</sup> In the light of this assertion, intuition's role should not only draw us towards the dimensions of the canvas but also towards apprehension of the inner self. The issue under discussion in this chapter is therefore the effectiveness of both Boccioni's and Cendrars's attempts to

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<sup>258</sup> 'No image will replace the intuition of durée, but many different images, taken from very different order systems, will, by the convergence of their action, guide one's consciousness to a specific point where a certain type of intuition can be seized.' [my translation] Henri Bergson, *Œuvres, La Pensée et le mouvant, 1934*, includes 'Introduction à la métaphysique' 1903 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p.35.

<sup>259</sup> 'From intuition one can pass to analysis', states Bergson, 'but not from analysis to intuition.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.77.



provoke a subjective response encapsulating 'durée' by creating unity of mental states on the part of the spectator/reader.

The basis of Bergson's theory of convergence through intuition is rooted in *Matter and Memory*. In the introduction Bergson writes of each object as a 'une image, mais une image qui existe en soi'.<sup>260</sup> Bergson uses the term 'image' here to denote every type of perception, implying that 'each image is also a type of object'.<sup>261</sup> This presentation of material in quasi-phenomenological terms suggests that the spectator's view of the work is reproduced in a purely instructional way. John Mullarkey corroborates this with an insight into Bergson's methods for detecting the origin of perception. Bergson, adds Mullarkey, examined both the process of evolution and the structural development of the nervous system: 'In doing so, he found that the nervous system is basically a facility for exchanging movement: it adds nothing to what it receives.'<sup>262</sup>

This has dramatic consequences for any analysis of representation and for simultaneity as a whole. If perception is not a new quality, formed afresh, and only a product of elimination, then images and text are simply data which do not enhance our subjective capabilities but only add to a pre-determined facility for interpreting material. In this sense, 'the body literally becomes a point perspective'.<sup>263</sup> How does this ultra-objectivism therefore translate into the transportation of the spectator/reader to the heart of an object? Bergson counteracts this by utilising, and possibly even subverting, this new-found state of total objectivity so that the

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<sup>260</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matière et Mémoire, Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, ed. by Paul-Antoine Miquel (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p.50.

<sup>261</sup> John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.155.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

reader's powers of perception are actually enhanced in this state: 'We are actually placed outside ourselves; we touch the reality of the object in an immediate intuition.'<sup>264</sup>

In this sense, intuition is the tool that leads to altered states of experience and consciousness, literally acting as a resource, possibly because it 'is an attempt to change our place in reality rather than escape from it'.<sup>265</sup> This is highly significant in relation to this study of simultaneity because it contributes even further to the underpinning theories of the thesis. First, this analysis is attempting to gauge the level of awareness on the part of both artists when constructing their 'data'. Cendrars in particular toys continually with the reader's ability to detect elements, enhancing and even distorting their spectrum of perceptive skills, producing an intended dysfunctionality in the areas of time and space. Boccioni, meanwhile, reiterates the significance of adopting an intuitive process when evaluating a Futurist work, locating its centre by instinctively working through its differing levels: 'La nostra è una ricerca del definitivo nella successione di stati d'intuizione.'<sup>266</sup> Even though this counteracts to a degree Bergson's ideal that 'durée' is not strictly based on the presentation of successive states, Boccioni's directive nonetheless demonstrates that intuition and multiplicity are intertwined. Bergson states that this tight-knit alliance is not viable yet Boccioni may well have viewed the

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<sup>264</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, transl. by Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp.80, 84.

<sup>265</sup> Mullarkey, p.160.

<sup>266</sup> 'Our [aim] is the search for the definitive through a succession of intuitive states.' [my translation] Boccioni, 'Che cosa ci divide dal Cubismo' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.136.

equation of intuition and succession as being more akin to facilitating interpenetration across time and space.

However, in terms of representation, Bergson realises that perception cannot ever be totally objective as the above summary details. There are parts of the object concealed from perspective because the mind chooses to obscure certain parts of any image or text. This is after all, what makes up the process of interpretation. As perspective has to be consciously located, there will always be parts hidden from view:

Representation is there, but always virtual – being neutralised, at the very same moment when it might become actual, by the obligation to continue itself and to lose itself in something else. To obtain this conversion from the virtual to the actual, it would be necessary, not to throw more light on the object, but, on the contrary, to obscure some of its aspects, to diminish it by the greater part of itself, so that the remainder, instead of being encased in its surroundings as a thing, should detach itself from them as a picture.<sup>267</sup>

There appears to be a conflict here between the subjective and objective aspects of representation. The principal point, and it is one which Mullarkey validates, is that the objective angle can never be fully achieved. There will always remain elements open to inference and in this sense, not even the scientific point of departure is truly objective. What is clear here is that perception is very much an assembly of so many parts, not all of which are on view to the reader/spectator yet all of which remain constantly within his/her field of possible interpretation:

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<sup>267</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, transl. by Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer, p.28.

The Whole is never 'given' [...] This is the constant theme of Bergsonism from the outset: the confusion of time and space, the assimilation of time into space, make us think that the whole is given, even if only in principle, even if only in the eyes of God.<sup>268</sup>

This is significant as it denies the idea that the world can be experienced in a simultaneous vision all at once and that it is only capable of presenting itself in parts. This is owing to the viewer's only partial and selected perception of the whole vision available as the spectator may only accept what she/he can see and touch. In other words, we are unable to escape from representations as they are presented in their physical entirety to us. Yet it is the movement of objects that facilitate this process. Buckberrough explains how the individual acts as:

[...] an intuitional center destined to move the objects around it [...] For Bergson, the human mind, as receiver and collator of the energies around it, it is necessarily the central agent in the perception of reality. Thus, if a work of art is to stimulate the state of reality, the spectator should be its central focus [...] such a concentrated focus of the action of the painting on the spectator would achieve a unity of the mind with exterior reality through a concordance of movement. This was the final goal of Bergson, (Jules) Romains, and the Futurists.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, transl. by Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p.104.

<sup>269</sup> Buckberrough, p.139.

Crucially, Fergonzi's essay in the catalogue for the exhibition 'Italian Futurism 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe' underlines the parallels between *Matter and Memory* and Boccioni's 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture' of 1912, raising the issue of the body as a hub around which objects commune.

There is a striking congruency between many of the ideas expressed in Boccioni's book and Bergson's, including the identification of the perceiving subject with the object perceived, the theory of muscle sensation, and the idea of the living body as a center that reflects the action of objects upon it.<sup>270</sup>

It follows that an individual's intuitive reading of all pertaining parts of a work permits a complete grasp of the internal reality of the work through external reality, which is engendered by motion. It will be interesting to assess in chapter four how successful Boccioni and Cendrars are in moving beyond what Bergson would deem to be the impossible penetration of the whole and its presentation as a simultaneous piece. Moreover, it is important that Bergson's philosophy of intuition is greatly transformed in its subsequent partnership with 'durée', which then goes on to transform its dynamic.

The role of the intellect in this process is difficult to fully ascertain. *In Matter and Memory* for instance, science spatialises the world and treats it as lacking duration. Graf espouses the redundancy of the role of intellect in the process that is 'durée':

Ainsi ne peut-elle [la science] qu'admettre qu'une heure ne soit pas égale à une heure [...] elle ignore à la fois la durée et la réalité vivante.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Fergonzi, p.128.

<sup>271</sup> 'Therefore, science can only recognise that an hour is not equal to an hour [...] it ignores both durée and living reality.' [my translation] Alain Graf, *les grands philosophes contemporains* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), p.50.

Graf's evaluation effectively distils the difference between intellect and instinct in that intellect conveys the scientific facts of existence. Intellect is oriented towards time and space, as demonstrated in the above statement, by juxtaposing phenomena within them. Instinct, on the contrary, 'is moulded on the very form of life',<sup>272</sup> in opposition to a purely scientific biological continuum. It is true that the essence of Bergson's theory of intuition is intended to engender a realisation of the self free of the distortions imposed by intellect. Intellect operates in terms of the separate and substitutes for the reality of consciousness a symbolic representation. Bergson does nevertheless attempt to amalgamate both intellect and intuition with his claim that 'au dessous de moi, aux états bien définis, un moi ou succession implique fusion et organisation'.<sup>273</sup> This statement nonetheless still indicates that intellect substitutes for consciousness, that is to say 'durée', and provides only a manifestation of it. Intellect is thus only capable of operating according to a rational time-scale and is incapable of expressing for example the displacement of the mind and body necessary for attaining the 'centre of consciousness' which forms the basis of chapter four.

This transportation to the interior of an object means that intellect cannot function as it is supposed to. The Boccionian and Cendrarsian respective visions depend upon the reader's/spectator's presupposed conceptions at times; the implications of this avenue of interpretation are elaborated in chapter five, *Conscious Creativity*. The references supplied by both artists demand unravelling (this is

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<sup>272</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p.613.

<sup>273</sup> 'Below me, in a series of well-defined states, the self or [a] succession imply fusion and organisation.'  
[my translation]

Henri Bergson, *Œuvres, Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience, 1889* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p.95.

supplemented by the pre-supposed knowledge needed to place certain key Cendrars images in context) yet it is important to acknowledge that Bergson's emphasis on the 'intellect versus intuition' debate provides a credible backdrop for examination of the issue.

However, it is significant that, as Donato Totaro, paraphrasing Bergson, asserts: 'The cinematographic process is like the intellect in that it takes "snapshots" of a passing reality. The movement is only an illusion generated by the projector. Movement does not exist in the images but is thrown back into them. Film is a spatialization of time/reality.'<sup>274</sup> It is true that Bergson uses a cinematic analogy to underline how intellect deals with and approaches the present: 'We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality [...] We may therefore sum up...that the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind.'<sup>275</sup> Totaro bolsters his argument: 'Bergson likens this process [in the final chapter of *Creative Evolution*] to the cinema apparatus. The camera begins with a real movement, breaks it down mechanically into a series of static single frames and then returns the movement through the projecting apparatus. The movement that we see is a reconstituted illusion.'<sup>276</sup> So how can we still equate Bergson's cinematic ideas with the time and memory-based art and poetry of Boccioni and Cendrars that is at times clearly episodic, especially in the case of the latter? The clear-cut film still analogy that Bergson applied to intellect is a spatialising device. This denotes only a succession of specific shots or moments, which is exactly the function of intellect. Yet the major

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<sup>274</sup> Donato Totaro, 'Time, Bergson and the Cinematographical Medium', *Off Screen*, Volume 5 Issue 1, (January 2001), pp.23-30 (p.24).

<sup>275</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p.332. transl. Arthur Mitchell.

<sup>276</sup> Totaro, p.25.

drawback of Bergson's intellect/film connection is that film frames do not exist in isolation. They form part of a body of work that flickers together and are juxtaposed via montage to create a composite entity.

This interpenetration of separate images is the most significant factor that connects Bergson, Boccioni and Cendrars. Bergson, however, gets round the challenging issue of juxtaposition, and how it acts as a barrier to heterogeneity in his view ('Pure duration excludes all idea of juxtaposition [...]')<sup>277</sup>, by viewing movement as a series of vibrations produced in art. This is expounded in chapter three of *Matter and Memory*:

If you abolish my consciousness [...] matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together into uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other and travelling in every direction like shivers. In short, try first to connect together the discontinuous objects of daily experience, then resolve the motionless continuity of these qualities into vibrations [...] finally, attach yourself to these movements [...] in just the same way, the thousands of successive positions of a runner are contracted into one sole symbolic attitude, which our eye perceives, which art reproduces and which becomes for everyone, the image of a man who runs.<sup>278</sup>

This draws upon Impressionist theories with its reliance on almost chronophotographic movements on the canvas. Yet for Bergson, these 'vibrations' solve the dilemma of eschewing successive stages on both a temporal and spatial level. The difference here is that Bergson is calling for the abolition of consciousness

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<sup>277</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p.164.

<sup>278</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp.208-9.



which would nullify both 'durée' and *mémoire pure*, yet he goes on to describe processes of representation and perception not too far removed from the 'beads on a string' metaphor (p.138) which is applied to 'durée'.

However, the root of this interpenetrative process is first and foremost founded on intuition which subsequently leads to 'durée' that is, in essence, heterogeneity. We are therefore back to step one again. The act of fusing fully with an object, as provoked by the amalgamation of a number of disconnected elements, means that the reader/spectator is at least aware of changes in time, synthesising 'quello che si ricorda e di quello che si vede' (p.128). Bergson states that no single image will be adequate to the task of expressing exactly the experiences of an individual although a number of images may be able to direct a person to a point of focus which is not 'durée' but resembles this state (p.184). The conception of intuition whereby total connection occurs between the individual and the work in question is intended to be markedly different to 'l'intuition de la durée', though it can act sufficiently as a departure point for this. Gilles Deleuze in his integral study of Bergson, *Le Bergsonisme*, pinpoints how both intuition and 'durée' are closely linked:

L'intuition n'est pas la durée même. L'intuition est plutôt le mouvement par lequel nous sortons de nôtre propre durée, par lequel nous servons de notre durée pour affirmer et reconnaître immédiatement l'existence d'autres durées [...] sans l'intuition comme méthode, la durée resterait une simple expérience psychologique.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> 'Intuition is not durée itself. Intuition is rather the movement by which we leave our own sense of durée, by which we use durée to affirm and recognise immediately the existence of other durées [...] without

Intuition is the connecting force, but, as Deleuze explains, intuition would not be able to survive without 'durée', in that determining the psychological aspect of time and memory relies on both factors to galvanise the mechanics of the other. This ideal dominates Bergsonian theory which provides an effective point of departure for Boccioni's art and Futurism in general, both of which were powered by his theories. Cendrars's poetics certainly resonate with the same ideals though the extent to which he remains bound by what seems a set of comparative theories remains to be debated. Yet it is the level of multiplicity suggested by Bergson, which demands special attention in relation to the artists concerned. It is evident from Bergson's treatise that intuition is difficult to contain and define. He believes that there is no 'simple and geometrical definition of intuition',<sup>280</sup> its amorphous reality requiring 'views of it that are multiple, complementary and not at all equivalent'.<sup>281</sup> This idea of plurality as engendered by the flexibility of the notion of intuition introduces the concept that is the crux of this analysis, that of multiplicity which is an integral element of the mechanics of simultaneity. For the Futurists, the object is important especially for its structure, a structure that can be decomposed and broken into fragments, rather than for its intrinsic value. Plurality, the concept which overarches all of Bergson's doctrine, is the predominant effect sought by both Boccioni and Cendrars. What makes any examination of this subject particularly fascinating is that both artists attempt to convey this impression yet also anchor their work to a degree in the form of 'markers' (perceptible semantic points of reference) as will be

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intuition as a method, durée would remain a simple psychological experience.' [my translation] Gilles Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1966), p.24.

<sup>280</sup> Bergson, *Creative Mind*, p.34.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

suggested in chapter five. Stable yet shifting, multiple yet constant is the ultimate desired effect.

This then affects how time is presented and translated. As F.C.T. Moore points out in *Thinking Backwards*: 'Our awareness of temporal unfolding is in terms of its various rhythms. We have complexity rather than multiplicity.'<sup>282</sup> Awareness of this complexity is what Bergson would term as 'intuition'. Adjusting to the 'various rhythms' requires the skill that is intuition whereby different changing realities ultimately lead to the state of 'durée'. This idea of 'rhythms' is absorbing and conveys perfectly the different time sequences which flow and overlap within any temporal experience:

Sans doute Bergson parle-t-il d'une pluralité de rythmes de durée; mais dans le contexte il précise, à propos des durées plus ou moins lentes ou rapides, que chaque durée est un absolu et que chaque rythme est lui-même une durée.<sup>283</sup>

A suitable analogy for this segmenting of our experience into discrete items is the 'layering' of sequences, one on top of the other. This categorisation of intuition finds its parallel in the episodic nature of the poetry of Cendrars. This talk of 'overlapping' is strongly echoed in the poet's œuvre in the sense that a nebulous time sequence develops internally within the poems. Episodes infringe upon another like the plates of an earthquake to such a degree that the poet 's'efforce de donner la durée d'un mouvement donné'.<sup>284</sup> Cendrars achieves a cinematographic effect and the suggested visual analogy of split-screen cinema for his work underlines that the

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<sup>282</sup> F.C.T. Moore, *Bergson Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.64.

<sup>283</sup> 'Bergson is no doubt discussing a plurality of durée rhythms; but in the context he specifies, regarding slower and more rapid durées, each durée is an absolute and each rhythm is itself a durée.' [my translation] Deleuze, p.75.

<sup>284</sup> 'endeavours to give the duration of a given movement'. [my translation] Bergman, p.161.

development of space is the premium consideration for the poet rather than a clearly outlined time sequence. This may seem at odds with Bergson's views on how cinematic technique all too neatly compartmentalises our experiences and even falsifies them on a temporal scale. However, as mentioned earlier, the clear-cut film still analogy that Bergson applied to intellect is essentially a spatialising device. Nevertheless, the fact that these episodes overlap means that they avoid becoming homogeneous, at least on a temporal level. They can be likened to the previous analogy of being like beads on a string, perhaps not as explicitly as Bergson would have considered, but still autonomous enough to merit being equated with 'durée'.

Yet, and this is the area of prime concern, Bergson's philosophy had a substantial effect on Futurism in that it solidified a theory of time duration that managed to convey both the past and present in an instant yet also elongated this process so that the distance that time communicates can be easily transposed onto the canvas or page and consequently assimilated. Simultaneity, at its most basic, is the act of seeing simultaneously the moment past and the second currently being experienced. Boccioni's work does adhere to Bergson's theories to a large degree yet Cendrars's continual manipulation of his own time and space patterns means that we are also able to rely on Bergson's philosophies as an important theoretical point of reference. According to Bergson, only experiences actually undertaken in one's life can be understood as autonomous episodes that interpenetrate accordingly and also separate yet connect still, like beads on a chain. There is much here which connects with Cendrars, from the underscoring of the episodic nature of time passing to the mapping out of experiential events which are alternately vast and contained. The

following extract from 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles' confirms this:

A votre âge

Mon oncle

Tu étais joli garçon et tu jouais très bien du cornet à pistons<sup>285</sup>

Et il y avait encore quelque chose

La tristesse

Et le mal du pays.<sup>286</sup>

Moving from the concrete to the abstract, the poetry ventures into an unspecified region, which covers a lengthier period of time. The ideal of 'virtual space' is discussed in chapter one with its capability for expanding and contracting in the spectator's mind the global vision that Cendrars presents. It is important that in evoking the exoticism that is 'virtual space', Cendrars in addition presents a reality that is far from immobile and that takes on a definite form and clear contours. He is a poet who revels in the present yet opens pockets of time and space up to the reader, which veer from the norm and penetrate a different part of the psyche:

Nous ne pouvons pas aller au Japon

Viens au Mexique!

Sur ses hauts plateaux les tulpiers fleurissent

Les lianes tentaculaires sont la chevelure du soleil<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> 'At your age/Uncle/You used to be a cute kid and you really knew how to play the cornet', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.54

<sup>286</sup> 'There was still something else/Sadness/And homesickness', transl. Ron Padgett, *Ibid.*, p.94.

Cendrars's efforts in coagulating time and space as one junction exemplify Bergson's thesis on 'durée'. But Deleuze states clearly how multiplicity splinters into space and time as mirrored phenomena:

L'important, c'est que la décomposition du mixte nous révèle deux types de multiplicité. L'une est représentée par l'espace (ou plutôt, si nous tenons compte de toutes les nuances, par le mélange impur de temps homogène): c'est une multiplicité d'extériorité, de simultanéité, de juxtaposition, d'ordre, de différenciation quantitative, de différence de degré, une multiplicité numérique, discontinue et actuelle. L'autre se présente dans la durée pure; c'est une multiplicité interne, de succession, de fusion, d'organisation, d'hétérogénéité, de discrimination quantitative ou de différence de nature, une multiplicité virtuelle et continue [...] <sup>288</sup>

In 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', the overriding impression is that of visiting all locations simultaneously. The reader plunges into the poem, experiencing, meeting and leaving everything encountered so quickly that the sense of a voyage recedes, with the reader grasping the vision all at once. This therefore correlates directly with Deleuze's critique. The spatial dimensions presented by the

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<sup>287</sup> 'We can't go to Japan/Come to Mexico!/Tulip trees flourish on the high plateaus/Clinging vines hang down like hair from the sun', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.37.

<sup>288</sup> 'The main factor is that the decomposition of the mix reveals two types of multiplicity. One of these is represented by space (or if we account for all the nuances, by the impure mix of homogeneous time): it is a multiplicity of exteriority, of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of order, of quantitative differentiation, of differences by degrees, a numerical multiplicity, discontinuous and current. The other is in pure durée; it is an internal multiplicity, one of succession, of fusion, of organisation, of heterogeneity, of quantitative discrimination or a difference of nature, a virtual and continuous multiplicity [...]'. [my translation] Deleuze, p.30.

poet are the main factor in shaping the fragmentary structure of the poem. The many journeys of the poem are the multiplied variations of the wanderlust and homesickness evoked by the stories of the seven uncles and the narrating nephew as they recount their yearning for a family home in Europe from their corners of the earth. This poem will be analysed further in this chapter although in this study of influences, it is viable to state that 'Panama' can be seen to embody Bergsonian ideology. Jay Bochner reiterates how the poem rigidly adheres to an almost prosaic formula: 'It is a poetry of presentation, with emotion held in reserve behind the rapid-fire juxtaposition of the wide world's quotidian.'<sup>289</sup>

It is evident thus that a homogeneity of form and ultimately of feeling permeates the work, or so Bochner would have the reader believe. Even though there has been emphasis on the disjointed spatial map of the poem, it appears that these spatial dimensions are paradoxically homogeneous as well as heterogeneous. Deleuze's summary cited qualifies this with his own diction which fuels dichotomy. He talks of space being capable of juxtaposition and order. It thus seems almost impossible for space not to be contained in any work though Cendrars has set definable boundaries by the fact that the stories of the seven uncles do focus the action in a quasi-realistic manner: '[...] notwithstanding its vastness and multiplicity, Cendrars's world is a self-enclosed one.'<sup>290</sup>

This contradiction of space being both fragmentary and invariable is due to the fact that space attempts to fall into line with 'durée', trying to be part of its unified

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<sup>289</sup> Jay Bochner, introduction to *Blaise Cendrars, Complete Poems*, transl. Ron Padgett (University of California Press, 1992), p.xxv.

<sup>290</sup> Chefdor, *Blaise Cendrars*, p.140.

flow yet remaining naturally outside this continuum. According to Deleuze, simultaneity seeks nevertheless to at least reconcile the chasms between time and space:

[...] l'espace ne sera plus simplement une forme d'extériorité, une sorte d'écran qui dénature la durée, une impureté qui vient troubler le pur, un relatif qui s'oppose à l'absolu; il faudra qu'il soit lui-même fondé dans les choses, dans les rapports entre les choses et entre les durées, qu'il appartienne lui aussi à l'absolu, qu'il ait sa pureté. Telle va être la double progression de la philosophie bergsonienne.<sup>291</sup>

It would be easy, however, to be critical of this stance, which advocates harmony between space and time. As Mullarkey contends, it is a cause of concern that space is destined to remain homogeneous in relation to the dynamic properties inherent in 'durée'.<sup>292</sup> The heterogeneity does spring from a psychological durée that is dynamic and qualitative with no indication of linear determinism. Or as Kitchin points out:

Pure duration [...] might be defined as a succession of qualitative changes, which mingle and interpenetrate, which have no precise boundaries and no tendency to separate from one another, no kinship with number; it is, then, pure heterogeneity. As soon as we attribute the least homogeneity to duration, we surreptitiously introduce space.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> ' [...] space will no longer be a form of exteriority, a sort of screen which distorts durée, an impurity which has upset purity, a relative opposed to the absolute; it will have to be based in things, in the relationship between things and between durées, and must belong to the absolute and have purity. Such is the twofold progression of Bergsonian philosophy.' [my translation] Deleuze, p.44.

<sup>292</sup> Mullarkey, p.21.

<sup>293</sup> Kitchin, p.60.



Homogeneous space, while possessing the ability to evolve and stagnate at the same time, is a 'symbolical medium'<sup>294</sup> for time as time cannot be measured without spatialising it. This is because, as Deleuze indicates, time leaves a trail of memories that demand recognition in a spatial sense: 'Le moment suivant contient toujours en sus du précédent le souvenir que celui-ci lui a laissé.'<sup>295</sup>

This is in opposition to the philosophy of Kant for whom space is not an empirical concept, in that it exists previously to those objects which we imagine as existing in space. In other words, experience precedes space and the formation of a spatial arena is the second part of the process of contextualising experience. Experience cannot create itself as it is only made possible by the representation of space, which is the inferior part of the equation yet significantly the by-product of the experiential process. Dee Reynolds reiterates the point when she questions how objects evoke their own sense of 'imaginary' space. This is in essence a description of the process that enables the poetic/pictorial object to be free of experiential episodes and their effects:

[...] the poetic/pictorial object can itself become an object of imagining activity, undergoing an ontological transformation by being experienced as a site of imaginary space.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Mullarkey, p.19.

<sup>295</sup> 'The moment that follows always contains the previous one as well as its memory.' [my translation] Deleuze, p.45.

<sup>296</sup> Reynolds, p.20.

#### 4.ii Durée

Up to this point, it is mainly spatial relationships that have formed the basis of this examination. This chapter endeavours to illustrate the connection between the individuals under discussion through selected works of both Boccioni and Cendrars; this link is that of the affective character of the spectator's perceptual existence as represented by the technique of interpenetrative spatial disruption.

*La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight) exemplifies Bergson's concept of 'durée'.

The painting is underscored by the Bergsonian ideal in question in that it is a 'synthesis of what one remembers and of what one sees' (p.128). The subject is Boccioni's mother viewing a building site from a balcony:

Dipingendo una persona al balcone, vista dall'interno, noi non limitiamo la scena a ciò che il quadrato della finestra permette di vedere; ma ci sforziamo di dare il complesso di sensazioni plastiche provate dal pittore che sta al balcone: brulichio soleggiato della strada, doppia fila delle case che si prolungano a destra e a sinistra, balconi fioriti, ecc. Il che significa simultaneità d'ambiente, e quindi dislocazione e smembramento degli oggetti, sparpagliamento e fusione dei dettagli, liberati dalla logica comune e indipendenti gli uni dagli altri.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> 'In painting a person from a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced; the sunbathed throng in the street, the double row of houses which stretch to right and left, the beflowered balconies, etc. This implies the simultaneousness of the environment, and, therefore, the dislocation and dismemberment of objects, the scattering and fusion of details, freed from accepted logic, and independent from one another.' Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Prefazione al Catalogo della 1a Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.380/English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912), 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto' in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.47.

The point of perspective is a subjective one; the spectator is intended to view the scene from the same angle as the woman. It is not only the subject's experiences which count but those of the viewer too. The subject looks at the scene as if to implicate the viewer at the same time in the course of the painting. The painting is so neatly framed, the impression is that of an audience member (the subject) facing a stage. This is a Romantic device whereby the turning away of a figure invites the spectator to become more directly involved in the activity of the painting. Consequently, it is difficult to determine who is meant to superimpose memory on contemporary experience: the artist, the subject or the spectator. All three are involved in this process: the artist in relation to underlying emotions and their depiction in art; the subject and spectator through an arousal of nostalgic memory. Orban outlines how memory, along with intuition, is the touchstone for the process of 'durée':

Boccioni is in agreement with Bergson on the notion of duration in particular, a synthesis of past, present and future which is realised in memory and in conscience. Memory is the 'élan vital', that is, becoming and creation in action, which is similar to the implicit action inherent in Boccioni's objects.<sup>298</sup>

Bergson's doctrine acts as a bridge at this point. 'Durée' is intended to be a 'unified process'.<sup>299</sup> It does not consist of a set of discrete moments, rather a heterogeneous chain of events where no two occurrences have the same effect. The heterogeneous aspect of 'durée' is stressed below:

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<sup>298</sup> Orban, p.5.

<sup>299</sup> A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.26.

La durée de Bergson, contrairement à celle de Roupnel, est hétérogène; elle est sentie par nous, elle exprime notre expérience intérieure, intime et personnelle; elle est une durée immédiate de la conscience. La durée de Bergson dans laquelle les instants s'unissent et ne se séparent jamais, s'éloigne du temps des physiciens et des mathématiciens qui est discontinu.<sup>300</sup>

A plurality of successive events is to my mind the most suitable description of the phenomenon. *La strada entra nella casa* may be seen in parallel with the most celebrated analogy Bergson uses to illustrate the nature of 'durée', that of a melody which if stopped 'would no longer be the same sonorous whole'.<sup>301</sup> The melody may not alter but it would nevertheless symbolise change and progression when played at different points in time. If Boccionian simultaneity is a question of what 'one remembers and what one sees', then the image utilised (a melody or the building site) underlines the significance of the heterogeneous precise moment which not only adds itself to the storeroom of one's memory but merges with and evokes related memories. That is to say, real time would be the point at which the notes of the melody are being played, and the subject ponders the scene from the balcony. 'Durée' continues to unify and assimilate the notes and the scene of the painting as experienced in one's consciousness, even though, as the melody analogy demonstrates, time is not a single unilinear succession but a multi-storeyed range of differentiated experiences. The painting is structured in such a way as to reflect the

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<sup>300</sup> 'Bergson's durée, in contrast to that of Roupnel, is heterogeneous; we feel it, it expresses our internal, intimate and personal experience; it is an immediate durée of the conscience. Bergson's durée, in which moments unify and never separate, is removed from the time formulated by mathematicians which is discontinuous.' [my translation] Osman E. Chahine, *La Durée Chez Bergson* (Paris: Structures Nouvelles, 1970), pp.78-9.

<sup>301</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, transl., M. L. Andison (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p.174.

constancy of the subject's own temporal process. The action moves ceaselessly in the background but the subject remains fixed and constant in time. The curving outer perimeter of the painting encloses the space to render visually and convey what is ultimately the claustrophobic, almost chaotic process of memory acquisition. This border encircles an idyll of industrial order as the construction workers move purposefully. All aspects of the painting are engineered towards this industrial heartland: the languid colours of the outer edge push the spectator towards the vibrant, yellow inner area; the geometrical pattern emphasises the middle section as the contours of the houses overlook and surround the building site. Technical unity is achieved through conscious creativity provoking reflection and the liberation from 'accepted logic'<sup>302</sup>, which is the basis of simultaneity.

That memory can even be mayhem is the message of this particular painting, although order reigns as 'durée' naturally brings experiential processes together. There is thus an asymmetry to the painting as it reveals memory to be random but also ordered simultaneously. It is structured and jarring in the sense that 'durée' is above all a reaction to stimuli when the subject responds, along with the spectator, to what she/he sees in the painting. The stimuli start a sequence in the mind which in itself means that some sort of change is ignited, but this pattern may be fitful to an extent and indistinct. The division between real time and 'durée' is a nebulous state, though, and Boccioni acknowledges the impossibility of representing 'durée' as a totally fluid time sequence. The horses at the foot of the painting are not ambling

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<sup>302</sup> Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Prefazione al Catalogo della 1a Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.380/English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912), 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto' in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.47.

through this idyll; they are darting in different directions, moving randomly. Their size is disproportionate to the scale of the painting, which indicates that they are alien to the generally ordered environment. These figures could be interpreted along the lines of *mémoire pure*, inexplicable and sporadic as they appear, or may be symbols of scientific time. The fact that they are also out of the subject's field of vision demonstrates that there are certain elements that cannot always remain under our control. It follows that these figures rupture the harmony of the painting and disrupt the simultaneous effect. The remainder of the painting represents how the subject views the scene whereas the horses are only meant for the artist's and spectator's appreciation. This is a significant switch in perspective, the result being that the onus is placed on the spectator. The horses are out of kilter and prevent us from completely freeing ourselves from 'accepted logic'. The fully Bergsonian work relies on a fluid stream of consciousness. Boccioni seems to have wanted to move against this at times with jarring elements such as these figures. In both *La città sale* (1911, plate one) and *La Risata* (1911), there is an elongation of the outer edge of the canvas owing to disjunctive features which distort the aesthetic and technical character of the works. This lengthening of the perimeter is due to colour flowing outwards from the centre of the painting literally up and out of picture.

Subconscious memory with all its irregularities also provides the intellectual substructure of 'Prose du Transsibérien'. It records the thoughts of a single speaker in a 'Boccionian synthesis of what one remembers and what one sees'.<sup>303</sup> This is made all the more effective by the condensed effect of time passing that Cendrars

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<sup>303</sup> Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p.159.

successfully manufactures. The reader often has the impression of the suppression of time at points in the poem. This simultaneity is made apparent through the manner in which Cendrars constructs his narrative. The tension generated by the narrative is so strong, events seem to happen very quickly; at times, it moves swiftly as the insistent rhythm of the poem suggests. In his 2013 compendium of *Oeuvres autobiographiques complètes*, Claude Leroy expounds the psychology of Cendrars's wanderlust and need to circumnavigate:

Dans son univers, et pour le paraphraser, les voyages ne sont pas les voyages— pas seulement les voyages. Il voyage pour ainsi dire en double. En prenant le masque du fugueur pour décrire son début dans la vie, il donne à entendre qu'un voyage pour lui est toujours une fugue, et la vie une rhapsodie de ruptures.<sup>304</sup>

The reader may well believe that the various episodes have followed hard and fast upon one another, but a close examination of the text reveals that this is not in fact so. References to the length of the journey and the slowness of the train are evidence of the journey's duration. However, flashpoints such as the human and physical references below reflect the ability of rapid travel to shrink time and space:

Tous les visages entrevus dans les gares  
Toutes les horloges

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<sup>304</sup> 'In his world, to paraphrase his words, journeys are not journeys—not travel alone. He travels to see himself again. By taking on the mask of a runaway to describe his early life, he implies that travelling is always for him like fleeing, and that life is a rhapsody of ruptures.' [my translation] Claude Leroy (with the assistance of Michèle Touret), *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres autobiographiques Complètes* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2013), p.xxiv.

L'heure de Paris l'heure de Berlin l'heure de Saint-Pétersbourg et l'heure de  
toutes les gares<sup>305</sup>

This has important implications with regard to 'durée'. This compression of time is  
intrinsically linked with the 'anxiety-laden rhythms in consciousness of the train  
journey'.<sup>306</sup> These rhythms are thus metaphorically identified with the passing of  
time:

Toutes les gares lézardées obliques sur la route  
Les fils télégraphiques auxquels elles pendent.<sup>307</sup>

In this sense, there is an order to 'durée' with defined moments in time stated  
unambiguously:

J'ai passé mon enfance dans les jardins suspendus de Babylone.<sup>308</sup>

However, in the same way that Boccioni seemed intent on disrupting the flow of  
consciousness in his art, so Cendrars permeates 'Prose' with an element of rupture.  
The poem is structured according to specific ideals; geographical destinations and  
landmarks are two of these criteria. Ill-fitting elements continue to intrude however:

Les démons sont dechainés  
Ferrailles  
Tout est un faux accord.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> 'All the faces glimpsed in stations/All the clocks/ The time in Paris the time in Berlin the time in St  
Petersburg and the time in all those stations' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien',  
*Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.39.

<sup>306</sup> Butler, p.160.

<sup>307</sup> 'All the cracked and leaning stations along the way/The telegraph lines they hang from', transl. Ron  
Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*,  
p.34.

<sup>308</sup> 'I spent my childhood in the hanging gardens of Babylon', transl. Ron Padgett, *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>309</sup> 'The demons are unleashed/Scrap iron/Everything clanks', transl. Ron Padgett, *Ibid.*, p.35.



It could be maintained, however, that the random nature of the content mirrors the mechanics of *mémoire pure*. Cendrars's poetics, especially during *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, revel in an enigmatic quality. There are areas of his poetry which are incomprehensible and represent the unpredictability of the human mind. The lines cited above are examples of the cinematographic aesthetic, mimicking a cut from an external scene to a close-up suggesting a state of mind. The stream of consciousness advances towards an automatic thought process with the emphasis on unregulated thought patterns. However, the notion of *durée* inherent in Cendrars's poetry can also be interpreted as an 'intersection of time and space'.<sup>310</sup> Properly speaking, 'durée' cannot be divided. When it is transected, homogeneous time is the result. The density of a poem allows such intersection to occur. Cendrars's zigzagging across the spatial/temporal divide effectively counteracts the anomaly that not all things which exist in time exist in space though all things that exist in space exist in time. Bergson's view ultimately was that this convergence was only possible through memory. Nevertheless, it is as if time and space cross in the work of Cendrars via his symbols which are so potent. For example, the Panama canal in 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles' binds time and space together so memorably, the poet's childhood resonates throughout the entire poem and continues to impinge itself on every subsequent event:

Oh mon oncle, je t'ai attendu un an et tu n'es pas venu...

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<sup>310</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, transl., F. L. Pogson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1910), p.110.

Je suis tous les visages et j'ai peur des boîtes aux lettres<sup>311</sup>

The fact that this material is committed to paper immediately coagulates time and space. Cendrars's symbols are developed to such a point that the two parts become indistinguishable. This is true of his use of diction relating to newspapers in his verse. As Cortiana notes:

L'effort de Cendrars pour récupérer les qualités expressives de ce moyen de communication moderne qu'est le journal – qui peut d'ailleurs contenir aussi les annonces publicitaires. On dirait qu'il veut emprunter, voler presque au journal sa caractéristique de simultanéité. Voilà alors le titre *Dernière heure* qui désigne dans le journal une rubrique précise concernant des nouvelles de la dernière minute, voilà l'insistance sur la date et l'heure et la définition de *Télégramme-poème* qui établirait le statut d'une écriture essentielle, d'une communication immédiate. Simultanéité temporelle et simultanéité spatiale vont se croiser, se superposer.<sup>312</sup>

Another example of a landmark exemplifying this junction in space and time is Cendrars's use of the Eiffel Tower in 'Tour'. The Tower has come to represent completely the contemporary age and in doing so, its physical presence is simply a mark of everything that has passed (in terms of the actual monument being built over a period) and is now present. I would advance this argument further by citing

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<sup>311</sup> 'Oh my uncle, I waited a year for you and you didn't come/I follow every face and I'm scared of letterboxes', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.66.

<sup>312</sup> 'Cendrars's efforts to recover the expressive qualities of this modern medium that is the newspaper – which also contains advertisements. It could be argued that he wants to borrow, even steal, from the newspaper its characteristics of simultaneity. This is why [he uses] the title *Last Minute* which refers in the paper to a specific column based on last-minute news and [why he] insists on the date and time and definition of *Telegram-poem* which establishes its status as an essential piece of instant communication. Temporal and spatial simultaneity intersect and are superimposed.' [my translation] Cortiana, p.66.

the example of a mother figure as a major motivating factor on both protagonists' psyches and as a potent symbol capable of linking time and space. The powerful maternal figure, possibly more than any other representative (in the work of Boccioni especially) occupies a spatial zone so substantially that she is almost trans-temporal. By this, I mean her omnipresence results in the mother figure being transposed across different temporal spheres. It is important to differentiate between the methods and outcome of both Boccioni and Cendrars here. Boccioni's art was driven by the figure of the mother. *Materia, Antigrizioso* (1912), *Testa + Finestra* (around 1912) and *Testa + casa + luce* (1912) all testify to Boccioni's faith in maternal love and power. A number of his pencil drawings convey a very real sense of the mother's omniscience with the technique of sweeping strokes conveying her overwhelming physical presence. For him, she symbolises solidity and universal strength. She is capable of being the 'durée' touchstone that throws him back to his past and grounds him in the present: '[...] nei momenti di crisi troverà un punto fermo, perché sa che è una forza elementare, antichissima.'<sup>313</sup>

Cendrars's relationship with maternity is more complex. Claude Leroy makes a very convincing case for the work *Les armoires chinoises* (1917) as the poet's immersion in a womb-like scenario. The poet is welcomed into an elderly lady's apartment (based on his close friend Mme Eugenia Errazuriz) and is so moved by her two Chinese wardrobes and their memorial associations that he decides to conceal himself in one of the spaces. This sets off childhood memories, and leads to a rebirth of the poet's sensibilities following the loss of his right arm (28 September,

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<sup>313</sup> '[...] in moments of crisis, he finds an anchor, because he knows that she is an elementary, age-old force.' [my translation] Ballo, *Boccioni, La vita e l'opera*, p.23.

1915), reconciling his loss through the prism of reinvention and rejuvenation that the wardrobe offers. As Leroy points out:

Le récit est resté secret parce qu'il touche au plus intime secret de Cendrars. Il le confie ici comme il ne le fera plus jamais par la suite: l'amputation aura été sa chance d'homme et sa chance de poète.<sup>314</sup>

Leroy has found evidence to support the finding that the wardrobe resolves to an extent any internal conflict following the poet's loss of his limb. It was only when the Cendrars archive opened in Berne in the early 1980s that a previously unpublished second chapter of this collection came to light. This reveals a level of acceptance, albeit dysfunctionally, of his injury:

Dans l'armoire, le poète mangeait les confitures qui coulaient de ses bras mutilés.<sup>315</sup>

This is a different interpretation of his predicament from that expressed in the first version: 'Dans le manuscrit de premier jet, l'armoire aux tortures coupait "le bras droit" du poète trop curieux.'<sup>316</sup> It is also important that once he is roused from his memories in the wardrobe, his suffering returns and Leroy contentiously equates the line 'Des aiguilles fouillent des coudes' with the German translation for épine (thorn) linking it directly to his mother's name (Marie Dorner). The status of the hand and arm gained precedence in Cendrars's poetry even before his injury had

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<sup>314</sup> 'The narrative remains secret because it touches upon Cendrars's most intimate secret. He shares it here in a way he will never do again: the amputation will have been his chance to be a man and a poet.' [my translation] Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Les armoires chinoises* (publication place of origin not stated: Éditions Fata Morgana, 2001), p.54.

<sup>315</sup> 'In the wardrobe, the poet ate the jams which flowed from his mutilated arms.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>316</sup> 'In the first draft manuscript, the torture wardrobe cut off the overly curious poet's "right arm".' [my translation] Leroy, *Les armoires chinoises*, p.54.

happened. Yet what we witness here is a conflation of time and space through the painful purging of memory symbolised by the breakdown and subsequent misshapen flowering of a new torso:

Les ongles continuent à pousser. On a par moment six doigts à chaque main et souvent trois, quatre pouces. La main coupée ne se situe pas au bout du moignon; elle est dans la région de l'épaule, dans l'axe du coude. Tantôt grande, tantôt petite elle se divise ou se multiplie et crée autour du corps une atmosphère sensorielle, élémentairement sensible, favorable à l'éclosion d'une vie spongieuse, cellulaire, quasi végétative. Des touffes de bras ondulent, vont au loin, reviennent, s'évanouissent. Les doigts sortent, rentrent, se nouent et se dénouent comme des cornes d'escargot ou s'allongent démesurément et pendent, inertes. Les omoplates sont souvent aussi lourdes que des ailes inemployées et la musculature du dos est gênante comme un harnais. On a l'impression que la cage thoracique se liquéfie. On perçoit nettement le chimisme des sensations. Telle saccade irréfrenable d'un doigt déclenche au fond de l'œil une impression prolongée de lumière vive; la croissance continue des ongles aiguise l'oreille; telle pression des ligatures du poignet répand une odeur de saumure; une crampe prolongée du thénar neutralise le palais; le réseau veineux se fige comme une fougère. Ces sensations, images, associations brouillent la notion du temps et de l'espace.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> 'The nails continue to grow. There are at times six fingers on every hand and often, three or four thumbs. The severed hand is not at the end of the stump; it is near the shoulder in line with the elbow. Now big, now small, it divides and multiplies, creating around the body a sensorial feeling, simply sensitive to the birth of a spongy life, cellular, almost vegetative. The arm tufts move up and down, move outwards, come back, fade. The fingers move out, come back, join together and unclasp like snail shells or spread out inordinately and hang, inert. The shoulder blades are often as heavy as redundant wings and the musculature of the back

#### 4.iii Mémoire pure

It is true that a work of art can show how time and space collide instantaneously. Boccioni's *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight) encapsulates a precise moment on both a spatial and temporal level. Both are ongoing in memory. It can be argued, however, that 'durée' as part of memory regression owes a considerable debt to the process of *mémoire pure*. This is the pattern of thought so deeply embedded in our consciousness, that it rarely, if ever, filters to the surface. But the fact that it exists and can be recalled, albeit obliquely, means that it remains a latent force. Thomas Hanna's description of the process is as follows: 'Pure memory is the survival of the images of perception when perception is no longer taking place.'<sup>318</sup> This process is therefore one that occurs in the unconscious sphere of the psyche and can be classed as an indistinct mass of memories.

Hanna's statement implies that perception and pure memory co-exist as lightning rods for each other. '*Mémoire pure*, though independent in theory, manifests itself as a rule only in the coloured and living image which reveals it,' states Bergson or, in other words: 'To picture is not to remember.'<sup>319</sup> The meeting point for both perception and *mémoire pure* is thus 'le souvenir image' which 'partakes of the *mémoire pure* which it begins to materialise, and of the perception in which it tends to embody itself'.<sup>320</sup> 'In the end,' observes Bergson, 'to perceive is no more than an

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is awkward like a harness. The rib cage seems to liquefy. The alchemy of sensations is apparent. The flick of a finger sets off deep in the eye a prolonged impression of bright light; nails keep growing the ear sharpens. A smell of brine comes from the pressure of the wrist ligatures; a cramp sustained from the thenar neutralises the palace; the network of veins congeals like a fern. These sensations, images, associations blur the notion of time and space.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, *Les armoires chinoises*, p.13.

<sup>318</sup> Thomas Hanna, (editor), *The Bergsonian Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p.11.

<sup>319</sup> *Matter and Memory* (trans. Paul & Palmer), p.133 & p.135.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, p.133.

opportunity to remember.’<sup>321</sup> The ‘souvenir image’, is not the point at which a person remembers a lesson learnt by heart, for instance, but the very first moment she/he began to memorise the lesson, therefore contextualising the memory in an appropriate scenario; this recollection is the ‘souvenir image’.

It is significant that Suzanne Guerlac is even more explicit in allying memory with perception when she discusses the genesis of *mémoire pure*:

Memory images cannot be lodged in the brain because Pure Memory is virtual! Memory does not exist until it is actualized through interaction with perception, or in the mode of dream [...] Pure memory has no material existence. It is pure idea or intention, pure virtuality. It only actualizes itself as it comes into contact with perception (which serves action) through the intermediary of the motor schematism.<sup>322</sup>

She goes on to stress that ‘the virtual image evolves towards a virtual sensation and the virtual sensation evolves towards the real movement’.<sup>323</sup> This process begins with Bergson asking the reader to think about the experience of trying to retrieve a memory. He uses the image of a telescope in *Matter and Memory* to show how previously fragmented and unconscious memories transmogrify into perceptible thoughts.<sup>324</sup> These memories become images in the mind through the ‘rotating’ motion of the telescope which makes the past become the present in varying degrees. This circular motion of the telescope, making new forms from interpenetrated states, creates a new kind of virtuality that mimics simultaneity in

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<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time, An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p.139.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140.

<sup>324</sup> *Matter and Memory* (trans. Paul & Palmer), p.134.

its move from unity to multiplicity (or vice versa as the progression to single, distinct images in the form of perceptible 'souvenir images' may be viewed as a unified form). Both unity and multiplicity are in evidence as discrete memories forming part of multiple thought patterns.

So is it possible to detect *mémoire pure* as a comparable strand of 'virtuality' in both Boccioni and Cendrars? I previously noted that in the case of Cendrars's poetry, there is displacement through various devices such as rhythm and imagery that indicate a shift to a new dimension which makes different demands on the reader's/viewer's intuitive skills as one moves from the textual/pictorial medium to a new imaginary space. To my mind, it is almost as if Cendrars enjoys emulating a state which exists only in a virtual medium, and which echoes Bergson's thesis of *mémoire pure*. This has been examined in chapter one through the implication that the poet opens up pockets of 'virtual space' by evoking a kind of exoticism, be it geographical or temporal. Yet this new, ambiguous space relies directly on defining perception 'in terms of action' (citing here Guerlac's view of Bergson's definition of perception<sup>325</sup>). Or, as Guerlac goes on to enunciate: 'Consider perception to be in the service of action, not knowledge, and see that memory is in part constitutive of perception.'<sup>326</sup> Therefore, we can see how Cendrars applies the central tenets of Bergson's thesis to his poetry by depicting past occurrences that are strengthened by Bergson's view of 'mental events [which] cannot be reduced to the neuro-chemical level.'<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Guerlac, p.5.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*, p.214.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.



Action in Cendrars's verse therefore goes hand in hand with the instrument of perception whereby *mémoire pure* is activated through the motor of motion which is, of course, a primary concern for the poet. This is the case at several points in Cendrars's poetry. The most obvious example is the train in *La Prose* which drives the poem in question. Yet the first part of 'Portrait' generates its own internal dynamism, which is just as frenetic as the rail journey. This is achieved through the subtly delineated actions of the artist presented in the poem who is invigorated by flashes of hyper-reality, for instance, that he is the son of God: 'Le Christ, Le Christ, c'est lui.'<sup>328</sup> The fact that the painter appears to cease making art by the end of the first section ('Tout à coup, il ne peint plus'<sup>329</sup>) shows that the protagonist is seeking a kind of realisation driven by internal machinations. It is almost as if an internal lens is at work here, motoring the painter's awakening. Guerlac's assertion of *mémoire pure* as a virtual sensation evolving towards a real moment is more applicable than ever in this instance.<sup>330</sup> There is a sense of the protagonist embracing his fully conscious state following a series of lapses into a less defined state of consciousness. As the poem states: 'Il dort maintenant.'<sup>331</sup>

The action depicted is not, however, limited to the canvas of the page for the poet. A particularly effective consequence of Cendrars's application of *mémoire pure* is his ability to make us think about what is happening 'off-screen' in terms of the action extending beyond the descriptions given. It is safe to say that as the action crystallises 'on-screen' (that is, on the page as described), so the narrative seems

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<sup>328</sup> 'The Christ, The Christ is him', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Portrait', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.77.

<sup>329</sup> 'Suddenly, he is not painting', transl. Ron Padgett, *Ibid*, p.78.

<sup>330</sup> Guerlac, p.140.

<sup>331</sup> 'Now he's asleep', transl. Ron Padgett, 'Portrait', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.78.

especially to continue 'off-screen' (off the page) which is in itself, a derivative of *mémoire pure*. If Bergson defines the phenomenon as being like a telescope drawing into focus, then a possible logical enhancement of this process takes place outside the boundaries of the scene depicted. This is because the actions of Cendrars's protagonists can often only be contextualised through envisaging alternative scenarios for them beyond the page.

However, *mémoire pure* has a less well-defined role to fulfil in Boccioni's works. This is borne out most explicitly in the first version of the *Stati d'animo (States of Mind)* series (1911; plate twenty) which is more Bergsonian in concept and execution than the corresponding second version of the triptych (1911; plate twenty-one) which is more Cubist in conception and acts as a comparative, layered foil to the temporal process portrayed in its initial counterpart version.

The angular, deconstructed geometric forms of *States of Mind: Those Who Go* are instantly recognisable as Cubist-inspired. The system of splicing and slicing the painter's subjects into overlapping sections echoes Picasso and Braque's Cubism, as does the electric tonal palette and splintered composition.<sup>332</sup>

*Mémoire pure* permeates the first series in the sense that it enacts for the spectator the melancholic experiences that she/he harbours which may be embedded in the psyche yet continue to form part of our everyday existence through their subconscious influence. Boccioni succeeds in encapsulating most effectively the depths of the mind. The first series encompasses the grainy and dream-like state

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<sup>332</sup> Will Gompertz, *What Are You Looking At? 150 Years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye* (London: Penguin Group, 2012), p. 144.

of *Quelli che Restano* along with the purge and poison of *Gli Addii*, a swirl of gas, smoke and sulphurous thoughts spouting from the nadir to the apex as if to embody the spewing over of the subconscious mind. The spectator functions intuitively to arrive at a subjective interpretation of the memory process inherent in his work. The mass of indiscernible shapes in the first version of the triptych equate with the hidden recesses of memory. Images only semi-lucid in the mind are represented by Boccioni in the same way that *mémoire pure* is one's consciousness. The 'infinite sadness'<sup>333</sup> of *Quelli che Restano* is pronounced and implies an ongoing memory process which may result in a more explicit affirmation of the workings of memory via 'durée'. The figures seem governed by a languidness which is permanent and are burdened with their own searing memories. The figures are a distillation of both 'durée' and *mémoire pure* as they epitomise an amalgamation of all that is present and absent in memory; present in 'durée' and absent in *mémoire pure*.

Yet the fact that the figures are indiscernible, torpid and hover between presence and absence indicates that they are meant to simply symbolise fleeting perception. This may explain why 'durée', rather than *mémoire pure*, is represented even more implicitly in the second *Stati d'animo* series of oil paintings (plate twenty-one) in which Boccioni graduates from the abstraction of version one to the relative figuration of version two. This evolution is elucidated by David Neo:

Bergson argues that memory is the intersection of mind and matter, and that it has a psycho-physiological relation (*Matter and Memory* xvi). Our perceptions, he asserts, are undoubtedly interlaced with memories; and that inversely, a

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<sup>333</sup> Butler, p.151.

memory only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips and that perception and recollection interpenetrate each other. In another instance, Bergson writes that memory creates anew the present perception—or rather it doubles this perception by reflecting upon either its own image or some other memory-image of the same kind, and that we are constantly creating and reconstructing our perception. According to Bergson, the source of memory-images is pure memory, which interacts and develops into perception.<sup>334</sup>

It could be argued that this progression, from the indistinct to the concrete, is a direct correlation to the transformation undertaken by memory in its transformation from *mémoire pure* to 'durée'. Brian Petrie underlines most effectively this progression: 'Boccioni was attempting a more sophisticated art based on pure intuition, expressive of duration as a property of matter as of the spirit, ontological in its goal.'<sup>335</sup>

The second version of *Gli Addii* (plate twenty-one) is a good example of the buried, abstract thoughts of the preliminary drawing becoming legible, digestible representations of memory and action. Likewise, the later, second version of *Quelli che Vanno*, with its combustible heads and houses coming into focus, may well encapsulate the overflow of memory from the bottom of the psyche's sub-strata to the top. For an insight into Boccioni's technique on achieving depth in his imagery, which he penetrates and portrays most effectively in the first version of *Gli Addii*, we

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<sup>334</sup> Alexander Sokurov, 'Fractal Images of Memory in Mother and Son, Part I', *Off Screen*, Volume 5 Issue 6, (November 2001), pp.15-19 (p.19).

<sup>335</sup> Brian Petrie, 'Boccioni and Bergson', *The Burlington Magazine*, 852 (1974), pp.140-147 (p.142).

need to examine his earlier etchings of 1909 to 1910 which show his mother carrying out various activities such as reading and sewing. *La madre che legge* (1909; plate twenty-six) and *La madre che cuce* (1909-10; plate twenty-seven) are figurative works on the verge of abstraction in the sense that they, especially the latter piece, are out of focus and show a figure not fully delineated. Once again, Boccioni is seen to retreat into an unconstructed, faintly perceptible past through these pieces that just fall short of becoming entirely illusory. Perhaps the act of reading is intended to be an ephemeral stage because another etching, *Donna che legge* (1910), is equally transitory in its unravelling of a past endeavour, both for the sitter and the artist. Such a short-lived pastime even appears to be of little importance to the sitter. In contrast, Cendrars does not, however, procrastinate as much between presence and absence. I would argue that Boccioni never achieves the same degree of liberality as Cendrars accomplishes in his proposed adherence to *mémoire pure*.

## Chapter Five: Conscious Creativity

### 5.i A Centre of Consciousness

Boccioni's Divisionist ideals conform to the precept of Bergson that advocates seizing a centre of consciousness by means of connecting disparate elements.<sup>336</sup> This dissimilarity is the basis of 'la compenetrazione dei piani' ('the interpenetration of levels') which, as I have argued, constitutes an essential tenet of this analysis in my introduction.<sup>337</sup> This technical approach needs to be analysed further so as to establish how Boccioni brings together in a unified form the disconnected entities often prevalent in his work. This approach, based principally on establishing a series of contrasts, filters down to Cendrars via Apollinaire. In terms of the use of colour, the origins of Orphic art and literature derive from Robert and Sonia Delaunay's theory of simultaneity which is intrinsically linked to the coagulation of colour in art (chapter 2.ii). Apollinaire spearheaded Orphic Cubism, a new strain of the movement, which was then advanced by the Delaunays.

The independence and purity of colour underpins Apollinaire's rallying call to create art akin to music and its accompanying literature ([une] "peinture pure [...] ce que la musique est à la littérature"<sup>338</sup>). An Orphic work must be structured yet sublime; the faithful depiction of the subject, constructed completely in the mind's eye of the artist rather than from visual reality, is pivotal. Orphic Cubism, elaborates Apollinaire in the journal *Montjoie!*, is an art "où ne vibre plus seulement le contraste

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<sup>336</sup> Henri Bergson, *Œuvres, La Pensée et le mouvant, 1934*, includes 'Introduction à la métaphysique' 1903 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p.35 (see also footnote 222).

<sup>337</sup> footnote three.

<sup>338</sup> 'pure painting [...] what music is to literature.' [my translation] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Du sujet dans la peinture moderne', *Soirées de Paris* (February 1912), p.2.

des complémentaires découvert par Seurat, mais où chaque ton appelle et laisse s'illuminer toutes les autres couleurs du prisme. C'est la simultanéité.<sup>339</sup>

This concept of contrast engendering harmony can be traced back to Georges-Pierre Seurat (1859-1891) who 'thought of his complementaries as phenomena produced by the psychological effect known as simultaneous contrast that Rood and Eugène Chevreul describe'.<sup>340</sup> Seurat fanned out colour so as to produce a chromatic separation of hues but as Guido Ballo points out, this is underpinned by an intuitive rather than a scientific approach to colour, a stance not unlike that pursued by Boccioni:

[...] Seurat giunge al cerchio cromatico dei complementari simultanei, dissocia i colori puri per usarli con un processo che vorrebbe essere scientifico ma che alla fine si affida alla intuizione fantastica, sviluppata con severo controllo mentale che non l'annulla, anzi la rafforza, dà valore al segno pittorico che nella simultaneità usa colori complementari e anche colori analoghi: il segno forma così vaste superfici linee, sia pure con tocchi staccati.<sup>341</sup>

Apollinaire later implicates Cendrars and writes of 'le poème ('Prose)': '[...] Blaise Cendrars et Mme Delaunay Terck ont fait une première tentative de simultanéité écrite ou des contrastes de couleurs habituaient l'oeil à lire d'un seul regard

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<sup>339</sup> '[...] where the contrast of the complementary elements discovered by Seurat no longer resonates, but where each tone depends upon and illuminates all the other colours of the prism. This is simultaneity.'

' [my translation] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'A Travers le Salon des Indépendants' (March 1913, *Montjoie*) in *Chroniques d'art 1902-1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), p.380.

<sup>340</sup> Paul Smith, *Seurat & the Avant-Garde* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), p.34.

<sup>341</sup> '[...] Seurat achieved a chromatic circle of simultaneous harmonies, he separated pure colours by using them in a process that should be scientific but ultimately relied on fantastical intuition, developed through strict mental control that does not cancel out but strengthens instead the [painting] process. This process adds value to the painting that uses simultaneous and analogous colours; the mark made forms vast superficial lines from staccato touches.' [my translation] Ballo, *Boccioni, La vita e l'opera*, p.18.

l'ensemble d'un poème, comme un chef d'orchestre lit d'un seul coup les notes superposées dans la partition, comme on voit d'un seul coup les éléments plastiques et imprimés d'une affiche.'<sup>342</sup> He describes the work as a 'poème en couleurs contrastées simultanément de Blaise Cendrars et Mme Delaunay Terck'.<sup>343</sup> This recalls Delaunays' art yet it appears to also confirm the internal machinations of Cendrars's poetics that are founded on multiformity. In this sense, Apollinaire regarded Cendrars as an Orphic artist, a view which André Salmon shares, stating that: '“la Prose du Transsibérien” est plutôt quelque chose à la manière orphiste.'<sup>344</sup>

Juliet Bellow highlights how Sonia Delaunay especially created art forms that turned uniform temporal flow on its head:

Her experiments with time constituted a significant contribution to the theoretical basis of simultanism: these works test the very meaning of simultaneity by placing its painterly manifestation in direct contact with sequential art forms.<sup>345</sup>

There is moreover a strong basis to believe that the Delaunays' form of 'simultanéisme' is primarily a technical experiment based on the dynamic qualities of light and colour.

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<sup>342</sup> 'Blaise Cendrars and Madame Delaunay Terck have made a first attempt at written simultaneity whereby contrasts in colours make the eye read in one go an entire poem, like a conductor reads at one attempt the notes superimposed on a score, like one sees the visual and printed elements of a sign.' [my translation] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Simultanisme-Librettisme', *Soirées de Paris* (June 1914), pp. 322-325 (pp.323-24).

<sup>343</sup> 'the poem in simultaneous contrasting colours by Blaise Cendrars and Mme Delaunay Terck'. [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>344</sup> 'la Prose du Transsibérien is more Orphic.' [my translation] André Salmon, *Gil Blas*, (October 1913).

<sup>345</sup> Juliet Bellow, 'On time: Sonia Delaunay's sequential Simultanism' in *Sonia Delaunay, Les Couleurs de l'Abstraction*, exhibition catalogue: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 17 October 2014-22 February 2015; Tate Modern, London, 15 April-9 August 2015 (London, Tate Publishing, 2015), p.99.



If Cendrars himself aligns with this largely technical school of thought, any claim to an instinctive approach on his part appears untenable to a degree and denotes production grounded completely in awareness and consciousness. Hence, any association with the aesthetics of Futurist art, which operates according to sensation and science, may appear invalid. Therefore, to what extent does the poet do what he wants, rather than bowing to the demands of pre-determined directives?

Sonia Delaunay testifies, however, that her methods are not motivated by technical ideals alone:

[...] je me contente de voir partout ces contrastes de couleurs dans les choses de la vie [...] La couleur m'excite, je ne me rends pas compte de ce que je fais. Ce sont des choses qu'on sort de ses tripes. Il en sera de même toute ma vie. Appelons ça l'instinct.<sup>346</sup>

If Delaunay does not espouse a conscious division of the canvas, Cendrars's position with regard to his approach to the page is possibly likewise in question. In the light of Sonia Delaunay's testimony in defence of instinct, Jean-Pierre Goldenstein concludes that Cendrars's approach relies as much on instinct as logic: 'Cendrars me semble partager la même position instinctive face à la poésie.'<sup>347</sup> This is evidence of the orchestrated angle of Cendrars's poetry or the extent to which it is 'consciously created'. It is at this point that a comparison with Boccioni gathers

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<sup>346</sup> '[...] It is fulfilling to see everywhere the contrasts between colours in everyday things [...] Colour excites me, I'm not aware of the things I do. This comes straight from the guts. This will be the case throughout my life. Let's call it instinct.' [my translation] Sonia Delaunay, *Nous irons jusqu'au soleil* (Paris: Laffont, 1978), p.35.

<sup>347</sup> 'Cendrars seems to me to share the same instinctive approach to poetry.' [my translation] Jean-Pierre Goldenstein, 'Quelques vues successives sur la Simultanéité', *Sud: Colloques de Cerisy-la-Salle* (20/30 July 1987, published Cerisy-La-Salle: Editions Sud, 1988), pp.55-69 (p.62).

validity in the sense that simultaneity is a process that combines both technical and emotional proficiency.

Goldenstein's article, which studies in detail the different published editions of 'Prose Du Transsibérien', provides us with an insightful analysis of the poet's creative stance and the degree to which it is deliberate. Discussing the original 1913 edition of the poem, he notes:

Les mises en relief imposées par la rupture de la linéarité (parallélismes de strophes, de caractères, d'encrages, de justifications) créent un espace littéraire opacifié qui dote le texte de supplément de sens. Ces phénomènes ont-ils été véritablement pensés ou créés a posteriori par la disposition adoptée?<sup>348</sup>

Goldenstein's examination of the first version of the poem (published by Editions des Hommes Nouveaux) reveals marked differences in the layout. In spite of the fact that the structural outline of the work appears to be rigidly constructed, the internal machinations inspire multiple meanings and interpretations. His findings highlight nevertheless a move towards sustaining the structure of the work solely through the typography which is ordered in all editions though according to certain key linguistic features which act as 'markers' on the page. The most dominant indicator of a cohesive narrative structure is the first person singular, 'je'. This infiltrates a significant part of the poem and undermines the common critical view that there is a severe destabilisation of identity in the work. These pointers in the language are

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<sup>348</sup> 'The outlines imposed by the rupture of linearity (parallelisms of stanzas, of characters, of inkings, of justifications) create an opacified literary space which gives the text more sense. Have these phenomena really been thought out or created a posteriori by the approach taken?' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.65.

however the only staple ingredient in what remains on first sight a swirl of diction and imagery which 'relèvent [...] d'un aléatoire pur et simple'.<sup>349</sup> Anne Henault's criticism of the first edition however illustrates the regularity and rhythm of this original version stating that 'le côté ferroviaire de la langue'<sup>350</sup> is its most striking aspect. The evidence suggests that there is a rhythm and order to this first edition that errs on the side of technical finesse. However, later versions, although structurally less ordered, are still founded on the same linguistic and thematic pointers, which played such a prominent role in the first version.

Cendrars's principal concern is how the typography is able to provoke a sense of space but this is fraught with paradox. Goldenstein asks how capable Cendrars is of shaping 'une simultanée spécifique à l'œuvre hors du support de l'édition originale?'<sup>351</sup> Plurality originates from the fact that simultaneity is no longer a question of reading but simply of seeing as 'l'écrit est condamné à la successivité, dépend d'une incontournable linéarité'.<sup>352</sup> It is this anomaly however which most succinctly highlights the success Cendrars has in utilising a typographic structure for simultaneous effect. The need to preserve a structural constant remains in the form of an ordered typographical shape. That is to say, Cendrars must have wished the reader to view the poem as a defined body of work on the page. Jay Bochner goes so far as to state that 'at a distance the typography gives the impression of great interweaving and even confusion, but every detail is carefully placed, position

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<sup>349</sup> 'falls within [...] a pure and simple randomness'. [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> 'the railway aspect of the language'. [my translation] Anne Henault, *Narratologie, sémiotique générale* (Paris: Paris PUF, 1983), p.135.

<sup>351</sup> 'a simultaneity specific to the work beyond the medium of the original edition?' [my translation] Goldenstein, p.67.

<sup>352</sup> 'writing is condemned to successivity, depending upon an inevitable linearity'. [my translation] *Ibid.*

playing an important role in meaning'.<sup>353</sup> The text is therefore not fully liberated from the constraints that a usual page layout demands; this is not chaos but controlled freneticism.

This is the conscious aspect of his method. However, instinct is incited because the reader will notice the actual spatial dimensions as they echo the spatial dimensions of the journey being covered in the poem. It is important to remember that the journey, the central motif of the poem, never actually happens (its authenticity as an autobiographical account is debatable). The journey, facilitated and driven by the poet, is essentially of the reader's making and it is his/her interpretation of the journey as depicted that makes any simultaneous effects possible. The conscious aspects of the poem are the typographical element and the globe-spanning thematic content. The unconscious elements are ultimately therefore of the reader's making.

This is aided by the fact that Cendrars excels in investing his poetry with a quasi-instinctive approach which in turn opens up pockets of 'virtual space' by evoking a kind of exoticism, be it geographical or temporal. The action moves, for instance, at one point, from Madrid to Patagonia and onto the poet's own reminiscences of 'les mers du Sud'.<sup>354</sup> The diction and typography in other words is designed to induce the global vision which was Cendrars's primary aim, constituting simultaneity for the poet. The Editions Seghers version of the poem shows how the content continues to override technical considerations. Goldenstein's analysis concurs with this idea, but his conclusion does give the poet some credit for his attempt at reordering the

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<sup>353</sup> Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars: Discovery and Re-creation*, p.103.

<sup>354</sup> 'southern seas' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose Du Transsibérien' *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.33.

semantic properties of the page, saying that ‘une justification typographique-esthétique arbitraire’<sup>355</sup> is at work. He agrees that the poem is devoid of ‘une justification sémantique textuellement motivée’.<sup>356</sup> This question of what is arbitrary in terms of the material as it is presented is an important area relating to this study.

The poetry of Cendrars, which is heavily orchestrated but aims to elicit a sensory response from the viewer, therefore exhibits a workable fusion of the instinctive and the conscious. This reflects the Boccionian ideal of simultaneity which is both technical and aesthetic. The debate at the centre of this thesis is how both artists achieve this marriage of the spontaneous and the predetermined and how this leads to an intuitive appreciation of space. Cendrars’s approach needs to be examined in more detail with particular reference to ‘Prose Du Transsibérien’ followed by a subsequent study of Boccioni’s method in the same respect. The poem in question is an experimental poem with its mixing together of high and low cultural references. This is mirrored in the choice of diction. Cendrars concentrates on single, defining words as openings to his global vision which, for the poet, constitute simultaneity. The poem is constructed around a series of contrasts:

J’étais à 16 000 lieues du lieu de ma naissance.

J’étais à Moscou, dans la ville des mille et trois clochers et des sept gares.

Maintenant, j’ai fait courir tous les trains derrière moi

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<sup>355</sup> ‘an arbitrary typographic-aesthetic justification’. [my translation] Goldenstein, p.66.

<sup>356</sup> ‘a semantic justification that is motivated in a textual way’. [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.66.

Bale-Tombouctou

J'ai aussi joué aux courses à Auteuil et à Longchamp<sup>357</sup>

Apart from the obvious implications for the spatial plan of the poem, these examples also mark out 'je' as the first and most distinctive semantic feature. This in turn helps create a hidden narrative, that is to say the unified thread which supplies the reader with points of reference. The hidden narrative also consists of a series of contrasting images, which steer the voice of the poem. The narrative is also guided by semantic markers, for example, the names of towns and regions which figure during the poet's journey. Marie-Louise Audin examines the manner in which these markers operate. She argues that the poem can be judged according to criteria which are grounded in semiology. Referring to the function of the proper name, she argues that:

Son rôle d'individualisation se double alors d'une fonction de signifiante, née du réseau mobile des connotations intra et extra-textuelles que lui confèrent encodage et décodage. Le nom propre acquiert ainsi une opacité qualitative, capable d'animer quasi charnellement l'Espace.<sup>358</sup>

Audin then addresses the fundamental issue on which this chapter is based:

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<sup>357</sup> 'I was 16,000 leagues away from where I was born/I was in Moscow, city of a thousand and three bell towers and seven train stations'/'Now I've made the trains follow me/Basel-Timbuktu/I've played the horses at tracks like Auteuil and Longchamps', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.33.

<sup>358</sup> 'Its role of individualisation functions in conjunction with its meaning, born of a shifting network of intra and extra-textual connotations that endows it with encoding and decoding. The proper name then acquires a qualitative opaqueness, capable of bringing Space to life in an almost carnal fashion.' [my translation] Marie-Louise Audin, *La Prose du Transsibérien: une stratégie de l'analogie / Cendrars, l'aventurier du texte* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1992), p.194.

En ce qui concerne *La Prose*, la question majeure est de savoir si cette opacité et les stimuli qui en naissent se trouvent gouvernés par le créateur ou le lecteur.<sup>359</sup>

What is under discussion here is the ‘centre of consciousness’. This occurs when the simultaneity is all-encompassing in the way that Bergson advocated, gaining access to the inner substance of an object by means of the convergence of several, dissimilar defining images. A definitive point of intuitive enlightenment would then be the result. If we are to truly understand the mechanics of simultaneity in both media, the input of both the reader/spectator and the artist/writer need to be evaluated. The fact that Audin’s analysis is permeated with references to the ‘opacité’ and ‘le signifiant et la vacuité’<sup>360</sup> of Cendrars’s poetry underlines the difficulty involved in detecting the logic of his poetic direction at times.

However, threads of continuity do exist. A pattern does emerge through a process of explicit association. The progress of this sequence involving the demystification of imagery can be charted in terms of a shift from metaphor to synaesthesia. The following example demonstrates this procedure:

Le Kremlin était comme un immense gâteau tartare  
Croustillé d’or,  
Avec les grandes amandes des cathédrales toutes blanches  
Et l’or mielleux des cloches...<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> ‘Regarding “Prose”, the principal question is finding out whether this opaqueness and the stimuli which produce it are dictated by the creator or the reader.’ [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> ‘signifier and vacuity.’ [my translation] *Ibid.*, pp.194-96.

<sup>361</sup> ‘The Kremlin was like a immense Tartar cake/Iced with gold/With big blanched-almond cathedrals, and the honey gold of the bells...’, transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, ‘Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.27.

These lines illustrate how Cendrars manoeuvres this subject towards familiarity and a rational conclusion. Audin plots the progress of the image; how it begins with the comparison between 'kremlin' and 'tartare', her conclusion being that the imagery 'disent en écho, une puissance s'enracinant dans un lointain passé guerrier et étranger'.<sup>362</sup> The duality relating to a 'centre of consciousness' is again in evidence here; the reader is asked to summon the familiar and the unknown. The image of the almonds is bipartite: it divests the reader by degrees of his/her poetic task as it is so clearly delineated, and yet it still works as a metaphor because an element of deciphering must still take place on the part of the reader. It is still necessary for the reader to imbue the poetic text with meaning. It is almost as if Cendrars deliberately makes his poetic clues as prominent as possible yet his work still remains sufficiently hermetic to expect disentanglement. The continual use of synaesthesia, a technique that also fascinated the Symbolists, provokes a reaction across all senses, assisting in the liaison between the habitual and the irregular.

This alliance between the familiar and the unfamiliar is amplified by the unsettled voice of the poet. Regarding tone, it is first appropriate to question the context of the poem and useful to view the journey represented in 'Prose Du Transsibérien' as a microcosm of the international technology of the 1910s. The vivacity and rapidity of the journey aligns itself with the speed of Futurism, typifying the violence, energy and thrust into the future so indicative of the eponymous Italian movement. This 'violence of the new' is absorbed into the tone of the poem which is personal because of the use of the subconscious markers already discussed (these markers

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<sup>362</sup> 'is echoed, its power rooted in a distant past that is warlike and foreign'. [my translation] Audin, p.196.



are the disparate images, geographical points and the first-person singular which guide us towards the 'centre of consciousness'). The personal tone is established in a number of diverse ways. The violent emotions of the poet at the opening of the poem are those of youth firstly. In the course of the poem, the poet displays a degree of affinity with his travelling companion Jehanne. Lastly, certain images impinge upon his consciousness so that one perception leads to another, resurrecting personal recollection:

Le soleil est un fumeux quinquet

Et tout au haut d'un trapèze une femme fait la lune...

Et voici mon berceau

Mon berceau

Il était toujours près du piano quand ma mère comme Madame Bovary jouait les sonates de Beethoven<sup>363</sup>

Bergman highlights this central motif of personal doubt and feeling by stating that certain themes recur during the poem:

Toujours est-il que quelques thèmes centraux reviennent en leitmotiv, par exemple les doutes du jeune poète sur sa force poétique [...] et la question pleine d'angoisse de la petite Jehanne.<sup>364</sup>

This adds an element of spontaneity to the poem which undermines to a certain extent Audin's interpretation, placing too much emphasis at times on the

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<sup>363</sup> 'The sun like a smoking lamp/And way up on the trapeze a woman does a crescent moon.../And here is my cradle/My cradle/It was always near the piano when my mother, like Madame Bovary, played Beethoven's sonatas', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.33.

<sup>364</sup> 'Certain themes always recur as a leitmotiv, for instance the doubts of the young poet about his poetic power [...] and the anguished question of Jehanne.' [my translation] Bergman, p.317.

premeditated aspect of Cendrars's work. It is justified to say, however, that the poem does not evolve freely and without direction. The fascination of 'Prose Du Transsibérien' and the key to its effectiveness lie in the fact that it splinters so ingeniously, that is to say, it digresses but never completely abandons its pivot, that of the 'je'. This is also the case with 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles' where this pronoun is even more salient. Martin Steins clarifies why this poetry is structured in this intensely personal way with the subjective experiences of the poet at the forefront of the themes explored:

La poésie devient le reflet de l'âme au contact du monde. Sans vouloir jouer sur les mots on pourrait dire qu'elle est totalement et uniquement lyrique en ce sens qu'elle se suffit à transcrire des états d'âme-dechirés par la contradiction très souvent mais sans en chercher une quelconque signification. Être spontané: voilà le mot d'ordre qui galvanise cette génération.<sup>365</sup>

This is convincing evidence for the argument in favour of conscious creativity in the work of Cendrars. Martin Steins has summarised the dichotomy inherent in his poetry, which can be characterised as being uniquely aesthetic rather than technique-based. His quest to 'transcrire des états d'âme' echoes Futurist sensibilities. Indeed, it resembles closely the aesthetic ethos of the Futurist movement ('la simultaneità degli stati d'animo'; see footnote 4). It has become more apparent that simultaneity in the guise in which it manifests itself in both the art of

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<sup>365</sup> 'Poetry becomes the reflection of the soul in contact with the world. Without wanting to play on the words, it could be said that it is completely and only lyric in the sense that it is very often able to transcribe states of the soul torn by contradiction but without looking for some meaning in it. To be spontaneous: this is the key word which galvanises this generation.' [my translation] Martin Steins, 'Blaise Cendrars, bilans nègres', *Archives Des Lettres Modernes, Etudes de critique et d'histoire littéraire*, 169 (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1977), pp.50-51.

Boccioni and the poetry of Cendrars is therefore closely aligned with the controlled consciousness of the artist or poet. Steins's statement is contradictory in places though he is certainly correct in stating that the poetry of Cendrars is lyrical. Cendrars believed in the harmony and clout of lyrical poetry: 'le lyrisme est une façon d'être et de sentir.'<sup>366</sup>

Steins also points out correctly the alternation between control and spontaneity in his work. Cendrars is spontaneous, though this spontaneity is always regulated by imagery that he controls, and yet his poetics continually demand unravelling. He is the creator of his own reality, something the reader is constantly aware of; he provides the stimuli for an intuitive conversion by means of imagery while the reader has to furnish these catalysts with his/her own interpretations.

## 5.ii Consciousness and the Spatial Map

This assertion, that Cendrars retains an element of control in his poetic structuring, evidently has a bearing on the spatial map of his verse. It is through an examination of space and ultimately dynamism that parallels begin to emerge between Cendrars and Boccioni. It is necessary here to return to a point highlighted in the preface which is that of dynamism and its role in Futurist art. For Boccioni, dynamism is: 'una legge generale di simultaneità e di compenetrazione che domina tutto ciò nel movimento e apparenze [...]'.<sup>367</sup> In his essay *Dinamismo*<sup>368</sup>, Boccioni provides a

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<sup>366</sup> 'Lyricism is a way of being and feeling.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, *Œuvres Complètes, Vol. IV* (Paris: Paris Denoël, 1960-65), p.207.

<sup>367</sup> 'a general law of simultaneity and interpenetration dominating everything in movement and appearance [...]'. Umberto Boccioni, 'Dinamismo' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.202/ 'Plastic Dynamism', transl. Robert Brain in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.94.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.92-95.

detailed analysis of what constitutes dynamism. The Futurists were of the opinion that life should be studied according to its maximum intensity: 'nella velocità e nella conseguente simultaneità'.<sup>369</sup> The Futurists were seeking 'lo stile del movimento',<sup>370</sup> 'quel senso di perpetuamente mobile che è proprio di tutto ciò che vive'.<sup>371</sup> This applies to both sculpture and painting and can be divided into three parts: the interaction between absolute motion and relative motion, that is to say, between the environment and the object (be it the sculpted form or the subject of the painting) by means of force-lines; the quest for a single defining form to aid continuity; identification with the object itself through a succession of stages. These criteria can be related to the aforementioned discussion of Cendrars's structural techniques.

The environment in Cendrars's poetry is very much of his own determining. All the necessary elements therefore fulfil the Futurist doctrine of 'subject, object and environment'<sup>372</sup>; the subject is the traveller, the object is the journey and the environment is the field in which both evolve. There is clear evidence of the object or subject (the journey in 'Prose Du Transsibérien') imprinting itself on its environment as it unravels. The interdependence of the two (object and environment) is strongly delineated. The preface evaluated dynamism according to structuralist criteria. In a broader sense, 'Prose Du Transsibérien' relies solely on the environment it represents, that is to say, the environment provides the framework for the entire poem from the experience evoked within the train to the destinations

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<sup>369</sup> 'in speed and consequent simultaneity'. [my translation] *Lacerba*, March 15, 1914 (part of Boccioni's thesis *Pittura Scultura Futurista* was published in advance in *Lacerba* in March 1914).

<sup>370</sup> 'a style of movement'. [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'La Scultura futurista' in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009), p.80.

<sup>371</sup> 'this sense of perpetual movement that applies to everything that exists'. [my translation] Carlo Carrà, 'Guerrapittura' in *Manifesti* (Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta editore), 1970, p.66.

<sup>372</sup> Butler, p.147.

depicted. The work cannot and will not exist without this clearly defined milieu. It is nonetheless arguable that the poem could easily function if parts of its infrastructure were omitted. Most passages could even be considered superfluous yet the overriding impression is of a cohesive whole. Certainly, the 'inner life' of the poem creates its own space and the disparity of his imagery only serves to unify the work, mainly through association and connotation as discussed earlier.

This is related to the third condition, that of a single form to assist continuity. Boccioni's explanation on achieving sculptural simultaneity and the use of a single form to assist continuity clarifies how separate parts coexist yet remain independent:

Quindi nella pittura e nella scultura futuriste, non daremo, un oggetto in moto, facendone un press'a poco pel timore di fermarlo e di ucciderlo nel definirlo [...] ma ci preoccuperemo piuttosto del moto dell'oggetto, o meglio della forma che viene creata dal succedersi dei suoi stati di moto, i quali rappresentano la sua potenzialità.<sup>373</sup>

Various stages of structural composition are in play here. There is an awareness of each separate part although the emphasis is on the 'motion of the object', and the mass as it works in its entirety through the 'succession of its states in motion'.

'Conscious creativity' is a matter of how separate elements are utilised and the importance of those elements both as sole components and en masse. The analysis of Cendrars's poetry has shown that he plots to an extent the course of the action

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<sup>373</sup> 'So in Futurist painting and sculpture, we will not put forward an object in motion, for fear to a slight degree of stopping it and killing it by defining it [...] but rather we will be concerned about the motion of the object, or rather the form that is created by the succession of its states of motion, which represents its potentiality.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, *Dinamismo* in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.201.

which can be deemed episodic, thus contributing to the idea that a whole unit forms the final product. Each episode infringes upon another like the plates of an earthquake to such a degree that the poet 's'efforce de donner la durée d'un mouvement donné' (footnote 284).<sup>374</sup>

Bergman actually refers here to Boccioni's artistry in *Cavallo + Cavaliere + Caseggiato* (1913-14; plate fourteenr) though this affirmation can also be applied to Cendrars. This analogy is amplified by Bergman: 'Ce qui est successif dans le temps, devient simultané dans l'espace.'<sup>375</sup> It could be argued however that the reverse is in reality more applicable for both Boccioni and Cendrars. Cendrars especially seems to plot out his spatial dimensions and a nebulous time sequence develops internally as a result. Bergman's assertion is moreover important in relation to the last point of the tripartite series of conditions mentioned earlier (identification with the content through a succession of stages). A cinematographic effect is achieved by Cendrars yet the suggested visual analogy of split-screen cinema underlines that the development of space is the premium consideration for the poet rather than a clear time sequence. The headings 'une sorte d'espace-temps'<sup>376</sup> and 'simultaneità di tempo-spazio'<sup>377</sup> are hence slightly deceptive. Nevertheless, Cendrars's representation of space is alternately enlarged and reduced as a consequence of his references to the temporal pattern of his journey. Dimensions are made vast but also reduced at the same time.

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<sup>374</sup> 'strive to give the duration of a given movement'. [my translation] Bergman, p.161.

<sup>375</sup> 'What becomes successive in time becomes simultaneous in space.' [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> 'a sort of space-time'. [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> 'a simultaneity of time-space'. [my translation] Marinetti, *Mostra Futurista di Aeropittura e di Scenografia* (Milano: Bestetti e Tumminelli), p.12.

There is in fact a very real sense in both Boccioni's and Cendrars's work of their protagonists 'overlooking' and partaking in action that takes place in spatial arenas that are outside the usual sensory realm of experiential cause and effect. Boccioni's *Trittico: Veneriamo la madre* (1907-08; plate twenty-eight) is reminiscent of key Macchiaioli works where the question is whether the human presence imposes unity on the multiple facets of the painting or whether the human consciousness is affected by the fragmentation. The oil painting by Boccioni is a triptych, a form that the artist was to continue developing (*Stati d'animo first version*; plate twenty) and may be seen as a basic forerunner to montage. The juxtaposition it employs works in an ambiguous way. It is not altogether certain that the female figures of the main portrait are in fact the women who flank the principal image. This ambiguity, however, makes the series more cinematographic in the way it invites a multitude of interpretations. Moving from left to right, the painting presents a three-step sequence; the first figure in the sequence (possibly the daughter) studies a text, the central image depicts a mother doted on by her two siblings while the third shows the second daughter reading by lamplight. Against a backdrop of a town's skyline, the coarse brush strokes of the central image's personalities solidify the painting. The scale of the figures decreases in size from left to right in a beautifully measured combination of colour and shade. The turquoise mass of the mother's garment is set against a palette of multiple tints. This colour combination solidifies the painting, drawing upon the viewer's intuitive abilities to relate seemingly disconnected parts thereby prompting a subconscious unification of the work. In other words, we

discern colour which brings the painting together in the form of character and object representation, initiating subjective thought and feeling from the viewer.

This motif, which basically involves the supervision of principal activities of a scene, is continued in *La signora Massimino* (1908; plate twenty-nine). In this image, there is the unusual effect of a flattening of perspective which squares the exterior action against the canvas. However, the scene outside the window vibrates by means of an almost divisionist treatment of light and space. There are clearly delineated sunlit zones that highlight the figures in the square like the images of a photograph negative. The black and white reproduction of the portrait in *Boccioni, l'opera completa*<sup>378</sup> enhances this effect. In setting a succession of figures in the style of 'virgoli instabili'<sup>379</sup> against four tangible frames—the back wall, the balcony, the window and the signora herself—Boccioni presents density of content against a structured backdrop. In coalescing the image with the insertion of a prominent figure, the artist has bolstered his ideal of presiding over a fragmentary space that is not completely chaotic. This is a thematic and structural common gauge, several examples of which are found in the works of Cendrars.

Three salient examples are detailed below in which the narrating presence of Cendrars's poetry alternately presents local detail with an outlook constantly trained on the limitless and nebulous outer periphery of the larger world. This may be described as a swing from the subjective view of the poet towards an objective, all-seeing, more cinematographic point of view:

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<sup>378</sup> Calvesi & Coen, p.234.

<sup>379</sup> 'unstable points'. [my translation] M. Calvesi, 'Il futurismo di Boccioni: formazione e tempi', *Arte Antica e Moderna*, no.2, (April-June, 1958), pp.148-169 (p.152).



Je suis tous les visages et j'ai peur des boîtes aux lettres  
Les villes sont des ventres [...]

Je voudrais être la cinquième roue du char

Orage

Midi à quatorze heures

Rien et partout<sup>380</sup>

This paradox of world-weariness and a simultaneous desire to be completely within the world is typical of Cendrars's, at times, schizophrenic view of the cosmos. The link to simultaneity is here well-defined and made explicit in the sense of being 'rien et partout'. Dissipation and consistency are the result of this desire to become and absorb everything. Interpenetration along with the displacement and paradoxical reunification of the self dovetail with this idea of the split identity of simultaneity; it disfigures yet remains whole. This is where Cendrars excels; he stands outside a constructed realm, which facilitates the dynamics of simultaneity.

The theme of what I would call 'unchartered territory' is of course a comparative study that could be applied to any artist that deals with vistas, be they metaphorical or visual, in any sense. What makes this a common gauge in both artists' case is their stance as subjective observers managing a locale that will not overstretch them and on which they can stamp their own identities. This for Cendrars is a highly expansive

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<sup>380</sup> 'I follow every face and I'm scared of mailboxes/The cities are wombs [...]I'd like to be a fifth wheel/Storm/Noon to two pm/Nothing and everywhere', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.66.

realm. The advertisement in English on Denver that punctuates 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles' (plate thirty) is arresting because it is such a blatant promotional blurb, extolling the commercial and social benefits of living in the burgeoning US city.

Yet it immediately invites itself up as a workable example of the poet expanding and controlling his selected milieu, though this is altogether more unfettered than Boccioni's practice. Boccioni often attempts to introduce unfamiliar components into his material, giving his work an alienability that can be limited and limiting. This is evident in *Carica di Lancieri* (plate twenty-five) which, as I have stated, ripples out from a centre of gravity. The newsprint in the top right-hand corner of the painting, with the headline 'presi dai francesi' (taken by the French'), is a textual element that does not subsume the main parts of the work. Cendrars's Denver prospectus—its upbeat tone and diction landing like a meteorite in the middle of the unfurling narrative poem—brings an element of mass culture to a traditionally refined medium (poetry). His aim may consist of partly democratising his thematic and technical frameworks; this cannot be said of Boccioni who is altogether more tentative in introducing contemporaneous touches. A later overlooked work 'OpOetic' (plate thirty-one), part of the 'Sonnets dénaturés' series (1916) comprising only three poems, is a virtuoso deconstruction of aural and written signs, with the continued pivot on the O sign. The composition is delineated by distinct semantic blocks that are all anchored around the O sound and sign. Any semblance of order is maintained in a fragile sense throughout until the final block that disrupts the pattern with the large visual depiction of an O symbol. This cacophony demonstrates

how the poet discombobulates an already unsettled series of proclamations, resulting in the final anarchic domination of the page by the oversized printed letter. This chimes with the ethos enforced by the poet of expanding and controlling his panorama in verse. Another work in the 'Sonnets dénaturés' series, 'Académie Médrano', relies on the same sense of discordancy to rattle the reader with its emphasis on the enlarged phrases in different typographical fonts. It is challenging also to stay on track with language that breaks down completely into gibberish:

Les jongleurs sont aussi les trapézistes

xuellirép tuaS

teuof ed puoC<sup>381</sup>

But this is a deceptive, mischievous act. An inner, tethering dynamic overrides the frenetic lettering, as evinced in the aural touchpoints of 'Danse [...] Mesure [...] La fille [...] Le clown' which punctuate the linguistic contortions and unintelligible parts. I reiterate that the poet stands outside a constructed realm, which facilitates the dynamics of simultaneity. This is in evidence here; the poem distorts and distracts yet remains whole.

How does Cendrars achieve ownership of his more subversive interventions such as the advertisement in 'Panama'? Simply by including it is the obvious answer, which is worth stating. Another key to Cendrarsien simultaneity is bearing in mind that this is what the poet chooses to divulge (or 'oversee', just like the scenes he presents). This homage to Denver is part of an imprint of its time, a panorama made up of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century slogans and sound bites whose punch and verve is echoed in

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<sup>381</sup> 'Jugglers are also trapeze artists/ xuellirép tuaS/ teuof ed puoC' [my translation]. Blaise Cendrars, *Sonnets Dénaturés*, 'Académie Médrano', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.120.

the verse: 'Strindberg a démontré que la terre n'est pas ronde / Tous les grands hôtels se disputent tes services, Tu es le maître.'<sup>382</sup> Indeed, in 'Publicité=Poésie' (1927), Cendrars is keen to establish advertising as a kind of poetry for the modern era; the point is just as relevant to poetry—and its need to be relevant to the real world—as it is to the artistry of advertising.

This mastery of a blunter, 'journal-like' register and manipulation of signals to the reader was of great importance to Cendrars. The 1918 edition (published by Éditions de la Sirène, Paris), of the poem, a copy of which (no.181) is owned by the National Library of the Netherlands, is one of five hundred copies printed on Lafuma paper. Its front cover is printed in the style of a homespun travel guide, littered with sticker-like designs. There is a vertical folding line in the middle of all the pages, which is designed to make the reader fold the issue in half, thereby making it more compact. There are 25 railroad maps (of US rail networks) included in this edition, which adds to the 'rough guide' feel of the poem. In consciously honing this register, which combines personal recollection and nostalgia along with a contemporary form of address, Cendrars manages to create and shape an arena which goes back to the heart of the poet's front-page approach to his verse. By this, I mean that he hopes to mimic the effects garnered by a newspaper cover with its mix of high and low references. He may even be considered more like an editor than a writer, fuelling the assertion that as a poet, he enjoys standing back and cleaving the space he has engineered.

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<sup>382</sup> 'Strindberg demonstrated that the earth is not round'/'All the great hotels fought to get you/'You are the master', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.58/p.63.

The premise analysed in this section of digesting, overlooking, owning and creating an open space, which is intrinsic to the idea of having a centre of consciousness, is developed further in 'Roof-Garden' which is an eulogy to New York. The premise of digesting and evaluating an external space is also represented as a purely personal journey towards one's own subjective horizons, as exemplified in 'Journal':

Voici les tableaux que j'ai faits et qui ce soir pendent aux murs

Ils m'ouvrent d'étranges vues sur moi-même qui me font penser à vous<sup>383</sup>

Again, every strand of this argument coalesces at this point; time is not a single unilinear succession but a multi-layered range of differentiated experiences experienced by both the subject of the work and spectator so that what one remembers and what one sees is integral to the viewer's/reader's understanding of the work.

### **5.iii The Spiral Form**

Why concentrate on the spiral form at this point? It is hard to avoid the motif when discussing the work of both Boccioni and Cendrars; I would subsequently go so far as to say that it is the predominant linking factor between the two and their conception of form. Most of their respective works can be reduced to rotation which is also the key to Bergson's version of virtuality (based on memories turning into images in the mind through the 'rotating' motion of the telescope which makes the

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<sup>383</sup> 'Here are the pictures I've done and which hang on the walls tonight/For me they open strange views onto myself which make me think of You', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Journal', *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, p.69.

past become the present in varying degrees, p.215). This circular motion of the telescope, making new forms from interpenetrated states, creates a new kind of virtuality that mimics simultaneity in its move from unity to multiplicity. This transmogrification is achieved through circular movement; moving back and forth is moreover the thrust of Clive Scott's comments which unearth a number of crucial models for analysis.<sup>384</sup> Reading backwards and forwards involves a degree of rhythm and juxtaposition because the reader is inclined to move back and forth through several different areas of experiential perception. The most basic example of the repetitive strain of Cendrars's verse is seen in the below examples where, in affirming the opposite, the poet sets up a chain of corresponding sequences in the mind of the reader by establishing an overarching series of events that stem from the presentation of the negative:

L'unité

Il n'y a plus d'unité

Toutes les horloges marquent maintenant 24 heures après avoir été retardées  
de dix minutes

Il n'y a plus de temps

Il n'y a plus d'argent<sup>385</sup>

Il n'y a pas de futurisme

Il n'y a pas de simultanéité

Bodin a brûlé toutes les sorcières

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<sup>384</sup> Scott, p.143.

<sup>385</sup> 'Unity/There is no more unity/All the clocks now say midnight after being set back ten minutes/There is no more time/There is no more money', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Contrastes', *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, p.74.

Il n'y a rien

Il n'y a plus d'horoscopes et il faut travailler<sup>386</sup>

The circular movement that underpins the mechanics of Cendrars's work can be seen to take root in both Boccioni's earlier works (as his painting develops during the period 1909-10, light, colour and space in his paintings take on a 'spiral' form) and in his mediocre attempts at *parole in libert * verse. As *Primavera* (date unknown) crescendos towards the central refrain of 'Luce Luce Luce', Boccioni is successful in changing the function of isolated words and sibilant sounds as the poem unfolds. 'Esalta' and 'sole' in the first part give way to 'soffrire' and 'silenzi'. There is a movement towards 'l'anima si distende'<sup>387</sup> in the latter section but the tone that accompanies this realisation of the artist's aesthetic mission is more intense, reflecting his bewilderment at reconciling himself with a new self-searching role. The use of block capitals alerts the reader to the four points on the page where they are used and in so doing, steers him/her around the verse. The poem almost tapers off, the tail end of the spiral as such, with the interlocking 'b' and 'f' sounds in 'verde bisbiglio indecifrabile'.

On the verge of embracing Futurism, the design of Boccioni's art at this point in his career resembles a vortex. In *Paesaggio lombardo* (1908; plate thirty-two) and *Treno che passa* (1908; plate thirty-three), the eye is swept back and fore by the looping of the brightly-drawn colours. The former work presents a wonderful rotation of shrubbery in the foreground that balances the painting. There is an

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<sup>386</sup> 'There is no futurism/There is no simultaneity/Bodin burned all the witches/There is nothing/There are no more horoscopes and you have to work', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Cr pitements', *Dix-neuf po mes  lastiques*, p.90.

<sup>387</sup> 'the soul extends', Umberto Boccioni, 'Primavera', in *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), p.54.

illusion of depth here as the matching greens and reds of the front line of foliage merge with the background field. The circular movement of the strokes distinguishes this façade, forming a perceptible reef of undergrowth. The latter work operates on the same principle. In the foreground, swirling hues shore up the picture. The spectator moves instinctively from the background azure areas to the flattened centre area and then on to the roughly-painted bed of colour that supports the entire canvas. What is intriguing about this work is how such an uneven mass can so solidly govern the complete image. By effectively amalgamating a series of strokes and colours that move in different directions, the front layer, jagged yet smooth, is aligned with its preceding segments. The circular movements are controlled sufficiently to ensure a unified tableau that swirls yet remains readable.

The preliminary sketches of *La città sale* (plate one) permit a totally inclusive experience from one marked point to another in the same way, emulating the spiral formation that went on to dominate Boccioni's later works. Here, more than in any other Boccioni painting, multiple actions are encapsulated within the one frame in the sense that the picture depicts several experiences in the guise of composite forms. There is a patent movement from right to left, with the impetus for the action inspired by the central figure of the thrusting horse. A miasma of human and animal forms engulfs each other though as with every other aspect of Boccioni's work, the common denominator that is circular motion is never permitted to dominate and make the work much more difficult to digest. A circular movement from right to left is also echoed in an illustration Boccioni made for the journal *Italian Illustration* (the artist made seven works in total for this publication from 1908 to 1909). This piece



shows the aftermath after an explosion in a mine in Westfalia, Germany. The figures in the foreground of the painting are splayed outwards, pointing towards the periphery of the work, in much the same way that grass on a lawn separates when a helicopter lands there.

The painting *La città sale* itself is supremely well-organised. The freneticism of the moment is palpable, as browns clash with reds and yellows against a background of differing perspectives. The perspective of the work is intriguing; the inflated horses and four principal figures in the foreground swept into the whirlwind, along with the diminutive creatures and figures of the background, are all consistent in scale with the speed of the piece that is deliberately disorienting and overblown. Initial sketches (date unknown) for the painting demonstrate how the artist plotted the work around key features, such as the edifice under construction in the top right-hand corner, the horses and men of the bottom left-hand corner and the walled area of the top left-hand corner. These features assist in reading the painting as a carefully stepped process, moving the eye concentrically from one area to the next. Yet the eye is always drawn backwards to the previous facet. The spectator's line of vision, for instance, when surveying the white horse in the top left-hand corner, encompasses the men on the ground. This fluid switch between contrasting elements once more returns the argument to the governing principal of juxtaposing 'scenes' contained within a work, the fundamental nature of montage. In doing so, the idea of gaining insight into the work through gradiated perceptions resonates again. This steering of the viewer also shows that a 'centre of

consciousness' is in operation here, whereby the eye is trained to flick back to the centre of the work.

Just as *La città sale* presents a continual cycle, whereby the spectator simultaneously moves back and forth around the composition, so the interlocuting internal dynamics of 'Panama' loop the reader incessantly around the poem. But the circularity is even more pronounced in the poet's work (both works are shown on p.336). If the common gauge of circularity is so prevalent, it is because the poet is even more conscious of drawing the reader back into the main body of his text both grammatically and thematically. This is achieved to a greater degree than in the works of Boccioni. Colour acts as the principal means of bringing the viewer back in to the action of *La città sale* as, in theatrical terms, it sets out the viewer's movements in the same way that a director 'blocks' an actor's movements from one place to another and back again. Similarly, Cendrars employs verbal units that quickly transport the reader outside present events whilst containing him/her in a more effective way:

Tu as travaillé avec de joyeux Italiens à la construction d'une voie ferrée dans  
les environs de Baghavapour

Boute en train

Tu étais le chef de file de tes compagnons<sup>388</sup>

The extent to which 'Boute en train' grounds the poem in a recognisable reality cannot be underestimated, though it is actually a more concrete example of how the

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<sup>388</sup> 'You worked with happy Italians building a railroad near Baghavapur/A live wire/You were a natural leader', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.55.

poet measures his verse. The above example is a logical linking expression (also reproduced as plate one). At other moments, the poet tunes his verse with abstractions (phonetic and metaphoric) that serve as purely aural ‘anchors’ thereby acting as almost meditative chants that tell the reader that she/he is still in the realm of poetic licence. The poet had momentarily taken leave of the poetic scenario but is still there, informing the audience that even though he is taking them somewhere not recognisable to them, he is still set on presenting a fully functional and integral unit of language as a signpost of his own status as a poet:

L’homme qui se coupa lui-même la jambe réussissait dans le genre simple et gai

Mee low folla<sup>389</sup>

La danse du paysage

Danse-paysage

Paritatitata

Je tout-tourne<sup>390</sup>

Jeanne Jeannette Ninette nini ninon nichon

Mimi mamour ma poupoule mon Pérou

Dodo dondon<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> ‘The man who cut off his own leg succeeded in a light and simple genre/Mee low folla’, transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, ‘Mee Too Buggi’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.102.

<sup>390</sup> ‘The dance of the landscape/Dance-landscape/Paritatitata/I all-turn’ [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, ‘Ma Danse’, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.82.

The use of words with an obscure signifying function has various implications for the analysis of his structural dynamics. Firstly, it would be convenient to state that such interjections are only rhythmic devices, aiding the flow of the poetry. This is true and again contributes to the debate of circularity as a common feature, in that these utterances do add a melodiousness to the verse that engenders rhythm and familiarity as in the repetition of rhythmic patterns:

Et ils sont de neuf espèces

Le sacata, le griffe, le marabout, le mulatre, le quarteron, le métis, le mamelone,  
le quarteronné, le sang-mêlé<sup>392</sup>

It is evident that certain linguistic elements are therefore not even intended to function fully as 'signifiers'; they are rallying calls to the reader to embrace his poetic scenarios though the boundaries fixed between these different areas of representation are difficult to ascertain fully. What binds the cases in point is that they are engineered and not arbitrary. There is a continual echoing of each line in the next or those that follow, more so at times in the phonetic pattern created than in the thematic content. This pattern of generating echoes mimics a spiral formation and is found throughout Cendrars's poetry. The repeated use of the definite article in 'Prose du Transsibérien', a simple grammatical signpost, may be seen as one of the bases of simultaneity: it brings the reader back to the one place and allows him/her to see all parts of that world working at once. And yet this is what makes the poet so

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<sup>391</sup> 'Jeanne Jeannette Ninette nini ninon nichon/Mimi mamour my dear my Pérou/Dodo dondon' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.38.

<sup>392</sup> 'And there are nine types/Sacatra, griffe, marabou, mulatto, quadroon, half-breed, mameluco, quarteron, half-caste' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'Continent Noir', *Poèmes nègres, Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.126.

successful in achieving his aims relating to simultaneity. He is able to move from this platform to both more abstract and representational areas thereby using 'signs' as both semantically loaded poetic 'markers' and simply as vessels of sound. The most appropriate analogy would be a Venn diagram, the method used to designate sets in mathematics. There is always a common area in the middle of such a diagram where universal features are located. This is why Cendrars's verse can be described as a versatile form that regularly adheres to ideals pertaining to simultaneity. The common area of the analogy described, the overlapping region of the Venn diagram, is the area where the poet's concrete ideals are best represented. By frequently referring the reader to these 'anchors', the poet ensures that the process of absorbing his messages remains rooted in an identifiable referential context and the loop that is simultaneity continues to circle back round in the verse. The outlying other areas of the diagram would then represent verse that acts purely as a system devoid of semantic context.

When scanning a Cendrars work, the eye is immediately drawn to the monolexical lines. This is the case across his entire poetic oeuvre apart from 'Les Pâques à New York' that is structured around rhyming couplets. *Documentaires* also relies less on the single word construction though it is still prevalent in the series. From this singular idiom, the reader spirals around the remainder of the stanza in the same way that Boccioni directs the spectator around his paintings (for example, in *Treno che Passa*; plate thirty-three) from a central point. There is, then, considerable consistency with the poet's use of different tenses. Cendrars adheres to the tense,

which is correct for that particular utterance. This sounds anomalous yet there is little desire on his part to subvert completely his constant grammatical patterns:

Oh mon oncle, ma mère m'a tout dit

Tu as volé des chevaux pour t'enfuir avec tes frères

Tu t'es fait mousse à bord d'un cargo-boat

Tu t'es cassé la jambe en sautant d'un train en marche

Et après l'hôpital, tu as été en prison pour avoir arête une diligence

Et tu faisais des poésies inspirées de Musset

San-Francisco

C'est là que tu lisais l'histoire du général Suter qui a conquis la Californie aux

Etats-Unis<sup>393</sup>

The intervallic symmetry of the subject/object union in lines two to four of the above indicates a surprising degree of uniformity in the poet's approach which is only diminished slightly by the 'San Francisco' line. There is in addition a beautifully crafted form of enjambment running through these lines in that the sound and sense of each phrase depends on the former for its existence. Even the 'San Francisco' interjection complements the rhythm of the piece, providing a swivelling aural hinge between the first and second parts of this tu-based construction. This is possibly the key to Cendrars's almost labyrinthine poetry; finding the corresponding sense, be it

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<sup>393</sup> 'Oh uncle, my mother told me everything/You stole some horses to run away with your brothers/You became a cabin boy on a tramp steamer/You broke your leg jumping from a moving train/And after the hospital, you were in jail for sticking up a stagecoach/And you used to write poetry inspired by Musset/San Francisco/That's where you read the story of General Sutter who conquered California', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.51.

in the phonetics or semantics, of the preceding verse. This is part again of the spiral movement that makes the work loop back on itself ('La spirale règne dans la création de Cendrars [...]'<sup>394</sup>). He never leaves the reader completely stranded (out to shore but not left to drift). On the issue of sound as a back-up device in his verse, there is a continual ebb and flow to the phonetic make-up of his verse:

J'étais seul des jours entiers  
Parmi les meubles entassés  
Je pouvais même casser de la vaisselle  
Fendre les fauteuils  
Démolir le piano...<sup>395</sup>

There is therefore a continual echoing of earlier patterns in the verse. The relationship between certain consonant sounds in the above (p/l/s) means that the poem circles acoustically. Even amongst the disjointed works of *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, a sense of connecting through sound and sentiment succeeds. In 'Journal', the three triple couplets that follow the first longer stanza form a harmonious relay between key sounds. The penultimate stanza of 'Panama' again draws back into itself as a self-functioning container of sound and sense. As discussed earlier in the analysis, the eye is always drawn backwards to the previous facet in a Boccioni painting. We return to the idea here of looping backwards and forwards so as to fuse

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<sup>394</sup> 'The spiral reigns in the work of Cendrars [...]'. [my translation] Claude Leroy (introduction), *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.I* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2001), p.xviii.

<sup>395</sup> 'I was alone for entire days/Among the stacks of furniture/I could even break the dishes/Split open the armchairs/Demolish the piano...', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.48.

uncommon elements. There is thus aural montage in Cendrars's verse that relies on a system of juxtaposing and ultimately uniting sounds.

The other, outlying areas of the analogical Venn diagram described previously may well be classified as 'degrees of tone'. It can be argued that the issue of tone further incorporates both the abstract and concrete. Throughout his verse, the poet vacillates between various poetic voices. One of the most intriguing aspects of Cendrars's approach to his poetry, this question of tone is a distinctive enough element to be classed as another prominent marker. The poet's voice arguably falls into two camps, detectable throughout the course of his work: first, a bluntness of tone infuses his verse, prominent examples of which can be located throughout 'Les Pâques à New York'. This work switches fluidly between the principal voice of a penitent protagonist and a sharper, more ambiguous tone (the second component) that seems to thrive on what can be viewed as a restrained judgmental stance towards his protagonist:

Je voudrais être Vous pour aimer les prostituées.

Seigneur, ayez pitié des prostituées.<sup>396</sup>

Seigneur, quand vous mourûtes, le rideau se fendit,

Ce que l'on vit derrière, personne ne l'a dit.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> 'I wish I were You, so I could love those prostitutes/Lord, have pity on the prostitutes', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Pâques à New York', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.20.

<sup>397</sup> 'Lord, the curtain parted when you died/And what was seen behind, no one has said', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Pâques à New York', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.21.



It is increasingly obvious that this attitude cloaks an almost schizophrenic array of voices that represent the agony of an uncertain future for the poet. As the poem reaches a climax, there is a confused call to minister to the lonely poet though this is eventually drowned out by a defiant:

Je ne pense plus à Vous. Je ne pense plus à Vous.<sup>398</sup>

Leading up to this final diatribe, the poem veers between a descriptive mode (as in an account of the burgeoning weight of the new industrial landscape of the city) and the pleas of the protagonist as he ponders on the suppressed role of religion within that new setting. The repetition of 'Où sont [...]?', 'Seigneur' and 'Dic nobis' form an axis around which both the emotional and grammatical content of the poem can evolve. These three cornerstones of the poet's syntax very much shape the course of the poem in its final stages. Recognisable as they are in the role of thrusting invective vocabulary, they verge on the unstable yet steer the poem just this side of total anarchy. It is difficult, however, to accept the poet's entreaty of psychosis as completely genuine. This is yet another case in point of the solidifying aspect of Cendrars's poetry, which warrants that simultaneity is constantly centred and brought back into a more rational dominion. If the reader is aware of a sanitising voice that never becomes overly absurd but often hinges upon the incongruous, it is because the poetry dovetails together and spirals into one recognisable form according to these diverse pitches of sound and voice. There are many illustrations of these gradations of tone that swipe at the reader and leave him/her uncertain of

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<sup>398</sup> 'I stop thinking about You/I stop thinking about You', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Pâques à New York', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.26.

the poet's true objectives. They are proof of the earlier assertion that Cendrars's tone can be subdivided into the candid and the confrontational:

Les vitres des maisons sont toutes pleines de sang

Et les femmes, derrière, sont comme des fleurs de sang,<sup>399</sup>

Puis il y avait beaucoup de femmes

Des femmes des entre-jambes à louer qui pouvaient aussi servir<sup>400</sup>

Et j'aurais voulu broyer tous les os

Et arracher tous les langues

Et liquéfier tous ces grands corps étranges et nus sous les vêtements qui

m'affolent...<sup>401</sup>

Tu apprends le Bengali et l'urlu pour apprendre à fabriquer les bombes<sup>402</sup>

These interpolations affect the reader's instinctive appraisal of the poem as we meet the darker, more human side of this body of literature. These sinister and ultimately more human exclamations with their naked naturalistic belligerence bond the emotional strands of the poem with the concurrent individual, visceral thought

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<sup>399</sup> 'The apartment windows are all filled with blood/And the women behind them are like flowers of blood', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Pâques à New York', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.17.

<sup>400</sup> 'And there were a lot of women/Women with vacant thighs for hire', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.29.

<sup>401</sup> 'And I would have liked to have ground up all their bones/And ripped out all those tongues/And liquefied all those big bodies, naked and strange, under clothes that drive me mad...', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.28.

<sup>402</sup> 'You learned Bengali and Urlu to learn how to make bombs', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.55.

processes of the reader. There is thus something universal about this underbelly of affirmative verse. This is why it is sometimes difficult to trust Cendrars and the persona he theatrically embraces. Another gauge of his poetry that impinges on this is his 'documentary' tone when he reports, apparently objectively, on what he sees and experiences:

Au bruit strident des branches cassées arrachées succède le bruit plus sourd  
des gros bananiers renversés d'une poussée lente<sup>403</sup>

Les délicieux cottages construits en briques de couleurs vives donnent à ce  
paysage l'aspect d'un royaume enchanté<sup>404</sup>

J'ai vu des trains de 60 locomotives qui s'enfuyaient à toute vapeur  
pourchassées par les horizons en rut et des bandes de corbeaux qui  
s'envolaient désespérément après<sup>405</sup>

The clipped verse of *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques* does not feature many instances of this retreat into what could be seen as a device with faint echoes of reportage. *Documentaires* is also intended to be more of a record in verse while 'Prose du Transsibérien' combines a number of varying tones, from the provocative to the testimonial. Out of all of Cendrars's verse, this poem is the most difficult to pinpoint

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<sup>403</sup> 'The strident noise of branches broken ripped off is succeeded by the duller sound of big banana trees turned over with a slow push', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Chasse A L'Eléphant', *Documentaires*, p.171.

<sup>404</sup> 'The delicious cottages built in bright-coloured bricks give this landscape the appearance of an enchanted landscape', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Les Mille Iles', *Documentaires*, p.140.

<sup>405</sup> 'I saw trains with 60 locomotives streaking away chased by hot horizons and desperate crows', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.42.

in terms of pitch. If simultaneity is a multi-faceted phenomenon, then Cendrars activates the process by engaging in assorted parts made up of different voices. It is not, however, a generalisation to state that two strains predominate in this piece and across his work: a degree of candour, and also an element of subjectivity. As we reflect, there is a discernible character to the poetic presence, summarised most succinctly as a diligent reporter of events with a critical alter ego within the machinations of his work.

In contrast, it is difficult to isolate a defining 'voice' for Boccioni. The tone of his work, from his earlier measured pieces to his sketch drawings (many of which can be classed as studies for finished works), could be described as one of checked freneticism and in this respect, there is an affinity with Cendrars when one is able to root out beneath a controlled veneer a sense of liberation (with a pen or pencil poised for complete abandonment). This is mirrored in a chronological selection of Boccioni's sketches from 1911 to 1914. *Costruzioni orizzontali* (1911-12) is intriguing because it uses a number of horizontal platforms in the drawing as benchmark stabilisers. The eye is drawn around the figure of the central, aged woman by jumping from platform to platform. This is a disjointed spiralling movement but it still takes on a spiral form nevertheless with the horizontal planes cutting through the sitter's body at regular intervals, causing its own unfettered rhythm in the image. Experimenting with this movement around the central figure is an objective in *Studio per l'antigradoso* (1912; plate thirty-four). This print operates with a curious dynamic; the figure moves from right to left, clockwise in the direction of the head in a propeller-like motion. This is subtly engineered; one's line

of vision centres initially on the head, then down the torso and finally back along the left side of the misshapen mass. This pattern, a spiral from right to left, is more blatant in another work on paper, *Studio per l'antigrazioso* (1912). If the eye is able to break down this figurative depiction into a basic series of strokes, then it becomes apparent that the drawing motion moves towards the bottom right of the page and then back up to the top left. Yet even though a clockwise movement governs *Dinamismo di un corpo umano* (1913), this motion is disrupted by fascinating mammary-like structures dotted around the figure. This delve into abstraction reaches its limits in *Studio per Cavallo + cavaliere + case (Costruzione dinamica di un galoppo, 1914)* whereby the focus is on the tail end of the animal. The structure of the figure is cut into three parts: the aforementioned protruding backside, the cone-shaped middle part of the horse and the vague outline of the head in the far right-hand side. The device that makes this image revolve is the use of the jutting arrow-like strokes that represent the animal's limbs.

Anything that exhibits any sense of movement is nearly always kept under control: the series of sketches, *Dinamismo di un ciclista* (1913; plate thirty-five), demonstrate Boccioni's skill in expressing high-speed movement. The trajectory of the bicycle is superbly executed; the cyclist moves up and across the page principally by means of the pointed, arrowed lines encircling the cyclist. Boccioni's series of 'walking' sculptures, however, the most celebrated being *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio* (1913, plate thirty-eight), carve out their own spatial location with a profound sense of remaining centred. In a similar way, Boccioni controls the brightness of his tones (as in hues). *Dinamismo di un Foot-baller* (1913) is an

attempt at restraining a colour scheme; the tone is muted at the edges and allowed to flourish away from the centre. In contrast, *Natura morta. Cocomero* (1913-14) screams at the viewer with its garish blend of shocking pinks, blues and greens.

#### **5.iv Interpenetration**

Simultaneity in the Futurist sense is essentially movement, or, as Boccioni outlined, dynamism: 'Simultaneity is a condition in which the various elements which constitute dynamism are present. This is therefore the effect of that great cause that is universal dynamism.' (footnote 2). The basis of the concepts of both movement and space are founded on the ideal that, according to the Futurists, no object is isolated. Objects work mutually in relation to each other through the action of force-lines. This has implications not only for the treatment of space but also for movement. The doctrine of 'la compenetrazione dei piani' engenders a blurring of boundaries to the extent that objects appear 'en masse'. This is because the object is supposed to merge with its environment in the sense that the object gels with its adjoining space by means of its absolute motion and relative motion. Boccioni declared the need to reassess how a painting or sculpted piece progressed in space: 'In scultura come in pittura non si può rinnovare se non cercando lo stile del movimento [...].'<sup>406</sup>

This raises a single, defining issue. Boccioni strove to reorder the relationship between the sculpted piece and its environment by re-examining the relationship

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<sup>406</sup> 'In sculpture as in painting, renewal is impossible without looking for the style of movement [...]'. [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'La scultura futurista' (1912) in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009/2018) p.80.

between absolute/relative motion and the conjoining space. His realisation that sculpture should be conflated with its surrounding area is a pioneering stage in the advancement of sculpture technique. It is thus this new and intriguing employment of the environment as the field of action for the sculpted piece's movements, which is original and exciting. This idea of total integration with the surrounding area is emphasised by Boccioni in 'Fondamento plastico della scultura e pittura futuriste' (*The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting*, 1913).<sup>407</sup> The new sculpture is to be a sculpture of the environment. That is to say, sculpture will no longer occupy a place as mass within space but will actively enhance and participate with it:

[...] poiché nessuno può più dubitare che un oggetto finisca dov'è un altro comincia e non v'è cosa che circonda il nostro corpo: bottiglia, automobile, casa, albero, strada, che non lo tagli e non lo sezioni con un arabesco di curve e di rette [...]. Rovesciamo tutto, dunque, e proclamiamo l'assoluta e completa abolizione della linea finita e della statua chiusa.<sup>408</sup>

It is possible to see a comparative move on the part of Cendrars in his poetry because collections such as *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*<sup>409</sup> rely as much on what is not stated as well as what is provided by the poet, in what he chooses to omit as well as include. 'Contrastes' is a dissolute work in this vein; a limited number of words are

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<sup>407</sup> Umberto Boccioni, 'Fondamento plastico della scultura e pittura futuriste' in *Lacerba* 1:6 (15 March 1913).

<sup>408</sup> '[...] no one still believes that an object finishes off where another begins or that there is anything around us—a bottle, a car, a house, a hotel, a street—which cannot be cut up and sectionalised by an arabesque of curves and straight lines [...] let's proclaim the absolute and complete abolition of finite lines and the contained statue.' Umberto Boccioni, 'Manifesto tecnico della Scultura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.396 & p.403/'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture', transl. Robert Brain in Umberto Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.52 & p.63.

<sup>409</sup> Blaise Cendrars, *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, pp.69-105.

often the reader's only points of reference, serving to detonate a sensation of movement in a wider sense:

Et les chapeaux des femmes qui passent sont des comètes dans l'incendie du soir.<sup>410</sup>

Just as Boccioni propels his figures forward into space through the interpenetration of different planes (external surfaces cutting across and through the piece), so Cendrars sculpts out and extends the spatial dimensions of his poetry by means of opaque lines such as the above.

Simultaneity in the Futurist sense depends principally on an understanding of the dynamic properties of a subject. The above examples of dynamism in Cendrars's work are a tenuous basis for comparison however. It is in the flowering of the dynamic element of the poetry that a comparison becomes more viable. The final part of 'Contrastes' bears testimony to this process. 'J'entends' progresses to:

Montrouge Gare de l'Est Metro Nord-Sud bateaux-mouches monde.<sup>411</sup>

This strikes a different tone, thrusting the poem into modernity, fusing it with the new electronic age. Everything suddenly becomes alive in motion and transformation. There is a purposeful attempt to connect with the boundaries of space and the environment. These limits may be on a far larger scale than a Boccioni sculpture but the intention and execution are alike. It is only a question of environment cutting through and across the subject to produce a mass which is within and distinct from its position.

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<sup>410</sup> 'And the women's hats going by are comets in the burning evening', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Contrastes', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes*, p.74.

<sup>411</sup> 'Montrouge Gare de l'Est Métro Nord-Sud Seine omnibus people', transl. Ron Padgett, *Ibid.*, p.75.



This process crystallises in the prose poem 'Profond Aujourd'hui'. This particular work could be seen as an epitaph to the Futurist movement. To begin, new technology is the subject but a personal and imaginative element remains as the tap of a finger stimulates creation and invention:

Je ne sais plus si je regarde un ciel étoilé à l'oeil nu ou une goutte d'eau au microscope. Depuis l'origine de son espèce, le cheval se meut souple et mathématique. Déjà les machines le rattrapent, le dépassent. Les locomotives se cabrent et les paquebots hennissent sur l'eau [...]. La matière est aussi bien dressée que l'étalon du chef indien. Elle obéit au moindre signe. Pression du doigt.<sup>412</sup>

A significant change takes place during the course of the poem. The self becomes increasingly absent and the world of objects gradually supersedes the poet's own voice. The 'Je' of the poem has been transposed and submerged into the surrounding space as emotion is dehumanised and transferred onto the world of objects:

La tour Eiffel va et vient du sommet. Le soleil, un nuage, un rein suffit pour l'allonger, la raccourcir. Les ponts métalliques sont tout aussi mystérieux et sensibles. Les montres se mettent à l'heure. De tous les côtes les transatlantiques s'avancent vers leurs correspondances. Alors le sémaphore

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<sup>412</sup> 'I no longer know if I'm looking at a starry sky with the naked eye or a drop of water under the microscope. Since the species of the horse was born, it moves in a supple and mathematical way. But machines are already catching up and overtaking it. Locomotives rear up and liners bray on the water [...]. The matter is as tame as the stallion of an Indian chief. It responds to the slightest sign. Pressure of the finger.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, *Œuvres complètes, Vol. II*, p.6.

fait un signe. Un oeil bleu s'ouvre. Le rouge se ferme. Tout n'est bientôt que couleurs. Compénétration.<sup>413</sup>

The final word is Futurist simultaneity. The argument has reverted to the crux of the Cubism versus Futurism debate which can be defined as interpenetration and the degree to which this takes place in both movements. Boccioni's statement expresses the harmony that arises when science is utilised to lyrical effect. This harnessing of science's aesthetic properties is reflected in Boccioni's debate on the lyrical qualities of a science/art partnership:

Noi futuristi abbiamo un ardore lirico che ci inebria dei nuovi concetti di forza che la Scienza ci ha rivelati.<sup>414</sup>

What both 'Contrastes' and 'Profond Aujourd'hui' clearly demonstrate is a fluid and continually transforming visual experience that is capable of being both fragmentary and unitary. What has happened here that does not take place as easily in Cubist art is the reduction of the role of the signified. It is the speed and movement of the above poem and painting that allies them. The key to understanding both works is by means of assimilation of sounds and fleeting references that the reader/viewer only partially assimilates. This is especially apparent in the most telegraphic sections of Cendrars's poetry where syntax is reduced to a minimum. At these

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<sup>413</sup> 'The Eiffel Tower comes and goes from the top. The sun, a cloud, a kidney is enough to lengthen it, to shorten it. The metal bridges are all as mysterious and perceptible. Watches are set. From all coasts, transatlantic liners move towards their connecting points. Semaphore makes a sign. A blue eye opens. Red closes. Everything is soon all in colour. Compenetration.' [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> 'Us Futurists have a lyric ardour which inebriates us with new concepts of power which Science has revealed.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'Trascendentalismo fisico e stati d'animo plastici' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.183.

moments, the reader no longer sees through the words to recognise a given signified but confronts the material presence of the signifier which makes us aware of its sound and shape. This may be likened to the experience of looking at a painting and recognising not a given represented object but merely an area of colour or a combination of lines. There could be no more fitting an example than *Le forze di una strada* (1911; plate five). This directness of expression and the absence of traditionally 'poetic' or 'artistic' qualities all point towards both poet and artist attempting to minimise the gap between experience and its expression. Cendrars's poetry is meant to be an experience, a lyrical venture that depends upon sound and rhythm at times to a greater extent than the actual content of the work. There is immediacy of expression in Futurist art because the viewer sees blocks of colour and lines in a striking form on the canvas. Yet the same canvas is intended to represent a subject. It does achieve this, although only on a second reading by which stage the spectator penetrates the surface, having initially seen only colour and form.

The ultimate aim of the dismissal of definite lines is the replacement of the traditional, single viewpoint by a three-dimensional view resulting in 'sculptural completeness'.<sup>415</sup> The first tentative steps made by Boccioni towards the dissolution of space are in evidence with his sculpture *Antigrazioso* (1912-13; plate seven). This attempt at interconnection between the sculpture and the atmosphere is only partially successful nevertheless. The upper part of the figure is exaggeratedly heavy and appears sealed rather than open to its environment. The bulbous top-half of the head jars with and weighs down the lower half which is not so contorted. The

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<sup>415</sup> John Golding, *Boccioni's Unique Forms of Continuity in Space – Charlton Lectures on Art*, p.16.

collar shapes the piece and successfully frames it within a defined space. There is not however a clearly defined sense of movement with the sculpture and it does not achieve the desired simultaneity of space or movement as imagined by the sculptor.

For this, it is necessary to look to Boccioni's later attempts such as *Sintesi del Dinamismo Umano* (1913; plate thirty-six). This is the first of his striding figures to give the impression of moving within its radius milieu whilst retaining a sense of volume. The trajectory of the legs is defined though the jutting scythes of the torso, which are intended to systematically slash the air thus adding to a feeling of discordant motion. The effect of simultaneity is apparent though diluted because the impression of movement conveyed is cloying. The leaden upper torso seems to prevent the lower half from fully amalgamating with the environment and halts any move forward into its space as envisaged by Boccioni. His answer is to create an incision down the front of the figure which adds another dimension to the piece. This conveys the idea of external planes and influences cutting through the figure's allotted space. The occupied space is transformed by positioning his point of dissolution across the upper part of the body, turning one half on an intended course of movement while the other half, the left-hand side, remains stationary.

The sculpted pieces demand that every part of the surrounding space is utilised. That is to say, unoccupied space is as viable as occupied space in relation to the sculpture itself: 'Negative space is almost as important as solid mass.'<sup>416</sup> This is because Boccioni has identified with the mass and volume of the sculpture to create a more liberated form. Boccioni used the same technique in earlier works and

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<sup>416</sup> John Golding, *Boccioni: Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1985), p.23.

Golding provides an astute insight into how the artist made sure the conjoining atmosphere carried the traces of his main 'satellite' creations:

In 'Those Who Stay' ('Stati d'animo II' [plate twenty-one]), the Cubists' analysis of solid form and its surrounding space has been given a new direction or emphasis by the way in which the shapes into which the figures are abstracted are now for the first time unfurled into the atmosphere around them, like wood-shavings still adhering to their parent bodies, a device with exciting sculptural possibilities that Boccioni was soon to explore.<sup>417</sup>

Just as Boccioni propels his figures forward into space through the interpenetration of different planes (external surfaces cutting across and through the piece), so Cendrars carves out and extends the spatial dimensions of his poetry by means of opaque text such as the language of 'La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France' (footnote 363, for instance). There is a conscious effort with this particular collection to shape and sculpt a defined environment. The overall effect is that of harmony and not fragmentation; in the same way that it is possible to view a Boccioni sculpture as part of a spatial jigsaw (separate parts fitting together within a set spatial block with only the sculpture/painting being the visible element) so it is also feasible to consider this collection as one half of a partnership with an interconnecting spatial field. In other words, it is interesting to firstly imagine visually a Boccioni sculpture and the aforementioned poetry and then try to see how, in the mind's eye, it would fit into and move in the rectangle or circle of space around it. Also, imagine it static in this space. By shading in black the areas which

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<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

could be utilised by the sculpture and poem as they move, as well as the sculpture and the poem themselves in white, we can grasp what the Futurists were aiming at in terms of movement. Rosa Trillo Clough's account of the Futurist theory of interpenetration of surfaces reaffirms my analogy:

In this rearrangement [interpenetration], said the Futurists, each object is a new structure developed to the point at which the complementary action of the milieu intervenes and seems to absorb the as yet unexpressed part of the developing object.<sup>418</sup>

For Boccioni, objects in space have no fixed limits and he wishes to explore their extension into the surrounding area. This is the basic premise behind the theory of *linee-forze*, force-lines that spread through the canvas, extending into the space outside the painting, so that the viewer's own space is sliced by the lines:

These force-lines were used by the artist to indicate where his construction ended and where the intuition of the spectator began to operate.<sup>419</sup>

This means that connection with the objects ensues, connecting us to them but also partitioning us from them at the same time. This goes back to the basic principle of physics, via Einstein, namely that matter is energy. Objects moving through space act on the area around them, revitalising those segments. As discussed with the jigsaw analogy, there is a case here for effective visualisation of the entire orb that includes interconnection of objects depicted with their adjoining space. The painting and sculpture form half of this sphere with the viewer or whatever is adjacent,

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<sup>418</sup> Rosa Trillo Clough, *Futurism, The Story of a Modern Art Movement, A New Appraisal* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1961), p.101.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92.

encapsulated as one solid mass. Fred Licht's assessment of the impact of the mixed-media sculpture *Dinamismo di un Cavallo in Corsa + Case* (1914-15) on its surroundings is an excellent example of how a Boccioni sculpture adjoins with its space:

The angled planes, instead of intersecting at a vanishing point, slide past each other at indeterminate positions in space. By means of this combination of Cubism with a different (but equally ambiguous) method of space construction, Boccioni achieved the startling sensation of (1) the forward speed of the horse, (2) the fleeting appearance of atmosphere and houses left behind by the horse, and (3) a dematerialization of form that transforms sculptural matter.

Simultaneously Boccioni arrived at a dramatic confrontation between known and measurable space (the space which lies between us and the galloping horse, space which is sucked into the hidden center of the composition) with a mysterious space that is intuited but not measurable, a space which lies behind what we see and which is hinted at by the sliding planes disappearing behind the fragmented forms of the galloping horse.<sup>420</sup>

This criticism leaves its punchline until the last moment when Licht talks about the 'space which lies behind what we see', while the emphasis on 'known and measurable space' is fascinating; this is a different way of enunciating the 'jigsaw' analogy but is just as enlightening. Licht's articulation of how the work of Boccioni completely rules its spatial domain is subsequently an excellent evaluation.

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<sup>420</sup> Fred Licht, 'Equestrian Sculpture in the Modern Epoch' in *Dinamismo di un Cavallo in Corsa + Case*, exhibition catalogue, Venice: Guggenheim Foundation, 3 February-19 March 1996 (Venice: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1996), p.135.

By isolating his works and making them solid entities within a 'jigsaw' pattern that invites the spectator to conjoin a painting with its surrounding area, Boccioni is furthering an Expressionist, abstract ethic voiced by Kandinsky whereby the intrinsic forms employed in the painting become the focus of our attention, rather than the objects shown. This aids the process of seeing the work as one solid mass:

As long as the observer (he is no longer a reader) regards the line on the canvas as a means of outlining an object, he remains subject to the impression of the practical-purposeful element. However, the minute he says to himself that the practical object in the picture played mostly an incidental role and not a purely pictorial one, and that the line sometimes had an exclusively, purely painterly significance, at this moment the soul of the observer is ready to experience the pure inner resonance of this line.<sup>421</sup>

This approach to making painting more abstract is enunciated by Boccioni himself:

Verrà un tempo in cui il quadro non basterà più. La sua immobilità sarà un arcaismo col movimento vertiginoso della vita umana. L'occhio dell'uomo percepirà i colori come sentimenti in sé. I colori moltiplicati non avranno bisogno di forme per essere compresi e le opere pittoriche saranno vorticose composizioni musicali di enormi gas colorati, che sulla scena d'un libero orizzonte commoveranno ed elettrizzeranno l'anima complessa d'una folla che non possiamo ancora concepire.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), 'On the Problem of Form' in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art, A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p.164.

<sup>422</sup> 'There will come a time when the painting will no longer suffice. Its immobility will become archaic with the movement of human life. The human eye will perceive colours like emotions. The multiplication of colours will no longer require form to be understood and paintings will be vortical musical compositions of



In this paper given at a conference in Rome in 1911, Boccioni also questions how Cubism is able to show completely both the external and internal properties of an object. This question is addressed before the artist began to experiment with the radical forms initiated by Cubist artists and more importantly, Boccioni explains that Cubism is a bridge to a more abstract form of art:

Infatti come si può comprendere sotto il nome di cubismo la riproduzione complessiva di un oggetto cioè la ricostruzione integrale delle forme che lo compongono esteriormente e interiormente? [...] Noi dichiariamo che ciò che passa sotto il nome di cubismo non è che una tendenza di transizione e che ben maggiori sono le nostre aspirazioni per una pittura veramente astratta.<sup>423</sup>

Boccioni's thesis on the relative properties of spatial dimensions elucidate the Futurist theory of the osmosis of surfaces within a defined external and internal space:

Perché le distanze tra un oggetto e l'altro non sono degli spazi vuoti ma della continuità di material di diversa intensità, che noi riveliamo con linee sensibili che non corrispondono alla verità fotografica. Ecco perché nei nostri quadri non abbiamo l'oggetto e il vuoto, ma solo una maggiore o minore intensità e solidità di spazi.<sup>424</sup>

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enormous coloured gas, against which the backdrop of a free horizon will move and electrify the complex soul of a crowd which we cannot even conceive of now.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'La Pittura Futurista' in *Altri inediti e apparati critici*, ed. by Z. Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972), p.11.

<sup>423</sup> 'The term Cubism can encompass the complex reproduction of an object, that is the complete reconstruction of forms of which it consists, both inside and out [...] We declare that which is described by the term Cubism is nothing more than a tendency towards transition and that our aspirations for an entirely abstract form of painting are much greater.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>424</sup> 'Because the distances between one object and the next are not empty spaces but a continuity of materials of different intensities which we reveal with sensitive lines that do not correspond to photographic reality. This is why in our paintings we do not represent an object and the void but simply a greater or lesser

*Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism* (1914) contains many examples of this rejuvenation of the concept of movement:

Un cavallo in movimento, non è un cavallo fermo che si muove, ma è un cavallo in movimento, cioè un'altra cosa [...] si tratta di concepire gli oggetti in movimento oltre che nel moto che portano in sé [...] Si tratta di studiare gli aspetti che ha assunto la vita nella velocità e nella conseguente simultaneità.<sup>425</sup>

The umbrella of rapidly encroaching, all-consuming global communication revitalised, in part, this debate. As Cendrars laconically states in 'Crépitements':

On est en contact.<sup>426</sup>

This interplay between the inner and outer life is again facilitated through intuition and a subsequent centre of consciousness. Sculpture is no exception to this process, indeed, it could prove to be a more productive example. Boccioni himself highlights how both the artist and spectator are involved in the factorisation of environment, which paradoxically fosters harmony:

Proclamiamo che tutto il mondo apparente deve precipitarsi su di noi, amalgamandosi, creando un'armonia colla sola misura dell'intuizione creative;

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intensity and solidity of spaces.' [my translation] Umberto Boccioni, 'Fondamento plastico della scultura e pittura futuriste' in *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, ed. by Z.Birolli (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p.42.

<sup>425</sup> 'A horse in movement is not a motionless horse which is moving, but a horse in movement, which makes it another sort of thing altogether [...] it is a matter of conceiving the object in movement quite apart from the motion which it contains within itself [...] it is a matter of studying the different aspects assumed by the life of speed and its consequent simultaneousness.' Umberto Boccioni, 'Moto assoluto e moto relativo' in *Pittura scultura futuriste*, p.187/'Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism', transl. Robert Brain in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.152.

<sup>426</sup> 'We're in contact', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Crépitements', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.89.

che una gamba, un braccio o un oggetto, non avendo importanza se non come elementi del ritmo plastico [...] <sup>427</sup>

This is because the internal element, that is to say the shaping of the sculpture according to the sculptor's and spectator's own subjective experiences, is as significant as any external influences, predominantly environment. In the first technical manifesto of Futurist painting, the artists had proclaimed that they attached importance to the psychological life of objects and machines. The inner life of an object endowed with the sensibility of the artist thus became a point of focus. Just as the force-lines manoeuvre our instinct to a centre of consciousness, so a Boccionian sculpture is capable of eliciting an emotional and personal reaction from the spectator by means of the actions of the sculpted piece. What is evident here is the effect of the artist's experiences on the portrayal of movement. This new motor of creation that is subjectivity leading to the new treatment of movement in sculpture is a primary factor in evaluating simultaneity, as Boccioni confirms:

L'emozione, nella pittura e nella scultura moderne, canta la gravitazione, lo spostamento, l'attrazione reciproca delle forme, delle masse e dei colori, cioè l'interpretazione delle forze.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> 'We want the entire visible world to tumble down on top of us, merging and creating a harmony on purely intuitive grounds; a leg, an arm or an object has no importance except as an element in the plastic rhythm of the whole [...]'. Umberto Boccioni, 'Manifesto tecnico della Scultura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.404/'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture', transl. Robert Brain in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.63.

<sup>428</sup> 'Emotion, in modern painting and sculpture, sings of gravitation, displacement, reciprocal attraction of forms, of masses and colours, sings of movement, the interpenetration of forces.' Umberto Boccioni, 'Che cosa ci divide dal Cubismo' in *Pittura scultura futuriste*, p.122/'Futurist Painting and Sculpture (extracts)', transl. Robert Brain and J.C. Higgitt in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.174.

This identification with the emotional content of the painting or sculpture fosters a sense of liberation and a new and more open treatment of sculptural form. It is almost as if Boccioni works from the inside out, moving out from the internal core of the piece towards the environment which cuts through his figures. In order to discover what would constitute an internal and personal point of departure, it is necessary to look to one of the sketches of his striding figures.<sup>429</sup> The sketch dramatically illustrates how Boccioni wanted his subject to be within and part of its space. The frenetic tone of the drawing with its agitated undercurrent conveys tumultuousness and urgency. The female figure of the sketch, which depicts Daphne pursued by Apollo, slashes at the air though her speed has an aim; she is progressing rapidly through space. Moreover, the female's natural velocity lends herself to a more accurate and naturalistic representation of movement. There is a particular rhythmic movement to the figure as it advances and the image takes upon almost mythical proportions appropriate to the subject as she moves headlong, energised, demonised and revered as the motor car was for its euphoric and heady sense of speed. There is indeed an element of self-destruction to the drawing and this is echoed throughout the majority of Boccioni's sculpted works. This expression of a new kind of motion is paradoxically modernist and traditional; the former in the sense that the sculptor's disenchantment, even confusion, brings about an urgency, vehemence and self-destructive streak that heralds Surrealist sensibilities; the latter because Boccioni, in reverting to a form which depends upon the spiral structure rather than the straight line as he expressed (both in the advocacy of force-lines and

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<sup>429</sup> Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni, l'opera completa*, p.486.

geometric forms), returns technically to the Italian classic tradition. As demonstrated in other areas of examination in this thesis, the artist only goes so far in breaking modes of execution established by art-historical antecedents.

So what of the 'inner life' of a Cendrars poem and its effect on the poet's representation of movement? Does it have the same kind of internal motor, so to speak, which enhances interpenetration with external elements and facilitates an osmosis of planes and different realms? 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' would appear to be the most significant and blatant example of movement and speed in the poetry of Cendrars. The work is successful because it is such a fluid montage of images, narrative fragments and sensations bound together by the oscillation of the train's restless motion. The poem is a vortex of speed, an arena of action. Movement in the poem assists in the process of seamlessly blending the present with the past. The shift to different time sequences often means that the poet has moved geographically as well though these transitions are subtle because the "Je" is viewed from different perspectives. This is related to the issue of working from the internal element of the object or subject. The journey itself is the nucleus but the first person narrative acts as the main anchor. It is the personal pronoun which pervades the verse ('nous' and 'elle' puncture the verse sporadically). This is because memory, 'mes souvenirs', forms the substructure of the work. Thus, the physical movement of the train (to which there are continual references) are interspersed with the poet's own journey and displacement through memory:

Et mes souvenirs

Le train tonne sur les plaques tournantes

Le train roule<sup>430</sup>

It is even arguable that every line in the poem is movement-based, based on either 'sensation' (poet's own experiences) or 'science' (actual physical movement, see footnote 5). The former is the internal life of the poem while the latter is the consequence. This reiterates how the parameters of basic Futurist theory as a mode of interpretation can be applied to Cendrars's work, aiding our comprehension of the poet's methods regarding the representation of movement in his work.

'Tour' is a more effective example of the hidden, psychological life of a body of work modifying the aesthetic framework of a Cendrars poem. The exalting tone endows the tower with an emotional resonance. The final eight lines interestingly ally the practical with the personal, that is to say, the poet's admiration is couched in modernist terms:

Tour

Dieu antique

Bête moderne

Spectre solaire

Sujet de mon poème

Tour

Tour du monde

Tour en mouvement<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> 'And my memories/The train thunders along on the turntables/The train rolls along', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'La Prose du Transsibérien', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.39.

Technical innovation, based on new methods of realising global movement as exemplified by the communications centrepiece that is the tower, is above all the 'sujet de mon poème' (subject of my poem). However, the adulatory tone of the poem is due to the poet's recognition of the monument not only as a modernist landmark but in addition as a symbol of his own fragility in the macrocosm and his subsequent wonderment at what the tower inspires in him in relation to his own conception of space and time. There is a noticeable progression towards an emotional and psychological affinity with the tower that goes beyond simply poetic indulgence. It is in the liberty of the expression and scale of the work that this collection closely reflects the Futurist ideal, from its emphasis on freedom of movement to its head-on collision with modernity. In terms of interpenetration, there is a move here towards partnering the personal and historical contexts of the tower: the personal as a beacon of spirituality, the historical in a symbolic deistic sense. The tower has so been fully integrated with both the modernist world (as seen by the proud declaration that the tower is an emblem of contemporary existence) and with the dynamics of the poet's page; it has therefore been made part of both Cendrars's internal and external experiences. To return to Apollinaire's statement from *Soirées de Paris*, cited previously (footnote 345), the reader is able to take in this vision of modernity almost in one slice, ' [...] comme on voit d'un seul coup les éléments plastiques et imprimés d'une affiche.' The poet does not need any

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<sup>431</sup> 'Tower/Ancient god/Modern animal/Solar spectrum/Subject of my poem/Tower/World tour tower/Moving tower', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Tour', *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.73.

kind of ancillary illustration (as with 'Prose du Transsibérien') because the construction of the ode to technology is compact enough to allow the reader to compress the verse into a digestible form. It is safe to conclude that interpenetration in the verse of Cendrars actually means reduction.

### **5.v Elasticity**

The most appropriate starting point for a discussion of the elasticity of Boccioni's pictorial forms, represented though his art's shifting, circumscribed boundaries, is his painting *Elasticità* (1912; plate two) which shows a black-booted horse rider tearing over a landscape populated by factory chimneys. This portrays the sequential movement, both up and down and forward, of a subject kept in check, however, by the limits of the surrounding landscape and the borders of the painting. As discussed, Robert Rosenblum takes a different view of the mechanics of the scenario (see p.34).

Yet the paradox of being both 'tightly compressed' and 'so dynamic that it must burst its four-sided confines' accentuates the artist's technique of tightening and slackening his so-called elastic forms. It is perhaps incorrect then to assume that Boccioni wants to give the impression of complete malleability. The effect on the canvas can be likened to a coiled spring that be stretched or contracted. This then implies an elongation by degrees of the scaled matter of his pieces and interpenetration across the planes of his pieces. Yet we always return to the most elemental premise of Boccioni's oeuvre: that the subject is a stationary work caught in time on the canvas. This is especially true of the subject of *Elasticità*. For all its



allusions to leaping out of the picture and mimicking every motion of the animal, it feels and looks rooted to the spot. The point of stretching something is nonetheless that it always pings back into place. Boccioni chose to unravel rather than completely dissect and slice his subjects; *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (1912; plate thirty-seven) is a work that seems to have evolved more spontaneously than *Elasticità*. This really does look like it has naturally shed a skin rather than being split into stunted parts. Hence Boccioni's spatial elasticity works best when it is determined and supervised. *Elasticità* is not elastic; it is taut and self-contained. It breaks into pieces in situ but does not progress beyond the portrait edges in spite of Rosenblum's assertion.

Again, we need to look to preparatory sketches for both works to see how impermeable Boccioni wanted his forms to be. *Studio per Elasticità* (1912) is far more free flowing. Every semi-circular motion depicted in the sketch drives the horseman of the work up into the top left-hand corner. This successful ascent makes for an upward move off the canvas. The corresponding painting may now be seen to shrink back into itself. *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio*, in its measured decomposition of form, is not as restrained a work as first appears (it looks nothing like the flowering, liberated form it comes to resemble on first impression). But a preliminary sketch for the piece underlines how the work developed in a far more fluid fashion than *Elasticità*. The drawing in question is entitled *Tavola + bottiglia + caseggiato* (1912) and certain commentators, including J.C. Taylor,<sup>432</sup> have said that this work could be the basis for *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio*. It does not

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<sup>432</sup> Maurizio Calvesi and Ester Coen, *Boccioni, l'opera completa*, p.438.

dovetail exactly with the development of the finished sculpture but does show how the artist envisaged the disintegration of the bottle shape, piece by piece. The duplication of the central spine of the bottle to the left of the main object (possibly in the shape of a drinking glass) and the plate, also jutting out to the left, with a further lip at its outer circumference show that Boccioni was keen to demonstrate how his shapes could be deconstructed through slotting together the circular slabs from which his forms are moulded. The destabilisation of the object's features demonstrated here points to a flexibility of form but Boccioni is at his most unfettered when he portrays the cyclist figure in a series of sketches dated 1913. In all but one of the drawings, the trajectory of the sportsman is blocked, or at least halted on the page, by a curved line to the left of the image. True elasticity of form has, in the artist's eyes, to be impeded in some way. Only in one of the sketches does the cyclist break free and move forward unobstructed. The issue of self-containment is raised again; there is always a physical barrier that blocks the complete unfurling of form in his art, from the coiled, self-imploded body itself of the object (as in *Elasticità*) to another component in the picture which keeps action and motion in check (these include the curved line mentioned in the cyclist sketches).

Where Cendrars differs, and challenges the space he works on and with, is that he is prepared to 'stretch' further the 'subject/object/environment' formula, breaking down all traditional concepts of the individuality of invention. The potential for extension and elasticity is greater with the poet. This is a constant throughout the thesis; the fact that the poet is more experimental than the artist. Cendrars's verse can be stripped to the utmost, without rhyme or metre, so that his diction is left

naked, evolving and restructuring the art of the poetic ellipse. Cendrars's work is a Modernist experience which is not taken to the extreme (but certainly pushes through the limits set by Boccioni), but his intertextual montage, which is artistically more innovative than Boccioni's canon, is governed by an 'elasticity' which is not only technical but also inherently aesthetic. Faced with the bare bones of *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques*, the reader immediately senses that she/he is dealing with only a partial entity. The chasms are there to be bridged, or at least an attempt should be made. The reader is invited to join the dots and link up both spatial and temporal compartments. The montage of semantics and phonetics is an unashamedly self-conscious route established by the poet and then followed by the reader. It is, in other words, a plotted semi-lit path of signposts and clues. But the poet's itinerary is, in practical terms, regularly pared down. Claude Leroy's study of Cendrars's turn as an editor is particularly valuable with his analysis of 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles'. Leroy lists each of the poet's original suggestions for twenty-eight lines of the work. With two exceptions, each line in the final version is shorter, some considerably so. This reduction in diction achieves something important: it makes the text so punchy as to ping back into place with speed and energy. Why? The poet simply wants to squeeze time and space (life is too short possibly). The original version reads:

Tu as toujours été partout où il se passait quelque chose

[...] tes services

C'est une faveur

Tu es le maître de ton art

Et tu sers au monde des plats car le renommée d'un hôtel dépend de son chef  
de cuisine

Et tes menus inspirent les poètes nouveaux<sup>433</sup>

This has been transmuted into:

Tu as toujours été partout où il se passait quelque chose

Tu es peut-être à Paris

Tes menus

Sont la poésie nouvelle<sup>434</sup>

Everything may have become smaller, that is subject, object and environment, but the three parts are now much more easily interchangeable and more fluid. The notion of elasticity is, however, only given credence in the poetry of Cendrars because he so willingly transforms his verse into 'un poème-objet ou plutôt d'un poème-tableau [...]' (Leroy here refers to 'Prose du Transsibérien').<sup>435</sup> The poet thus instantly increases the potential of his creation so that it takes on inherently more flexible and aesthetic properties as both a written and visual creation. However, according to Leroy, Cendrars is significantly at pains to distance himself from any

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<sup>433</sup> 'You were always everywhere anything was happening/[...] Your services/It is a favour/You are the master of your art/You give to the world dishes as if the reputation of a hotel depended on its head chef/And your menus inspire new poets', [my translation] Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.I* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2001), p.356.

<sup>434</sup> 'You were always everywhere anything was happening/Maybe you're in Paris/Your menus/Are the new poetry', transl. Ron Padgett, Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de Mes Sept Oncles', *Du monde entier Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, p.58.

<sup>435</sup> Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.I* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2001), p.344

form of poetry that may be deemed ‘elastic’: ‘Cendrars se dissocie nettement de cette poésie “élastique” dans une lettre à Jean Epstein, le future cinéaste, publiée en postface à l’essai de celui-ci, *La Poésie d’aujourd’hui/Un nouvel état d’intelligence* (Paris: La Sirène, 1921).’<sup>436</sup> In fact, Epstein eschews all traces of modernity in poetry, condemning what he saw as the lack of intellectual rigour in contemporary verse which only reflects the emotional and intellectual famine of the age: ‘La littérature contemporaine présente le véritable tableau clinique d’un degré léger de fatigue intellectuelle/On pourrait soutenir que la rime a disparu parce qu’elle était dangereuse pour la vérité artistique, illogique[...]/qu’on néglige la logique et ses formes les plus élémentaires comme la grammaire et la ponctuation.’<sup>437</sup> But Cendrars’s enthusiastic backing for Epstein, whose diatribe in the form of a letter is itself confused because it half-heartedly supports the poets of the day, cannot be seen as a complete rejection of the ethos of modern poetry. The poet enjoys the fact that someone is calling for a ‘brisure nette’ (clean break)<sup>438</sup> and appreciates that a vacuum has now been created (‘Puis la guerre: un vide’)<sup>439</sup>, but his assessment of the topsy-turvy typographic globe is ambiguous, possibly because it is stimulating, even engorging:

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<sup>436</sup> ‘Cendrars clearly dissociates himself from this “elastic” poetry in a letter to Jean Epstein, the future filmmaker, published in the postface of the essay *La Poésie d’aujourd’hui/Un nouvel état d’intelligence*’ [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.360.

<sup>437</sup> ‘Contemporary literature presents a genuine picture of intellectual fatigue to a small degree [...] It may well be that rhyme has vanished because it was dangerous for artistic truth, illogical [...]’/‘logic and the most elementary forms like grammar and punctuation are neglected’. [my translation] Jean Epstein, *La Poésie d’Aujourd’Hui, Un Nouvel État d’Intelligence, Lettre de Blaise Cendrars* (Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1921), p.210, p.202, p.206.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p.214.

<sup>439</sup> ‘Then the war: an emptiness’ [my translation] *Ibid.*

Puis l'époque: construction, simultanisme, affirmation [...] Affiches. La façade des maisons mangées par les letters. La rue enjambée par le mot.<sup>440</sup>

His letter comes out firmly in favour of Epstein: 'C'est pourquoi une nouvelle façon d'être et de sentir peut s'apprendre dans votre livre.'<sup>441</sup>

Yet the idea of a versatile 'poème-objet' lingers; its adaptability as a malleable, all-in-one form is given weight by the observations of Clive Scott:

If we equate a Delaunay dress with a Cendrarsien text, then the reader, like the wearer, changes its shape, stretches it here, contracts it there, so that it snugly fits, thus authenticating reader and text reciprocally, in relation to each other. [...] As this happens, of course, the elements of the text/dress change in configuration and relationship; when we say that a poem is different each time we read it, we merely mean that we as readers/wearers of the text have put on some weight, or lost it; the elastic poem merely builds this element of relativity into itself as a simultaneous co-existence of possible states, rather than as something developing through time.<sup>442</sup>

This belies a flexibility beyond belief at times; surely all poetry is as subjective and liable to be read in different ways at different times and by different readers? Scott is saying in all likelihood though that this collection of nineteen poems has the propensity to alter and be altered after successive readings because of its 'lexical

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<sup>440</sup> 'Then the era: construction, simultanism, assertion [...] Signs. House fronts eaten by letters. The road straddled by the word.' [my translation] *Ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> 'This is why a new way of being and feeling can be learned from your book.' [my translation] *Ibid.*, p.215.

<sup>442</sup> Scott, p.148.

latitude'.<sup>443</sup> So shedding any layers (of clothing in a metaphoric sense or the reordering of the composite parts) is more easily accommodated in this elastic arrangement. This gymnastics of language takes us closer to a state resembling the fourth dimension discussed in the introduction, whereby the poet is imbuing the flexibility of his verse with supplementary pliability thus increasing the possibility of protracting the spatial and temporal distances to be experienced. But there must be more to these texts than simply stating that they can be 'flung on' (a possible clothing metaphor for reading in light of the above) at any time?

There is more to be determined on the 'elasticity' front; the linking thread between both Boccioni and Cendrars is, as ever, Henri Bergson. Scott begrudgingly outlines any affinity between all three parties on the 'elasticity' issue:

It should be said immediately that there is no reason to tie this term down to a particular origin, to Boccioni's *Elasticità*, for instance. Elasticity is central to Bergson's insistence on the relativity and heterogeneous continuity of duration, to the distortions of space by moving bodies explored by non-Euclidean, to the lines of force and mutual interpenetrations of the Futurist world, to movement itself conceived of as an uninterrupted passage rather than as a sequence of intervals.<sup>444</sup>

These are all workable comparative links which tie in with earlier parts of this thesis yet Scott's most penetrating point on the Cendrars/Boccioni elasticity debate is the following: 'Cendrars is much closer to the Futurists in the "manière de voir

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid. Scott here refers to Robert Delaunay's interpretation of the collection: 'Transsibérien-Jehanne laisse la latitude [à] la sensibilité de substituer un ou plusieurs mots, un mouvement de mots, ce qui forme la forme, la vie du poème, le simultanéisme,' *Du Cubisme à l'art abstrait* (Paris: Sevpen, 1957).

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

vitalistique” which he celebrates, in his essay on “La Perspective” (1912) against the “manière mécanique” and immobilism of Renaissance perspective.’<sup>445</sup> Scott goes on to say though that “we would not be justified in calling “La Prose” Futurist. Rather we should call it Futuro-Orphist [...].’<sup>446</sup> The question of vitality springs once again from the philosophy of Bergson whose *élan vital* (life force) theory links up the notion of elasticity across the work of both men. Vitalism is a vilified philosophy which, naively from a scientific point of view, attempts to separate human consciousness from the Darwinian tradition of evolution with a belief in the natural life force of all living species. For Bergson, matter is mechanical while consciousness is creative. If consciousness is seen as relying completely on a developmental, organic, inbuilt power that is not physical or chemical, then Bergson gives it licence to be completely uninhibited, bringing into play under this unrestricted, empiricist umbrella related issues of intuition, flux and successive parts. Vitalism is therefore a convenient free-for-all, embraced by the Futurists in a warped, anarchy-light fashion and taken on board, less obviously, by Cendrars. Yet it is this liberty of expression and car-crash of themes and forms that brings together Cendrars and the Futurists in the first place. Are Futurism and Cendrars basically siblings with the same pack mentality? The point raised by Scott depends on the machinations presented in ‘La Perspective’:

La différence entre les deux manières de voir, entre la manière mécanique et la manière – je voudrais l’appeler vitalique – est donc une différence de fonctionnement de la conscience. [...] Pourtant, nous avons appris à voir la

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<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*



beauté dans le mouvement du spectacle, en promenade, en tramway, en chemin de fer, en auto. Quand une image chassait l'autre, quand une image se reliait à l'autre, ou quand elles se confondaient momentanément. [...]

L'impression causée par une ligne ou une figure est influencée par les lignes et figures environnantes. [...] Je marche dans la rue. Tout se meut autour de moi.

Les maisons s'évident ou s'arc-boutent. Parfois passe une figure dans une fenêtre oblique, des lumières dansent, passent. Les murs s'inclinent très loin au-dessus de la rue...Ceci semble un ramollissement. Mais non. Un exemple: la maison d'en face. Je pense dans cet état de conscience: comment s'allonge-t-elle? Je vois les horizontales voler vertigineusement au loin; je vois nettement devant moi; les verticales s'inclinent, se tordent, se retirent comme ratatinées.<sup>447</sup>

There are several issues raised here that tie in with the premise of *élan vital*.

Cendrars first states that he can only see the world in this new, shifting light because of a renewed and realigned consciousness. This refreshed state of mind does not so much make the poet elastic in his outlook as positively bouncing and febrile. This is a slightly different way of seeing than through the vitalist filter envisaged by Bergson.

Cendrars's evangelism seems to be grounded in a physical transformation that must

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<sup>447</sup> 'The difference in the two ways of seeing, between the mechanical way and the way – I would call it vitalist – is a difference in how consciousness functions. [...] However, we have learnt to see beauty in the movement of a scene, walking, by tram, by rail, by car. When an image overruns and links up with another image, or when they merge momentarily. [...] The impression given by a line or a figure is influenced by lines and surrounding figures. [...] I walk in the street. Everything moves around me. The houses are hollowed out or bow. A figure sometimes passes in a side window, lights dance, move. The walls recline far above the road...a softening. But no. An example: the house opposite. In this state of consciousness, I think: how does it stretch? I see the horizontals fly dizzily in the distance; I see clearly in front of me; the verticals slope, twist, withdraw as if shrivelled.' [my translation] Blaise Cendrars, 'La Perspective' (1912) in *Aujourd'hui 1917-1929 suivi de Essais et Réflexions 1910-1916* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1987), pp.179-181.

be molecular if it permits a visual eruption on this scale. If this is not a 'softening' of perspective, then is it conversely a hardening or contortion? The sight of modern machines melding momentarily and houses arching overhead brings to mind the protagonist of Boccioni's *Elasticità*. I would strongly argue here that the heart of Cendrars's essay introduces the principles of controlled contortion and partial pulling of material (what could be dubbed as engineered elasticity) demonstrated in the aforementioned Boccioni picture (both were produced in 1912). The horizontal planes may well be evaporating in the distance but the vertical layers are gnarled and contracted. Buildings are zooming out of view but always remain distinguishable. If this passage had been turned into an image, I believe it would have looked unerringly like *Elasticità* with stepped contours and creased shapes. A similar situation, whereby forms are hunched but irrevocably blot the landscape, is repeated in 'Hôtel Notre Dame' (*Au Coeur du monde*, 1917):

Je prends mon chapeau et descends à mon tour dans les rues noires.

Voici les vieilles maisons ventruës qui s'accotent comme des vieillards.

Les cheminées et les girouettes indiquent toutes le ciel du doigt.

Je remonte la rue Saint-Jacques, les épaules enfoncées dans mes poches.<sup>448</sup>

Other common areas collide in both examples: the perspective adopted in a Futurist canvas whereby the spectator remains static while moving objects run across his/her field of vision. The poet is keen to show that everything moves around him and that he is the fixed centre of the scenario (a fundamental Futurist

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<sup>448</sup> 'I take my hat and head down the dark streets/Here are the old bulbous houses which lean against each other like old men/The chimneys and weather vanes all point to the sky/I go back to the rue Saint-Jacques, my shoulders sunk into my pockets' [my translation] Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.I* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2005), p.130.

condition). From this point, everything in his line of vision lurches into view.

Evidently, the 'La Perspective' text, with its emphasis on agglutinating figures with their environment, also reflects to a degree the famous Futurist dictum of 'sinking into the settee':

E talvolta, sulla guancia della persona con cui parliamo nella via noi vediamo il cavallo che passa lontano. I nostri corpi entrano nei divani su cui ci sediamo, e i divani entrano in noi, così come il tram che passa entra nelle case, le quali alla loro volta si scaraventano sul tram e con esso si amalgamano.<sup>449</sup>

Cendrars's sightline may not be as all-enveloping as that of the Futurists but in saying that houses and trams fall into his curved horizon, the poet enunciates a kinship with Futurism's need to optically cut and paste people and places. The reference to the effect of lines on figures within the landscape also elicits the Futurists' preferred weapon of choice: force-lines, which cut through and simultaneously weld with the landscape. Scott previously encapsulated how elasticity boosts the 'mutual interpenetrations of the Futurist world' (footnote 444) by supplementing 'an uninterrupted passage' of movement across the canvas. Force-lines, with their solubility on point of contact with other surfaces, are an integral part of this process. But force-lines only function because of the 'implicit action inherent in Boccioni's objects' (footnote 298). It is an obvious move to ally this inner

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<sup>449</sup> 'How often have we not seen upon the cheek of the person with whom we are talking the horse which passes at the end of the street. Our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies. The motor bus rushes into the houses which it passes, and in their turn the houses throw themselves upon the motor bus and are blended with it.' Umberto Boccioni et al., 'La Pittura futurista, Manifesto tecnico' in 'La Pittura Futurista, Manifesto tecnico' in *Manifesti Futuristi*, ed. by Guido Davico Bonino (Milano: RCS Rizzoli Libri S.p.A., 2009), p.72/'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto', English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912), in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.28.

activity with *élan vital* and the subsequent stream of heterogeneous continuity typified by 'durée', which is generated by the subsequent plurality of successive events. Elasticity, which transforms structures through elongating them, is then the gateway to a multistoried range of differentiated experiences.

The poet's reinvigorated consciousness is thus the key to a new psychological state, which induces virtuality. It has been previously stated that Cendrars's quasi-instinctive approach to constructing verse is due to the fact that he opens up pockets of 'virtual space' by evoking a kind of exoticism, be it geographical or temporal. This is brought about partly through rhythmic displacement. Gary Lachman shows that vitalism and virtuality make a credible partnership in Bergson's take on consciousness and how it operates:

This consciousness, Bergson argues, is not necessarily associated with the brain. He argues that we perceive 'virtually' much more than what actually reaches our conscious awareness. This would make sense, since that awareness is subject to the highly efficient editing procedures of the brain, which limits the amount of input coming to it through the senses.<sup>450</sup>

The brain therefore selectively shuts out certain memories and thoughts. Bergson's 'virtual' universe exists but only when it is triggered and forced to awaken. Lachman gives the most explicit evaluation of the interpretative power of the virtual sphere of the psyche whereas my insistence that virtuality is in essence an incomplete sphere of consciousness has been upheld throughout this analysis. The analogy of the rotating telescope introduced by Bergson (p.215) is the best way of showing how

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<sup>450</sup> Gary Lachman, *A Secret History of Consciousness* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2003), p.23.

the philosopher aimed to engender a virtual simulacrum. Virtuality is not able to present a complete or the whole scenario but only fragments of it in the guise of *mémoire pure*. Lachman goes further by making the case for virtuality as a fully functioning mode of consciousness rather than a subsidiary method of reflection and interpretation.

But whereas vitalism may engender the beginning of virtuality, elasticity and its ability to aid the mechanics of the different dimensions of consciousnesses that constitute 'durée' is a more valid area of examination. I defined 'durée' in the introduction as a continuous dimension of consciousnesses, rather than a succession of occurrences. This is the first tie-in with elasticity in the sense that making the forms of the image as pliable as possible brings about a sequence of states dependent on rhythmic multiplicity that remain variegated and heterogeneous yet constant. The stepped process behind stretching the structure of a piece implies that, like beads on a string, a consecution of events takes place. It follows that the progress from past to present within one contracted episode is manifest when the ductile properties of a figure or object are made more apparent on canvas and on the page. This is, after all, the most basic definition of elastic: an extent in time or duration in the sense that 'a stretch of ten years' may be cited as a length of set time. But the ideal of elasticity is that an extension is at least made possible. It transforms and expands the premise of scientific time, which is set.

'Durée' and elasticity function in tandem in the collection *Au coeur du monde*; what is significant about this series is that fiction and truth come together in an apparent melding of real-life and poetic interchanges dating from 1917 to 1944

(most of the poem seems to have been written between 1917 and 1919). Different parts were then published sporadically from 1922 when 'Le Ventre de ma mère' appeared in the *Montparnasse* journal.<sup>451</sup> Leroy states that apart from two references by the poet himself to the collection – the first in the poem 'Bagage' from *Feuilles de Route*<sup>452</sup> and then in an exchange with Nino Frank in 1928 – the series is not mentioned again by the poet until 1944 when it resurfaced in the first Denoël edition of *Poésies Complètes*). A continuous dimension of consciousnesses make up the warp and weft of the series which the poet likened to a 'tapisserie' where 'tout se tient, se suit'.<sup>453</sup> Elasticity as a navigational concept comes into play here whereby the different parts are subsumed into an, at times, possible semi-autobiographical trail culminating in the 1944 publication. It is interesting that the poet, in formally marking an earlier period of his life by publishing the aforementioned series over twenty years later, evokes the episodic nature of 'durée' through the complex poetic mapping of a life experienced in 1919. This mapping is almost 'virtual' in its re-creation of incidents that took place, from revisiting a childhood place to being born.

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<sup>451</sup> Claude Leroy, *Blaise Cendrars, Œuvres Complètes, Tout Autour d'Aujourd'Hui, Textes présentés et annotés par Claude Leroy, Vol.I* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2005), p.377.

<sup>452</sup> 'Le manuscrit du Coeur du Monde que j'enverrai au fur et à mesure a Raymone,' *Ibid.*, p.206.

<sup>453</sup> 'a tapestry' where 'everything holds together, flows' (cited in a letter to Jacques-Henry Lèvesque, 21 January 1944). *Ibid.*, p.378.

## Conclusion

It is appropriate that the final chapter of this thesis ended on Cendrars's 'virtual' navigation of his life through the mapping of the collection *Au coeur du monde*. This reduction of real time (as in the lapse between 1917 and 1944) adds to the ideal of Cendrars creating his own reality. This principle thereby infiltrates his approach which, as I have emphasised, is driven by this 'virtual' outlook that consists of invisible, shifting dimensions, has a fixed perimeter and provides a tenable point of contact for the reader. Most importantly, it allows a sense of plurality to underpin the poetry of Cendrars which is conditioned to a large degree by the mechanics of 'durée', a sequence dependent on rhythmic multiplicity.

Brevity and distance can therefore be subsumed through the poet's circuitous verse, which permits to an extent an aphoristic view of events. Within this conception of time and space, multiplicity and a multi-layered range of experiences nonetheless remain superior constituent parts. Moving back and fore across the verse and subsequently across different time demarcations are part of this experience. These elements are kept in check, however, through the controlling consciousness of Cendrars who is always determined to command the progress of his poetics. Cendrars continually sustains an element of control in his poetic fabrications. The internal, subjective engine of his poetry ensures that harmony prevails even when the external appearance is fragmented.

Yet this position, even with this element of restraint, is more radical than that of Boccioni with regard to moving outside the periphery of the artist's own vision of containment. The artist is not as confident and adventurous as the poet, making him

less experimental. The continuum of 'durée' is a springboard embraced more fully by Cendrars than Boccioni. This may seem at odds with the latter's Futurist aesthetic that aims for a breakdown of the canvas and the page (the Marinettian mindset is powered by the eventual rupture of the working surface) but Boccioni still manages to detonate the canvas by juxtaposing and then dissipating his forms. There is a 'dynamism of light' in evidence in his art, a legacy of his Divisionist heritage. The ultimate consequence of this bleed of light and colour, especially during the artist's Divisionist phase, helps induce an intuitive reading of the painting in question. The viewer, however, is given more assistance by Boccioni than Cendrars in joining up the aesthetic dots.

Where Boccioni excels is in producing forms that interact with their surrounding planes. The thematic and technical jigsaw fits together more easily in his paintings and drawings because Boccioni saw intuition and succession as facilitators of interpenetration across time and space. Cendrars's field of exploration could even be classed as sealed but paradoxically, the poet is prepared to distend the margins of his field of vision by disrupting the 'subject/object/environment' doctrine. The shift from metaphor to synaesthesia in his imagery is part of this process, which results in a partial fracturing of the verse. Nonetheless, his poetry ultimately remains intact because it is so consciously constructed and ordered. Nevertheless, the poet is more audacious, even bolder, than his Italian counterpart.

But Boccioni's diluted stance does not make him any the less an adherent of Bergson's conception of 'durée'. The artist's aforementioned aim of generating a unified reading of the canvas through an intuitive portal is valid. The



accomplishment of simultaneity is made more likely through the art of Boccioni because the viewer's intuitive understanding is heightened, enabling him/her to deconstruct and then construct without difficulty the parts of a Boccioni piece. The multiplicity of his works lends itself to the heterogeneous, fragmented aspect of *durée*, hence the plurality of successive planes, and subsequently events, that feature in the majority of his work; these constitute the subjects and objects represented in his works from the dovetailing contours of *Elasticità* (1912) to the fragmentary frame of *Materia* (1912). Consequently, the trajectory of the arc from past to present in the art, a feature of 'durée', can be charted more rapidly because this myriad of constituents, that are spatially and temporally apart, may be interlinked through the viewer's augmented intuitive receptivity on ruminating over a Boccioni work. Unravelling Cendrars's poetry requires a more detailed and complex expository process.

The aesthetics of film, photography and photomontage mesh with the mechanics of 'durée': the progress from past to present within one contracted episode; the continuum of what Bergson calls 'pure heterogeneity'; multiplicity and interpenetration. Moreover, unfolding the oeuvre of both Boccioni and Cendrars in relation to Bergsonian 'durée' has been facilitated in the course of this thesis by demonstrating how closely both the artist and poet worked according to the aesthetics of film, photography and photomontage. As I emphasised previously, simultaneity is a cinematic experience in that the whole is presented with the 'joins visible'. At the most basic level therefore, the dynamics of montage inspire a sequential reading of both text and image through seeing a respective poem or

painting as an overlapping series of superimposed, constituent elements. For Cendrars, dividing the universe into a series of instants involves a conscious 'editing' process of a series of events that can be likened to a succession of 'cuts'. Boccioni's paintings cannot be spliced as effectively but there are breaks and slashes across the canvas with the artist leaving trails of flickering residue as in *La città sale* (1910-11). Both of these ways of splicing and reuniting the disconnected areas depend nonetheless upon the Bergsonian interpretation of maintaining an intrinsic connection between supposedly juxtaposed portions.

This abutment of constituent parts put forward by Bergson is integral to the rhythmic multiplicity and multifariousness that directs 'durée'. The contrast between separate bodies means that they remain multiple and heterogeneous, engendering a cadenced yet, at the same time, uniform trajectory. As I have previously stated, 'durée' is not a succession of occurrences but rather a continuous dimension of consciousnesses. This movement is powered by the concept of rhythmic multiplicity which ensures that the flight of the object or subject remains multiple and heterogeneous. It is shaped by an association of thought processes, namely intuition, which prompts the process of 'durée', and habitual action based on unconscious recollection (*mémoire pure*) that is almost virtual in its subconscious grasp on reality. I initially questioned the effectiveness of both Boccioni's and Cendrars's attempts to provoke a subjective response encapsulating 'durée' by creating unity of mental states on the part of the spectator/reader.

At this point, reading across the intervals created by these jutting parts becomes an issue in reconciling the lacunae that characterise simultaneity. The

viewer/reader envisages gaps deliberately engineered by the artist and the poet. Yet which figure provides the best means of compounding these apertures? For all his poetic acrobatics, I believe Cendrars is the artist most adept at transporting the reader to other 'virtual' realms, thus bringing him or her into the text's aesthetic and semantic centre. This is achieved through the spiral movement in his verse that is founded on a procedure of juxtaposing and ultimately marrying sounds and concepts. This practice is aided by the inclusion of 'markers' (perceivable points of reference) that foster the development of numerous fields of experiential perception. Providing familiar vantage points for the reader is a strategy of the poet's which, in turn, underlines one of the main aims of this thesis: to determine a governing core at the centre of Boccioni's art and Cendrars's poetry. This convergence of spatial and temporal planes, which is sparked by an intuitive analysis of the work at hand, is at the root of simultaneity as an all-engaging, truly interactive phenomenon, whereby the viewer gains access to the inner dimensions of an object by means of the elision of several, dissimilar defining images. Boccioni is, though, reluctant to let the viewer lose his or her way completely, with a more prevalent controlling consciousness implicit in his art than in the poetry of his Swiss counterpart. The difference between the two figures is, quite simply, that Cendrars wants the reader to only partially reconstruct the fragmented forms that he creates; he is an advocate for the breakdown of form and theme. The reader's task is then to rebuild those scattered parts. Boccioni does not fragment the strands of his art; they remain, however, as dislocated elements ready to be reconciled. He moves freely

within the boundaries of 'subject/object/environment' formula but does not attempt to venture outside it.

Within this formula, 'negative space' is a defining factor and what is not stated, painted or sculpted assumes as much significance as what is provided. This is enhanced continually by the successful interpenetration of planes. In this respect, both Boccioni and Cendrars are most akin. The subject remains constant and is never surrendered to the object in both media (poetry and art). This needs to be reiterated regarding Cendrars's poetry where the stabilisation of the self is critically disputed because of the melding of different semantic plates. Cendrars especially conveys the impression that he has subverted the subject/object relationship; this is an integral part of confusing the reader. There is expansion ('virtual reality' and the opening to an extra dimension via select, evocative diction, for instance) and contraction (the semantic 'markers' assist in actually closing down his verse to a degree by limiting the metaphorical surface area of his poetry). Yet the poet is determined to present continually a stable yet shifting, multiple yet constant effect through this overlapping of varied components of his poetry. What overarches these theories of interpenetration, 'negative space', and the skewing of the link between the subject and the object is the idea that a layering of sequences leads to a series of changing realities; these ultimately lead to the state of 'durée', an intermingling of varied spatial and temporal realms.

The functioning of 'durée' is no doubt facilitated by the continual employment of the circular movement that underpins the mechanics of Cendrars's work and takes root especially in Boccioni's earlier works. The spiral shape is the predominant

linking factor between the two and their conception of form. This circularity is a uniting factor because it promotes the motion of moving backwards and forwards, thereby enhancing the multitudinous aspect of 'durée'. This process also underscores the inclusiveness of Boccioni's work, which remains more closed than that of his counterpart. The Italian practitioner to my mind presents experiences that appear curtailed by the picture frame. As stated, the preliminary sketches of *La città sale* permit a totally inclusive experience from one marked point to another in the same way, emulating the spiral formation that went on to infiltrate Boccioni's later works. It is valid to state that Boccioni's figures may swirl and penetrate their surrounding space but stand out as essentially contained units (the lines of the protagonist of the sculpture *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*, 1913 (plate thirty-eight), may ripple outwards, for example, but what the viewer absorbs is a solid, even concrete, mass).

Cendrars, meanwhile, implicates the reader in a much more convoluted journey. His aim is to loop the reader back and fore, through a system of juxtaposing and ultimately harmonious sounds. This strategy makes Cendrars's poetry at least feel far more expansive than a perimeter-defined Boccioni painting but, as discussed, even Cendrars aims to map out and plot his surface area through the use of semantic markers, for example. Once again, this facilitates a key process: even if the external appearance of his verse is dysfunctional, the internal motor of his works remains constant and rhythmic.

This idea of containment is further reinforced by the poet's embrace of virtuality which is a reflection of Bergson's ideal of 'mémoire pure'. There is dislocation

through various devices such as rhythm and imagery that indicate a shift to a new dimension which makes different demands on the reader's/viewer's intuitive skills as one moves from the textual/pictorial medium to a new imaginary space. I stress that it is almost as if Cendrars enjoys emulating a state which exists only in a virtual medium, echoing Bergson's thesis of 'mémoire pure'. The latter does not co-exist as effectively with 'durée' in the art of Boccioni. There is not the same degree of virtuality in the Italian's paintings, drawings and sculptures. This is partly due to the fact that there are fewer springboards for 'mémoire pure' in his work; the means of developing any kind of virtuality are not as prevalent as in the almost boundary-less verse of Cendrars.

This underlines how the poet refuses to be contained by the rigid doctrine of simultaneity established by the Futurists and propagated by Boccioni. The poet adheres to the basic tenets of simultaneity but just as easily stands outside them. The focus of this analysis has been to assess by means of a comparative study the degree to which simultaneity is practised and demonstrated in the art of Umberto Boccioni and how it subsequently infuses the poetry of Blaise Cendrars. More explicitly, its aim was to illustrate that the poetry of Cendrars largely duplicates Boccioni's and the Futurists' ideal of simultaneity, while transcending it in certain key respects. This evaluation has considered whether Cendrars's conception of simultaneity is as prescriptive as Boccioni's which is underpinned by Futurist tenets.

At this point, it is imperative that we return to the research questions posted in the introduction. Throughout, I have maintained that this assessment pivots around two factors which are reiterated throughout: the degree to which Cendrars adheres

to a (1) unifying consciousness while simultaneously (2) engendering the interrelatedness of his subject. I noted in Chapter four that Cendrars's poetry 'exhibits a workable fusion of the instinctive and the conscious' (p.229). I believe this is borne out through an analysis of the protagonist's poetry, prose essays and screenplays dating from 1912 to 1928 (the most straightforward way of illustrating the chronology is by seeing it as bridging a span from *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924* to *Feuilles de Route, 1924-28*). Meditating on this sample has indeed demonstrated that the poet has achieved a marriage of the spontaneous and predetermined, leading to an intuitive reading of properties pertaining to time and space. I have demonstrated that Cendrars reaches this definitive point of intuitive enlightenment more easily, manoeuvring his subject towards familiarity and a more rational conclusion; crucially, his spontaneity is more controlled, relying as much on logic as instinct. In addition, it is shown that Boccioni instils a more prevalent controlling consciousness in his art compared to his Swiss counterpart. I have demonstrated that the Italian does not fragment his compositions but selects instead 'to unravel rather than completely dissect and slice his subjects'.

Regarding the second research question I posit, I believe it has been valuable seeing also the respective visions of Boccioni and Cendrars within a Nietzschean context. That is, viewing their practices and works on a surface level—being radical and free-spirited in a forward-thinking way—and in a more substantial way by assessing the transformative element contributed by Nietzsche, who advocated a new belief system, involving the annihilation of systems of embedded thinking and governance, giving at least an idea of revolution through the philosopher's concept

of the triumph of will. This fostered a sense of autonomy at least on the part of my protagonists. I have argued in addition that Cubism represents a 'stepping stone' for both Futurist artists and Cendrars by providing a platform for experiential contemplation. It is significant that Cubist art demands a sequential reading rather than a simultaneous one, offering an illustration of how art might attempt to approximate shifting temporal and spatial natures. Cubism's splintered compositions at least provided a new axis from which the viewer can deconstruct the works in question, giving an impetus for further experimentation on the part of the Futurists, especially regarding the interpenetration of planes. What is ultimately under discussion here is the fusion of the figure with its environment. As discussed, these Cubist innovations prompted a process of experiential contemplation on the part of the viewer, raising questions about how the spectator ultimately navigates a painting or a poem. The idea of multiple perspective is the most straightforward way of distilling this aspect of the investigation: the sequential springboard Cubism sparks a reading leading to an assimilation of parts that progresses towards a simultaneous absorption of the whole.

Montage forms the crux of this survey in the sense that it lends itself to this examination purely in the sense that a cinematographic effect underpins the structure and language of both artists, thereby bringing into play simultaneity which has characteristics pertaining to montage. On an elementary level, Boccioni and Cendrars fulfil the criteria of montage by delivering juxtapositions of contrasting images (or shots). In the introduction, I stated that montage brings to the fore how simultaneity foregrounds the formation of a whole unit with the "joins visible";



consequently, the viewer and reader must read across the gaps to form a coherent entity. Cendrars, I have shown, is the better editor; there is a purpose to his system of contrasts. With Boccioni, the lines of demarcation are less well defined though his photocollages succeed in delivering multivalent actions within a single frame. Both men are adept at layering their works but Cendrars explicitly looks to film techniques to build a chain of heterogeneous events and incidents which build into a rhythmic duration. This does not happen to the same degree in the art of Boccioni.

This thesis has been most original in its overview of how 'durée' acts as the connecting tissue between Boccioni and Cendrars (crucially, there is no other comparable study). I make a number of analogous points that apply to both practitioners; 'durée' powers intuition, acting as a bridging device, aiding and abetting the Boccionian ideal of 'what one remembers and what one sees'<sup>454</sup> ('quello che si ricorda e di quello che si vede', p.128). This synthesis of the past, present and future materialises in memory as an unlinked chain of events. Boccioni manifests through works such as *La strada entra nella casa* (plate eight) the constancy of the subject's temporal experience against the scene being played out from the balcony. I return here to the analogy Bergson uses to illustrate the nature of 'durée', that of a melody which if stopped 'would no longer be the sonorous whole' (footnote 301). The action of the aforementioned painting moves ceaselessly in the background, but the subject remains fixed. Therein lies the dynamic of 'durée' as exemplified by Boccioni who wanted to relay subconscious memory with all its irregularities but at

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<sup>454</sup> Umberto Boccioni et al., 'Prefazione al Catalogo della 1a Esposizione di Pittura futurista' in *Pittura Scultura Futuriste*, p.380/'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto', English version from the catalogue of the 'Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters', Sackville Gallery (1912) in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), p.47.

all times, the viewer's intuitive understanding of a Boccioni painting is heightened, enabling him/her to deconstruct and then construct the past without a modicum of difficulty. Bergson's *durée* comprises moments which unify and never separate, and is so removed from the time formulated by theoreticians which is discontinuous. The notion of *durée* inherent in Cendrars's poetry can correspondingly also be interpreted as an 'intersection of time and space'.<sup>455</sup> Properly speaking, '*durée*' cannot be divided. When it is transected, homogeneous time is the result. The density of Cendrars's poetry allows such intersection to occur bringing '*durée*' to the fore in the form of a new dimension—a new virtual pocket—which makes different demands on the reader's intuitive skills. I believe that my research shows that the poet achieves a modicum of '*durée*' by opening up a new sphere of 'virtuality' combining unity and multiplicity which are in evidence as discrete memories.

The final, and fifth, research question posited whether a conflux of different phenomena act as conductive mediums in this overall process. These factors include the circular structure of the spiral—linking to the backwards/forwards reading of verse and painting constituents across a heterogeneous continuum—and a study of the issue of elasticity across the oeuvres of both figures. I believe I have justified examining the issue of montage as a linking conduit, the effectiveness of which is ascertained by evaluating how it prompts a segmented reading back and fore, finding its counterpart in the spiral movement employed by both practitioners. Overarching this study is Bergson's continuum of pure heterogeneity which could be interpreted as a clipperboard of flickering images. I have stated that simultaneity is a

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<sup>455</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*,<sub>2</sub> transl., F. L. Pogson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1910), p.110.

cinematic experience in that the whole is presented with the joins visible. At this point, we read 'across the gaps' as viewers and readers, charting a trajectory constructed more skilfully by Cendrars who edits in a more conscious way. The thesis has shown that both practitioners operate in parallel to an extent through the prism of corresponding influences and experiences, filtering their concepts through various mechanisms, including interpenetration, elasticity and the spiral form. These devices have demonstrated that ultimately, Boccioni's simultaneity can be read as harmony over fragmentation; the beauty of Cendrars's is that it can be read as either.

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## Appendices

Plate one: Umberto Boccioni, *La città sale* (1910-11)

Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles' (excerpt, 1913-14)



C'est ça qui t'a perdu comme on dit vulgairement  
Tu aimais tant la musique que tu préféras le ronflement  
des bombes aux symphonies des habits noirs  
Tu as travaillé avec des joyeux Italiens à la construction  
d'une voie ferrée dans les environs de Baghavapour  
Boute en train  
Tu étais le chef de file de tes compagnons  
Ta belle humeur et ton joli talent d'orphéoniste  
Tu es la coqueluche des femmes du baraquement  
Comme Moïse tu as assommé ton chef d'équipe  
Tu t'es enfui  
On est resté 12 ans sans aucune nouvelle de toi  
Et comme Luther un coup de foudre t'a fait croire à  
Dieu  
Dans ta solitude  
Tu apprends le bengali et l'urlu pour apprendre à fabri-  
quer les bombes  
Tu as été en relation avec les comités secrets de Londres  
C'est à White-Chapel que j'ai retrouvé ta trace  
Tu es convict  
Ta vie circonscrite  
Telle que  
J'ai envie d'assassiner quelqu'un au boudin ou à la  
gaufre pour avoir l'occasion de te voir  
Car je ne t'ai jamais vu  
Tu dois avoir une longue cicatrice au front  
  
Quant à mon quatrième oncle il était valet de chambre  
du général Robertson qui a fait la guerre aux Boërs  
Il écrivait rarement des lettres ainsi conçues  
Son Excellence a daigné m'augmenter de 50 £  
Ou  
Son Excellence emporte 48 paires de chaussures à la guerre



Plate two: Umberto Boccioni, *Elasticità* (1912)



Plate three: Umberto Boccioni, *Paesaggio al tramonto* (around 1906)

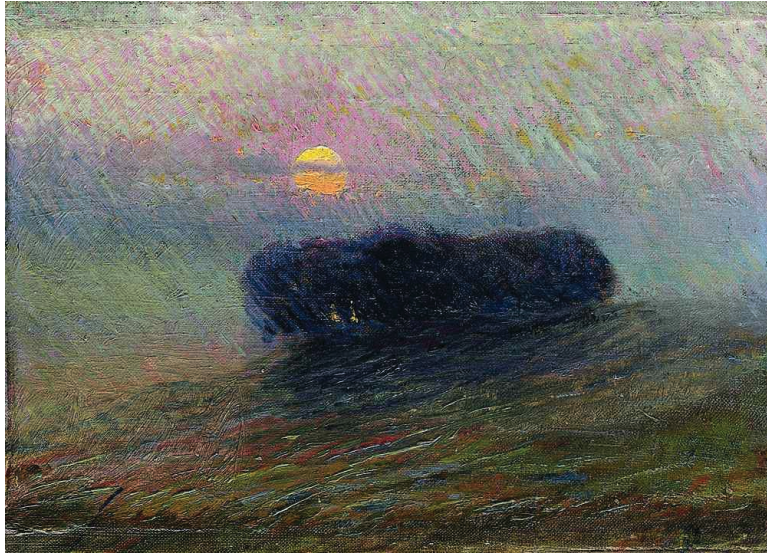
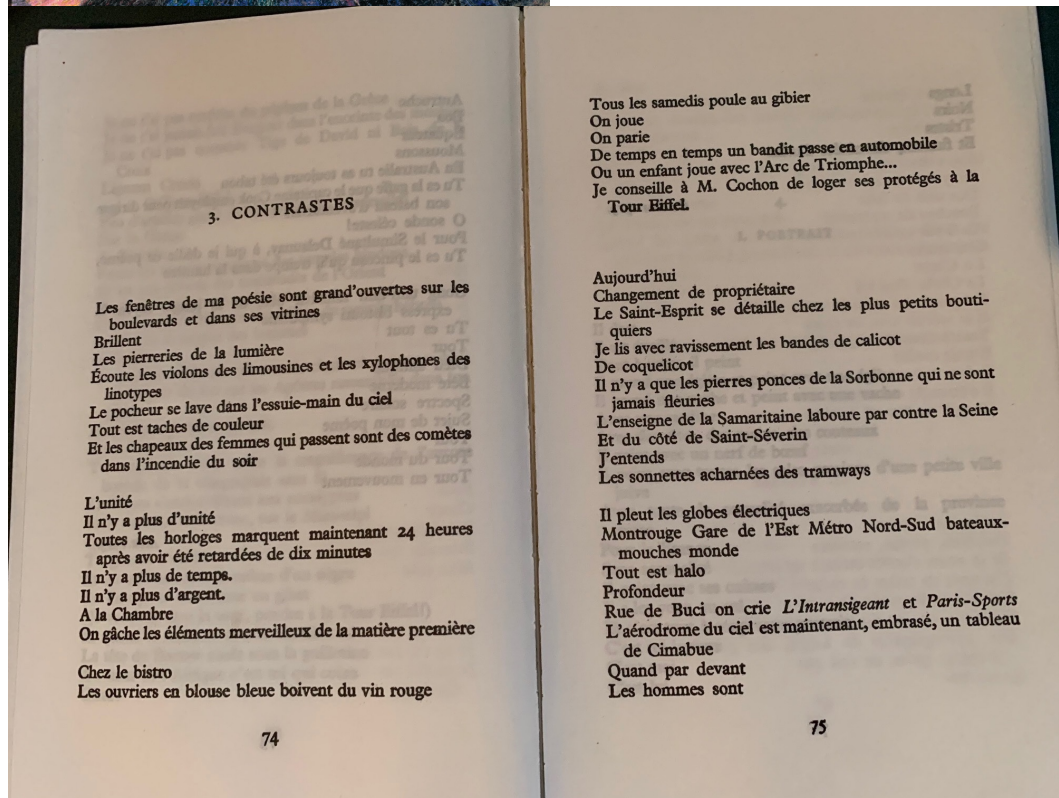
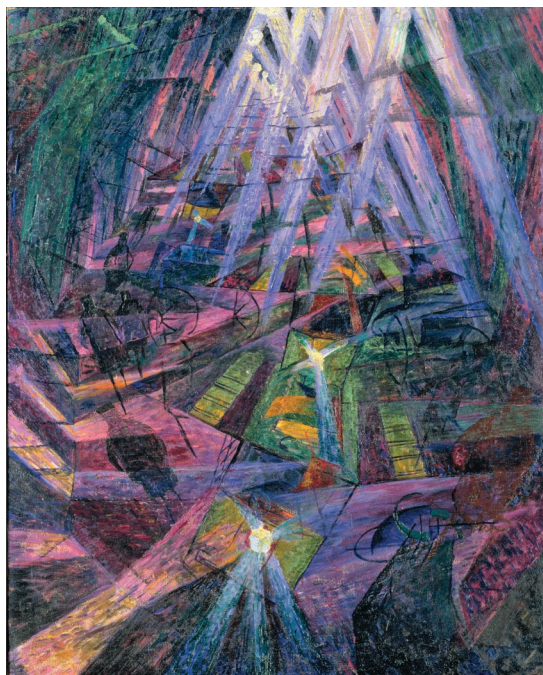


Plate four: Umberto Boccioni, *Materia* (1912)



Plate five: Umberto Boccioni, *Le forze di una strada* (1911)

Blaise Cendrars, 'Contrastes', (1913)



3. CONTRASTES

Les fenêtres de ma poésie sont grand'ouvertes sur les  
boulevards et dans ses vitrines  
Brillent  
Les pierres de la lumière  
Écoute les violons des limousines et les xylophones des  
linotypes  
Le pocheur se lave dans l'essuie-main du ciel  
Tout est taches de couleur  
Et les chapeaux des femmes qui passent sont des comètes  
dans l'incendie du soir

L'unité  
Il n'y a plus d'unité  
Toutes les horloges marquent maintenant 24 heures  
après avoir été retardées de dix minutes  
Il n'y a plus de temps.  
Il n'y a plus d'argent.  
A la Chambre  
On gâche les éléments merveilleux de la matière première

Chez le bistro  
Les ouvriers en blouse bleue boivent du vin rouge

Tous les samedis poule au gibier  
On joue  
On parie  
De temps en temps un bandit passe en automobile  
Ou un enfant joue avec l'Arc de Triomphe...  
Je conseille à M. Cochon de loger ses protégés à la  
Tour Eiffel.

Aujourd'hui  
Changement de propriétaire  
Le Saint-Esprit se détaille chez les plus petits bouti-  
quiers  
Je lis avec ravissement les bandes de calicot  
De coquelicot  
Il n'y a que les pierres ponceuses de la Sorbonne qui ne sont  
jamais fleuries  
L'enseigne de la Samaritaine laboure par contre la Seine  
Et du côté de Saint-Séverin  
J'entends  
Les sonnettes acharnées des tramways

Il pleut les globes électriques  
Montrouge Gare de l'Est Métro Nord-Sud bateaux-  
mouches monde  
Tout est halo  
Profondeur  
Rue de Bucy on crie *L'Intransigeant* et *Paris-Sports*  
L'aérodrome du ciel est maintenant, embrasé, un tableau  
de Cimabue  
Quand par devant  
Les hommes sont

Plate six: Umberto Boccioni, *Il lutto* (1910)



Plate seven: Umberto Boccioni, *Antigratzioso* (1912-13)



Plate eight: Umberto Boccioni, *La strada entra nella casa* (1911)



Plate nine: Umberto Boccioni, *Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo* (1914)





Plate ten: Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913) – courtesy Marc Litzler collection



Plate eleven: Umberto Boccioni, *Sotto la pergola a Napoli* (1914)



Plate twelve: Robert Delaunay, *Fenêtres* series (April-December 1912)

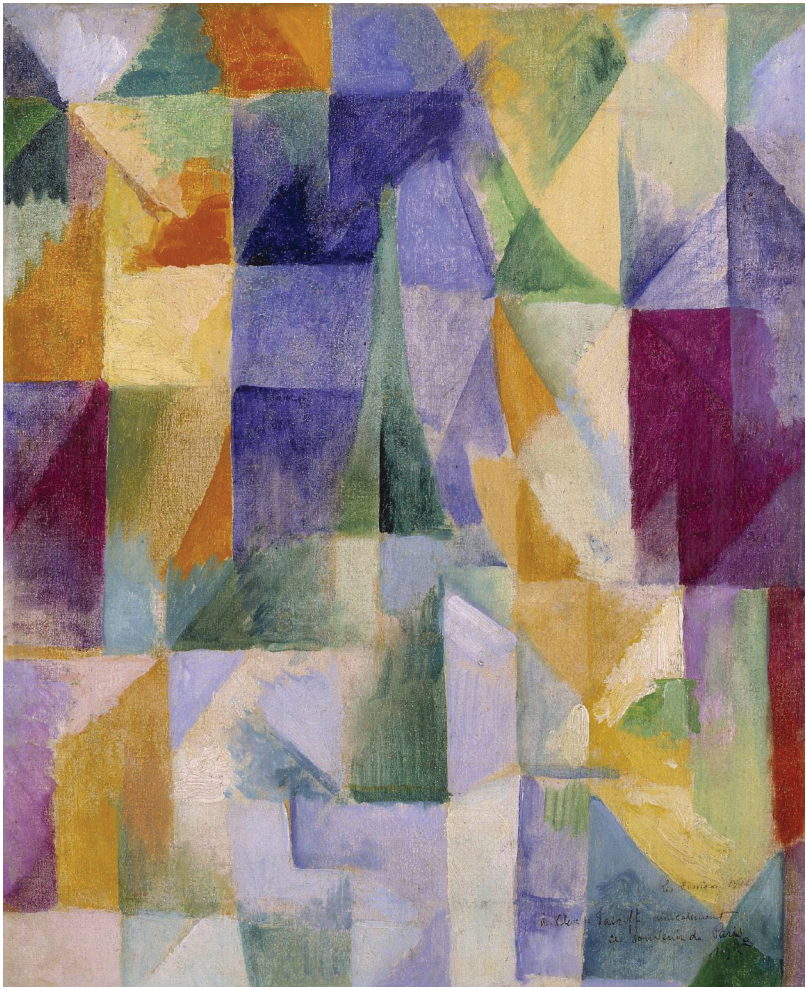


Plate thirteen: Umberto Boccioni, *Visioni Simultanee* (1911)



Plate fourteen: Umberto Boccioni, *Cavallo+Cavaliere+Caseggiato* (1913-14)



Plate fifteen: Gino Severini, *Danseuse bleue* (1912)



Plate sixteen: Oscar G. Rejlander, *The Two Ways of Life* (1857)



Plate seventeen: Paul Cézanne, *Montagne Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine* (around 1887)





Plate eighteen: Umberto Boccioni, *Io-Noi* (1905-07)



Plate nineteen: Umberto Boccioni, *Dinamismo di una testa di donna* (1914)

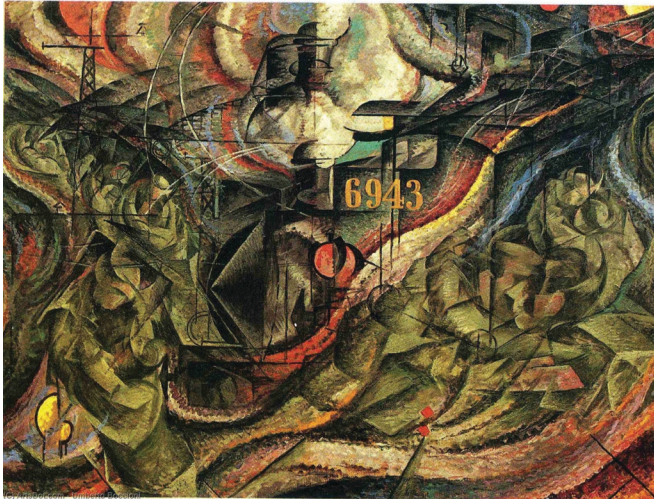


Plate twenty: Umberto Boccioni, *Stati d'Animo first version, The Farewells, Those Who Stay, Those Who Go* (1911)





Plate twenty-one: Umberto Boccioni, *Stati d'Animo second version, The Farewells, Those Who Stay, Those Who Go* (1911)



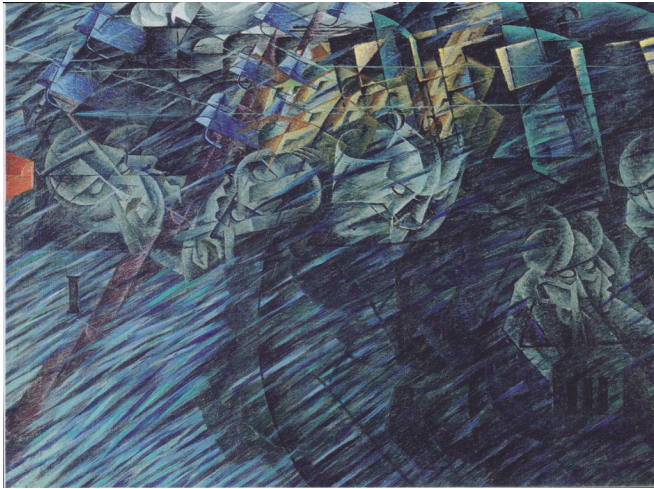


Plate twenty-two: Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, *The Polyphysiognomical portrait of Boccioni* (1913)

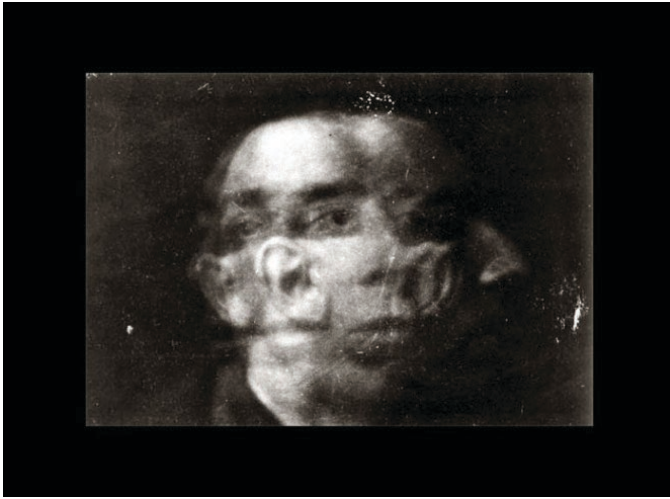


Plate twenty-three: Umberto Boccioni, *Autoritratto* (1908)

Blaise Cendrars, 'Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France' (1913)



N'est pas plus riche que ma vie  
Ma pauvre vie  
Ce châle  
Effiloché sur des coffres remplis d'or  
Avec lesquels je roule  
Que je rêve  
Que je fume  
Et la seule flamme de l'univers  
Est une pauvre pensée...

Du fond de mon cœur des larmes me viennent  
Si je pense, Amour, à ma maîtresse;  
Elle n'est qu'une enfant, que je trouvai ainsi  
Pâle, immaculée, au fond d'un bordel.

Ce n'est qu'une enfant, blonde, rieuse et triste,  
Elle ne sourit pas et ne pleure jamais;  
Mais au fond de ses yeux, quand elle vous y laisse boire,  
Tremble un doux lys d'argent, la fleur du poète.

Elle est douce et muette, sans aucun reproche,  
Avec un long tressaillement à votre approche;  
Mais quand moi je lui viens, de-ci, de-là, de fête,  
Elle fait un pas, puis ferme les yeux — et fait un pas.  
Car elle est mon amour, et les autres femmes  
N'ont que des robes d'or sur de grands corps de flammes,  
Ma pauvre amie est si esseulée,  
Elle est toute nue, n'a pas de corps — elle est trop pauvre.

Elle n'est qu'une fleur candide, fluette,  
La fleur du poète, un pauvre lys d'argent,  
Tout froid, tout seul, et déjà si fané  
Que les larmes me viennent si je pense à son cœur.



Plate twenty-four: Umberto Boccioni, *Due Figure* (1910)



Plate twenty-five: Umberto Boccioni, *Carica di Lancieri* (1915)



Plate twenty-six: Umberto Boccioni, *La madre che legge* (around 1909)



Plate twenty-seven: Umberto Boccioni, *La madre che cuce* (1909-10)



Plate twenty-eight: Umberto Boccioni, *Trittico: Veneriamo la madre* (1907-08)

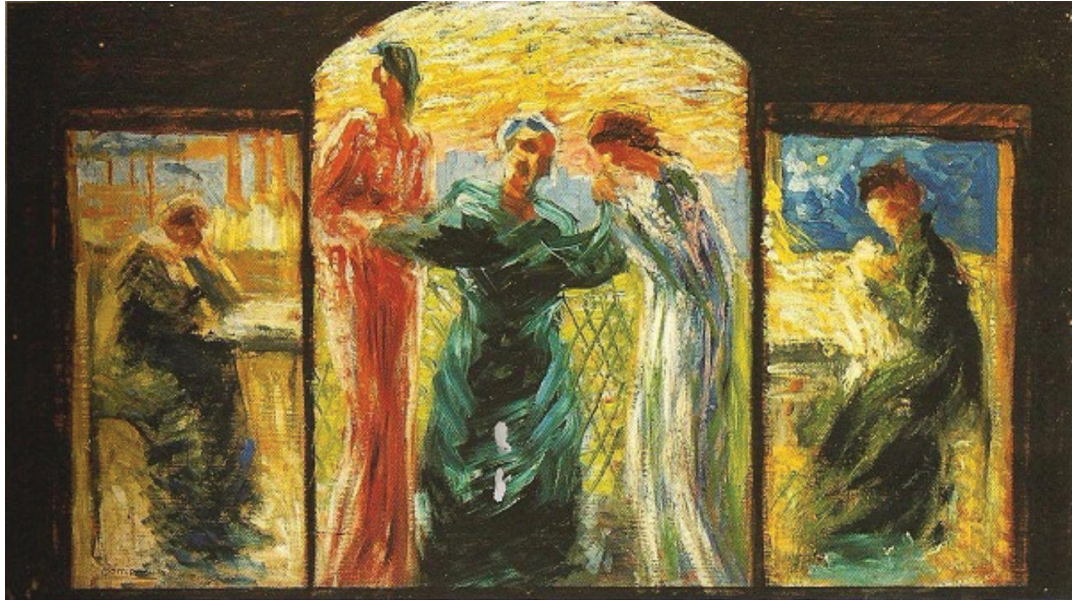


Plate twenty-nine: Umberto Boccioni, *La signora Massimino* (1908)



Plate thirty: Blaise Cendrars, 'Le Panama ou les Aventures de mes Sept Oncles', 1914

(from *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1947)

**Denver, the Residence City and  
Commercial Center**

DENVER is the capital of Colorado and the commercial metropolis of the Rocky Mountain Region. The city is in its fifty-fifth year and has a population of approximately 225,000 as indicated by the U.S. Census of 1910. Many people who have not visited Colorado, believe Denver is situated in the mountains. This city is located 12 miles east of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, near the north central part of the state, at the junction of the Platte River and Cherry Creek. The land is rolling, giving the city perfect drainage. Altitude one mile above sea level. Area 60 square miles.

**Ideal Climate, Superior Educational Advantages  
Unequalled Park System**

DENVER has the lowest death rate of the cities of the United States.

DENVER has 61 grade schools, 4 high schools, 1 manual training school, 1 trade and 1 technical school.

DENVER has 209 churches of every denomination.

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DENVER has 11 playgrounds — 8 in parks, 3 in individual tracts.

DENVER has 56 miles of drives in its parks.

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Per capita clearings, \$ 180.00.

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DENVER has 810 factories, in which 16,251 wage earners were employed during 1911. The output of factories in DENVER in 1911 was valued at \$ 52,000,000. The payroll for the year was \$ 12,066,000 — OVER A MILLION DOLLARS A MONTH!

DENVER, COLORADO, BERLIN, GERMANY and MANCHESTER, ENGLAND, are cited by Economists as examples of inland cities which have become great because they are located at a sort of natural cross-roads.

For detailed information, apply to the Denver Chamber of Commerce. Prospectus free.

Plate thirty-one: 'Opoetic', 1916 (from *Du monde entier, Poésies complètes 1912-1924*, Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1947)

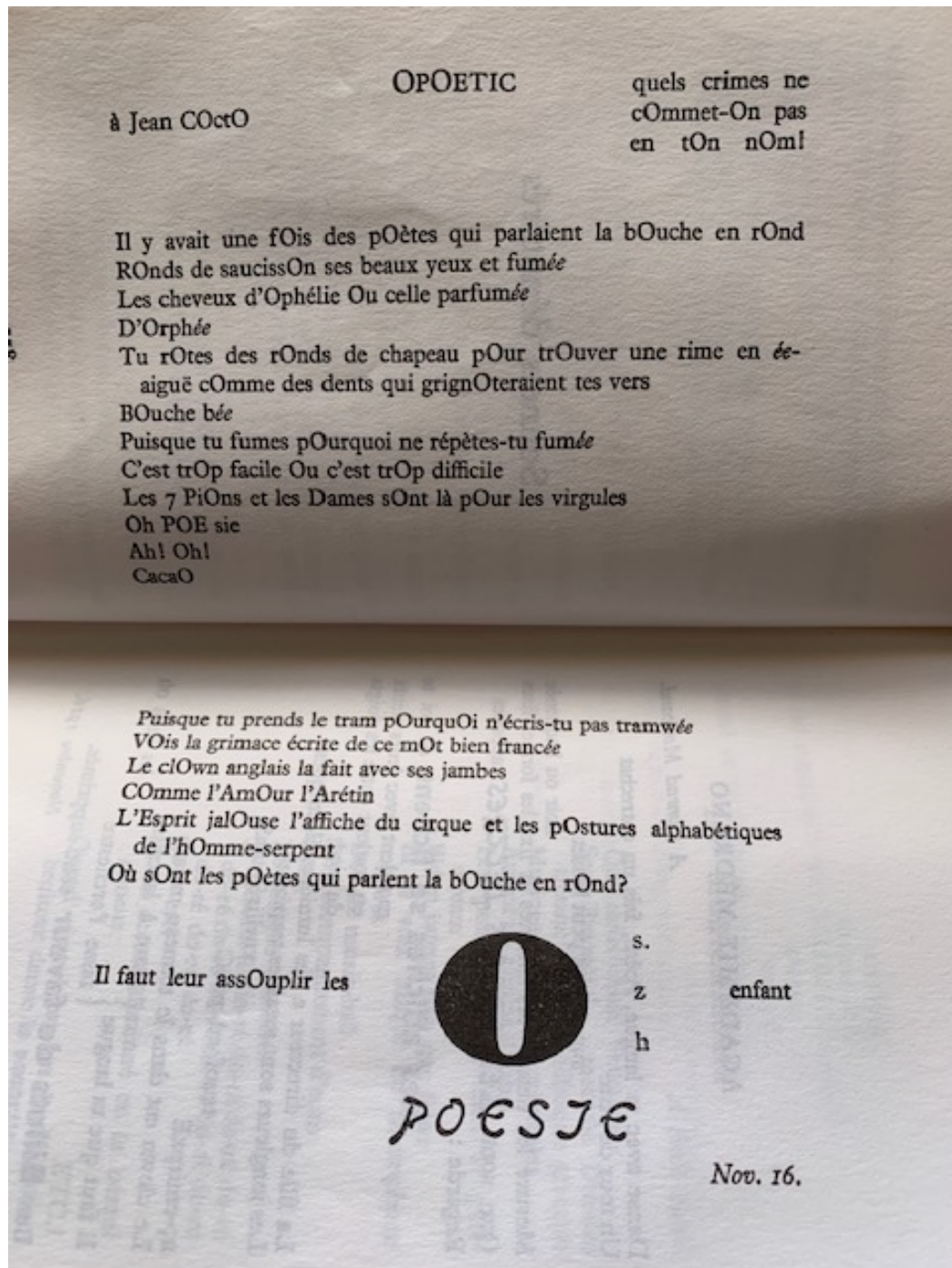




Plate thirty-two: Umberto Boccioni, *Paesaggio lombardo* (1908)



Plate thirty-three: Umberto Boccioni, *Treno che passa* (1908)



Plate thirty-four: Umberto Boccioni, *Studio per l'antigravioso* (1912)

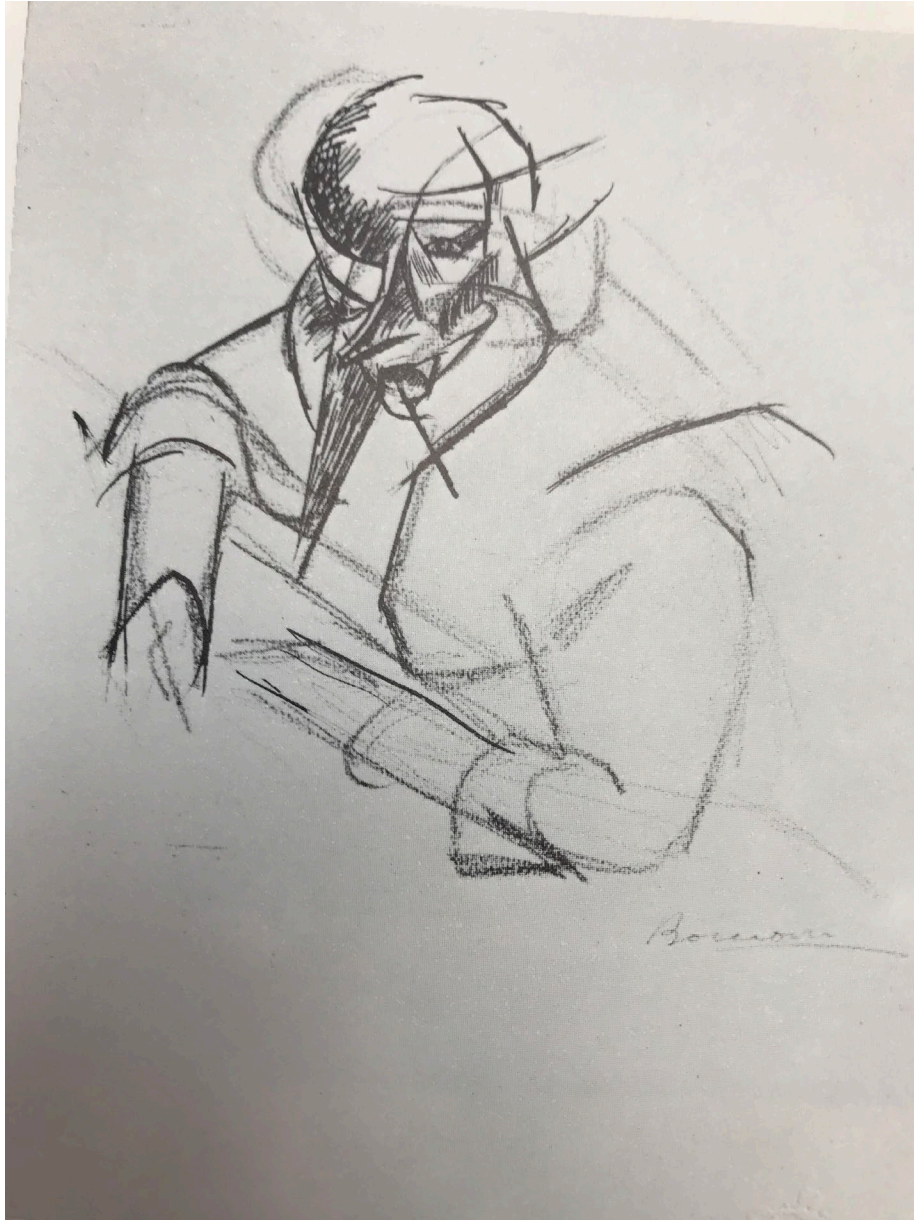


Plate thirty-five: Umberto Boccioni, *Dinamismo di un ciclista* (1913)



Plate thirty-six: Umberto Boccioni, *Sintesi del Dinamismo Umano* (1913)



Plate thirty-seven: Umberto Boccioni, *Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio* (1912)



Plate thirty-eight: Umberto Boccioni, *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*  
(1913)

