

Boccioni

Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-garde in Milan and Paris



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*Boccioni's Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the
Avant-garde in Milan and Paris*

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with Vivien Greene

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*Boccioni's Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the
Avant-garde in Milan and Paris*

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in front of *Materia*, 1913 (detail of fig. 59.7)

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On the Title of the Painting *Materia*

FLAVIO FERGONZI

Futurist artists attached particular importance to the titles of their works. Among the various strategies they used to provoke the viewer—unsettling subject matter, brash colors, rejection of the academic canon—the title was one of the finest exploited, amplifying rather than mediating the conflict between the average, passéist, prejudicially hostile audience and ostensibly indecipherable, modernist content. The choice of wording for a title was intended as a further affront to any viewer who, while gazing at the image, happened to come across it on an exhibition label or accompanying a catalogue reproduction.

The shock was even greater in the backward and recalcitrant cultural climate that was Italy in February 1913, when Boccioni's *Materia* (1912; cat. no. 27) was first shown as part of the Futurists' group exhibition in the foyer of Teatro Costanzi in Rome. In the years before World War I, few were accustomed to reading an artwork's formal qualities—known as the aesthetics of pure visibility in Italy—save for an educated elite. But almost everyone knew how to read a title to find a logical explanation of the content or a means of penetrating it. Visitors to the Teatro Costanzi exhibition expected a title that described or suggested a mood (as did, for example, Mario Calderini's *Autumn Evening* [1911], shown at the first Secessione romana in 1913), emphasized a visual detail (Cipriano Efisio Oppo's *The Beam of the Train* [1912], at the Circolo artistico internazionale di Roma in 1913), or provided a plain description of the composition (the case even in Henri Matisse's radically modernist *Goldfish* [spring–summer 1912], also at the Rome Secessione, where it generated much controversy).¹

The Futurist paintings shown at Teatro Costanzi constituted a new, unsettling experience for the public. Viewers found themselves confounded by titles that defied logic

and common sense: Boccioni's *Abstract Dimensions* (1912, cat. no. 21; but dimensions of objects are geometrically determined, therefore concrete and measurable); Carrà's *The Street Walks* (1912; people walk, streets do not), Luigi Russolo's *Solidity of Fog* (1912; fog is gaseous, not solid); and Giacomo Balla's *Little Girl Multiplied by the Balcony* (1912; a nonsensical mathematical operation). The next step for viewers—to overcome the challenge of the images—was already impeded. The public grew indignant because it was provoked; Roberto Longhi wrote with amusement of the "flowers of idiocy" coming from the lips of the most pompous spectators.² Others played along with the Futurists, trying to match the titles with passages they managed to recognize in a canvas, as did one Milanese journalist writing a feature on the Teatro Costanzi opening for *Corriere della Sera*.³

Futurist titles fulfilled another function as well, that of formulating the terms of a pictorial problem in order to stress its successful resolution. Before giving the titles of the most current works, the catalogue of the Futurist exhibition in Rotterdam in May–June 1913 (immediately following the one in Rome) listed the paintings shown at prior venues, beginning with Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris in February 1912.⁴ It was a savvy publicity stunt to show that the paintings had already been seen and sold on a prestigious international tour, but the Futurists also wanted to emphasize forcefully that the rules of the artistic game had changed. They made the public aware of how the previous cycle of works had resolved complex issues of representation, such as the skyward yearning of a new urban quarter under construction (Boccioni's *The City Rises* [1910–11, fig. 11]), the interpenetration of interior and exterior spaces (Boccioni's *The Street Enters the House*, [1911, cat. no. 7]), the evocation of voices, perceptions, and states of mind (Carrà's *What*

Facing page

Detail of Umberto Boccioni, *Materia*, 1912 (cat. no. 27)

the *Streetcar Told Me* [1911]), the persistence of an image over time and space (Russolo's *One Head Three Times* [1911]), and the combination of disjointed and distant travel memories in a single picture (Severini's *Souvenirs de Voyage* [1910–11]). The title had value all by itself as a veritable declaration of poetics, and there were even a few visitors who seem to have taken this process too literally. For example, an attentive Roman cultural journalist, Federico Mastrigli, writing on Carrà's *Speed Breaks Up the Horse* (1912), took pains to demonstrate that speed in itself does not break up forms, and that, in any event, the painter's task is to put them back together again in a coherent arrangement.⁵

The titles used by the Futurists did not start out so rebellious or novel. "Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto," with its reckless assertions, had already been written by April 1910, but at his one-man show at Ca' Pesaro in Venice that year, Boccioni's *Landscape* (1909) and *A Drama Teacher* (1910, fig. 53) hardly broke with conventional titles found at established events such as the Biennale or the Brera.⁶ In their group exhibition at the Padiglione Ricordi, Milan, in May 1911—no catalogue was printed, but the titles appeared in newspaper reviews⁷—the Milanese Futurists wavered between longstanding humanitarian socialist beliefs (Boccioni's *Work* [1910–11]), anarchist sympathies (Carrà's *Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* [1911]), a new take on history painting motivated by rising anti-Austrian sentiment (Carrà's *The Martyrs of Belfiore* [1910–11]), traditional salon painting (in title and subject, Boccioni's *The Laugh* [1911, fig. 6] echoed the well-known and critically hailed canvas by Philip Maljavine, *The Laugh* [1899], which was exhibited at the 1901 Venice Biennale and thereafter in the permanent collection of the Ca' Pesaro museum), and the omnipresent tinge of Symbolism (Boccioni's *Mourning* [1910] and

Russolo's *The Dying Man* [n.d.] and *Music* [1910–11]), which still hovered over everything. Reviewing the show, the Florentine Ardengo Soffici, who was uniquely current with the latest Cubist developments in France, allowed himself some heavy-handed irony regarding the "innovative title" of Boccioni's *Beloved Whores* (1910; known today as *The Roundup*),⁸ the sort of title well in keeping with the outworn tropes of the Scapigliatura (the Disheveled Ones), the Milanese-based, French-Symbolist-inspired writers of the 1870s. As Soffici proved, the Futurists' claim to have renewed the arts was an empty boast because they drew on the worst sort of literary clichés from Symbolism to unanimism.

Only when Marinetti took the situation in hand did the artists realize how effective titles could be in their strategy of provocation. He made the arrangements for the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune exhibition in February 1912 and financed a reconnaissance trip to Paris for Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo a few months before, in October 1911, during which they realized that the Futurists could trump the innovations of the Cubists by countering the staid nineteenth-century titles used at the Salon d'Automne (Fernand Léger's *Study for Three Portraits* [1910–11], Jean Metzinger's *Landscape* [1911] and *Femme à la cuiller* [1911], and Albert Gleizes's *Portrait of Jacques Nayral* [1911, cat. no. 13]). Provocative titles would also grab the attention of journalists and generate advantageous publicity.

Of course, Boccioni's key work at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, the triptych *States of Mind* (1911, figs. 20–22) was still imbued with late-Symbolist traditions, and the individual titles of its three canvases—*The Farewells*, *Those Who Go*, and *Those Who Stay*—were borrowed almost verbatim from those of Charles Cottet's triptych *Aux pays de la mer* (1898): *Les Adieux*, *Ceux qui partent*, and *Ceux qui restent*.

A version of Cottet's celebrated work was exhibited at the 1899 Venice Biennale, from which it was acquired by the Museo Bottacin in Padua.⁹

Nonetheless, there were signs of important change in the titles Boccioni gave to works included in the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune exhibition. For example, he rebaptized *Work* as *The City Rises* eight months after it had been exhibited under the first title. In doing so, human labor—no longer represented in the ideological terms of fin-de-siècle humanitarian socialism—was reduced to something "purely physical, to the parameters of energy and movement," according to Marinetti's new dictums.¹⁰ More important, the renaming of *On the Balcony*, exhibited at a small show in December 1911, as *The Street Enters the House* shifted people's attention to the mechanisms of perception; the wording of the title coincided with a passage in the catalogue essay, explaining to the French audience that the Futurists wanted to represent, not the visible, but a combination of sensations experienced by the subject—in this case, a woman looking out from an apartment onto a street.¹¹ Other titles served the same didactic function, such as *Simultaneous Visions* (1911, cat. no. 8) and *The Forces of a Street* (1911), in which emphasis was placed on the almost-invisible passersby and the tram, and the physical forces they set into motion. In 1912, at least some of these titles led to accusations of "peinture littéraire" (literary painting) being hurled at the Futurists.¹² Significantly, the Paris-based Gino Severini, who was the most sensitive to this sort of criticism, realized that the strategy behind the titles detracted from the genuine innovations of the images themselves. In a letter concerning the 1913 Teatro Costanzi exhibition he asked Marinetti if he might list his series of six paintings in the catalogue simply as "Painting No. 1, Painting No. 2, etc.," but his request was denied.¹³

Materia, painted in 1912 and exhibited in February 1913 at Teatro Costanzi, opened a new chapter for the Futurists in the titling of their works. Here an abstract term, ennobled by a centuries-old tradition of philosophical and scientific debate, was used for an everyday, immediately recognizable image—a figure on a balcony—yet one that was monumental in scale and stylistically current with the international avant-garde. Within the development of Boccioni's works, this broke with the long sequence of plain thematic titles (*The Laugh* and *The Roundup*) and Symbolist ones (*The City Rises*, *The Modern Idol* [1911, fig. 2], and *Those Who Go*). Boccioni also moved beyond deliberate provocation (*The Street Enters the House*) and the flaunting of brand new technical jargon (*Simultaneous Visions* and *Abstract Dimensions*) to enter into a more intellectually ambitious realm. It should be emphasized that, in the Italian context, giving an abstract concept to a painting was utterly novel. The Teatro Costanzi exhibition featured at least three such instances—Boccioni's *Materia* and *Elasticity* (1912, fig. 28) and Russolo's *Solidity of Fog*—with titles insisting on properties of the physical world. In this way, the Futurists drew attention to the fact that their works, no longer concerned with depicting external reality, delved instead into the essence of the things represented.

In the case of *Materia*, no documentation exists—no letters, no diary—to ascertain whether the title came before the painting or vice versa: did Boccioni begin with the aim of illustrating the concept, or did he create the image of his mother against the balcony and then call it *Materia*? The latter hypothesis is more likely, given the painting's enlargement through the addition of canvas, and its pivotal role in the constellation of works that includes *Horizontal Construction* (1912, cat. no. 28), *Head + House + Light* (1912,

destroyed; fig. 58.12), and several related studies. It appears that Boccioni began to focus on a subject dear to him—his mother on the balcony—and that the choice of such an imposing title emerged as the painting developed into an important ideological manifesto.

When Boccioni was making and naming his picture, the Italian *materia* was a word of disparate and disputed meanings. *Grand Dictionnaire universel Larousse*, the popular encyclopedic compendium of late nineteenth-century knowledge, linked the French *matière* with “the Sanscrit *matram*—‘measure’ and ‘matter’—from the root *ma*, to make with the hands, to construct, to measure.”¹⁴ The word also derived from the Latin *mater* (mother), and was still understood by Italians in this way, as witnessed by its inclusion in 1937 in Ottorino Pianigiani's etymological dictionary: “others connect this word directly back to the Latin *mater*, mother, which derives from the same root [*matram*], to wit, the prime matter from which others are formed.”¹⁵ A family of three words—*materia* (matter), *madre* (mother), and *mano* (hand)—and their etyma are inextricably linked in Boccioni's painting. In his psychoanalytic reading of *Materia*, Fausto Petrella demonstrated how the words' etyma activate metaphorical thought and images on a subconscious level, triggering the latent meanings that are submerged in day-to-day linguistic usage.¹⁶ Boccioni's mother herself, with whom he shared an unusually intense relationship—“he loved his mother more than anything in the world,” stated Carrà¹⁷—and who had become his preferred model years before, likely triggered the chain of connections. He deformed the physique of the *mother*, drawing attention to her enormous *hands* in the foreground through grotesque exaggeration, while emptying her of all symbolic primacy by emphasizing her

relation to the surrounding *matter*. Recent studies analyzed Boccioni's ambivalent depiction of the mother's body, one fraught with latent violence and fear of castration¹⁸ and acknowledged his explicit debt to Marinetti's poetics, whereby passive matter, gendered feminine, awaits penetration by an active masculine force.¹⁹

The relationship between the object represented (mother) and the painting's title (matter or material), however, exhausts only one possible interpretation. The viewers of *Materia*—first, in Rome (in 1912), then, in Rotterdam (1913), London (1914), and San Francisco (1915)—were aware, even if only in some general or uninformed manner, that *materia* was a fashionable word at the center of a fervent cultural debate, a word whose meaning had radically changed over a decade. The scientific literature directly or indirectly accessible to Boccioni had remarkably widespread diffusion, and one should not exclude the possibility that a few of the ideas developed in these books had a direct bearing on the execution of the painting. It is no coincidence that around the same time Boccioni gave the title *Materia* to a painting in which his mother is dramatically linked to the background by rays of light, he used the title *Horizontal Construction* for a smaller, analogous image, in which similar light effects do not appear.

In the book *L'Evolution de la matière* (1905) by Gustave Le Bon—whose *Psychologie des foules* (1895; *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 1897) was a key ideological influence on the Futurist depiction of crowds—faith in the indestructibility of matter was overturned by a new theory of electronics. According to Le Bon, objects gave off “effluvia of particles similar to cathode rays,” thereby connecting “ponderable bodies with the imponderable ether.”²⁰ Charles Gibson's popular *Scientific Ideas of Today* (1909; translated into Italian in

1912) described matter as emitting rays of energy into the cosmos.²¹ In Alberto Righi's *Radiant Matter and Magnetic Rays* (1909), one finds "elastic forces" arising from "special deformations" that emit electrical forces into the ether—a concept very similar to Boccioni's "lines of force."²² The lecture by Henri Poincaré that ended the popular series *Les Idées modernes sur la constitution de la matière*, held in Paris in 1912 at the Société Française de Physique, explored, with great clarity and simplicity, Max Planck's theory of energy exchanges between matter and the ether.²³ All of these sources popularized the nineteenth-century electromagnetic theories of Michael Faraday and James Clerk Maxwell, as well as the electromagnetic bases of matter theorized by Friedrich Wilhelm Ostwald, the 1909 Nobel laureate whose principal work was translated into French in 1912.²⁴ Nevertheless, the "matter" that preoccupied Boccioni when he named his opus was more philosophical than physical and derived directly from the writings of French philosopher Henri Bergson, who defined matter as "the aggregate of images" perceived by someone, while the syntagma "perception of matter" represented the same aggregate but "referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body."²⁵

It is very likely that Boccioni became directly acquainted with Bergson's texts in 1912, precisely at the moment he conceived *Materia* and began the studies for it. Before this date, the word *materia* had never appeared in his writings or letters with any learned implication; for example, the "terror of matter [*materia*] that suffocates me," mentioned in a 1908 diary entry, refers merely to his fear of being unable to translate his ideas with the proper technique.²⁶ It is not until a letter to Carrà from Berlin, datable to mid-April 1912, that Boccioni used the word for the first time in a specifically Bergsonian sense, that is, as

the combination of the images perceived and coordinated by the self: "There is no longer any truth except outside the pictorial (as I understood it until yesterday); for the moment I'm not interested in anything but matter expressed according to myself . . . et tout le reste est littérature."²⁷

Toward the end of the twentieth-century's first decade, Bergson's ideas dominated philosophical debates all over Europe, even in Italy. His fame reached its peak after his lecture tour through Italy and England in 1911 and 1912.²⁸ The formulations of the man who could with good reason be called "the fashionable philosopher"²⁹ had already passed into the language of art: in 1910, Soffici used Bergson's theory on the perception of things "in relation to our needs" to explain the perspectival distortions of Cubist painting.³⁰ During this same period, especially among the writers of *La Voce*, a pocket of resistance formed against a philosophy deemed too diffuse; there was, according to Giuseppe Prezzolini, a new "hunger for order and discipline," based on an opposite need, well expressed by Paul Cézanne in painting, to "give solidity, firmness, and cubicity to the shapes of things."³¹

In the course of his international travels in 1912, particularly visits to Paris, London, and Berlin during February–May, Boccioni found a receptive climate for the discussion of Bergson's concepts of duration, memory, and intuition, which were flourishing among artists. These ideas, drawn mostly from synopses in contemporary journals, and not from the original books, were widely adapted in interpretations of the new Cubist painting in articles by Roger Allard, Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger, and Tancrède de Visan.³² Boccioni was certainly aware of these critical approaches, if only indirectly. In the space of a year, encouraged by their exploration of simultaneity in painting, references to

Bergson became commonplace among the Futurists. In 1913, even Severini, a painter little given to theoretical speculation, could claim in the introduction to the catalogue for his solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in London: "to perceive, says Bergson, is after all, nothing more than an opportunity to remember."³³

Back in Milan in summer 1912, Boccioni apparently verified the ideas he had picked up second-hand against Bergson's original texts. Brian Petrie demonstrated the consistency of many concepts in Boccioni's *Pittura scultura futurista (Dinamismo plastico)* (drafted that year and published in 1914) with Bergson's tenets; for example, Boccioni identifies the perceiving subject with the thing perceived; he speaks of the distinction between absolute and relative motion and of the theory of muscular sensation.³⁴ Bergson's notions of space and time also influenced the ideology behind Futurist mass politics, as Mark Antliff elaborated in a recent study.³⁵

While the Bergson-Boccioni connection in 1912–13 may be indisputable, no one has investigated the artist's specific mode of access to the philosopher's texts. The issue is not unimportant; indeed, it is essential to try to understand how a painter who read a great deal—but in a somewhat disorderly fashion and without a firm cultural base—would have approached the complexity of Bergson's writings. How did Boccioni relate directly and continuously to the lofty level of the contemporary scientific debate? There is some evidence in an undated note published in 1971 by Zeno Birolli, the *terminus ante quem* being March 1913, when parts of this text were used in Boccioni's first article published in *Lacerba*.³⁶ Here, Boccioni transcribed a passage from Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (originally published in French as *Matière et mémoire* in 1896) on the condition of matter, largely to counter accusations that the

Futurists were engaged in cinematography rather than painting. Bergson claimed matter to be indivisible, "all division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determinate contours is an artificial division,"³⁷ contradicting the common-sense meaning given it in most popular dictionaries of the time.³⁸

The undated note, which contains other quotations and a list of readings, makes it possible to reconstruct Boccioni's path as a reader of Bergson through the libraries of Milan. Taking into account a slight error of transcription (7.4.D.41 instead of F.4.D.41), Boccioni wrote down the call number for *La filosofia dell'intuizione*, the Bergson anthology translated by Giovanni Papini in 1909 and available in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense of Milan. (The first edition of *Matter and Memory*, from 1896, could also be found in the Braidense library; see fig. 43) Boccioni's notations attest to the superficiality and rapidity with which he approached *La filosofia dell'intuizione*; they include, almost exclusively, only the brief sentences printed in italics, which served to sum up Bergson's important conceptual points. For example, he took notes from pages III, 4, 6, 74, 163, 213, 215, 218 (containing the passage on the indivisibility of matter quoted above), 225, and 252 (the first lines of the author's conclusion). Boccioni's quick schooling in Bergson's dense constructs nonetheless exposed him to key concepts and images that bore surprising fruit in the painting subsequently entitled *Materia*. In agreement with the concepts Boccioni read in Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, the image represented arises from the body's "center of action" (p. 4 in the 1896 edition); there is a continual relationship between centripetal and centrifugal forces binding the perceiver to the object perceived (p. 6); the image of the body occupies the center of the perceptual field, changing the images perceived as it moves (p. 10); the



Fig. 43 Title page from first edition of Henri Bergson's *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Paris: Alcan, 1896) in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, Milan.

body's perceptual centers are linked to objects through actual extensions (p. 27); the body is experienced as a center from which is reflected, onto the surrounding objects, the forces that these objects exert upon it (p. 47); and there are no intervals delineated between the body and the objects it perceives (pp. 48–49).³⁹

Even before Boccioni examined Bergson's original texts first hand, Marinetti had played an essential role in pushing Futurist artists to reflect on the philosopher's concept of matter. In Marinetti's "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," dated May 11, 1912, and published as the introduction to his *I poeti futuristi* (1912), the word *materia* (as "matter") is obsessively repeated no less than nine times⁴⁰ and used in the precise Bergsonian sense of a network of perceptible images. Indeed, in a response dated August 11, 1912, Marinetti had to defend himself against those who accused him of being overly indebted to Bergson's philosophy.⁴¹ In the literature manifesto, Marinetti evoked *materia* in terms very familiar to Boccioni. He wrote of a new "lyric obsession with *matter*" that would replace stale pandering to human psychology.⁴² Matter would be freed from the subjectivity of the first-person narrative that is "contemplated by a cold, distracted *I*, too preoccupied with itself, full of preconceived wisdom and human obsessions."⁴³ He further described matter as possessing "an admirable continuity of impulse toward greater warmth, greater movement," and the need to penetrate its essence in order to "destroy the dumb hostility that separates it from us."⁴⁴

Boccioni frequented Marinetti in Milan quite assiduously in summer 1912. During this period, the artist realized that the challenge to Cubism needed to rise above the mere oppositions of style—movement versus immobility, brilliant color versus monochrome, modern versus academic subjects—

listed in the catalogue preface he signed with his fellow Futurists for their Galerie Bernheim-Jeune exhibition several months earlier, in February. By bestowing the title *Materia* to a grand image of his mother seated on a balcony, Boccioni laid claim, against Cubist theory, to the privileged relationship between Futurist art and Bergson's philosophy of time and space.

Translated from the Italian by Stephen Sartarelli.

Notes

- 1 For a precise reconstruction of artistic events in Rome in the first months of 1913, see Mario Quesada, "Roma dal 1912 al 1918: mostre e vicende artistiche" and "Archivio privato" della Secessione Romana," in Rossana Bossaglia, Mario Quesada, and Pasqualina Spadini, eds., *Secessione Romana 1913–1916*, exh. cat. (Rome: Palombi, 1987), pp. 31–33, 45–48, respectively. For the Italian reception of Matisse's *Goldfish* (that is, the painting now in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen), see Flavio Fergonzi, "Firenze 1910–Venezia 1920: Emilio Cecchi, i quadri francesi e le difficoltà dell'impressionismo," in *Bollettino d'Arte del Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali*, 78, ser. 6, no. 79 (May–June 1993), pp. 1–26.
- 2 Roberto Longhi, "I pittori futuristi," *La Voce*, April 10, 1913.
- 3 See Civ. [Guelfo Civinini?], "L'esibizione del futurismo al Costanzi: Uno spettacolo burrascoso," *Corriere della Sera*, February 22, 1913: "curtain, curtain, curtain—waiter, a cognac!—greetings, hello, how are you?—turn and strut—I am the sun—gasps of dying stars—I am a dog walking along—walking along, with twenty-five legs—galleria vittoriano emanuele—bedside-rug—23–34–52, bet on Naples, sure winners those three. And so on and so forth. It's perfectly clear."
- 4 See "Première série des tableaux futuristes exposés à Paris, Londres, Berlin, Hambourg, Amsterdam, La Haye, Munich, Vienne et Budapest et vendus," in *Les Peintres et les sculpteurs futuristes italiens*, exh. cat., Rotterdamsche Kunstkring (Rotterdam: De Jong, 1913), pp. 13–16.
- 5 See Federico Mastrigli, "La mostra futurista al 'Costanzi': Dinamismo, stati d'animo e linee-forza," *La Vita*, February 23–24, 1913, p. 3: "They all wanted to give the viewer the same impression of movement that Carrà, for example, attempted to capture in his painting *Speed Breaks Up the Horse*. Apart from the fact that speed doesn't break up anything, Carrà's painting raises a new and insurmountable problem... that of putting back together the horse that's been broken up."
- 6 These are the titles mentioned in Boccioni to Barbantini, June 21, 1910, in Zeno Birolli, ed., *Umberto Boccioni: Gli scritti editi e inediti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), pp. 339–40.
- 7 See D.b.[?], "Esposizione libera," *La Perseveranza*, May 1–2, 1911; C.c., "La prima esposizione di arte libera," *Il Secolo*, May 2, 1911; N. Barbantini, "L'esposizione libera di Milano," *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, May 19, 1911; "Esposizione d'arte libera," *L'Uomo di pietra*, May 6, 1911; and Ardengo Soffici, "Arte libera e pittura futurista," *La Voce*, June 22, 1911.
- 8 Soffici, "Arte libera e pittura futurista."
- 9 See Ester Coen, *Umberto Boccioni*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), p. 122. On the fame of Cottet's triptych, see Rodolphe Rapetti's entry for this work in Michel Laclotte, ed., *Polyptyques: Le tableau multiple du moyen-âge au vingtième siècle*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1990), p. 194.
- 10 As asserted in Maurizio Calvesi, "Un Boccioni ritrovato e il tema dialettico della spirale," *Paragone*, nos. 317–319 (July–September 1976), pp. 259–60.
- 11 The presence of *The Street Enters the House* at a show at La Famiglia Artistica, Milan in December 1911, under the title *Al balcone* (On the Balcony), is attested to in Margherita Grassini Sarfatti, "Cronache d'Arte. L'Esposizione 'Intima' alla Famiglia Artistica," *Avanti!*, December 13, 1911, a review in which the painting is described very precisely. Sarfatti's review was rediscovered thanks to Antonello Negri, "Uno sguardo circolare," in Laura Mattioli Rossi, ed., *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, exh. cat. (Milan: Mazzotta, 1995), pp. 31–32.
- 12 Gustav Kahn, "L'Art. Les Futuristes italiens," *Mercure de France*, March 1, 1912, p. 184. This review is not included in the rich anthology of French reviews of the Futurists' Galerie Berheim-Jeune exhibition in Giovanni Lista, *Les Futuristes* (Paris: Veyrer, 1988).
- 13 Severini to Marinetti, February 9, 1913, in A. Hanson, "Marinetti Papers: Letters and Postcards from Gino Severini to F.T. Marinetti, 1910–1915," in Anne Coffin Hanson, *Severini futurista: 1912–1917*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), pp. 144–45.
- 14 Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle français*, vol. 10 (Paris: Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1873), p. 1337.
- 15 Ottorino Pianigiani, *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana*, (Milan: Sonzogno, 1937–38), s.v. "materia."
- 16 See Fausto Petrella, "La 'materia' inquieta e le sue trasformazioni: Appunti per una ricerca," in Mattioli Rossi, *Boccioni 1912 Materia*, p. 95.
- 17 Carlo Carrà, *Boccioni* (Milan: [no publisher], 1916), p. 23.
- 18 See Virginia Spate, "Mother and Son: Boccioni's Painting and Sculpture 1906–1915," in Terry Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
- 19 See Christine Poggi, "Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body," in *Modernism/modernity* 4, no. 3 (September 1997), pp. 31–35.
- 20 See Gustave Le Bon, *L'Évolution de la matière* (Paris: Flammarion, 1905), pp. 6, 9.
- 21 See Charles Gibson, *Idee scientifiche d'oggi: Sulla natura della materia, elettricità, luce, calore, ecc. messe alla portata di tutti*, trans. Leopoldo Jung (Milan: Cogliati, 1912), p. 59.
- 22 Augusto Righi, *La materia radiante e i raggi magnetici* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1909), pp. 9, 110.
- 23 See Henri Poincaré, "Les Rapports de la matière et de l'éther," in *Société Française de Physique: Les Idées modernes sur la constitution de la matière. Conférences faites en 1912* (Paris: Gauthiers-Villars, 1913), p. 364.
- 24 The work of Wilhelm Ostwald, especially his *L'Évolution de l'électrochimie* (Paris: Alcan, 1912), is discussed in relation to Boccioni in F. Petrella, "La 'materia' inquieta," p. 101. On the theories of Faraday and Maxwell, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Die Moderne Kunst und das Unsichtbare: Die verborgenen Wellen und Dimensionen des Okkultismus und der Wissenschaften," and Giovanni Lista, "Futurismus und Okkultismus," both in Veit Loers and Pia Witzmann, eds., *Okkultismus und Avantgarde. Von Munch bis Mondrian 1900–1915*, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Edition Tertium, 1995), pp. 28, 443, respectively.
- 25 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 22.
- 26 Boccioni diary, in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, p. 304.
- 27 Boccioni to Carrà, [after April 12, 1912], in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, p. 353.
- 28 For an early framing of the question of Bergson's international fame, see Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 3–15.
- 29 Alessandro Chiappelli, "Il filosofo di moda," *Il Marzocco*, May 7, 1911.
- 30 Ardengo Soffici, "Divagazioni sull'arte," *La Voce*, September 22, 1910.
- 31 Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Io devo . . .," *La Voce*, February 15, 1912.
- 32 This important question has been reconstructed from two different points of view: Maria Grazia Messina, "La formazione di cubisti tra filosofia e letteratura," in Maria Grazia Messina and Jolanda Nigro Covre, *Il cubismo dei cubisti: Ortodossi/eretici a Parigi intorno al 1912* (Rome: Officina, 1986), pp. 37–90; and Antliff, *Inventing Bergson*, pp. 16–105.
- 33 Gino Severini, introduction to *The Futurist Painter Gino Severini Exhibits His Latest Works*, exh. cat. (London: Marlborough, 1913), p. 3.
- 34 See Brian Petrie, "Boccioni and Bergson," in *The Burlington Magazine* 116, no. 852 (March 1974), pp. 140–47.
- 35 See Mark Antliff, "The Fourth Dimension and Futurism: A Politicized Space," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 4 (December 2000), pp. 720–33.
- 36 See Boccioni, "Libri da consultare-Bergson" (undated note), in Birolli, *Gli scritti editi e inediti*, p. 442; and Boccioni, "Fondamento plastico della scultura e pittura futurista," *Lacerba*, March 15, 1913.
- 37 Boccioni, "Libri da consultare-Bergson," p. 442.
- 38 See Giuseppe Rigutini and Pietro Fanfani, eds., *Vocabolario italiano della lingua parlata* (Florence: Tipografia Cenniniana, 1875), p. 945; and Nicolò Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini, *Dizionario della lingua italiana*, 6 vols. (Turin: Pomba, 1861–79), vol. 4, p. 147.
- 39 Pages cited are in Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Paris: Alcan, 1896).
- 40 See F.T. Marinetti, "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista," in Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), pp. 46–54. The manifesto must have appeared in print at least one month after its May 11 date since the first reviews of *I poeti futuristi* were from July, such as Alberto Calza, "Poeti futuristi . . . ma non tanto," *Il Giornale d'Italia*, July 21, 1912.
- 41 See F.T. Marinetti, "Risposta alle obiezioni," in Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, p. 55. The question is discussed in Luciano De Maria, "Marinetti poeta e ideologo," in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, pp. 69–80.
- 42 F.T. Marinetti, *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), p. 95.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 44 *Ibid.*