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Umberto Boccioni's States of Mind

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Umberto Boccioni’s States of Mind

by

Sonya Shrier

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Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... ii

List of Illustrations .......................................................................................................... iv

Introduction: The States of Mind as Self-Portrait ......................................................... 1

Chapter One: Boccioni’s Vision .................................................................................... 21

Chapter Two: Divisionism and Symbolism ............................................................... 31

Chapter Three: The Philosophy of Henri Bergson .................................................... 49

Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 63

Illustrations .................................................................................................................... 75

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 114
List of Illustrations

Fig. 1. Luca Carrà, *I-We-Boccioni*, c. 1906, photograph, private collection, Milan.

Fig. 2. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1905, oil on canvas, 20 ¼ in. x 27 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 3. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1905, oil on canvas, Palazzo Brera, Milan.

Fig. 4. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1908, oil on canvas, 39 1/3 in. x 27 ½ in., Palazzo Brera, Milan.

Fig. 5. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1908, pencil on paper, location unknown.

Fig. 6. Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, *Ritratto polifisiognomico di Umberto Boccioni*, 1911-12, oil on canvas, private collection, Milan.

Fig. 7. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911, oil on canvas, 27 ½ in. x 37 ¾ in., Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 8. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1911, oil on canvas, 27 ½ in. x 37 ¾ in., Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 9. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: Those Who Stay*, 1911, oil on canvas, 27 ½ in. x 37 ¾ in., Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 10. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911, charcoal and conté on paper, 23 in. x 34 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 11. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1911, charcoal and conté on paper, 23 in. x 34 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York.


Fig. 16. Umberto Boccioni, *Drawing after States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1912, ink on paper, 12 ½ in. x 16 3/5 in., collection of Lydia Winston Malbin, New York.
Fig. 17. Umberto Boccioni, *Drawing after States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1912, ink on paper, 12 ½ in. x 16 3/5 in., private collection, New York.

Fig. 18. Umberto Boccioni, *Drawing after States of Mind: Those Who Stay*, 1912, ink on paper, 12 ½ in. x 16 3/5 in. private collection, New York.

Fig. 19. Umberto Boccioni, *Study for States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911, oil on canvas, 15 3/8 in. x 20 ½ in., private collection.

Fig. 20. Umberto Boccioni, *Sketch for States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911, oil on canvas, 15 in. x 21 5/8 in., private collection, Bergamo.

Fig. 21. Umberto Boccioni, *Sketch for States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911, oil on canvas, 37 ¾ in. x 47 ½ in., Civico Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan.

Fig. 22. Umberto Boccioni, *Study of Those Who Go*, 1911, pen on paper, 6 7/10 in. x 4 7/10 in., private collection.

Fig. 23. Umberto Boccioni, *Study for The Farewells*, 1911, pen on paper, 6 1/5 in. x 3 9/10 in., private collection.

Fig. 24. Umberto Boccioni, *Study for Those Who Stay*, 1911, pen on paper, 6 1/10 in. x 3 ½ in., private collection.

Fig. 25. Umberto Boccioni, *Study for States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1911, pencil on paper, 19 1/8 in. x 24 in., collection of Lydia Winston Malbin, New York.

Fig. 26. Umberto Boccioni, *A Futurist Evening in Milan*, 1911. Location unknown.

Fig. 27. Humbert de Superville, line theory diagram.

Fig. 28. Giacomo Balla, *The Stairway of Farewells*, 1908-09, oil on canvas, 40 3/4 in. x 41 in., collection of Dr. and Mrs. Barnett Malbin (the Lydia and Harry Lewis Winston Collection), New York.

Fig. 29. Gaetono Previati, *The Chariot of the Sun*, central panel of *The Day* triptych, 1907, oil on canvas, 50 in. x 72 4/5 in., Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura, Milan.

Fig. 30. Giovanni Segantini, *Alpine Triptych (Life, Nature, Death)*, 1896-99, oil on canvas, 74 4/5 in. x 126 in., Segantini Museum, St. Moritz, Switzerland.

Fig. 31. Charles Cottet, *Le pays de la mer*, 1898, oil on canvas, 186 7/10 in. x 69 1/5 in., Musée d’Orsay, Paris.
Fig. 32. Étienne-Jules Marey, Chronophotographs of a man doing a high jump, 1892.

Fig. 33. Umberto Boccioni, *Three Women*, 1909-1910, oil on canvas, 71 in. x 52 in., Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan.

Fig. 34. Umberto Boccioni, *Mourning*, 1910, oil on canvas, 41 in. x 53 in., private collection.

Fig. 35. Umberto Boccioni, *The Street Enters the House*, 1911, oil on canvas, 39 2/5 in. x 39 3/5 in., Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany.

Fig. 36. Umberto Boccioni, *Simultaneous Visions*, 1911, oil on canvas, 23 7/8 in. x 27 3/8 in., Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal, Germany.


Fig. 43. Painting and Sculpture collection galleries, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fall 2016 installation.

Fig. 44. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Paris, 1912.

Fig. 45. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in London, 1912.

Fig. 46. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Naples, 1914.

Fig. 47. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Milan, 1916-17.

Fig. 48. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Florence, 1914.
Fig. 49. Lodging locomotive, c. 1883.

Fig. 50. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, March 1913, photograph, Calmarini Collection, Milan.

Fig. 51. Fourth-floor collection galleries, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fall 2016 installation.
Introduction

We declare ... that a portrait, in order to be a work of art, must not resemble the sitter, and that the painter carries in himself the landscapes which he would fix upon his canvas. To paint a human figure, you must not paint it; you must render its surrounding atmosphere.
—Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto

Almost every text on Futurism lauds Umberto Boccioni’s States of Mind (1911) as one of the most important works in the movement, as it so aptly represents its philosophical pillar: the celebration of the simultaneity and speed of the modern world. Conceived as a three-part panel work, it is one of the artist’s most famous series of paintings and arguably the most representative of his Futurist aims. The fact that Boccioni made four versions of the States of Mind in the span of one year attests to the central role it played in his art and theory. These four iterations include: a preliminary version painted in a Divisionist style (Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan) (fig. 1, 2, 3); charcoal and conté drawings on paper (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) (fig. 4, 5, 6); the final painted version in oil on canvas (also collection of The Museum of Modern Art) (fig. 7, 8, 9), which reflects the new influence of Cubism, after the artist traveled to Paris in late 1911; and ink drawings rendered after the last version for publication in the Berlin magazine Der Sturm in 1912 (fig. 10, 11, 12). Each tripartite version contains the same titles for the individual images: The Farewells, Those Who Go, and Those Who Stay.

This thesis will examine all of the iterations of the States of Mind and discuss how they represent a breakthrough in the artist’s search to find a pictorial expression for key concepts that occupied him early on in his career, namely
emotion and subjective experience, aims that he inherited from the influential Divisionist generation of artists. The Divisionists provided him with a model for the anti-naturalistic use of form, line and color to portray the contrasts and tensions of the modern world’s new reality through divided form and color. In addition, the States of Mind, more than any other work by Boccioni, displays the profound impact of the ideas of Henri Bergson, which the artist encountered in 1910. Bergson prompted Boccioni’s new view of the modern experience of space, time, and matter, which the artist found epitomized by railway travel. Indeed, it was railway travel that not only made the idea of simultaneity a concrete reality, but also led to changes in emotional states of individuals due to the radically different experience of distance and time created by high-speed travel. The year 1911, when Boccioni created the States of Mind, marked a shift in his work stylistically and conceptually. This is articulated most clearly in his lecture at the Circolo Artistico in Rome where he lays out the artistic theories of the Futurist and makes clear his intentions in the States of Mind. Towards the end of this year, Boccioni took a trip to Paris and was first exposed to the Cubists’ work. This had a profound impact on his art, which is first seen in the final painted version of the States of Mind. Lastly, I will show how Boccioni’s view of reality underlying appearances informs the ordering of the three panels in the series. Tracing the exhibition history of the various iterations, I will argue for a definitive sequence for the three panels in which the artist intended them to be installed.

One of the earliest known photographs of Boccioni was taken by Luca Carrà in 1906, when the artist was twenty-four years old. It shows, through a
photomontage, five identical images of Boccioni standing in a circle and facing inward (Fig. 13). The words io and noi (Italian for “I” and “we”) are handwritten in the margins. This photo is at once a playful experiment by two artists with what was then a relatively new medium, and a precursor to Boccioni’s breakthrough work from 1911, the States of Mind, which, like this photograph, shows an artist searching for a visual representation of the fragmented modern experience.

Whereas in the 1906 photo we see Boccioni looking into his own eyes and contemplating the multiple selves created by the camera’s photographic tromp l’oeil, in the States of Mind, the artist shows us what subjective reality looks like in a world where technology has transformed traditional experiences of time and space. Here we see Boccioni looking deeply into his own soul.¹ In the States of Mind, Boccioni not only examines his personal experience, but also seeks a novel way to depict a world where technologies are rapidly collapsing time and space and disrupting long-standing cultural and artistic traditions.

Boccioni devoted almost an entire year to the subject of the States of Mind, creating four complete versions, each consisting of three images: The Farewells, Those Who Go, and Those Who Stay, along with three early paintings and four early drawings. The tripartite series is set in a train station and depicts the experience of saying goodbye from three distinct vantage points: departure, separation, and retreat.

This intense focus on a single subject is rivaled only by Boccioni’s fascination with self-portraiture. Between 1906 and 1913, the artist produced nine self-

¹ The Italian title, Stati d’animo, can be translated as either “states of mind” or “states of soul.”
portraits, which are remarkable for their variety. The earliest self-portraits are from 1905 (Figs. 14 and 15). One shows the artist in formal dress, squinting seriously, a fruit tree loosely rendered in the background. Boccioni depicts himself as a sophisticated, aristocratic man in deep thought. Although he does not offer any specifics about the location or the subject’s identity, Boccioni was a student at the Accademia di belle arti in Rome when he painted this portrait, and we know that he cherished it as he never sold it. By contrast, a self-portrait from the same year shows Boccioni in a very different manner. Here he presents himself in his studio, actively holding a collection of six paintbrushes in one hand while the other hand moves out of the composition to work on the canvas at which we are looking. The mood of this portrait is noticeably lighter. Behind Boccioni is a bright yellow-and-blue-patterned wallpaper and the artist has a slight smile on his face. In contrast to the distant squint, here his eyes are open, interested, and engaged.

Another pair of self-portraits from 1908 displays a similar incongruity (Figs. 16 and 17). The first (Fig.17) is a simple pencil drawing where the artist’s face is framed in a close-up. Although Boccioni was only twenty-six years old, the figure depicted here could be in his mid-thirties. Traces of the worry and wisdom that come with age are indicated by creases on his forehead, eyes, and mouth. The second 1908 portrait shows what one might consider a more typical twenty-six-year-old artist. Boccioni stands in the street dressed smartly in a trench coat and Russian-style hat, which he may have picked up on his travels to that country the year prior. A palette rests comfortably in his right hand. His left hand is out of the frame, showing him in the act of creating this image of an international young artist.
In addition to the Carrà photograph, another collaborative photo of the artist has direct connections with the *States of Mind*. *Ritratto polifisognomico di Umberto Boccioni* (1911-12) by the brothers Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia (Fig. 18) shows a continuum of Boccioni’s faces in numerous positions, exposing multiple profiles in one image. His bald pate adds a point of brightness, against which his dark brows and eyes register an intense frontal gaze framed by two softer profiles. An ear strobes through the photograph, implying sudden movement that blurs the directional axis of the sitter. The Bragaglia brothers pioneered this method of capturing movement and called it photodynamism, which captures the movement of a figure, usually from left to right, with the section in between the start and end points blurred. Ultimately, Boccioni did not consider photography an art form and as a result, convinced the Futurist founder Filippo Tommaso Marinetti to excommunicate the Bragaglia brothers from their circle. Though Boccioni was adamant that painting did not draw any inspiration from photography, this photograph, along with the one by Carrà in 1907, has clear visual similarities to the *States of Mind*, particularly the repeated faces in *Those Who Go* and the numerous bodies in *Those Who Stay*.

The variety of stances Boccioni takes in his early self-portraits show an artist who is intensely interested in representing himself through painting and drawing and in examining the multi-faceted nature of the self and subjectivity. While each of his earlier pieces gives us a different perspective on the artist, the multi-panel format of the *States of Mind* is a breakthrough in Boccioni’s understanding that multiple states can exist in one work of art and within himself. In this context, *States*
of Mind suggests the possibility that a portrait may “not resemble the sitter” and instead “renders [the] surrounding atmosphere.”

While there have been multiple perspectives on the States of Mind put forth in the literature, the majority of the interpretations treat the MoMA oil painting as the most complete work and discuss the other iterations as preparatory. But just as looking at the collection of early self-portraits affords us a more complete picture of the artist, looking at all of the iterations of the States of Mind and their chronological progression offers us the most complete understanding of the work as a whole. When considered together, they show us an artist proposing a radical new form of subjectivity while exploring the available modes of painterly expression. Though there is a consensus on the chronological order of the four complete versions of the States of Mind, virtually nothing has been written on the sequence of the preparatory works. In addition, little attention has been paid to how the different sets relate to one another vis-à-vis the progression of Boccioni’s thinking on the subject matter. A closer look at these issues offers important insight into the artistic and conceptual evolution of the States of Mind.

In addition to the four finished version of the States of Mind, seven preparatory works exist. There are three oil sketches, one, in a private collection, titled Study for the States of Mind: Those Who Go (Fig. 19); the other two are both titled Sketch for the States of Mind: Those Who Go (Figs. 20, 21). One is in a private collection (Fig. 20) and the other is in the collection of the Civico Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, in Milan (Fig. 21). All of the oil sketches display Divisionist-style brushwork.

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2 Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto, 1911. Reprinted in Rainey, 64.
Three of the four preparatory drawings are a set that corresponds to the complete paintings. They are called *Study for the Farewells, Study for Those Who Go,* and *Study for Those Who Stay* (Figs. 22, 23, 24), and are all in a private collection. These drawings are pen on paper and are done in a loose, gestural style. Finally, the fourth early drawing is a pencil-on-paper sketch titled *Study for States of Mind: The Farewells* (Fig. 25) and is in the collection of Lydia Winston Malbin in New York.

When viewing all of the iterations side by side, the three early *Those Who Go* oil paintings (Figs. 19, 20, 21) stand out stylistically as the very first in the series. Compared to the other pieces, these three are the least resolved, and taken as a set, they show Boccioni working through the visual motifs that he will subsequently repeat. I posit that of these three early paintings, *Study for Those Who Go* (Fig. 19) and *Sketch for Those Who Go* (Fig. 20) clearly came first because they share one defining characteristic that appears in all of Boccioni’s previous works, but is not seen in the subsequent iterations of the *States of Mind*: a horizon line. While I do not find this observation in the literature, I believe it is important not only in ascertaining the chronology of the *States of Mind,* but also in reinforcing the significance of the work in Boccioni’s oeuvre. Though the *States of Mind* is widely recognized as seminal in that it is the artist’s first true Futurist work,\(^3\) it is never discussed as also showing Boccioni’s shift from depicting space in a more traditional manner to focusing on representing energy and dynamism overriding naturalistic expression.

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\(^3\) This idea will be discussed further in Chapter Three.
Study for Those Who Go (Fig. 19) is the most traditional landscape in the series, due to its naturalistic depiction of space and form. A light sky occupies the upper register and in the lower half is green land. Interspersed are grey cone-shaped forms that resemble mountains. The work is painted in a Divisionist style with small, highly chromatic brushstrokes. Abstract, zigzagging lines arch over the landscape. In the context of the later works, we can understand these as reflections on the glass of a train window, indicating that what we are seeing is a view from inside a moving locomotive. There is also a striking connection between this work and an excerpt in Boccioni’s Circolo Artistico lecture, which has not been noted previously. Towards the end of this lecture, Boccioni says, “...the human mind operates between two horizon lines, the absolute and the relative, both equally infinite, and draws between them the jagged and painful line of the possible.” The early oil sketch directly illustrates this idea with clear, jagged lines cutting through a landscape, the composition being divided by a prominent horizon line. Mysterious shapes that have never been identified are distributed throughout. Seen alongside this excerpt, it is likely that these shapes represent the subject or the mind operating in the modern space-time that Boccioni describes. In the later versions, this abstract landscape evolves into a train station, a place that pulls apart the old experience of time and space.

Sketch for Those Who Go (Fig. 20) retains the same format as the prior study, but becomes much more abstract. The horizon line is still visible, though it appears

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4 The influence of Divisionism on the States of Mind will be discussed in Chapter Two.
only as a small rectangle in the upper left corner. The greater part of the composition is occupied by large abstract forms that look to be a combination of the mountain and zigzag lines from the first work. The staccato brushwork remains, but rather than being used as building blocks to create the illusion of a mass of land, it is now disengaged from form and overlaid on top of the composition to produce an effect of movement and energy.

*Study for the States of Mind: Those Who Go* (Fig. 21) is the last of the three, as it has the most in common with the finished versions. The prior two studies were approximately 15” x 20”, whereas this one, at 37¾ x 47½”, shares similar dimensions with the completed paintings. Also like the subsequent versions, the horizon line has completely disappeared and figures have been introduced. Here Boccioni has arrived at the motif he will keep throughout the rest of the series: figures caught in a vortex of energy, atmosphere, and forms.

I believe the works Boccioni created next are the pen-on-paper sketches (Figs. 22, 23, 24), as they prefigure the structure of all subsequent iterations of the *States of Mind*: a series of three works using the same motif, each having a different theme. These sketches are loosely rendered in a manner that shows they are preparatory drawings. The figures are barely recognizable as such; they are masses made up of almost frenetic scrawled marks. Violent lines are overlaid on the surface in distinct directions within each drawing. The gestures of the figures and the lines are constant in all of the finished sets. In *Study for Those Who Go* (Fig. 22), gestural lines move diagonally from the upper right to the lower left corner and indications of heads are interspersed as they are in the final version. *Study for the Farewells* (Fig.
23) contains comparatively fewer directional lines, which will become the undulating masses that dominate the later iterations of the composition, and shows suggestions of figures embracing, the central motif of all of *The Farewells* versions. *Study for Those Who Stay* (Fig. 24) is the simplest composition, as it remains in all of the subsequent versions, with hunched figures moving from the left to the right side and perfectly vertical lines overlaid.

Even though these sketches possess similarities to the three final versions, when Boccioni created them, his concept for the *States of Mind* was still being developed, as evidenced in the titles jotted down underneath each of these works: *forse, ancora*, and *senza* (maybe, again, and without). *Forse* is the corresponding sketch for *Those Who Go*, *ancora* for *The Farewells*, and *senza* for *Those Who Stay*. In Calvesi and Coen’s interpretation, *senza* indicates the deprivation and frustration of those left behind, *forse* represents the uncertain emotions of one who embarks on a journey to the unknown or the future, and *ancora* suggests the desire to stay again, or the idea of another embrace before being separated. It could also refer to the cyclical nature of the activity of a train station, i.e., “another departure.” Christine Poggi interprets *ancora* as “a term that suggests awareness of a moment whose termination could already be sensed.” Here we see Boccioni moving closer to the finished versions of the *States of Mind*, working through his ideas in a more

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conceptual way and defining the main framework that he will ultimately use: figures caught in an array of forces in different moments at a train station.

After the pen-and-ink drawings, Boccioni likely created the first complete set of the States of Mind: the oil paintings now in The Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna (Figs. 7, 8, 9). When comparing all of the iterations, there appears to be a progression toward sharper, more resolved lines and forms. The Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna set is the most loosely rendered, with the figures and the force lines on the surface melding into one another at points, whereas in subsequent versions, the edges of the shapes are more sharply delineated.

The earliest written documentation of the States of Mind is a November 16, 1911, article in the Parisian literary review, Mercure de France. The writer and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire recounts a recent conversation with Boccioni in Paris, where the artist had travelled that fall to arrange for his exhibition there the following spring. Apollinaire quotes Boccioni: “I have painted two pictures, one of which expressed departure and the other arrival. This takes place in a railroad station. Eh bien! To bring out the differences in feelings I have not put into my picture of arrival a single line found in the picture of departure.”

Though the two panels mentioned to Apollinaire do not quite correspond to any of the existing titles, given the theme of arrival and departure, there is little question that Boccioni is alluding to some iteration of the States of Mind. It is, however, not entirely clear which one. Art historians Marianne Martin and Ester Coen both believe that Boccioni must have been referring to the Civica Galleria

9 Article trans. and cited in Calvesi and Coen, 397.
d’Arte Moderna series. One fact that this quote illustrates, which no other scholar has mentioned, is that whichever version Boccioni may be referring to, he originally conceived the States of Mind as a two- rather than a three-panel work. Judging from the artist’s description of the two first panels as representing “departure” and “arrival,” these likely refer to Those Who Go and The Farewells, and thus the panel that was possibly added later was Those Who Stay.

The MoMA charcoal-and-conté drawings (Figs. 4, 5, 6) are perhaps the most difficult to place chronologically. Various scholars refer to them alternately as studies and finished works. Ester Coen calls them finished pieces, but does not specify where they fall among the other iterations. Marian Martin states that the MoMA drawings are “based on the oil sketches” begun in the late spring of 1911, because the two series have many shared elements and because the drawing is “less spontaneous.” James Thrall Soby describes the drawings as being “preparatory” for the last painted series in his catalogue for the 1949 Twentieth Century Italian Art exhibition at MoMA, still placing them between the two painted versions but relating them more closely to the later one. MoMA changed its position in the wall text for a 1977 exhibit at the museum, which states that all three drawings are studies for the early versions of the paintings.

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11 Calvesi and Coen, 118.
13 Martin, Futurist Art and Theory, 94.
15 MoMA charcoal and conté drawings object file.
I believe that the MoMA drawings fall between the early oil paintings and the final MoMA paintings, as the drawings share an important compositional element that is absent in the earlier oils: there are lines that appear on the left and right sides of *The Farewells* that continue into the two flanking works when *The Farewells* is hung in the center. Here Boccioni is exploring how to relate the panels to one another, an idea that was not present in the oil sketches but that he continues to build on in the final painted iteration. Moreover, because of the care that Boccioni took in the MoMA charcoal-and-conté drawings, bringing them to a more finished state than any other work on paper in his oeuvre, we should see them as complete and not as studies for any of the painted versions.

For all of the ambiguity in the chronology and completeness of the previous *States of Mind* series, the second painted version of the triptych in the Museum of Modern Art feels the most resolved, and perhaps as a result, has become the most iconic version (Figs. 7, 8, 9). It has been well documented that Boccioni’s trip to Paris with Carlo Carrá in mid-October of 1911, when he toured the galleries, viewed the public Cubist exhibition at the Salon d’Automne, and met Apollinaire and Picasso, had a major impact on his work and on Futurism. It is also widely agreed that this Cubist influence manifested itself most clearly in the MoMA paintings.

When looking at the MoMA paintings next to the previous versions, they immediately stand out for incorporating Cubist elements. Whereas the initial painted triptych and the charcoal-and-conté drawings are dominated by organic lines in the foreground that create an atmosphere of movement and emotion, the final painted version puts more of an emphasis on rendering recognizable objects in
an abstracted Cubist style that emerge from interpenetrating facets and greater three-dimensionality. In the previous versions of The Farewells, the locomotive is suggested by a subtle, lingering smokestack, but in the final version, Boccioni makes it the focal point—a rectangular mass rendered from multiple vantage points and made up of seemingly disjointed, boxy shapes. The train number is stenciled at the center of the composition, which is a direct nod to a Cubist trope from works he must have seen in Paris.

The figures in the final painted version are similarly treated in a style that renders them as masses rather than as dissolving into the atmosphere, as in the previous works. In The Farewells panel, the figures are represented as three-dimensional shapes conjoined to form a sort of wave, which is parted by the imposing train like a vessel parts the sea, as it bursts from the upper right corner of the painting into the center. The arabesque lines dominating the surface of the previous two versions are transformed into a more geometric formation in the Cubist-influenced panels.

Though this stylistic shift was undoubtedly influenced by the analytical Cubism of Braque and Picasso, it did not indicate a thematic alliance between it and Futurism, as this did not exist. Why, then, did Boccioni choose to make such a bold visual switch in this final series, which capped the body of work that had occupied him for most of 1911? Clearly, Boccioni’s use of Cubist motifs shows less about his indebtedness to the movement’s ideas than to his desire to be associated with the art of the “new.”¹⁶

¹⁶ See Braun.
In the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters*, Boccioni and his comrades note that, “in the eyes of other countries, Italy is still a land of the dead, an immense Pompeii of whitewashed sepulchers.”  

Marinetti, in *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, states that one of the movement’s goals is to liberate Italy from “the countless museums that have covered it like so many cemeteries.” A major aim of the Futurist project was therefore nationalist in scope: to elevate Italy from a backwater of Europe to a cultural player. In this context, appropriating motifs from the most avant-garde movement at the time is more a signal of being contemporary and relevant and of looking outside Italy for artistic influence than an alignment with Cubist pictorial goals.

Though Boccioni includes cubist elements in final iteration of the *States of Mind*, in fact, he goes to great lengths to criticize Cubism, primarily as a means of defining Futurism by virtue of its difference. In his essay, “What Divides Us from Cubism” (1914), a passionate diatribe against the movement that appeared in his book, *Pittura, scultura, futuriste*, of the same year, he criticizes the cubists’ approach as overly scientific, so much so that it drains the life from their pictures. For Boccioni, the Cubist is an analyzer of “fixity” in that the object is immobile while the artist rotates his or her point of view, creating for the artist an “incapacity to

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19 Braun, 5. Ester Coen notes that Boccioni must have rethought his conception of the final paintings after he and the other Futurists were the target of an attack by Ardengo Soffici, who at the time was championing the Cubists in his review *La Voce*. Ester Coen, 118.
experience [the object] in its action." For Cubists, the object is fixed and the subject is moving, while for Futurists, the subject is at the center of the picture in a world that is full of dynamic forces, energy, and speed. In the following excerpt, after acknowledging Picasso’s contribution to new ways of depicting form and conceptions of reality, Boccioni adds the following jab:

Once the first surprise has passed, however, one realizes that this formal concept is the result of an impassive scientific calibration that destroys all dynamic heat, all violence, and all incidental variety in the forms. But precisely this dynamic heat, violence, and incidental variety makes the forms have a life outside of intelligence and project them into the infinite. And this is the result of creative emotion, delirious sensation, intuition.

Emily Braun articulates how Boccioni’s work differs from Cubism in her influential essay, “Vulgarians at the Gate,” which states, “the subject of Boccioni’s art is not the nature of representation, as it is with Cubism, but the representation of perception as an invisible flow of sensory-motor movements and dynamic ‘states of mind.’” Revealing the reality underlying appearances was Boccioni’s primary artistic project and the explicit subject of the States of Mind, which depicts the train station as a series of changing perceptual experiences.

After the final painted version of the States of Mind, Boccioni completed one additional version of the series: pen-and-ink drawings to be made into woodblock prints for reproduction in the German magazine Der Sturm (Figs. 10, 11, 12). These are very similar to the final MoMA paintings and are now commonly referred to as “drawings after” each of the respective panels. At one point, they were thought to be

21 Ibid.
22 Braun, 8.
preparatory drawings for the final paintings, but in the 1983 catalogue raisonné, Maurizio Calvesi made a compelling case for their coming afterwards and being explicitly made for print. Calvesi observes that Boccioni’s preparatory sketches always vary slightly from the final images, whereas these pen-and-ink drawings are virtually identical to the MoMA paintings. He further argues that because they are not signed, which indicates the drawings were made to be translated into the woodcut medium, they were indeed published in Der Sturm.23

Perhaps because the States of Mind fits so neatly into the futurist program that the movement’s outspoken leader Filippo Marinetti laid out, its complexities and personal nature are lost. Scholars have interpreted the work in a number of different ways, though never as a self-portrait. Art historian William Valerio sees the entire series as an exploration of the emotions generated by Italy’s invasion of Libya on September 29, 1911—a formative moment that set it off on its journey toward an imperialistic future.24 Following this narrative, according to Valerio, The Farewells depicts mothers and children saying goodbye to soldiers as they go off to fight in Africa. By contrast, Mariannée Martin views the more abstract embrace in the early oil painting as forming an ovum- or womb-like shape.25 This reading is in line with the Futurists’ gendered associations with progress and their feminization of the past, to which the figures are saying goodbye. Judith Ellen Meighan assigns specific identities to a number of figures in the work based on resemblances to caricatures in Boccioni’s 1911 A Futurist Evening in Milan (Fig. 26). According to Meighan, the

23 Calvesi and Coen, 405.
25 Martin, Futurist Art and Theory, 94.
artist places himself off to the side in the finished MoMA drawing of *The Farewells* and renders Marinetti as scowling down from the upper left corner of *Those Who Go* in the same series.²⁶

To my eyes, the figures appear to be explicitly anonymous, having no distinguishing characteristics. If Boccioni had wished to make a statement about specific identities, he did not overtly highlight them. Hence, the argument that the *States of Mind* represents a certain moment or narrative is not particularly compelling. Indeed, William Valerio points to the generalized quality of the figures as well, and posits that they are related to Boccioni’s identification with the anonymous individual at the center of Italian society at this pivotal time in 1911. For Valerio, this anonymity represents the artist’s fears and emotional conflict about the uncertainty of Italy’s political and cultural future.²⁷

I would also like to suggest that the couples in *The Farewells* are not actually embracing, as is typically thought. Rather, in all three versions, they more closely resemble couples moving toward or pulling away from one another in the moments just before or after an embrace. This is a subtle albeit important distinction, as it points to Boccioni’s aim to represent the figures as forces and emotions in flux rather than in stasis. The apparent non-specificity of the figures and details gives weight to this interpretation as representing Boccioni’s own inner experience.

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In Chapter One, I discuss Boccioni’s artistic vision by looking closely at his lecture at the Circolo Artistico in 1911. I then show how this vision diverges from Futurism’s founder Filippo Marinetti’s, as evidenced by Boccioni’s treatment of the train station setting. I investigate this railway station in the context of how it was understood in Futurist writing and in Europe generally. I take a cross-disciplinary approach, drawing primarily on the studies of the cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch on the impact of the railway on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century traveler. Through this analysis, it becomes clear why Boccioni chose this particular setting for his keystone work.

Chapter Two examines the influence of Divisionism and Symbolism on Boccioni’s oeuvre and how it is evident in the States of Mind. I connect the tripartite format of the States of Mind with formal and conceptual themes in Symbolism and Divisionism, which have not been fully analyzed to date. I also discuss Boccioni’s choice, which is in line with other Symbolist works, to use multiple panels as a vehicle for expressing a fragmented modern experience, in the hopes of adding to an analysis of this format. Until now, this aspect of the States of Mind has been viewed from a predominantly formal perspective. The most recent and in-depth scholarship on Boccioni’s relationship with Divisionism is Vivien Greene’s 2004 essay, “The Path to Universal Synthesis: Boccioni’s Development from Divisionism to Futurism.” I draw on Green’s research on Boccioni’s teachers, Balla and Previati, to show how his contact with these mentors specifically shaped the States of Mind.

Chapter Three focuses on Henri Bergson and the influence of his writings on Boccioni’s work after 1911. Although much has been written on this subject, Brian
Petrie’s *Burlington Magazine* article, “Boccioni and Bergson,” from 1974 and Mark Antliff’s *Inventing Bergson* from 1992 continue to be the most authoritative texts. Petrie discusses Bergson’s epistemology and how it influenced Boccioni’s concept of reality, citing Bergson’s theories of *Duration* and *Intuition* as being particularly significant. Antliff’s *Inventing Bergson* primarily surveys the Parisian avant-garde, though it is an invaluable source on the philosopher’s impact on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European art and culture. Though neither text discusses, nor even mentions, the *States of Mind*, I build on them to analyze how Bergson’s major philosophical concepts shaped Boccioni’s early development and was most fully realized in his programmatic concept for this work.

The conclusion reviews the order of the different panels in the series, which the artist changed within each iteration, and which was also changed in the installations after Boccioni’s death. Ultimately, I argue for a definitive hanging order but show how the variation in display is reflective of key concepts in the work itself and of Boccioni’s own complexity as an artist. Through this analysis, our understanding of the *States of Mind* becomes more nuanced. Beyond a mere reflection of the futurist program, the work emerges as a personal manifesto imprinted with the subjectivity of an artist shaped by his historical and cultural moment without being fully defined by a single position or allegiance.
Chapter One
Boccioni’s Vision

On May 29, 1911, at the age of twenty-nine, Boccioni delivered a lecture on Futurism at the Circolo Artistico in Rome, giving us the first description of his concept of *la pittura degli stati d’animo* (states of mind painting). This lecture is one of the most important documents that exists for understanding Boccioni’s work, not only because of its detail and personal voice, but also because it came at a significant moment: it was delivered in the same year when he created the *States of Mind*. By 1911, the groundwork of Futurism had been forcefully laid by the movement’s founder Marinetti in *The Futurist Manifesto* (1909). This was followed by other manifestos signed by Boccioni and his comrades, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, including *The Manifesto of Futurist Painters* (1910) and *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto* (1910). Along with these more formal pieces of writing, the Circolo Artistico lecture was an opportunity for Boccioni to define his own aesthetic at the cusp of what is commonly understood as the mature phase of his career. While in this lecture Boccioni is ostensibly speaking for Futurist painting as a whole, it is clear from the passion that comes through his words and from the direct connections that can be drawn to his work that he is also articulating his personal aesthetic vision.

Boccioni repeatedly mentions the concept of “states of mind” to describe a new kind of experience characterized by unseen aspects of the modern world. In his

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28 The text from Boccioni’s *Futurist Painting* lecture, delivered at the Circolo Artistico in Rome on May 29, 1911, is taken from the English translation reprinted in Ester Coen, pp. 231-239.
lecture, he gives a name to this modern energy, which one might find at a train station at the turn of the twentieth century, calling it sensation (*sensazione*).

Boccioni states that sensation sums up the radically new perception of our epoch, from which “will arise a new aesthetic, expressed in abstract signs dictated by the music of forms or the drama of movement.”  

An excerpt from the lecture conveys the dynamism of his ideas:

> And so if solid bodies give rise to states of mind by means of vibrations of forms, then we will draw these vibrations. Velocity will thus be something more than an object in swift motion, and we will perceive it as such: we will draw and paint velocity by rendering the abstract lines that the object in its course has aroused in us.... If an object never has a fixed form but varies according to the emotion of whoever contemplated it, why should we not draw instead of the object, the rhythm aroused in us by that variation in dimension?  

The visible vibrations Boccioni describes appear in the *States of Mind* as force lines that dominate each work. Rather than depicting the train, he shows us the experience of the train's velocity.

Woven throughout Boccioni’s lecture are declarations of Futurism’s aim to represent the modern world, and further, echoing earlier manifestos, claims of its “complete detachment from the past.”  

Boccioni argues that this detachment makes his artistic movement best equipped to help the confused and misguided public understand the new world in which they live. Describing how radically this world has affected people’s psyches in ways that are not even yet apparent, he says:

> They deny that scientific discoveries have completely remade the mental fabric of the world, that a radical change has come about in our spirit, and that, just as animal species have multiplied in form, structure, and character

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29 Ibid., 233.
30 Ibid., 238.
31 Boccioni in Calvesi and Coen, 233.
with altered conditions of existence, so electricity and telegraphy, steam and aviation have deepened the gap in mental difference between ourselves and our grandfathers (now so much wider than between them and, for example, Aristotle). And, thus, our conviction that our time initiates a new era, naming us the primitives of a new, completely transformed sensibility.\(^{32}\)

The train station as the setting of choice in the *States of Mind* is emblematic of a modern site infused with the energy of technology, one that literally moves people forward into the future. It is significant that though the work takes place in a railway station, there are few visual clues to the actual space. Boccioni’s aim is to depict new experiences that may not be perceptible to many and to “see” the effect the steam engine has as a force, creating a schism between past and present while redefining human experience using new states of mind.

Though there are variations in the three tripartite versions of the *States of Mind*, the basic formal elements are consistent. Each composition depicts figures seemingly caught within a series of gestural lines that obscure virtually all other indications of objects and landscape and suggest a particular mood. *The Farewells* features figures appearing as repeated embracing pairs scattered throughout the picture, shown from above using wavy lines that evoke emotional confusion. *Those Who Go* includes faces in profile rendered with expressions of fright, peeking through the violent force lines that move diagonally from the upper right to the lower left corners. These marks resemble the effect of the view through the window of a fast-moving train, where objects are obscured by speed and the refraction of light. *Those Who Stay* contains hunched figures moving from the lower left to the upper right. The view of the figures from below and the downward direction of the

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 232.
atmospheric lines intensify the mood of anonymity and sorrow. The palette throughout is muted and is dominated by blues and greens, creating a pervasive atmosphere of melancholy.

For the Futurists, the railway station represented the beginning and potential of a journey, as well as symbolizing a space where the past was left behind both technologically and culturally. The motif of the railway station signified cutting ties or “saying farewell” to tradition and the familiar. What is interesting is that Boccioni suggests the relevance of this setting for his own relationship to Futurism. Though the location of the States of Mind is aligned with Marinetti’s Futurist program, Boccioni’s attitude towards this charged space is markedly different from that of the movement’s founder.

Marinetti grew up in Egypt in a wealthy family, and when he came to Europe as an adolescent, he discovered a new world. In his autobiography, he describes how his father took him to Milan and how he experienced the metropolis as “a pleasing example of the commanding aesthetics of the machine.” He also could not help noticing that Italy lagged behind other European countries, as it was only after its unification in 1861 that industrialization began to take off. The desire in Marinetti’s Futurist program to celebrate the machine was grounded in a basic insecurity and a need to assert the Italian artistic movement as supremely modern.

The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism (1909), Marinetti’s impassioned call to action, frequently features the train as a metaphor for this new cultural movement and the modern world that necessitated it. Marianne Martin describes

Marinetti’s view of the machine as a Pegasus in the guise of a train, automobile, or airplane, freeing man from the past and literally moving him forward. The Manifesto is full of imperatives like “let’s go!” and “let’s leave!,” and Boccioni adapts these directives in the three panels of the States of Mind. Marinetti writes,

> We affirm that the beauty of the world has been enriched by a new form of beauty: the beauty of speed…. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! ... Why should we look back over our shoulders, when we intend to breach the mysterious doors of the impossible? Time and space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, for we have already created velocity which is eternal and omnipresent.

Here, Marinetti defines a new aesthetic paradigm where the speed and energy of the modern world are to be appreciated as things of beauty, replacing older, more traditional forms.

Let’s Murder the Moonlight, Marinetti’s follow-up to his founding manifesto of the same year, is an allegory of the machine’s domination of nature, shown through the moonlight being overtaken by electricity. The railroad is used as a repeated trope symbolizing the characteristics of Futurism and as a rallying call to “get on the train” of the movement. Marinetti writes, “let’s rest for the last time before we move out to construct the great Futurist Railroad.” He goes on, “O madman, O our deeply beloved brothers, follow me.... We’ll build the railroad over the summits of all the mountains into the sea!”

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34 Martin, “Futurism, Unanimism and Apollinaire,” 259.
35 Founding and Manifesto of Futurism, reproduced in Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, 49.
36 Ibid.
37 Let’s Murder the Moonlight, reproduced in Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, 56.
38 Ibid., 57.
While the train station in the *States of Mind* represents Boccioni’s alignment with the ideals laid out in Marinetti’s manifestos, a closer look at the artist’s writings and the works themselves reveals a much more complex and divergent attitude towards technology. The artist’s own description of his series in the preface to the Paris and London catalogues for the 1912 touring exhibition betrays a less optimistic perspective than Marinetti’s:

1. **LEAVE TAKING.** In the midst of the confusion of departure, the mingled concrete and abstract sensations are translated into force-lines and rhythms in quasi-musical harmony: Mark the undulating lines and the chords made up of the combination of figures and objects. The prominent elements, such as the number of the engine, its profile shown in the upper part of the picture, its wind-cutting fore-part in the center, symbolic of parting, indicate the features of the scene that remain indelibly impressed upon the mind.

2. **THOSE WHO ARE GOING AWAY.** Their state of mind is represented by oblique lines on the left. The color indicates the sensation of loneliness, anguish and dazed confusion, which is further illustrated by the faces carried away by the smoke and the violence of speed. One may also distinguish mangled telegraph posts and fragments of the landscape through which the train has passed.

3. **THOSE WHO REMAIN BEHIND.** The perpendicular lines indicate their depressed condition and their infinite sadness dragging everything down towards the earth. The mathematically spiritualized silhouettes render the distressing melancholy of the soul of those that are left behind.39

Christine Poggi describes Boccioni’s take on the symbol of the railway station as being more nuanced than the Futurist obsession with speed and all things new. She notes that his published remarks on the triptych for the Bernheim June gallery say nothing of the thrill of pure speed and adventure that a Futurist interpretation of train travel would presumably entail. Poggi says, “instead, the industrialization of travel functions to accelerate the rendering of affective bonds, to produce [the] ____________

39 Reproduced in Ester Coen, 121.
sensation of loss and melancholy, and to shatter the previously known boundaries of self and world.” Where for Marinetti, the speed of the train was a beautiful thing, Boccioni portrays a much less optimistic vision filled with loneliness and confusion.

Far from fetishizing the machine as Marinetti does in his writings, Boccioni plays down the image of the locomotive itself in the *States of Mind*. The train is notably absent from all but a couple of panels in the numerous versions of the work. Instead, abstract lines are the focus of the compositions, drawing the viewer’s attention to the psychic effect of the machine on the subject: the new states of mind that the train produces.

The first time a train appears in the *States of Mind* is in the charcoal-and-conté version of *The Farewells*. A locomotive is quietly present in the upper register, obscured behind lines that dominate the picture plane. The final version of *The Farewells* panel features the train most clearly and prominently as a geometric outline winding from the right background into the center of the composition. A second perspective depicting the train head on is shown in the upper center as well. In both the charcoal-and-conté drawing and the final painted versions of *The Farewells*, the train and the steam rising from it are the only two forms depicted in perspectival space, emphasizing the symbolic significance of the train as moving into the future. However the effect is not one of velocity and violent speed, but rather the train appears to be static, held still within the tight web of forces.

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It is notable that the image of the train in the final painted version of *The Farewells* is flanked by two panels dominated by hunched and aimless figures. These figures have no individual features and appear to be suspended in space, carried away by atmospheric forces overtaking their subjectivity and free will. None are in the certain, grounded state of *arrival*, but are rather in the passive position of being left behind. In *Those Who Go*, forceful diagonal lines are overlaid on images of figures and houses in the distance, obscuring and overtaking their form. The perspective is that of a passenger on a train, the world around him moving so fast as to rapidly alter his surroundings. Vertical lines similarly dominate the surface of the different versions of *Those Who Stay*. Here, the lines weave in between anonymous, featureless figures moving through the abstract landscape. The lines’ downward motion, along with the hunched posture of the figures and the muted color scheme, evoke a mood of oppressive sadness, which is the antithesis of that presented in Marinetti’s Futurist rhetoric.

The way in which Boccioni represents the train station in the *States of Mind* is in line with the perception of the locomotive in early twentieth-century Europe. It is important to remember that in 1911, the train was still a fairly new invention. In *The Railway Journey*, Wolfgang Schivelbusch discusses the impact of this new form of travel on perceptions of time and space. Trains were much faster than previous modes of transportation. The average speed of the early railways in England was roughly 20 to 30 miles per hour, three times the speed achieved by stagecoaches.\(^{41}\) Therefore, any given distance shrank to one-third of its previous length in the

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psyche of the nineteenth-century traveler. The railway eroded identities that were formerly defined by their isolation and fixed proximity to other communities and cultures. Shivelbusch observes, “as the space in between the points—the traditional traveling space—was destroyed, those points moved into each other’s immediate vicinity: one might say that they collided.”

The format and visual motifs of the States of Mind relate to the new, fragmented psychological experience of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century train traveler. Boccioni articulates this inner turmoil by breaking the act of departing into three distinct compositions. While certain formal elements cross over into the adjoining panels, the works in the series are separate in their color scheme, composition, and mood, portraying the stark division of moments the modern subject undergoes in the train station. At the same time, the three panels are connected by force lines, which dominate most of the works in the series and relate to how the railway slices through space. This sensation must have had a defining impact on ones state of mind in the early twentieth century for its contrast to older forms of travel such as the stagecoach, which offered a feeling of connection to the landscape.

In the introduction to Schivelbusch’s text, Alan Trachtenberg notes that though trains at first promised a utopian future, by the end of the nineteenth century, railroad corporations came to epitomize ruthless business power and were seen as a threat to order and stability. Trachtenberg states,

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42 Ibid., 38.
43 Ibid., 37.
Personal travel by railroad assimilated the traveler into a physical system for moving goods. This is a necessity of capitalism and is what accounts for the railroad’s unhindered development in the nineteenth century. [The railroad] was a decisive mode of initiation of people into their new status within the system of commodity production: their status as objects of forces whose points of origin remain out of view.44

In contrast to Marinetti’s celebration of the railway as a symbol of progress and beauty, in the States of Mind, Boccioni reveals his more ambivalent feelings.

Connected to the anxieties about train travel in early twentieth-century Europe, for Boccioni, the train station is a site of the negative psychic consequences produced by the new machine paradigm, which he felt was profoundly alienating to the modern subject.

44 Trachtenberg in Schivelbusch, xiv.
Chapter Two  
Origins of the pictorial expressions in the States of Mind: Divisionism and Symbolism

When Boccioni was born on October 19, 1882, Italy as a unified kingdom was only twenty years old; the Risorgimento marking the political unification of the new country had just concluded in 1871, with Rome as its capital. In the following years, Italy was defined by increasing social unrest. Industrial development grew in cities and prompted a mass migration of workers from rural areas. Poor living conditions and low wages led to strikes and the rise of left-wing parties. Artists and intellectuals addressed, among other issues, Italy’s cultural and industrial backwardness. It is in this cultural context that the artistic movement of Divisionism emerged and linked itself to European Symbolist themes of interiority. Italian artists also used Divisionist techniques to represent humanitarian subjects and themes on social issues.

Divisionism is a distinctly Italian movement that combines optical theory as well as perceptual psychology with symbolist themes and ideas. Its color theory and divided brushwork are related to Neo-Impressionism, though it was not in fact a derivative of the French movement. The painting style used multiple small strokes

45 Though Divisionism consisted of a diverse group of artists with varying aims, most members of the movement denied that they were ever a school at all (Lucy Riall, “Radical Light: Italy’s Divisionist Painters,” History Today 58 [August 2008]: 53).

46 Divisionism was developed in the late nineteenth century concurrently with Neo-Impressionism in France, and though they share stylistic similarities, it was not actually a derivative of the French movement as is commonly thought. Simonetta Fraquelli notes that the Divisionists had little or no firsthand knowledge of the pointillist paintings of George Seurat (1859-1910) or Paul Signac (1863-1935). Simonetta Fraquelli, “Italian Divisionism and Its Legacy,” in Radical Light: Italy's
of high-chromatic color that literally divided light and represented form as an outcome of an all-encompassing energy. Divisionism was a radical shift from religious and regional pictorial traditions that had dominated art up until this time, and was instead built on the investigation of perception and emotion.

This chapter will discuss the significant influence of Divisionism on laying the groundwork for Futurism, in the development of Boccioni’s artistic philosophy, and subsequently, on the origins of the pictorial expressions in the States of Mind. It was through exposure to Divisionism that Boccioni was introduced to tools that enabled his painting to represent the dematerialization of matter, emotion through form, and the new subjective reality produced by the discontinuities and velocity of modern life.

When Boccioni and his peers, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, signed Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto on April 11, 1910, they were all still loosely working in a Divisionist style. The artists made clear in this manifesto, the first description of the theoretical underpinnings of Futurist painting, just what an important predecessor Divisionism was to their new art. They wrote, “...painting cannot exist today without Divisionism.”

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Of all the Futurists, Boccioni was the one who most ardently embraced Divisionist theories and the influence of this movement is evident both in his art and in his writing. In his Circolo Artistico lecture delivered in May, 1911, Boccioni asserts, “Divisionism is not a technique! Divisionism is an attitude of the spirit, a stage at which human sensibility has arrived, a way of translating—it is the style of an epoch!”

Divisionism appealed to this group of artists, and particularly to Boccioni, for its novel ways of depicting the contrasts and tensions of the modern world. Firstly, it revolutionized painting at a time when Italian art had lost the stature it enjoyed in previous centuries. In addition, the visual devices it employed expressed ideas of interest to the Futurists. The characteristic short, directional, energetic brushstrokes coincided with their desire to depict speed, motion and dynamism. The luminous effect created by the complementary, high-chroma colors evoked energy, another Futurist ideal and a decidedly modern topic. Divisionism also portrayed a kind of synthetic experience where subject and action are fussed and where form dematerializes, a Bergsonian concept particularly important to Boccioni and at the heart of many of the Futurists’ art.

Perhaps one of the most significant conceptual shifts that the Divisionists ushered in relates to their idea of the viewer’s role in the painting. Divisionists

49 Reprinted in Ester Coen, 234.
51 Green 2004, 23.
believed that the perception of an image involves the complexity of human psychology, entailing an emotional response in the viewer that varies from person to person.\textsuperscript{52} Because of the variety of human emotion, impressions change with every viewer, and it follows that the painting is perceived differently by everyone and is not a static thing. One of the Futurists’ primary aims, as stated in \textit{Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto}, is to “put the spectator in the center of the picture.”\textsuperscript{53} This idea has its roots in Divisionism. Boccioni and the Futurists did not just want to represent the modern world in their pictures; they wanted the viewer to experience “dynamic sensation itself.”\textsuperscript{54}

Boccioni felt that Divisionism was a means to represent subjective experience and in turn to depict the world in the most real way by mimicking how the artist sees. He says,

\begin{quote}
...In divisionism our time is finding its true expression... [This is] because every sign, however tiny, bears the imprint of the individual who made it. And from this it follows that we are superior verists since we imitate intuitively the procedure of light rays striking bodies and coloring them. This is the only way we conceive of the imitation of nature.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Though the \text{States of Mind} are solidly Futurist works, created two years after the movement’s founding in 1909, they contain many Divisionist elements. The common visual motif across all iterations include lines intersecting with forms, which confuses foreground and background, figure and atmosphere, and gives the impression of dissolving matter. Individual brushstrokes follow the contours of

\textsuperscript{53} Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto, 1911. Reprinted in Rainey, 64.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Circolo Artistico Lecture reprinted in Coen, 236.
objects while at the same time seeming to expand into the space beyond. The atmospheric lines are given equal visual importance to the solid forms that they weave through and envelope. Giovanni Lista posits that Boccioni’s subject of trains cutting through fields can also be connected to the Divisionists breaking down of materiality.  

It was through Divisionism that Boccioni was introduced to line and color as not only representing but also creating inner states, an idea partially relevant to the States of Mind.

Though Divisionism was a significant influence on Boccioni, indeed, he ultimately felt its theoretical premise to be at odds with that of Futurism.

Divisionism was rooted in a positivist philosophical system, where knowledge is based on empiricism and verifiable facts, and thus intuitive understanding is rejected. The Divisionists believed that truth exists in the world already, where the Futurists believe in subjective experience and, based on the influence of Bergson’s antimaterialist theories, that perception is embedded in intuition. This is in conflict with the notion that art should imitate nature and explains why the Futurists ultimately found Divisionism inadequate.

Though Boccioni’s work produced from 1911 onward moved away from Divisionism, the technique remained evident in his handling of paint, the expression of the contrast,

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57 This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four of this thesis.
58 Bergson’s philosophy and its influence on Boccioni will be discussed in more detail in chapter three of this thesis.
oppositions and tensions intrinsic to the modern world, and the idea of universal synthesis.\(^{60}\)

The roots of the Divisionist’s visual themes were originally inspired by nineteenth-century research on the physics and optics of light that centered around new understandings of matter and perception. This inspired the Divisionist’s new style of representation, which moved away from naturalism and aimed to create a mood through suggestive colors, rhythms and forms. In *La suggestion dans l’art* (1893), the philosopher Paul Souriau (1852-1926) posited that the contemplation of art could cause the human psyche to enter ecstatic states of being. Similarly, the philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau (1854-1888) held that art has a mystical transformative dimension and used psychoanalytic and physiological theories to show how certain colors or lines could elicit emotional and spiritual reactions.

The early Italian Divisionists were introduced to these theories largely thanks to the painter and critic Vittore Grubicy de Dragon (1851-1920), the movement’s first promoter. Grubicy ran an art gallery in Milan that exhibited paintings by some of the leading Divisionist artists. He traveled widely throughout Europe and published numerous articles summarizing the ideas of the movement’s philosophers and theorists, which were widely disseminated in Italy in the 1890s. He interpreted new scientific theories on light and the perception of color in understandable terms and related them to art. Grubicy stated,

…the research based on the scientific theory of color, besides providing a technique and a language of greater social expansiveness for the art of painting, can open the way for an entire aesthetic, suitable for the treatment

\(^{60}\) Green 2004, 30.
of radically new subjects, [and] for the expression of some aspects of the beauty of Nature that have never been dealt with.\textsuperscript{61}

Gurbicy believed that light was a manifestation of life itself\textsuperscript{62} and thus Divisionism’s ability to increase the expression of light allowed art to depict new subjects such as the artist’s experience. He wrote extensively on the perception of light as the tool best able to translate onto canvas subjective emotions, which he compared to mystical experiences\textsuperscript{63}. This was perhaps the idea that had the most significant impact on the Italian Divisionist painters and Boccioni.

Boccioni’s direct introduction to Divisionism came through Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), whom he met in 1901. Around 1899, having graduated from high school in Sicily where he was living with his father, Boccioni moved to Rome.\textsuperscript{64} The young, aspiring artist took figure-drawing classes at the Scuola Libera del Nudo, but did not train at any of the formal art academies. Instead, he and his friend Gino Severini (1883-1966) fashioned their own education by seeking mentors with avant-garde experience, among whom Balla was the most important for Boccioni at this formative stage in his development.

Eleven years older than Boccioni, Balla had settled in Rome four years earlier. He was originally from Turin, where he was acquainted with the major Italian Divisionists like Gaetano Previati, Angelo Morbelli, Vittore Grubicy de Dragon, Emilio Longoni, and Giuseppe Pellizza. When Boccioni and Balla met, the

\textsuperscript{62} Fraquelli, “Italian Divisionism and its Legacy” 14.
\textsuperscript{63} Greene, “Divisionism’s Symbolist Accent,” 48.
\textsuperscript{64} When Boccioni was fifteen, the family separated. Boccioni followed his father to Catania in Sicily while his mother and sister remained in Padua.
elder artist had just returned from a three-month stay in Paris, where he had been exposed to and energized by the theories of Impressionism. Balla was a precise painter, concentrating on cityscapes in a Divisionist style at this point, and he passed his great knowledge of color relations and layering brushstrokes to Boccioni and Severini. Severini describes how Balla was conspicuous in Rome in the early twentieth century for his adherence to more avant-garde practices than most at a time when, for the most part, the art world was still tied to nineteenth-century formulas. He writes, “in that milieu of vulgarity, of banality, and of mediocrity, the severe personality of Balla stood out. Following his example and in reaction to that milieu, my works and Boccioni’s became increasingly aggressive and violent. Both of us had made progress.”

In addition to teaching Boccioni formal techniques, Balla may have influenced certain thematic elements in the States of Mind. The elder artist’s painting, Stairway of Farewells (1908-09) (Fig. 27), which depicts a staircase seen from above with figures glancing upward, has many similarities to Boccioni’s series: the psychologically potent act of the farewell, the dramatic perspective that places the viewer at the center of the picture, the stairs cascading downward to evoke the flow of time, and the spatial relationship between the figures. The view from above down into a staircase creates a spiraling spatial effect that is similar to

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66 From Gino Severini’s autobiography, Tutta la vita di un pittore, reprinted and trans. in Ester Coen, xvi.
67 This connection was noted in Gerald D. Silk, “Fu Balla E Balla Futurista,” Art Journal 41, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 332.
the *States of Mind: Farewells* and could have been influential to Boccioni when conceiving of this composition.

Balla’s early Divisionist paintings were grounded in observed reality, focusing on the subjects of labor, growing urbanization and social problems. This began to feel limiting to Boccioni who was becoming more drawn to allegorical and symbolic subjects. Feeling restless, in 1906 he left the city and traveled to Paris and then to Russia. On his return to Italy, he stayed in Padua with his mother and sister; in a diary entry from March 14, 1907, Boccioni reveals his anxious state of mind:

I must confess that I seek, seek, seek—and find nothing. Will I ever? Yesterday I was tired of the big city, today I desire it with all my heart. Tomorrow what will I want? I feel that I want to paint what is new. The fruit of our industrial times. I am nauseated by old walls, old palaces, old subjects based on reminiscence: I want to have my eye on the life of today…. I want the new! And I lack the elements to conceive what stage we are in and what we need. What is this to be done with? With color? Or with drawing? With painting? With realistic tendencies which no longer satisfy me? With symbolist tendencies that please me in few artists and that I have never tried? With an idealism that attracts me but I don’t know how to make concrete?69

Divisionism gave Boccioni a theoretical framework for the new forms of expression he had been seeking; however, his search for a way to represent the new, modern world was still ongoing. After parting ways with Balla, he encountered the work of Gaetano Previati (1852-1920), who was instrumental in the evolution of his mature artistic style. Diary entries indicate that Boccioni was closely reading Previati’s work *La tecnica della pitura* (1905) in 1907. Previati had gone through an earlier period of obscurity but at this time was benefitting from a revival thanks to the support of Alberto Grubicy da Dragon, the brother and former business partner of Vittore

68 Fraquelli, “Italian Divisionism and its Legacy” 17.
69 Boccioni diary entry from March 14, 1907, reprinted and trans. in Ester Coen, 256.
Grubicy, who represented and heavily promoted him.\textsuperscript{70} It was during this time of revival that Boccioni encountered Previati’s work.

Like several other Divisionist painters, Previati worked in a Symbolist style.\textsuperscript{71} One of the dominant literary and artistic movements in fin-de-siècle France, Symbolism gained currency in the 1880s and was characterized by expressions of interiority, a deconstruction of pictorial space and use of less conventional imagery. The Divisionists working in the Symbolist style saw art as a medium to express emotions and a reality beyond the surface of natural phenomenon. This was in line with the pervasive belief at the time that art could, through intuition and sensibility, recapture truths and mysteries that eluded science.\textsuperscript{72}

In his essay for the 1995 exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, \textit{Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe}, the curator Jean Clair explains this shift: “If Romantic painters looked upon landscape as a state of mind, a place where the gaze both rests and reposes, Symbolism invites us to invert this formula: the state of mind becomes the landscape.”\textsuperscript{73} In this tradition, Previati’s work relied on rhythmic forms and color to carry meaning, along with narrative detail. The idea of pictorial elements of line and color representing psychological and spiritual states was hugely influential.

\textsuperscript{70} Meighan \textit{The Stati d'Animo Aesthetic}, 106.
\textsuperscript{72} Greene, “Divisionism’s Symbolist Accent,” 47.
to Boccioni and forms the basis of the *States of Mind*. Reflecting on his debt to Previati in his Circolo Artistico lecture, Boccioni said:

> Previati ... is truly the first to attempt to express by means of light itself a new emotion outside of the conventional reproduction of forms and colors. He cuts some of the innumerable ties that connect us to the past and to the future as well. With him, forms commence to speak like music, solid bodies aspire to become atmosphere and spirit, and the subject is ripe to transform itself into a state of mind.\(^7^4\)

Previati had been involved more than any other Italian artist in laying the theoretical foundations for Divisionism. In his texts, *La tecnica della pittura* (1905) and *Principi scientifici del divisionismo* (1906), he discussed how one’s memory and mental state influence perception. He was also the most traditionally religious of the Divisionists; the undulating lines and distorted forms characteristic of Symbolism were the means by which he portrayed sacred and allegorical subjects drawn from Christian narratives.\(^7^5\) Critics at the time frequently used the term *stati d’animo* (which translates literally as states of soul or states of spirit) to describe the effect of Previati’s work, as it evoked both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of emotion.\(^7^6\) The Divisionist painters’ works, including those of Balla and Previati, never reached the degree of abstraction that the *States of Mind* achieved, and Boccioni eventually moved away from his mentors as he felt that they were unable to fully break with the past. However, the concept of portraying psychological states in painting formed the basis for Boccioni’s future efforts.

\(^7^4\) Reprinted and trans. in Ester Coen, 237.

\(^7^5\) Greene, “Divisionism’s Symbolist Accent,” 51.

\(^7^6\) Meighan, “The *Stati d’Animo* Aesthetic,” 175.
Previati’s painting first made a concrete impact on Boccioni in April 1907, when he traveled to Venice to visit the Biennial.⁷⁷ Previati’s triptych *Il Giorno* (1907) (Fig. 28) was on view in a group show, which he also co-curated, titled *L’arte del sogno* (*The Art of the Dream*).⁷⁸ That same year Boccioni took a trip to Paris where he viewed Previati’s *L’Eroica* (1907) (fig. 29), another triptych, in the exhibition *I pittori divisionisti a Parigi*.⁷⁹ In a diary entry from October 17, 1907 Boccioni writes of the impact Previati’s work had on him and how the artist had replaced Balla as his primary mentor: “The Divisionist exhibition in Paris, extremely interesting — the canvases by Segantini [are] marvelous, those by Previati are bold, those by Fornara and others respectable — they dealt me the decisive blow — Balla is finished.”⁸⁰

In an article Boccioni wrote a few months before his death he said:

Previati is the only great Italian artist who has conceived of art as a representation in which visual reality serves only as a point of departure. Only this great artist had the intuition, more than thirty years ago, that art was escaping from Realism to elevate itself into style... He has intuited the style that commences when the conception is built upon vision.⁸¹

In Boccioni’s Futurist works, speed and expansive dynamism referenced the modern world rather than the more mythic subjects that dominated his mentor’s painting. However, the way that Previati articulated and developed forms and flowing compositions, as to suggest a kind of inner movement, as well as the way his work moved away from naturalistic representation using backgrounds of color and light

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⁷⁷ All of the recent literature indicates that 1907 is the first time Boccioni encountered Previati’s work in person (Fraquelli 2008, 18. Green 2004, 24. Meighan 1998, 106.).  
⁷⁸ Meighan 1998, 112.  
⁸⁰ Reprinted and trans. in Greene 2004, 32.  
with no horizon or landscape, significantly impacted Boccioni for the rest of his artistic career.

The tripartite format of the *States of Mind* can also be traced back to a common format in Divisionist painting. Though these painters sought to embody the experiences of the modern world, Divisionism was also a firmly Italian movement, and to signify this, its members used long-established native artistic traditions like the triptych presentation and certain religious iconography,\(^82,\) \(^83\) in the case of Previati. The triptych was a common format among these painters, who adopted it for secular themes such as communion with nature, and scenes depicting social issues and familial bonds.\(^84\) Boccioni was influenced by a number of tripartite compositions that not only depicted contemporary subjects in this traditional format, but also used the multi-panel presentation to ascribe a fragmented modern temporality to the subject matter.

We know of a number of Divisionist triptychs that Boccioni would have seen and that likely had a direct impact on the three-part format of the *States of Mind*. One of the earliest of these is *Alpine Triptych* (1896-99) (Fig. 30) by Giovanni Segantini.\(^85\) Though the work remained incomplete at Segantini’s death, highly finished drawings were included in the 1907 exhibition *I pittori divisionisti a Parigi*,

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\(^{82}\) Fraquelli, “Italian Divisionism and Its Legacy,” 12.

\(^{83}\) Though the triptych and religious iconography were used not only used by the Italians, notably by Flemish painters, Previati used this format and subject matter specifically to refer to the Italian tradition.

\(^{84}\) See Greene, “Divisionism’s Symbolist Accent” for more detailed description of the Symbolist painter’s themes.

which Boccioni saw when on a trip to Milan.\footnote{Ibid., 33.} *Alpine Triptych* consists of three separate paintings, *Life, Nature*, and *Death*, each depicting the landscape of the Alps in different seasons. The format diverges from a more traditional triptych, which is typically read from the middle out, having a clear central panel flanked by two that are subordinate in size and in subject matter. In *Alpine Triptych*, like in the *States of Mind*, each panel has equal importance and represents a contained and independent theme. This reformulation of the triptych may relate to the Divisionists’ new way of seeing where forms are shown merging with the environment. Thus the entire visual scape is flattened and the focus is on color and light more so than on specific objects.

Though not the work of an Italian Divisionist, the triptych *The Sea Country (Le pays de la mer)* (1898) (Fig. 31) by the French Neo-Impressionist painter Charles Cottet is worth discussing here as its panels have identical titles to the *States of Mind*: *Those Who Stay (Ceux qui restent)*, *The Goodbyes (Les Adieux)*, and *Those Who Go (Ceux qui partent)*. Boccioni would have seen Cottet’s painting at the Venice Biennial in 1898, as well as the following year when it was acquired by the Museo Bottancini in Padua, where Boccioni spent many of his student years.\footnote{Flavio Fergonzi, “On the Title of the Painting Materia,” in *Boccioni’s Materia: A Futurist Masterpiece and the Avant-Garde in Milan and Paris*, ed. Laura Mattioli Rossi, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004), 48, and Ester Coen, 122. Art historian A. Martini asserts that Boccioni’s decision to make the *States of Mind* into three canvases “was almost certainly derived” from Cottet’s work, and this is the sole influence cited for the *States of Mind*’s tripartite format in Ester Coen’s catalogue raisonné on the artist. While this choice clearly stemmed from more than one painting, there is little doubt that *Le pays de la mer* made an impact on Boccioni based on his appropriation of its titles (A. Martini, cited in Ester Coen, 122).}
Country represents the departure of sailors from the Brittany coast. The middle panel, The Farewells, shows the sailors with their friends and relatives before they go off to sea. They are gathered around a table, solemn and anxious, sharing a meal that could be their last together. To the left in Those Who Go, the sailors sit on a boat out in the ocean. In the right panel, Those Who Stay, wives and maidens gather on a rocky coast looking out to the water, contemplating the unknowable future. Unlike Alpine Triptych, there is a clear central panel in Cottet’s work, however the tripartite format is used in interesting ways. The two side panels represent scenes that are meant to be occurring simultaneously, breaking off chronologically from the central panel. Just as Boccioni was inspired by the titling of this work, it is also possible that he was influenced by this particular depiction of time and adapted it in the States of Mind.

Balla’s tripartite painting Worker’s Day (1904) (fig. 32) likely influenced the format of the States of Mind as well. This work depicts laborers erecting a residence in the Borghese Gardens section of Rome, which at the time was undergoing intensive architectural development. The three panels are arranged in an unusual manner: two smaller pictures are placed one on top of the other and the third, to the right, is twice as large as the other two panels, taking up one half of the full rectangular composition. The three parts represent different moments in the life of a proletariat. The upper left panel shows the laborers working during the morning, in the bottom left they are resting and having lunch in the afternoon, and in the right

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88 For a description of Le pays de la mer from Boccioni’s time, see Arthur Anderson Jaynes, “The Art of Charles Cottet,” Brush and Pencil 11, no. 3 (1902): 210-222.
panel they return home at dusk. Because of the subject matter depicting different
times of day and arrangement of the panels, the viewer’s eye moves around the
composition counter clockwise in a continuous circular motion: after the laborers go
home, they will wake up and work the day all over again. Though the States of Mind
focuses on depicting more simultaneous moments, Balla’s novel depiction of time
through pictorial means using a three-part format was likely influential to his
mentee.

Boccioni made one triptych himself during his Divisionist period: Homage to
Mother, 1907-08 (fig. 33). This allegorical work moves through different parts of the
day from left to right, and can be characterized as Boccioni’s first attempt at
depicting time as a subject in his work. The left panel pictures a male figure
studying the sciences at a desk. Through the window behind the figure is a daytime
scene depicting a train crossing a bridge with smokestacks in the background. In a
diary entry from 1907 Boccioni describes the view through the window in this work
as showing “a glimpse of modern life.” The right panel pictures a woman working
by lamplight with a cloudy night sky in the background. In the central panel there
are two figures comforting their grieving mother. A church and ruins are seen
through the window, perhaps symbolizing a generation mourning the loss of the old
world. Judith Meighan posits that the figures could represent Boccioni’s family, with
Boccioni himself as the figure on the left shown immersed in the modern world, and

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90 Diary entry from October 17, 1907 reprinted in Calvesi and Coen 1983, 230.
his sister in the pictorially less developed right panel doing traditional woman’s work\textsuperscript{91}, representing the past as more feminine and less virile\textsuperscript{92}.

Here, Boccioni uses the three-part format to show the viewer the simultaneous and conflicting aspects of entering into the future, themes that he would later carry into the States of Mind. The central panel of Homage to Mother relates to Those Who Go in representing the violence of being ripped from the old world forward in time. In Homage to Mother, this is represented by the central figure writhing in anguish being held by her children with references to religion and crumbling architecture in the background, and in Those Who Go, the sharp diagonal marks show the violent speed experienced when inside a fast moving train. The right panel in Homage to Mother relates to Those Who Stay, both portraying a stagnant mood and showing figures existing in the past. In Homage to Mother the old fashion light signifies out of date technology and in Those Who Stay the monochromatic pallet of muted green, vertical lines and hunched over figures retreating to the background creates a stagnant atmosphere. The Farewells, representing the act of saying goodbye to the past and breaking off into the future, relates to the left panel in Homage to Mother, which symbolizes modernity. This panel features a train in the background, perhaps the same train that would come barreling forward in the last painted iteration of the States of Mind. In both painted versions of the States of Mind a more active mood is created by the use of warm, fiery colors and undulating lines.

Homage to Mother is a pencil drawing clearly created as a preparatory work, however Boccioni never produced a painting after this sketch: the work was

\textsuperscript{91} Meighan 1998, 126.
\textsuperscript{92} Feminizing the past would become a common Futurist tendency.
described as “sketch for the unexecuted triptych Homage to Mother” in the catalogue for a posthumous exhibition of 1916-17. Knowing this, it is tempting to view the States of Mind as a direct continuation of the ideas Boccioni was working out in this drawing three years earlier as they share such similarities in the theme of entering into the modern world and the tripartite format.

Divisionism introduced Boccioni to key ideas and techniques that were essential to his artistic development, such as the concept that form has an inner energy, the use of staccato marks and pure color to express the unseen aspects of the landscape, and the use of the triptych format to represent new temporalities. It was through Divisionism that Boccioni was introduced to line and color as not only representing but also creating inner states, an idea partially relevant to the States of Mind. Perhaps most importantly, Divisionism served as an example of a new direction in art that reflected the possibilities inherent in a recently unified Italy, accelerating its transformation from a country stuck in the past to one who could participate in the avant-garde culture of Europe. Divisionism allowed Boccioni to find his place within the milieu of cutting edge painters, and at the same time within Italy’s rich artistic heritage. Ultimately Boccioni uses the lessons from Divisionism and Symbolism to chart his own artistic path forward, and to create his own visual language, which is manifest in the States of Mind.

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93 Cited in Coen, 36.
Chapter Three
The Philosophy of Henri Bergson

Art is not the copy of nature. The higher art raises itself, the more distant it becomes from nature, and the more profound the artist, the more his subjective vision—that is, the world itself—is hopelessly unrecognizable at its first appearance. —Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto (April 11, 1910)

In Boccioni’s search for a visual representation of his subjective experience that extended beyond Divisionism and Symbolism the philosophy of Henri Bergson was the most profound influence. After the artist started reading Bergson in 1909, his work expanded from portraying visual sensations of appearances to depicting theoretical aspects of perception. He began to use more abstract elements and symbolic forms and to overtly depict ideas about space and time. In 1911, Boccioni said, “Our kind of impressionism ... is absolutely spiritual, since it seeks to render, more than any optical and analytical impression, the psychic and synthetic impression of a thing.” He based this view on a Bergsonian way of understanding matter. Bergson contends that things exist only in one’s mind, stating that, “the object is entirely different from that which is perceived in it, that it has neither the color ascribed to it by the eye, nor the resistance found in it by the hand.” He asserts that these attributes are in fact due to our mental states. He then concludes that our experience of “the object is, in itself, pictorial, as we perceive it.” Bergson’s philosophy, particularly his concepts of duration and intuition, allowed Boccioni to

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94 Reproduced in Rainy, Poggi, and Wittman, 234.
95 Reprinted in Ester Coen, 237.
96 Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, xiii.
97 Ibid.
represent a world beyond visual perception, and to show reality through the lens of his subjective experience of time and space.

In this chapter, I explain how the *States of Mind* models Bergsonian ideas in three main ways: via its multi-panel format, repeating figures, and flattened space. I then analyze the philosopher's impact on Boccioni by tracing Bergson-influenced visual elements in the artist's works from 1910 to 1911, leading up to the *States of Mind*.

Bergson was not only one of the most influential thinkers of his day; he was also somewhat of an international celebrity. Starting in 1900, he disseminated his ideas through weekly public lectures at the Collège de France and on tours. The lectures drew luminaries of the time and a very large, educated public, who were popularly termed the “five o’clock Bergsonians.” At the height of the “Bergsonian vogue,” the philosopher's admirers would go on pilgrimages to his summer-house in Switzerland and take swatches of his hair from the local barber-shop. Bergson’s ideas, while perhaps not fully understood by the masses, certainly had a significant impact on the popular consciousness of early twentieth-century Europe.

Bergson was first published in Italian in 1909 in a volume titled *La filosofia dell’intuizione*, edited by Giovanni Papini. It included the entire text of *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), as well as extracts from various other works. *Introduction to Metaphysics* was the first of Bergson’s books to be translated in many languages and became a crucial guide to his philosophy. This work also marked the beginning of “Bergsonism” and his influence on art and literature. *Introduction to Metaphysics*

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discusses “intuition,” “absolute motion,” and “states of mind,” concepts that are repeated throughout Boccioni’s writings and visually represented in his artwork.

As an artist living in Italy at this time, it is no surprise that Boccioni was familiar with Bergson’s philosophy. He probably became acquainted with it by 1910, right before he embarked on the States of Mind. Art historian John Golding suggests that Boccioni first came into contact with Bergson’s ideas through the Florentine critic Ardengo Soffici.99 Soffici used Bergson’s theory on the perception of things in a 1910 La Voce essay, “Le Due Perspective,” to describe the perspectival distortions of Cubist paintings.100 He believed that painters should employ perspectiva psicologica, which he viewed as an endorsement of Bergson’s theories on intuition, as opposed to geometric single-point perspective, which he felt was overly scientific.101

An undated note by Boccioni, published in 1971 by Zeno Birolli, contains the call number for La filosofia dell’intuizione, which was available at the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense of Milan, the city where the artist lived. The note also contains a transcribed passage from Bergson’s Matter and Memory (Matière et mémoire, 1886). This work proposes a theory of perception as contact with matter and of memory as constitutive of what it means to know.102 Art historian Flavio Fergonzi describes the rapid style of writing and the fact that Boccioni almost exclusively copied the brief sentences printed in italics summing up the philosopher’s concepts.

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100 Fergonzi, 50.
as evidence that he had only a surface understanding of Bergson. Regardless of the degree to which the artist comprehended the nuances of Bergson’s arguments, there is no disputing the effect they had on his work.

Bergson’s writing on the nature of change and duration, or *durée*, which he defines as time sensed by our intuition, was perhaps most influential to Boccioni. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson describes *durée* as an experiential entity and posits that it is the key to comprehending true reality. Bergson also discusses the state of objects in this true reality. He writes, “I attribute to the mobile [object] an inner being, and as it were, states of soul; it also means that I am in harmony with these states and enter into them by an effort of imagination.” He goes on to describe intuition as “the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what is unique” about it. Bergson uses his concept of duration to explore inner experience—the sensation of qualities, things, and effects that cannot be measured. For him, clock time prevents us from having a true experience, and duration allows our consciousness to exist in a more real state:

Now, let us notice that when we speak of time, we generally think of a homogeneous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity. Would not time, thus understood, be to the multiplicity of our psychic states what intensity is to certain of them,—a sign, a symbol, absolutely distinct from true duration? Let us ask consciousness to isolate itself from the external world and, by a vigorous effort of abstraction, to become itself again.

103 Fergonzi, 51.
105 Ibid.
106 Guerlac, 5.
107 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 90.
In the *States of Mind*, Boccioni applies Bergson’s writing on *durée* to the history of art to transcend his artistic predecessors and make paintings that were truly novel and representative of the modern era. He does this via two primary visual means: the multi-panel format and the repetition of imagery.

As the previous chapter notes, Boccioni’s choice to make the *States of Mind* a triptych was influenced by the Divisionists and Symbolists, for whom this format was a way to link themselves to Italy’s artistic heritage and explore alternative ideas of the divine. Boccioni, however, handles this format in a distinct way that sets him apart from his predecessors and aligns his use of a three-part presentation more closely with Bergsonian ideas. The Divisionists employed the tripartite format mainly to illustrate a sequence of events and to portray the tension between man and nature. For example, in Segantini’s *Alpine Triptych* (Fig. 30), the constant element across all three panels is the mountainous landscape, which is transformed by the seasons. In Cottet’s *Le pays de la mer* (Fig. 31), the steady power and mystery of the sea is driving the turmoil in the subjects, who are completely at its mercy. In both cases, nature is causing the changes from panel to panel and the subjects are subordinate to these changes. By contrast, in the *States of Mind*, it is the subject’s psychic condition that drives the shifts across the panels. As Bergson explains, “whether it is a question of the internal or external, of ourselves or of things, reality is mobility itself.... There is change ... but not things that change.... This invisible continuity of change is precisely what constitutes true duration.”

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*Mind* demonstrates Bergson’s influence in his conception of time and change as a product of subjectivity, rather than as an outside force that carries us away.

The three panels in the *States of Mind* resist a linear reading, which is what sets it apart from previous triptychs. Vivian Greene observes how with this evocation of simultaneous events and perceptions, Boccioni pioneered the first analytical phase of Futurism.\(^{109}\) When one tries to parse conceptually which scene comes first—the act of saying goodbye, staying, or going—multiple possibilities emerge. Therefore, Boccioni is depicting simultaneity: time as an all-encompassing experience where what came before and what comes next is irrelevant; where true reality is determined by psychic states, free from the linear clock. By breaking the scene into three “states of mind,” all happening concurrently in the same location, Boccioni is showing us *durée*. Bergson says, “there is on the one hand a multiplicity of successive states of consciousness, and on the other a unity which binds them together. Duration will be the 'synthesis' of this unity and this multiplicity.”\(^{110}\) This relates closely to the multi-panel format of the *States of Mind*, which allows the artist to present simultaneous moments on each canvas to capture the fragmented nature of time.

Another visual means Boccioni uses to represent *durée* is the repetition of figures.\(^{111}\) He does this to illustrate the tension between an expanse of time and the


\(^{110}\) Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 57.

\(^{111}\) It is worth pointing out that although the repeating figures in Boccioni’s work are visually similar to the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey (Fig. 32) created just two decades earlier and which various contemporary critics accused Boccioni of copying, they are conceptually distinct. For Boccioni, Marey’s work produces an arbitrary array of images rather than embedding the impression of the experience
present moment. As discussed in Chapter One, the figures in the *States of Mind* are rendered in an anonymous manner with little personal detail. This makes it difficult to determine whether the figures are meant to be the same individuals shown at different moments or distinct figures making similar gestures to those around them. *

*The Farewells* panel shows multiple couples embracing. In each version, there is one larger pair near the center of the picture and increasingly smaller versions emanating outward towards the edges, suggesting an echo effect. In *Those Who Go*, suspended faces in profile, all turned toward the left, appear in a single register. In *Those Who Stay*, hunched figures move from the lower left register to the upper right; they are all shown in a virtually identical way, only varying slightly in size.

In *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto*, Boccioni and the other Futurist artists write,

> A profile is never motionless before our eyes but constantly appears and disappears. On the account of the persistency of an image upon the retina, moving objects constantly multiply themselves, change shape, succeeding one another, like rapid vibrations, in the space where they traverse. Thus a running horse has not four legs, but twenty, and their movements are triangular.\(^{112}\)

These simultaneous scenes and sensations, collapsed into a single image, were a concept intrinsic to Futurism.\(^{113}\) Bergson offers a more nuanced version of multiplicity in his doctoral dissertation, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness (Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience)*, which was published in 1889. In it he writes, “There are two kinds of multiplicity:

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\(^{112}\) Reprinted in Rainy, Poggi, and Wittman, 64.

that of material objects, to which the conception of number is immediately applicable; and the multiplicity of states of consciousness, which cannot be regarded as numerical without the help of some symbolical representation, in which a necessary element is space."¹¹⁴ The Futurists were influenced by this idea and used repetition to show a truer depiction of the sensation of sight and experience.

Maurizio Calvesi was the first to posit that what we are looking at in The Farewells is not an embrace, but a couple in different space-time locations. It can also be seen as the memory of an embrace as one would experience it on a train.¹¹⁵ Poggi notices differences in the figures, which leads her to read them as several memories representing the artist’s departure from his mother.¹¹⁶ Both of these interpretations support a Bergsonian influence in that the figures depict a subjective experience, including elements such as lingering sensations and memories. In Matter and Memory, Bergson writes, “Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of ‘images.’ And by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is ... an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation.’”¹¹⁷ By repeating figures, Boccioni puts forward an idea of the world that questions empirical reality; he is attempting to visualize the Bergsonian view of matter and multiplicity of states of consciousness. The treatment of the figures as anonymous and repeating also indicates that they may represent the memory of the artist’s own experience.

The lines structuring each composition in the States of Mind are another visual device influenced by Bergson. Cumulatively forming masses pressed up

¹¹⁴ Bergson, Time and Free Will, 87.
¹¹⁵ 1967 Calvesi quote cited in Calvesi and Coen, 397.
¹¹⁶ Poggi, Inventing Futurism, 21.
¹¹⁷ Bergson, Matter and Memory, vii-viii.
against the picture plane, these lines travel vertically and sideways through the paper, weaving in and out of view and fading into or moving behind adjacent lines and forms. This pattern possesses the contradictory qualities of dimensionality and flatness and forcefully resists a fixed representation of space. In Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto, Boccioni and his Futurist colleagues describe what they are aiming for:

Space no longer exists: a street pavement that has been soaked by rain beneath the glare of electric lamps can be an abyss gaping into the very center of the earth. The sun is thousands of miles away from us; yet the house in front of us can seem to fit into the solar disc.... The sixteen people around you in a moving tram are in turn and at the same time one, ten, four, three; they are motionless and they change places; they are coming and going, they leap into the street, are suddenly swallowed up by a flood of sunlight, then come back and sit before you, persistent symbols of universal vibration. Or sometimes we look at the cheek of the person with whom we were talking in the street and can see the horse which is passing at the corner. Again: our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies, just as the tram rushes into the house which it passes, and in their turn the houses throw themselves upon the tram and are merged with it.118

The lines in the States of Mind depict change or movement as an energy permeating our existence and represent intuitive experience. By contrast, the emphasis on the flatness of the picture plane is a way of showing the past pushed up against the present, which relates to Bergson’s concept of non-linear time. Art historian Mark Antliff compares Boccioni’s force lines and force forms to Bergsonian spatial-temporal flux, unfettered by the three-dimensional space of clock time.119 Through Bergson, Boccioni re-conceptualizes painting by shifting the focus from the image to

118 Reprinted in Rainy, Poggi, and Wittman, 65.
the sensations that the form evokes, thereby showing the creative act of perception itself.

Influenced by Bergson’s concept of Intuition, Boccioni uses abstract lines that visually weave the figures together to demonstrate how the subjects are not self-contained objects, but are rather interdependent on the energy around them. Intuition for Bergson is a kind of subjective knowledge, a projection of our self-awareness onto the external world, as opposed to analysis or objective knowledge. Indeed, Bergson invokes intuition to describe a way of experiencing the world where objects enter into one’s awareness. This psychic fluctuation is central to Boccioni’s theory of art. In delineating the process of intuition, Bergson says, “I am attributing to the moving object an interior and, so to speak, states of mind; I also imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them by an effort of imagination.” Bergson uses this example to posit that through this type of perception one can possess an absolute experience of a thing that is uninfluenced by outside factors. In the *States of Mind*, through the relationship of figures to brushstrokes, Boccioni “enters into” the landscape with the goal of depicting his true experience of it.

To more fully understand Bergson’s influence on the *States of Mind*, it is useful to trace the evolving expression of the philosopher’s ideas in Boccioni’s preceding works. Directly after Boccioni started reading Bergson, the artist made a number of paintings representing different moments in time within one picture.

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The first of these is *Three Women* (1909-1910) (Fig. 33), a portrait of Boccioni’s mother Cecilia, sister Amelia, and romantic partner Ines. They pose in a relaxed manner, facing inward, as if they have just looked up from a conversation. The composition is striking in that each woman is placed in a progressively deeper position in space corresponding to her age: Boccioni’s mother is closest to the viewer, his sister is behind his mother, and furthest back is Ines. Their triangular arrangement is similar to the figural groups in Balla’s *Stairway of the Farewells*, completed in the same year that *Three Women* was begun. Boccioni’s three figures wear almost identical white, draped dresses.\(^{122}\) The compositional device, wherein three women recede in space corresponding to their ages, and the similar clothing hints that the figures could perhaps be the same woman at different points in her life. Here, Boccioni questions the passage of time as linear and alludes to the Bergsonian idea that past and present are linked.

In *Mourning* (1910) (Fig. 34), painted just after *Three Women*, Boccioni uses repeated figures to represent a simultaneity of moments more closely resembling the *States of Mind*. *Mourning* depicts a scene at a funeral and uses repeated figures to indicate concurrent experiences. In the far back upper left corner, three men carry a casket. In the foreground center and back upper register, six women are shown in poses of anguish. The central figure is the most distraught; throwing her hands up in surrender, her face reflects despair. Three of the figures are elderly, white-haired women; the other three are younger, with long red hair. The younger woman closest

\(^{122}\) The rays of light that seem to dissolve the white, gauzy fabric have been cited as being a precursor to Futurist force lines, indicating the point at which Boccioni’s true rupture with Divisionism begins (see Greene, “The Path to Universal Synthesis,” 30).
to the foreground has her hair in a bun and her back to the viewer. The second young woman, the central figure, is spun around to confront us with her wild hair and unraveled emotions. The third young woman is facing away from us and is retreating into the background. The older women are interspersed throughout the composition, following the central figure back in space. Like *Three Women*, the arrangement and symmetry of the three older and three younger figures receding from the viewer suggests that they could be the same women shown simultaneously at different points in time or in different emotional states. Boccioni also sets up a relationship of past and present by flanking the sides of the composition with vibrant, oversized flower arrangements in the foreground. The section in front represents life, while the casket in the background symbolizes death. The stark difference in age between the two sets of women also fits into this scheme. While *Mourning*, like *Three Women*, is still solidly figurative, it shows Boccioni assimilating Bergson-inspired concepts of space and time.

Marianne Martin describes *Mourning* as Boccioni’s “first tentative attempt at portraying a state of mind in the Futurist sense” in its representation of the subjective emotional and temporal experience of its central grieving figure. The compositional devices and the heightened gestures of the women in mourning draw attention to their emotion, rather than to the objective elements of the scene.

*The Street Enters the House* (1911) (Fig. 35) and *Simultaneous Visions* (1911) (Fig. 36) are additional later works that demonstrate Boccioni’s interest in visually

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123 It is not completely clear whether repeated images of two or three women are shown, but a contemporary article on the painting reprinted in Calvesi and Coen, 365 lists the work as containing “tre donne.”

124 Martin, 1968, 82.
representing Bergsonian space by compressing foreground and background. Both made at the same time that he was creating the States of Mind\textsuperscript{125} and virtually identical in subject matter, the paintings depict a woman looking out from her balcony onto an urban square. The viewer is situated just behind the central figure’s shoulder, looking down from her perspective on the street below. In The Street Enters the House, the buildings surrounding the square tilt in toward the woman, as if being drawn in by her focus on the scene. The activity in the square somehow spills into the woman’s balcony, showing us not just what she sees but what she experiences from her distinct position. Similarly, in Simultaneous Visions, the woman is depicted in close-up looking down on the street. Her face is doubled as if in a mirror image, so she does this from two perspectives. The effect differs from that of the multiplied figures in Three Women and Morning, which use repetition to show how various moments can exist in one scene. Instead, Boccioni arrives at a more complex portrayal of a multifaceted experience that includes multiple perspectives and the sensation of one’s body and mind being in different locations at the same moment. This is drawn from the Bergsonian idea of one’s subjective perception being just as valid as empirical reality.

Vivian Greene discusses the importance of the unique space depicted in Simultaneous Visions:

The construction of the scene where the figure is in one space but set against another embodies those tenets laid out in the Futurist Manifesto. This compositional arrangement enabled Boccioni to conceive of an image in which interior and exterior spaces and actions, which actually occur in

\textsuperscript{125} Ester Coen notes that both The Street Enters the House and Simultaneous Visions were painted after Boccioni’s trip to Paris in November 1911 at the same time he was working on the States of Mind. Ester Coen, 132.
separate spheres, exist simultaneously, as one would experience them optically but not literally in the spatial sense. This allowed him to arrive at the universal synthesis central to his notion of art. As he developed this idea, he finally merged the two environments physically and elided them temporally.\footnote{Vivien Greene, “Modified Divisionism: Futurist Painting in 1910,” in \textit{Italian Futurism 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe}, ed. Vivian Greene, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2014), 26.}

In studying Bergson's influence on Boccioni from 1909 to 1911, we see his portrayal of emotion in painting evolve from a narrative depiction to one focused on subjective experience. This evolution also explains the increasing level of abstraction from the earlier to the later works, which culminates with the \textit{States of Mind}. Through Bergson, Boccioni gained the intellectual framework he needed to represent his subjective reality.
Conclusion

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.
—Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution

In 1916, Boccioni’s life was tragically cut short at thirty-four in a horse-riding accident while he was on duty in World War I. Indeed, it almost appears as if he could somehow intuit that his time as an artist would be limited, as his visual and written output is characterized by a passionate search for a greater inner truth. The States of Mind encapsulates this search, showing Boccioni’s struggle to reconcile the “I” and the “we,” and to establish his personal vision within the larger world.

Returning to the 1906 portrait discussed at the beginning of this study, I-We-Boccioni (Fig. 1), with a deeper understanding of his short yet rich career, we see Boccioni’s repeated figure as representing, literally and figuratively, an artist with many facets. We see him as a young Italian in the early twentieth century, frustrated with yet indebted to his cultural heritage, yearning to break free and create an entirely new art. We see an artist who experimented with Divisionism and Symbolism, the most avant-garde techniques of his time, but who soon became restless and restricted by their conventions. We see an artist who would soon be one of the leading figures in Futurism, a movement through which he would blossom and produce his most mature and notable work, but who could never align himself fully with all of the ideas of the group with which he so closely identified.

One of the last photographs we have of Boccioni is a self-portrait taken in 1913, two years after he completed the States of Mind and three years before his death (Fig. 50). It depicts an artist who has matured, sitting comfortably in his
studio. He leans back easily in his chair and rests his head against his hand. A slight smile is on his face, and his eyes look straight into the camera with a relaxed kindness. His attitude stands in stark contrast to that in his earlier self-portraits. As a younger man, his furrowed brow and unfocused squint express a searching intensity that takes no account of the viewer. But now, he appears confident and content. Whereas *I-We-Boccioni* contains repeated images of the artist with an expression of curious uncertainty on his face, the 1913 self-portrait shows a confident single figure at the height of his career. However, the theme of multiple states is still subtly present.

In the background of the 1913 portrait, empty frames are nested together and lean up against the wall. Boccioni, sitting in the foreground, is bordered by them, perhaps suggesting that the subject of his work is always himself and reminding us that he is in service to the noble profession of painting. Three palettes are on the wall behind him above the frames. One is large and meant for the studio, while the others are smaller and suited for traveling. They hang above his head like three states of mind, as if to tell the viewer that he has finally mastered the ability to convey his subjective reality via the paint on these palettes.

Themes of repetition and multiplicity are central to Boccioni’s experience, as evidenced by the sheer number of the iterations of the *States of Mind*. They show the artist’s ideas in motion. The four complete sets—the Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna paintings with their expressive Symbolist brushstrokes (Figs. 7, 8, 9), the MoMA

127 I do not know if the frames are in fact empty or paintings turned on their verso but to my eyes it looks like the former.

128 Thank you to Jennifer Katanic for this interpretation.
drawings with their Divisionist-inspired lines (Figs. 10, 11, 12), the Cubist-inflected MoMA paintings (Figs. 13, 14, 15), and the pen-and-ink drawings that were created to be made into woodblock prints for Der Sturm (Figs. 16, 17, 18)—along with the seven preparatory works, contain remarkable stylistic and conceptual variety. At the same time, they are all anchored by the idea, most clearly expressed in the Circolo Artistico lecture, of depicting the unseen sensations of the modern world. But perhaps the most compelling element in the States of Mind that demonstrates this spirit of malleability, multiplicity, and drive to continue searching is that its structure is in a nearly constant state of change.

The relationship among the different panels of the States of Mind offers various possibilities, both in its visual and conceptual approach. The narrative does not suggest a clear order, but rather points to a simultaneity of experience. In addition, in each set of panels, we glimpse the work as a larger effort comprised of multiple iterations, giving it a lack of fixity. I posit that it is for these reasons that there is no established ordering of the three panels in their exhibition history. Over the years, they have been displayed in various sequences, according to different curators’ interpretations. Nonetheless, scholars have virtually ignored the order in which the tripartite series should be presented.

Of all of the different sets, the most detailed exhibition history exists for those in MoMA’s collection: the charcoal-and-conté drawings and the final oil paintings. The museum acquired the drawings in 1941, and since then, has included them in at least six separate installations. Exhibition images show that since the charcoal-and-conté triptych entered MoMA’s collection, the work has been installed
in almost every possible order, each giving the viewer a different experience. In 1942 and again in 1971, *Those Who Go* was flanked by *The Farewells* on the left and *Those Who Stay* on the right (Figs. 37, 38). This sequence suggests a reading from left to right, beginning with saying goodbye and concluding by showing those who remain behind. In 1961, *Those Who Go* was flanked by *Those Who Stay* on the left and *The Farewells* on the right (Fig. 39). It is difficult to see how this sequence makes sense from either a narrative or a conceptual standpoint, and thus this ordering gives the impression of simply laying out three possible actions at a train station. A similar effect was produced with the next installation later that same year, when *The Farewells* was placed in the center flanked by *Those Who Stay* on the left and *Those Who Go* on the right (Fig. 40). In 1969, MoMA finally installed the works in what I will later show is the correct order, with *The Farewells* in the center flanked by *Those Who Go* on the left and *Those Who Stay* on the right (Fig. 41). Placing *The Farewells* in the center creates the greatest dynamism, as one naturally reads this panel first and thus sees the other two as outcomes emanating from it. Finally, in a 2006 exhibition, the linear format was curiously broken, and *Those Who Go* was placed above *Those Who Stay* and *The Farewells* was off to the left (Fig. 42). While this is certainly not how the work was intended to be installed, it produces a similar effect to what is created with the correct installation order.

The iconic MoMA oil paintings remained in a private collection from Boccioni’s death in 1916 until 1979, when Nelson A. Rockefeller donated them to
the museum, so there are fewer photographic installation records for this set. The first installation photo we possess shows *The Farewells* in the center, *Those Who Go* on the right, and *Those Who Stay* on the left (Fig. 40). Subsequent installations, including the one at the time of this study, display *The Farewells* first, then *Those Who Go*, then *Those Who Stay* (Fig. 43).

To my knowledge, no installation images of the *States of Mind* exist from Boccioni’s lifetime. In fact, the only version that was shown publicly before his death is the final MoMA painted set. We do, however, have catalogues from the Futurism exhibition that toured Europe from 1912 to 1914, in which the *States of Mind* was included. The panels appear in most catalogues in the following order: 1. *The Farewells*; 2. *Those Who Go*; and 3. *Those Who Stay* (Figs. 44, 45, 46, 47). However, when the exhibition traveled to Florence in 1913, the catalogue switched the order to: 1. *Those Who Go*; 2. *The Farewells*; and 3. *Those Who Stay* (Fig. 48). This inconsistency complicates the question of knowing what the ideal order should be.

In the absence of useful exhibition records, we can deduce a definitive order for the last two versions of the series from a formal analysis. For the first complete tripartite version in the Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna (Figs. 7, 8, 9), the similar painterly style of the three canvases, their size, and their related muted green and deep red color scheme clearly makes them a set, though there is no indication of how the panels connect to one another. Because of this, it is likely that these first oil paintings were used to work through compositional questions and may not have

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129 Nelson A. Rockefeller acquired the works from Benedetta Marinetti, Filippo Marinetti’s widow, in 1949.
had a specific intended order. The same is true for the early paintings and drawings (Figs. 19–25).

The first visual clue that points to an installation sequence appears in the second complete set, the charcoal-and-conté MoMA drawings (Figs. 10, 11, 12). Subtle lines trail off of the left and right sides of The Farewells and continue precisely into the two flanking panels when it is placed in the center. These connecting lines stand out for their distinct shape and direction, which they share with the adjacent compositions. On the left edge, sharp diagonal marks appear faintly at exactly the same angle as in Those Who Go. Similarly, on the right edge, straight vertical marks stand out for their difference to the lines in The Farewells and their similarity to the lines in Those Who Stay.

Further evidence for this ordering exists in the depiction of the train in The Farewells drawing. The locomotive is shown moving towards the left side of the paper and continuing into Those Who Go, the adjacent panel, which depicts the view from inside it. When placed in the center, The Farewells creates the effect of fading into the interior perspective of the train. Finally, the posture of the figures in Those Who Stay indicates that they are walking toward the right side of the composition. If this work was placed anywhere other than at the far right, these figures would be arriving into one of the other panels, rather than moving toward the past or staying still as the title connotes.

The final painted version in MoMA’s collection also contains visual elements pointing to an intended order (Figs. 13, 14, 15). Curiously, though, this order differs

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from that of the MoMA drawings. The main indication of this is the Roman numeral “I” on the left side and “III” on the right side of Those Who Go. This must specify that the panel is the central one in the series. In addition, elements on either edge of the composition suggest which panel goes on the left and right side, respectively. On the left edge of Those Who Go is a bright-red triangular shape, which appears out of place in the predominantly blue color scheme. Precisely the same red is interspersed in The Farewells panel, making an obvious link between the right and left edges of the two canvases. The visual connection to Those Who Stay is subtler, though still present. Toward the right edge of Those Who Go, the tone becomes progressively darker and greener. This color matches almost exactly the dominant hue of Those Who Stay, which must be the third in the series on the right.

As the visual evidence points to a clear difference in the order of the three panels of the States of Mind in its last two iterations, the questions arise: why did Boccioni change the order, and is this change significant to the meaning of the work? For insight into these questions, it is useful to compare the different effects Boccioni aimed to achieve in the charcoal-and-conté and final painted iterations. The most obvious difference between the two versions is their level of abstraction. The MoMA drawings have less recognizable imagery than the final paintings, containing only subtle indications of the surrounding environment and specific forms relating to the narrative. Facial expressions are mostly obscured and instead, the general gestures of the figures and abstract lines are left to portray emotion. In addition, the drawings convey more abstract ideas than the final painted version, particularly in
their allusions to sound and simultaneity, which I believe relates to the order in which they are meant to be displayed.

Boccioni alludes to sound in *The Farewells* drawing using six carefully rendered cone-shaped objects to the left of the train, contained within its puff of steam. These forms are shaped almost identically to bells mounted on top of a locomotive of the time (Fig. 49). Their repetition denotes the echo or rhythm of chimes and their placement, seemingly being carried away by the smoke coming out of the train, suggests sound permeating the train station. In his Circolo Artistico lecture, Boccioni makes several references to sound in the visual arts. He says, "with the mention of musical forms, spiritual volumes, and the state of mind as the subject, I have arrived at the nucleus of Futurist painting." Bergson frequently compares psychic duration to music in *Matter and Memory*, where he refers to consciousness as a melody and to duration as rhythm. In the MoMA drawings, the primary focus is not only on the velocity of the train, but also on its sounds and on the clashing of temporal moments that coming and going create. In this context, placing *The Farewells* in the center would make sense because it evades a linear narrative. Rather, the drawings flow into one another with abstract lines, drawing attention to the sensations the work evokes rather than the concrete story it is telling.

The idea of time as simultaneity is also most fully expressed in the charcoal- and-conté set. When *The Farewells* is hung in the central position, lines travel into

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131 The only known interpretation of these shapes is by Marianne Martin in *Futurist Art and Theory*, who somewhat unconvincingly calls them “spermatozoa” (Martin, 265-266).
132 Reproduced in Ester Coen, 237.
133 Antliff, “The Fourth Dimension and Futurism,” 723.
the adjacent drawings, which coincides with Bergson’s description of true experience as “entering into the states of soul of beings and objects.”\textsuperscript{134} This complicates conventional perceptions of time and space. Similarly, in the narrative of the triptych, \textit{The Farewells} acts as a catalyst for \textit{Those Who Go} and \textit{Those Who Stay}; when hung in the center, it becomes the nucleus of an explosion from which the two possible outcomes emanate. When \textit{The Farewells} is flanked by \textit{Those Who Go} on the left and \textit{Those Who Stay} on the right, the boundaries of past, present, and future are blurred and the energy of Futurism materializes.

The MoMA painted version shares many of these elements, while shifting its focus to the narrative detail and emphasizing the velocity and dynamism of the train station. Rather than being a faint suggestion, the train in the final \textit{Farewells} painting is articulated clearly and placed in the center. Here, \textit{The Farewells} anchors the two flanking paintings by identifying the “main character” of the work as the locomotive. Our eyes then pan to the right as the image fades to the train’s interior in \textit{Those Who Go}. We can read the series of faces appearing across the center of the composition as the reflections of passengers inside the train. Their forms are distorted by diagonal lines, showing the refracted light on the glass, and meld with impressions of the distant city outside. Finally, in the next panel, \textit{Those Who Stay}, we are returned to the station to see the backs of those left in the aftermath of the raging machine. By placing \textit{The Farewells} first in the final version of the \textit{States of Mind}, Boccioni foregrounds the impression of forward motion and dynamic spatial perspective, heightening the drama of the work. I believe Boccioni chose to change the order

\textsuperscript{134} Bergson, \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, 92.
of the *States of Mind* to more fully embody the tenets of Futurism. The final painted
version aligns with the shocking, brash, and forceful aim of the movement: in
Marinetti's words, "to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and
fearlessness." It is generally agreed that Boccioni reworked the final painted
version after his trip to Paris, though less discussion exists on his choice to return to
the paintings specifically for the *Futurist Painters Exhibition* in Paris at the
Bernheim-Jeune gallery, in which it would be included just a few months later.
Marinetti organized the Paris exhibition on the heels of harsh reviews of the
Futurists section of the *Mostra d'Arte Libera* show in Milan, which opened on April
30, 1911. Soffici wrote the most damaging review in a *La Voce* article that June,
calling the Futurist paintings on view

> stupid and repugnant blusterings by unscrupulous persons who ... think that
by slapping colors madly onto a picture worthy of academic janitors, or by
dragging back into the limelight the nasty strings of Divisionism—that
moribund error *alla* Segantini—they can put their game across in the eyes of
the foolish mob.\(^{136}\)

It was perhaps because of this criticism (along with a subsequent first fight between
Boccioni and Soffici) that Marinetti organized the Paris exhibit to introduce
Futurism to the world. Thus, Boccioni was under immense pressure to craft the final
*States of Mind* paintings to “perform” in a particular way on this stage. I believe this
accounts for the artist’s decision to change the order from the sequence of the
charcoal-and-conté set. He could not risk the subtle and abstract concepts being lost
on the viewer. He had to make a statement that aligned his work with Futurism,
while giving a stylistic nod to Cubism, to show that he was up to date with the latest

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 51.
\(^{136}\) Reproduced in Ester Coen, xxiv.
artistic trends. The ordering of the final oil set, which offers a straightforward narrative plainly spelled out with Roman numerals, is less open to interpretation and contains less of the artist's personal expression, and this was precisely Boccioni's aim.

Today, both the oils and the charcoal-and-conté drawings are keystone works in MoMA's collection and are on almost permanent view in the fifth-floor galleries. MoMA's first director, Alfred Barr, was a champion of Futurism, and it is fitting that the museum, founded to show the art of its time and to widen the canon to include novel forms for an art museum such as film, architecture, and design, is now the steward of these works. Recently, MoMA has begun a radical rethinking of its permanent collection galleries. The fourth and fifth floors were formerly devoted to only painting and sculpture and were revered as the most important spaces in the museum. Presently, the fourth-floor galleries have been reinstalled to include works from across the museum's curatorial departments. In a room devoted to 1961, a Jaguar sports car sits next to a Lee Bontecou painting and across from a Richard Avedon photograph (Fig. 51). Formerly, these works spanning three distinct media would have been segregated on different floors, but now, thanks to this new approach, which recognizes the value of looking beyond traditional art historical categories, we may make new connections that could give a truer insight into the art and how and why the artists created it. Perhaps one day this new, comprehensive approach will place the early paintings and preparatory drawings for the States of Mind alongside the known masterworks, presenting the full scope of its evolution.
This would give the public a more complete picture of the *States of Mind* and of Boccioni as an artist, and my hope is that this thesis encourages such an endeavor.
Illustrations

Fig. 1. Umberto Boccioni. *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 37 3/5". Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 2. Umberto Boccioni. *States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 37 3/5". Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 3. Umberto Boccioni. *States of Mind: Those Who Stay*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 37 3/5". Civica Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan.

Fig. 5. Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1911. Charcoal and conté on paper, 23 x 34". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.


Fig. 10. Umberto Boccioni. Drawing after *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1912. Ink on paper, 12.5 x 16.6”.
Collection of Lydia Winston Malbin, New York.

Fig. 11. Umberto Boccioni. Drawing after *States of Mind: The Farewells*, 1912. Ink on paper, 12.5 x 16.6”.
Private Collection, New York.

Fig. 13. *I-We-Boccioni*, c. 1906. Photograph by Luca Carrà. Private Collection, Milan.

Fig. 15. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1905. Oil on canvas. Palazzo Brera, Milan, Italy.
Fig. 16. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1908. Oil on canvas. 39 1/3 x 27 ½”. Palazzo Brera, Milan.

Fig. 17. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, 1908. Pencil on paper. Location unknown.
Fig. 18. Anton Giulio and Arturo Bragaglia, *Ritratto poligrammatico di Umberto Boccioni*, 1911-12. Private collection, Milan.
Fig. 19. Umberto Boccioni, Study for *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 15 3/8 x 20 ½”. Private Collection.

Fig. 20. Umberto Boccioni, Sketch for *States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 15 x 21 5/8”. Private Collection, Bergamo.

Fig. 21. Umberto Boccioni, *Sketch for States of Mind: Those Who Go*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 37 ⅜ x 47 ½”. Civico Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan.
Fig. 22. Umberto Boccioni. *Study of Those Who Go*, 1911. Pen on paper, 6.7 x 4.7”. Private Collection.

Fig. 23. Umberto Boccioni. *Study for The Farewells*, 1911. Pen on paper, 6.2 x 3.9”. Private Collection.

Fig. 24. Umberto Boccioni. *Study for Those Who Stay*, 1911. pen on paper, 6.1 x 3.5”. Private Collection.
Fig. 26. Umberto Boccioni. *A Futurist Evening in Milan*. 1911.
Fig. 27. Giacomo Balla, *The Stairway of Farewells*, 1908-09. Oil on canvas, 40 3/4 × 41". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Barnett Malbin (The Lydia and Harry Lewis Winston Collection), New York.
Fig. 28. Gaetano Previati, *The Chariot of the Sun*, 1907; central panel of *The Day* triptych. Oil on canvas, 50 x 72 4/5". Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura, Milan.
Fig. 29. Gaetano Previati, *L’Eroica*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 78 x 256”. Associatiazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi de Guerra, Rome.
Fig. 30. Giovanni Segantini, *Alpine Triptych*, 1896-99 (top to bottom: *Life, Nature, Death*). All works oil on canvas. 74.8 × 126 in”. Segantini Museum, St. Moritz, Switzerland.
Fig. 31. Charles Cottet, *Au Pays de la Mer*, 1898. Oil on canvas. 186 7/10 x 69 1/5". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
Fig. 32. Giacomo Balla, *The Worker's Day*, 1904 - 06, oil on paper, 39 1/2 x 53 1/8". Private Collection.
Fig. 33. Umberto Boccioni. *Homage to Mother.* (1907-1908). Pencil on paper, 15 1/3 x 22 5/8"
Fig. 32. Marey, Etienne-Jules. Chronophotographs of a man doing a high jump, 1892.
Fig. 33. Boccioni, Umberto. *Three Women*, 1909–1910. Oil on canvas. 71 × 52”. Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan.
Fig. 34. Umberto Boccioni. *Mourning*, 1910. Oil on Canvas. 41x53”. Private collection.
Fig. 35. Umberto Boccioni. The Street Enters the House (La Strada Entra Nella Casa), 1911. Oil on canvas. 39 2/5 × 39 3/5”. Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany.
Fig. 36. Umberto Boccioni. *Simultaneous Visions (Visioni simultanee)*, 1911. Oil on canvas. 23 7/8 x 27 3/8". Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal, Germany.
Fig. 43. Painting and Sculpture collection galleries, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fall 2016 installation.
Fig. 44. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Paris. 1912.

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BOCCIONI

1. Les adieux (Cliché page 25.)
2. Ceux qui s'en vont
3. Ceux qui restent
4. La rue entre dans la maison.
5. Le rire (Cliché page 26).
6. La ville monte.
7. Visions simultanées.
8. Idole moderne.
9. Les forces d'une rue.
10. La rafle.
CATALOGUE.

BOCCIONI.

1. Leave-taking.
   In the midst of the confusion of departure, the mingled concrete and abstract sensations are translated into force-lines and rhythms in quasi-musical harmony: mark the undulating lines and the chords made up of the combination of figures and objects. The prominent elements, such as the number of the engine, its profile shown in the upper part of the picture, its wind-cutting fore-part in the centre, symbolical of parting, indicate the features of the scene that remain indelibly impressed upon the mind.

2. Those who are Going Away.
   Their state of mind is represented by oblique lines on the left. The colour indicates the sensation of loneliness, anguish and dazed confusion, which is further illustrated by the faces carried away by the smoke and the violence of speed. One may also distinguish mangled telegraph posts and fragments of the landscape through which the train has passed.

3. Those who Remain Behind.
   The perpendicular lines indicate their depressed condition and their infinite sadness dragging everything down towards the earth. The mathematically spiritualised silhouettes render the distressing melancholy of the soul of those that are left behind.
Fig. 46. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Naples. 1914.

Galleria Futurista
Direttore G. SPROVIERI
NAPOLI — Via dei Mille, 16 — NAPOLI

PRIMA ESPOSIZIONE DI
PITTURA FUTURISTA

Boccioni - Carrà
Russolo - Balla
Severini - Soffici

NAPOLI
Maggio-Giugno 1914

BOCCIONI

2. Quelli che vanno.  \{ \begin{align*}
                            & \text{Stati d'animo} \\
                            & \text{Quelli che restano.}
\end{align*}
\}
3. Dimensioni astratte.
5. Dimensioni astratte.
6. Testa + luce + ambiente (Proprietà del signor Bruno Corradini).
7. Ambiente emotivo di un nudo di donna.
8. 9.10. Complementarismo di forma-colore.
15. Penetrazione angolare (Bicicletta).
17. Espansione spirale obliqua.
18. Espansione spirale (Nudo).
20. Ambiente emotivo di un cavallo.
22. Ambiente emotivo di una bicicletta.
27. 28. 29. Analisi di forme.

- 25 -
Fig. 47. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Milan. 1916-17.
ESPOSIZIONE DI
Pittura Futurista
DI "LACERBA,"
Novembre 1913 - Gennaio 1914
FIRENZE
48, VIA CAVOUR. 48

Fig. 48. Catalogue for the Futurist Painters exhibition in Florence. 1914.

BOCCIONI

1. Nudo (Complementarismo di forma-colore).
2. Dinamismo di un ciclista.
3. Dimensioni orizzontali.
4. Dimensioni astratte.
5. Testa + luce + ambiente.
7. Complementarismo di forma-colore.
9. Quelli che vanno.
10. Gli addii. Stati d’animo
11. Quelli che restano.

Lodging locomotive, circa 1883.
Fig. 50. Umberto Boccioni, *Self-Portrait*, March 1913. Photograph. Calmarini Collection, Milan.
Fig. 51. Fourth Floor collection galleries, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fall 2016 installation.
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