

GINO SEVERINI AND THE SYMBOLIST AESTHETICS OF
HIS FUTURIST DANCE IMAGERY, 1910-1915

by

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(Under the Direction of Evan Firestone)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Gino Severini's dance imagery produced between 1910 and 1915 and its relationship to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Symbolism. It is proposed in this paper that the influence of Symbolism, including the phenomenon of synesthesia, was a consistent presence throughout Severini's artistic production during this period. Surrounded by artists and writers within the neo-Symbolist milieu of Paris, Severini was introduced to Symbolist literature and contemporary philosophy, both of which influenced his approach to Futurism. The resultant amalgamation of Symbolist and Futurist aesthetic theories is analyzed in the context in which these dance images were produced. Taking into consideration Severini's personal and artistic relationships, along with his theoretical writings, a more complete understanding of his Futurist works from this period is possible.

INDEX WORDS: Gino Severini, Severini, Futurism, Symbolism, Dance

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Marian Pritchard, for without her unwavering support and understanding this would not have been possible. I also wish to dedicate this work to my father, Wayne Pritchard, my grandparents Ruth and Wallace Pritchard, and my aunt Becky, all of whom have been a constant source of encouragement, laughter and cheer when I needed it most.

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INTRODUCTION

Gino Severini's career as an artist began with his arrival in Rome in 1900 and lasted nearly sixty-six years. His ability to assimilate various artistic developments, while at the same time maintaining his own personal aesthetic, marks Severini's distinctiveness as an artist. As an Italian Futurist living in Paris during the height of avant-garde activity, particularly during the years 1910 through 1915, Severini occupied a unique position. Simultaneously part of the new Italian art movement, yet removed from it geographically, he operated as the lone representative of Futurism in the artistic capital of the world. This situation allowed him to pursue his artistic goals with almost unfettered freedom, applying Futurist doctrines to a variety of artistic styles in an atmosphere of continuous experimentation and transformation.

In 1910, Severini embarked on a series of works exploring the theme of the dance and it quickly became a unifying subject for him during the years leading up to World War I. During those five years Severini executed over one hundred works in different media depicting dancers in a variety of settings.¹ Not since Henri Toulouse-Lautrec had an artist immersed himself so completely in the urban nightlife of cabarets and dance halls. Severini's approach departed considerably, however, both stylistically and conceptually, from that of his predecessor. His representations of dancers and nightclub habitués range from a quasi-documentary style recording the latest dances to nearly abstract images based on modernist aesthetics and contemporary philosophies. Although the subject of dancers appears at first to be diametrically opposed to Futurist

¹ For a complete overview of Severini's career see: Daniela Fonti, *Gino Severini Catalogo Ragionato* (Milan: Edizione Phillipe Daverio, 1988).

doctrine, Severini used the image of the dancer as an expression of his personal vision of Futurism.

Dance as subject matter was familiar to many avant-garde artists during the early twentieth century, especially in an atmosphere rich with the memory of artists such as Edgar Degas, Georges Seurat and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. From the cabaret and dance-hall scenes of Kees van Dongen and Pablo Picasso, to the utopian dance images of Henri Matisse, Georges Roualt's morally condemned dancers, Marie Laurencien's sweetly innocent figures and the twisted, expressionistic women of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, many artists found a means of personal expression through dance. However, no artist utilized the theme of dance and the image of the dancer in a manner comparable to Gino Severini. For him, the dancer became the quintessential interpreter of modern life, reflecting the fast paced urban environment of modern Paris while at the same time giving physical shape to transcendental ideas. Throughout this five-year period (1910-1915), Severini consistently pursued the symbolist notion of synesthesia, recreating the sensations he experienced through color, line, and form. At the same time he strove to deliver the Futurist promise of placing the viewer at the center of the canvas and creating works that required the "active intervention of the outside world."² In this sense, Severini echoed the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé in his choice of dance as representative of the "Idea," for as Mallarmé wrote in 1886: "...only the Dance can translate the fleeting and the sudden into the Idea. To see this is to see the entire – absolutely the entire – spectacle of the future."³

² Gino Severini, "The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 125.

³ Mallarmé quoted in Marianne Martin, "The Futurist Gesture: Futurism and the Dance," *Kunst, Musik, Schauspiel* 2, International Congress of the History of Art (CIHA), (Vienna September 1983), 95-113, esp.

The paintings and works on paper produced by Severini during this period are sophisticated compositions derived from a variety of artistic, literary, and philosophical sources. Enthusiastically joining forces with the Italian Futurists in early 1910, he embraced their goal of resuscitating Italian art through the glorification of a modern life made possible by technological progress. However, through his contacts with neo-symbolist groups in Paris, the ideas of late nineteenth-century Symbolism were also influential to Severini. As a consequence, clear interpretation of these works has been problematic in that they juxtapose a modern, if abstract, documentary description of daily life with a symbolist desire for transcendence. It is precisely this tension between Futurism and Symbolism that was never completely resolved in the eyes of the artist or viewer, and thus, each work can be interpreted as a complex set of ideas, informed by past artistic traditions, while at the same time expressive of a desire to break away from those very traditions.

Scholars have previously addressed the influence of Mallarmé's writings and Jules Romains' Unanimist poetry in Severini's Futurist works. However, additional analysis is warranted in order to fully understand the ways in which these ideas informed Severini's imagery. In addition to Mallarmé and Romains, another important influence on Severini's works was the ideas of the philosopher Henri Bergson. Bergson's theories of memory and *durée* have been analyzed in relation to Futurist aesthetic in general, but they are seldom discussed in the context of Severini's dance imagery. Moreover, Severini's wide range of personal contacts within the Parisian literary and symbolist groups began almost immediately upon his arrival in the city in 1906 and lasted

97. For complete text see: *Oeuvres Complètes de Stéphane Mallarmé*, eds. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), 541.

throughout his career. As an intelligent and literate artist, a strong argument can be made that these relationships were decisive in his retention of nineteenth-century Symbolist ideas. Furthermore, the foundation of Italian Futurism was rooted in Symbolist theory, thereby allowing Severini the creative freedom to unite his interest in the modernity of city life with his interests in Symbolist aesthetic theories.

The influence of Symbolist literature on Severini's dance imagery has been addressed in some scholarship, but little has been said about the implied presence of music within these works. Synesthesia, the phenomenon of color and form evoking sound, was an important concept in nineteenth-century Symbolist aesthetics and is an equally essential component of Severini's artistic theory and production. Derived from symbolist literature and visually expressed by works such as Edward Munch's *The Scream* (1895), synesthesia remained a vital component of early twentieth-century art. Evidence of this is found in the Futurist manifestos, Severini's personal writings and correspondence, and in contemporary neo-symbolist writings. It is evident that Severini understood that a close relationship between music and painting was a key component of avant-garde art.

A brief summary of the significant texts addressing Gino Severini's career reveals a diverse range of interpretations regarding the extent of Symbolist literary and aesthetic influence on his Futurist paintings during the years 1910 to 1915.⁴ The most recent

⁴ The primary texts consulted for this study are: Marianne Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory. 1909-1915*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1968); Marianne Martin, "The Futurist Gesture: Futurism and the Dance," *Kunst, Musik, Schauspiel* 2, International Congress of the History of Art (CIHA), (Vienna September 1983), 95-113; *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Museum, 2001); Daniela Fonti, *Gino Severini Catalogo Ragionato* (Milan: Edizione Phillipe Daverio, 1988); Piero Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo di Jules Romain e le Danze Cromatiche di Loïe Fuller I," *Antichità Viva* 29, no. 6 (1990), 44-53; and Piero Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo di Jules Romain e le Danze Cromatiche di Loïe Fuller II," *Antichità Viva* 30, nos. 4-5 (1991), 57-64.

exhibition on Gino Severini was the 2001 exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in Venice, which specifically addressed his dance inspired works from 1909 to 1916.⁵ The Guggenheim exhibition provided much needed insight into this aspect of Severini's career. Scholars generally agree that a symbolist subtext is present to varying degrees in Severini's work. The area in which disagreement often arises is the issue of precisely where and when these literary influences are discernable and whether they embody a continuous presence within his dance *œuvre* or only appear intermittently.

Marianne Martin's seminal 1968 text on Futurism laid the groundwork for future generations of scholarship in the area of Italian Futurism in general, and specifically on Severini's symbolist tendencies. Martin re-established the literary connections between the artist's early Futurist paintings and the Unanimist poetry of Jules Romains.⁶ The ideas of Unanimism, which celebrated modern city life and the "collective consciousness" created among its inhabitants, nightclub performers and spectators, were identified by Martin in works such as *The Boulevard* (Fig. 2), *Yellow Dancers*, and *Dance of the Pan Pan at the Monico* (Fig. 9), all of 1910-11.⁷

In her later research, Martin re-explored the affinities between Severini and Romains, and suggested also that the influence of Mallarmé is discernable in a few select

⁵ The exhibition, *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, was held at the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice, Italy, May 26 - October 28, 2001.

⁶ Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 102. This association had been noted at the time of the first Futurist Exhibition in Paris in 1912, when the art critic and poet Guillaume Apollinaire wrote: "...the titles of their [the Futurists] pictures seem frequently taken from the vocabulary of Unanimism..." See: Leroy C. Breunig, ed., *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918*, trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 199.

⁷ Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 96-97, 102; and Marianne Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism and Apollinaire," *Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (1969), 258-268; esp. 263-264. Martin also tangentially relates *Memories of a Journey* (Fig. 3) to Unanimism suggesting that the water well at the center of the canvas may be Severini's way of symbolically representing himself in the image. The idea of placing the spectator, or reader, at the center of a work was a goal common to both the Futurists and to Jules Romains.

works dating from 1912.⁸ Martin focused on two works in particular, the *Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal Tabarin* (Fig. 11), and *Dancer at Pigalle* (Fig. 16).⁹ Following these two paintings, she also suggested that Mallarméan or symbolist associations are evident in Severini's later dance imagery produced during his Plastic Analogy period of 1913-14, such as *Dancer = Sea* of 1914 (Fig. 26). In these works Martin pointed out that the influence of both Mallarmé and the American dancer Loïe Fuller are present.¹⁰

Two articles published by Piero Pacini in 1991 deal specifically with the relationship between Severini's dance imagery and Unanimism.¹¹ Pacini argues that the influence of Unanimism is present in most of Severini's works executed between 1910 and 1915 and in this view he appears to be singular amongst scholars. Founded primarily on a series of unpublished notes written by Severini prior to World War I, along with the author's personal correspondence with the artist's widow, Jeanne, Pacini argues for a fairly direct line of influence from poetry to painting. The articles also confirm that Severini was well versed in Unanimism despite his later claim that he was unaware of the significance of the term "unanimist" at this time.¹² Furthermore, the artist and poet were apparently on friendly terms with each other as they both frequented La Closerie de Lilas and lived in the same neighborhood. One of the most significant revelations in Pacini's articles is a comment made by Romaine regarding the 1912 Futurist exhibition at the

⁸ Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 258 -268; and Martin, "The Futurist Gesture," 95 -113.

⁹ Martin, "The Futurist Gesture," 98.

¹⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹¹ Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo...I," 44-53; and Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo...II," 57 - 64.

¹² Gino Severini, "Symbolisme Plastique et Symbolisme Littéraire," in *Gino Severini Ecrits sur l'art, 1913-1962*, with a preface by Serge Fauchereau, (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 1987), 68. Severini states in this 1916 article that he did not understand the implication of Raoul Dufy's comment that his work was Unanimist in tone. See also: Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo...II," 48 and 53 n.6, which contains a portion of a letter written to Pacini by Jeanne Severini in 1979 providing some details of their relationship: "Gino conobbe Jules Romaine...al momento della mostra da Bernheim, e Romaine scrisse (o disse) che la pittura di Gino era unanimista."

Bernheim Jeune Gallery. According to Jeanne Severini, as Romaines stood before Severini's paintings, he stated that he "was not able to aspire to more elegant or spontaneous visualizations of his unanimist imagery."¹³

Two other texts important to Severini scholarship are Daniela Fonti's 1988 *Catalogo Ragionato* and the accompanying exhibition catalogue to the 2001 Guggenheim exhibition, for which she was curator. The entries in the *Catalogo Ragionato* provide brief descriptions, along with exhibition and bibliographic information. Due to the sheer volume of works documented by Fonti, the *Catalogo* is an indispensable resource for issues regarding chronology and provenance. In her catalogue essay for the Guggenheim exhibition, Fonti also addresses certain areas of Symbolist influence found in Severini's dance imagery. Fonti agrees with the view that there are Symbolist elements evident in the *Pan Pan*, but she maintains that symbolism was absent from Severini's works by the time he painted the *Bal Tabarin*.¹⁴ Her essay focuses primarily on Mallarméan connections which she finds in a few key works from 1911-12 and in the later plastic analogy paintings of 1914, where she also finds evidence of the influence of Loïe Fuller.¹⁵

¹³ Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimismo..I," 48. The only work that Pacini does not address is the *Bal Tabarin*, which was arguably the most important and well-known work of Severini's during this time. The reason for this is not known, but perhaps there is no mention of this painting in the unpublished notes that Pacini addresses in his two articles.

¹⁴ Daniela Fonti, "Gino Severini. The Dance," in *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 11-31; esp. 20. Interestingly, however, Fonti finds "no conceptual difference" between the *Pan Pan* and the *Bal Tabarin*, which in itself suggests that both works would contain elements of symbolism.

¹⁵ Fonti, "The Dance," 19-22. Fonti sees the presence of Unanimism in Severini's work only up to *The Boulevard* (1911), where she suggests that this influence all but disappears from his work after this point, thereby negating any Unanimist reading of his large dance compositions such as *Pan Pan* and *Bal Tabarin*. Fonti also suggests that references to Mallarmé's writings only become manifest in Severini's work from mid-1912 to 1913 and in the plastic analogy paintings of 1913-14. However, she contradicts this argument by her statement that Mallarmé's metaphor of chandeliers being symbolic of theater can be read in *Haunting Dancer*, which she dates to 1911. See: Fonti, *Catalogo*, 118.

This paper seeks to examine the various components of Severini's dance images by focusing primarily on the tension between the divergent impulses of Symbolism and Futurism that inform his aesthetic. Building upon the analysis and interpretations of the aforementioned scholars, this paper will show that elements of Symbolism were not only present in Severini's work produced during 1910 and 1915, but were significant factors in his choice of subject matter, composition and his own artistic theory. Severini joined Italian Futurism eager to take up the call for a new direction in the history of Italian art, and yet he always remained somewhat at a distance ideologically from his Futurist colleagues. Living in Paris at the peak of avant-garde activity was highly stimulating for Severini and allowed him the freedom to synthesize a broad range of philosophical, artistic and literary concepts.¹⁶ Even Marinetti's 1911 diatribe against Futurism's "intellectual forefathers," in which he declared his hatred for "...the great Symbolist geniuses Edgar Poe, Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine," did not dissuade Severini from an interest in symbolism or from forging his own path within Futurism, incorporating elements from the very same "forefathers."¹⁷

¹⁶ Although Severini was living in Paris, he traveled to Italy regularly, with some trips of rather extended length.

¹⁷ F.T. Marinetti, *Le Futurisme* (Paris: 1911; reprint with a preface by Giovanni Lista, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1980), 117. This text is also quoted in Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 118-119.

CHAPTER 1

CULTURAL LIFE IN PARIS

During the first two decades of the twentieth century Paris was the epicenter of artistic creativity, cultural, and philosophical discourse. The relentless advance of technology made for a new, modern lifestyle that was rapidly subsuming nineteenth-century provinciality. Technological advances included electric lighting, telephones, the wireless telegraph, automobiles, airplanes and faster transatlantic ocean liners.¹ Poets, artists and writers converged on the ‘City of Light’ at the turn of the century, entering an atmosphere saturated with the contradictory feelings of excitement and anxiety, isolation and community, modernity mixed with the remnants of provinciality. Within this energetic environment Severini forged several key relationships that were instrumental in his development as an avant-garde artist. These relationships heightened his interest and knowledge of symbolist notions, which he later incorporated into his vibrant images of dancers.

Prior to his arrival in Paris, Severini had been in Rome working under the tutelage of Giacomo Balla, already a successful painter and a later Futurist colleague.² Balla showed Severini the works of Italian Divisionist painters such as Giovanni Segantini,

¹ Stephen Kern, *Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 113. Kern’s book provides a fascinating account of the rapidity of technological development and how it played out in the early twentieth century. For example, Kern cites the following statistics: In 1900 there were approximately 3,000 cars in France and by 1913 that number had increased to 100,000; a land speed record of 200 km/hr was set in 1906 and electric lighting was in full use by 1906.

² Severini left Cortona for Rome in 1900 with his mother, where he lived until 1906. He and Umberto Boccioni met Balla in 1902.

Gaetano Previati and Pellizza da Volpedo.³ Balla also introduced Severini to French Neo-Impressionism, the aesthetic foundation of Italian Divisionism.⁴ Using line and color to evoke mood and ambiance, Italian Divisionist paintings often contained symbolic as well as socialist overtones, projecting quasi-heroic or mythical representations of the daily struggles borne by the common man. Within a few years, Severini would take up the theme of daily life, replacing Italian working class laborers with Parisian dancers, who, for Severini, personified the modernity of life experienced in the urban landscape of Paris.

Severini arrived in Paris in October 1906 and by early 1907 was living in an apartment in Montmartre located in the courtyard next to Aurélian Lugné-Poë's symbolist theater, Théâtre de L'Œuvre.⁵ Through his proximity to the Théâtre de L'Œuvre, Severini was exposed to a wide range of writers and artists, both past and present. He had the opportunity to see theatrical productions staged by the theater, including dance performances by Isadora Duncan.⁶ An example of Severini's work at this time, *Claudine at the Moulin de la Galette* (1907) (Fig. 1), documents his early interest in the denizens of Parisian nightlife. Reminiscent of Toulouse-Lautrec in subject matter and style, the figure of Claudine is set against a background loosely constructed

³ Coincidentally, Previati and Segantini would be singled out in the 1910 *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* as important Italian artists "producing works destined to honor their fatherland." See: Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, "Manifesto of Futurist Painters," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 26.

⁴ Balla had been to Paris in 1900 where he stayed for seven months and had the opportunity to see Neo-Impressionist paintings, including works by Seurat and Signac. It was on Balla's advice that Severini immediately sought out and studied these works upon his arrival in Paris.

⁵ Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini*, trans. by Jennifer Franchina, (originally published as *La Vita di un Pittore*, 1946); reprint with an introduction by Anne Coffin Hanson, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 44.

⁶ Daniela Fonti, "Gino Severini. The Dance," in *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 11-31; 14. Although he was familiar with Duncan's dance, her classically inspired choreography did not influence Severini's dance imagery. The technological innovations of Loïe Fuller and her physically transforming dances were more in line with his Futurist and Symbolist ideas at the time.

with long straw-like strokes. Although the portrait lacks the deep sense of pathos of his predecessor's works, Severini manages to capture an underlying melancholy through the directness of his representation. His familiarity with Toulouse-Lautrec's work was probably acquired from Lugné-Poë, who was a friend of the famous Montmartrean painter of La Goulue and Jane Avril. It is also likely that one of Severini's first encounters with Mallarmé's symbolist literature was through Lugné-Poë, who had been a regular participant in Mallarmé's *mardis* in the late nineteenth century.⁷

Over the course of the next two years, Severini worked on set designs for the theater, following in the footsteps of Nabis artists such as Edouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis, and by 1909, was regularly contributing illustrations to Lugné-Poë's journal, *L'Œuvre*.⁸ Denis, also a regular participant in Mallarmé's *mardis*, was by this time a respected art critic and theoretician, publishing essays on symbolist and syntheist art theory.⁹ A passage from Denis' 1909 essay, *De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme*, reads as a harbinger of Severini's own Futurist theory of a few years later:

...the emotions or spiritual states caused by any spectacle
bring to the imagination of the artist symbols or plastic

⁷ Pamela A. Genova, *Symbolist Journals. A Culture of Correspondence* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 93; 165. Genova provides an informative account of the culture of Symbolist publications and their relationship to art in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. Those who attended Mallarmé's *mardis* (Tuesday) evenings included Gustave Kahn, Félix Fénéon, Lugné-Poë, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Edouard Vuillard.

⁸ Daniela Fonti, *Gino Severini Catalogo Ragionato* (Milan: Edizione Phillipe Daverio, 1988), 96. Lugné-Poë wrote an anonymous article to help publicize Severini's work, entitled 'L'Atelier d'un cam arade,' published in *L'Œuvre* (November 13, 1909). It should also be noted that Lugné-Poë and Paul Fort were associated with each other by the early 1890's in Fort's Théâtre d'Art. Lugné-Poë started the Théâtre de l'Œuvre after the closing of Fort's theater in 1892. They both embraced symbolist theater, supporting playwrights such as Maeterlink and Ibsen, where the set designs painted by the Nabis were intended to evoke emotional responses from the theatergoers. Furthermore, Félix Fénéon's office at *La Revue Blanche* was a gathering place for symbolist and Nabis artists. As Severini was to become acquainted with Fénéon and Fort early in his career in Paris, this trio (Lugné-Poë, Fénéon, and Fort) form an especially significant source of symbolist influence for the artist.

⁹ Maurice Denis, 'Cézanne,' *L'Occident* (September, 1907); 'Paul Sérusier,' *L'Occident* (December, 1908); 'De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme,' *L'Occident* (May, 1909). For a discussion of Denis' critical writings, see: Genova, 169-174.

equivalents. These are capable of reproducing emotions or states of the spirit without it being necessary to provide the copy of the initial spectacle; thus for each state of our sensibility there must be a corresponding objective harmony capable of expressing it.¹⁰

Sometime during 1908-1909, Lugné-Poë introduced Severini to the critic Félix Fénéon, an important figure in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Symbolist movement, and a long-time supporter of Neo-Impressionists, particularly of Georges Seurat. Fénéon was an important guide for Severini at this stage of his career, as Severini had declared Seurat his “master” soon after arriving in Paris. In his autobiography he explained his conscious emulation of Seurat:

..it was Seurat who first and most successfully established a balance between subject, composition and technique..the modern world that Seurat wished to paint..I understood his importance as soon as I arrived in Paris..I chose Seurat as my master for once and for all...¹¹

In all likelihood, Severini and Fénéon’s relationship was more than one of casual acquaintanceship as they moved in the same artistic circles. It is therefore reasonable to presume that Fénéon would have discussed his theoretical writings on the transcendental nature of Neo-Impressionism, including Seurat’s writings on color and line, with the artist.¹² Fénéon believed the divisionist technique of Neo-Impressionism was capable of capturing and expressing the essential nature of existence, writing “...for them [the Neo-Impressionists], objective reality is simply a theme for the creation of a higher,

¹⁰ Maurice Denis, “De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme,” *L’Occident* (May, 1909); translated in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art. A Sourcebook by Artists and Critics*, (Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1968), 105-107.

¹¹ Severini, *Life*, 35.

¹² Marianne Martin, “Carissimo Marinetti: Letters from Severini to the Futurist Chief,” *Art Journal* (Winter 1981), 305-312; 305. Martin suggests that Fénéon gave Severini Paul Signac’s book *D’Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionisme*. However, Severini stated that Dufy first gave him this text. See: J.-P. Crespelle, *Montmartre Vivant* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1964), 194. Nevertheless, Fénéon’s personal relationships with Seurat, including his knowledge of his private writings, would have been important to Severini’s understanding Neo-Impressionism and the development of his own Neo-Impressionist aesthetic.

sublimated reality, which becomes fused with their personalities.”¹³ These ideas of the transcendental potential of painting permeated Severini’s dance imagery from the beginning and remained an important impulse in his work. Furthermore, echoes of Seurat’s theories on the emotional content of color and line, the luminosity of complementary colors, and the lasting impression of an image on the retina, are all found later in slightly altered form in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painters* and Severini’s draft of his own manifesto, *Art du fantastique dans le sacré (Peinture de la Lumière, de la Profondeur, du Dynamisme. Manifest futuriste.)*.¹⁴ In 1908, Fénéon mounted a major Seurat retrospective at the Bernheim Jeune Gallery, which likely did not pass unseen by the young Italian artist.¹⁵ Three years later in February 1912, through the efforts and support of Fénéon, the Futurists mounted their first major group exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery.

It was also during these initial years in Paris that Severini met fellow Italian émigré Amadeo Modigliani and became involved with a group of artists who gathered regularly at the Lapin Agile, a small cabaret in Montmartre.¹⁶ Among those who congregated there were Suzanne Valadon, her son Maurice Utrillo, André Utter (whose

¹³ Félix Fénéon, “Le Néo-Impressionisme,” *L’Art Moderne* (May 1, 1887), 138-139; translated in *Art in Theory 1815-1900*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1998), 969.

¹⁴ *Art in Theory*, 969-970. These ideas are proposed by Seurat in a letter of 1890 to Maurice Beaubourg, and are the synthesis of various ideas from Eugène Chevreul, H. Ogden Rood and Charles Henry. Although Marianne Martin does not believe that the Futurists could have known of Seurat’s writing (Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 58 n. 2), Fénéon’s publication of the letter in 1914 makes possible the suggestion that he discussed such theories prior to publication. Had Fénéon discussed these ideas with Severini, it is possible that Severini would have related them to Boccioni who is the acknowledge author of the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painters*. Furthermore, Seurat’s ideas are set out in Paul Signac’s book, *D’Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme* which was published in Paris in 1911.

¹⁵ Joan Ungersma Halperin, *Félix Fénéon. Aesthete & Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 120; 210. By this time, Fénéon had retired from his literary career and was in the second year of his position as director of modern art at the Bernheim-Jeune gallery.

¹⁶ Severini, *Life*, 31. Severini and Modigliani met in 1906, within a few months of Severini’s arrival in Paris.

portrait Severini painted in 1910), Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, André Salmon, Max Jacob, and Juan Gris.¹⁷ Severini later recalled that the Agile was a place where young artists gathered to discuss Nietzsche and Bergson in their search for a pictorial vocabulary more expressive of the times in which they were living.¹⁸ Most of these artists resided in close proximity to one another, including several in the same apartment building. Thus, a great exchange of ideas took place between artists through visits to one another's studios.¹⁹ Braque and Severini frequently shared their progress, with Severini showing Braque works such as *The Boulevard*, *The Milliner*, and *Pan-Pan*.²⁰ The influence of Braque's Analytic Cubism is evident in these early Futurist paintings as Severini adopted a similar compositional technique. By arranging deconstructed figures along various axes parallel to the picture plane, he created multiple viewpoints that denied a sense of spatial recession, much like that of Braque's Analytic Cubist works.

One of the most significant figures in Severini's career was Filippo Tommaso (F.T.) Marinetti, the founder and leader of Italian Futurism. A well-known poet and author, Marinetti first conceived Futurism as a literary movement, but soon broadened its scope to encompass all of the arts. Marinetti's symbolist credentials were established in the late nineteenth century under the influence of Jean Moréas and Gustave Kahn. Already a well-known poet, Marinetti joined the Symbolist movement after reading Moréas' manifesto published in 1886 in the Parisian journal, *Le Figaro*, the same venue

¹⁷ Severini, *Life*, 40-41; 62. Severini was introduced to Picasso in 1910 through Georges Braque.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁹ Severini, *Life*, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62. Severini later recalled that Braque's "simple and precise" paintings fascinated him at this time. Severini was introduced to Braque through Raoul Dufy, as all three lived in an apartment building at 5 Impasse Guelma. However, Dufy and Braque apparently did not move into this building until 1911 although Severini implies in his autobiography that they were all three living there in 1910. See: Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 77 n. 3.

he would use to launch Futurism.²¹ Marinetti's poetry was published in *Mercure de France*, Paul Fort's *Vers et Prose* and *Gil Blas*, and he became an important link between French and Italian poets. In 1902 Marinetti declared Mallarmé to be the greatest poet of the nineteenth century, translating his poetry from French into Italian, and eventually publishing a compilation of his works in 1916. Marinetti's own symbolist journal, *Poesia*, regularly featured poetry from the Paris group of neo-symbolists, including Paul Fort, Rene Ghil, and Jules Romains.²²

Marinetti and Romains became acquainted through their mutual association with the *L'Abbaye de Créteil*, which published Romains' book *La Vie Unanime* in 1908.²³ A favorable review of Romains' book published in *Poesia* declared it to be "...a perfect sample of poems on the individual and collective psyche."²⁴ Marinetti and Romains agreed on a number of ideas, many of which became underlying concepts in the genesis of Futurism. Both men embraced, even venerated, technology, modernity, and the sensation of simultaneity generated by life in the modern city. Furthermore, they both subscribed to the belief that artists, being superior to laymen, operated on the level of visionaries or guides, capable of divining the transcendental nature of life's experiences

²¹ Günter Berghaus, *The Genesis of Futurism: Marinetti's Early Career and Writings 1899-1909* (Leeds: The Society for Italian Studies, 1995), 5-6.

²² *Poesia (1905-1909)*, ed. François Livi, (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1992).

²³ Peter Brooke, *Albert Gleizes. For and Against the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 4-7. The Abbaye de Créteil was a commune on the outskirts of Paris established in 1906 by the poets Alexandre Mercereau, Charles Vildrac, René Arcos, and the artist Albert Gleizes. The goal of the Abbaye was a continuation of the late nineteenth-century Symbolist idea of integrating art with life. The Abbaye functioned until the end of 1908, with several writers and artists working to establish a self-sufficient community away from the commercialized art world of Paris where art and life would become symbiotically related to each other. The members of the Abbaye planned to support themselves financially by publishing and illustrating their own books and essays. However, by late 1908 the group disbanded in part due to financial difficulties and in part due to the diverse interests and goals of its members. For further information on the reciprocity of the relationship between Marinetti and Romains, see: Daniel Robbins, "From Symbolism to Cubism: The Abbaye of Créteil," *Art Journal* 23, no. 2 (1963-64), 111-116; and Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 258-68. Robbins suggests the term *Unanime* came from the symbolist poet Verhaeren's description of modern life as "*les Forces Unanimes*."

²⁴ Paolo Buzzi's review in *Poesia* IV, no. 8 (September 1908) is excerpted in *Poesia*, 258-259.

and transmitting those sensations through their art.²⁵ As a consequence, Marinetti and Romaines can be seen as supporters of the Symbolist goal of moving beyond objective sensory experience to a level where the apprehension of reality would rely more on a person's innate sense of intuition than solely on visual perception. However, the manner in which each man sought to promote his beliefs differed greatly. The revolutionary and violent manner of Marinetti contrasted sharply against the perceived optimism of Romaines. Nevertheless, Marinetti extended to Romaines an invitation to join the brotherhood of Futurism, but after an initial favorable response, Romaines declined.²⁶

Jules Romaines' poetic/philosophical movement, Unanimism, influenced many avant-garde artists during this time including Severini. The tenets of Unanimism proposed that all people share in a universal "collective consciousness," in which each person's thoughts and feelings become joined with those around them.²⁷ The experience of the "collective consciousness" would occur in group settings or situations, such as walking down a crowded boulevard, attending a wedding, or going to a nightclub. These experiences were thought to create a universal consciousness, where the individual becomes melded into the group of which they are a part. However, not everyone was capable of tapping into the "collective consciousness." Only those individuals with a higher intuitive capacity, such as artists and writers, would be able to access these communal sensations. By promoting the idea that this higher plane of communal consciousness or transcendental understanding was limited to certain members of society,

²⁵ Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 260.

²⁶ P.A. Jannini, ed., *La Fortuna del Futurismo* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, n.d.), 23. For Romaines' rejection of Futurism, see: Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 259 n. 15.

²⁷ Dennis Boak, *Jules Romaines* (New York: Twayne, 1974), 22. Jules Romaines experienced the sensation of "collective consciousness" as he walked down the Rue d'Amsterdam one day in October 1903, feeling himself in tune with the psyches of the people surrounding him on the boulevard.

these groups (Symbolism, Unanimism, and Futurism) bestowed artists with the responsibility of bringing the uninitiated to a higher plane of understanding through their artistic creations.

Beginning in 1907, Romain's poetry was published in Symbolist journals such as *Mercure de France*, *Vers et Prose*, and *La Phalange*.²⁸ While Romain's was not specifically part of the neo-symbolist movement, readers of such journals might easily have interpreted his work as symbolist due to its appearance in those publications. Furthermore, his presence in well-known neo-symbolist circles, and his association with poets like Gustave Kahn, René Ghil, and Émile Verhaeren, combined with Guillaume Apollinaire's enthusiastic review of *La Vie Unanime*, made Romain's poetry appear sympathetic with Symbolism.²⁹ Severini became aware of Unanimism sometime around 1910 and the impact was immediate. In *The Boulevard* of 1911 (Fig. 2), which is one of Severini's works most often discussed by scholars in terms of its Unanimist content, Severini seems to literally depict Romain's poem *Une autre âme s'avance*, where indistinct figures meld into the environment of the boulevard: "What is this that transfigures the Boulevard?/ The gait of the passers by is hardly a physical one/ They are no longer making movements, but rhythms/ And I no longer need my eyes to see them."³⁰ Severini's palette of complementary colors, based on cool blues and purples accentuated by horizontal patches of warm orange, drives the interplay of interlocking triangles, creating a slow, pulsating rhythm between foreground and background elements. The

²⁸ Kenneth Cornell, *The Post-Symbolist Period. French Poetic Currents, 1900-1920* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958), 74, 86.

²⁹ Rosalind Williams, "Jules Romain's, *Unanimisme*, and the Poetics of Urban Systems," in *Literature and Technology*, eds. Mark L. Greenberg and Lance Schachterle, (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), 181.

³⁰ Jules Romain's, *La Vie Unanime* (Paris: 1908). Romain's poem translated in Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism. Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 141.

dominant pyramidal structure that emanates from the center of the picture is suggestive of linear recession, yet it simultaneously denies this by the repetition of the pyramidal grid throughout the composition. The merging of figures into the surrounding environment seen in this small painting expresses the sense of the “collective consciousness” experienced by members of an urban society as the individual dissolves into the group. Instead of representing large office buildings and apartments, Severini chose instead to represent a tree-lined boulevard, which was very much a part of urban life in Paris. The patches of white throughout the composition may be read as snow while snowflakes are suggested across the upper portion of the canvas. Comparable to the boulevard scenes of the Impressionist painters, for example Claude Monet’s *Boulevard des Capucines* of 1873 (Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City), or Camille Pissarro’s *Boulevard Montmartre on a Winter Morning* of 1897 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Severini similarly represents a wintry Parisian boulevard. Although the triangular compositional pattern of the painting may be suggestive of a mountainous landscape, these areas actually create a tunnel-like sensation as the boulevard disappears into the distance and the strollers become engulfed in the surrounding environment. Severini’s inclusion of treetop branches in the spaces between the triangular peaks at the top of the canvas further emphasizes this sensation. Moreover, the windmill-like structure in the upper left portion of the canvas recalls the famous Moulin Rouge cabaret. In the upper right portion of the canvas, a similar starburst element is evident, and painted in lighter color it is perhaps representative of the electric lamps that illuminated the Parisian streets. This painting is a precursor to Severini’s next work, the monumental *Pan Pan*, in which he explores the unanimist experience generated by the vibrant atmosphere of a dance hall.

The philosophic poetry of Romain Rolland was considered by some to be a natural complement to the psychological philosophy of Henri Bergson, one of the most important and influential theorists of his time.³¹ Bergson's theories of memory, *durée*, and *élan vital* provided a continual source of discussion among students, artists, and the Parisian intelligentsia who attended his standing room only public lectures at the *Collège de France*.³² His texts were quickly translated into many languages, including a 1909 Italian translation by Giovanni Papini, an early Futurist collaborator.³³ Reviews and analyses of Bergson's philosophy, including comparisons to Symbolism, were regularly published in Parisian journals and newspapers.³⁴

Bergson's theories on intuition and duration corresponded to Romain Rolland's Unanimism in the sense that both men believed people were innately connected to one another through a collective or universal psyche.³⁵ This experience was particularly apt to happen while participating in a communal event, such as walking along a busy boulevard, attending parties, weddings, and the like. In Bergson's theory of duration (*durée*), he addressed the issue of how a person experiences the passage of time. Believing that no object or being is by nature a static entity, he suggested that all objects exist in a constant state of forward motion, fluidly moving from one state of being to the next. Furthermore, according to Bergson, the traditional concept of time, which is broken down into discrete units of seconds, minutes, and hours, was scientifically developed by

³¹ Fanette Roche-Pézard, *L'Aventure Futuriste 1909-1916* (Rome: École Française de Rome, Palais Farnèse, 1983), 34.

³² Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson-Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4, 10.

³³ Butler, 199 n. 33. *Filosofia dell'Intuizione* was published in Florence in 1909. See also: P.A.Y. Gunter, *Henri Bergson: A Bibliography. Revised Second Edition* (Ohio: Bowling Green State University, 1986), 93-153.

³⁴ Gunter, 93-153. Gunter provides entries for hundreds of articles and reviews of Bergson and his philosophies, too numerous to list here.

³⁵ Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 260.

man in an effort to control the temporal world through logic and order. Bergson saw this as being vastly at odds with the natural state of a person's internal *durée*, in which one moment passes to the next uninterrupted; in other words no gaps or stops happen between the stages.³⁶ Therefore, *durée* is a concept of time that is in continual motion, which is diametrically opposed to the stasis inherently produced by the scientific division of time. According to both Bergson and Romain Rolland, time and space are not discrete entities within the "collective consciousness" of society, and both postulated a theory of life comprised of a dynamic, simultaneous flow of sensations and vibrations. These theories coincided with and encouraged a growing tendency within artistic circles, including Futurism, to express internal sensations, or "states of mind," through visual representations of the external experiences that generated them. Bergson's specific influence on Futurist aesthetics and theory dates from the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* of 1910 and continues through the end of 1914.³⁷

Severini's *Memories of a Journey* (Fig. 3) has often been interpreted as a visual expression of Bergson's philosophy of the effects of memory upon *durée*.³⁸ Severini's acknowledgement of his debt to Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, which he read while visiting Florence in 1911, confirms such an interpretation.³⁹ Bergson's

³⁶ Henri Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme, 2d ed., (Originally published in 1903 as *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*; reprint and translation, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1955), 42.

³⁷ Virginia Spate, *Orphism. The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 75. Spate notes the existence of a broadsheet the Futurists produced of a Belgian article that analyzed the affinities between Futurism and Bergsonism.

³⁸ Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism," 264; Antliff, 53-54. See also: Christopher Green, "Border Crossings," in *Gino Severini: From Futurism to Classicism*, exhibition catalogue, (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 1999), 26. Green argues that Boccioni introduced Severini to Bergson in his October 1911 visit to Paris. This seems highly unlikely since Bergson was known and often discussed in Severini's circles beginning in 1909, and it is more probable that they each became aware of Bergson at roughly the same time, although through different circumstances.

³⁹ Denys Sutton, "The Singularity of Gino Severini," *Apollo* 97, no. 135 (May 1973), 448-461; 450.

discussion of memory seems the perfect textual counterpart to a painting representing distant memories of the artist's journey from Italy to France in 1906. Bergson wrote:

I perceive...all the perceptions which come to [oneself] from the material world...I notice the memories which more or less adhere to these perceptions and which serve to interpret them. These memories have been detached...from the depth of my personality, drawn to the surface by the perceptions which resemble them....⁴⁰

Bergson continued that the ‘past follows us, swell[ing] incessantly with the present that it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory.’⁴¹ In other words, one may never escape memory as it persistently imposes itself onto each moment experienced in the present. According to Severini, he recorded in this painting all of the ‘sensations of the artist's journey from his native house to Paris, the proportions and values being rendered in accordance with the emotion and the mentality of the painter.’⁴² Painted in a strong Neo-Impressionist style, utilizing thick *taches* of paint, this composition is formally at odds with the geometric structure of works such as *The Boulevard* (Fig. 2) and *Pan Pan* (Fig. 9), although the palette is similar to that of *The Boulevard*. The disruption of logical spatial and temporal viewpoints was an attempt by Severini to ‘totally [do] away with the unities of time and place’ - narrative and perspective - in order to represent the landmarks of his journey in ‘a painting of memory.’⁴³ Unanimism is also associated with *Memories of a Journey* in that conventional spatial-temporal relationships are rejected in the piling up of diverse imagery as in a passage from Romains' poetry: ‘The crowd, the house, the village, at this time/Become consciou s to

⁴⁰ Bergson, *Metaphysics*, 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴² ‘Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters,’ The Sackville Gallery, London, March 1912, reproduced in *Archivi del Futurismo, Volume 1*, eds. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori (Rome: De Luca, 1958-68. 2d 1986), 112.

⁴³ Gino Severini, ‘The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism,’ in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 121.

me in my brain.”⁴⁴ The number of artists who explored similar pictorial possibilities of memory at this time indicates the allure that Bergson’s theories had in avant-garde circles. Examples range from fellow Futurist Umberto Boccioni’s monumental *States of Mind* triptych (1911-12), Luigi Russolo’s *Memories of a Night* (1911) to Kees van Dongen’s *Memories of the Russian Opera Season* (1909). These works similarly combine memory with a synesthetic use of color in order to evoke the sounds and corresponding emotions represented in their images.

In early 1910 Severini made the acquaintance of a man who was to become the most important connection between Severini and the Symbolist movement. Shortly after aligning with Futurism, Severini was introduced by Marinetti to Paul Fort, a major figure in Parisian neo-symbolist circles, and his group at the café La Closerie de Lilas in Montparnasse. In Fort’s neo-symbolist environment, the memory and influence of Stéphane Mallarmé were palpable. Fort, who like Mallarmé before him, was dubbed the “*prince des poètes*,” held gatherings every Tuesday evening (*mardis soirees*) at La Closerie for artists and writers to gather and discuss various topics in the arts.⁴⁵ Severini was soon a regular attendee at these *mardis*, joining the company of artists as well as writers such as Gustave Kahn, Guillaume Apollinaire and Jules Romains.⁴⁶ Fort’s poetry, along with that of the poets mentioned above, kept the symbolist ethos of the late nineteenth-century alive within avant-garde Paris. Fort even appropriated the title of his

⁴⁴ Romains quoted in Pacini, “Gino Severini, L’Unanimismo..I,” 48.

⁴⁵ Paul Fort, *Mes Mémoires. Toute la vie d’un poète 1872-1943* (Paris: Flammarion, 1944), 55-66; 84-85. Paul Fort dedicates a chapter in his memoirs to a discussion of Stéphane Mallarmé and the influence of Symbolist poetry on himself and other neo-symbolist writers in his group.

⁴⁶ Severini, *Life*, 71-72. In his autobiography, Severini devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of the history of La Closerie des Lilas, “the café of the Symbolist poets,” and his experiences with the artists and poets who gathered there, including Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger, Henri Le Fauconnier, and Marcel Duchamp. As Albert Gleizes was a founding member of the Abbaye, he would have been an important source of information about contemporary poetry, and particularly of Unanimism, for Severini.

literary journal, *Vers et Prose*, from Mallarmé's book, *Choisis Morceau de Vers et Prose*.⁴⁷ Due to Mallarmé's deified status in this setting, it is easy to imagine that the poet's famous statement that "à danc er is not a woman who dances..but a metaphor.." had a profound impact on Severini just as he was beginning to explore the theme of dance in his own work. Severini's bond to this group was firmly solidified in 1913 with his marriage to Jeanne Fort, the daughter of Paul Fort.⁴⁸

Several essays published in *Vers et Prose* during 1909-1910 dealt with aspects of the present symbolist movement. Severini's awareness of these, and similar writings, may be presumed in light of his contact with Fort. The September 1910 issue of the journal published an unfinished essay written by Paul Gauguin in which he theorized on the musical aspects of painting:

[In] painting...all sensations are condensed, everyone...with a single glance [has] his soul invaded by the most profound recollections...everything is summed up in one instant. Like music, it acts on the soul through the intermediary of the senses: harmonious colors correspond to the harmonies of sound.⁴⁹

Here, the correlations between music and painting, sound and color, is presented as an integral part of the painted image. Severini takes a similar approach in his work the following year when he sought to render the musical quality of the dance spectacle through the use of specific color harmonies. Gauguin's essay may have provided further

⁴⁷ Fort, 84.

⁴⁸ Severini, *Life*, 126-128. Severini's wedding was widely reported in journals and newspapers, and filmed for the evening newsreels. Paul Fort called it "the marriage of France and Italy." While his Futurists friends had tried to dissuade him from marriage, fearing it would distract him from his Futurist obligations, Marinetti nevertheless came at Severini's request in his white automobile, and along with Guillaume Apollinaire, acted as his witness. Others in attendance were Fernand Léger, Jean Metzinger, and Max Jacob.

⁴⁹ Chipp, 60-64. The essay "Notes Synthétiques" was written in Pont -Aven in 1888 and left incomplete. The essay was first published in *Vers et Prose* XXII (July-September, 1910), 51-55.

confirmation to Severini that a symbolic and analogical approach to color would allow for a more complete expression of mood, ambiance, and emotion.⁵⁰

Severini's first painting to explore the theme of dance was *Dancers at the Monico*, 1910 (Fig. 4).⁵¹ Painted in a modified Neo-Impressionist technique, Severini's application of large blocks of color creates the shimmering, dappled effect of the ambient light emitted by the gas lamps flickering overhead. Certain elements of this composition bear comparison to Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Le Moulin de la Galette* of 1876 (Fig. 5). Although the settings differ, Renoir's being outdoors and Severini's indoors, both works present the viewer with a romantic view of a Parisian dance hall and its patrons. Severini eliminated all foreground objects, such as tables and chairs, and placed himself (recognizable by his trademark monocle) and his partner center stage. Both Renoir and Severini grant the viewer access into the scene by establishing eye contact with figures in the composition. Moreover, the pose of Severini and his dance partner echo that of the dancing couple emphasized in the left portion of Renoir's image. By contrast, however, Severini engages the viewer more emphatically by eliminating all visual boundaries, as opposed to the tables and chairs Renoir placed in the foreground of his painting, thereby creating a dance floor that is virtually contiguous with the viewer's space. By allowing direct access to the dance floor, Severini prefigures his later Futurist preoccupation with placing the viewer at the center of the canvas.

⁵⁰ Severini was certainly aware of Gauguin's legacy and importance to the development of avant-garde painting and presuming he read the article, would have understood its importance to him as an artist. Moreover, as Paul Fort and Lugné-Poë knew Gauguin from earlier years, there can be little doubt that his influence was still very much in the air.

⁵¹ No color reproduction has been found for this work. The palette may be similar to *Printemps à Montmartre*, 1911.

Dancers at the Monico may also be compared to Toulouse-Lautrec's *Un Coin du Moulin de la Galette* of 1889 (Fig. 6). Both Renoir's and Lautrec's works serve to document the dancers and their surroundings, an interest that was recurrent in Severini's imagery. In all three paintings, the artists are careful to distinguish between the various social classes that could be seen at cabarets and dance-halls, and represent them accordingly by their clothing and headwear. This detail of descriptive or documentary reality is an element that reappears throughout Severini's dance imagery. Similarly, both Severini and Lautrec knew several local dancers personally, and while Lautrec tended to portray his subjects in a caricature-like manner, Severini later tried to capture their internal essence by decreasing focus on their exterior presence. Other examples were also available to Severini, particularly in the work of Pablo Picasso and Kees van Dongen, who both sought source material from the dance halls and cabarets they frequented. Works that were possibly known by Severini at the time he painted *Dancers at the Monico* include Picasso's *Moulin de la Galette*, 1900 (Fig. 7)⁵², and Van Dongen's *Moulin de la Galette* of 1904 (Fig. 8).⁵³ While differing stylistically from Severini's

⁵² Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso Style and Meaning* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2002), 73-74. Although Picasso derided the famous Parisian cabaret in his painting for being run down and expensive, he nevertheless understood the popularity of such images as a means of establishing himself as an artist in Paris. Renoir's *Moulin de la Galette* was in the Musée du Luxembourg prior to Picasso's first trip to Paris in 1900 and may have influenced his composition. Picasso is also known to have admired Toulouse-Lautrec's cabaret scenes, to which this painting bears some resemblance with the composition and the caricature-like quality of the faces. Severini recounts Picasso's 1901 exhibition at Ambroise Vollard's gallery, where his works based on Parisian nightlife were shown. Severini did not see the works personally, but claims to have seen reproductions sometime in 1910. See: Severini, *Life*, 53; and *Picasso: The Early Years 1892-1906*, ed. Marilyn McCully, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 35.

⁵³ Jan van Adrichem, "Kees van Dongen's early years in Rotterdam and Paris," in *Kees van Dongen*, exhibition catalogue. (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1990), 19. It is possible that Severini knew van Dongen's work through his friendship with Picasso's group, of which van Dongen was a part, and through his association with Félix Fénéon, who was critical to van Dongen's first exhibition in 1904 at Ambroise Vollard's studio. Van Dongen also was under contract with Bernheim-Jeune Gallery by 1909 (he first exhibited there in 1908) and regularly exhibited there until 1914. Evidence of Severini's admiration of van Dongen is found in a letter to Boccioni in early 1910, where he wrote of van Dongen's abilities as a "synthetic and instinctive painter," and praised his use of color and his focus on the subject,

painting, they may nonetheless have played a role in validating dance as a viable subject matter.

It is apparent that Severini's development from Italian Divisionism to Futurism, interpreted through Neo-Impressionist techniques, was predicated on his assimilation of the various intellectual and visual stimuli he found within Parisian avant-garde circles. Over the course of the next three years, Severini will use Futurist and Symbolist aesthetics to depict the exterior reality, and internal vibration of his experience of the cabarets and dance halls of Paris. His goal was not visual mimesis, but rather to intuitively create a deeper vision of reality that could communicate his perceptions of the collective psychology of modern city life.

calling him a 'painter of our epoch.' See: Elena Pontiggia, 'Il primo rapporto sul Cubismo: lettera di Severini a Boccioni,' *Critica d' Arte* 52, no. 12 (January-March 1987), 62-70, esp. 68.

CHAPTER 2

FUTURIST MANIFESTOS AND EARLY FUTURISM

Italian Futurism as a literary movement burst onto the international scene in 1909 with the publication of F.T. Marinetti's *Founding Manifesto of Futurism* in the Parisian journal *Le Figaro*.¹ While this manifesto is most often associated with Futurism, it has little to do with the Futurist aesthetic program. However, certain images suggested in this text, such as "great crowds excited by work, by pleasure and by riot," became staples of Futurist imagery. Railway stations, "deep-chested locomotives," and the automobile similarly found their place in Futurist works. The manifesto was outrageous in its glorification of war, exaltation of speed, industry and the machine and its call for the destruction of museums and libraries. As a literary manifesto, Futurism was indebted to ideas garnered from Unanimism and Symbolism.² Marinetti extolled the virtues of modern city life and industrialization, and promoted the belief, derived from Friedrich Nietzsche, in the artist as a sort of *Übermensch*, a superman who could rise up to fulfill the call for the renewal of Italian art and society. The scope of Futurism soon expanded to include the visual arts and the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* was published in

¹ F.T. Marinetti, "Founding Manifesto of Futurism," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 19-24. The manifesto appeared on the front page of *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909.

² For information on the literary sources influential to the development of Futurism, see: Marianne Martin, "Futurism, Unanimism and Apollinaire," *Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (1969) (258-268), 259; F.T. Marinetti, *Le Futurisme*, (Paris: 1911; reprint with a preface by Giovanni Lista, Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1980), 7 - 69; and Daniel J. Robbins, "Sources of Cubism and Futurism," *Art Journal* 41, no. 4 (December 1981), 324-327.

February 1910.³ Severini's friend from Rome, Umberto Boccioni, was one of the first members of this new movement and sent Severini a copy of the manifesto asking him to join the Futurist cause. Severini responded enthusiastically and joined Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, and his mentor from Rome, Giacomo Balla, in the call to revivify the languorous state of Italian art.

The *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* is a vehement expression of the group's desire to "rebel..against everything..corroded by time," by embracing the "triumphant progress of science" which made "profound changes in humanity inevitable." Declaring that Italian painting was suffering from the "foul laziness" of artists who "exploited the glories of the ancient Romans," the Futurists were determined to awaken the creative Italian spirit with "new flights of artistic inspiration." The new "living art" of Futurism was to "draw its life from the surrounding environment," and not from religious sources, as it had in the past. In a decidedly unanimist tone, appropriate Futurist subjects were to reflect "tangible miracles of contemporary life," including transatlantic ocean liners, airplanes, and "the frenetic life of our great cities and ..the exciting new psychology of nightlife..." An ironic declaration of "war" was made against those who falsely represented themselves as modern while still adhering to traditional means of expression. Proposing the elimination of genre, landscape, and portrait painting, the Futurists railed against all "superficiality and banality." The manifesto ends with a commandment-like list that called for "destroy[ing] the cult of the past; elevating all attempts at originality;

³ Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini and Giacomo Balla, "Manifesto of Futurist Painters," in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 24-27. All quotations regarding this manifesto are taken from this source. The manifesto was first published by *Poesia* as a leaflet on February 10, 1910 and then published in the Parisian journal *Comeodia* in May 1910 with immediate critique in other Parisian newspapers (for example in *L'Intransigeant* on May 17, 1910). For a selection of the responses to Futurism published in French journals, see: *La Fortuna del Futurismo*, ed. P.A. Jannini, (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, n.d.), 223ff.

rebel[ling] against the tyranny of the words ‘harmony’ and ‘good taste’; and support and glory in our day to day world.”

While the group was clear in what they deplored about contemporary Italian art, and confident that they would become the leaders of a modern renaissance, they were unclear as to how they were going to achieve their goals visually. At this time, no Futurist painting had been produced. To that end, the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* was released two months later in April of 1910, and specified the means of achieving the new Futurist aesthetic.⁴ More firmly positioned to begin the creation of Futurist works in earnest, the five artists embarked on an intense two-year period of work that culminated in the 1912 Futurist Exhibition at the Bernheim Jeune Gallery in Paris.

Severini began his exploration into the expression of Futurist ideology in 1910, but it was 1911 that proved to be the most productive, as he completed a number of paintings, including *The Boulevard* (Fig. 2), *The Milliner*, *Voice in my Bedroom*, *Haunting Dancer* and *Yellow Dancers*. This intense period of creativity culminated with the monumental *Dance of the Pan-Pan at the Monico* (Fig. 9). The environment of the dance hall, which bombarded the senses with loud music, jostling bodies, and radiant electric lights, appeared to Severini as an ideal setting for his visualization of Futurism. Dance could be seen as the definitive manifestation of modernity, but it was also a spectacle that Mallarmé believed could “translate the fleeting and the sudden into the Idea.”⁵ Perhaps Severini had this in mind when he selected the microcosmic world of the dance hall as his inspiration. In this environment, the dancer was “..not a woman who

⁴ Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini, and Giacomo Balla, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting, 1910” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 27-31. All of the quotes contained herein regarding this text are from this source.

⁵ Marianne Martin, “The Futurist Gesture: Futurism and the Dance,” *Kunst, Musik, Schauspiel* 2, International Congress of the History of Art (CIHA), (Vienna September 1983), 95-113, 97.

dances...but a metaphor...” and in this sense became a metaphor for the *élan vital*, the dynamic essence of life.⁶ Through the movements of dancers Severini would be able to go beyond mere physical representation and give plastic form to the elusive Idea.

Standing as an extraordinary amalgamation of the Futurist tenets in the *Technical Manifesto*, the *Pan Pan* also includes ideas from contemporary philosophy and nineteenth-century symbolist theory. In a letter to Marinetti dated May 1911, Severini expressed his unwavering dedication to Futurism, approving of its program by citing a fundamental passage of the manifesto: “the gesture that we want...will be the dynamic sensation itself.”⁷ This letter has been interpreted as evidence of Severini’s symbolist leanings, in that the term “gesture” was often used in symbolist circles as a metaphor for life.⁸ Attempting to capture the “exciting new psychology of nightlife” in one monumental canvas, Severini clearly recognized a potential affinity between Futurist doctrine and Symbolism.

As an artist wanting to convey movement, the effects of bodies dematerializing in electric light, and the sensation of simultaneity experienced in a dance hall, Severini needed a suitably expressive painting technique. The Futurists proclaimed in the *Technical Manifesto* that Divisionism was, for the “modern painter, ... an *innate complementariness* [that was] ... essential and necessary.” Although his Italian colleagues had the Italian Divisionist style of Segantini and Previati in mind, for Severini,

⁶ Dee Reynolds, “The dancer as woman: Loïe Fuller and Stéphane Mallarmé,” in *Impressions of French Modernity. Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 166.

⁷ Anne Coffin Hanson, *Severini Futurista: 1912-1917*, exhibition catalogue, (Connecticut: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), 134.

⁸ Marianne Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory. 1909-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1968), 38-39.

the divisionism of Seurat seemed a more appropriate model to follow.⁹ Wanting to go beyond the stasis of Degas' dancers, Severini felt he could 'achieve effects of movement, never yet attempted, and a more pronounced lyricism' through a modified Neo-Impressionist approach.¹⁰ Visually these were concepts that could not be realized through traditional painting methods that relied upon linear perspective, imperceptible brushstrokes or dull color. Only through the vibrating effects of paint 'gleam[ing] with light and richness,' applied to the canvas in small bricks of pure color 'like diamonds,' would Severini be able to realize his desired visual aesthetic.¹¹

In the *Pan Pan*, Severini denied traditional one-point perspective in favor of multiple viewpoints that advance and recede within the canvas. In an environment where "space no longer exists" the faceted, fragmented figures overlap and interconnect in an attempt to suggest the dancers' movements. This desire to capture the sensation of motion is directly related to Bergson's philosophy of *durée*, in which he states that "*form is immobile and reality is movement*," where "*form is only an instant view of transition*."¹² The reality of the painting is the two dancers who converge at the center of

⁹ Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini*, trans. by Jennifer Franchina, (originally published as *La Vita di un Pittore*, 1946); reprint with an introduction by Anne Coffin Hanson, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 37; 53. Severini characterized his approach to this aspect of Futurism as "a consequence of Neo-Impressionism (Seurat, Signac) and Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas..." compared to that of his Milanese colleagues whose works were "influenced by Jugendstil...[and] a continuation of the Lombardian tradition of Segantini, Previati..." He went on to state: "I was interested in achieving a creative freedom, a style that I could express with Seurat's...color technique, but shaped to my own needs. Proof that I found it is in my paintings of that period, among which is the famous *Pan-Pan a Monico*. My preference for Neo-Impressionism dates from those works. At times I tried to suppress it, but it always worked its way back to the surface."

¹⁰ Ibid., 53-54. Regarding this period of activity, Severini later recalled: "This point marked the beginning of a series of drawings I wanted to do in a very different way from those of Degas who always painted them [dancers] in static poses."

¹¹ Elena Pontiggia, "Il primo rapporto sul Cubismo: lettera di Severini a Boccioni," *Critica d'Arte* 52, no. 12 (January-March 1987), 62-70, 66.

¹² Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, (1907), quoted in Ivor Davies, "Western European Art Forms Influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson Before 1914, Particularly Italian Futurism and French Orphism," *Art International* 19, no. 3 (1977), 49-55; 54.

the canvas in a dynamic interplay of pulsating, disjointed movements reflecting the instantaneous views of one transitional motion to the next. In fact, the pan-pan dance was choreographed for two female dancers to be positioned against each other, back to front, dancing to the banging rhythm of the orchestra, with one hitting the other on the backside (hence the name “pan pan” which translates to “tail” and “bang”).¹³ Although the fractured nature of Severini’s figures denies a sense of fluid motion, he succeeds in conveying the rapid rhythm of the dance and by repeating the two dancers throughout the canvas he also imparts a sense of simultaneous vision. Movement depicted through the multiplication of form comes directly from the *Technical Manifesto*, which states “moving objects constantly multiply themselves...like rapid vibrations.” This tenet of Futurism was ostensibly based on Bergson’s discussion of Eadweard Muybridge and Jules-Etienne Marey’s chronophotography in which he describes the isolating process of their photography which causes “the gallop of a horse [to] spread out..into as many success attitudes as it wishes...”¹⁴ In the *Technical Manifesto*, the Futurists offered almost the exact same example of a galloping having twenty legs instead of four when observed in motion. In Apollinaire’s opinion of the 1912 Futurist Exhibition, the *Pan*

¹³ Fanette Roche-Pézar, *L’Aventure Futuriste 1909-1916* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1983), 240. In a letter to the author, Jeanne Severini gave an account of the Pan Pan dance from which the above description is taken. There has been discussion by some scholars that Severini was perhaps engaging in a play of words in the title of this painting. See: Silvia Carandini, “‘One Evening Experiencing the Action of a Dancer’: Gino Severini, Paris and the Dance,” in *Gino Severini. The Dance 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Milan: Skira Editore S.p.A., 2001), 52. Carandini suggests that Severini may have been attempting a play on words in his title as “pan” also can mean “piece of a prism,” or perhaps even a reference to the mythological god Pan. Carandini also suggests the onomatopoetic use in French of the word “pan” as the sound of a champagne cork popping. Additionally, “Pan Pan” was a well-known Parisian song, thereby facilitating recognition within the spectators’ imagination of the atmosphere they were witnessing. See: Severini, *Life*, 110. Severini recounted in his autobiography that a local Parisian woman sung this song to Boccioni during his visit to Paris: “Il est dingo pan pan pan pan / il a tout du ballot pan pan pan pan.” (“He is nuts pan pan pan pan / He plays the clown pan pan pan pan.”)

¹⁴ Bergson quoted in Davies, 54. Bergson’s comments on the advantages of modern photography, which could isolate movement, may be related to the photographic works of Eadweard Muybridge and Jules Etienne Marey.

Pan was a success, “..the most important work yet painted by a futurist. Movement is well rendered in this canvas, and since no optical fusion of colors occurs, everything is in motion, as the artist wished.”¹⁵

Although influenced by the pictorial innovations of Braque and Picasso’s Analytic Cubism, particularly in the disassembling and reassembling of objects, Severini’s work was quite different from that of his Cubist colleagues.¹⁶ Stating that the “highly evolved ones [the Cubists] will be satisfied with such movement as a chair may have,” Severini referred to himself as a “primitive [who is] thrilled by the movement of a dancer and boulevard filled with people.”¹⁷ In this he echoes a claim made by the Futurists in the *Technical Manifesto*, that they were “the primitives of a new sensitiveness,” producing an art that was “intoxicated with spontaneity and power.”

Severini’s choice of red and green as the dominant colors of the dancers intensifies the “rapid vibration” of their movements through the optical tension produced by the contrast of complementary colors. The “innate complementariness” of Divisionism that the Futurists deemed “essential and necessary” to the modern painter was a concept that encompassed more than just the relationship of colors. It also called for the representation of corresponding sensations, such as: ‘sight/smell, noise/vision, or

¹⁵ Guillaume Apollinaire, “The Italian Futurist Painters,” *L’Intransigeant* (February 7, 1912). Text reproduced in Leroy C. Breunig, ed., *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918*, trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 200. In this review, Apollinaire goes on to state that he was “less fond of Severini’s other canvases, which have been overly influenced by neo-impressionist technique and by Van Dongen’s forms.”

¹⁶ Severini, *Life*, 63. Severini stated: “Picasso had just started..to dismantle objects, in order to present different points of view. Such freedom of thought and action was an important example for me...” However, the influence was not always a one way street, as Severini recalled that after showing his *Memories of a Journey* to Picasso, he was later invited to the Spaniard’s studio and was shown *Still Life (Memory of Le Havre)*, which was a painted recollection of Picasso’s visit to Georges Braque’s hometown. See: Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighton, *Cubism and Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 89.

¹⁷ Severini quoted in Fonti, “The Dance,” 15.

object/environment.”¹⁸ In Severini’s case this idea was expanded to include the complementariness of color/sound and dance/music. The synesthetic elements inherent in these correspondences are expressed in the *Technical Manifesto* as the Futurists’ desire to have “sensations...sing and re -echo upon [their canvases] in deafening and triumphant flourishes.” Apollinaire applauded the “symphonic form” of Futurist painting as compared to the “melodic form” of French painting.¹⁹ In a letter of 1913 Severini explained that the execution of *Pan Pan* “was influenced by the sounds of the ambience [and the painting]...was only musical, to the detriment of the volumes and the forms that [I] had unconsciously neglected...[in] following the greater emotional cause: the sounds.”²⁰ By using high-keyed colors and sharp, angular lines to define form, Severini creates in the viewer’s mind the “sensation of the bustle and hubbub created by the *tsiganes* [gypsy musicians], the champagne-sodden crowd, the perverse dance of the professionals, the clashing of colors, and [the sound of] laughter at the famous night-taverne at Montmartre.”²¹

With the nearly life size figures of *Pan Pan*, Severini places the viewer at the center of the picture as a witness and active participant in the spectacle taking place

¹⁸ Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 53 n. 1. The original Italian text of “complementarismo congenito” has been interpreted in various ways. In 1958, Severini stated that the term referred to the equation of divisionism and complementariness as a natural association. (“La phrase ‘complmentarismo congenito’...voulait dire que désormais le divisionisme et complementarisme étaient devenus une habitude, une chose naturelle.”) Martin suggests a possible occult reference, as ‘complementarismo congenito’ was more than technique, but a way of ‘bringing the artist in closer touch with universal forces.’ However, a more complete definition of the term states that “the innate quality of an element by which it exists only by the presence of its complement (for example: sight/smell, noise/vision, object/environment.) See: Joshua Taylor, “Color and Form,” in *Color & Form, 1909-1914; the origin and evolution of abstract painting in Futurism, Orphism, Rayonnism, Synchronism, and Blue Rider*, exhibition catalog, (San Diego: Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, 1971), 20.

¹⁹ Apollinaire on Art, 204.

²⁰ *Archivi del Futurismo Volume 1*, eds. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori (Rome: De Luca, 1958-68; 2nd ed. 1986), 291-293. Letter from Severini to Ardegno Soffici, September 27, 1913 (Pienza).

²¹ Ibid., 112. This text is from a portion of Severini’s catalogue entry for this painting in the catalogue to the Futurist’s 1912 exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in London.

across the surface of the canvas. The impression of fractured time and place generated by this environment decorated by crystal chandeliers and mirrored walls,²² corresponds with Bergson's description of movement between one body and another as "arrangement[s] like that of the pieces of glass that compose a kaleidoscopic picture. Our activity goes on from arrangement to arrangement..."²³ Although Bergson was referring specifically to the effects of cinematography on the visual perception of figures or objects, the imagery of *Pan Pan* does indeed resemble a kaleidoscopic view of movement.²⁴ Moreover, the nature of cinema to transport viewers to a place outside the mundane reality of their world is in fact similar to the goals of the Futurists, that is, to place the viewer at the center of the picture in order for that person to experience a reality outside of their own. The viewer becomes the spectator, actively engaged with the scene similar to the state of suspended disbelief experienced when viewing a film.

By "rendering the whole of the surrounding environment," as advocated in the *Technical Manifesto*, the patrons of the dance hall merge into one pulsating organism. This painting can be seen as a reflection of the unanimist experience expressed in Romains' poem, "Le Théâtre," where people become united through "the noise, the odour, the moistness, the breath, [in which they] come together to fill the illuminated space; the limbs, and nerves and muscles of all work to forge the great and unique joy.

²² Daniela Fonti, "Gino Severini. The Dance," in *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 19. Fonti describes the Monico's décor.

²³ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, (1908), quoted in Davies, 53. The passage continues: "...the cinematographical character of our knowledge of things is due to the kaleidoscopic character of our adaptation to them..."

²⁴ For an interesting parallel to this painting, see: Dee Reynolds, "The dancer as woman: Loïe Fuller and Stéphane Mallarmé," in *Impressions of French Modernity. Art and Literature in France 1850-1900*, ed. Richard Hobbs, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 158-159. Reynolds describes Loïe Fuller's "Mirror Dance," where Fuller erected a glass wall with a series of mirrors placed at diagonals that formed a triangular space on the stage: "...the invisible glass wall functioned as a mirror for the dancer and in turn projected its reflections on to the diagonal mirrors behind, in which the audience perceived the dancer as a disembodied, kaleidoscopic series of images."

And the individual dissolves...”²⁵ Connected through shared psychic interrelationships, the individual becomes part of a collective experience that represents the totality of modern consciousness. Admitting the difficulty “..of abstracting [himself] totally from visual reality,” Severini combined his memories of the experience and “..all the resources of [his] fantasy without remorse and freely employ[ed] observations and real-life studies,” hoping to “generate a sense of dynamism and vivacity.”²⁶ Included in *Pan Pan* are visual elements that Severini referred to as “transcendental realism,” such as the woman on the staircase “painted in a Toulouse-Lautrec like manner” in the left portion of the canvas and the champagne glasses in the foreground. Through these two elements, which are stylistically different than the rest of the composition, Severini provides the viewer with recognizable objects that add an element of tangible reality to a painting that is otherwise concerned with the simultaneous visions produced in the mind of the artist as he remembers past experiences at the Monico. Moreover, if the male figure located just off center in the canvas, who seems to be embraced by the dancer in green, is a self-portrait, then Severini has provided the viewer with an image that both reflects and transcends reality in his effort to convey the essence of the dancers and dance-hall as experienced and remembered by the artist.²⁷

Severini’s painting of the *Pan Pan* can be compared with works by Fernand Léger and Robert Delaunay of the same period. Even though each of these artists had different

²⁵ Jules Romains, *La Vie Unanime Poème 1904-1907*, (Originally published 1908. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1926; 1983), 66-67. This passage is discussed in Piero Pacini, “Gino Severini, L’Unanimismo di Jules Romains e le Danze Cromatiche di Loïe Fuller I,” *Antichità Viva* 29, no. 6 (1990), 44-53, exp. 52; and is also referenced in Fonti, “The Dance,” 19. Fonti relates this passage to Severini’s *Haunting Dancer*, which is also the work she equates with Mallarmé’s essay on the theater. However, both can similarly be applied to the *Pan Pan*.

²⁶ Severini, *Life*, 64. “In one corner of the *Pan Pan* painting there is an elegant lady...painted in a somewhat Toulouse-Lautrec style, and, therefore, almost realistically.”

²⁷ There is another head that may be identified as Severini’s self-portrait which is located in the center right portion of the canvas, where the only visible portion of the man’s face is the eye with a monocle and nose.

formal concerns, at this point they all shared a common interest in representing aspects of modern Paris, which they each accomplished through serial explorations of their chosen motifs. Delaunay's *Eiffel Tower* series of 1911-1912 (Fig. 10) highlights the quintessential monument of modernity, while Léger's smoke motif in the *Fumée* series of 1911 explores the rise in industrial production as attested to by the billowing smoke stacks rising above city roofs.²⁸ These themes are paralleled by Severini's use of dance as a metaphor for the dynamic sensation of simultaneity that was perceived as a fundamental aspect of the increased pace of life in a modern world. Furthermore, all three artists share a common relationship to Unanimism.²⁹ Delaunay's celebration of the Eiffel Tower and Léger's representation of smoke as a defining characteristic of the Paris skyline is in line with the unanimist exaltation of the modern city. Moreover, Severini and Léger engaged with the psychological aspects of Unanimism in their paintings, such as in *Pan Pan* and Léger's *The Wedding* of 1911-12 (Fig. 11). Both artists represent group activities in which large numbers of people participate in a common, joyful experience. In unanimist terms, events or activities such as these were the catalyst for stimulating the "collective consciousness." These two monumental canvases therefore represent similar unanimist ideas through a combination of the first-hand experiences and memories of these two artists.³⁰

²⁸ For a discussion of Léger's use of smoke as a motif of modernity, see: Judy Sund, 'Fernand Léger and Unanimism: Where There's Smoke...', *Oxford Art Journal* 7 no. 1 (1984), 49-56.

²⁹ Virginia Spate, *Orphism. The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 247-8. All of these works were singled out in the 1911 and 1912 exhibitions as being Unanimist in content. Léger may have been influenced by Futurist painting as *The Wedding* was completed shortly after the Futurist Exhibition in 1912 and exhibited at the *Salon des Independents*. For a discussion of Romain's influence on Léger, see Sund.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 247. According to Spate, the wedding of Léger's friend André Mare, which Léger attended, may have inspired this painting and it is possible that Léger used a photograph of himself at the wedding to aid in the composition.

Severini's next major painting, *Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal-Tabarin* of 1912 (Fig. 12), completed in Pienza, Italy and expanding on the ideas of *Pan Pan*, is a more fully developed and complex Futurist composition.³¹ In this work Severini explores the Bergsonian concept of the persistence of memory on present events. During the winter of 1911, Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, and Marinetti came to Paris at Severini's request to see the latest in avant-garde art in order to more adequately prepare themselves for their upcoming exhibition. During this visit, Severini took his friends to the Bal Tabarin cabaret, where, he later recalled "they were, quite frankly, amazed" at the lavish spectacle of the dance hall.³² In the composition, the artist painted himself in the extreme lower right corner (distinguishable only by the top of his straw hat), and above him Marinetti is recognizable by his moustache and monocle. The imagery of the dancers and the nightclub surrounding Severini's head expands outward, covering every square inch of the canvas in a mixture of visions of past experiences at the Tabarin, which he had been frequenting since 1910, and the specific memory of his colleagues' visit to the city the previous winter. Severini amalgamates Bergsonian theories of memory and the Futurist notion of representing "states of mind." Interestingly, however, instead of painting the image from the perspective of a detached observer, depicting the states of mind of those he observes as Boccioni had done in his *States of Mind* triptych of 1911, Severini represents *his* state of mind as a participant and as an artist.³³ Félix Vallotton's *The Waltz*

³¹ Severini, *Life*, 107. Although the precise dates are unknown, Severini appears to have left for Pienza between July and August of 1912 and returned to Paris by September 1912. The Bal Tabarin opened in 1904 with can-can dancers as entertainment and a cabaret for "lower class clientele" called *Le Paradis* in the basement. Throughout the following years, dances such as the waltz, the mambo and the boogie-woogie were performed at the Bal Tabarin. See: Elaine Brody, *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope 1870-1925* (New York: George Braziller, 1987), 110.

³² Severini, *Life*, 54.

³³ Boccioni's triptych represents three "states of mind" of people at a train station: *The Farewells*, *Those Who Go*, and *Those Who Stay*. Boccioni's color palette of blue and green, punctuated by areas of red, was

of 1893 (Fig. 13) provides an interesting precedent for the literal representation of a particular state of mind.³⁴ In this painting, a young woman's head in the lower right corner is surrounded by swirling pairs of dancers who emerge from a soft haze as if from a dream. The contrast between the woman's highly rendered face and the imprecise, ephemeral quality of the dancers highlights the transcendental state of the woman and can in some ways be related to Severini's concept in *Bal Tabarin*.

The *Bal Tabarin* also differs formally from the *Pan Pan* in that the fractured, staccato rhythm of the *Pan Pan* has been supplanted by a more fluid, lyrical representation Futurist dynamism. In contrast to the repetition of the two dancers in the *Pan Pan* in order to create a sense of movement, Severini's focuses on two dancers who become more abstracted in their monumentality. Furthermore, the less rigid and angular forms of the dancers allowed Severini to 'express plastically and rhythmically the absolute feeling of the environment.'³⁵ Curving lines and overlapping transparent planes of color cause the dancers to dissolve and reappear in diaphanous patterns of light. The composition is disposed along the front of the picture plane, thus heightening the sensation of frenzied action in this popular Parisian nightspot, which Severini vibrantly described as:

..[a] generous display of scantily clad beauties and a carnivalesque inventiveness ..[the] beautifully masked and underdressed women, with showers of confetti, multicolored streamers. The atmosphere was one of frenzy...³⁶

used in conjunction with line and form to express the feelings of sadness, longing and anxiety for each group of people. This idea of color, line and form being used to evoke emotions or sensations from the viewer is based in Symbolist theory, and therefore, not unlike what Severini was doing at this time as well.

³⁴ It should be noted that Vallotton was a friend of Lugné-Poë's and had spent considerable time at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Severini mentions Vallotton in his autobiography as a follower of Gauguin in the Symbolist movement, which he described as a tendency between Neo-Impressionism and Fauvism.

³⁵ Hanson, 145. Letter from Severini to Marinetti dated February 9, 1913 (Paris).

³⁶ Severini, *Life*, 54.

Continuing his exploration of Neo-Impressionist technique, the texture and color of this painting corresponds to the artist's preference for "divisionism of analogous brushstrokes, with relative differences of tone [that] models color harmoniously [similar to a] musical scale, [which] raises its luminous and dynamic power..."³⁷ Reminiscent of Wassily Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*³⁸, Severini's first draft of his manifesto contains analogies that equate certain dance rhythms with specific colors.³⁹ According to Severini, the "color sounds" of the Waltz are analogous to pale blue, pale violet and emerald green, and in *Bal Tabarin* all three colors are used.⁴⁰ This symbolist-based theory of synesthesia echoes a passage of Baudelaire's "Correspondences," in which the poet declared that he would be amazed if "a musical tone could not elicit a color, if colors could not evoke a melodic motif, and if notes and colors were not suited to conveying thoughts...expressed by mutual analogy..."⁴¹ Severini will address the idea of mutual analogy within a year when he begins to develop his plastic analogy paintings. Here, however, Severini utilizes the emotive potentiality of color to express the rhythm of the

³⁷ *Archivi I*, 311-312. Portions of Severini's 1914 letter to Sprovieri are quoted in John Gage, "Severini's Socks or the Dancing Colours," in *Gino Severini. The Dance 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Milan: Skira Editore S.p.A., 2001), 37.

³⁸ Spate, 29. Although it is not clear whether Severini was familiar with this text, Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* was published in German in 1912 (Kandinsky first drafted this text in 1910). However, Delaunay received a copy of the text through his friendship with Kandinsky, and Kupka, Apollinaire, and Picabia's wife all read and spoke German. It is possible that Kandinsky's theory on the relationship between color and music was known in the Cubist/Orphist circles fairly early after its publication.

³⁹ Although Kandinsky drew correlations between colors and specific instruments, even differentiating between various hues and sounds, the overall premise is the same in that specific colors can draw very specific associations with sound.

⁴⁰ Gino Severini, "Art du fantastique dans le sacré. (Peinture de la Lumière, de la Profondeur, du Dynamisme. Manifeste futuriste.)," in *Gino Severini Ecrits sur l'art, 1913-1962*, with a preface by Serge Fauchereau, (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 1987), 50. Portions of this text are quoted in Carandini, 55 n. 35.

⁴¹ Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondences," quoted in Karin v. Maur, *The Sound of Painting. Music in Modern Art*, trans. John W. Gabriel, (Munich, London, New York: Prestel Verlag, 1999), 12.

dance instead of relying solely on the optical vibrations produced by the juxtaposition of complementary colors as he had in *Pan Pan*.

In addition to the influence of Bergson in this painting, scholars have generally viewed *Bal Tabarin* as the work in which Mallarméan influences are first detectable in Severini's imagery.⁴² This coincides with a general renewal of interest in Mallarmé in literary and artistic circles in 1912, including the publishing of a new compilation of his poetry by Albert Thibaudet and Paul Fort's election as *prince de poètes*.⁴³ It is presumed that Severini read Thibaudet's book on Mallarmé published in 1912 in which the author suggested a link between Mallarmé's thoughts on dance, his poetry, and the written book.⁴⁴ Severini may have found inspiration amongst the pages of this book that led him to consciously or unconsciously include certain Mallarméan themes in this composition. The Mallarméan element most often noted in this painting is the title. Originally the work was titled *Bal Tabarin*, but by early 1913 the words "dynamic hieroglyph" had been added to the title. It has long been assumed that Marinetti was the one responsible for this addition in order to emphasize the Mallarméan connotations of this work.⁴⁵ Mallarmé had referred to dance as a form of hieroglyphic writing,⁴⁶ hence the implication of the word "hieroglyph" in the title, while the inclusion of the word "dynamic" is obviously derived from Futurist rhetoric. Regardless of whether the change made to the

⁴² See pages 5-9 for the discussion of pertinent scholarship.

⁴³ Martin, "Futurist Gesture," 96. Furthermore, in the 1913 spring issue of *Lacerba*, Soficci declared "the glory of Mallarmé has been increasing for some time and is becoming brighter from day to day."

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁵ Martin, "Futurist Gesture," 98-100. According to Martin, these additional words, written in an "unknown hand" on the back of the canvas, are presumed to be Marinetti's. The depiction of a nude female sitting astride a pair of scissors Martin sees as a possible reference to Mallarmé's comment on dance as "engagement with nudity." Martin argues that the nude figure in this image is Severini's rejection of "Mallarmé's introverted, otherworldly refinement," in favor of the "abrasive and coarse energies of the modern world."

⁴⁶ Mary Lewis Shaw, *Performance in the Texts of Mallarmé*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 54.

title was Marinetti's idea or not, as suggested earlier, Severini would have been well aware of the Mallarméan overtones of this painting, due to his association with the neo-symbolist groups of Théâtre de L'Œuvre and La Closerie de Lilas. Moreover, Symbolist artists such as Seurat and Gauguin had used hieroglyphic elements in their paintings and the idea of hieroglyphs as a transcendental form of writing was related to the poetry of Edgar Allen Poe who was an important influence for French Symbolist poets and writers.

A passage from Mallarmé regarding his own literary theory underscores on a more abstract level how the choice and arrangement of images in *Bal Tabarin* is imbued with Mallarméan subtext. Mallarmé wrote:

The naming of an object suppresses three-quarters of the pleasure of a poem, which consists in the happiness of guessing bit by bit; suggesting the object - that makes for the dream - it is the perfect practice of this mysterious process which constitutes the symbol; in the evocation little by little of an object, in order to make manifest a state of soul.⁴⁷

Bal Tabarin corresponds visually to this passage in that neither the enigmatic title, nor Severini's use of fragmentary text or visual symbols clearly specifies the narrative and intention of the painting. Moreover, Mallarmé believed that both dance and hieroglyphics were textless forms of poetic "writing" and the dancer's legs were the instruments of that writing.⁴⁸ Although Severini included text and pictorial symbols in his "textless" poem, these elements operate for the spectator as signifiers of a higher meaning. As a hieroglyph is a pictorial form of communication, expressing words and ideas through symbols, a natural affinity seems to exist between Severini's rendition of

⁴⁷ Quoted in Blake, 6. During Mallarmé's revival in 1912, a new edition of his collected poetry was published by Albert Thibaudet, *La Poesie de Stéphane Mallarmé*. Martin suggests that Severini read this book upon its publication, therefore such parallels between Severini's image and Mallarmé's writing may not be an unreasonable assumption. See: Martin, "Futurist Gesture," 98.

⁴⁸ Shaw, 54.

the events at the Bal Tabarin and Mallarmé's "hieroglyphic" view of dance. For both writer and artist, the dancer becomes the instrument by which a wordless poem is "written," requiring the spectator of the dance, or in this case the painting, to become the "reader."

As a final note concerning this remarkable canvas, *Bal Tabarin* may also be understood in terms of Severini's response to two important Analytic Cubist innovations of 1911 and early 1912: the painted text fragment and the collage. Braque's *Clarinet and Bottle of Rum on a Mantelpiece* of 1911-12 (Fig. 14) appears to be the specific impetus for Severini's inclusion of the words "Valse" and "Polka" in this canvas.⁴⁹ Severini's alignment of the words "Polka" and "Valse" take on the cadence of the dances themselves. The first three letters of "Polka" descend toward the right, while the last two letters read horizontally, perhaps indicative of the folk character of this dance. "Valse," written horizontally in French, appears more indicative of the smooth, rhythmically balanced choreography of this upper class dance. In addition to identifying specific dances, Severini includes several other words: "micheton," "pois," and "bowling." In a 1913 letter written to Ardegno Soffici, a Futurist colleague in Florence, Severini described his obsession with the painting of noises, and how he found the word "micheton," commonly heard in dance halls and cabarets, to be "highly emotive."⁵⁰ In French slang, "micheton" is a derivative of "miché" which refers to a prostitute's customer. However, the way Severini chose to break up the word "micheton" is interesting, isolating it into two separate words "miche" and "ton." Taken as separate

⁴⁹ As Severini and Braque were friends by this time, it is likely that Severini had a chance to see the painting upon Braque's return to Paris from his stay in Catalonia. However, the work was also at Kahnweiler's gallery from 1911-14, also allowing for the possibility that Severini would have seen it at that venue.

⁵⁰ *Archivi I*, 291-93. Letter to Soffici dated September 27, 1913.

words, “miche” could also refer to “boobs” or “ass,” and “ton” is French for “color” or “sound.” In fact, the central portion of the canvas has been seen by some as representing a dancer’s buttocks, while the round flesh colored forms in the center of the right edge of the canvas may possibly be seen as breasts.⁵¹ While the specific intentions of the words “pois” (meaning “pea” in French) and “bow ling” (presumably referring to the English game which had just been introduced to France at this time) are unclear, they may have been included for their emotive qualities or onomatopoeic resonance. In these words too, however, Severini has delighted in visual puns as the cursive text of “bowling” not only seems to indicate the rolling motion of the ball, but also plays on the bowler hat underneath the word. The onomatopoeic sound of “Pois” is visually represented by the capital “P” followed by the small, lower case “bis.” Severini’s placement of this word next to his head is surely significant, but as of yet, the meaning remains unknown. It is also possible that these words signify specific events that took place at the Bal Tabarin, as Severini recounted:

There were always “theme” parties..such as “The Conquest of Fez” (counting on the inevitable pun), or beauty contests, leg contests, contests for strategically placed moles, etc. In other words, they were carnevalesque parties...⁵²

The sexual undertone of the “Conquest of Fez” and the idea of theme parties may relate to the nude woman astride a pair of scissors, the white cloaked Arab on a camel, and the face of a black cat, which may allude to masks worn at these parties, the Chat Noir cabaret, or even to Edgar Allen Poe. Severini provided his viewers with hieroglyphic signs representative of the various activities that took place each weekend at the Tabarin.

⁵¹ Martin, “The Futurist Gesture,” 98.

⁵² Severini, *Life*, 54.

The class differences of the patrons at the cabaret are further suggested by the variety of word puns and innuendos by combining slang and proper French nouns in order to convey the atmosphere of the nightclub. Included along with these elements are the ship's flags strung across the top portion of the painting. The semaphoric quality of the flags is related to the idea of hieroglyphs as ships used flags as a means of signaling one another as well as identifying their port of origin. Suggestive of the diversity of the crowds at the Bal Tabarin, Severini depicts flags from various countries, including the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy, which is the largest one shown.

Severini appropriated the collage aesthetic of Cubism through the application of real sequins to the surface of the canvas in decorative patterns on the dancer's skirt. He wrote that the sequins were 'not meant to describe the real, but to express it [the real] in a transcendental way.'⁵³ By using real sequins, Severini further draws the viewer into the scene as the sequins reflect real light off of the image into the viewer's space, thereby dissolving the barrier between painting and reality. Severini was also apparently drawing upon a conversation he had with Apollinaire, who described how Italian Primitive painters employed real objects to 'increase the vitality of the paintings and their dynamism.'⁵⁴ Severini's choice of light-reflecting sequins was conceptually important for the painting as he tried to move "toward ever-purer realities," while "satisfy[ing] [his] need for absolute realism."⁵⁵ By incorporating reflected light from the "real" world into

⁵³ Gino Severini, "Considerations sur l'esthétique picturale moderne," *Critica d'Arte* (1970), quoted in Gage, 40.

⁵⁴ Severini, *Life*, 117. Apollinaire was referring to Carlo Crivelli's *Camerino Triptych* (Pinacoteca, Brera) in which the painted St. Peter holds a real key. He also used examples of paintings in which jewels and gold leaf were incorporated into crowns and haloes. Interestingly, Crivelli and similar fifteenth-century Italian artists, some of whom used gesso and real materials in their paintings are referred to as "primitives."

⁵⁵ Hanson, 145. In this letter to Marinetti regarding his exhibition at the Galleria Giosi in Rome and the accompanying catalogue, Severini described his works as "d'après nature," in order to avoid a "subjective and thus unavoidably relative concept of things."

his painted world, he was able to “comprehend the sense of a more profound and secret inner reality..born from the contrast of real materials employed directly as things placed in juxtaposition to lyrical elements,” thus creating an intuitive correspondence between the spectator and the painted spectacle.⁵⁶

Severini's other works during this period, such as *Blue Dancer* (Fig. 15), *White Dancer* (also referred to as *La Chahutteuse* and *Dynamism of a Dancer*) (Fig. 16), *Spanish Dancers at the Monico*, and *Dancer at Pigalle* (Fig. 17), reinforce the theory that he was interested in representing dynamism, the musicality of color and the representation of the painter's “state of mind.” In the opening paragraphs of *Art du fantastique*, Severini wrote, “the metaphysical forms [that] compose ... futurist works,” were the result of “conceived realities and realities created entirely by the artist..inspired by emotion or intuition and dependent on the atmosphere-mood (ambiance).”⁵⁷ In the pendant pair of *Blue Dancer* and *White Dancer* Severini eliminated almost all references to the dancers' surroundings. The isolated dancers are pushed to the front of the picture plane and are rendered on a scale that encompasses the entire surface of the canvas. This compositional device enhances the immediacy of the image, generating a feeling of their vibratory, animated movements. The artist's state of mind becomes manifest in the sequential repetition of the dancers' shoulders and arms as the figures begin to appear more as illusions of the physical world rather than inhabitants of it, and for Severini, become personifications of the enigmatic Idea. Using color as a transmitter of sensation and rhythm, the predominant blue of *Blue Dancer* can be read as a “speed color,”

⁵⁶ Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 45-46. Excerpt from a letter written by Severini to Raffaele Carrieri.

⁵⁷ Severini, “Art du fantastique,” 47.

alluding to the agitated movements of the dancer and her costume.⁵⁸ The predominant white of the *White Dancer* suggests the can-can dancer's underskirts that are displayed when she kicks her legs up into the air. Although Severini did not specify white as a "speed color," the repetition of the dancer's arms and her yellow stockinged legs, along with the discontinuous image of her face, suggest the frenetic energy emitted from a dancer as her body begins to dematerialize under the bright spotlights of the dance hall stage.⁵⁹

By contrast, *Dancer at Pigalle* (Fig. 17) marks a dramatic departure for Severini as he begins to move away from recognizable, if fragmented, representation to severely abstracted imagery. The shift from an identifiable subject was at the forefront of avant-garde aesthetics, and can be seen in the contemporary works of Léger, among many others, who was working in a similarly abstracted vein. However, while Léger's figures became more geometric and volumetric, as in *Woman in Blue* of 1912 (Fig. 18), Severini maintained a fluidity that is at once abstracted, yet preserves the vestiges of the figure. In *Dancer at Pigalle*, Severini rendered a more poetic expression of the rhythmic patterns created by the dancer and her dress, which he described in the entry for the Marlborough Gallery exhibition as:

[the] circular rhythmic movement of a dancer, the folds of whose dress are held out by means of a hoop. These folds preserve their exterior form, modified in a uniform manner through the rotary movement. In order the better to convey

⁵⁸ Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 139. Martin argues that the spiritually symbolic blue of Kandinsky is at play here and that this blue is also representative of the slow, rhythmic steps of the tango. Fonti, ("The Dance," 21; 27), points out Severini's equation of blue with the representation of speed, but in the case of *Blue Dancer*, she sees it as depicting a slower moving dance like the Flamenco, which may be reasonable as the decoration on the dress and the positioning of her hands is similar to this Spanish dance. See, Severini, "Art du fantastique," 50.

⁵⁹ Severini, *Life*, 54. Severini described the can-can dancers of the Moulin de la Galette and how they would rush in and lift their skirts and "under bright spotlights, all you could see was a blur of contrasting blacks and whites, a splendor of grays..."

the notion of relief, I have attempted to model the essential portions in a manner almost sculptural. Light and ambiance act simultaneously on the forms in movement.⁶⁰

Building up the surface of the *Dancer at Pigalle* with plaster, Severini tried to plastically represent the movements of the dancer and her dress by extending them into the spectator's space. Adding a quasi-relief quality to the painting, Severini is again implementing ideas that he would later express in his *Plastic Analogies of Dynamism* manifesto.⁶¹

As mentioned earlier, some scholars have argued that Severini's interest in the American dancer Loïe Fuller was not sparked until mid- to late 1913.⁶² However, a remarkable resemblance exists between *Dancer at Pigalle* and photographic postcards of Loïe Fuller in her Butterfly and Serpentine dance costumes (Figs. 19 and 20) that were perhaps distributed as promotional material for Fuller's engagements.⁶³ Additionally, the description given in the Marlborough Gallery catalogue of the dancer's dress being held

⁶⁰ Daniela Fonti, *Gino Severini Catalogo Ragionato* (Milan: Edizione Phillipe Daverio, 1988), 130.

⁶¹ Severini, "Plastic Analogies," 125. Severini wrote that the "absolute need for realism makes [the Futurists] model in relief on [their] paintings," and that "plastic dynamism" is expressible through "painting and sculpture united in a single work of art."

⁶² This supposition is based primarily on the argument that the plastic analogy paintings were inspired by Loïe Fuller's dancing. However Piero Pacini draws attention to the fact that there was a renewed interest in Fuller during 1912 when the dancer began performing again in Paris. He convincingly argues that although Severini may have never verbalized an interest in Fuller, he would nonetheless have been aware of her presence in Paris, not to mention her reputation, which preceded her by decades. See Piero Pacini, "Gino Severini, L'Unanimità di Jules Romains e le Danze Cromatiche di Loïe Fuller II," *Antichità Viva* 30, nos. 4-5 (1991), 57-64; 61. See also Giovanni Lista, "Nieder mit dem Tango und Parsival. Die Futuristen der Tanz," in *Tanz in der Moderne. Von Matisse bis Schlemmer*, eds. Karin Adelsbach und Andrea Firmenich. (Köln: Wienand, 1996), 134-139; 134. During Balla's visit to the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris he would have had the opportunity to see Loïe Fuller's pavilion where she performed the Serpentine Dance. It is possible that Balla would have told Severini about this experience after Severini began his investigation of dance in 1910. Furthermore, Fuller's remarkable use of technology in her dance performances was legendary. Incorporating mirrors, smoke and vast lighting systems, along with designing her own costumes to enhance these technical innovations would have been of great interest to an artist like Severini who wanted to combine elements of the modern world with the ephemeral, transcendental quality of dance.

⁶³ This may be the first instance of Severini's reliance on photographs to aid his compositions. He clearly relies on contemporary photography in later works as will be discussed below. In 1913, the would-be Futurist Felix Mac Delmarle chastised the "Futurist genius [who] works solely from 'static' photographs." See: Giovanni Lista, *Futurisme; Manifestes-Proclamations-Documents* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), 393. Delmarle's statement is also quoted in Marianne Martin, "Carissimo Marinetti: Letters from Severini to the Futurist Chief," *Art Journal* 41, no. 4 (December 1981), 309.

out by means of a hoop recalls Fuller's use of similar devices during her famous Serpentine dance.⁶⁴ In this painting Severini has amalgamated the Butterfly Dance and the Serpentine Dance, thus making it possible to argue that Severini was in fact aware of and interested in Fuller by early 1912. The pattern of sequins on the dancer's dress is a continuation of the idea of hieroglyphs first explored in the *Bal Tabarin*, where the sequins take on a more pictorial quality than merely being decorative.

It is also worth noting that Fuller was a favorite subject of Symbolist poets and artists, including Mallarmé and Toulouse-Lautrec.⁶⁵ Severini's interest in Loïe Fuller has a very specific connection with Mallarmé, who was an admirer of her dancing and wrote of her in his essay on dance. *Dancer at Pigalle* seems to evoke the poet's descriptions of Fuller's movements and the relationship she created with the space surrounding her on stage. Mallarmé wrote:

[This] woman associates the flight of clothes with the powerful or vast dance to the point of sustaining them, to infinity, like her expansion...The enchantress creates the ambiance, draws it from herself and returns it there, in a silence fluttered by with *crêpe de chine*.⁶⁶

Mallarmé continues, describing the movement of Fuller's costume in relation to the music of the orchestra, describing the scene as "a transition of tones to fabrics," which complements Severini's treatment of the dancer's costume. The circular rhythms of her dress, highlighted by arabesques of colored sequins that radiate around the figure in response to the momentum of her spiraling movements have been compared to

⁶⁴ Giovanni Lista, *Loïe Fuller, Danseuse de la Belle Époque*, (Paris: Editions d'Art Somogy, 1994), 153 - 155. Lista reproduces a very interesting copyright document for Fuller's Serpentine Dance.

⁶⁵ For general information on Loïe Fuller, see: Margaret Haile Harris, *Loïe Fuller: Magician of Light*, exhibition catalogue, (Richmond, VA: The Virginia Museum, 1974); and Giovanni Lista, *Loïe Fuller, Danseuse de la Belle Époque*, (Paris: Editions d'Art Somogy, 1994).

⁶⁶ Mallarmé quoted in Reynolds, 164.

Mallarmé's view of dance as 'represent[ing] caprice as rhythmical impulsion.'⁶⁷ The spiraling quality seen in this painting also suggests the propellers of an airplane, which Severini will address in his plastic analogy painting, *Dancer=Airplane Propeller=Sea* (Fig. 36), two years later. While the painting is lively and perhaps even somewhat decorative, it is clear that Severini's response to the dancer in this image goes beyond a merely fanciful representation of 'rhythmical impulsion.' Influenced by popular entertainment, photography and symbolist literature, *Dancer at Pigalle* is a synthesis of Severini's artistic and philosophical pursuits of the past two years. Combining Futurist dynamism, a Symbolist interest in the expressivity of line, and Mallarmé's writing it is a painting that illustrates the theoretical and aesthetical advances of the artist and can surely be seen as a forerunner to the increasingly abstracted imagery of 1913 and 1914.

In 1913 Severini began work on a series of images exploring popular dances such as the Bear Dance and the Argentine Tango. In contrast to his earlier paintings and the abstracted analogies that follow, where the representation of the artist's state of mind is a priority, these works emphasized the evocative power of strong color and simplified form. American 'animal' dances and the Latin based tango were introduced to Paris by 1911 through, among others, the music of Irving Berlin and the popular dance couple Vernon and Irene Castle.⁶⁸ These dances were perceived as embodying modernity due to their mix of newness, exoticism, and modern primitiveness in the dance steps and the music. Furthermore, Mallarmé's essay on dance addressed the primitiveness of the medium as a consequence of its connection to ritual performance and primitive and folk

⁶⁷ Martin, 'Futurist Gesture,' 98. Martin does not discuss this painting in terms of Severini's interest in Fuller.

⁶⁸ Fred Appel, Jr., *Jazz Modernism: from Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce*, (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Jr., 2002), 42.

heritages.⁶⁹ As the Polka is a folk dance, Severini's representation of it in the *Bal Tabarin* may be seen as a precursor to his paintings in this series. Mallarmé's idea loosely coincided with the avant-garde (and Symbolist) notion of the primitive, which viewed non-Western societies or practices as more bound to nature, visceral and less inhibited sexually. The uninhibited and often sexually provocative movements and rhythms of the tango and the animal-like gesturing of the "animal" dances caused a stir amongst the more conservative members of Parisian society.⁷⁰ Both types of dance were considered scandalous, but such sentiment did not dissuade throngs of people from all tiers of society from joining in the excitement of these dances. One observer in 1912 noted the "crowds of fanatics...with a truly impressive lack of self-consciousness under the gaze of a thousand spectators in the harsh light of the art lamps, set in motion the undulating swell of innumerable entranced derrières."⁷¹

Drawing from personal experience and contemporary photography (Fig. 21), Severini began the Bear Dance series in 1913 simultaneously documenting the popular new dance and continued his symbolist exploration of line, color and form. In *Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge* (Fig. 22) Severini depicts the dance in a remarkably elegant rendering of the two figures through the concise, yet dynamic, use of color and line. In these paintings and works of paper, Severini moves away from his earlier method of composition where every available inch of space is used (*Pan Pan* and *Bal Tabarin*, for example), and the figures are rendered with a solidity of form. The dancers in this series are isolated against a blank ground with no other narrative or descriptive elements and are

⁶⁹ Shaw, 51-52.

⁷⁰ Jody Blake *Le Tumulte Noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1999), 43.

⁷¹ Quoted in Blake, 47.

rendered with a transparency and fragmentation of the figure that results in an integration of form and color, where the dancers become personifications of the idea of dance itself. According to Severini, the conception behind the *Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge* was the “displacement of bodies in [the] atmosphere [where] two persons form but one plastic unity, rhythmically balanced.”⁷² This painting can be seen as a microcosmic representation of the “collective consciousness” of Unanimism through the uniting of two souls by a shared state of mind. The swirling dress of the female dancer arcs around the knees of both dancers as “the tussling pair sets off in a rapid sequence of eight short steps forward, ending with a slightly off balance sway...they repeat the sequence and conclude with a bent knee dip.”⁷³ The clustered repetition of legs and feet, and Severini’s use of deep blue (a “speed color”) in the dancer’s dress, all work to reinforce the rapid rhythm and motion that is characteristic of this dance. Severini includes the cupped hands seen in the Dance Almanac (Fig. 21, photograph 10), which adds an additional element of documentary authenticity. Furthermore, the lines of force that radiate out from the figures suggests the “off balance sway” of the dance steps, reinforcing the tempo and rhythm of the Bear Dance.

In contrast to the energetic rhythm of the Bear Dance, the Argentine Tango relies on more fluid, sensual movements with equally sensual and dramatic music. Severini represented this dance several times in a variety of media, culminating in the large oil painting *Argentine Tango* of 1913-14 (Fig. 23). He utilized forms and colors consistent with the theories outlined in *Art du fantastique*, according to which, the tango would be

⁷² Gino Severini’s catalogue entry for his exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in London in April 1913, reproduced in *Archivi I*, 116.

⁷³ *International Encyclopedia of Dance: A Project of Dance Perspectives Foundations, Inc.* ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 628.

best represented by yellow, orange and violet, all of which are present in this canvas.⁷⁴ The concentrated dark blue and violet core of the dancers' bodies emphasizes the intense physical connectedness of the two figures, while the transition of color outward along the light spectrum from dark to light suggests the ever-expanding rhythmic vibrations of the dance into the surrounding atmosphere. As Severini's exploration of the communicative power of color and form became more focused, his dancers are transformed into geometricized planes of color that become increasingly distant from figural representation. Maintaining the Futurist preoccupation with the representation of movement and dynamism, Severini's use of serial repetition in the triangular forms of the shoulder and the cylindrical forms of the legs, not only suggests the movement of the dancers but also that of the music.

The success of the Argentine Tango relies on the mental and physical connection between the two partners. This united intuition, or shared state of soul, also relating to the concept of Unanimism, similarly evokes an association with the primitive through its sensual dance steps. The sexual overtones of the tango gave it a titillating air of primitivism that readily lent itself to symbolist interpretation. The symbolist concern with elements of primitivism, seen in Gauguin's works for example, was related to the notion stated above that primitive societies were thought to have a more intuitive connection with the driving forces of nature. This perceived innate, or perhaps even transcendental, connection with life parallels concepts of Unanimism and Futurism. The

⁷⁴ Severini, "Art du Fantastique," 50. Severini uses the term *matchiche*, which is the name of a Brazilian dance similar to the tango. Other artists were also inspired by these new dances, and in 1913 Sonia Delaunay immortalized a favorite dance hall, *The Bal Bullier*, where she, her husband Robert, and friends witnessed the Fox Trot and Argentine Tango. According to Delaunay, the "continuous, undulating rhythm of the Tango caused [her] colors to move" as she recreated the spectacle across her canvas. While Delaunay focused on the movement of color and light, similar to that of Robert Delaunay's abstracted Orphic paintings, Severini retained a more figurative quality that combined descriptive representation with lyrical symbolism expressed through color and line. See Spate, 48.

Futurists had already claimed themselves to be “primitives” of a new art, and this new art was one that was to reach beyond the physical world of reality in order to express the fundamental essence of modern life. Tied also to this new “primitivism” may be Severini’s increasing abstraction, for as he moved further away from descriptive reality, he allowed himself and the viewer to more easily apprehend the images on a more innately intuitive level.

Severini’s efforts during 1911 to 1913 bear witness to his search for a pictorial language that would best serve to represent his personal aesthetic. While still unable to extricate himself fully from figural representation, he began a gradual transition to the abstracted dancers of late 1913 and 1914. In the plastic analogies of 1913-14, Severini achieved a level of lyrical abstraction comparable to no other works in their expression of dance and music, and their ability to thoroughly engage the imagination of the viewer.

CHAPTER 3

PLASTIC ANALOGIES OF DYNAMISM: MANIFESTOS AND IMAGERY

Severini's development toward increased abstraction necessitates discussion in greater detail of two documents from 1913 that lay the foundation for the 1914 manifesto, *The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism*. Severini's meditation on the theme of dance led, by late 1913, to a highly theoretical foundation for his work. Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo had each written a manifesto by this time and likewise Severini wanted to stake his claim as a theoretical force within Futurism as well as within the avant-garde.

As noted previously, in April 1913, Severini held a one-man show at the Marlborough Gallery in London. Severini's catalogue essay for this exhibition prefigures much of what is to follow in his manifesto and underscores the influence of Bergson and past artistic tradition on his art. A key passage from this essay summarizes Severini's artistic labors and can be related to several works:

The need for abstraction and symbols is a characteristic sign of the intensity and rapidity with which life is lived today. It often happens that a word, [or] a phrase, will serve to synthesize a complete action, an entire psychology. In the same way, one gesture, one essential feature, may, by suddenly throwing light upon our intuition, succeed in presenting to our vision the total reality.¹

A work that immediately comes to mind is the *Bal Tabarin* where words and symbols are used to generate an understanding of the entire spectacle of the dance hall. Another is

¹ Gino Severini's introductory essay for the Marlborough Gallery catalogue is reproduced in *Archivi del Futurismo, Volume 1*, eds. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori (Rome: De Luca, 1958-68. 2d 1986), 113-115.

Waltz (Fig. 26), discussed below, in which only a word is used to suggest the entire reality of the dance. Severini quotes Bergson's statement that "to perceive is nothing more than an opportunity to remember," and relates the importance of this notion to the theoretical conception of Futurism. This concept remains central in his subsequent writings on art. In this text Severini is at times contradictory, as in his defense of the Futurist "hatred of the past" while at the same time arguing that "an expression of art which possess true depth bears a natural connection with tradition." He is similarly contradictory when he denies Futurist art as being literary, but if "musical rhythms, or a metaphysical or a literary idea, are evolved from pictorial expression," then this would be an acceptable reading as it establishes the underlying complexity of Futurist art. In this text Severini began to flesh out his ideas on Futurist art theory, which became more articulately expressed and refined in his later writings.

The second document from 1913 is *Art du fantastique dans le sacré (Peinture de la Lumière, de la Profondeur, du Dynamisme. Manifest futuriste)*.² This is the preliminary draft of his manifesto, *Plastic Analogies of Dynamism*, which expands on ideas in the Marlborough Gallery essay and pushes them further theoretically. This text is an important document in that it not only provides valuable insight into Severini's theoretical approach to his art, but it also clearly defines his concept of synesthesia and the significance he placed on its functioning role within his work. As it has been suggested above, ideas presented in this text had already been incorporated into his work as early as *Bal Tabarin* of 1912. However, the theories posited in *Art du fantastique*

² Anne Coffin Hanson, *Severini Futurista: 1912-1917*, exhibition catalogue, (Connecticut: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), 39. Severini first mentions *Art du fantastique* in a letter to Marinetti dated October 1913.

begin to significantly inform Severini's works of late 1912 and 1913, which ultimately lead to the plastic analogy paintings and manifesto of late 1913-14.

Severini opens *Art du fantastique* with a theoretical explanation of the concept, form and content of a Futurist work:

The metaphysical forms which compose our futurist pictures are the result of realities conceived and realities created entirely by the artist. These last are inspired by the emotion or intuition and dependent on atmosphere-ambience.³

Severini further elaborates the conceptual process of the artist whose need is not only to include the subject, such as a dancer, but also the mood generated by the subject. Severini combines "qualitative and quantitative expression of forms, volumes and colors...in an atmosphere-ambiance," along with "expression[s] of forms conceived [while] replying to internal and essential realities," to produce "simultaneous expression[s] of emotional [and] conceived forms." Through intuition and emotion, the artist generates "emotional forms" while "conceived forms" are arrived at through memories and knowledge of the external world. Thus the two types of imagery are joined to create a "plastic equivalent of reality." Severini conceptualizes his work in terms of an emotive, transcendental quality combined with actual experience and memory. His stress on "metaphysical forms" is the language of Symbolism.

This combination of "emotional" and "conceived" forms had appeared in works such as *Bal Tabarin* and *Dancer at Pigalle* in Severini's use of both visual reality and his own memories and state of mind, but become insistent elements of his compositions from this point forward. Severini outlines how "light, noise, sound, odor, and speed" can all be

³ Gino Severini, "Art du fantastique dans le sacré. (Peinture de la Lumière, de la Profondeur, du Dynamisme. Manifest futuriste.)," in *Gino Severini Ecrits sur l'art, (1913-1962)*, with a preface by Serge Fauchereau, (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 1987), 47-52; 49. All quotations herein are taken from this text.

represented through “emotive” forms and “emotive” colors. Each “emotive” form, (i.e., light forms, sound forms, speed forms, etc.), is defined by a particular type of line. The “sound forms” of a Waltz are comprised of “undulating lines, obtuse angles, and round, oval, spiraling or conical forms,” which Severini represented in the *Bal Tabarin*. Also represented in the *Bal Tabarin* are “speed forms,” which Severini used to represent the Polka, which are composed of “acute angles, inclining lines, conical forms, and spiral forms.” Furthermore, “each color of the prism corresponds to a sensation,” and therefore “emotive colors” can likewise be selected for “light, noise, sounds, odors, [and] speed.” Severini describes light colors” as “all of the colors of the prism disposed like shades of a rainbow; or by groups arranged in contrast,” and the “sound colors” of a Waltz are “light blue, light violet and emerald green.” These concepts echo those of written by Seurat, which were published by Signac in his 1912 publication *D’Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionism*:

[The Neo-Impressionist] will harmonize the composition with his conception; that is to say, he will adapt the lines (directions and angles), the chiaroscuro (tones), and the colors (hues), to fit the character that is to dominate. The dominant line will be horizontal for calm, ascending for joy, and descending for sadness, with all the intermediate lines representing all the other sensations in their infinite variety. A polychromatic interplay, no less expressive and diverse, is coupled with the play of lines... by thus subordinating color and line to the emotion he has felt and seeks to render, the painter will play the role of a poet, a creator.⁴

Seurat’s symbolist language in this letter is seen visually in his *La Chahut* of 1889-90 (Fig. 24), and is a consequence of his and Signac’s activity in the Symbolist milieu. Beyond his relationship with Félix Fénéon, Seurat was acquainted with many Symbolist

⁴ Paul Signac, “D’Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionism,” in Floyd Ratliff, *Paul Signac and Color in Neo-Impressionism* (New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1992), 193-285; 249-50.

poets, including Stéphane Mallarmé, Gustave Kahn, and Jean Moreas and socialized with Symbolist artists of the day.⁵ Seurat's interest and active participation in the Symbolist movement foreshadows that of Severini twenty-five years later who also uses Neo-Impressionist technique with underlying Symbolist concepts in his works.

In many ways, the aesthetic theory that Severini proposes conforms to that laid out by Baudelaire in 1846, where in describing the "musicality" of a painting, he offers the following thoughts on color:

Harmony is the basis of the theory of colour. Melody is unity within colour, or overall colour. Melody calls for a cadence; it is a whole, in which every effect contributes to the general effect. Thus colour leaves a deep and lasting impression on the mind.⁶

Baudelaire's color analogy corresponds well with Severini's theory of "emotive" colors in that both suggest the ability of color to stimulate a deeper emotional response within the viewer, which for Baudelaire would be a musical response. However, Baudelaire also suggests that imagination and memory play important roles in the viewer's perception of a work of art, ideas that prefigure Bergsonian notions of memory. As Severini was well acquainted with Bergson, it seems Baudelaire's theories would find resonance in his works as well. The parallels found between Severini's manifesto (in both draft and final form) and Baudelaire's writings reinforce the argument that Severini was well versed in Symbolist theories and that they were a fundamental part of his aesthetic conception.

⁵ Paul Smith, *Seurat and the Avant-Garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 81-95. Seurat was a frequent participant at the *salons* of Robert Caze, and it was at one of these *salons* that Seurat met Fénéon. Seurat also participated in one of Mallarmé's *mardis* at least once, evidenced by a letter from Mallarmé to Seurat's widow upon his death. Furthermore, Smith argues that the relationship between the Neo-Impressionists and the Symbolists was reciprocal, with members of each group interested in being associated with one another, and Smith (95) states "Seurat...actively courted Symbolist interpretations of his work." See also: Sven Lövgrén, *The Genesis of Modernism: Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh & French Symbolism in the 1880's* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).

⁶ Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1846," translated in Simon Shaw -Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music. Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 55.

In *Art du fantastique*, Severini also supports the inclusion of diverse pictorial elements, or materials, in order to enhance the ‘expressive totality’ of a Futurist picture. These additional elements include the use of onomatopoetic sounds or words painted onto the surface, pieces of posters or placards, numbers, hair, sequins, and any other object or sign that had a “great value of pictorial realism and emotional meaning.”

In one of the first works based directly on the ideas expressed in *Art du Fantastique*, Severini drew upon his emotions and memory to create an image that is highly abstract, but still capable of evoking the sensation of dance within the spectator’s mind. The work, *Form of a Dancer in the Light* of 1912 (Fig. 25), followed the Bear Dance series and marks the beginning of the visual aesthetic Severini will embrace in the Plastic Analogy paintings. During this time Severini was still oscillating between fairly figurative works and increased abstraction, but the chronological placement of this work within his oeuvre indicates the presence of his theoretical inclinations at this time.

In this pastel work, the dancer has been reduced to a series of lines and planes, but the vertical axis remains somewhat suggestive of a human figure. Thick pastel marks of color, highlighted by three triangular areas of sequins, and insistent lines of force, arcs and sharp diagonals dynamically animate the composition. Using the “color forms” and “sound forms” as laid out in *Art du fantastique*, Severini’s palette of blues, white and black, highlighted by areas of light pink, reinforce the feeling of a dancer in motion whose form dematerializes under bright spotlights.⁷ Severini combines “speed forms” (sharp angles, inclining lines) and “speed colors” (dark blue) along with the “sound” and

⁷ Daniela Fonti, *Gino Severini Catalogo Ragionato* (Milan: Edizione Phillipe Daverio, 1988), 96. Fonti believes this to be the first work in which Severini used his “color form” and “sound form” theories. However, as it has been argued herein, it appears that he had already explored these concepts in earlier works, especially in the *Bal Tabarin*.

“color forms” of a Waltz (obtuse angles, conical forms, light blue). Color and line work together in generating an intuitive sensation of the motion and rhythm of the figure.

In *Waltz* of 1912 (Fig. 26) Severini eliminates the figure entirely and composes an image of dance based only on “sound forms” and “sound colors.”⁸ Curved forms ascend upward in swirling lines creating a visual sensation of the music, leaving the dance itself to be imagined by the viewer. The heavily stippled pastel denies any sense of solidity or physical presence, which allows the wafting forms to take on the ephemeral, transient quality of music. The color choice utilized by Severini does not adhere to the sound colors of the waltz as written in *Art du fantastique* (light blue, light violet, emerald green), but seem rather to have been chosen according to their visual resonance, where the colors play off of one another much as the various instruments do in a piece of music.⁹ The green in the painting, however, may be read as an emerald green, which would correspond with the sound colors. Severini varies the color and line to account for the rhythmic cadence of the waltz. This visualization of music, including the depiction of musical notes, can be compared to paintings such as Luigi Russolo’s *Music*, where although more descriptively represented, the swirling arabesque emanating from the piano was meant to evoke the physical presence of the music.

The musical notes, in conjunction with the large block letters dispersed throughout the composition that spell out the subject of the painting, bears comparison

⁸ This work is not listed in Fonti’s *Catalogo Ragionato*, as she believes it to be lost. However, it is reproduced in Elena Pontiggia, “Il primo rapporto sul Cubismo: lettera di Severini a Boccioni,” *Critica d’Arte* 2, no. 12 (January-March 1987), 62-70 and in Piero Pacini, “Futurismo ed Oltre. Contributo agli ‘Archivi del Futurismo,’” *Critica d’Arte* 17, v. 111 (May-June 1970), 3-75; 20. Fonti, *Catalogo*, 139, cites a letter Severini wrote regarding two works titled *Polka* and *Valse*, neither of which are in the *Catalogo*, and she suggests that *Danseuse Parmi Les Tables* may be the lost *Valse*. Fonti maintains this hypothesis in the catalogue entry for *Danseuse Parmi Les Tables* in the Guggenheim exhibition catalogue (98) even though she cites Pontiggia’s article in her bibliography.

⁹ This painting appears to have been reproduced in color only once, in Pontiggia’s article, and its quality is lacking. Therefore, a more thorough analysis of color is inadvisable as the true colors are not discernable.

also with Picasso's *Ma Jolie* of 1912 (Fig. 27), and even Braque's *Clarinet and Bottle of Rum on a Mantelpiece* (Fig. 14). Picasso also includes a musical symbol and text at the bottom of the canvas that identifies the musical association of the image. The influence of analytic cubism is further evident in Severini's composition as the image is disposed along the front of the picture plane. The scroll-like forms at the top of the *Valse* are reminiscent of the stringed instrument in Seurat's *La Chahut* (Fig. 24) at the left of the canvas. Severini's placement of the letters of "Valse" differs from treatment of the same word in the *Bal Tabarin*, here reading from left to right and descending downward through the painting in a wide serpentine curve that emphasizes the side-to-side and back and forth motion of the dance steps. However, the inclusion of text and symbols in Severini's image, as well as Picasso's, does not provide the viewer with temporal or spatial information. Rather, the waltz becomes manifest in Severini's mind, and thus in the viewer's, through harmoniously orchestrated abstract shapes and evocative colors.

After drafting the initial text, *Art du fantastique*, which was accompanied by several discussions with Marinetti concerning its content, *The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism* manifesto was completed in 1914.¹⁰ Refining the concepts laid out in *Art du fantastique*, Severini incorporated elements of Marinetti's literary theory from the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* along with more explicit Bergsonian references. The opening paragraphs deal with the primacy of memory in the creation of a plastic analogy:

¹⁰ Hanson, 38-39. Hanson discusses the resistance Severini encountered while writing his manifesto. He had difficulty garnering Marinetti's approval of its content and it was never published as a Futurist document as were his colleagues' manifestos. She also discusses Carlo Carrà's manifesto, *Plastic Planes as Spherical Expansion in Space*, which was published at the time Severini was drafting *Plastic Analogies of Dynamism*, and the worry Severini had that Carrà's ideas, similar to his own, would be published first (and indeed it was published in *Lacerba* in 1913), and therefore invalidate his own Futurist art theory. *Plastic Analogies of Dynamism* was first published in 1957.

We will express in this way artistic emotions which are not only related to a particular emotional background, but united to the whole universe..So now exterior reality and our knowledge of it no longer have any influence on our plastic expression, and, with regard to the action of memory on our sensitivity, only the memory of the emotion remains and not that of the cause that produced it. Memory then will act in the work of art as an *element of artistic intensification*, as a true emotive source independent of any unity of time or place, and as sole *raison d'être* of an artistic creation.¹¹ (Severini's emphasis)

Severini cited *Memories of a Journey* (Fig. 2) as the first work in which he realized the expressive potentiality of incorporating images from his memories. Drawing from past experiences allowed him to “expand ad infinitum the range of plastic expression, totally doing away with unities of time and place.” In equally Bergsonian language, he continued, “.in this epoch of dynamism, one cannot separate any event or object from the memories.” Severini built his manifesto on the assertion that viewing an object or event in the present can call up a memory of a totally disparate event or image and the two then become synthesized into a new vision through their simultaneous action on the imagination. He employed part of Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurist Literature*, which describes literary analogies as “nothing more than the deep love that connects distant and apparently diverse and hostile things, [and] only by means of very extensive analogies can an orchestral style, at once polychrome, polyphonic and polymorphous embrace the life of matter.”¹² Severini explained the phenomenon as:

The spiraling shapes, and the beautiful contrasts of yellow and blue, that are intuitively felt one evening while *living*

¹¹ Gino Severini, “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 121-125. All quotes pertaining to this text are taken from this source.

¹² A portion of Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurist Literature* is quoted by Severini in “The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism,” in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications 2001), 122.

*the moment of a girl dancing may be found again later, through a process of plastic preferences or aversions, or through a combination of both, in the concentric circling of an aeroplane or in the onrush of an express train.*¹³

This passage bears comparison with Baudelaire's theory of synesthetic correspondence, as set forth in his poem *Les Fleurs du Mal*:

Like long-held echoes, blending somewhere else
Into one deep and shadowy unison
As limitless as darkness and as day,
The sounds, the scents, the colours correspond.¹⁴

The Symbolist synesthetic undertones in both passages are clear, as one sensory experience evokes a corresponding sensory response. Severini's ideas, drawn from such literary sources as Baudelaire and Marinetti, strengthens the argument that synesthetic correspondences between diverse elements, including music, color, odor, and vision, significantly informed Severini's works. Additionally, Severini hoped that visual analogies would be able to "penetrate the most expressive part of reality and render *simultaneously* the *subject* and the *will* at their most *intensive* and *expansive*."

In the manifesto, Severini reiterates ideas from *Art du fantastique*, including the notion that "certain forms and colors [are capable of] expressing the sensations of noise, sound, smell, heat, [and] speed." Although condensed from the earlier version, the manifesto carefully lays out specific guidelines for the use of line and color. He emphasizes the importance of simultaneously contrasting lines and planes, using "arabesque-like construction," in "dynamic compositions open in all directions toward space." Color is equally regulated in this new phase of Futurist painting by "the

¹³ Severini, "Plastic Analogies," 121.

¹⁴ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), translated in Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music. Art and Music from Wagner to Cage* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 53. Shaw-Miller suggests that this poem, in particular its synesthetic elements, had an undeniable influence on the development of Symbolism towards the end of the nineteenth century.

exclusive use of the pure colors of the prism” in “simultaneous contrast or for groups of analogous and divided colors..disposed in spherical expansion.” Severini’s call for the simultaneous contrast of colors, which he refers to as color analogies, is based on the notion that “by using color analogies one can obtain the greatest luminous intensity, heat, musicality, optical and constructional dynamism” in the image.

The theory of simultaneous contrast proposed by Eugène Chevreul became a theoretical foundation for Neo-Impressionism as Seurat had been in contact with Chevreul by 1882.¹⁵ According to Chevreul, simultaneous contrast occurs when two colors are placed next to each other on the canvas without first being mixed on the artist’s palette. The juxtaposition of these solid dots of pure color creates an optically perceived alteration in the tonal intensity of each color, and this effect is heightened if the colors are complementary. Furthermore, these dots of color combine optically when viewed from a distance creating the desired color; for example, blue placed next to yellow would be perceived optically as green. These theories later proved relevant also to Severini and his contemporaries, such as Robert Delaunay.¹⁶ Instead of small dots, however, Severini and Delaunay juxtaposed large planes of color, which still created an optical tension on the surface of the canvas. Severini and Delaunay both worked in a Neo-Impressionist vein in 1906-1907 and their interest in color theory continued well into their careers. In 1912 Delaunay was re-exploring Chevreul’s theories more completely in works such as *Simultaneous Contrast, Sun and Moon* of 1913 (Fig.28), where the transparent disks of

¹⁵ Michel-Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de ses applications* (Paris, 1889). Chevreul was the director of the Gobelins Tapestry Factory and he wrote his laws of simultaneous contrast with reference to the strands of thread used in tapestry weaving. Seurat had visited Chevreul at the tapestry factory where they discussed the theory of simultaneous contrast prior to the publication of Chevreul’s book in 1889.

¹⁶ Sherry A. Buckenrough, *Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneity* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 103.

color seem almost like the color wheels of Chevreul.¹⁷ However, the transcendental nature of his imagery keeps it from being merely a study of color theory. As the focus of Delaunay's imagery shifts from the figurative to the more abstract, his exploration of the emotional power of color relationships takes on a transcendental quality that is not altogether unrelated to Severini's interests at this point.

Severini's manifesto also advocates the inclusion of onomatopoetic symbols, words, and any other materials that would help "heighten the realism" of the painting. Further stressing the metaphysical quality of Futurist works, Severini wrote that the "abstract colors and forms [that the Futurists'] portray belong to the Universe outside time and space." Art was now asked to function outside traditional spatial/temporal boundaries, operating on a higher, perhaps more spiritual, plane in which the memories and emotions of the artist are used to express a deeper, more profound reality than before.

The first painting to be completed based on the theory of plastic analogies as defined in the *Plastic Analogies* manifesto was *Sea = Dancer* of 1913-14 (Fig. 29).¹⁸

Severini used this painting as a descriptive illustration of "Real Analogies":

The sea dancing, its zig-zag movements and contrasting silver and emerald, evokes within my plastic sensibility the distant vision of a dancer covered in sparkling sequins in her world of light, noise and sound. Therefore, *sea = dancer*.¹⁹

¹⁷ Virginia Spate, *Orphism: The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 179.

¹⁸ There is some confusion over which *Sea=Dancer* painting was completed first in relation to the *Plastic Analogies* manifesto. Fonti, *Catalogo*, 172, places this version (Fig. 29) after the Guggenheim *Sea = Dancer* (Fig. 30), but Marianne Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909-1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1968), 144-45, suggests that Figure 29 was the first painting completed based entirely on the theories of the manifesto. What is agreed upon, however, is that Figure 29 is the painting Severini refers to when defining Real Analogies, as the Guggenheim version does not have sequins. Martin believes this work was painted while Severini was living in the seaside town of Anzio, where he was recuperating from illness.

¹⁹ Severini, "Plastic Analogies," 123.

This type of pictorial analogy is generated through a more sophisticated type of sensory synesthesia by which one vision evokes the memory of a completely disparate vision, inclusive of the entire atmosphere of the experience. These ideas can be directly related to Boccioni's notion that the "spiritualization" of a work of art can be made possible by expressing the artist's state of mind through mathematical means. He wrote, "...if the objects will be mathematical values, the *ambiente* in which they live will be a particular rhythm in the emotion which surrounds them. The graphic translation of this rhythm will be a *state of form*, a *state of color*, each of which will give back to the spectator the 'state of mind' which produced it... (emphasis Boccioni's)" ²⁰ By setting up an algebraic equation in the title Severini does not give primacy to one image or the other, but sets them as equal contributors to the resultant vision. Moreover, the use of algebraic symbols suggests a form of modern day hieroglyphics, semaphores that here express the infinite visual possibilities derived from memory and visual reality that are simultaneously combined in the imagination of the artist.

It is also at this point that the influence of Unanimism begins to fade from Severini's work. Although Pacini related the ideas Unanimism to Severini's dance images through 1915, with the increased focus on the importance of memory and emotion in painting, the idea of a "collective consciousness" becomes supplanted by the artist's

²⁰ Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory*, 125. Boccioni's expressed these ideas in a February 12, 1912 letter to Nino Barbantini, the director of the Ca' Pesaro in Venice and a friend of Boccioni's. Boccioni was in Paris at this time, as the Futurist Exhibition had opened on February 5 at the Bernheim Jeune Gallery and it must be assumed that he and Severini discussed Boccioni's theory in which he was trying to reconcile Futurist dynamism with Cubist formalism. It is interesting to note that the Mexican artist Marius de Zayas, who was a friend of Picabia's, was at the 1912 Futurist Exhibition and became aware of Boccioni's ideas stated above, and upon his return to New York, began incorporating mathematical symbols in his caricature portraits of artists as an expression of their personalities. See: Douglas Hyland, *Marius de Zayas: Conjuror of Souls* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 1981), 36-37.

highly personal experiences.²¹ The crowded atmosphere of the dance hall is replaced with singular visions comprised of complex associations to which the viewer must relate on an equally personal and individual level.

The palette of pastel colors in *Sea = Dancer* presents visually stimulating juxtapositions, including the correspondence between analogous colors such as light blue, light violet and light pink. Colors are treated as separate fields with very little interpenetration between them. The large area of black, gray and white at the bottom presents a neutral area in accordance with the manifesto. While not specifically adhering to any particular “emotive color” as defined in *Art du fantastique*, the colors are intended to evoke the sensory experience of the musical rhythm of the dancer in equal harmony with the rhythmic motion of the sea. Through these colors, the figure emerges in a slow turning rhythm around the diagonal axis that cuts through the painting slightly off center. An undulating line that bisects the image horizontally evokes visions of waves and rhythmic motion. As in earlier works such as *Blue Dancer* or *Dancer at Pigalle*, the figure occupies the entire canvas, but the tightly controlled brushwork in this painting compresses the work, not allowing it to open up “in all directions towards space.” However, this type of paint application succeeds in bringing a shimmering, light-filled quality to the image, where the dancer and the sea become one translucent image. The transparency of paint, as well as the thickness of application in some places, creates a back and forth movement between the sea and the dancer. And it is this back and forth movement that strengthens the meaning of the algebraic title, giving both the sea and dancer an equal part in the creation of this visual analogy.

²¹ See discussion of Pacini’s articles on Gino Severini and Jules Romain in Chapter I.

The Guggenheim *Sea = Dancer* (Fig. 30) is the most well-known plastic analogy painting of this period and was the basis for the 2001 Guggenheim exhibition. Visually dynamic, the physical descriptiveness of the dancer's body has been reduced to a series of interpenetrating geometricized planes of color. Aided by the title, the viewer discovers a rich array of skillfully constructed forms that emerge as if a mirage rising up from the depths of the artist's memory. The geometric emotive forms from *Art du fantastique* (arcs, cylinders, ovals, conical forms and undulating lines), carefully and subtly define the figure of the dancer. Severini's color analogies, in brilliantly faceted hues incorporating the "pure colors of the prism," give the painting an energized, dynamic quality. Contrasting complementary colors are combined with areas of analogous colors creating a jewel toned, light-filled composition. Here again Severini maintains the division of color, organizing the autonomous planes of color in a harmonious orchestration of expansive vibratory tension that flows across the surface of the canvas. This vibrating, scintillating color is clearly meant to stimulate a corresponding analogy of music that is at once both harmonious and polyphonus.

This painting has most often been discussed by scholars with regard to its relationship to the dances of Loïe Fuller. Marianne Martin was the first to suggest the influence of Mallarmé and Loïe Fuller.²² Daniela Fonti suggests that this is the first time Severini displayed any interest in Fuller, but she does not address the issue of Mallarmé's influence.²³ As discussed earlier in this study, Severini appears to have been interested in Fuller as early as 1912, evidenced by the *Dancer at Pigalle*. Fonti does not find

²² Marianne Martin, "The Futurist Gesture: Futurism and the Dance," *Kunst, Musik, Schauspiel 2*, International Congress of the History of Art (CIHA), (Vienna September 1983), 95-113.

²³ Daniela Fonti, "Gino Severini. The Dance," in *Severini and The Dance: 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Venice: Peggy Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 28.

Symbolist content in Severini's Plastic Analogy manifesto, stating that is not a Symbolist "flight into the inexpressible," but is rather a "construction of 'another' reality..linked to the natural one analogically."²⁴ But it is precisely Fuller's symbolist lineage along with Severini's own neo-symbolist background in Paris that makes it impossible to ignore the symbolist subtext of the works produced during the plastic analogy phase. The importance of synesthesia in Severini's manifesto and resultant compositions cannot be denied. Moreover, Fonti's suggestion that the analogy paintings derive from "the unconscious which conditioned the 'chain of analogies'" seems to assert a fundamental concept of symbolist synesthesia where an unconscious response to color, for example, would give rise to a corresponding sensation of sound. The evocations of emotions or related visions are then byproducts of these synesthetic experiences. While Severini may remove some of the ambiguity of interpretation from the image through the algebraic titles, he nevertheless remains committed to stimulating unconscious emotional responses from himself and the viewer based on the forms and colors of his compositions.

Mallarméan connotations are clear in both versions of *Sea = Dancer* as Severini represents "a dancer [who is]... a metaphor..."²⁵ Furthermore, as Loïe Fuller was the inspiration for much of Mallarmé's musings on dance, a comparison to images of Fuller are useful (Figs. 31 and 32). In both the photograph and the sculpture, each just one of numerous representations of Fuller produced during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, the relationship between Severini's paintings and Fuller's dances is evident. The expansive spiraling characteristics of her choreography, along with her use of colored lights and orchestral music, were the perfect physical manifestations of

²⁴ Ibid., 28.

²⁵ Martin, "The Futurist Gesture," 100.

Severini's analogical theories. Fuller's billowing and diaphanous drapery is also suggestive of rising and falling waves in the ocean, providing a further visual parallel with Severini's imagery during this time. Although formally different, these two painted versions of *Sea = Dancer* serve to signify an intuitive comprehension of the artist's memory of the dancer. By abstracting the figure to its essential elements, and through the use of color, sequins and displacement of forms, Severini creates a vibrant image of a dancer that goes beyond mere physical record, suspending the idea between reality and memory. By continuing the forms onto the frame of the painting, Severini suggests that infinite expansion is possible, transcending the boundaries of space and time.

The second type of analogy in Severini's theoretical construct is the "Apparent Analogy," which involves a more complex association between images:

The plastic expression of the same sea, which in a real analogy evokes in me a dancer, gives me by process of apparent analogy a vision of a great bunch of flowers. These evident and superficial analogies help to intensify the expressive power of the work of art. Thus one comes to the result: *sea = dancer + bunch of flowers*.

Mallarmé may be invoked again as his passage on the dancer as a metaphor reads in full: "a dancer is not a woman who dances...but a metaphor which summarizes some elemental aspects of our form, sword, cup, flower..."²⁶ Not only does Severini's imagery relate to Mallarmé's notion of the dancer as a metaphor, but now the dancer has the ability to transform herself into a completely different being, just as Fuller did during her Butterfly and Serpentine dances. While real analogies equate one vision with another, such as the sea with a dancer, apparent analogies go one step further by evoking several images at once and synthesizing them into a unified whole.

²⁶ Ibid.,100.

Expressed as an algebraic equation, as in *Sea = Dancer + Bouquet of Flowers* of 1914 (Fig. 33) one image is now equated with two unrelated objects. As Martin notes, there is a definite Mallarméan tone to these works when viewed in the context of Mallarmé's *Crise de Vers*:

...the miracle by which a natural object almost disappears in the vibratory play of the word...so as to conjure up the pure notion from the direct and palpable recall. When I say "flower" then from that forgetfulness to which my voice consigns all floral forms, something different from all the know calyxes arises, the idea itself...the flower that is absent from all bouquets.²⁷

Such associations are found in *Bear Dance = Sail boat + Vase of Flowers* of 1914 (Fig.34). Severini said of this painting in 1914:

On one side I grouped all the colors and forms of heat, of the dance, of joy, and on the other all the colors and forms of freshness, of transparency, of noises and sounds; while in the center I bunch form-colors in contrast to the form-colors at the sides; and this bunch of dynamic forms unites the elements to right and left and corresponds to sensations of the sky, of the atmosphere, of electric light, of flesh, of cloth, etc.²⁸

Compositionally similar to *Sea = Dancer + Bouquet of Flowers* (Fig. 33), Severini has represented on either side, tactile, aural and visual sensations while the central forms unite the entire composition in an overall analogy expressive of the artist's state of mind while experiencing a variety of sensory experiences. In this painting Severini utilizes the "pure colors of the prism" in a composition that pulsates with shimmering color and dynamic movement. Complimentary and analogous color groupings create visually stimulating patterns across the surface. The tightly constructed core of angular forms

²⁷ Portions of Stéphane Mallarmé's "Crise de Vers" are quoted in Martin, "Futurist Gesture," 100.

²⁸ John Gage, "Severini's Socks or the Dancing Colours," in *Gino Severini. The Dance 1909-1916*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Daniela Fonti, (Milan: Skira Editore S.p.A., 2001), 34-35.

gives way to more rounded and expansive forms that spread out to the edges of the canvas. Following his own guidelines, Severini has added words and additional materials, such as the sequins and the words “La Fortuna” and La Speranza,” to heighten the “realism” of the picture. The sequins can certainly be interpreted as part of the dancer’s costume, while the sailboats (indicated by the title of the painting) are identifiable by their respective names, *Fortuna* (Luck) and *Speranza* (Hope). Severini’s conception of this canvas is based on his belief that form and color are capable of triggering intuitive responses within the viewer that will enable them to grasp the higher reality of the image, a deeper reality dependent upon ideas and experiences beyond external appearances. On this level, Severini’s works seem to take on a metaphysical quality. The artist asks the viewers to give themselves over to a state of mind that transcends the banalities of daily life in order to enter into a reality where intuition and emotion replace logic and reason as the main cognitive means.

In the last plastic analogy painting of this period, Severini combined dance and the technology of war in a work produced in 1915 during the World War I. Severini’s *Dancer = Helix = Sea* (Fig.35) was painted at the time of his series of war paintings, such as *Armored Train in Action* of 1915 (Fig. 36), and bears similar compositional elements to this work. The center of *Dancer = Helix = Sea*, comprised of sharp angles juxtaposed with rounded forms, can be seen simultaneously as both a dancer, an airplane propeller and a helix. The dual nature of the word “helix” in French (*hélice*) and Italian (*elica*), meaning both propeller and helix, provided Severini with a way of suggesting multiple ideas.²⁹ If read as an airplane propeller, and in particular a war plane, the conical form at the top of the canvas bears a striking relationship to the artillery depicted

²⁹ Hanson, 107.

in the *Armored Train*. However, Severini also suggests the infinite form of a helix through the spiraling sensation created by the intertwined planes of color in the center. Severini's use of a diamond shaped support heightens the sensation of ascendancy and expansion. In this image, Severini combined his memories of a dancer and time spent by the sea with the visual reality of war. It is at once ephemeral in its associations with the infinite and concrete in its suggestion of warfare artillery. Swelling ocean waves are recognizable on the left side of the canvas and their rocking motion is further reinforced by the undulating curves below. Severini remained true to his theory of complementary and analogous colors in a palette that is undeniably prism-like. The vibrant dynamism of this canvas reinforces the underlying element of motion generation by ideas of the dancer, the sea, an airplane and a helix.

Severini continued to produce plastic analogy paintings through the end of 1915. During this time, he interrupted his dancer motif to create a series of works addressing World War I. These images of canons, trains and soldiers would be Severini's last truly Futurist works. He resumed the theme of dance after the war, although the devastation of the war, including the death of his longtime friend Boccioni, had taken its toll, and Severini turned away from Futurism and abstract representation in step with what is known as *La Rappel du Ordre*.³⁰

³⁰ For further information on *La Rappel du Ordre*, see Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps-The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

CONCLUSION

A passage written by the symbolist art critic Georges-Albert Aurier reads as an eloquent summation of Severini and the imagery he produced during the period examined in this paper. Although written about the work of Van Gogh, Aurier's comments nonetheless find resonance among Severini's images of dance:

..he only considers this bewitching pigment as a kind of marvelous language destined to translate the Idea...[and] beneath this very material matter there lies, for the spirit that knows how to see it there, a thought, an Idea, and this Idea, the essential substratum of the work is, at the same time, its efficient and final cause. As for the brilliant and dazzling symphonies of color and lines, whatever their importance be for the painter, they are in his work only simple expressive means, simple processes of symbolization.¹

Beginning with his first work of the Parisian nightlife (Fig. 1) and ending with the amazing *Dancer = Sea = Helix* of 1915 (Fig. 35), the pinnacle of Apparent Analogies, Severini journeyed across a wide artistic range during this five-year period. Aided by his contacts and friendships within the neo-symbolist and avant-garde groups of Paris, Severini established his own identity and aesthetic within this international art community. An artist of prodigious output throughout his career, Severini pursued his own path, always remaining true to his personal vision of artistic expression. What becomes overwhelmingly clear, even on a cursory examination of his career as an artist, is that Severini still has much to offer art historical scholarship.

¹ Georges-Albert Aurier quoted in James D. Herbert, *Fauve Painting: The Making of Cultural Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 29.

Severini's adherence to synesthesia was not restricted to dance imagery, as it is equally important factor in his *Nord-Sud* series of 1913, representing the cross-town trams of Paris is one of the few times he explored themes outside of dance during this period. In this series he sought to express the movement and sound of the passenger vehicles while also presenting the sensation of simultaneity experienced by the passengers on those vehicles. In these images, Severini relied on the same theories of color and form used in his dance imagery to evoke the experiences of modern transportation.

This interest in synesthesia, particularly the relationship between color and sound, remained after the First World War as evidenced by his art and writings. He continued his exploration of the expressive qualities of color and line, pushing the limits of their emotive potentiality to greater depths of expression. In a 1918 diagram (Fig. 37), Severini related color to the musical scale of "do re mi," here perhaps coming closer to Kandinsky's theory of color and sound that had been expounded in 1912, and again underscoring the profound relationship he perceived between these two elements.²

Severini's interest in symbolist theory is consistent with the Futurist movement's symbolist inclinations which are apparent in many works. Originating with Marinetti's background as a symbolist poet, and his connection with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century symbolist groups, it is not surprising to find that certain symbolist ideas permeated the Futurist program. For example, the Futurist goal of representing "states of mind" is a fundamental conceit of Symbolism as is the reliance on line and color to express emotions and sensations with the ultimate aim of stimulating those same

² Image reproduced in Giovanni Lista, "Nota su Severini inedito. La scuola musicalista," *Il Margutta: periodica d'arte contemporanea* 6, no. 5-6 (May-June 1973), 13-18; 15.

sensations within the viewer. In Boccioni's *States of Mind Triptych* he combines color and line to try and communicate feelings of sadness, longing, and anxiety. These effects are reinforced by a pictorial structure intended to enhance the mood generated by the color.

However, in the context of Futurist production Severini went beyond his colleagues in the use of symbolist theories as a means of endowing his work with a deeply personal, yet at the same time universal, expression of the essence of dance. He did this by attempting to connect the viewer to his personal response to dance while at the same time visualizing dance as a transcendent experience. Not only did he see dance as a metaphor or personification of modernity, but also beyond that, the ability of a dancer's movements to evoke a multitude of visual imagery, even if seemingly unrelated. Therefore, Severini's dance images exist on several levels, from the mundane to the transcendental.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson wrote "the artist aims at giving us a share in this emotion, so rich, so personal, so novel, and at enabling us to experience what he cannot make us understand."³ This idea is the foundation of Severini's dance imagery. Bodies dissolved by electric light, rhythms of the crowd moving through a dance hall, and the implied element of music transport the viewer from the specific to the infinite by means of the artist's inner vision. In scenes of the Parisian nightlife, Severini combines painting, music, and dance in compositions open to varied Symbolist and/or Futurist interpretation depending upon the state of mind of the viewer. Just as the veil of a dancer simultaneously conceals and reveals the figure, Severini's images veil ultimate meaning,

³ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (1907), quoted by Mark Antliff, "Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment," *Art Journal* (Winter 1988), 341-349; 343.

asking the viewers to unveil for themselves the transcendent sensory experience of the dance spectacle.



1 *Claudine at the Moulin de la Galette*, 1907, pastel,
dimensions unknown, Cognac Collection, Angoulême.



2 *The Boulevard*, 1911, oil on canvas,
63.5 x 91.5 cm, Estorick Collection, London.



3 *Memories of a Journey*, 1911,
oil on canvas, 47 x 75 cm , Location Unknown.



4 *Dancers at the Monico*, 1910, oil on canvas,
dimensions unknown, private collection, Great Britain.



5 Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Moulin de la Galette*, 1876,
oil on canvas, 51 5/8 x 69" (131 x 175 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



6 Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Un Coin de la Moulin de la Galette*, 1889, oil on canvas, 40 x 32 cm, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.



7 Pablo Picasso, *Moulin de la Galette*, 1900, oil on canvas,
88.2 x 115.5 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, New York.



8 Kees Van Dongen, *Moulin de la Galette*, 1904,
oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm, Musée d'Art Moderne, Troyes, France.



9 *Dance of the Pan Pan at the Monico*, 1911 (original destroyed, copy by artist 1959-1960), oil on canvas, 280 x 400 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



10 Robert Delaunay, *Eiffel Tower*, 1911, oil on canvas, 195.5 x 129 cm, Kunstmuseum, Bâle.



11 Fernand Léger, *The Wedding*, 1911, 257 x 206 cm,
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



12 *Dynamic Hieroglyph of the Bal Tabarin*, 1912, oil on canvas with sequins, 161.6 x 156.2 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York.



13 Félix Vallotton, *The Waltz*, 1893,
oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm, Private Collection.



14 Georges Braque, *Clarinet and Bottle of Rum on a Mantlepiece*, 1911, oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 23 5/8" (81 x 60 cm), Tate Gallery, London.



15 *Blue Dancer*, 1912, oil on canvas with sequins,
61 x 46 cm, Mattioli Collection, Milan.



16 *White Dancer*, 1912, oil on canvas, 60 x 45 cm,
Jucker Collection, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.



17 *Dancer at Pigalle*, 1912, oil on canvas with plaster and sequins,
69 x 50 cm, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland.



18 Fernand Léger, *Woman in Blue*, 1912, oil on canvas,
193 x 130 cm, Öffentliche Kunstammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum, Basel.



19 Reutlinger, *Loie Fuller Dance of the Serpents*, 1896, Photograph reproduced from Margaret Haile Harris, *Loie Fuller: Magician of Light*. Loan exhibition at the Virginia Museum (Richmond: The Virginia Museum, 1979).



20 Reutlinger, *Loie Fuller in Butterfly Dance Costume*, ca. 1893,
Photograph reproduced from Margaret Haile Harris, *Loie Fuller: Magician of Light*.
Loan exhibition at the Virginia Museum (Richmond: The Virginia Museum, 1979).



PER KROHG
 MIT
 M^{lle} LUCY VIDIL
 I
 MODERNE DANSE
 II
 ELLESE PHOTOGRAPHIE OPI-
 TAGELIER FÜR DANCEN
 NOTENBUCHKLEINER
 III
 Kgl. Hof- und Opern-
 Ballett

1. Première page d'un almanach de 1911 pour les dames, avec Per et Lucy.



2. Marchiche.



3. Marchiche



4. L'écrevisse



5. L'écrevisse



6. Le tango



7. Le tango



8. La danse de l'ours



9. La danse de l'ours



10. La danse de l'ours



11. La danse de l'ours



12. La danse de l'ours

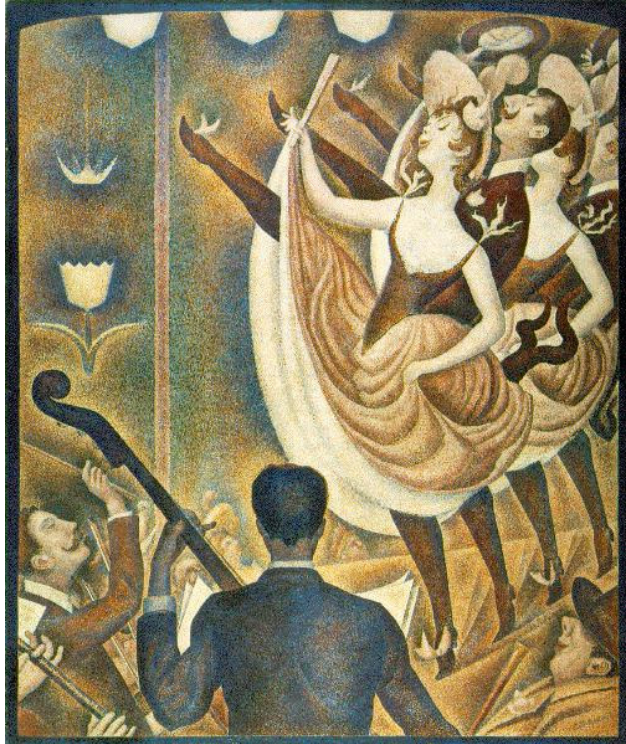
21 *Modern Dance Almanac*, by Per Krohg and Lucy Vidil, 1911,
 Photograph reproduced from *Gino Severini and the Dance: 1909-1914*,
 (Milan: Skira Editore S.p.A., 2001).



22 *Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge*, 1913, oil on canvas, 100 x 73.5 cm,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.



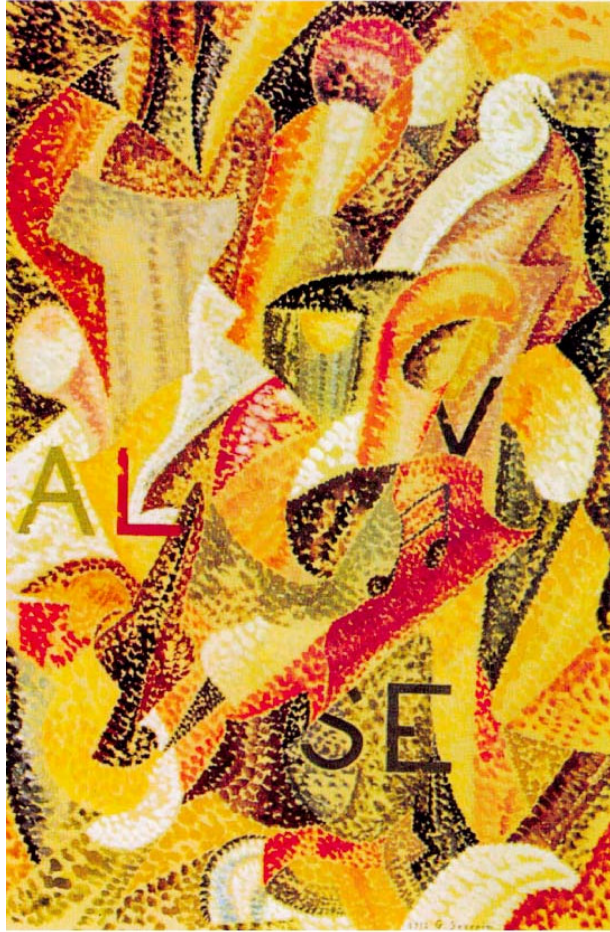
23 *Argentine Tango*, 1913, oil on canvas with painted frame by artist,
92 x 73 cm, Syracuse Museum, Syracuse, New York.



24 Georges Seurat. *La Chahut*, 1889-90, oil on canvas,
66 1/2 x 55 1/2 in, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, The Netherlands.



25 *Form of a Dancer in the Light*, c. 1912,
pastel on paper with sequins, 50 x 35 cm, Private Collection, Rome.



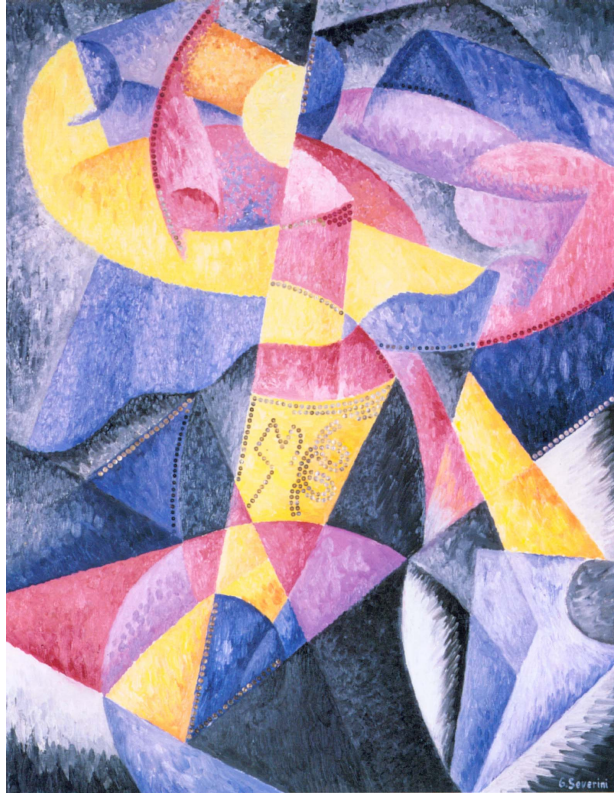
26 *Waltz*, 1912, pastel on paper,
dimensions unknown, L. Rosenberg Collection, Paris.



27 Pablo Picasso, *Ma Jolie*, 1912, oil on canvas,
100 x 65.4 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York.



28 Robert Delaunay, *Simultaneous Contrast Sun and Moon*, 1913, oil on canvas, 134.5 cm diameter, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York.



29 *Sea = Dancer*, 1913-14, oil on canvas,
92.7 x 73.6 cm, Private Collection, Fort Worth, Texas.



30 *Sea = Dancer*, 1913, oil on canvas with frame painted by artist,
100 x 85.9 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.



31 Loïe Fuller, 1896, photo taken from Margaret Haile Harris,
Loïe Fuller: Magician of Light. Loan exhibition at the Virginia Museum
(Richmond: The Virginia Museum, 1979).



32 Pierre Roche, *Loïe Fuller: Fire Dance*, ca. 1897, bronze, 21 1/2 in., Le Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.



33 *Sea = Dancer + Bouquet of Flowers*, 1914,
oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm, Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle.



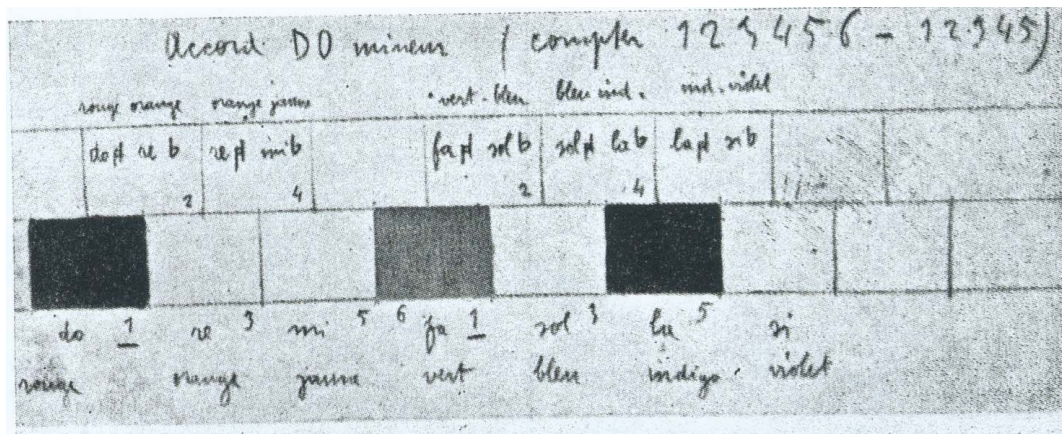
34 *Bear Dance = Sailboat + Vase of Flowers*, 1914,
oil on canvas, 104 x 90 cm, Prato, Galleria Farsetti.



35 *Dancer = Helix = Sea*, 1915, oil on canvas, 78 x 75 cm,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Alfred Steiglitz Collection, New York.



36 *Armored Train in Action*, 1915, oil on canvas,
115.8 x 88.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York.



37 Correspondence between music and color, 1919,
media unknown, dimensions unknown, Vantongerloo collection.

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