

Souza-Cardoso and Boccioni: A Comparison of Similar Movements /
Souza-Cardoso e Boccioni: movimentos analógicos em confronto

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ABSTRACT

Even though he was not affiliated to any of the so-called avant-garde movements that emerged during his brief lifetime, Souza-Cardoso's vast and prolific artistic work managed to relate to all these avant-garde movements, using beauty and grace to create his works. In contrast, Umberto Boccioni, a very diligent painter and sculptor, actively engaged in the avant-garde movements that swept through some areas of Europe like a wild fire, is an entirely futuristic author. I intend to consider the work of these two artists by putting special emphasis on the fact that they both had the same goal -- namely, the dynamics of the human body. Furthermore, I will also take into account their simultaneous convergence and divergence regarding the guidelines of the ultramodern manifesto.

KEYWORDS: Souza-Cardoso; Analogy; Movement; Opposition; Boccioni

RESUMO

Embora não estivesse afiliado direta e especificamente a nenhum dos movimentos de vanguarda que eclodiram durante a sua breve existência, a produção fértil e vasta de Souza-Cardoso, com a leveza e a beleza que a caracteriza, conseguiu de certo modo tocá-los a todos. Umberto Boccioni, ativíssimo pintor e escultor, muito mais próximo dos movimentos vanguardistas inflamando algumas áreas europeias, é, pelo contrário, um autor plenamente futurista. Pretendo analisar sucintamente a obra destes dois artistas, tendo especialmente em conta o fato de ambos terem o mesmo objetivo – a dinâmica do corpo humano –, mas também a sua convergência e divergência relativamente às indicações programáticas do manifesto futurista.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Souza-Cardoso; Analogia; Movimento; Oposição; Boccioni

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Our fantasy may wish to wander through the mental connections caused by certain expressions or terms – not always casually –, when those expressions or terms appear in a certain dialogical context.

However, one may think that to begin a text in such an extravagant fashion may give the impression that the object of this paper is fantasy or the lack of connection between thoughts. This is not the case. My reflection stems from a very interesting passage in a text by Teolinda Gersão which made me think about the origin of the word “reader.” Since the reader gathers, i.e., captures the meaning hidden in the succession of letters and establishes their causal connection (an action carried out by seeing – hence the Latin expression *legere oculis* - to gather with the eyes), he/she is also a spectator, someone who sees, that is to say, someone who witnesses something that is happening right in front of his/her eyes.

Teolinda Gersão’s text (1981, p.XXXVII), which juxtaposes reader and spectator, is crucial to the development of my thought:

As a matter of fact, in painting as in literature, the attitude of the reader/spectator is the same: both were “thrown in the middle”, there is no longer a single perspective but rather a plurality of intersecting *planes* giving that impression of “vertigo” often alluded to by the futurists [...].¹

What I find interesting and relevant in this quote are the words “middle,” “plane,” and “vertigo” because when we read the futurist manifestos written in the second decade of the last century, we realize that the aims of the authors, and later on those of the followers, were precisely to throw the reader into chaos, to remove the known and historical clothes covering the body of his/her thought, i.e., to cause the vertigo of finding himself/herself in the middle of the unknown and of disorder. In the

¹ All Portuguese quotes were translated into English by me. Original text: “Em pintura como literatura, de facto, a atitude do espectador/leitor é a mesma: um e outro foram “atirados para o meio” não existindo mais uma perspectiva única, mas uma pluralidade de *planos* que se interseccionam, produzindo a sensação de “vertigem” a que frequentemente os futuristas aludem; [...]”. All Portuguese quotes were translated into English by me.

case in question, one has to conceive the reader as an individual who gathers and/or apprehends with the eyes, that is to say, one has to consider him/her as a spectator.²

When Marinetti published the *Futurist Manifesto* in 1909, *grosso modo* what he does is to say that poetry is nothing more than the sum of the analogies produced as simultaneous transcriptions of the chaotic movement of reality's forms. If the function of the forms is to adopt or assume different figures, i.e., to touch the fringes of the absolute, it is only through a frenetic and uncontrolled, "chaotic" movement that Marinetti's analogies may emerge. For instance, consider point 10 of the *Futurist Manifesto*: "[...] it is necessary to orchestrate the images and display them in accordance to the maximum disorder" (DE MARIA, 1973, p.8).³ This observation implies, by analogy, the total freedom from material bonds, whatever they may be, an absence of bonds clearly stated by Marinetti in the ideal of "words in freedom" that will be carried out in other human arts. Or, let us say, the desire to impress the reader/spectator with a sort of "ontological insecurity" (GERSÃO, 1981, p.XXXVII) that prevents him/her from placing himself/herself in time and space, from landing on firm ground, continuously wandering in the limbo of the analogies in construction.

Therefore, what is at stake is essentially the meaning of the prefix *poly*, which expresses the idea of *several, a large number, many*, thus applied to -chrome, -phony and -morph. That is how we understand point 7 of the manifesto previously mentioned:

Analogy is the profound love that binds seemingly diverse and hostile and distant things. Only by means of vast analogies may an *orchestral* style, at the same time polychromic, polyphonic and polymorph, embrace the life of matter (DE MARIA, 1973, p.8).⁴

I emphasize the term "orchestral" that also occurs in the already quoted point 10 in verbal function, i.e., "to orchestrate." They both immediately express the concept of plurality (the prefix *poly*- mentioned earlier) presented by Marinetti and clarified in the futurist precepts. The analogy is very clear. The manifesto aims to create harmony from

² I insist in the association of these words because the reader of Marinetti will be the spectator of Boccioni.

³ All Italian quotes were translated into English by me. Original text: "bisogna orchestrare le immagini disponendole secondo un maximum di disordine."

⁴ Original text: "L'analogia non è altro che l'amore profondo che collega le cose distanti, apparentemente diverse ed ostili. Solo per mezzo di analogie vastissime uno stile orchestrale, ad un tempo policromo, polifonico, e polimorfo, può abbracciare la vita della materia."

various and totally different instruments, by trying to play them all in unison; even if such a harmony is not in tune with the established canons, that is to say, a pre-established order, the main thing is to force their union, to coerce the instruments to coincide in multiple planes. The central theme of futurism consists therefore in the total contact that forces the new industrial and technological society (and thus its forms of action), to enter literary activity and, afterwards, other arts. All these forms or art are eager to experiment new ways of expression (MARCHESE *et al.*, 1999, pp.151-5). That is why the myths of the machine and velocity become of capital importance to understand the mechanism of concepts apparently unconnected in the moment of the ignition of the futurist conceptual motor.

Analogy and movement, analogy and force are the lenses through which one must see the artistic production of the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly the two figurative arts particularly relevant here: painting and sculpture.

One year after the Parisian publication of the *Futurist Manifesto* in the *Figaro*, in 1910, other young men taken by Marinetti's precepts signed the manifesto and enlisted in the battle against the decrepitude of the already given and the conventions of the bourgeois epoch. These intellectuals believed in the idea of becoming (understood as a perpetual movement), in the scientific progress that transforms the environment in which we all live. Umberto Boccioni, painter and sculptor, is one of them.

Umberto Boccioni was born in Reggio Calabria, in the south of Italy, in 1882. A painter first and a sculptor later, he was one of the artists who better and more fiercely embraced and enriched Marinetti's futurism. One might even say that in his brief artistic life – he died in 1916,⁵ in the World War, at the age of 33 – Boccioni had two “fathers.” The first was Giacomo Balla (1871-1958), a divisionist painter, with whom he studied and perfected his pictorial technique. The second was surely Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), with whom he closely collaborated in the field of literature.⁶ They both contributed to the creation of two artistic states in Boccioni's soul.

⁵ Irony and chance, for one who so praised velocity and also the equine figure, it will be a horse that will make him fall and cause his death during some war exercises in Sorte, Verona (cf. De Maria, 1973, LIII).

⁶ “Signer and co-signer of numerous manifestos, he also ventured himself, always with valid and clever results, into the theatre with some ‘summaries’ and two texts in freestyle” (DE MARIA, 1973, p.LIII). Original text: “Firmatario e cofirmatario di numerosi manifesti, si cimentò anche, con risultati sempre validi e intelligenti, nel teatro, con alcune ‘sintesi’, e, con due testi, nell’ambito parolibero.”

Boccioni's travels to Paris and Russia nourished his cultural education and showed him what was being done abroad. Travelling was a familiar activity to this artist, for he spent a great part of his childhood and youth moving from one Italian city to another in the company of his father – a civil servant whose occupation implied constant moves. Therefore, adjusting to the new and diverse was already a part of his way of being in the world.

Directly engaged with the futurist theories and personally with Marinetti, Boccioni becomes a tireless promoter and agent of his manifesto, unconditionally and totally committing himself to the transposition of its precepts into the arts (DE MARIA, 1973, p.LIII), into painting, and more specifically into sculpture. Strongly embracing the significance of Futurism, in February 11 of 1910, Boccioni, with Carlo Dalmazzo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini, will sign the *Manifesto dei pittori futuristi*, and two months later they will sign *La pittura futurista Manifesto tecnico*. In 1912, he also writes a study on futurist sculpture, demonstrating a full appropriation of Marinetti's ideals.

In fact, as one would expect, Marinetti's manifesto and the manifesto of the futurist painters coincide in some points, and Boccioni takes them as the base for his artistic creations. I highlight two examples: points 3 and 10 of Marinetti's manifesto agree with points 3 and 1 of the futurist painting manifesto signed by Boccioni.

Marinetti = 3. Literature has praised immobility of thought, ecstasy and sleep so far. We want to praise aggressive movement, feverish insomnia, the racing step, the somersault, the slap and the punch (DE MARIA, 1973, p.9).

Boccioni = 3. To praise each form of originality, even if daring, even if extremely violent (DE MARIA, 1973, p.22).

Marinetti = 10. We want to destroy museums, libraries, academies of all sorts, and fight against moralism, feminism, and any opportunistic or utilitarian villainy (DE MARIA, 1973, p.9).

Boccioni = 1. To destroy the cult of the past, the obsession for the ancient, academic pedantry, and formalism⁷ (DE MARIA, 1973, p.22).

⁷ Original text: Marinetti = 3. La letteratura esaltò fino ad oggi l'immobilità pensosa, l'estasi e il sonno. Noi vogliamo esaltare il movimento aggressivo, l'insonnia febbrile, il passo di corsa, il salto mortale, lo schiaffo ed il pugno.

Boccioni = 3. Esaltare ogni forma di originalità, anche se temeraria, anche se violentissima.

Marinetti = 10. Noi vogliamo distruggere i musei, le biblioteche, le accademie d'ogni specie, e combattere contro il moralismo, il femminismo e contro ogni viltà opportunistica o utilitaria.

The verbs used are clearly the same in both points: *praise* and *destroy*. In all and any form of art, one *praises* everything implied in velocity and temerity of gesture or action, and one *destroys* everything that represents the obsolete and the static. The two verbs are always accompanied by the strongest expression of verbal desire and intention: *we want*. In both cases, the complement of that action is always dependent on the desire for power, an idea pointing to Nietzsche's philosophy and its theory of the super-human (MARCHESE *et al.*, 1999, pp.155-6) – a theory to which the futurists (Boccioni included) had access and even assimilated.⁸

Boccioni's painting and sculpture are an expression of this form of desire and this wish for power, of an unrestricted impulse towards movement. However, he also studied other philosophers – especially Henri Bergson and his work *Matter and Memory* (1991 [1896]),⁹ whose theory of “spontaneous memory” (understood as an intuition of the fundamental unity of matter) suggests to him the idea of the co-penetration of planes – and consulted historical-artistic volumes that helped him to formulate and develop his concept of *plastic dynamism*. Here are his own words in the *Prefazione al Catalogo della 1ª Esposizione di scultura futurista a Parigi* (June-July 1913):

All these convictions urge me to find, in sculpture, not pure form but *pure plastic rhythm*, not the construction of bodies but the construction of the *action of bodies*. Therefore, not an architecture, as was done in the past, not a pure form but the *pure plastic rhythm; in moto* is not a body studied in its quietude and later displayed as if it was in motion but *a body truly in moto*, that is, a living reality, absolutely new and original. [...] The form-force is, with its centrifuge direction, the potentiality of the real form (DE MARIA, 1973, p.75).¹⁰

Boccioni = 1. Distruggere il culto del passato, l'ossessione dell'antico, il pedantismo e il formalismo accademico.

⁸ Particularly Aldo Palazzeschi, a Florentine futurist who much praised Nietzsche's *The Joyful Science* and its message of a superficial and simple culture. *Vide* Marchese *et al* (1999, p.156).

⁹ BERGSON, H. *Matter and Memory*. Translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

¹⁰ Original text: “Tutte queste convinzioni mi spingono a cercare, in scultura, non già la forma pura, ma il *ritmo plastico puro*, non la costruzione dei corpi, ma la costruzione dell'*azione dei corpi*. Non già, quindi, come nel passato, un'architettura, non già la forma pura, ma il *ritmo plastico puro, in moto* non è dunque per me un corpo studiato fermo e poi reso come in movimento, ma un *corpo veramente in moto*, cioè una realtà vivente, assolutamente nuova e originale. [...] La forma-forza è, con la sua direzione centrifuga, la potenzialità della forma reale.”

This is, in general terms, the core of plastic dynamism theory fulfilled in the representation of velocity and bodies in motion, and in the plastic simultaneity of the simultaneous co-penetration of different sensations of time and space. I believe the 1913 *Forme uniche nella continuità dello spazio* (Image 1) is one of the most representative sculptures of the application of such a theory. This work of art is probably the symbol of a human figure in motion, one might say of some kind of soldier. According to Floreani (2017, p.20), it is a work suggesting

[...] dazzling light and subterranean shadow, overwhelming fullness and absolute void, ambition and defeat, euphoria and solitude, pride and terror, ‘unquietness’ and satisfaction, accelerations and jumps, uneven laterality and ascending vertigo, internal waves and centrifuge expulsions, spiral vortexes, opposing and violent force-lines, freezing rays, intensity, rarefaction, fixidity, quietude, threat (FLOREANI, 2017, p.20).¹¹

Also dating from 1913 is the oil painting of the Portuguese artist Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, *O Atleta (The Athlete)*, a work in which a very stylized human figure is captured and, in turn, captures motion. But what have these two artists, separated by the Mediterranean Sea, to do with each other? What is it that unites or divides them as artists who live the mo(ve)ment of artistic vanguard?

¹¹ Original text: “[...] luce accecante e ombra sotterranea, pieni straripanti e vuoti assoluti, ambizione e sconfitta, euforia e solitudine, orgoglio e terrore, inquietudine e appagamento, accelerazioni e rimbalzi, lateralità sghemba e vertigine ascensionale, onde interne ed espulsioni centrifughe, vorticosità spiraliche, linee-forza contrapposte, violente, raggismi raggelanti, intensità, rarefazione, fissità, quiete, minaccia.”



Image 1: BOCCIONI, *Forme uniche nella continuità dello spazio* (1913)

If travelling was something highly familiar to Boccioni's way of being in the world, given the constant moves imposed by his father's work (FLOREANI, 2017, pp.29-44), and later by his own choice, to Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso this very concept of moving was not unfamiliar. Indeed it is from Paris, where he enriched his personal education (from 1909 to 1914, the year in which he returned home due to the beginning of World War I), that Souza-Cardoso writes to his mother always signing as "Your son the walker A."

And it is as a *walker* that he presents himself to his mother, a word he sometimes attaches to his name when he caringly says goodbye to her. The idea of a way/road is not for the artist a mannerism or a literary justification. On the contrary, directly related to the idea of journey, it is a vital foundation for his artistic trajectory (FREITAS, 2016, p.18).¹²

Road and journey are, therefore, two aspects that unite Boccioni and Souza-Cardoso. Although the differences may be numerous and more evident than the two

¹² Original text: "E é como *caminheiro* que se apresenta à mãe, palavra que por vezes junta ao seu nome quando carinhosamente dela se despede. A ideia de caminho não é para o artista um tique ou uma justificação literária. Ela é pelo contrário, e na sua relação imediata com a ideia de viagem, um fundamento vital para o seu percurso artístico [...]."

aspects emphasized, I would like to show throughout my essay other important connections to understand the artistic universe of both artists.

Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso was born in Manhufe, a village in the north of Portugal, in 1887. He died very young, in 1918, a victim of the “Spanish Flu.”¹³ He is an artist whose death (at the age of thirty) cut at the root the possibility of making modernism (or maybe one should say modernization) flourish in Portuguese art.

As a young man, Souza-Cardoso went to Paris with the group of dreamers¹⁴ who still believed that the City of Light was a sort of salvation and a place of projection. First, with the academic intention of studying architecture and, later, choosing painting and plastic arts, Amadeo encountered other intellectuals and artists who, like him, were in Paris in search of education or luck.

The encounter with Amedeo Modigliani is decisive and highly influential; their friendship is well known and documented (FRANÇA, 1980, pp.28-30). They have the same name, they go to Paris in the same year and they share common artistic traits. Furthermore, they both collaborate in one exhibition in 1911. Among other distinguished guests of the luxurious atelier were Picasso, Apollinaire, Max Jacob (*vide* Freitas, 2016, p.20). The second acquaintance that influenced Souza-Cardoso’s personality and technique, in that same year, was the Delaunay couple. He soon became their friend and attended their celebrated *dimanches*. It was at one of these events that he met Umberto Boccioni (FREITAS, 2016, p.23) and accepted to exhibit at the Berlin salon *Der Sturm* in 1913. Amadeo will take in the Delaunay couple as war refugees in Vila-do-Conde in 1915 and 1916.

¹³ The 1918 flu pandemic, known and mentioned as Spanish Flu, had other names, such as pneumonic plague or just pneumonic). Caused by the RNA H1N1 virus, it affected more than 200 million people all over the world and caused the death of about 10 million. The first known cases took place in France, during World War I, but it later spread to Greece, Portugal and Spain. Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso was one of the victims of that flu pandemic. Santa-Rita Pintor was also a victim of the same flu. See José-Augusto França (2016, p.243-55). For further information, see the entry “Spanish Flu” at http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/influenza-spagnola_%28Dizionario-di-Medicina%29/.

¹⁴ In some cases, it is the leaving and the returning home, with new ideas and renewed feelings, that makes the artists of *Orpheu* (1915), and later of *Portugal Futurista* (1917), decide to apply the modernity they have seen and learned abroad. “Here the brains meet and bring their youths’ lived experiences outside the boundaries of their motherland. Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Almada-Negreiros and Santa-Rita Pintor come from France, and Fernando Pessoa from South Africa. They all share an iconoclastic, almost intolerant and renewing spirit” (PICCOLO, 1970, p.299). Original text: “Gl’ingegni che vi s’incontrano, ciascuno dei quali porta le esperienze della propria giovinezza vissuta fuori dei confini della patria, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Almada-Negreiros e Santa-Rita Pintor che vengono dalla Francia, Fernando Pessoa che viene dall’Africa del Sud hanno in comune uno spirito insofferente, iconoclasta e rinnovatore”

One cannot enclose Amadeo's work in a rigid and definite style (GONÇALVES, 2011, p.95).¹⁵ Although Souza-Cardoso crossed, *ante litteram*, the artistic movements of his time (cubism, for instance), and "considered himself an 'impressionist, a cubist, a futurist and abstractionist,' a bit of everything, it was the futurist label that soon fitted him" (FRANÇA, 1980, p.20).¹⁶ His Parisian life, and one might say existential predisposition to discover new forms of art, led him to a practical experimentation of the theoretical principles that stimulated and nourished the minds of the intellectuals of the late nineteenth century, who were willing to revolutionize and overthrow the European *status quo*. Even though he was not affiliated to any of the so-called avant-garde movements existent during his brief lifetime, Souza-Cardoso's vast and prolific opus managed to 'touch' them all with the etherealness and grace that defines it.

We know that Amadeo read the *Futurist Manifesto* published in the *Figaro* (FREITAS, 2016, p.21), and we know that he did not join it as a movement that represented him. In a letter to his uncle Francisco, dated from the fifth of August 1913, he writes: "Futurism is a senseless, brainless charlatan's trick, the Camelot of cubism; cubism is a literary and mental calligraphy. Art, as I feel it, is an emotional product of nature [...]" (FREITAS, 2016, p.24).¹⁷

If Souza-Cardoso didn't recognize himself in the futurist movement, as one plainly sees in this letter to his uncle, why then do I try to compare his painting with the sculpture of Boccioni, who was, in turn, a fierce defender of futurism? In reality, it would be simpler to show the similarities between Souza-Cardoso's 1913 oil painting *Cavaleiros* (Image 2) and Boccioni's 1915 collage *Lancieri* (Image 3). For instance, the

¹⁵ "In February 1912, the exhibition of the Italian futurist painters in Paris was decisive in Amadeo and Santa-Rita's choice of vanguard. Amadeo had already read Marinetti's Manifesto which was published in the *Le Figaro* newspaper in 1909, and not only did it not interest him all that much but it failed to interest his Italian friend Modigliani. But the painting convinced him. He himself started painting futurist pictures using the pointillistic technique similar to what Severini was doing at the same time. From there he went on to geometrical abstractionism where he was one of the pioneers together with Delaunay. Through Delaunay, Amadeo met other expressionists who were working in Germany. [...] Amadeo therefore, was the first Portuguese painter to have taken part in the international vanguard of his time. A comparison of his work with that of other artists he was friendly with reveals certain similarities, and also differences that are worthy of reflection. Like Modigliani, he acknowledged that two of his most important modernist trends were cubism and expressionism, the first in relation to a new concept of the maximum energy of colours with the maximum energy of shapes, surpassing the orthodoxies issuing as much from expressionism as from cubism" (GONÇALVES, 2011, pp.98-9).

¹⁶ Original text: "declarava-se 'impressionista, cubista, futurista e abstraccionista', de tudo um pouco – mas foi a etiqueta futurista que logo lhe coube."

¹⁷ Original text: "O futurismo é um truc charlatão sem sensibilidade nem cérebro, camelote do cubismo; o cubismo é uma caligrafia mental e literária. A arte tal como a sinto é um produto emotivo da natureza [...]"

theme is similar: they both represent horsemen (in the second case, holding a spear) and sensations of motion and inertia. However, I propose to confront a painting and a sculpture for one precise reason: to act on the suggestion of one of the *Futurist Manifesto*'s programmatic points, namely, the one concerning analogy, that “profound love that binds seemingly diverse and hostile and distant things” (DE MARIA, 1973, p.8).¹⁸ The works of Boccioni and Souza-Cardoso can be related and examined because of their thematic analogy and the moment of their composition. Although painting presupposes bi-dimensionality and sculpture tri-dimensionality, it is still possible to compare them because they both, for better or worse, show the simultaneity of planes and the plasticity of motion. In other words, despite the different instruments, they both show the dynamism of the thematic subject.

I will first consider Souza-Cardoso's oil painting given its curious, and to some extent tragic, history.



Image 2: SOUZA-CARDOSO, *Cavaleiros* (1913)



Image 3: BOCCIONI, *Lancieri* (1915)

From September 20th to November 1st of 1913, during the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, following a suggestion and the advice of the Delaunays, the German art gallery Der Sturm received three works from Souza-Cardoso for exhibition. One of them, *O Atleta* (Image 4), number 334 in the catalogue of that exhibition, vanished almost without a trace and is still missing to this day. What we do have is a sort of simulacrum of it, a collage and stylographic ink on board, 23,8cm x 17,8cm, when we

¹⁸ Original text: “[...] l’amore profondo che collega le cose distanti, apparentemente diverse ed ostili.”

know from a reference in the artist's diary dated 1912-3 that the original measured 33 x 22,5 cm (AA.VV., 2016, p.376).

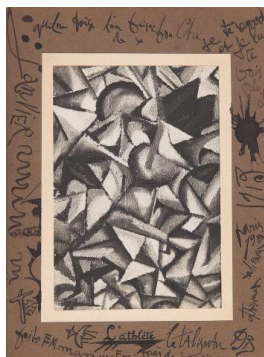


Image 4: SOUZA-CARDOSO, *O Atleta* (1913)

In the same letter to his uncle, Amadeo wrote:

I also sent you by post a photograph of the little painting I made in the begonia balcony destined for the catalogue of the Berlin Exhibition [...] Given the absence of color, the photograph does not say what the painting is. It is however curious for its gigantic nature, for whatever it has of athletic architecture (AA.VV., 2016, pp.376-7).¹⁹

The painting was, thus, coloured and the presence of colours gave a different liveliness to the theme with respect to the one presented here. In paintings such as *Corpus Christi* or *D. Quixote*, the chromatic motion is much more visible. However, despite the fact that in those works the lines are much less stylized than in the *O Atleta*, I believe that the same might happen in the latter. Indeed, it was the colour that assured the heavy sinuosity of the forms, which gave nerve and muscle to the body of the work, by delineating the figure of the athlete. If one looks carefully at the central part closer to the background (see Image 2), one will see two horizontal lines that seem a tense member but, at the same time, by directing the gaze to the end of those lines, the member seems to take another direction and posture. I may even imagine a perception of motion given by the interposition of semicircles and right angles – mostly in the centre – that the play of colours stresses or lightens. The lines are clear and strong, with

¹⁹ Original text: “Pelo mesmo correio lhe envio uma fotografia do quadrito que fiz na varanda das begônias que foi destinada ao catálogo da Exposição de Berlim [...] Esta fotografia não diz o que o quadro é pela ausência de cor. É em todo o caso curiosa pelo gigantesco, por um quer que seja de arquitectura atlética.”

steady brush strokes that stabilize the motion of the body. The colourful spots detaching from the lines make visible the thickening of what could be understood as the pressure of the muscle seen in the motion of the geometrical figures. The use of a few curved lines highlights the defined motion of the subject, almost slow and as if posing. The motion of the athlete becomes visible in the corporeal subdivision of its lines.

In what concerns this lost work

The only critical comment on the Portuguese artist's work is made, curiously, in a violent and polemic text about the theoretical principles of the exhibition. In it, Amadeo's *Der Athlet* appears, alongside Carrà's *Forças centrífugas*, as an example of a "dead-end in the vain attempt to represent mental substances" (FREITAS, 2016, p.27).²⁰

A more solid interpretation of it seems, therefore, impossible or very difficult. And yet, the existence of a cardboard encasing the non-original drawing allows us to understand why Souza-Cardoso did not consider himself as a follower of a given and specific movement. The frame is covered with Portuguese and French sayings, smudges, arabesques and acronyms, studied by Maria Filomena Molder (2006, pp.42-3), which I will not consider here.

I would like to focus on a part of Amadeo's letter to his uncle in which he describes the painting by its *je-ne-sais-quoi* of "athletic architecture." What attracts the observer's attention is precisely the use of the term *architecture*. Since this technique allows the construction and/or deconstruction of structures occupying spaces, somehow making them mobile, the asymmetric use of the lines in the painting I am considering and the colours to which we no longer have access should also contribute to the idea of that body in motion that Souza-Cardoso named *Atleta*. It is not a representation of the real but (as claimed by the avantguard spirit) a transformation of the real that goes beyond what is shown or given at first sight by the real. And that is, as is well known, a futurist precept.

On the one hand, Souza-Cardoso gives a concrete name to the almost abstract figure he paints; Boccioni, on the other hand, chooses an abstract name for the almost

²⁰ Original text: "O único comentário crítico localizado que refere o trabalho do artista português é, curiosamente, um texto violento e contestatório dos princípios teóricos da exposição. E nele Amadeo surge com *Der Athlet*, ao lado de Carrà com *Forças centrífugas*, como exemplos de um «beco sem saída na vã tentativa de representação das substâncias mentais.»

concrete figure he makes, *Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*, a plaster sculpture made in 1913, 113 cm. I will not consider the original work, now in the possession of São Paulo's Museum of Contemporary Art,²¹ but one of the many bronze fusions made after the artist's death, displayed in many museums, and not only in Italy (in New York, for instance, there is a bronze copy). One of them was made as early as 1931, in the Chiurazzi foundry at Naples by order of Filippo Marinetti.

Much has been said about this statue (*vide* Argan, 1982, pp.531-4) chosen as the verso of the Italian €0,20 coin. I will not explore its symbolism, mostly because this has already been carried out by distinguished specialists (see, for instance, Maltese, 1960, pp.282-302). I quote the recent volume by Roberto Floreani, a very dense but beautiful volume on the lifework of Boccioni. According to the author,

Although not entirely true, and probably because of the very restricted availability of his sculpted works, Boccioni is considered mostly as a distinguished painter who, with important results, also bases his work on sculpture; and this despite the fact that it is precisely the numbing novelty of his plastic research that is unprecedented in the history of art and by which he is successful in communicating the inexpressible feeling of going beyond, of taking at least a step beyond himself (FLOREANI 2017, p.18).²²

In this passage, the critic emphasizes that, by constantly and carefully researching the plasticity of motion, Boccioni manages with the sculpture to put in action the plastic dimension presented in detail by the manifesto.

In my analysis, however, it is more interesting to establish an analogy between the motion in Souza-Cardoso's painting and the fluid motion of Boccioni's statue. In a certain way, both works display a synthetic *continuum* of motion. In the case of Souza-Cardoso it is given by a *degradé* in which the strong lines, suggesting the undulation of the athletic body, decompose and recompose all over the canvas. In the case of Boccioni, the limits of the statue give it the perception of "athletic" motion. The absence of arms is not definite and total, since they reappear in the linearity that goes along the

²¹ In 2003 the sculpture fell and suffered considerable damage. It was recently restored by a team supervised by Vilma Basilissi.

²² Original text: "Probabilmente, per la ridottissima disponibilità di opere scultoree, Boccioni è considerato, anche se non del tutto a ragione, soprattutto un pittore d'eccellenza, che si cimenta, pur con importanti risultati, anche nella scultura, benché sia proprio la strabiliante novità della sua ricerca plastica a non aver precedenti nella storia dell'arte, dove l'artista riesce a comunicare l'inesprimibile sensazione di spingersi altrove, almeno un passo più in là di se stesso."

body of the figure. It is a sensation that becomes perceptible by the use of discontinuous *chiaroscuros* and by the cavities that project the corporeal or, in other words, reveal the tense muscles of the sculpture. If in Souza-Cardoso's painting the perception of motion is given by the apparent random use of straight and curved lines, Boccioni's statue may be observed from several perspectives, a possibility that allows the spectator to read the figure according to the space it occupies in his visual field.

Spatially and spiritually distant (distant as regards to their artistic background) nevertheless, both Umberto Boccioni and Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso uphold a culture of extremism, desecrating or ludic, understood in the sense of a dynamic conception of things and language, especially those that express reality by means of art and state its value and function in society. The distance that separates them in their technique is, at the same time, what binds them as leading figures in the revolutionary art of the first quarter of the twentieth century. One might say that Souza-Cardoso's painting as much as Boccioni's sculpture complies with point 5 of the *Futurist Manifesto*: "[...] it is necessary to merge directly the object with the image it evokes, to present the image aside it by means of only one essential word" (DE MARIA, 1973, p.8).²³

In this case there is only one word: motion.

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²³ Original text: "[...] bisogna fondere direttamente l'oggetto coll'immagine che esso evoca, dando l'immagine in iscorcio mediante una sola parola essenziale."

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