This study will examine Futurist experiments concerning the creation of a new form of dance. Using a double-methodology, I will investigate how the dancing body was perceived and represented during the first part of the twentieth century and how it perceived and represented itself. On the one hand, I will examine the Futurist arts and, on the other, I will study the history of modern dance. As a consequence, I will demonstrate that corporeality as a form of artistic expression appears throughout the entire Futurist movement and that the *Aerodanza* (1931) can be solidly placed within the tradition of the Romantic ballet, wherein the dancer attempts to fly through air, yearning to free him or herself from gravity.

Chapter I. *The “second” futurism: the problem of periodization*

First and foremost, it is important to establish the position of this work in relation to the question of the periodization of Futurism. It was generally considered that the Futurist movement lasted until the death of Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), or rather, until the outbreak of the First World War. Nonetheless, from the 1980s through the centenary of Futurism, a new periodization has been accepted, spanning until the passing of the founder, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944). This thesis emphasizes the importance of the latter,
since only the second generation developed the futurist aesthetics of speed into “air-aesthetics” and realized abstraction and corporeality in “air-art”.

Chapter II. The physical sensibility of Marinetti
Critics have considered Marinetti’s only point of contact with dance to be the manifesto La danza futurista (1917). However, I will show how his particularly acute physical sensibility laid the foundations for the creation of futuristic dance. In a reinterpretation of his manifestos, I wish to highlight his perception of the body and invention of a new dance art. As a result, it becomes clear that, for Marinetti, dance was an expression of hope, joy, desire to break with the past and a longing to leap: dance as a prelude to flight.

Chapter III. Dance and Futurism
In this chapter, I examine how dance – substantially, beauty in motion – was conceived by Futurist artists. In the first section, Futurism around dance, I will focus particularly on the works of Degas, Severini and Balla. I consider Edgar Degas (1834-1917) a pioneer of Futurist painting for his studies on the dynamism of racing horses and dancing forms. Gino Severini (1883-1966) provided the first experiments of segmentation and fragmentation of the dancing body and the potency of electronic light, while Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) embarked on a complex and articulated path through his study of terrestrial, swirling and aerial linee andamentali. Balla then proposed a significant theme for this research, that is, a series of painted profiles of dancers and, subsequently, sculptures of these. These figures, for example in Bal Tic Tac, are fruit of a dramatic abstraction and purification of the movements of the dancing body. In other words, these sculptures represent a conflict between the body bound to gravity and the soul desiring flight, in short, the desire to sublimate the dancing body.

In the second section, “Catalysis” between Futurism and the Ballets Russes”, I illustrate the mutual influence between the Futurists and the world of dance, starting from 1917, the crucial moment of “catalysis”.

The third section, Double trend of modern dance, examines both the mechanization of the body and its harmonization with nature. It functions as a fundamental introduction to the following chapter.

Chapter IV. The aerial dance of Giannina Censi
The first section, Admiration of flight: the Futurist “air-aesthetics” of the 1930s, based on the
history of aviation in Italy, is the analysis of “aeropittura”, in which the human body is freed from the ground and partakes in acrobatic flights. Furthermore, in aeropittura it is possible to identify the double trend of a documentary and representational tendency and an abstract and spiritual one. It is important to note that many aeropittori attempted to fly before drawing their aerial pictures. This implies that the artist’s body must not remain static and must fuse together the acts of painting and flying.

In the second section, Beginning of the Danza dell’elica, Pantomima dell’Aviatrice and Aerodanza, I focus on some Futurist dances and pantomimes representing flight and airplanes, as well as the original study on aerial dance written by Anton Giulio Bragaglia (1890-1960). The third section, The dancing and flying body of Giannina Censi is the climax and central subject of this work. The importance of Censi’s dance is examined both through the history of dance and through the experimentations of the Futurist movement. Censi’s Aerodanza is placed in relation to the “semi-aerial” dance of Marie Taglioni, in order to highlight the scientific development of aviation – from balloon to airplane – and the transformation of the dancing body in air, from lightness to dynamism.

Chapter V. The future of Futurist dance

The last chapter proposes a discussion on the future of Futurist dance. The first section, Rediscovery of the Aerodanza, is a consideration of the renewed interest and the “reworking” of the Aerodanza, starting from 1980s. The second section, Opening to the future, illustrates the futurist metropolis from a geographically and chronologically vast perspective. It is in the original perspective of the metropolis – the place of Futurism – where the “multiplied man” thrives. The view moves through the geometric choreography of George Balanchine and the Japanese avant-garde dance of Botoh.