Le Sacre du Printemps (the Ballets Russes, 1913) and Italian Futurism: Thematic Confluence and the Politics of Social Tension, Stylistic Repulsion and Aesthetic Dehumanisation

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This research has used methodologies of both comparative and transdisciplinary analysis to test the hypothesis that there was thematic confluence between selected works of the Ballets Russes and the Italian Futurists prior to the formal collaboration of the two artistic groups in 1917. The key point for this study is Sergei Diaghilev's production of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*Le Sacre*) performed in Paris and London in 1913. In the context of widespread scholarly acknowledgement of the significance of radical changes in the spheres of gender and sexuality at the moment of colonialism and imperialism in this period, this thesis identifies three sites of potential thematic confluence while contributing to the field a focus on the presence of 'blackness' as an unrecognised and under-analysed dimension of the politics and reception of *Le Sacre* and of Futurism.

The first thematic confluence to be examined addresses the political and social tensions which were features of the European society at the awkward end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentiet-centuries. My study focuses, however, on issues of gender and sexuality articulated in the explorations of masculinity, homosexuality, women's emancipation and reproduction. With an emphasis on the narratives of Futurist and Ballets Russes works, and drawing upon the interplay between currents in literary and religious philosophy, the thesis explores how these themes were represented in works of art and considers the role of the sacrificed virgin or Chosen One in *Le Sacre* with respect to anti-procreative practices and other forms of resistance.

The thesis then explores the theme of 'stylistic repulsion' that refers to the complex and hierarchical relationship which European societies had with the subjects European countries were colonising in overseas territories. The works of the Futurist leader Fillipo Marinetti are for example, examined for their conflicted relationship between Europe and specifically Africa. In reviewing attitudes to people from outside Europe in relation to the narrative of *Le Sacre*, I explore the potential impact on the making and reception of *Le Sacre* — and in particular to its score composed by Igor Stravinsky — in relation to the presence in World Fairs and exhibitions of non-Occidental people who were made to perform their difference and culture in the period 1880-1920. This gives rise to an analysis of an interpretation of works of art which I argue were mediated by the presence of the colonised within European society and according to ever evolving constructs of race and power.

The thesis then addresses the theme of 'dehumanisation', a term associated with the machinic in Futurism and Nijinsky's choreographic aesthetic in *Le Sacre.* The Futurist *Variety Theatre Manifesto* (1913) proposed a dynamic of unifying connection between audience and performer but also exhibited forms of political dehumanisation in their manifestoes and theatre practice. These are reviewed with respect to the aesthetic and aural strategies which promoted sensorial interplay between audience and performer in *Le Sacre.* They are also aligned with the ambiguities in interpretations of the sketched record of *Le Sacre* made by French artist Valentine Gross and Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography of the work, together with his declaration of the absence of human beings in *Le Sacre.*

The thesis aims to demonstrate the value of an enriched social history of art in transdisciplinary engagement with postcolonial theory, musical and dance history and the relations between performance and reception.

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INTRODUCTION

A Personal Reflection

When I was a child my father bought a recording of Stravinsky's *(L' Oiseau de feu) Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911) because it was 'meant to be a classic'. He hated it for its dissonance and I loved it. Never having heard music as complex and interesting as that before, I would sing along to it endlessly. I was also lucky to have a sister who, whilst working for the *Liverpool Echo*, took me to watch the ballet and hear concerts at the many performances they seemed to stage in Liverpool in those days.

My parents were born in 1923 and raised in middle-class Jamaica under British colonial rule. The music which was taught in their schools was often religious and usually Baroque and choral in nature. Bach and Handel were the preferred composers but my father's tastes extended beyond the Classical as far as the Romantic period to Mendelsohn, Tchaikovsky and a bit of Calypso, whilst my mother's stretched to the occasional Ella Fitzgerald and even some Beatle's tracks! They were able to see performing in Jamaica, the violinists Yehudi Menhuin and Jascha Heifitz, the bass Paul Robeson who performed 'negro spirituals' and contralto Marion Anderson who sang 'semi-classical' music.

My mother's principle objection to most 'pop' music was that it was 'too repetitive'. My instinct here was always that the *something* which was objectionable about repetition was somehow culturally prescribed. As if 'classical' was 'respectable' and good and, therefore, made other music less valuable. The 'culture' to which I refer to here of course was embedded within the imperial legacy of the then Jamaican society. For 'classical' one could read 'white'. The exposure of the 'native' to purely European music would I suppose be considered edifying to those in power and into this mix might be added the complexities of the British class system. Straddling the imagined polarities was my uncle who played piano in a jazz band into the early hours of Saturday night and crawled into church to play the organ the next morning.

My father drew and painted and always encouraged me to do likewise. Museums and art galleries were an important part of my childhood education. Both parents encouraged my interest in dance, music and art. A particular interest in music developed from being given free violin lessons in school. My teacher — believing my having to stretch further up the finger board of a larger instrument would correct my lazy violin technique — switched me to viola which became my principle study. Music, art, (and watching horse racing) was respite from the relentless racism commonplace in the three Chester schools I attended. I was effectively mute for a long period. I saw a way out with a news report on a Manchester music school on the television. My viola became my escape when I won a place at Chetham's School of Music which I attended for four very formative years. It was here I first heard about *Le Sacre du Printemps (Le Sacre).* With some incredulity at my not knowing the work, my friend told me the story of the first night and how the audience — unaccustomed to Stravinsky's 'modern' music — had rioted. I have lost count of the number of times since starting my research that I have read the same account of *Le Sacre* and even found the same words falling from my own mouth. 'Riot' as a signifier for *Le Sacre,* has become the arresting narrative and an entry point for popular discussion on the ballet.

I supply details of my personal background to let the reader know the nature of my early interest in and relationship with the works of the Ballets Russes. I think it is also important to understand that my perception of race comes from my own experience as racially Othered. What I bring to this field of study, both complements and diverges from others who have written about my subjects. This experience and my use of a social art history model, makes a space which allows for a hearing of my account which the art historian T. J. Clark would describe as being 'in contact and conflict with other kinds of historical explanation.'[1] I identify as black British which means my contribution is governed by a perspective which acknowledges the

[1] T J Clark and Gustave Courbet, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley: Univ of California Pr, 1999), p. 251.

consequences of colonialism and post-colonialism from a very specific yet complex standpoint. Similarly, the discriminatory practices and lack of control I would experience when young, as a musical, woman performer (expectations of dress, photographic manipulation and journalistic inaccuracies) have fostered a consciousness which I have brought to my scholarly work. Its relevance will become clearer as the reader progresses through the thesis.

This thesis looks into the work of two artistic groups and their practice at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. The first was the *Ballets Russes* (in English: the Russian Ballet) who created and performed the first performances of *Le Sacre.* The second group was the Italian Futurists.

My first knowledge of Italian Futurism came from overhearing a conversation on a train platform in Saltaire station. An elderly lady was informing another that she was off to London to see an exhibition by the Italian Futurists. It was okay to see this work she said, because it was from an earlier period, not from a later time when they had 'turned all fascist'. On investigation, it was this early period which most piqued my interest as it dovetailed so well with the early works of the Ballets Russes. Further discussion with my history of art Masters supervisor raised correspondences between international Futurism and the Ballets Russes that made the topic worth pursuing for my dissertation. This research revealed the common social environment and shared biographical details from which individuals from these different groups had emerged. It also uncovered geographical coincidences, shared interests and social contacts. As regards the art theory and practice of each group, I felt that it was significant that both the Italian Futurists and the Ballets Russes were identified by critics and reviewers according to their interest in cross-disciplinary practice. The group identity of both was established according to not being predominantly any one art but their being a multitude of different art practices. Italian Futurism was designed as a philosophical umbrella under which literature, the plastic arts and music could operate.

The thematic confluence between the groups was striking enough to warrant further research as was the manner in which they promoted their projects. Both groups became the target of accusations of provocative intent on the part of the creators.

Key Research Questions

In this thesis I will be asking:

1) What understanding of early twentieth-century culture can we gain by a comparative analysis of the work and reception of *Le Sacre du Printemps* by the Ballets Russes and Italian Futurist aesthetics, thought and practice?

We know that they converged and cooperated in 1917 (discussed below) but:

2) What led to that and to what extent can parallels before that date be identified?
3) To what extent can analysis of a colonial imaginary throw light on key aspects of the work and reception of the Ballets Russes and Italian Futurism.

To be more specific, this thesis examines the presence of 'blackness' as a structuring Other in the social tensions and politics of aesthetic radicalism in these two groups.

4) How do race, gender and sexuality intersect at this moment of militancy?

My work is an expanded art history that is of necessity interdisciplinary. Mine is a very densely populated field with many experts on the Ballets Russes and Italian Futurism. As such I have drawn richly upon the great scholarship of dance and music historians alongside art historians and cultural theorists and benefitted from the important points they make about race, gender and sexuality. In particular, I am deeply indebted to the work of Truman C Bullard for his thesis on the circumstances up to an including the première of *Le Sacre* and to dance historian Lynn Garafola who has written in considerable depth about the relationship between the Italian Futurists and the Ballets Russes in her book *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1989).[2] Both Garafola and the musicologist Richard Taruskin have paid considerable attention to the broader, cultural and political context for the Ballets Russes and the creation of *Le Sacre du Printemps,* and I shall be

[2] Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 76–97.

drawing extensively upon their insights into gender, race and sexuality throughout this thesis. I am particularly grateful for Taruskin's suggestion of the French having a taste for a 'negrified Russia' (see details below) and his take on the immensely visceral qualities of *Le Sacre* (see Chapter III).[3]

The dance historian Millicent Hodson reconstructed Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* in 1987 and throughout her subsequent publication *Nijinsky's Crime against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for "Le Sacre du Printemps"* detailed how she interpreted these traces of the work from archive material.[4] Hodson has also published her research into the designs of Nicholas Roerich in relation to Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* to which I also refer.[5] I have examined the analysis of science and art by Thomas Vargis and Delo Mook in *Inside Modernism: Relativity Theory, Cubism, Narrative* and the studies into sexuality by Peter Stoneley's *A Queer History of the Ballet* and Jeffrey Weeks *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity,* who have surveyed with deep care and understanding the experiences of gay men during the fin de siècle.[6] In my thesis I draw upon these authors because they have shown in different ways the importance of cross cultural study in elucidating the works of art I scrutinise.

The Ballets Russes benefits from the input of large survey books, often sumptuously illustrated with the designs of important Ballets Russes artist contributors such as Alexandre Benois (1870-1960), Léon Bakst (1866-1924) Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947) and Natalia Goncharova (1881-1962). There also exists first-hand testimony from those who danced for the company. These include the memoirs of soloist Serge Lifar (1905-1986), Anatole Bourman

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[3] 'Richard-Taruskin-Resisting-The-Rite.pdf', pp. 286–87.
[4] Millicent Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre Du Printemps* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996).
[5] Millicent Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's Choreographic Method', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 4.1 (1986), 63–77 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1290674>.
[6] Thomas Vargish and Delo E. Mook, *Inside Modernism: Relativity Theory, Cubism, Narrative* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999). Peter Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007). Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality, and Identity* (London : Concord, MA: Rivers Oram Press ; Paul and Co, 1991).

(1888-1962), Marie Rambert (1888-1982), Lydia Sokolova (1896-1974) who danced in the original corps de ballet of Nijinsky's of *Le Sacre,* Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) upon whom Nijinsky modelled his original choreography for the sacrificed Chosen One in *Le Sacre* and the regisseur of the company Serge Grigoriev (1883- 1968) who wrote an account of his time with the Ballets Russes in *The Diaghilev Ballet 1909-1929*.[7] The legacy of the Italian Futurists is tainted by their support (in particular by Fillippo Marinetti) of Mussolini in World War II. In more recent years, historians Marianne W. Martin and Gunther Berghaus have provided analysis of Futurist theory and its application to works of art whilst Berghaus and Michael and Victoria Kirby's book on Futurist performance has surveyed Italian Futurism in theatre performance practice. I will be referring to the work of these and other significant scholars in the field later in this introduction and throughout this thesis. Reprints and translations of Futurist manifestoes are extensively available and for my thesis I have drawn on those republished in *Marinetti Selected Writings* edited by R.W. Flint and *Futurism an Anthology* edited by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman.[8] I need to acknowledge from the outset the work of Melissa McQuillan whose thesis *Painters and the Ballet, 1917-1926: an Aspect of the Relationship Between Art and Theatre* (1979) looked carefully at the involvement of the Futurists with the Ballets Russes and with reference to the staging of *Parade* and *Feu d'Artifice* both of 1917.[9] As stated above, my work differs in that it uses cross cultural, social art historical means to test the veracity of confluent themes between both groups. This is often — but not exclusively — at the site of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and addresses the significance of an earlier period in the history of these groups 1909-1917.

[7] S. L. Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet 1909 - 1929* (Alton, Hampshire England: Dance Books Ltd, 2009).
[8] R.W. Flint, 'Introduction', in *Marinetti, Selected Writings*, ed. by R.W Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969). *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence S. Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)
[9] Melissa A. McQuillan, 'Painters and the Ballet, 1917-1926: An Aspect of the Relationship Between Art and Theatre' (New York University), pp. 382–428.

My research owes a very great deal to post-colonial scholars such as Edward Said, Petrine Archer-Straw, Charmaine Nelson, and Toni Morrison for their restitutive repositioning of the black subject within the historical realms of Western European art and literature (see below). Their body of work has identified European thought producing Othering and as such is a methodologically crucial space for my work. My own background puts me in alignment with this form of scholarship and it is from these authors I draw to test the efficacy of cross cultural confluence and 'intersectionality' (and in particular in relation to the concept of social tension and dehumanisation).[10]

Two Groups

The Italian Futurists were a group of artists, mostly European men, who were led by the poet, playwright, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944). In Milan, Marinetti had been founder and editor of the magazine *Poesia (Poetry)*; he had plays and poetry readings of his work staged in Paris. Evidence of an early taste for sensation came when he was punished for circulation of a banned novel in his Jesuit school and years later he would be tried three times for obscenity following the publication of his novel *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel* (1910).[11] Drawn to Marinetti through agreement with an emerging Futurist ideology, were many different artists some of whom remained associated with the group and others who would depart from it in the intervening years. The core group of artists in its earliest formation were the painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), the painter Carlo Carrà (1881-1966) the musician and painter Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), the painter Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) and the painter Gino Severini (1883-1966).[12]

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[10] 'Article__Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf' <http://socialdifference.columbia.edu/files/socialdiff/projects/Article__Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf> [accessed 23 September 2016].

[11] The novel was originally titled *Mafarka le Futuriste* before its translation from French into Italian. F. T Marinetti, Steve Cox, and Carol Diethe, *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998), p. viii.

[12] Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory, 1909-15*, New edition (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), pp. 61–95.

The ideas which supported Futurism were sustained by a belief in the importance of the reproduction of contemporary society in the arts as part of Italy's rejuvenation. Thus the representation of the industrial expansion and technological development which had been changing work and social life in Europe since the mid-nineteenth-century, was declared as being integral to Futurist practice. Futurism was promoted through a sensibility of masculine youthfulness, where the symbolic foil of women could be charged with sentimentality, charm and nostalgia and, therefore, all that was weakening the Italian nation. The suffusion of art with politics was a vital part of Italian Futurist identity. This was often represented in seemingly contradictory form. For example, the Futurists' desire for Italy's colonial expansion in Africa was in opposition to the symbolic representation of a colonising hero in the shape of a black African, the central character in *Mafarka the Futurist*. Futurism would be infused with dynamism which concerned itself with the concept of perpetual motion in all things. In its adaptation to art practice, the Futurists engaged in researches which would strive towards the capture of movement through static media such as painting and sculpture.

Marinetti — sole signatory to the opening manifesto — laid out their theory in the founding manifesto of Futurism in a front page statement entitled *Il Futurisme*. This was published in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909. Futurist philosophy would extend far beyond these initial beliefs encompassing a great range of arts and being further expounded through painting, live performances and further manifestoes.

The second group I am researching bears the name the Ballets Russes. The Russian ballet was the original idea of the Russian impressario Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghilev (1872-1929). Diaghilev had formerly edited his own arts periodical in St Petersburg — *Mir Iskusstva (World of Art)* — had curated art exhibitions and worked for the Imperial Ballet before embarking upon a series of concert ventures which would lead to his forming his own ballet company. Like the Italian Futurists, the Ballets Russes would become known for its presentation of a multitude of art practices. These were both innovative and produced to a high standard owing to Diaghilev's

employment of professional artists, musicians and dancers. The Ballets Russes presented established ballets amongst their newer works. However, they became noted for the bold, exotic designs of their new works. The use of 'ethnic' designs and musical styles were often a hotch-potch of ideas, assumed to be Russian by an audience unfamiliar with Eastern European culture and chiming with a fashionable appeal amongst Paris audiences for the appropriation of aspects of non-European cultures. In this sense, the Ballets Russes probably offered what art historian Griselda Pollock describes as a 'dialectic of distance and identification' which she argues was the 'founding condition' for avant-gardist activity.[13] Contemporary productions of the Ballets Russes made a remarkable impression on audiences when they first performed in Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet on 19 May 1909.[14] Reception to new works had however become less predictable by the time their premiere of the ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* was first performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May, 1913.[15] The original ballet was performed a total of only nine times between May 29 and 23 July 1913 in Paris and at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London.[16]

Argument and Methodology

Social art history and Admitting Ambiguity

This thesis argues its points through cross cultural references. As such I have consulted sources from art history, dance, music, sociology, politics, drama and English studies. It is primarily supported by my training in social history of art, which, as a model, pays equal attention to the intersections of biographical, political, philosophical, social and artistic factors in the creation of the field of cultural practice.

My research question evolved from my identification of thematic confluence between these two groups. Much of what they shared seemed to me to become confluent at the site of *Le*

[13] Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888-1893: Gender and the Color of Art History*, The Walter Neurath Memorial Lectures, 24th (New York, N.Y: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 49.
[14] Grigoriev, pp. 18–20.
[15] Grigoriev, pp. 82–83.
[16] Jane Pritchard, 'Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes - An Itinerary. Part 1: 1909-1921', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 27.1 (2009), 108–98 (pp. 127–29).

Sacre, as a work of art which embodied tradition and modernity, articulations of nationalism, violent acts towards women, racial ambiguities and instances which could be described as audience provocation, audience/stage reciprocity and merging. These I will describe later together with details of the major protagonists from both groups.

First it was important for me to carefully determine what these common themes were and which of them warranted deeper exploration. Many questions arose firstly, to what extent might dissimilarities between shared features be significant? The same phenomena might be arising for very different reasons. Would it be possible to argue that the same thread ran through both groups and if so, what factors might contribute to making this argument? If other groups around the same time were also accommodating this same thread, then how might this enrich or undermine my investigation? I soon determined that the 'threads' I was speculating about could be aligned to the social and political climate of the fin-de siècle which I will detail in a basic overview below.

Putting these two groups together alongside *Le Sacre* has raised a number of problems. As one prominent historian said to me of *Le Sacre* early into my research 'It's a lost ballet. There's nothing more to say about it which hasn't already been said!' The historian was alluding to the ephemerality of works such as *Le Sacre* which was never choreographically notated by Nijinsky. It is therefore difficult to know with any certainty what exact steps and movements were performed. The few rough notes which Marie Rambert made on Stravinsky's score have been analysed by some historians as have the photographs taken in the dressing room of the 'young maidens' and the 'young men', posing in full costume.

No film footage exists of *Le Sacre,* nevertheless, a significant body of commentary remains from newspapers and magazines. The sketches of Valentine Gross of the first performances are plentiful and largely unstudied. I would also argue that the points of confluence I am investigating are supported by what we know of or have taken as supposition about the work in the intervening years. In this sense I believe that if mythology is still in play in

our public understanding of *Le Sacre* then the work must contain inherent sociological value. Regarding the assumption that all that can be written has already been done so about *Le Sacre*, in this thesis, I have put in place aspects of race in relation to *Le Sacre* which other writers have not yet made visible (discussed later in this introduction).

Another key problem in trying to find resonances between the two groups was in my needing to reconcile works by the Ballets Russes and the work of the Italian Futurists — which appeared helpful in informing the thesis — with *Le Sacre*'s being performed in 1913. NB This was a year before members of the two groups met to discuss working together and four years before their first formal collaboration. I soon realised that a focus centred solely around direct encounter was a confining approach which would fail to bring together the invisible yet important elements; those which combine to shape the period and the thinking within it and which do not always provide the most obvious explanations for phenomena. I instead have made my case by outlining biographical details and apparently loose affiliations between those practising in different fields of art such as literature and philosophy. Whilst those selected may have crossed paths, had mutual contacts, interests or be relationally connected to our protagonists, my point in highlighting their presence was to help provide a historical context to the works being studied. For example in my first chapter, my analysis takes careful account of the contributions made to *Le Sacre du Printemps* by its creators but also looks beyond the work to significant figures of the age such as Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Zanaida Gippius (1869-1945). Whilst seemingly peripheral to the groups being discussed I argue that certain works of theirs alongside their philosophical and cultural inclinations support the reasoning behind and provide the context to my later arguments. This method also allows for further exploration of other factors upon which the Ballets Russes' thematic formation may have developed.

A) Social History of Art

In an essay 'On the Social History of Art', published as the introductory chapter to his first major study of art and revolution, T. J. Clark addressed some of the current approaches to

the relations between art and history that informed his discipline. These he identified as background, reflection, context, influence and 'the spirit of the times'. He found all of these attempts to posit relations between the historical and the artwork too vague and often unidirectional. What they left out was the concept of ideology, which was to play such a vital role in the original formulations of a social history of art. Ideology offered an intermediary, a mediation between social, economic, and political process, and the work of representation. Art belongs in the ideological sphere of ideas and beliefs, images and fantasies. Art also follows the logics of its art form, the history of its conventions, concepts of its function, its medium and so forth. These could not be sufficiently reconciled according to explanations of history as background to art or art as a reflection of the historical. Thus he wrote:

> I want to *know* how 'background' becomes 'foreground'; instead of analogy between form and content, to discover the real, complex relations between the two. These mediations are themselves historically formed and historically altered; in the case of each artist, each work of art, they are historically specific.[17]

In fact, the advocates of the background approach in effect absent history from the art work, because they are not studying the process by which it becomes its representation through the ways artworks *work* their materials. Thus, Clark undertakes his study of the French painter Gustave Courbet in order to study the mediations artistic practice performs as it transforms events, experience, ideas, moods, structures or ideologies into specific artistic forms that are inflected in addition by the particularity of the artists themselves. Rather than generalizing the encounters between art, ideology, history and form, Clark asks art historians to study the conditions of each specific encounter, negotiation and transformation. Art necessarily embodies the ideas, beliefs, and values that we can recognize in their being dispersed across many sites in a culture or a historical moment. But 'it *works* that material; it gives it a new form, and a certain moments that new form is in itself a subversion of ideology.'[18]

[17] Clark, p. 12.
[18] Clark, p. 13.

My project is not about situating *Le Sacre* or The Futurist Manifesto in history. By offering close readings of the specific art practices and texts, I seek to 'know' in Clark's terms how these works 'worked' the historical and cultural materials, and indeed I seek to make visible threads in the cloth of the historical and cultural moment that have not been followed from their historical foundations into the forms of their articulation in specific works of art.

One of Clark's specific methods for capturing the way art works worked in their own moment, is his reading of critical responses, not as mere accounts, but almost as symptomatic inscriptions of affects and anxieties. Thus, writing of the critical uproar that followed the exhibition of the work of Gustave Courbet, Clark suggests an analytical model that resonates with a way of reading what we know of *Le Sacre's* canon of 'riot' and the choreography's critical failure:

> Like the analyst listening to his patient, what interests us, if we want to discover the meaning of this mass of criticism, are the points at which the rational monotone of the critic breaks, fails, falters; we are interested in the phenomena of obsessive repetition, repeated irrelevance, anger suddenly discharged — the points where the criticism is incomprehensible are the keys to its comprehension.[19]

The disruption of prose registers, in language, the sense that the work of art has disrupted the smooth functioning of ideology, not for the sake of provocation, but because something is being introduced into the cultural field that disturbs and transgresses the conventions of what should be said or seen or shown.

B) Feminist Social Art History: Encounter

To this end, I also take as my model Griselda Pollock's proposition for what she names the *Virtual Feminist Museum*. This is a concept for art historical enquiry and its logics for relating artistic works and events. It aims to unseat established forms of art history such as 'mastery, classification, definition.' Pollock describes this work as a 'research laboratory' through which

[19] Clark, p. 12.

'argued responses, grounded speculations, exploratory relations' can tell us 'new things about femininity, modernity and representation'.[20]

Pollock's 'feminist tactic' makes it possible to understand 'the exhibition as *encounter* that opens up new critical relations among artworks, and between viewers and artworks, that points to repressed narratives in the histories of arts'.[21] For me this quote suggests a feminist approach lending itself particularly well to my thesis, not only for an understanding of my own particular feminist reading of *Le Sacre* in Chapter I, but also for its intersection with my exploration of articulations of race in *Le Sacre* .

C) The Post-colonial

Postcolonial criticism can better enlighten us as to its presence within and around this and other works of art and in particular around relations between audience/politics and aesthetic thematic manifestation. I have drawn on Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* as a reference point for my terming of those from societies subject to European colonial domination.[22] To this end I have employed the terms non-Occidental and Othered as descriptions whilst recognising the difficulties attendant with the seeming homogenisation of such an enormous community. As Said states of *Orientalism*:

> I emphasize in it accordingly that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other.[23]

I do however make distinction between these groups as a generic body of people with shared experiences as colonial subjects, and my use of the terms Black and Blackness. The term Othered I use for those many subjects whose appearances and cultural enactments made up the 'entertainments' at World Fairs. Some of these comprised Europeans as part of their spectacle.

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[20] Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 11.
[21] Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, p. 13.
[22] Edward William Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Classics, Repr. with a new preface (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
[23] Said, p. xii.

The art historian Petrine Archer-Shaw has written of the prevalence of black minstrel shows in France in the 1880s.[24] She makes a very important point in remarking of how in advertising and characterisations of black minstreldom by white Europeans there was an affirmation of difference as well as notions of white superiority which 'allowed whites to define the negro character in ways that were non-threatening and that afforded engagement with so-called black culture without being intimate with it.'[25]

I will be expounding upon this very point when I argue that responses to *Le Sacre* indicated interpretations of a transgression of racial boundaries which were policed by the dominant culture.

D) Homosexuality

Additionally, although Diaghilev and Nijinsky's homosexuality have been considerably remarked upon, it is rarer that we would ever find its intersection with other 'repressed narratives' of women's historical relation to modernity as described by Pollock above. The threatened destabilisation of hegemonic masculinities raised by Europe-wide campaigns for women's emancipation presented a challenge to the status quo which has brought to the fore the complexity of male homoerotic relations. Fillippo Marinetti had strength of feeling enough to remark publicly upon both homosexuality and British militant feminism. Thus through citation of critical instances of political or social significance involving those individuals, the confluence or divergence of particular thematic manifestations might be better understood.

***Le Sacre* and the Modern**

Le Sacre is, and always was, talked about in reference to the modern with literature on the work littered with opening statements to this effect. To give just one example, in 1916 the critic Carl van Vechten wrote of how the *The Sacrifice to the Spring* was 'An appeal to the primitive emotion through a nerve-shattering use of rhythm, staged in ultra-modern style by Waslav

[24] Petrine Archer Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, Interplay : Arts + History + Theory (New York, N.Y: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 42.
[25] Archer Straw, pp. 40–42.

Nijinsky'.[26] Van Vechten's use of language conflates the modern with the 'primitive'. This then begged the question for me as to what made an evocation of ancient Russia then and now, 'modern'. I am interested in what was meant by 'new' regarding the listening experience of *Le Sacre* when millions of people during late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century visited World Fairs and were exposed to drumming and dancing from non-European cultures. Richard Taruskin's extensive inquiry into the origins of the distinctive characteristics in *Le Sacre,* firmly attribute Stravinsky's score to sources mined from traditional Russian folk material.[27] In the light of Taruskin's work, is it still plausible to speculate whether Stravinsky might have experienced non-European performances and integrated elements into his work equatable with the impact Javanese Gamelan orchestras had upon Claude Debussy following a visit to the 1889 Paris Exhibition?[28] I believe that there were elements of Russian folk music which coincided with interest in and aversion to colonial presences and that these different reference points converged at the site of *Le Sacre*. Such considerations at the very least open a space for an assessment of racially Othered performances with respect to audience reaction to the *Le Sacre's* first performances. For example, if 'modern' meant 'difference' might modern mean 'black'? In this sense my thesis asks as its first research question: if articulations of modernity could have been infused with an unspoken sense of 'blackness'. In referring to blackness this of course implies no essential qualities. Rather I pose it as an open question. It is not the same as race but participates in issues of race or ancientness, which I shall have to track through many related elements such as linguistics, aesthetics, the cultural and musical.

With this in mind it was important to find any possible consistencies with ideas which the Futurist may have had which juxtaposed the old and the new. As with my mother's relationship with 'black' music attests, could it be that music rigidly associated with certain

[26] Carl Van Vechten, *Music and Bad Manners* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1916), p. 33.
[27] Richard Taruskin, 'Russian Folk Melodies in "The Rite of Spring"', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 33.3 (1980), 501–43 (pp. 541–43) <https://doi.org/10.2307/831304>.
[28] Neil Sorrell, 'Gamelan: Occident or Accident?', *The Musical Times*, 133.1788 (1992), 66–68 (p. 66) <https://doi.org/10.2307/965846>.

environments and types of audiences, supported particular values accorded by the dominant society? How were audiences coming to terms with the presence of difference and was it possible that notions of propriety and intrusion might be somehow in play? Placing these ideas alongside Futurist theory on provocation and intrusion in performance is where I have tried to understand if audience response to *Le Sacre* could be supported by alignments with Futurist practice.

Le Sacre du Printemps

Le Sacre du Printemps was first conceived of by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) in 1910. The idea for it came to him in a dream which he described in his memoirs *Chronicle of My Life* (1936) as follows:

> One day, when I was finishing the last pages of *L' Oiseau de Feu* in St. Petersburg I had a fleeting vision which came to me as a complete surprise, my mind at the moment being full of other things. I saw in imagination a solemn pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god spring. Such was the theme of *Sacre du Printemps*.[29]

Stravinsky had at this stage already written music for the ballet company which would perform *Le Sacre*, the Ballets Russes. Recognising the young, largely unknown composer's potential, the impressario of the Ballets Russes Sergei Diaghilev had commissioned scores for *The Firebird* of 1910 and *Petrushka* 1911. *Le Sacre's* further development came through Stravinsky's association with the artist and designer of *Le Sacre*, Nikolai Roerich (1874-1947), who told the *St Petersburg Gazette* in August 28, 1910 about a story he had written for a ballet *Supreme Sacrifice* stating how:

> The new ballet will depict several scenes of a sacred night of the ancient Slavs. ..Strictly speaking, the choreographic part comprises ritual dances. This will be the first attempt to reproduce antiquity without any explicit story.[30]

Correspondence between these two, points towards this close collaboration prior to the involvement of the dancer/choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950) who choreographed the

[29] Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (V. Gollancz, 1936), pp. 55–56.
[30] Bronislava Nijinska and others, *Bronislava Nijinska--Early Memoirs* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 448.

work — though the origins of the *Le Sacre* have been a source of great argument amongst scholars. Nijinsky had been a working associate of Diaghilev whilst a principal dancer at the Imperial Theatres (the official state ballet in Russia) where Diaghilev had earlier served as a special assistant to the Director.[31] Diaghilev's dismissal from the Imperial Ballets, his decision to start his own company and the sexual relationship he had embarked upon with Nijinsky, was not long followed by Nijinsky's own dismissal for 'appearing in the presence of Her Imperial Highness Maria Fedorovna in the ballet *Giselle* in an indecent and improper costume.'[32] Having transitioned as a soloist from the Imperial Ballets to the Ballets Russes, Nijinsky would progress to being the company's chief choreographer. *Le Sacre du Printemps* was the third ballet Nijinsky had choreographed for the company. The first two are described in the forthcoming chapters. Their relevance to the research is in regard to the stylistic and thematic singularities of the choreography, and the distaste with which the works were greeted by some.

According to accounts by Nijinsky's dancer sister Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) — who would go on to be one of the most important choreographers for the Ballets Russes — Nijinsky enjoyed a good relationship with Roerich, who had earnt the dancer's respect through his archaeological endeavours and his translation of these studies into landscapes of an imagined ancient Russia.[33] Roerich's costume designs for *Le Sacre* used vivid colours with, striking, simple,

[31] Serge Lifar, *Serge Diaghilev an Intimate Biography* (Putnam, 1945), p. 160.
[32] Nijinska and others, p. 319.
[33] Nijinska and others, pp. 448–49.

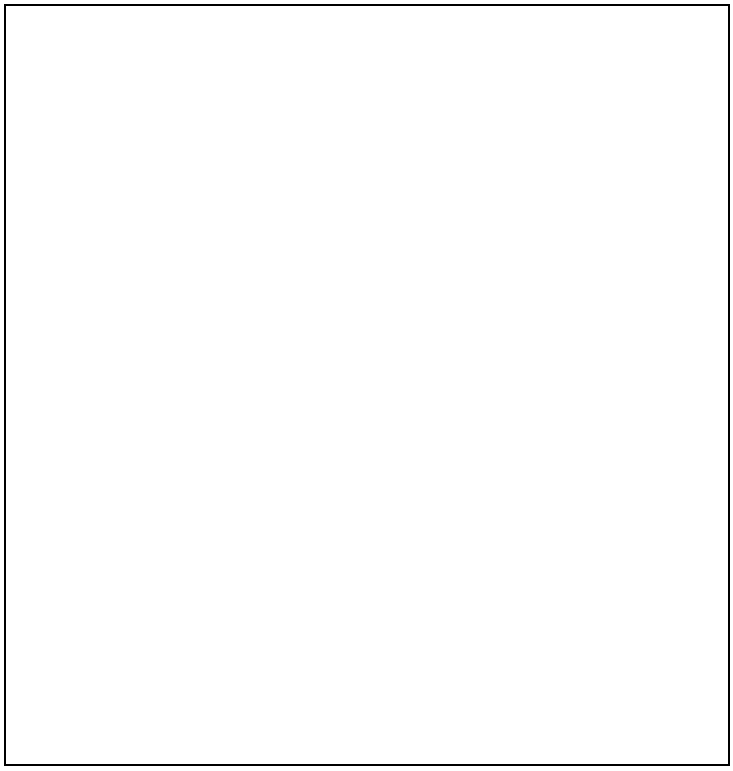

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Fig. 1
After Nicholas Roerich, Costumes for Maidens from *The Rite of Spring* 1913, Wool, metal necklace, leather and metal belts,
Collection: V&A: S.669(&A)-1980; S.681-1980, with S.667A-1980; S.676(&A)-1980, V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

symmetrical adornments for smocks, hats and head bands (see Fig. 1) *Le Sacre du Printemps* was a supposition of what such textiles might have looked like. Roerich scenic backdrop for *Le Sacre* was a sparse, rural landscape realist in design and as such drew criticism for its lack of originality when compared with the dance and music. Writing in 1919 for the *Burlington Magazine*, British artist and critic Roger Fry, commented as follows:

> But when M. Fokine, striking out a new line, created Petrushka, it became apparent that the choreographic conception was far ahead of the *décor*, and the same dissidence was even more apparent between the extremely original and formal design of the dance in "Le Sacre du Printemps" and the rather fusty romanticism of M. Ruhrich's scenery. It was evident here that both dance and music had outstripped the scenic artists, had arrived at a conception of formal unity which demanded something much more logically conceived than the casual decorative pictorial formula of the scenery.[34]

[34] Roger Fry, 'M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 34.192 (1919), 112–18 (p. 112).

What may have been the designs for the backcloths are shown and discussed in Chapter III where the significance of the realist aspects of Roerich's work for *Le Sacre* were given some precedence in relation to the worked up pastels of Valentine Gross. It should be noted at this stage that no-one can be certain which actual designs were used for the backcloths for *Le Sacre*'s 1913 production. I am therefore working on the supposition that the works as illustrated (which are repeatedly credited as being the backcloths for *Le Sacre*) were either the original designs Roerich used or created earlier and repurposed/adapted for the production.

In an interview to the *Daily Mail* on 13 January 1913 Stravinsky referred to his 'new ballet, *The Crowning of Spring'* which had 'no plot.' [35] *Le Sacre* was conceived in two acts, the first was called *The Adoration of the Earth* and the second *The Sacrifice.*[36] The score was described by critic Cyril W Beaumont as 'bludgeoning the audience' almost certainly in reference to its most famous passage the *Augurs of Spring.* [37] The impact of this section was probably made more striking for its placement just prior to a sparse, dissonant (yet lyrical) introductory passage which serves to lull the listener into a state of anticipatory calm just prior to their being 'bludgeoned' by the weight and repetition of the 'Augurs'. It is punctuated by intermittent and unpredictable accented stabs and disorientating switches in time signature. I describe just a part of the work here which as stated was conceived as episodic and without plot (see subsectioned titles above). The research of Richard Taruskin and Lawrence Morton argued the extent to which Stravinsky 'borrowed' Lithuanian and Byelorussian folk melodies for his composition of *Le Sacre.*[38] Five

[35] Nesta Macdonald, *Diaghilev Observed by Critics in England and the United States, 1911-1929* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1975), p. 90.
[36] Macdonald, p. 88.
[37] Cyril William Beaumont, *Bookseller at the Ballet: Memoirs 1891 to 1929 Incorporating the Diaghilev Ballet in London : A Record of Bookselling, Ballet Going, Publishing and Writing* (C. W. Beaumont, 1975), pp. 110–38.
[38] Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 895–900.

Lithuanian wedding songs were used, sourced from the anthology of 1,785 songs (*Melodje Ludowe Litewskie* 1900) collected by the Pole Father Anton Juszkiewicz and published posthumously.[39]

In her book *Dancing for Diaghilev* (1960) Lydia Sokolova (1896-1974) chronicled her experiences of Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre.* Sokolova had danced in the corps du ballet of Nijinsky's original performances and as the Chosen One in a later version of *Le Sacre* choreographed by Leonide Massine (1896-1979) in 1929, Nijinsky's version having been 'forgotten'.[40] Sokolova recorded her steps for the Sacrificial Dance in a 'little penny notebook'.[41] Her description of this experience is given some precedence in Chapter I for Massine's reinterpretation of the work having exhausted her.[42]

The dancer and student of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Marie Rambert, also recorded her experience in the original corps du ballet in her book *Quicksilver: the Autobiography of Marie Rambert* (1972). In winter 1911-12, on Diaghilev's suggestion, he along with Nijinsky and his sister Nijinska and other members of the company visited Germany to meet with Dalcroze in order to assess the value to the new ballet's choreography, of his technique designed for teaching rhythm to children.[43] After watching the young girls perform 'The girls walked to 2/4 beat of the music; at the same time one arm was gesticulating to 3/4 time and the other was marling 4/4 time' Diaghilev 'declared himself impressed by the musicality thus displayed by Dalcroze pupils'.[44] To Nijinsky's sister, the performance reminded her of 'the skill acquired by jugglers who practice for hour after hour to be able to juggle bottles, plates or balls to perfect their circus acts'.[45]

In spite of ensuing arguments, Marie Rambert was employed to support Nijinsky in his interpretation of Stravinsky's complex score and in communicating his ideas to the company.

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[39] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, pp. 895–900.
[40] Lydia Sokolova, *Dancing for Diaghilev: The Memoirs of Lydia Sokolova* (Mercury House, 1989), p. 159.
[41] Sokolova, p. 161.
[42] Sokolova, pp. 166–67.
[43] Truman C. Bullard, 'The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's Sacre Du Printemps' (University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1971), p. 34.
[44] Nijinska and others, p. 451.
[45] Nijinska and others, p. 451.

The rehearsals for this performance were difficult. Stravinsky, in an interview for the *Pall Mall Gazette,* 15 February 1913, described one hundred and twenty-five rehearsals being necessary prior to its staging.[46] Instead of replicating the classic lower limb turnout and the arc of the *port de bras*, Nijinsky asked that his dancers flex their knees and rotate their hips inwards so that the toes pointed towards one another, whilst in the upper limb, elbow and wrists joints were angularly presented.[47] Referencing Dalcroze and reinforcing this dissimilarity to established choreographic conventions were movements which corresponded precisely with the rhythm of and repetitions in the score. There are consistent accounts of exhausting and even painful choreographic rehearsals. Anatole Bourman, who was a dancer in the corps de ballet, provided this important account of the preparations for *Le Sacre*:

> Nijinsky rehearsed like an inexhaustible demon until he nearly dropped in his tracks. Jumps were no longer completed on toes with slightly flexed knees, but flat-footed and straight-legged in a fashion to preclude the possibility of lightness, and to convey an impression of antediluvian festivity that nearly killed us. With every leap we landed heavily enough to jar every organ in us…Nijinsky had to rehearse with every single group, and danced hour after hour, pounding his feet onto the stage with mighty thumps that must have cost him untold agony,…Time after time I sought him out, my own head a fiery hell of jagged pain, and raved: 'Vaslav! You'll drive every one of us mad with those jumps!.. My reward was always the same. Nijinsky's face would flush, his eyes would shoot tiny jets of fire at me. 'The steps are mine. They will stay. Go back and dance them and don't bother me with your complaints'. Off I would go to rejoin my group of aching, irritable dancers, ready to break under the strain of a routine that defied every muscle and nerve with its bludgeoning. [48]

The arguments I make in Chapters I and III, raises the question of these physical requirements in relation to gender and the role of the performance required of the Chosen One in the *Sacrificial Dance*.

The audience disturbances of the first night were extensively investigated in Truman C. Bullard's PhD thesis from 1971.[49] This reviewed the press of the period for clues as to the real — as opposed to mythological events— and the most likely cause of the audience unrest which

[46] Macdonald, p. 90.
[47] Marie Rambert, *Quicksilver: The Autobiography of Marie Rambert.* (London; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1972), p. 63.
[48] Bourman, Anatole, *The Tragedy of Nijinsky* (London: Robert Hale and Company), p. 245.
[49] Truman C. Bullard.

took place in Paris on May 29 1913. Whilst to an extent my first chapter deals with the thematic and aesthetic choices made in the work's creation, my second chapter considers race as a contributory factor which in *Le Sacre's* scholarship has remained largely invisible and was at best referred to only obliquely in order to honour historical accuracy: in the creators' having declared their work to be about ancient Russia.[50]

For me, what makes this work still remarkable after one hundred years is what caused my friend (when aged eight) to ask if she could please go home: her parents having taken her along to experience *Le Sacre* with front row seats. Stravinsky's vastly augmented orchestra makes the work a vibrationally powerful experience easily overwhelming to an unsuspecting eight-year-old and — for good or ill — jaw dropping to nineteenth (and even twentieth and twenty-first) century audiences. With this in mind, my third chapter draws together Futurist declarations about the integration of the audience with the work of art with respect to the drawings of the French artist Valentine Gross who recorded the first performances in sketch form. My research of written descriptions of *Le Sacre* and Gross's archive differs from Millicent Hodson's reconstruction in two key areas.[51] This requires clarification for the difference between what is available for public viewing of Hodson's reconstruction and my own research.[52]

In Lydia Sokolova's account of *Le Sacre*, the Chosen Virgin rather than being held aloft to blackout in the final scene of the ballet, is held aloft whilst those holding her underneath run off the stage with her.[53] In my work this act is referenced in Chapter I. The illustration below is by Valentine Gross and shows this action at the culmination of the ballet. The second refers to Gross's unpublished notes which describe the Chosen Maiden repeatedly stabbing her toes into the stage. This is a matter I believe to be highly significant and which I address in my third and

[50] In an interview to the *Daily Mail* newspaper given 13 February 1913, Stravinsky stated of *Le Sacre* that it was '… a series of ceremonies in ancient Russia, the Russia of pagan days'. Macdonald, p. 90.
[51] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*.
[52] Fatova Mingus, *Joffrey Ballet 1989 Rite of Spring (1 of 3)*, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF1OQkHybEQ> [accessed 2 September 2016].
[53] Sokolova, p. 43.

final chapter. The most renowned and respected contemporary writer on *Le Sacre* was the critic Jacques Rivière (1886-1925) who edited the literary journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française* between 1919 and 1926. In 1913 he wrote two essays on *Le Sacre.*[54] Reference is made to his work in Chapters II and III largely for Rivière's considered explanation of how *Le Sacre* departed from previous conventions in music and choreography.

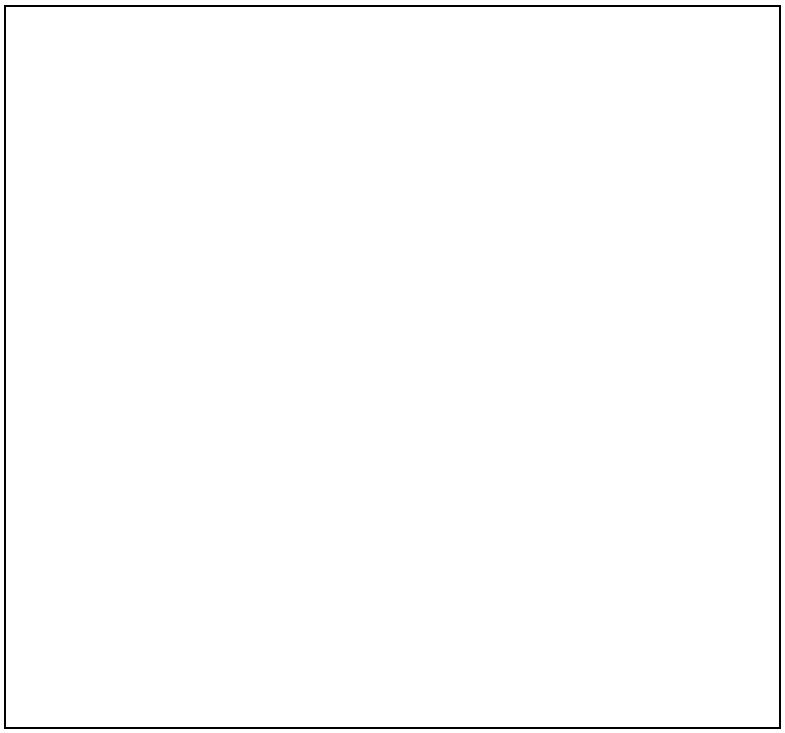

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Fig. 2
Valentine Gross
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, pencil on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive 2.825.5015,V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Thematic Confluence

These are categories which are identifiable as confluent between the creators, works of art and the questions around ideological instances of race, gender and sexuality which I have identified as important to my analysis.

[54] Jacques Rivière, *The Ideal Reader: Selected Essays* (Harvill Press, 1960), pp. 82–107.

Violence/Riot

In Chapter I, I have broadened the scope from research studies to date, in order to investigate the context for narratives of violence in other Ballets Russes works and beyond. This was to see if I could set the terms for the likely appearance of such themes in works of art. *Le Sacre* had violence in its original title and in two of its episodes, referring to ritual abduction and killing within the ballet, culminating in the death of its principle character. This gave *Le Sacre* an affiliation with violence which it shared with Italian Futurist theory and practice. Even though it is referring to a later period than the one being investigated, it would be quite wrong to ignore the association that the first prominent Futurists had with Italy's fascist regime in World War II. Their support for the Italian Fascist movement must always be acknowledged in any research which deals with Italian Futurist legacy. I do not propose an artificial separation: a before and after, between the period I am addressing — roughly 1909 until 1917 and World War II. That surviving Futurists such as Marinetti 'turned all fascist' would be remarkable if elements of extreme right-wing ideology had not been at all present until 1939. However, the articulations of nationalism and extreme violence in Futurist work were integral to their practice and present at their earliest incarnation as an identifiable group. To this end, the Futurists would hijack events, have fist fights with the public and generally engage in behaviours which would provoke a reaction. A Futurist event was held in Trieste which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire in spite of having an Italian speaking population of sixty percent.[55] That territory had remained 'unredeemed' when the rest of Italy was unified in 1860 was a point of political contention.[56] The Futurists delivered inflammatory speeches and 'conflated Futurism with irredentism', this being the movement aimed at bringing Trieste and other similar territories under Italian governance.[57]

[55] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 9.
[56] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 9.
[57] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 9–10.

Nation

Irredentism was an example of Italian nationalism with which the Futurists could align their movement. Of the Ballets Russes, Juliet Bellow has written of how:

> …most reviews shoehorned the Ballets Russes into the stereotype of the "primitive Other" privileging Orientalist spectacles such as *Cléopâtre* (1909) and *Schéhérazade* (1910) at the expense of other productions that affiliated the troupe with Western European balletic, musical and artistic traditions.[58]

I have been interested to know how reviews and criticisms of the Ballets Russes' work — and in particular *Le Sacre* — were frequently subject to racialisations more often associated with non-European cultures. The use of words such as 'barbarism' in descriptions of Ballets Russes' work is also a feature of Futurist rhetoric. Futurism was aggressively nationalist in its tone and it too will be dealt with in Chapters I and II in relation to Italy's colonial aspirations and the militarism in Futurist rhetoric.

The Geographical

The development or reformation of distinctive Russian and Italian aesthetic culture (from the perspective of Western Europe) would take place in Paris, this being the site of the most valued critical reception for the Ballet Russes and the Italian Futurists. In Russia, Diaghilev had met with resistance to the changes he wished to make. The Russian dancer Serge Lifar would write in his Diaghilev biography of how in his opinion:

> Paris, at the time, was indisputably the world's spiritual capital, and the tardy spring-tide of the Franco-Russian *entente* was inspiring the intensest interest and enthusiasm for everything connected with our country.[59]

Lifar sums up the status Paris held in the minds of European artists and the readiness for its audiences to engage in the Russian arts. In fin de siècle Italy, the momentum for the renewal of Italian art was hindered by what the art historian Marianne Martin describes as 'the prevailing

[58] *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870-1914: Strangers in Paradise*, ed. by Karen L. Carter, Susan Waller, and Norma Broude (Farnham Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), p. 156.
[59] Lifar, p. 168.

apathy of Italian taste which kept the general public in ignorance of the aims and achievements of the best creative minds.'[60] Martin identifies the tide of change in public attitude as emerging with the Venice Biennale and subsequent public events of international standing such as the 1902 Turin Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art and the Roman World Fair of 1911.[61] In addition she cites the impetus for change around public access to foreign arts journals and the impact of travel to France by Italian artists.[62] Marinetti was not only educated in Paris but had his first plays performed here.[63] As mentioned, it was also where the first manifesto of Futurism was published, where Severini lived for years — introducing the other Futurist painters to Picasso — and where they held their Futurist exhibition in 1912.[64] The Ballets Russes never performed in Russia but would enjoy unprecedented fame in Paris where its first major performances were staged. Diaghilev's presentations of Russian culture to Paris began as early as 1906 with a display of Russian works of art at the city's *Salon d' Automne*.[65] In 1907 he organised concerts of Russian music for the Paris Opéra and in 1908 brought Russian opera to Paris through his staging of Modeste Mussorgsky's *Boris Godonuv*.[66] In 1909 both ballet and opera productions were presented to Paris audiences by Diaghilev.[67]

Sensation

Historians have separately argued the case for both groups having used tactics which would cause a sensation amongst audiences. Diaghilev was reported to have been delighted at

[60] Martin, p. 16.
[61] Martin, p. 17.
[62] Martin, p. 18.
[63] F. T. Marinetti, *Marinetti, Selected Writings*, ed. by R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 10.
[64] In Severini's memoirs he reported how he introduced the Futurists to Gertrude Stein, whom they bored and how Picasso found their philosophical arguments about painting 'practically useless'. Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter: The Autobiography of Gino Severini* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 92–93.
[65] Lifar, p. 165.
[66] Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, trans. by Britnieva, Mary (Putnam, 1941), p. 239.
[67] Benois, p. 239.

the publicity that *Le Sacre* had generated.[68] Many have pointed out the benefits to the Ballets Russes of scandalising the public with work such as *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (*The Afternoon of the Faun,* 1912) where the character of the faun simulated orgasm in the final scene of the work.[69] An example of the public response was shown in an article for *Le Figaro* the day after the première, signed by 'Calmette' in stating of the ballet, 'What we have seen is a concupiscent faun, whose movements of erotic bestiality are emphasised in a shameless manner. That is all…'[70]

It is also a matter of contention whether or not Diaghilev in any way provided the conditions which made it more likely that audience dissent would occur during *Le Sacre*. In addition to the instances cited above, the Italian Futurists wrote provocation into their manifestoes as a means of enacting their desire for the audience not to remain passive but be an active part of the performances they came to see. The *Variety Theatre Manifesto* of 1913 therefore calls for the double booking of seats and glue to be placed on seats to create pandemonium.[71] In Chapters II and III, I take up Modris Eksteins proposition that the audience themselves may have been enacting a kind of performance or involved in the performance of *Le Sacre.*[72]

Transition

Transition is part of the background to this thesis and is clearly intrinsic to our understanding of what the fin de siècle means: not just the literal 'end of the century' but in the broader sense, a looking forward to the next, which also encompasses a moment of transition. In the introductory chapter of Shearer West's book *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in the Age of Anxiety* (1993) the author charted Western societal attitudes during periods of millennial transition and

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[68] Joy Melville, *Diaghilev and Friends* (London: Haus Publishing, 2009), p. 122.
[69] Richard Shead has noted how the scandal in the press which followed the faun's orgasm at the climax to the première of *L'après-midi d'un faune* made for sell-out audiences with extra performances needing to be scheduled. Richard Shead, *Ballets Russes* (London: Quarto Book, 1989), pp. 62–63.
[70] Misia Sert, *Two or Three Muses: The Memoirs of Misia Sert* (Museum Press Limited, 1953), pp. 126–27.
[71] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 163.
[72] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan, 1990), p. 36.

their manifestation in works of art. In detailing how the term fin de siècle came to be understood West wrote how:

> *fin de siècle* referred not just to the fact that the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, but it signified a belief on the part of the literate and voluble bourgeoisie that the end of the century would bring with it decay, decline and ultimate disaster.[73]

Whilst these were characteristics shared with other such periods in history and times of turbulence, West argued that the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries in Europe was characterised by internationalism and a 'secularized millenarianism' which was 'strengthened' by developments in mass communication.[74] This she believes 'stimulated racism, nationalism and other forms of extremism on a vast scale'.[75] These were regional concerns which became magnified through the mass distribution of ideas and the threat of war. West categorised her chapters under the following headings making the public discourse identifiable as 'Degeneration', 'Anarchy', 'Anxiety', 'Androgyny', 'Icons of Womanhood', 'Inner Life' and 'Regeneration'.[76] These were aspects which West and other authors such as Olga Matich have defined as being redolent of the artistic/societal age and to which I will refer throughout the thesis.

I would like to speculate as to a coincidence between Diaghilev having been accused of extreme radicalism and the Futurist belief in the rejuvenation of Italian society through its youth.[77] It is possible that in their respective posts as editors of their own arts magazines — *Mir Iskusstva* (1898-1904) and *Poesia* (1905-1909) Diaghilev and Marinetti needed to make similar choices about how their preferences for art could be located in relation to the fin de siècle.[78] I discuss transition in Chapter I with respect to the above and also to help address some of the contradictory language (both ancient and contemporary) used by Marinetti in *Il Futurisme*. The matter is also raised in Chapter III where I explore the juxtaposition of contemporary images

[73] Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle*, 1. publ (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p. 1.
[74] West, p. 15.
[75] West, p. 15.
[76] West, p. v.
[77] Sjeng Scheijen, *Diaghilev: A Life*, Reprint edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 134.
[78] Shead, p. 16.

from advertisements for motor cars and traditional images redolent of classical ballet, in the accompanying programme to the 1913 *Saison Russe*.

Russian Futurism 1906, the 1914 Meeting, The *Futurist Manifesto of Dance* 1917 and the First Formal Collaboration 1917

It is worth noting at this stage that unless otherwise stated, the term Futurist refers to the Italian Futurists, as apart from any other groups splintered from or calling themselves Futurist, at or around the same time as the Italian Futurists were practising. This is important to distinguish because the groups of artists who would later be known as the Russian Futurists enjoyed an early association with the impresario of the Ballets Russes, Diaghilev through his friendship with the artists Mikhail Larionov (1881-1964) and Natalia Goncharova. Larionov was one of the artists who created work for Diaghilev's contribution to the *Salon d'Automne* in 1906 and both would become designers for the Ballets Russes productions but in a later period than this study addresses.[79]

I will address in this thesis the concrete instances of contact between the Italian Futurists and the Russian Ballet. Painter/sculptor and Futurist theorist Umberto Boccioni wrote in a letter to a Vico Baer of 13 February 1915 (Archivi, II p. 51):

> Today I have been invited to a tea in honour of the Russian musician Stravinsky. He wishes to make my acquaintance and wants to make something with Futurist systems, colour, dance, costume.[80]

Plans were afoot for a collaboration between the Ballets Russes and the Futurists as early as 1914. A meeting took place in Marinetti's Milanese home at which Stravinsky played one of his compositions and a performance was given of the painter musician Futurist Luigi Russolo of his Intonarumori or Noise Intoners (instruments which Russolo had invented for performance of Futurist music). Also present at this event were Marinetti, Diaghilev, Futurist musician Francesco Pratella, Francesco Cangiullo, Boccioni, Carrà and Massine. Cangiullo described how

[79] Jane Pritchard, *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929 / Ed. by Jane Pritchard* (London: V & A Publishing, 2015), pp. 106–11.
[80] Melissa A. McQuillan, p. 383.

Pratella arrived hoping not to find any guests but instead was 'forced to play and sing his music with a mouth that would rather have opened to a good bowl of fish soup.'[81] The evening then proceeded with a performance of Russolo's Noise Intoners:

> A crackler crackled and sent up a thousand sparks like a gloomy torrent. Stravinsky leapt from the divan like an exploding bedspring, with a whistle of overjoyed excitement. At the same time a rustler rustled like silk skirts, or like new leaves in April. The frenetic composer hurled himself on the piano in an attempt to find the prodigious onomatopoeic sound, but in vain did his avid fingers explore all the semi-tones. Meanwhile, the male dancer [Massine] swung his professional legs, Diaghilev went Ah Ah like a startled quail and that for him was the highest sign of approval. By moving his legs the dancer was trying to say that the strange symphony was danceable…[82]

Diaghilev did not stage a performance of the Intonarumori though, as Garafola has identified; their being performed at the London Coliseum in 1914 did coincide with a London Saison Russes.[83] McQuillan has written of how a letter from Diaghilev to Balla dated December 2 1916 confirmed that Balla and Depero received commissions from Diaghilev in 1916.[84] Diaghilev had also considered the possibility of staging a performance of Balla's *Macchina Typografica (Printing Press).* In spite of a practice performance/meeting in Diaghilev's salon it was not produced.[85]

McQuillan has documented the architect Virgilio Marchi's account of the evening as follows, 'One evening we all went to Diaghileff and *Semenoff's* salon to make the decision whether to choose *Feux d'artifice* [sic] or the *Printing-Machine Ballet*, a mechanical invention of Balla's.'[86] McQuillan proceeds to explain how the account differs from that of Stravinsky's but that this was explicable through Diaghilev's commissioning methods (selecting one from several which had been produced by different artists).[87]

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[81] Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzolla, *Futurism*, The World of Art, Repr (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), p. 117.
[82] Tisdall and Bozzolla, p. 118.
[83] Garafola, p. 77.
[84] Melissa A. McQuillan, p. 383.
[85] Günter Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 249–51.
[86] Melissa A. McQuillan, p. 385.
[87] Melissa A. McQuillan, p. 385.

A work produced in collaboration with the Futurists, *Feu d'artifice,* was however staged in 1917. This was designed by Giacomo Balla and will be discussed in Chapter III. Its significance to this thesis is in my wanting to know if it is possible to apply Futurist ideas addressing the immersion of the spectator into the work of art, in relation to what I argue was the sensorial experience of Valentine Gross in recording *Le Sacre* (see below). My use of *Feu* was for its complete absence of human beings from the stage, and the illumination — not only of the stage with coloured light, but also of the audience during the performance.

In the same year that the Futurists first collaborated with the Ballets Russes, Marinetti produced his *Manifesto of Futurist Dance*. It was published July 8 1917.[88] In it he states:

> Once the glorious Italian ballet was dead and buried, there began in Europe stylizations of savage dances, elegant versions of exotic dances, modernizations of ancient dances. Parisian red pepper + panache + shield + lance + ecstasy in front of idols that have lost all meaning + undulations of Montmartre thighs = an erotic passéist anachronism for foreigners….With Nijinsky the pure geometry of dance, free of mimicry and without sexual stimulation, appears for the first time.[89]

Following a breakdown of the dance styles and individuals which Marinetti felt to be of note — he included acts as diverse as Isadora Duncan and the Cakewalk — he proceeded to stipulate what Futurist dance would look like. The language is again steeped in militarisms consistent with the aggressive tone of other manifestoes.[90] I refer to this manifesto in all three of my chapters because it deals with questions around assertions of masculinity in case studies I have selected, raising the matter of how women were represented as metaphors for sentimentalism and ineffectuality, uses militarist language/suggestions of violence and praises the dancer's mimicry of mechanisation in choreography.

In addition to the examples above, another recorded instance of a direct connection between members of the two groups was cited by Marianne Martin in her book *Futurist Art and*

[88] Marinetti, p. 137.
[89] Marinetti, p. 137.
[90] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 234–39.

Theory 1909-1915. In it she explains how Carlo Carrà writing in 1965 described how he had sold a picture to Diaghilev entitled *Natura morta con sifone di selz*. [91]

World of Art/Poesia

I would like to further consider the most obvious areas of confluence between the Italian Futurists and the Ballets Russes through an introduction to both groups. Both emerged into public consciousness in Paris around 1909. The Italian Futurists had been formed by their leader the poet playwright Fillippo Marinetti. Marinetti had been born and raised in Egypt where his father had accrued wealth as a speculator and advisor to the Khedive of Alexandria.[92] Whilst attending a French Jesuit school Marinetti created a school magazine called *Le Papyrus* and was criticised by his teachers for essays he wrote both praising and damning established authors.[93] Marinetti left Egypt for Paris to complete his baccalaureate and later in Pavia and Genoa universities studied for a degree in law.[94] His later association in Paris with Alfred Jarry, author of *Ubu Roi* (1896) frequently draws comparison with Marinetti's own play *Le Roi Bombance* (1905) which R.W. Flint has stated Marinetti plagiarised from the former and was 'greeted with a small but satisfactory riot' when it was first performed.[95] This staging, together with Sarah Bernhardt's public reading of his prize winning poem *Les Vieux Marins* (*Old Sailors)* led to Marinetti's gaining recognition as a writer.[96] Both his parents having died by 1907, Marinetti inherited their significant wealth.[97] His own art periodical *Poesia* was founded in Milan in 1904.[98] The first manifesto *Il Futurisme* was published in *Le Figaro* in 1909.

1909 was the same year in which the Ballets Russes first came to public prominence. Like Marinetti, Diaghilev, Stravinsky and Roerich, had all began studying law whilst pursuing their

[91] Martin, p. 192.
[92] Marinetti, p. 9.
[93] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 2.
[94] Marinetti, p. 10.
[95] Marinetti, p. 10.
[96] Marinetti, p. 10.
[97] Marinetti, p. 10.
[98] Didier Ottinger, *Futurism* (London: Tate, 2008), p. 309.

specific and shared interests in the arts. Diaghilev grew up in Perm in a traditional noble family. His mother died giving birth to him, and his father later remarried Diaghilev's stepmother Elena Diaghileva (1853-1919) to whom he would become particularly close.[99] This relationship is often discussed of in terms of Elena Diaghileva's involvement in the arts, but as I have discussed in Chapter I, the circles in which Elena Diaghileva mixed, fostered associations with the Russian intelligentsia with regard to spiritual, sexual and reproductive abstinence and relational experimentation which I shall argue, have far greater significance as a philosophy informing works of art such as *Le Sacre*.

Case Studies

Because of the numerous array of manifestoes produced over the period under investigation, it has been necessary for me to limit the number of case studies I have used as examples. For instance in Chapter I, there is an emphasis on the founding manifesto of Futurism *Il Futurisme*.[100] This work shares with many others a literary bombast, a casual taste for violence and the symbolic use of women as sentimental, disarming and therefore emasculating.

My selection of works by Valentine Gross is explained more fully in Chapter III. As examples come from a large number of rough sketches, it has been necessary to limit the number illustrated. Those selected share formal characteristics generalizable to the remainder of the group and — as I speculate — are demonstrative of themes (e.g. dehumanisation and regressive process through time) featured in the chapter title. However, they differ slightly from the rest in their being more overtly indicative of elements raised in previous chapters such as gender asymmetry and acts of negativity and violation in works of art.

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[99] Historian Sjeng Scheijen has dedicated a chapter *A Big Head* to the pervasive story of Diaghilev's head size. Scheijen debunks the myth of Diaghilev's head having killed his mother in childbirth, her death most likely being from contracting puerperal fever: a disease spread through a lack of hygiene amongst those who assisted women in childbirth. The reader may wish to consider the entrenchment of this myth within the context of my later discussion around gender asymmetry, drives towards women's emancipation and the presence of women's reproductivity in works of art.
Scheijen, pp. 8–18.

[100] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 49–53.

Chapter I

There are three themes addressed in Chapter I. My first chapter explores the thematic and social entwinement of works of art with A) religious/spiritual philosophy B) resistance to initiatives supporting women's emancipation /reproductive choices and C) the negative discourse on homosexuality arising in part as the fallout from the trial and condemnation of Oscar Wilde. My chapter serves as an introduction to the creators of *Le Sacre* and the protagonists of futurism through coverage of some shared experiences between individuals and general biographical details. By necessity it also revisits many of the individual plots of the Ballets Russes' works in order to demonstrate their connections with the arguments being made.

Research has drawn upon elements of the social and cultural formations in Western Europe and national and political unrest of the period 1890-1917. To this extent I have drawn upon Richard Taruskin's analysis of attitudes towards Russian male homosexuality prior to the Europe wide reverberations of the Criminal Law Amendment act of 1885.[101] This became popularly known as the 'blackmailer's charter' and made acts of 'gross indecency' a crime in the United Kingdom.[102] It had far reaching consequences after Oscar Wilde was tried and convicted in 1895 for 'committing acts of Gross indecency with other male persons'.[103] The trial was reported as far afield as New York and in Paris commentators observed the hypocrisy in British reporting in expressing deep shock whilst disgorging all aspects of the trial in prurient detail.[104] That Marinetti remarked with similar distaste on the negative British attitude to homosexuality in his 1910 *Futurist Speech to the English* is therefore also of interest.[105] The question I have asked is whether or not elements of homoeroticism and misogyny bear comparison with descriptions of Nijinsky's work for the Ballets Russes, other works preceding it and examples of Futurist

[101] Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, Ahmanson Foundation Humanities Endowment Fund Imprint (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 76–82.
[102] Merlin Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London ; New York: Fourth Estate, 2003), p. xii.
[103] Holland, p. xxxi.
[104] Holland, p. xxxii.
[105] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 72.

manifestoes and Marinetti's novel *Mafarka the Futurist* of 1910 which is strikingly homoerotic and misogynist in its tenor. I am not suggesting that a hatred of women was the driving impetus in producing these works. Rather that the emergence of assertions of masculinity in works of art — which have been argued by art historian Lisa Tickner as being a reaction to the campaigns for women's emancipation in the United Kingdom and France — might in some way be applicable to *Le Sacre du Printemps* and other works by both groups. With this in mind I have investigated the relevance of sexual repression in men, to consider if this idea could be a framework through which to read the confluence of gendered themes which appear in the works under scrutiny.

Tracking confluences between Italian Futurism and the Ballets Russes throughout my research has been a rewarding but complex undertaking. Whilst researching this chapter a theme that continually surfaced with increasing insistence was that of reproduction. I posed the question for myself as to whether or not the character Mafarka — who Marinetti makes reproductively omnipotent through the removal of women in the act of producing his son — could in any way be confluent with women's emancipation? *Le Sacre* again seemed to be the glue which connected seemingly disparate factors. At the site of this work, it was possible to explore perceptions around the power of female reproductivity and to ask what might be read from enactments of virility interlaced with the concept of the sacrifice of a woman. And so, the choreography for and the thematic annihilation of the principal woman dancer in *Le Sacre,* has gradually been deconstructed through its dovetailing with the relational experiments among the Russian intelligentsia, in abstinence, same sex relationships and three person marriages. Foundational to this chapter is my asking if it is reasonable to suppose that any aesthetic and narrative elements of *Le Sacre* might be in anyway confluent with these individuals, their social lives, beliefs, political systems and familial conventions.

Key research draws on the specialist knowledge of those working in specific areas. For example the scholar and dance historians Peter Stoneley and Lynn Garafola and many others

have written about the choreography of Nijinsky (including *Le Sacre*) in relation to his sexuality.[106] The narrative themes in the literature of Lev Tolstoy have been reviewed by authors such as Sarah Hudspith to assess how analogous they might be with his philosophy and events in his personal life.[107] These are researches on which I have drawn to elaborate my own reading. My work at times converges with theirs but ultimately differs in its conclusion, which arises from the amalgamation of combined complexities held together through the regularity of emergent themes which I will argue to be of significance.

Chapter II

In this Chapter I draw upon an interview of a curator Sarah Woodcock at the theatre Museum of the Victoria and Albert Museum, regarding the designs of Roerich for *Le Sacre*.[108] There *Le Sacre* was aligned with the 'primitive' in painting, referencing a trend amongst avant-garde artists for the appropriation of the aesthetic presentation of ethnographical material devoid of and decontextualised from its original purpose. The appeal of an idea of anti-refinement which such material seemed to offer not only tied the Ballets Russes stylistically to these reduced sources, but added significant meaning to suggestions of 'tribe' with which the ballet was publicised. This conflation of *Le Sacre* with non-Occidental ethnicity is understandable. Nijinsky's interest in and association with contemporary painting coupled with a later formal collaboration of the Ballets Russes with Picasso made the possibility of common ground between Nijinsky's angular postures and Cubism seem equitable. It is however complicated by a number of factors which are discussed in Chapter II.

I also address the intersection of class and with race for an understanding of the significance they may have played in any analysis of audience response. In investigating the

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[106] Garafola, p. 63.
[107] Sarah Hudspith, 'Life in the Present: Time and Immortality in the Works of Tolstoy', *The Modern Language Review*, 101.4 (2006), 1055–67 (p. 1056) <https://doi.org/10.2307/20467029>.
[108] Digital Media webmaster@vam ac uk Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Costume from The Rite of Spring', 2012 <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/costume-from-the-rite-of-spring/> [accessed 24 August 2016].

complexities of class alongside 'Classical ballet's queer potential' being in 'the display of male bodies, and with the female dancer, the interplay of strong and weak, rounded and phallicised', Peter Stoneley asks us to consider the consequences of 'race and the staged body' writing 'To what extent is the ballet body automatically a white body...?'.[109] His question recognises the scope of 'intersectionality' for its being able to encompass instances of other highly relevant material. As the scholar Kimberley Crenshaw has written for example '…race can also be a coalition of straight and gay people of colour, and thus serve as a basis for critique of churches and other cultural institutions that reproduce heterosexism.'[110] Thus Stoneley continues by discussing instances of homophobia within the African-American community in sometimes thinking homosexuality a 'white disease' alongside other variants which need to be accommodated to give all significant arguments their full due:

> At times the Black male classical dancer may have appeared to have turned aside from his more immediate cultural inheritance, whilst also confounding his culture's idea of masculinity. This awkward intersection of racial and sexual values extends to the dancers relationship with a predominantly white audience. To what extent is that audience's response determined by the racial preconceptions that it brings to the theatre? What stored fantasies and resentments might be at play?[111]

This acknowledgement of a grid or matrix of interrelated practices and attitudes can be superimposed as a framework for understanding the various factors I explore in Chapter II. The body of the Black classical ballet dancer like the Russian performers in 1913 is offered up and is subject to racialisation and sexualisation. These for example may conflict with his personal identity, may rub-up against economic necessity of his needing to earn a living or clash with audience attitudes fostered by colonial practices which confine black players to particular artistic roles. In this chapter I explore the racial perceptions which may have been brought to the first performances of *Le Sacre* and the possibility of their having governed some of the first audience responses.

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[109] Peter Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 15.
[110] 'Article__Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf', p. 1299.
[111] Stoneley, p. 15.

I begin the chapter, however, by making an argument for the presence of cross-disciplinary paring back of style in Futurist theory and elsewhere. In Futurist practice it translated as a severe decluttering of scripts for plays and programmes for performances which I explain in full. I then revisit commentary which identified *Le Sacre* as both modern and archaic. I do so in order to contextualise my readings of the impact of the choreography combined with the music, and elements of both, which – when considered alongside stylistic brevity — I argue made associations for *Le Sacre's* audience with 'Othered' cultures. Stravinsky's score for *Le Sacre* became dissociated from Nijinsky's choreography, following the controversies of the stage performance and in combination with its success as an independent concert piece. I am always struck yet unsurprised when reading the reviews of *Le Sacre* assembled by Valentine Gross, Truman C. Bullard and Nesta MacDonald's book *Diaghilev Observed by the critics in England and the United States 1911-1929* how the commentary on the first performances often overlooked the sophistication of its overall form, describing instead the passages which refer to its rhythmic repetitiveness.[112] Similarly, Nijinsky's choreography was frequently spoken of in terms which highlighted its synchronicity with the repetitiveness of the score.

In addressing the confluence between different disciplines, the matter of stylistic economy is explored. I want to reassess the possibility that *Le Sacre's* aural and aesthetic presentation might have been interpreted as 'simple' especially with consideration to critics who declared *Le Sacre* as making fools of its audience or a being a hoax. This analysis also touches on the brevity of narrative/ 'plot' information supplied to the audience prior to the performances in Paris (as compared with London). I want to test the possibility of the audience being frustrated, to see if it might be aligned with Futurist theory around audience provocation and inadvertent audience/performer interaction.

In Chapter II, I also raise a number of questions central to which is my contribution to the discussions which have taken place over the years surrounding the disruption which took

[112] Macdonald.

place — most frequently referred to as a 'riot' — at the very first performance of the *Le Sacre* at the newly built Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. I want to ask what meaning if any, can be drawn from an inadvertent yet direct engagement (audience participation) between audience and performance/work of art which seems in theory to realise some ideas fundamental to Futurist theory. Some Futurist principles were purloined and adapted from the work of philosopher Henri Bergson where they were presented in manifestoes such as Umberto Boccioni's *Futurist Sculpture* 1912.[113] In this instance a concept held that the dynamism of a work of art should radiate beyond its presentational confines in a manner which integrated it with its spectator and the surrounding environment.[114] Futurist manifestoes produced during 1913 such as Boccioni's *The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting* (March 15) and Marinetti's *Variety Theatre Manifesto* (29 September) would appear to show some relation to *Le Sacre du Printemps* in this respect.[115] These texts — though apparently various in authorship, artistic genre (theatre, painting, music), and supporting theory —when placed together might register as a snapshot of the wider artistic community from which the first performances of *Le Sacre* emerged. Boccioni's adaptation of Bergson's theories through his development of the concept of physical transcendentalism, allowed for cross-disciplinary interpretation of intepenetrability between audience stage design and performer which has pertinence to the final chapter also.

As already stated, one of the areas of possible confluence comes with the suggestion of the employment of thematic violence by both groups. Truman C Bullard's investigation into *Le Sacre,* argued that the 'events and circumstances' which preceded the performance and the support and dissent for the work itself, were the two categories around which an analysis and understanding of the possible reasons for the disturbances could best be structured.[116] Whilst I draw upon this and Bullard's extensive research throughout the thesis and explore a theory of

[113] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 113–19.
[114] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 64–67.
[115] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 139–42, 159–64.
[116] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 190–91.

audience response derived of his work, I hope to add to and not duplicate his analysis of the possible reasons for the 'riot'. I have referred to the tumult of the 1905 failed Russian revolution, the militancy of the British suffragette movement and in a later chapter the violence of European colonialism to suggest how these impacted on European society and were therefore liable to appear as integral to the works of art I scrutinise.

Bellow has explored the multiplicity of cultural references which the Ballet Russes employed in its productions. Thus for example, Ballet Russes' exotic costuming she describes as 'cross-cultural travesty' being an amalgam of different sources adapted to the tastes of the Parisian public.[117] In this respect she argues that objections to *Le Sacre* were linked to borrowings from the contemporary culture of Paris in 1913.[118] My own analysis of the dissent reported bears similarities in suggesting the importance of audience recognition of social and political currents abroad in wider society but differs more specifically as to what these were.

Literature to date has largely honoured the creators' declared intent to evoke ancient Russia in *Le Sacre*. For example the art historian Kenneth Archer has written of how Roerich's exposure to Slavic costume figured in his designs for *Le Sacre*.[119] The greater extent to which *Le Sacre's* creation can be attributed to pre-Christian Russian sources as a consequence of Roerich's own archaeological investigations, has been extensively investigated by the dance historian Millicent Hodson. In a paper entitled *Nijinsky's Choreographic Method: Visual Sources from Roerich for Le Sacre du Printemps*, Hodson argued the possibility for the relationship between the basic pose from which Nijinsky developed his choreography, being based upon Nijinsky's exposure to Roerich's own paintings, pre-Christian Slavic collection of wooden idols and images of cave painting.[120] Through Stravinsky and Roerich's association with the art colony Talashkino, *Le*

[117] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 157.
[118] Carter, Waller, and Broude, pp. 156–57.
[119] Kenneth Archer, 'Nicholas Roerich and His Theatrical Designs: A Research Survey', *Dance Research Journal*, 18.2 (1986), 3–6 (p. 5) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478046>.
[120] Millicent Hodson, 'Nijinsky's Choreographic Method: Visual Sources from Roerich for Le Sacre Du Printemps', *Dance Research Journal*, 18.2, 7–15 (p. 7).

Sacre had a lineage to the neo-nationalist Russian Arts and Crafts Movement which impacted on painting, theatre and music in its 'quest for a native Russian identity'.[121] The greater difficulty of firm attribution would exist irrespective of Roerich's membership of the Russian Archaeological Society.[122] What Roerich probably did was well summarised in a comment made of his series of paintings entitled *The Beginning of Rus; the Slavs* in a survey book on Russian artists:

> The conception of this series was quite original. Roerich was not trying to create particular historical events, and although he resurrects the past on the basis of scientific archaeological findings, the essence of his work is not reconstruction of a past age, but its poetic embodiment.[123]

The supposition is that the stylistic modern finds elements of its resources for its difference in the pre-modern.

I want to add to this body of investigation by taking up the observation made by Richard Taruskin who has written:

> …Behind all modern primitivist movements lurked an old-fashioned colonialist exoticism, much of it of French inspiration. Everyone recognized the shadow of Paul Gauguin behind the work of Nicholas Roerich. Behind Stravinsky's primitivism there lay a cognate Russian orientalism that, when presented to the French, cast the native in auto-exoticized terms. That parallel between the French and Russian orientalist strains vouchsafed Diaghilev's Parisian triumphs, for he knew that the Russia the French wanted to see was a Frenchified, exoticized, orientalized, racialized, one almost wants to say *negrified Russia* [my italics].[124]

It is this idea of a 'negrified Russia' which I investigate, setting this chapter against a backdrop of 'exploration', colonialization and racial hierarchy as a means of unveiling extant frameworks for the reception of *Le Sacre.* To this end my chapter explores the presence of non-Occidental, living, cultures and what they represented to the European public when presented to them as display exhibits at World Fairs. Art historian Charmaine Nelson has written of how the exhibits of human specimens of colonised people were collected and displayed in European

[121] Scheijen, p. 86, 97,98.
[122] *Fifty Russian Artists*, ed. by A. F. Dmitrenko (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1985), p. 230.
[123] Dmitrenko, pp. 230–31.
[124] 'Richard-Taruskin-Resisting-The-Rite.pdf', p. 286.

museums as a means of qualifying assumptions of their 'evolutionary inferiority'.[125] She continues:

> Exceeding museum practices in their mass appeal to broad middle- and lower-class populations, the more socially accessible spectacles of fairs, circuses and open air exhibitions often replaced skeletal remains with the living bodies of colonized subjects…Colonial subjects framed within the Eurocentrically biased and artificially imposed boundaries of reconstructed and anthropologically "authentic," "primitive" villages were made to perform their cultures and also, significantly, their races, for the entertainment of white audiences. [126]

References to Africa are oblique in *Le Sacre* and therefore in the literature analysing its content. If we ask to what extent might *Le Sacre* have been a work of its creators' imagination, the likelihood of real-life precedents which would satisfy an audiences' ideas of what the tribal might look and sound like, would likely come from *contemporary* sources especially if we consider that Diaghilev was under pressure throughout many of his productions to produce work which would bring about a good financial return.[127] Other factors to consider might be Diaghilev's known eclecticism in gathering non-traditional sources for ballet presentations and the constant travel around Europe during a period when World Fairs were prevalent across the continent and well patronised. For example, the Great Exhibition in London attracted six and a half million visitors in 1851.[128] There is a strong probability that the creators' of *Le Sacre* were exposed to such exhibits especially if we consider Diaghilev's willingness to not only view non-classical dancers but to employ them in the corps de ballet to fill out numbers or as 'character dancers'.[129] Peter Greenhalgh has written of how the visitor numbers to the Paris expositions increased from four million in 1855 to thirty-two million in 1899, reaching forty eight million in 1900.[130]

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[125] Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, Routledge Studies on African and Black Diaspora, 2 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), p. 125.
[126] Nelson, p. 125.
[127] Garafola, pp. 177–200.
[128] Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, UK : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 12.
[129] Garafola, p. 37.
[130] Greenhalgh, p. 37.

Milicent Hodson proposed an alignment between trance-like states relating to practices in traditional cultures and Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre*. She wrote how:

> The involuted rhythms of what has recently been called 'minimalist' or 'trance music' share with *Le Sacre* the common roots of traditional chants and percussion ceremonies. The techniques are remarkably consistent, despite great variations in culture, and new musicians have made a point of studying such systems as Javanese gamelan, Ghanaian drumming, and Moroccan handclapping.[131]

The perception of sameness between traditional cultures is a matter to which I give greater attention in this chapter. Hodson continues:

> The 'ordealistic' effort of marking complex rhythms is an essential part of Eastern and Western ritual: Slavic and Central Asian sources provided the models for *Le Sacre*, and African and other Asian sources have been favoured by our contemporaries.[132]

As well as proposing a successful confluence between the construction and presentation of the work, its effects upon the audience and the work's replicating instances of known ritual practices in non-Occidental communities and trance music from the 1990s, Hodson discusses the ordeal of the dancers in having to execute repetitive movement in *Le Sacre*.[133]

Whilst Nijinsky's choreography may have been an *ordeal* to render, I would argue against its being ritually *ordealistic* in regard to what she describes in *Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps"* dance in the following terms:

> In the original *Sacre*, Nijinsky seems to have grasped, in a single stroke as it were, the fundamentals that characterise the ritual dance of highly developed traditional cultures: the use of postures that restrict the body's attention, turning it inward; the prolonged repetition of simple motions, establishing a rhythm which can alter consciousness; and the limitation of group activity to primary patterns in space, often duplicating totem signs drawn on objects and garments.[134]

Whilst I don't rule out the reproduction of 'inner states' as a possible audience, performer impression of his choreography, I would argue that rather than his instinctive grasp,

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[131] Millicent Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's "Le Sacre Du Printemps"', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 3.2 (1985), 35–45 (p. 41) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1290556>.
[132] Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance', p. 41.
[133] Millicent Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's Choreographic Method', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 4.1 (1986), 63–77 (p. 36) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1290674>.
[134] Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance', p. 39.

the stylistic nature of Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* was governed by the combination of the rhythmic complexity of Stravinsky's score coupled with choreography's need to correspond closely to it as determined by Diaghilev's well-documented embrace of the Dalcroze system and the subsequent need for the choreography to closely follow this score (his being a factor that would not lend itself willingly to the languid, fluidity of Classical gesture stated above and Nijinsky's possible observation of non-Occidental dance. As Emille Vuillermoz wrote in an article entitled 'La Nouvelle Version du Sacre du Printemps' in *La Revue Musicale*: in February 1921,

> Stravinsky's work will always dominate any choreography…You will try in vain to flee from the tyranny of this rhythm. It will bend you under its iron will…All of this "dance of the earth" belongs to the orchestra.[135]

This is not my entering into an argument about originality and sources of material. Rather I am suggesting that there is something which still needs to be articulated, which concerns finding the most plausible evidence for artistic manifestations but also — where the evidence seems absent —trying to make sense of what is happening when we as historians somehow fill in the gaps to complete the story. So when scholars such as Garafola and Hodson draw a parallel with trance in the choreography or we write how Stravinsky's score sounds a bit African (and I include myself in this analysis), I think it is worth knowing what is it we are doing and why is it we are doing it.[136] I believe this has been insufficiently elucidated in the literature to date or is referred to obliquely or by an imputation of a superficial sameness between the ethnographic and the pseudo-ethnographic which demands scholarly attention.

Writers such as Bellow, Bowlt, Bullard and Garafola have all drawn our attention to the value to Diaghilev of stylistic hybridisation in stimulating the public towards a heightened interest in Russes productions. This pulls towards their discursive orbits the details of stage

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[135] *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. by Minna Lederman, Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), pp. 30–31.
[136] Lynn Garafola has written of Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* 'At times the movement approximated the involuntary condition of trance'. Garafola, p. 68.

presentation following on from creator intent, audience interpretation and the matter most referred to, with respect to the mythological narrative of *Le Sacre*: the audience response. My focus for this chapter is on audience interpretation and the apparently inauthentic. Why should this be so? My chapter reads the reception of *Le Sacre* according to another layer of inauthenticity: that of an African village or ritual dance as delivered by impressarios who captured human beings to use as display exhibits at world expositions. I have chosen this focus because I do not believe that discussions to date regarding what contemporary commentators referred to as the 'primitivist' nature of *Le Sacre's* music, choreography and design, have extended to arguments specific to interpretations of its association with what was at the time understood as the 'tribal' and the degree to which ethnicity was appropriated in the arts whilst remaining hierarchically constituted at the turn of the century. This might seem odd to suggest this has not already been written about, especially if we consider other studies for example Paul Gauguin's use of 'non-Western art, Egypt, Java, Japan' that Griselda Pollock wrote 'provided the syntax for an otherness, an unfamiliarity, a distance…'. Pollock argues this association with and appropriation of non-Western otherness was of value to Gauguin both to his contemporary avant-gardists and also to establish his difference from them.[137] These ideas were clearly too present in the minds of our protagonists — in the *The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting* (1913) Boccioni makes reference to 'primitives and Barbarians' — and support arguments around the audience's discomfiture through the tensions between exotic appeal and socially prescribed distancing from the Other .[138] To this end I have briefly addressed some of the debates being raised by the French government concerning a labour shortage caused by the drop in the birth rate and the resultant concerns raised over the necessary employment of foreign workers.[139]

[137] Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888-1893*, p. 31.
[138] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 139–42.
[139] Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 25–40

The popularity of exoticism which the Ballets Russes frequently foregrounded in its new works made a space for enactments of racialisation described by Bellow as follows:

> It should be noted that blackface performance featured regularly in Ballets Russes' repertory. In *Schéhérazade* members of the *corps de ballet* wore dark makeup and body stockings that may have appeared convincing onstage (less so in photographs for the souvenir programmes).[140]

Work published by the Ballets Russes designers Alexander Benois and Leon Bakst in *Comoedia Illustre* bear testament to the rich source of tantilising imagery which could be adapted to illustrative purposes even if, as Bellow suggests, the reality may have appeared somewhat different. Also see Benois illustration for *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (Fig. 5 Chapter I.)

Social art history is able to accommodate such theories through an acknowledgement of the ideological operations to which artists gave form in their work thus reaffirming what Clark describes as 'the connection of art with political action.'[141] The thesis is unable to give voice to those who were exhibited at the World Fairs through recovery of their undocumented experiences. However, it may act as a silent witness, iterating its phenomena, the extent to which it was practised across the world and the likely enormity of its impact. The matter of the sacrifice of a woman in *Le Sacre's* narrative has been discussed extensively with respect to its being 'an invention with no historical Slavic antecedents'.[142] Many authors such as the art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg have noted its presence in Mexican culture.[143] Warburg compared this with his observation of the dances of the Pueblo Indians of North America:

> The essence of magical insinuation into the divine, into a share of its superhuman power, is revealed in the terrifyingly dramatic aspect of Mexican religious devotion. In one festival, a woman is worshipped for forty days as a corn goddess and then sacrificed, and then the priest slips into the skin of the poor creature. Compared to this most elementary

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<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1170638> [accessed 13 November 2015].

[140] *Foreign Artists and Communities in Modern Paris, 1870-1914: Strangers in Paradise*, ed. by Karen L. Carter, Susan Waller, and Norma Broude (Farnham Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), p. 161.

[141] Clark, p. 258.

[142] Millicent Hodson, p. 11.

[143] Please also see Millicent Hodson, p. 7.pp. 9–10.

> and frenzied attempt to approach divinity, what we observed among the Pueblos is indeed related but infinitely more refined.[144]

In my analysis I draw upon the work of the Futurists through an understanding of the historical specificity of the mediations (such as women's emancipation and the emergence of the fictional 'new woman') which led to those Futurist works which I argue are relatable to *Le Sacre.*[145]

Chapter III

In chapters II and III reciprocity between audience and performer is explored in relation to the concept of the integration of the spectator with the work of art in Futurist theory.[146] This is addressed in part through the 'role' that stage lighting may have played, floodlighting the audience, making them participant and causing reaction. Critical analysis of the relations of form within works of art, between viewers and art works/performances, are crucial for Chapter III as a foundation for an analysis of Valentine Gross's relationship with *Le Sacre.* When all aspects of the organisation of humans, scenery, and stage are taken into account, Gross's sketches — drawn live at the first performances of *Le Sacre du Printemps* —become highly ambiguous in their readability. That it is not always clear whether the viewer should interpret certain lines as figurative or geological is understandable when we consider the conditions under which Gross was most likely to be drawing – in semi-darkness and at speed to capture movement of the dancers. That the same ambiguity should persist into her finished pastels of the same work is more enigmatic. This chapter explores these complexities using as its source the original, unpublished written notes which Gross made of *Le Sacre*, in addition to her sketches and completed pastels which are in the Theatre and Performance Collections, Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

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[144] Aby Warburg and Michael P. Steinberg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 34.
[145] Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture, 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 11.
[146] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 65.

One of the contributions this thesis will make is the exploration of the possible relation between what I am naming dehumanisation in Gross's drawings and the Futurist machinic.

This chapter addresses a key term 'dehumanisation'. This has two meanings a) human versus non-human i.e. the machinic and b) human- versus non-human in terms of the hierarchical.

The chapter begins with the problem of the descriptive terms of what I am defining as dehumanisation. In stratifying the term it was possible to understand the work in relation to other contemporary descriptions of *Le Sacre* which alluded to this same tendency. What was it that Gross was trying to achieve in her sketches, pastels and written commentary about *Le Sacre* and was there any consistency between my untested perception of these works with those of the Futurists — which have been discussed extensively by Michael Kirkby — which remove the human from the stage or propose that they behave as though they were machines? It also seemed remarkable that Futurist experiments in the capture of movement, movement through time and the synaesthetic values of an artist's perception of their subjects, had not yet been explored in relation to Gross's work. Here I have sought to ascertain whether this, the sensorial experience of *Le Sacre* and ideas of audience immersion in Futurist manifestoes, were worth re-exploring in relation to audience and performer reciprocity?

I have identified themes such as violence, provocation, nation and nationalism, spatio-temporal encounter and more complex ones such as articulations of a racially Othered presence, which appear to bear resemblance between the groups and work being studied. Aspects of these show correspondences with cultural changes such as anxiety about the empowerment of women and reinforcement of racial hierarchies which have been recognised by established authors as being commensurate with public discourse within European society at the fin de siècle. Both these and other investigated instances can be argued as fostering elements of repression and cruelty and it is for this reason that I have chosen to centre my latter discussions around the term dehumanisation for its transferability across different forms of physical, philosophical and

aesthetic representation. The challenge — which social art history allows me to address — is in finding if and how, the multifaceted material of which *Le Sacre* was comprised, may have worked as agency, demonstrating the transforming processes of social tensions into works of art. It is in the spirit of artworks being read as cultural *practices* negotiating meanings shaped by history and the 'unconscious' that I proceed with this study.[147]

[147] Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, p. 10.

HAILING THE INVERSE: Re-reading *Le Sacre du Printemps's* Performance of Tensions Across *Fin de siècle* Europe

Chapter I

I have chosen to engage the concept of 'resurrection' in this chapter. The reason for its inclusion was because of its continued thematic emergence through an entanglement with contestations around sexuality, women's equality and spiritual reckoning. For example, *Le Sacre du Printemps* and at least two preceding Ballet Russes productions alluded to the idea of 'resurrection'. *L' Oiseau de Feu* 1910 (*The Firebird*) appeared to draw upon Greek mythology and the story of the phoenix; a bird capable of being reborn as new, following its death.[148] Similarly, the title character in *Petrushka* (premièred June 1911) is killed and resurrected at the climax of the ballet. In *Jeux,* which premièred on May 15 1913, Nijinsky's experimental choreography replaced the soft curves and lightness of classical ballet with the angularity of flexed elbows and wrists. Writing within a historical context Barbara Barker, has suggested that this work 'fragmented movement not to destroy the past but to open new realms of possibility'.[149] Barker implies that stylistically — as well as thematically — *Jeux* was a work which tried to 'resurrect' ballet (an art form in decline in France) through reformation. Central to the narrative of *Le Sacre du Printemps* was a 'young girl' who sacrificially danced herself to death as payment to the God Yarilo in order to renew the earth's harvest. Scholars wrote about *Le Sacre du Printemps* as being associated with 'resurrection' on several fronts: the novelty of its unfamiliar music and choreography, its capacity for renewal by later choreographers, and its narrative tale of sacrifice. [150] In addition, *Le Sacre* presented itself as a revival of 'Pagan Russia'.[151]

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[148] John Spencer Hill, 'The Phoenix', *Religion & Literature*, 16.2 (1984), 61–66 (p. 61).
[149] Barbara Barker, 'Nijinsky's "Jeux"', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 26.1 (1982), 51–60 (p. 60) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1145445>.
[150] The legends about audience misbehaviour which grew up around *Le Sacre du Printemp's* first performance might also be considered as a resurrection. Nijinsky's version of the ballet was quickly dropped from the repertoire of the Ballets Russes.
[151] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. vii.

The theme of resurrection is also identifiable within the works of the Italian Futurists. Embedded within their theory was the belief in art's potential as a force for political, social and cultural renewal. In the 1909 Futurist manifesto *Il Futurisme*, Filippo Marinetti used 'resurrection' as a metaphor for his belief in the power of the mechanised vehicle over nature. This was a way of communicating the Futurists' hope for a rebirth in Italy's national identity and the aspirations they proclaimed as the philosophical underpinnings of their *artistic* identity.[152]

For me the question arose as to whether the recurrence of the theme of resurrection was in any way particular to its placement within particular discourses. If one made the case for its being concentrated around matters of social anxiety (being manifest as a reversion to/reinforcement of social convention) might it be argued as being a response to calls for social change such as women's emancipation around the end of nineteenth-century and beginning of the twentieth-century: a moment when one might expect a review of the previous century and an anticipation of the next? Whilst I argue this as a possibility, establishing its pertinence has not been my primary goal. I have envisioned its employment more as a unifying tool connecting divergent threads throughout the chapter. Its presence and indeed subversion are clarified through a review of the narratives of the ballets, and other works of possible significance between 1909 and 1917. The first Futurist Manifesto *Il Futurisme* and *Le Sacre du Printemps* are given analytic precedence for their value as works which exemplify the theory under discussion. Of particular significance to the narrative formation and final presentation of many of the works addressed, is the alignment of negativity with women's sexual identity in combination with homosexual repression and perceived threats to male sexual identity in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. To argue my point, it has been necessary to outline several plots so that the reader can understand fully how I am making the case for a relationship of different narratives to one another. It is my belief that these aesthetic articulations were deeply inflected by gender and sexuality at the level of metaphor and representation and my argument

[152] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 49–53.

will be underpinned by the idea that what was made visible in the arts was repressed or a source of increasing tension in wider society.

Interconnections: Towards a Shared Consciousness

I wish to begin laying the foundation for this chapter with an exploration of the interconnections between particular personalities, ideas and works of art. I will start with a look at the circumstances which brought a painting by Nikolai Roerich the artist who would become the designer for *Le Sacre du Printemps,* to the attention of the writer Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910).

Roerich

In 1896 Roerich graduated in law from the University of St Petersburg. As was not unusual for young Russian men of Roerich's education and status at the time — other examples being Stravinsky and Diaghilev — Roerich had pursued his studies in a respected profession whilst simultaneously studying in the arts. The following year he submitted an oil painting as part of his graduation from the Imperial Academy of Arts.[153] The painting Roerich had prepared for his graduation examination was entitled *The Messenger: Tribe Has Risen Against Tribe* (1897) (Fig. 3) and was the only painting produced from a planned series of twelve works. The images drew upon Roerich's interest in ancient Russian culture. Through these he hoped to depict the story of the warring Slavic tribes who sought a Nordic king to restore peace and rule over them in 860 AD.[154]

[153] Archer, p. 3.
[154] Jacqueline Decter, *Nicholas Roerich: The Life & Art of a Russian Master*, Second Printing edition (Rochester, Vt. : New York, NY: Park Street Press, 1989), p. 30.

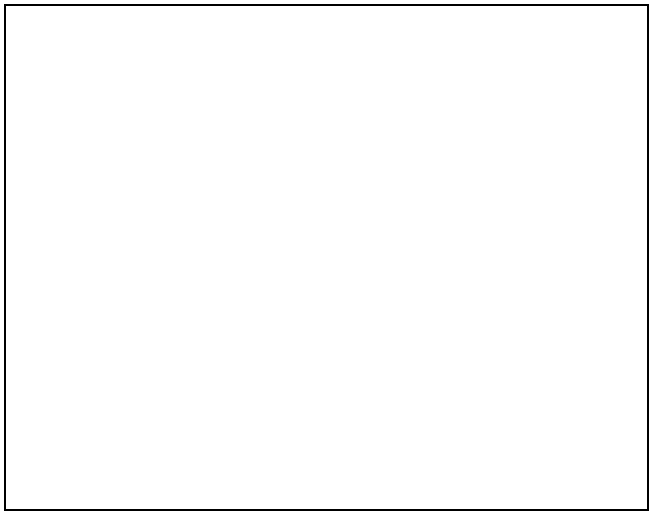

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Fig. 3

Nikolai Konstantinovich Roerich, *The Messenger: Tribe Has Risen Against Tribe* 1897, oil on canvas, 124.7 × 184.3 cm Collection: Tretyakov State Gallery, Moscow.

The Messenger: Tribe Has Risen Against Tribe so impressed Roerich's friend the writer and critic Vladimir Vasilievich Stasov (1824-1906) that he proposed that Roerich show the painting to the writer Lev Tolstoy. Roerich visited Tolstoy alongside Stasov and the composer of *Schéhérazade* Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908). On viewing a large photograph of the work, Tolstoy declared,

> Have you ever crossed a rapidly flowing river in a boat? It is always necessary to steer higher than the spot toward which you are headed, otherwise you will be taken downstream. So, too, in the sphere of moral demands it is always necessary to steer higher — life takes everything downstream. Let your messenger hold the helm high, then he'll reach his destination.[155]

As Stasov had hoped, Tolstoy validated Roerich as an artist. A more significant consequence of this meeting was Tolstoy's recognition of the belief in the importance of the work's narrative; and the worth of an aesthetic return to Russia's cultural past. The messenger in Tolstoy's parable is identified as a visionary who in seeking integrity must anticipate, lead and be followed. In it Tolstoy made morality analogous with perpetual movement and in particular,

[155] Decter, p. 33.

elevation into a superior moral realm. In this way it anticipated his final novel *Воскресение (Resurrection)* written two years later in 1899. Roerich's formal introduction to Tolstoy and the nature of the substance of their discussion points towards his being a logical progenitor of such themes — in concord with Stravinsky — for *Le Sacre* and a resonance with spiritual consciousness for which Roerich would later become renowned. If we both review and expand Tolstoy's narrative vision, we can find 'death' together with 'resurrection' running throughout Tolstoy's work long before his completion of *Resurrection*. These emerged in such works as *A Confession* 1882, *War and Peace* 1869, *Anna Karenina* 1873-1877 and the play *The Living Corpse* 1900.[156] But what life experiences of Tolstoy might have instigated such a conversion into his art?

This I will discuss in reference to Tolstoy who — like Roerich — was a writer for whom Diaghilev had a great admiration, having read many of his works and having been present at the première of his play *The Fruits of Enlightenment* in Moscow in 1889.[157]

Diaghilev

In the autumn of 1891, Diaghilev and his cousin Dimitri (Dima) Filosofov (1872-1940) — the son of a prominent feminist Anna Filosofova and a man with whom he was in a relationship — made a spontaneous decision to visit Tolstoy at his Moscow home.[158]

Having made the trip to Moscow, Diaghilev and Filosofov were unexpectedly granted an audience with Tolstoy. Diaghilev wrote in a letter to his stepmother Elena Diaghileva 'What particularly struck me about him was the combination of peasant's working clothes and a gentlemanly way of behaving and speaking.'[159] Like Diaghilev, Tolstoy was himself an aristocrat

[156]Wachtel, Andrew, 'Death and Resurrection in Anna Karenina', in *In the Shade of the Giant*, ed. by Hugh McLean (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 100.
[157] Scheijen, p. 44.
[158] Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siecle*, 1 edition (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 23.
[159] Scheijen, p. 47.

and as befitted his social rank, he married and had many children.[160] However, he underwent a significant re-evaluation of his own religious values and privileges and came instead to believe that sex was an immoral act which tainted the children resulting from it.[161] Tolstoy's diaries which detailed the sexual profligacy of his youth were given to his wife on the eve of their marriage.[162] They also recounted his having had a child with a peasant woman who lived on the family estate.[163] Tolstoy renounced his wealth and angered the government operating under the reign of Alexandr III, by organising famine relief in 1891.[164] He also promoted political and ethical causes like that of the Doukhobors: a Christian spiritual community for whom the proceeds from *Resurrection* were given. A belief expressed by one commentator writing in 1914, was that the spirit of *Resurrection* articulated the dangers of distorting the rule of law at the behest of the state and that it was a summation of nineteenth century critical thought in Europe; the novel being the 'highest expression of the general humanitarian movement' of the period.[165] Tolstoy's tacit criticism of the corrupted systems of Russian church and state in *Resurrection* led to its being available only in a censured format in Russia up until 1936.[166] The novel was consistently well received amongst the non-establishment community in Russia.[167]

The extent to which Tolstoy was respected throughout Russia was reflected in Diaghilev's uncompromising language after meeting him. Writing to his stepmother he reported that immediately upon leaving his estate 'our first words were "But he's a saint, he's really a saint!" '.[168] Echoing Tolstoy's parable on seeing Roerich's painting, Diaghilev also wrote,

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[160] Olga Matich, p. 55.
[161] Olga Matich, p. 48.
[162] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1998), p. 179.
[163] Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 60.
[164] Edward Garnett, *Tolstoy; His Life and Writings* (Constable and Company, 1914), p. 84.
[165] Garnett, p. 91.
[166] Claudia Durst Johnson and Vernon Johnson, *The Social Impact of the Novel: A Reference Guide* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 2002), p. 207.
[167] Johnson and Johnson, p. 207.
[168] Scheijen, p. 47.

> After seeing him I understood that on the road to achieving perfection a man can acquire moral sanctity; I understood that the prophets and the saints we read about in the Scriptures aren't just impossible myth. I learned that today too there can be holy warriors who seek out the truth and spread the word.[169]

Diaghilev was taken with Tolstoy being — as he saw him — a spiritual man. The allusions to sainthood and morality imply a considered relationship with religion and demonstrate an appropriation of language which Diaghilev knew would convey a particular meaning as shared between himself and his stepmother. Elena Diaghileva's religious sensibility was able to accommodate an exploration of alternative spiritual models to which her association with the writer Zinaida Nikolayevna Gippius (1869-1945) attests. Questions surrounding the doctrine of the religious authorities in Russia had preoccupied the Russian intelligentsia since the 1860s.[170] In a continuation of this period, figures such as Zanaida Gippius, along with other intellectuals of her generation such as Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853-1900) and Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919) had (to different extents) become part of an experimental and lived philosophy which questioned the relationship between religion, family life and sexuality. Gippius and the writer and thinker Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) for example, held that the transcendence of nature through anti-procreative alternatives such as celibacy and homosexuality were akin to the transfiguration of a degenerate physicality into a condition of spiritual purity.[171] Much that is known of Gippius has been gleaned from her diaries and her correspondence.[172] She was known to take on the personas of both men and women in her letters to which she referred to as having given birth. [173] Gippius would request that her epistolary children — as Olga Matich has coined them — be destroyed when they did not receive a sympathetic ear from the 'father' to whom they were sent.[174]

[169] Scheijen, p. 48.
[170] Olga Matich, p. 22.
[171] Olga Matich, pp. 5–6.
[172] Olga Matich, pp. 181–82.
[173] Olga Matich, p. 189.
[174] Olga Matich, p. 190.

Rosanov's writings were often contradictory in tone: largely procreationist and frequently deemed anti-semitic, a position which led to his expulsion from the religious philosophical meetings for which he had been a co-founder alongside Gippius, Merezhkovsky and Nikolai Minsky (1855-1937).[175] The refusal of his first wife to divorce him led to his secret marriage to his second wife and the union's illegality with respect to Russian Orthodox church.[176] Living technically unwed with six children motivated Rosanov's criticism of the divorce laws and his activism for 'the rights of unwed mothers and illegitimate children'.[177]

Drawing upon ancient myth Solovyov, hailed the union of both sexes in the form of an androgyne who would be the 'ideal' gender of the future and whose erotic desire would remain purely cerebral.[178] Resolving that celibacy was the best form of attaining spiritual transcendence, strongly echoed the values that Tolstoy came to adopt having extensively studied and subsequently rejected the teachings of the most significant Western and Eastern philosophers of the time and also the 'Christian Fathers'.[179] To the frustration of his wife — for whom he blamed for lapses in his sexual control — Tolstoy began to preach a life of abstinence.[180]

By 1889 Gippius and Merezhkovsky had embarked upon a celibate marriage which would later be augmented to include Diaghilev's cousin and lover Dimitri Filosofov.[181]

I will return to Gippius and her counterparts later in the chapter. Firstly however I need to briefly outline the plot to the novel *Resurrection* through which spiritual and social aspects of Tolstoy's own personal history would appear to have been interwoven.

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[175] Olga Tabachnikova, *Anton Chekhov Through the Eyes of Russian Thinkers: Vasilii Rozanov, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Lev Shestov* (Anthem Press, 2012), p. liv.
[176] Tabachnikova, p. liv.
[177] Olga Matich, p. 220.
[178] Olga Matich suggests that the period and society in which Solovyov was writing would have used the term 'androgyne' as a euphemistic substitute for 'homosexual'. Olga Matich, p. 8, 9.
[179] Lincoln, p. 183.
[180] Lincoln, p. 183.
[181] Olga Matich, p. 162.

Tolstoy's *Resurrection*

Resurrection told the story of Prince Dmitri Ivanovitch Nekhludoff, a man who sought redemption from Katusha Maslova, the young woman whose pregnancy and subsequent downfall he caused. Following a series of calamitous events triggered by her pregnancy, Maslova becomes destitute and is driven into prostitution. Unjustly accused of murder, she is sent to stand trial but does not recognise that one of the juror's is in fact Nekhludoff. Nekhludoff's overwhelming guilt at his role in Maslova's predicament, leads him to resign his social position and instead seek out an understanding of the poor, the injustices they faced and to realise the extent of his own privileged life. The redemption Nekhludoff seeks is denied when Maslova rebuffs his offer of marriage. Any dignity in this act of resistance is countered by the continued misery of her existence at the book's climax.[182]

Sarah Hudspith has argued that Nekhliukhov was resurrected through overcoming his previous 'animal self' as the seducer of the young Maslova.[183] This she notes was an attitude faithful to Tolstoy's own interpretation of religious resurrection which she believed was to keep a mindfulness of death, as a means of following a moral path, whilst living in the present.[184] Tolstoy's rejection of an afterlife was perhaps mirrored in his novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* of 1889 which contains a character who envisages the ideal world as one where the human race will be ended.[185] This work also bears comparison with *Le Sacre* for suicide of a woman (owing to the discovery of her infidelity by her husband) and the adaptation by the Ballets Russes to the plot for the ballet *Schéhérazade* (discussed later).[186] *The Kreutzer Sonata* unsettled the writer Chekov precisely for what he read as its enactment of hatred towards women.[187]

[182] Leo Tolstoy and Louise Maude, *Resurrection* (Guildford: White Crow Books, 2010).
[183] Hudspith, p. 1066.
[184] Hudspith, p. 1056.
[185] Olga Matich, p. 6.
[186] Sofia Andreevna Tolstaia and Maureen Cote, *Sophia Tolstoy's Rebuttal of Her Husband Leo's Accusations: Who's to Blame?* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), p. 1.
[187] Tolstaiā and Cote, p. 4.

A sympathetic review of *Resurrection* in 1900 referenced the controversial reception the book received, how upon publication it had been misunderstood; as had been the case — the author believed — for many such books in which messages of morality were inscribed.[188]

Between 1892-3 Diaghilev and Tolstoy had a brief correspondence little of which is known. There is evidence that in one letter Diaghilev wrote to Tolstoy on a matter for which he sought Tolstoy's counsel and in a second letter Diaghilev declared his belief that his life's purpose was to work within the arts.[189]

The controversy with which *Resurrection* was received upon its first exposure to the public in serialised form, is unlikely to have escaped Diaghilev's notice as one who had met and admired Tolstoy. Were this so, then Diaghilev would have borne witness to Tolstoy's moral and very public resolve to use his own work to communicate his dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The social and relational interconnection between major figures in the Russian arts and intelligentsia appears logical and in tandem with emerging philosophy and patterns of social experimentation. Wealth, success and privilege may have proven a comparatively safe or permissible environment for the trial of such concepts. However, Rosanov appeared to have experienced the limits of sexual freedom through his need actively to resist the divorce laws and advocate on behalf of his unwed partner and her children. Gippius's sexual experimentation seems at once liberating in its homo- and heterosexual intent but is hobbled by its contradictory focus upon abstinence. It seems to contrast with the realised consummation of Rosanov's illicit relationship and infer a repression which alludes to a form of gendered asymmetry. An alignment in thinking between those who favoured non-procreation as an extension of abstinence is a theme which I wish to take up later. I want to consider this as an approach which flowed in opposition to the dominant discourse of the expected role of women in the reproductive process

[188] 'The Advocate of Peace (1894-1900)', *World Affairs Institute*, vol 62.no 6 (1900), 141.
[189] Scheijen, pp. 48–49.

and variations of which were shared both by Italian futurist theorists and as an idea transformed into works of art such as *Le Sacre*.

Transition and Tumult

The title and sentiment of *Resurrection* may have provided inspiration for an address which Diaghilev made in 1905. It coincided with the end of his work as editor for the arts periodical *Мир искýсства (World of Art)* 1898-1904. This was a publication to which Zanaida Gippius had been a contributor and which had also published a portrait of her by Bakst in 1900.[190] By the time it folded in 1904, Diaghilev had already begun to realise his aim as stated in one of his letters to Tolstoy, to establish himself within the arts (please also see biographical details recorded in introductory chapter).[191] Editing *World of Art* and the controversies which framed his dismissal from the Imperial Theatres, required Diaghilev's negotiation of existing and well established systems of authority. Thus his early efforts within his art circle could be identified according to his sexual and social peripherality and their psychologically dissonant conjoining to his state of privilege as an aristocrat. Diaghilev had to establish a role for himself as a non-specialist group member.[192]

World of Art's closure coincided with increasing civil unrest throughout Russia. An exhibition of Russian portraits organised by Diaghilev in 1905 would require him to travel far and wide to borrow works. One might speculate as to whether the combination of the above circumstances led to a state of personal reflection for Diaghilev where — in a public address — 'resurrection' could be co-opted as a metaphor for a peaceful national and cultural transformation?

[190] Olga Matich, pp. 173–75.
[191] Scheijen, p. 49.
[192] Benois, pp. 162–65.

The 1905 Exhibition and Speech

> …And hence, with neither fear nor doubt, I raise my glass to the ruined walls of the beautiful palaces, as I do to the new behests of the new aesthetics…[193]

In March 1905 Diaghilev gave a speech at a dinner which was held in his honour at the Metropol Hotel in Moscow (see Fig.4). He had recently curated his *Exhibition of Historic Russian Portraits* at the Tauride Palace in St Petersburg and it was to praise him for this venture and for his energetic promotion of the arts that the dinner had been hurriedly arranged. The organisation of the exhibition had involved extensive travel across provincial Russia engaging with potential patrons to facilitate loans from their collections for display. Diaghilev had visited over one hundred country estates and was able to gain the consent of five hundred and fifty lenders. [194] The exhibition which was underwritten by the Czar became Diaghilev's most successful venture whilst in Russia.[195]

The speech was published in the arts journal *Vesy (Scales).* Diaghilev's address drew upon his experiences gathering work for the exhibition during what was a period of considerable unrest in Russia. In her memoirs Bronislava Nijinska wrote of food shortages, unlit street lamps and railroad strikes which followed the Russo-Japanese war and the loss of the Eastern section of the Trans-Siberian Railroad after a treaty was signed with Japan in September 1905.[196] Nijinsky himself had been beaten with a whip and narrowly escaped injury having become accidentally caught up in a protest being violently quelled by mounted Cossacks.[197] Mirroring student meetings which ended in the dismissal of Roerich's teacher Arkhip Ivanovich Kuindzhi, a 'stormy' six hour meeting at the Imperial Theatres was held. The company demanded amongst other things the reinstatement of three teacher choreographers, a wage rise, their being consulted over the choice of régisseur, and free Saturdays. A strike was called for the matinee of *The Queen*

[193] *The Ballets Russes and Its World*, ed. by Lynn Garafola and Nancy Van Norman Baer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 69.
[194] Scheijen, p. 133.
[195] Scheijen, p. 132.
[196] Nijinska and others, p. 152.
[197] Nijinska and others, p. 152.

of Spades. Disagreements, strikes and dissent in amongst the Imperial ballet's company and student population ensued.[198] When the dancer and choreographer Sergei Legat was forced to withdraw his name from the company of other signatories resisting the theatre's management, it was rumoured to be the cause of his later suicide.[199] Mirroring the ructions the Futurists liked to instigate at political gatherings, a performance of *Lohengrin* was halted when theatre seats were torn up and thrown and swords were drawn, after an audience member shouted out 'Down with the Autocrats'. Another performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Kostchei the Immortal* was broken up by the police, some of his operas being banned by the Czar as the composer was suspected of being a 'revolutionary'.[200]

The uprisings symbolised a destabilisation in social hierarchies. According to Diaghilev's own impressions this was equally evident amongst the privileged classes. He alluded to this in his speech:

> …with the last whiff of thre summer breezes, I ended my long travels across the boundlessness of Russia. And it was precisely after these avid wanderings that I became especially convinced that the time of reckoning had come. I observed this not only in the brilliant images of our forefathers who are so obviously remote but also in their descendants, eking out the rest of their days…[201]

Diaghilev's diplomatic engagement with his fellow aristocrats to secure the loan of works for the exhibition had meant he had witnessed the ill-maintained estates once occupied by those in the portraits. Diaghilev's feeling was that not only the time of their elderly aristocratic descendants had come to pass but also for an era of feudalism and privilege to end.

[198] Nijinska and others, pp. 153–54.
[199] Nijinska and others, p. 154.
[200] Nijinska and others, p. 155.
[201] Garafola and Baer, p. 68.

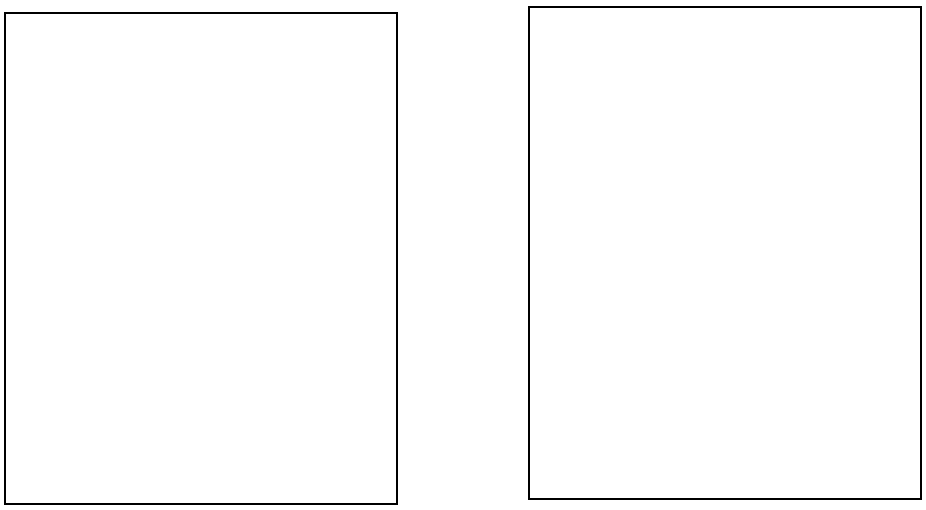

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Fig. 4

Въ Часъ Итоговъ (The Hour of Reckoning) Diaghilev's address as published in the art journal *Весы* no 4. 1905, pp 45, 46. Photographs, The Slavonic Collection, The National Library of Finland.

The dinner conversation amongst the thirty or so invited guests who paid six or seven roubles for appetizers, vodka, dinner and champagne, had often turned to Russia's political climate, the 1905 riots and the likely impact of the resulting instability upon Russia's cultural life.[202] Referring to his having been made immune to 'accusations of extreme artistic radicalism', Diaghilev aligned himself with the forces of new culture whilst anticipating that they too would disappear with the passing of time.[203]

> We must give up our lives for a resurgence of a new culture, which will take away from us the remnants of our tired wisdom…..we are witnessing the greatest historic hour of reckoning, where things are coming to an end in the name of a new, unknown culture, one which will create but which will in time also sweep us away.[204]

[202] Irina Ladygina, *I Raise My Glass: How Muscovites Feted Diaghilev in 1905* (The Tretyakov Gallery), pp. 43–49 (p. 46) <http://www.tg-m.ru/img/mag/2009/3/042-049.pdf>.
[203] Scheijen, p. 134.
[204] Scheijen, p. 134.

Diaghilev ended his speech with his glass raised in recognition of the crumbling palaces and his hope that the era's 'death would be as beautiful and as radiant as the Resurrection!'[205]

Following the success of the 1905 *Exhibition of Historic Russian Portraits*, Diaghilev secured financial backing to stage an exhibition in Paris. One of the stated aims of doing so was to bring Russian art to a Paris audience. The 1906 exhibition at the *Salon d' Automne* was a great success, establishing Diaghilev as a notable impressario and paving the way for his staging of a series of concerts of Russian music in 1907. This was followed in 1908 by the presentation of the opera *Boris Godunov* which starred the celebrated bass Feodor Ivanovich Chaliapin.[206] Following the success of this endeavour, financial backing was secured and plans made for a season of ballet in 1909.

As part of his new ballet company Diaghilev (now in his central role as chief organiser) employed professional artists and designers, many of whom had been contributors to *World of Art*.[207] These included Benois, Bakst and Roerich. When Diaghilev came to Paris with his new ballet troupe in 1909, he was accompanied by his lover and protégé the then soloist Vaslav Nijinsky. The programme included the Polovstian Dances choreographed by Mikhail Fokine from the Russian opera *Prince Igor* which (unusually) showcased male ensembles. The Ballets Russes played on delivering its uniquely Russian identity to Paris and the virile masculinity of the Tatar Warriors, in the Polovstian Dances, dancing with bow and arrow, presented a picture of Russianness which satisfied Parisian audiences' perception and expectation as to what this meant. Writer Cyril Beaumont described its 'savagery' and 'ferocity', noting how it captured the 'thrill of war-like exercises' and how when dancers performed under the direction of Adolph Bolm (1884-1951) playing the Chief , the frenzy of their dancing often led to broken weapons.[208] The success of the 1909 season brought with it a guarantee of the Ballets Russes's return for a 1910 season.

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[205] Scheijen, p. 134.
[206] Richard Buckle, *In Search of Diaghilev* (Edinburgh: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1955), p. 12.
[207] Lifar, pp. 192–93.
[208] Beaumont, pp. 103–4.

Serge Lifar, a dancer for Diaghilev and one of his biographers, wrote of his belief that programming decisions granted a similar tone to both the first 1909 and second 1910 seasons where correspondence could be drawn between the works on offer.

> The orientalism of *Cléopâtre* found its equivalent in *Schéhérazade*, the *divertissement* of *Le Festin* in *Les Orientales* … the romantic *Sylphides* in *Carnaval* while *Giselle* linked up through Théophile Gautier with *Pavillon d' Armide*.[209]

The interconnection Lifar identified above was between exoticism, (scenic) structure, emotional sensibility and the works' librettists. *Le Festin* (1909) and *Les Orientales* (1910) came together as divertissement ballets, *Les Sylphides* (1909) and *Le Carnaval* (1910) both presented no story and loose, light, romantic scenes. To this might be added the choice of Romantic composers, for both *Les Sylphides* (Chopin) and Carnaval (Schumann).

The plots of Ballets Russes productions most relevant to my argument are outlined. This is in order that can I begin to analyse their significance through drawing out for later discussion the apparent correspondence between notions of resurrection/renewal, sexuality, and elements of gender asymmetry.

Plots

Of the Chosen Maiden's sacrifice in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Robin Maconie has written:

> The theme of the *femme fatale* — subject matter ultimately dwelling on the social and personal consequences of following one's natural instincts to charm and seduce — is a romantic cliché of nineteenth century opera, whether its consequences — in retribution or betrayal — come in the form of suicide, murder, nature taking its revenge by inflicting fatal disease on the female lead, in abandonment, or in court action. …One is driven to wonder whether the conundrum for masculine composers may have been…the brutal paradox of why the female of the species was created in the first place, given that men are brutes, childbirth could be a death sentence, and syphilis was a constant risk factor in sexual relations for both sexes.[210]

The ballet narratives I am about to describe have well known scenarios. Some such as *L'Oiseu de Feu* (1910) and *Petrushka*, (1911) *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1912) are still performed today. Less well known works such as *Jeux* (1913) were documented sufficiently for

[209] Lifar, p. 240.
[210] Robin Maconie, *Experiencing Stravinsky: A Listener's Companion*, The Listener's Companion (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2013), pp. 51–52.

us to know the intention of their original creators. All are important with respect to Maconie's statement above. Of particular interest is his recognition of a pre-existing culture of negative characterisations of women in operatic narratives. The works of the Ballets Russes are rarely discussed in these terms. My listing of Ballets Russes narratives gives added meaning to the role of the woman in the 'sacrificial dance' because it shows how there were clear precedents for such characterisations, thus further contextualising *Le Sacre* within the body of Ballet Russes productions as continuation rather than rupture. To make the point more clearly, I have included a table at the end of the chapter to which the reader might refer. This will demonstrate at a glance the thematic confluence with Maconie's ideas as quoted above.

I would like to begin by returning to the ballet *Giselle*. This had long been established in the ballet repertoire since 1841 but first performed by the Ballets Russes in Paris 1910.

The story of *Giselle* is of a peasant girl who stabs herself to death on realising she has lost her lover to another.[211] In death she is resurrected by a group of women whose role it is to dance men to their deaths. Identifying her former lover as their next victim, Giselle defies them saving his life.[212] Though first premiered in 1841, the work interconnects with *Les Orientales* as it was one of the poems *Fantômes* from Victor Hugo's 1829 work which inspired *Giselle's* librettists one of whom was Théophile Gautier, to write the scenario.

In the *The Sleeping Beauty* (which premièred in 1890 at the Mariinsky theatre) the Princess Aurora is condemned to die when Carabosse, a wicked fairy, pricks her finger with a spindle. A good Lilac Fairy lessens the spell so Aurora lives, but the princess and her court are cursed to sleep for one hundred years. Aurora and her entourage are finally awakened by the love of a prince after which they both marry.[213]

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[211] Clement Crisp and Edward Thorpe, *The Colourful World of Ballet* (London; New York: Octopus Books ; Distributed in the USA by Crescent Books, 1978), p. 20.
[212] Crisp and Thorpe, p. 20.
[213] Crisp and Thorpe, p. 30.

Fig. 5

Alexandre Benois, *Le Pavillon d'Armide (Costume design for King, Queen, and Servants)* 1909, Watercolour, ink and pencil, MS Thr 414.4 (31). Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA.

In the Ballets Russes's production of *Cléopâtre* the libretto has the title figure exploit her femininity by seducing another's lover, offering her body in exchange for his drinking poison. As Garafola points out, Diaghilev adapted the plot from its St Petersburg version so Cleopatra was no longer a 'minor seductress' but instead 'an idol of perverse and deadly sexuality'.[214]

Touching upon similar themes of feminine transgression, the ballet *Schéhérazade* borrowed the music of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's score of the same title. The scenario detailed the faithlessness of a shah's harem. The Shah, on discovering his favourite Zobeide's liaison with one of his slaves (and with echoes of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*) murders her lover (the Golden Slave) and forces Zobeide to stab herself to death.[215] *Schéhérazade* was a revision by Benois and Bakst of a traditional Arabic tale *One Thousand and One Nights*.[216] In the original story, the Sultan murdered a wife per night after the consummation of the marriage. The murdering

[214] Garafola and Baer, p. 249.
[215] 'Scheherazade - Oxford Reference' <http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20111124125318456> [accessed 23 February 2017].
[216] Benois, p. 308.

ceased when the Sultan fell in love with one of the woman. This was also how Rimsky-Korsakov envisaged the libretto for his score. This ending to the story however was forgone by Benois in favour of Zobeide's murder at the work's climax. Benois wrote of it 'I do not think it necessary to justify myself from having digressed from the author's intention'.[217]

Apart from *Giselle*, a work long established in the Russian national repertoire, the works described above from the 1909 and 1910 seasons were not striking in their qualities of renewal.[218] In them however, and in particular the choices made about stories and the handling and adaptation of narratives, we might start to see an emergent theme of gender which will intersect with 'resurrection' and appear in later Ballets Russes works (in particular *Le Sacre du Printemps*) and those of the Italian Futurists.

The first performance of *L' Oiseau de Feu* took place on June 25th 1910. Those assembled backstage for the first two performances were subject to the 'poisoning' of 'the stage with the smell of stables' owing to the insistence on the part of the ballet's choreographer Michel Fokine, that two live black and white horses be employed to walk across the stage to symbolise night and day.[219] Last minute difficulties centred about the logistics of Tamara Karsavina (playing the firebird) needing to be repeatedly launched onto the stage with a wire and lighting problems which led to Diaghilev taking charge of the lighting himself.[220] The ballet was nevertheless well received and the public according to the company's régisseur, was particularly curious about Stravinsky's score.[221]

Benois who was chiefly credited with the narrative of the work, wrote in his memoirs of his wish that a ballet be created which 'should make use of really Russian—or Slav—mythology' particularly after the success of the first season[222]. Benois was convinced Russian 'ancient

[217] Benois, p. 308.
[218] *Giselle* had not been danced in France since the 1860s
[219] Grigoriev, p. 38.
[220] Grigoriev, p. 38.
[221] Grigoriev, p. 38.
[222] Benois, p. 303.

legends, folklore and fairy tales' lent themselves particularly well to 'choreographic drama' and a tale which transformed the 'hackneyed *Koniok Gorbunok'* the *Humpbacked Horse,* was considered a starting point.[223]

> By joint effort we started to search for the most suitable story, but soon came to the conclusion that no single story existed that was entirely adequate and that one would have to be created by merging several together.[224]

Benois wrote of how initially a conference which included at least six participants including the work's original composer Nikolai Nikolayevich Tcherepnin (1873 –1945) had ended without success and with Tcherepnin's departure. His replacement with Stravinsky produced a good score and a work which remained fairy tale like to Benois's disappointment.

Fig. 6

Léon Bakst, *Character portrait of Tamara Karsavina and Michel Fokine in L'Oiseau de Feu*, 1915, Watercolour and pencil, MS Thr 414.4 (13). Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA.

L' Oiseau de Feu was the story of Prince Ivan who whilst hunting, captured a firebird.[225] The struggle which ensued was choreographed by Fokine to emphasise the ballerina Tamara

[223] Benois, p. 303.
[224] Benois, p. 303.

Karsavina's ability to mimic birdlike, flitting, ephemeral qualities simulated through the lightness of dance and inflected by a classical grammar.[226] The encounter was envisaged by the ballet's designer Bakst as something far more aggressive as illustrated in the above watercolour (Fig. 6). Prince Ivan releases the firebird in exchange for a magical feather. He then encounters and falls in love with the Tsarevna, the leader of a beautiful group of young women. They become surrounded by monsters and slaves belonging to the evil Kotschei. Prince Ivan uses the feather to summon the firebird and break Kotschei's spell. She kills Kotschei and Prince Ivan and the Tsarevna marry.[227]

The next score produced by Stravinsky for the Ballets Russes was *Petrushka.* Mikhail Fokine (the established choreographer of the company's previous seven productions) choreographed *Petrushka* with Nijinsky in mind for the title role. *Petrushka's* première took place on the 13th of June 1911 at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. Stravinsky had worked previously with Fokine and Alexander Golovin, 1863-1930 (the set and costume designer) for the 1910 production of *L'Oiseu de Feu*. For *Petrushka*, the set and costume design were entrusted to Benois whose first created ballet designs for *Le Pavillon d' Armide* and *Les Sylphides* in the opening Saison Russe of 1909 and for *Giselle* in 1910.

Responsibility for *Petrushka's* scenario has over the years been disputed. However, Lifar's account, which maintains that Stravinsky had already completed an important section of the score following a meeting with Diaghilev (to accompany a scene in which Petrushka's appears in a cell) is given some credence by Benois who, having claimed that he had developed the initial concept, then returned the principal credit to Stravinsky. [228]

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[225] 'Firebird - Oxford Reference' <http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199563449.001.0001/acref-9780199563449-e-953> [accessed 23 February 2017].
[226] Beaumont, p. 96.
[227] 'Firebird - Oxford Reference'.
[228] Serge Lifar, 'The Russian Ballet 1912-1922' in *Diaghilev* (London: Putnam 1945), pp.261-315 Alexandre Benois, 'Petrouchka' in *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, (London: Putnam, 1941), pp. 323-338 (p. 333).

In contrast to *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (premiered only a year later) *Petrushka* presented a familiar dramatic narrative of love, hope and death set in the hub-bub of the mid-nineteenth-century pre-lent Maslenitsa or 'butter week' of St Petersburg.[229] The story line was as follows.

Amidst the fair's stalls, revelry and bustle, a magician emerged to enchant the crowd and to reveal from behind a curtain three life-size puppets who danced in a loose unison distinguished by the individual characteristics of each. The magician imbued the puppets with half-human qualities. Strength and impulsivity were displayed in the simplicity of the Moor whilst halting, mechanistic movements characterised the Ballerina. These was indicative of *Coppélia* (choreographed by Arthur St-Léon (1821-1870) with music by Léo Delibes (1836-1891)) created some forty years earlier for St Petersburg's Imperial Ballet.[230] Petrushka was a tragic puppet played with a heart-felt intensity by Nijinsky.[231] The ballet climaxed with a final crowd scene where all three puppets appeared in a chase beyond the puppeteer's booth. Petrushka, defeated in his love for the Ballerina, was struck down and killed by the Moor before making one last appearance resurrected in the form of a ghost atop the booth, to frighten the evil magician.[232]

The Ballerina personified by Tamara Karsavina in that first performance, was said by dance historian Lynn Garafola to embody Fokine's 'most despised' technical conventions. 'Her coy échappés and tiny hops on pointe, passés, relevés and whipping fouetté turns' all mainstays of the classical ballet form the perceived lack of authenticity from which Fokine and others were determined to rescue ballet.[233] Attention could be drawn to the wider challenges to gender asymmetry and the evolving consciousness around matters of racial hierarchy in Europe through Fokine's exaggeration of conventional characterisations and the entwinement of gendered

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[229] Richard Buckle, 'Thoughts on Alexandre Benois' in *Alexandre Benois 1870-1960* (London: Hazlitt, Gooden and Fox, 1980), p.10
[230] Crisp and Thorpe, pp. 22–23.
[231] Crisp and Thorpe, p. 45.
[232] Charles M. Joseph, *Stravinsky's Ballets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 55.
[233] Lynn Garafola, 'The Liberating Aesthetic of Michel Fokine' in *Diaghilev's Ballet Russes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 3-49 (p.37).

coquetry with racial exoticism. Audience empathy for the heartache of unrequited love could only be realised through identification with the human qualities the main protagonists (as only *half* puppet) presented. Real life in effect was only partially suspended within the auditorium; a case made more potent when Petrushka (having been murdered by the Moor) was revealed by the Magician as merely a lifeless puppet only to be resurrected in ghostly triumph at the culmination of the ballet.

Nijinsky's characterisation of the forlorn Petrushka helped affirm his status not only as a great dancer, but as one with extraordinary acting ability. The Ballets Russes's production of *L'après-midi d'un faune* would be the first choreographed by Nijinsky for the company.

In addition to his choreography, Nijinsky also played the central role of the faun when it was premièred in 1912. The work was loosely based on a poem of the same name by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and consisted of light engagement between the faun and several nymphs he has come upon. Choreographically *L'après-midi d'un faune* was very stylised with dancers being required to deliver their gestures based upon a primary, biplanal posture. Thus their lower bodies were planted feet and legs in parallel with one another whilst on another plane, the head and upper torso twisted and fixed into a different plane. The ballet was not well received and Nijinsky's choreography was thought to be an insult to Claude Debussy's music. A final masturbatory act where the faun mimes ejaculating into a scarf abandoned by one of the nymphs, was thought to be even more insulting to the national composer's name.

When describing *Jeux* Nijinsky's next choreographed work for the Ballets Russes, the dancer Lydia Sokolova stated how 'Nijinsky's idea must have been…to suggest that in the twentieth century love was just another game, like tennis'.[234] *Jeux* was a ballet which Nijinsky claimed in his diary (penned during a period when he was becoming increasingly incapacitated by ill-health) was inspired by Diaghilev's fantasy of a male *ménage et trois*. A game of tennis which he is said to have observed in London at the residence of a wealthy aristocrat is also credited with

[234] Sokolova, p. 41.

inspiring the ballet. Its contemporary costuming (landmark in the history of ballet) may have come about through Nijinsky's companionship to a Russian aristocrat and sports enthusiast, Prince Lvov. This association (according to Nijinsky's sister Bronislava Nijinska) acquainted Nijinsky with a fashionable world of wealth in which he was — at least for the time he was in a relationship with Lvov — fully participant. [235]

There was no specific plot to *Jeux*, rather a series of fleeting encounters between the three characters before they disappeared again off stage. Claude Debussy had been commissioned to write the score and the stage design by Leon Bakst was of a moonlit garden.[236] This was remarked upon by Nijinska as having swamped the characters on stage.[237] *Jeux* was hurriedly prepared and not well received.

In a remarkable letter to Debussy, Diaghilev made a suggestion which he attributed to Nijinsky, that for *Jeux*, Nijinsky dance *en pointe*. This was described in the following terms:

> As to the "style" of the ballet — NIJINSKY says that he sees above all — "*the dance*" — lots of *pointes* for all THREE. Great secret — because up till the present *never* has a man danced on toe. He would be the *first* to do so and I think it would be very elegant.[238]

Marie Rambert seems also to have witnessed this in planning. She wrote:

> It is probable that at some moment Nijinsky had the idea of doing *Jeux* on full point. He brought one day a pair of point shoes (ballet shoes with reinforced ends to the toes) and tried some exercises at the barre…if he had not found it so hard he would have made the two ballerinas dance on full point too…[239]

What emerged instead was a compromise where all three dancers wore slippers with slightly hardened toes.[240] This was described by Lydia Sokolova as 'three-quarter-point'; neither Classical — on toes — nor on demi pointe — on ball of foot — but in between.[241]

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[235] Nijinska and others, pp. 197–99.
[236] Sokolova, p. 41.
[237] Nijinska and others, p. 467.
[238] 'Letter from Diaghilev to Debussy Explaining the Concept of Jeux', in *Bonislava Nijinska Early Memoirs*, by Bronislava Nijinska, ed. by Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 468.
[239] Rambert, pp. 68–69.
[240] Sokolova, p. 41.
[241] Sokolova, p. 41.

This choice of Nijinsky's Sokolova describes as 'the novelty of *Jeux*' but also a failure in her eyes: 'It was not really very effective, as it looked as if they were trying to dance on their points and not doing it properly'.[242]

The possible significance of this level and quality of experimentation in the preparations for *Jeux* will be discussed later (please see illustration for *Jeux* below Fig . 7)

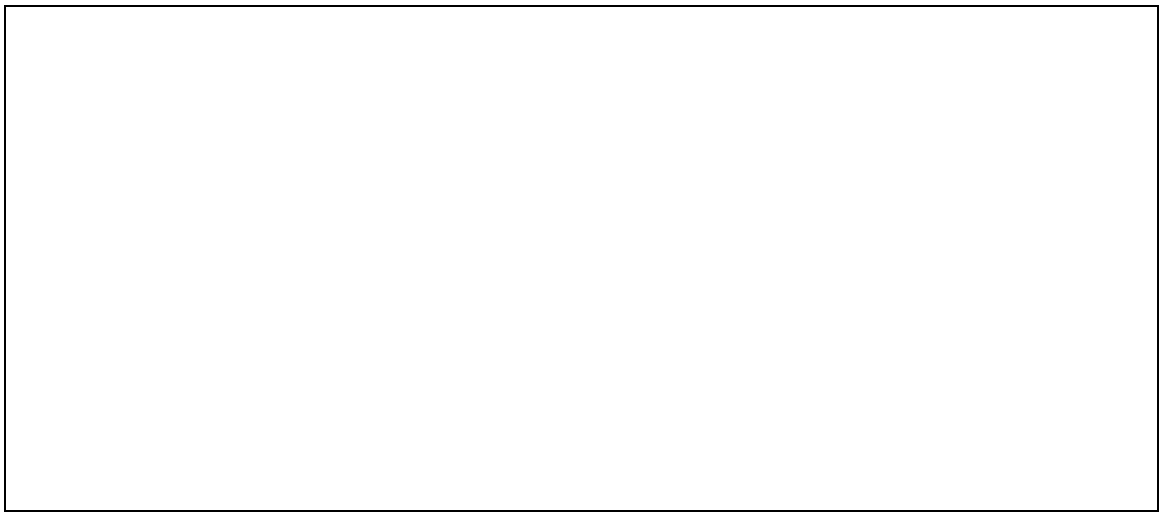

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Fig . 7
Valentine Gross, *Jeux (Scene design*), 1912, Pastel, MS Thr 861. Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA.

Stravinsky was writing *L' Oiseau de Feu* when the idea for *Le Sacre* came to him in a vision. He wrote as follows:

> One day, when I was finishing the last pages of *L' Oiseau de Feu* in St Petersburg, I had a fleeting vision which came to me as a complete surprise, my mind at the moment being full of other things. I saw in imagination a solemn pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring. Such was the theme of *Sacre du Printemps*.[243]

Stravinsky goes on to describe his collaboration with Roerich in particular because of his specialisation in 'pagan subjects' to create the work.[244] *Le Sacre* was Nijinsky's third choreographed ballet. Stravinsky's score was disquieting in its calmer passages, harmonically

[242] Sokolova, p. 41.
[243] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (Norton, 1998), p. 31.
[244] Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*, p. 31.

complex and unrelenting, vital and rhythmically driven elsewhere. The loose, episodic structure of the piece included a subsection in the first act described as 'mock abduction' (a referent to the ritual abduction and rape of women). The ballet culminated with the sacrifice through dance of a young woman as an offering to the God of Spring — an act for which there was no precedent in the ancient world and was, therefore, a contrivance on the part of the work's authors, one of whom (the designer Roerich) was 'a Member of the Archaeological Society.'[245]

We have seen how the production of works of art under scrutiny coincided with political and social turmoil in Russia, where religious and philosophical questions were being openly aired and brought directly into conflict with ruling authority. With this in mind, I now need to look in greater depth at the cluster of works listed above, so as to test the substance of these apparent traces of connectivity between the ideas identified.

Plot Analysis

Of the role of woman in the earlier ballets Garafola has written:

> …it was in her virginal, ethereal guise, ostensibly beyond class or race, that she left her deepest mark on choreography; in the "white acts" of ballets like *Giselle*, *La Bayadère*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Swan Lake*, the purity of her young womanhood was identified with an Eden of transcendent form.[246]

In contrast two interesting examples of later works described in this chapter can be argued as exemplifying an association of women with death; as a harbinger of death or being put to death *without* any form of moral or bodily resurrection. These are recognised here as *Cléopâtre* (1909) and *Schéhérazade* (1910). The woman portrayed as the deceitful Scheherazade is without redemption; (the male triumphs over evil (woman). Garafola writes of the death of the black slave in *Schéhérazade*:

> His death, which followed on the heels of a frenzied orgy, was a thrilling reminder of the wages of sexual sin at the hands of a grasping woman. As personified in Diaghilev's killer-Cleopatras, female sexuality and female power were a deadly combination. [247]

[245] Nijinska and others, p. 449.
[246] Garafola and Baer, p. 247.
[247] Garafola and Baer, p. 250.

Of *Schéhérazade* there is significance in the Ballets Russes's change to the traditional ending of the story, where the Sultan's enchantment with Scheherazade originally led to his saving lives and a restitution of his faith in womankind. The chart at the end of the chapter presents an interpretation of the function of gender within the works of the Ballets Russes and the Italian Futurists. In *L' Oiseau de Feu* the woman has magical power but, in capturing her as a bird, the Prince captures the woman *and* her power. She must bargain on his terms for her own release. The freedom to fly once again is only at the behest of a man. In the case of *L' Oiseau de Feu* the firebird's powers were contingent; free only to be exercised in the servitude of a man. A prince at that, his presence on the one hand upheld the character's mainstay within the fairy tale, ballet and mythological narratives. On the other, he stands for Russian nobility. The prince, in that mercurial world, played out a fantasy where the imbalance of power between men and women, princes and paupers was preserved in the face of serious threat to the status quo. Woman/nature were powerful but the power was only realisable at the say so of the prince who ultimately held the power of life and death. The control of freedom and bondage are made a greater point of with the contingency of the firebird's flight (elsewhere her resurrection from the ashes) and the princess being bargained for.

Petrushka is Ballets Russes' central male character who is murdered because of his *love* for a woman but who nevertheless triumphs in death. In *Le Sacre* a young girl is given the responsibility to die for the sake of the greater good. Her community can be redeemed only through her own death. As in *Schéhérazade* the woman is destroyed. In *Le Sacre* woman is acknowledged as and made central to the procreative cycle, but is destroyed in the process. The point I want to reemphasise here is that of the fabrication of a scenario where a woman's death is made necessary to the cycle of the earth's renewal. I would like to suggest that this supports those who have written about the period in terms of a deep anxiety. The employment in art of irrational and contradictory perspectives suggests a form of cognitive dissonance emblematic of an intense, repression of fear. Are such recurrent themes indicative of a widespread anxiety that

manifests itself obliquely in art in which violence is enacted as a prophylactic for fear? At this point I wish to invoke Cinzia Blum's identification of a 'fiction of power'.[248] She describes this as an 'ideological construction' prevalent throughout Marinetti's literature.[249] It supported an aggressive theoretical response to the dangers perceived as inherent in the feminine. Thus, women had to be present within works of art and literature; manufactured as symbolic foil against which the virility necessary for the resurrection of the Italian nation and male identity could be pitted. Blum distilled this idea as 'the construction of the text as a site of violence, in which women often figure as target.'[250] In the Ballets Russes one might substitute the word 'text' for 'stage' where works embodied fantasies around the destruction or denigration of women. This is justified through the woman's cruelty in *Cléopâtre,* carelessness in *Petrushka,* unreasonable/disreputable behaviour in *Schéhérazade* or, by virtue of their being born a girl, in *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Lynn Garafola has argued that Nijinsky's first ballets for the Ballets Russes were thematically erotic in nature. For Garafola *L'après-midi d'un faune* of 1912, *Jeux* of 1913 and *Le Sacre du Printemps* 1913, all embodied a form of disrupted sexual expression. She proposed that these works were an extension of Nijinsky's sexual ambiguity in that they presented the hero's eschewing of sexual entanglement with women.[251] The characters in *Jeux* were two women and a man. Nijinsky would later claim in his diary that this work was an enactment of a fantasy of a male *ménage et trois* as envisaged by Nijinsky's then lover Diaghilev, the Ballets Russes impressario. In the ballet, the three flirted with one another but this went no further. Garafola has proposed that 'In Jeux the two women engaged the young man in erotic games as provocative and potentially dangerous as those of *Schéhérazade*'.[252] In *Le Sacre du Printemps*, the

[248] Cinzia Blum, 'Rhetorical Strategies and Gender in Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto', *Italica*, 67.2 (1990), 196–211 (p. 198) <https://doi.org/10.2307/478592>.
[249] Blum, p. 198.
[250] Blum, p. 202.
[251] Garafola and Baer, p. 255.
[252] Garafola and Baer, p. 255.

sacrifice of a young girl was not rooted in any true archaeological precedent, but instead was more plausibly 'a creation of twentieth-century male sexual anxiety'. [253]

The role of women in *L'après-midi d'un faune* was not only a triumph over woman through resistance to her seduction as suggested by Garafola, but if reapplied, also a triumph of an important idea in Futurist theory. This held that submission to women's charm was emasculating. It should be mentioned here that the metaphorical use of 'women' to explain what Futurists had declared they were not (i.e. romantic, sentimental and contemplative) was a strategy which they would use repeatedly.[254] For example, women were referred to in these terms in Futurist literature/manifestoes such as *Let's Murder the Moonlight!* (1909) *Futurist Speech to the English* (1910) *Contempt for Women* (1911) and *We Abjure Our Symbolist Masters* (1911).[255]

The Faun's masturbatory act and its startling appearance within the ballet's plot is Futurist in its sensation-provoking qualities, but more so in its implications of both a retained male potency — through Garafola's idea about resistance to consummation — and contradictorily through the power that women possess as shown through the faun's helpless incontinence in the face of sexual excitement.[256] This resistance, like the Futurist fantasy of reproduction without the aid of women, could be interpreted as an enactment of absolute masculine power. These fantasies however, place Marinetti in denial as being himself one of the 'miserable sons of the vulva'.[257]

In her 2015 study of Rodin's sculpture of Balzac, Claudine Mitchell argued the significance of the distended belly of Rodin's commemorative figure. This she suggested was redolent of the alignment which could be made between the act of artistic creativity and the symbolism of the pregnant body in its state of procreative imminence.[258] Over this 'creativity –

[253] Garafola, p. 72.
[254] Blum, p. 198.
[255] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman.
[256] Garafola, p. 63.
[257] Marinetti, Cox, and Diethe, p. 3.
[258] Claudine Mitchell, Lecture 'Beneath the Gown of Balzac' (University of Leeds, 2015).

procreativity metaphor' might be superimposed the suggestion of reproductive envy in recognition of the role the woman plays in the prolonged period of incubation and the act of giving birth of which man is incapable.

Resistance to womankind in another ballet *Narcisse* (1911) might again be thought of as a metaphor for the withholding of consummation or even the frustrations of living a homosexual life in Europe at the start of the twentieth century. [259]However, this ballet was an adaptation of a Greek myth. This raises the question, if a ballet is an adaptation of a classical tale, is it possible to make any suppositions about its thematic alignment with other works which appear to use similar ideas? *Schéhérazade* (1910) is another example of a work which had precedent in ancient culture. Are ballets based on original themes less significant in making an argument for an interconnection between works? How well can one truly draw any accurate inference around the choice of theme, from the closeness the above works had to one another or from the cultural climate from which they emerged?

Ballets Russes' productions embodied a span of Russian art practices identified by historians as roughly starting with Symbolism in the 1900s and extending as far as Constructivism in the 1920s.[260] Diaghilev had been an early advocate of Symbolism which defied the then dominance of realism across the arts and instead promoted manifestations of the inner, subjective world of the artist. [261] Symbolism and the femme fatale became a marker of many of its narratives.[262] This contextualises the ballet plots identified according to their approximate correlation with resistance to the womens' movement around the period under discussion

[259] To Garafola's proposition that Nijinsky's fetishistic ejaculation into the nymph's scarf in *L'après-midi d'un faune* 'symbolizes his triumph over the snares of Woman' might be added *Narcisse*. Garafola, p. 57. This ballet premiered April 1911. In this story, the vain youth Narcisse rejects the love of Echo. He is punished by the Gods who condemn him to a life of unrequited love. Narcisse falls in love with his own reflection in a 'crystal pool' and dies in his unfulfilled state.
[260] John E. Bowlt, *Moscow and St.Petersburg in Russia's Silver Age: 1900 - 1920* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2008), p. 242.
[261] Garafola and Baer, pp. 71–72.
[262] Bowlt, p. 67.

(examined later in this chapter). The identification of the femme fatale as a feature of Symbolism gives context to works such as Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in its similarity to characterisations of women in the works discussed here. However as an explanation for the persistence of the destructive female character, it falls foul of the quick abandonment of or overlap between trends across different art movements.

Garafola has described Ballets Russes' 'larger aesthetic project' as a 'dialectic of rupture and return to the classical past'. She believes this was still possible, even whilst they bore simultaneous responsibility as vanguards of ballet culture; what she terms as 'ballet modernism'.[263] Diaghilev's having once stated, 'To go forward we can't pin all our well-being on the new' would appear to support this.[264] The interspersing of mid-nineteenth-century ballets with brand new works and the use of language from ancient mythology in Futurist manifestos might be argued as a strategic ploy. It seems obvious that to present new ideas to a public well versed in melodramatic plays or stories of from classical Greece, would require some tempering of communication. Such an adjustment could be achieved if the familiar could be recognised in amongst the avant-garde. Added to this, the Ballets Russes was dependent upon wealthy sponsors and audiences willing to pay for the price of a theatre seat to finance the company's productions. I would argue that it is the chosen stories' adaptability into a topical narrative, its presentation into a receptive cultural climate which could resonate with contemporary audiences, plus its location within a body of similar narratives, which suggests a significant pattern of interconnection (please see table at the end of the chapter) in this instance, with a thematic past and its adaptation for practical financial purposes, to the tastes of a contemporary audience.

Futurism and the Future

[263] Garafola, p. 51.
[264] Sergei Diaghilev letter to Von Meck, 9 January 1900. in Scheijen, p. 5.

Whether this was the original intention of the creators or otherwise, the architecture about which *Le Sacre du Printemps* was constructed, has been identified by historians Joan Acocella, Lynn Garafola and Jonnie Greene as a set of confluent 'ideas' namely being 'primitivism', 'biologism', 'sacrifice', 'scandal' and 'apocalypticism'.[265] They have argued that these have served to embed the work's status in cultural history long after the loss of the original choreography and in a manner which allowed for readaptation of new choreographies to the existing score.[266] Italian Futurists engineered their own set of ideas which were publicly declared in their first manifesto *Il Futurisme* in 1909 and which they hoped would assert their group identity and shared vision.[267] The work was widely circulated, but condemned by many who raised objections to its violent, militaristic tone.[268]

In *Il Futurisme*, the story of the movement's birth was told amidst gusts of poetically inflected aggrandisement. It was held together with a narrative which drew upon ancient mythology to make a point about Italy's potential for national revival. Given Apollinaire's identification of the Futurists as group who suppressed history for the sake of art, this is all the more ironic.[269] However, its function can be brought into sharper focus when placed alongside Diaghilev's 1905 speech. In the manifesto Marinetti wrote,

> Then the silence grew more gloomy. But as we were listening to the attenuated murmur of prayers muttered by the old canal and the bones of ailing palaces creaking above their beards of damp moss, suddenly we heard the famished automobiles roaring beneath the windows. [270]

The ailing palace was again a helpful analogy for a state of transition from old to new. In spite of displaying shades of similarity with the hoped for cultural resurrection expressed at the

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[265] Acocella, Joan, Lynn Garafola and Jonnie Greene, '"The Rite of Spring Considered as a Nineteenth-Century Ballet" and "Catalogue Raisonné",' *Ballet Review*, 20.2 (1992), pp. 68–71.
[266] Acocella, Joan, Lynn Garafola and Jonnie Greene, p. 71.
[267] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 49–53.
[268] 'Marjorie Perloff » First Futurist Manifesto Revisited', p. 1 <http://marjorieperloff.com/stein-duchamp-picasso/marinetti-revisited/> [accessed 5 July 2015].
[269] R.W. Flint, p. 8.
[270] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 49.

culmination of Diaghilev's speech, the Futurist tone was more of overthrow and revolution. Where references to national and cultural social hierarchy were at times wistful in Diaghilev's speech the Futurist championed an aggressive seizure of the new, at the expense of an obsolete past.

Then following these lines closely, the language of the manifesto reformed around an entanglement of women, death, birth and resurrection. Having buried the classical past Marinetti immediately resurrected it in the very next sentence making it current, alive and integral to the Futurist plan,

> "Let's go!" I said "Let's go my friends! Let's leave! At last mythology and the mystical ideal have been superseded. We are about to witness the birth of the Centaur, and soon we shall see the first Angels fly!" [271]

It is here that we must refer back to classical mythology (as a popular, reusable ideology amongst contemporary artists) to understand the role of the centaurs, and why they may have been recalled in service of the Futurist vision. In Greek mythology, the centaurs were half men/half horse. This presentation was often given as a reason for their wild behaviour. The centaurs were beastlike and as such were prey to drunkenness and lust.[272] According to myth, an attempt to abduct the bride of Pirithous resulted in a centauromachy (a battle of the centaurs) and their defeat after which they were driven from Mount Pelion.[273]

The earthiness of Marinetti's rebirth of the centaur is instantly interwoven with images of celestiality but the centaurs' resurrection is in no way benign. As Laurence Marqueste's marble *Centaur Raping a Nymph* attests, the centaurs were defined by their violence towards women (see Fig. 8).

> "We have to shake the doors of life to test their hinges and bolts!...Let's leave! Look! There, on the earth, the earliest dawn! Nothing can catch the splendour of the sun's red sword, skirmishing for the first time with our thousand year old shadows." [274]

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[271] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 49.
[272] 'Centaur | Greek Mythology', *Encyclopedia Britannica* <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102035/Centaur> [accessed 18 May 2015].
[273] 'Centaur | Greek Mythology'.
[274] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 49.

With these words, Marinetti envisions his new world; the defences of which must be broken beyond. From the scything through of this world's 'thousand year old shadows' with the sunrise's red sword, he resurrected the conquered, raping, centaurs. The language of violent assault is unmistakable. Then woman was invoked as seducer; a 'snorting beasts' whose breasts they caressed. Corpse-like, Marinetti lay across this machine before being revivified by the threat to his stomach. What from? From 'a guillotine blade' or rather, the steering wheel of the car.[275]

Fig. 8
Laurence Marqueste, *Centaur Raping a Nymph*, 1892, Marble, Tuileries Gardens, Paris, France.

An enlivening smell 'enough for our beasts!' then had them tearing through the streets in the motor car, hunting like 'young lions'. But then a more regretful note; there is no 'ideal Beloved'… 'nor a cruel Queen' to whom their corpses might be offered.[276] No reason for death — he concluded — save to be relieved of the weight of their own courage. In *Il Futurisme,* Death

[275] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 49.
[276] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 50.

is the Beloved and Queen for she was then tamed, merely offering a hand at their brushes with danger and giving only 'velvety and tender looks from every puddle'.[277]

Then the world was as a breast being both a feeder before which the Futurists would impulsively throw themselves and a teat through which they would nourish the world. A sudden crash! Into two cyclists. 'Oh maternal ditch, nearly full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your bracing slime, which reminded me of the sacred black breast of my Sudanese nurse!'[278]

The above paragraph demonstrates both reliance on woman and at the same time a disgust with such a reliance. A boy child after all depends on the breast milk of a woman as much as a girl child.

Marinetti arose from the ditch, filthy and himself penetrated through the heart by a 'red hot iron of joy'. The motor car, hauled like a gigantic 'shark' from its waters was feared dead by the assembled crowd but awoke with 'one caress'.[279]

Cast amidst the backdrop of their idealised world, Futurist manifestoes emerged within a context of social and political changes which were challenging the then role of women in European society. For the Futurists, women could be used as a metaphor for an effeminised society lacking in the fortitude to carry Italy forward into the next century. In Futurist manifestoes, 'woman' was often a metaphor for passivity, contemplation, inertia and romanticism. Many of the qualities with which the Futurists negatively identified as art having become suffused, were thus given association with women.

Tension as Inconsistency

As has been mentioned above, Futurist attitudes to women whilst frequently negative were also contradictory. Carol Diethe writing in 1997 in the *Translator's Introduction* to Marinetti's 1910 novel *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel* wrote how:

[277] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 50.
[278] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 50.
[279] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 50.

> Notwithstanding his personal respect for the role of the mother in family life, Marinetti elsewhere attacked chauvinist family values by his proposal to destroy 'the ownership of women' in effect advocating free love, yet he denied women the right to work, which feminists in Europe had come to see as the principal route to equality. The Futurist programme itself thus contained inbuilt inconsistencies in its attitude to women.[280]

However, his manifesto *Contempt for Women* of 1911 was uncompromising in its negative attitude towards women aspiring to get the vote. Yet Marinetti stated how the Futurists lent their support to women's right to vote, not, however, because he believed that emancipated women would benefit the whole of society. He claimed instead that the vote would see women's accession into what he saw as the redundant system of Parliamentarianism. In a paradoxical move, Marinetti declared:

> …we most enthusiastically defend the rights of the suffragettes, at the same time that we regret their infantile enthusiasm for the miserable, ridiculous right to vote. For we are convinced that they will seize the right to vote with fervour, and thus involuntarily help us to destroy that grand foolishness, made up of corruption and banality, to which parliamentarianism has been reduced.[281]

In this manifesto, Marinetti told the public that what was feared in an all-women parliament was their dragging society through '…paths of pacifism and Tolstoyan cowardice…'.[282] Marinetti defended his stance and continued by outlining his belief in feminism's inevitable destruction of the 'principle of the family'. This he believed to be an objection which those opposed to emancipation would feel justified in protesting.[283] He reasserted his defence of women's suffrage by declaring the Italian Futurists view that:

> *…if the family should disappear, we could try to do without it. "We", I was just saying, but obviously I am mistaken: it will be our children — the children we will not have — they will know very well how to do without the family. And I should add parenthetically, that we are such fighters that we won't have children…* [my italics].[284]

[280] Marinetti, Cox, and Diethe, p. xiv. Here Diethe quotes from Marinetti's manifesto 'Against *Amore* and Parliamentarianism' in War the World's Only Hygiene, 1915.
[281] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 87.
[282] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 88.
[283] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 85.
[284] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 89.

If we once again acknowledge the poetic, contradictory and even humorous elements of the above statement (NB Marinetti would have three children, all of them girls) then we might notice again the feminisation of and objection to Tolstoy and a strident opposition (at least in theoretical/metaphorical form) to the idea of traditional life and procreation.

The briefest of surveys into the range of cartoons illustrated in *Punch, or the London Charivari* of 1913 referring to the suspicion of the presence of a suffragette or suffragette violence, is striking in its multitude. The illustrations below are but a few instances of those published in 1913. The first three cartoons are from the January to June volume of *Punch*.[285] The second three were published in the June to December edition.[286]

Fig. 9
L. Raven-Hill, *The Suspect,* published in *Punch or the London Charivari* February 12, 1913, London

[285] I counted fourteen cartoons referring to militant suffragetism in this volume alone and Ballets Russes cartoons featured in both volumes. *Punch, or the London Charivari*, January-June, 2 vols (London: Punch Offices, 1913), CXLIV.
[286] *Punch, or the London Charivari*, July-December, 2 vols (London, 1913), CXLV.

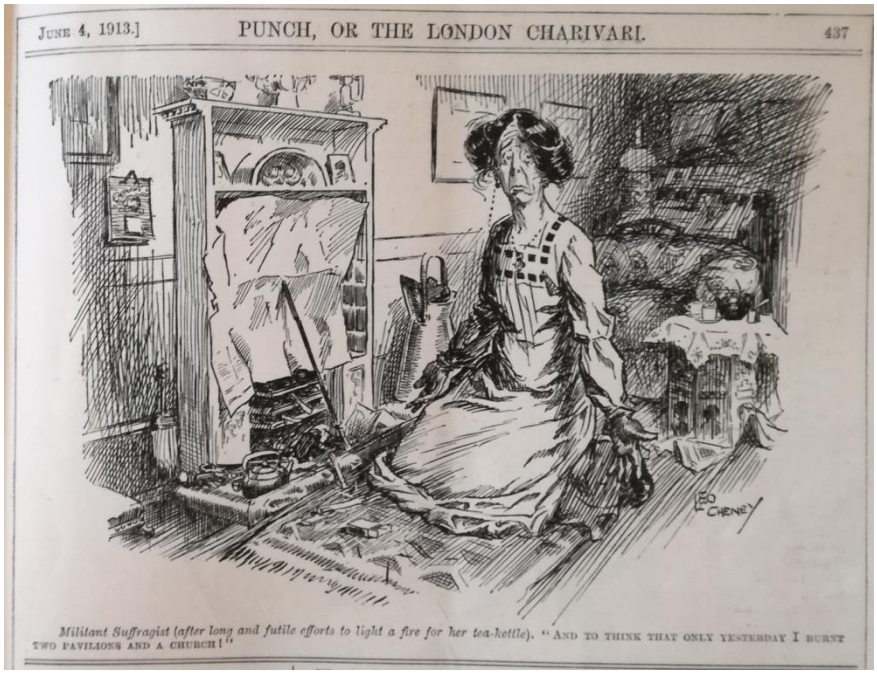

Fig. 10
Leo Cheney, untitled cartoon, published in *Punch or the London Charivari* June 4, 1913, London

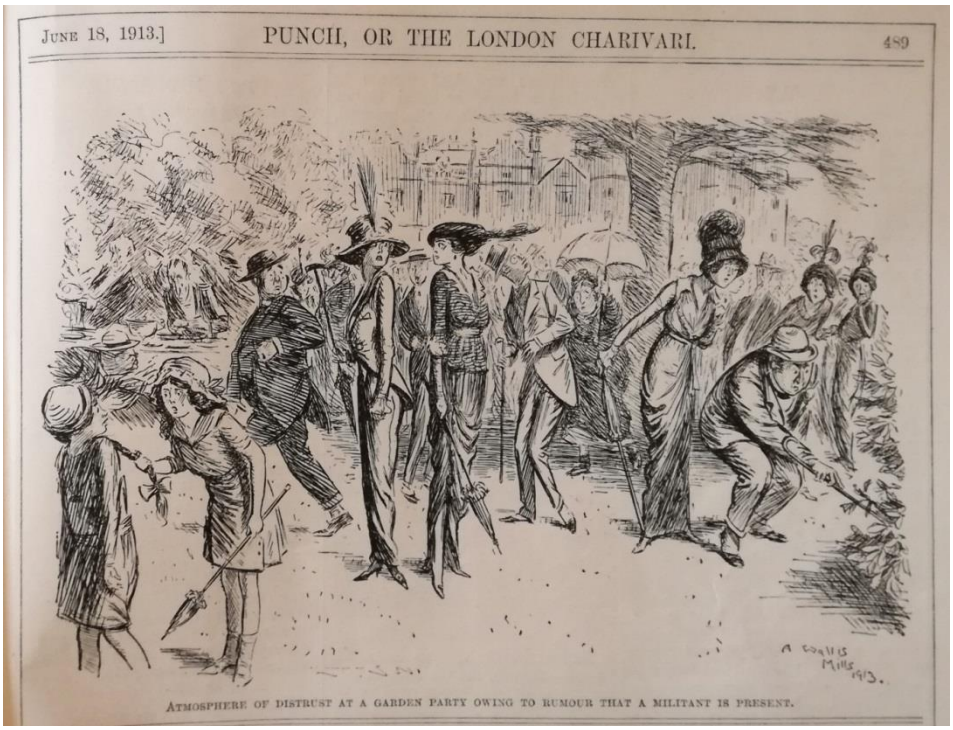

Fig. 11
A.Wallis Mills, untitled cartoon, *Punch or the London Charivari* June 18, 1913, London

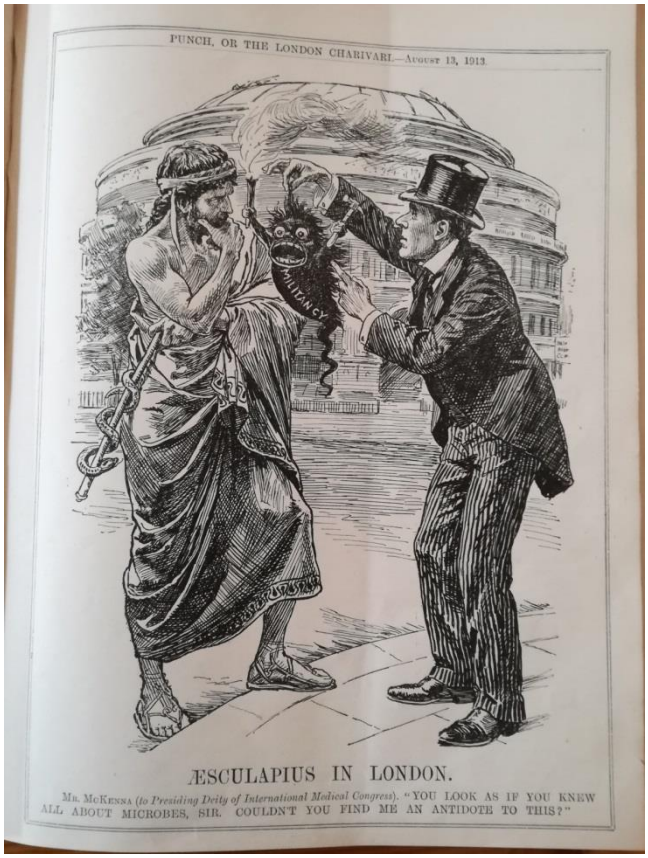

Fig. 12
Bernard Partridge, *The Aesculapius in London*, published in *Punch or the London Charivari* August 13, 1913, London

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Fig. 13
George Morrow, *The Spread of Tango*, published in *Punch or the London Charivari* November 26, 1913, London

Fig. 14
Bernard Partridge, detail of *Mr Punch's Russian Ballet*, published in *Punch or the London Charivari* December 24, 1913, London

It is quite apparent, not just from the prevalence of cartoons, but the detailed nature of the commentary accompanying the illustrations in *Punch,* how pressing women's militancy was as a national concern in the United Kingdom in 1913.

In the preface to *Mafarka the Futurist* (a novel whose first chapter is entitled 'The Rape of the Negresses') Marinetti wrote of *Contempt for Women* in the following terms:

> When I told them 'Scorn Women!' they all hurled foul abuse at me like brothel-keepers after a police raid! And yet it isn't woman's animal value that I am talking about, but her sentimental importance.[287]

In her analysis of the Vorticism, women artists and the suffragette movement, art historian Katy Deepwell, explains how the suffragette Margaret Wynne Jones Nevinson published an article which criticised Marinetti in the *The Vote* in December 1910 and in the

[287] Marinetti, Cox, and Diethe, pp. 1, 2.

newspaper of the *Women's Freedom League*.[288] Nevinson had invited Marinetti to speak at the Lyceum club (*Futurist Speech to the English*, 1910). Deepwell states how, whilst there was agreement between Marinetti and Nevinson about the 'existence of the serpent-of-the-Nile type of woman', Nevinson was clear in her understanding that Marinetti supported the suffragettes' *militancy* and not their end goal.[289] This was consistent with Marinetti having marched with the suffragettes in London as part of their window smashing campaign in 1912.[290] In her autobiography *Life's Fistful Fever* (1926) she wrote of Marinetti:

> I found him a very stimulating companion and greatly enjoyed his brilliant conversation. He admired English women, sympathizing with our fight for freedom and political rights, and our disregard for convention and public opinion; his approval naturally went to the extreme left of the militant movement.[291]

Women, Sexuality and Masculinity

Homosexuality

The lifetime of the figures I have so far discussed, spanned significant changes in attitudes towards gender and sexuality. As Elaine Showalter has written, the late nineteenth-century was the period in which 'both the words "feminism" and "homosexuality" first came into use.'[292] With this in mind, I would like to sketch out the broader context into which the creators' of the works under scrutiny were operating. This necessarily touches upon philosophical discourse, social conventions, class affiliations, and the variable political climate and judiciary across Europe. These are the conditions which would shape social attitudes and — as a consequence — aesthetic decision making.

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[288] Günter Berghaus and Mariana Aguirre, *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies. Volume 5, 2015, Volume 5, 2015,* 2015, p. 30 <http://lib.myilibrary.com?id=808075> [accessed 29 March 2016].
[289] Berghaus and Aguirre, p. 30.
[290] Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 101.
[291] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 514.
[292] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*, New Ed edition (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 3.

The musicologist Richard Taruskin researched the extent to which gender and homosexuality shaped the language of critical responses to Tchaikovsky's work. When Tchaikovsky died — whose lifetime had spanned 1840-1893 — his death was subject to considerable speculation around his sexuality. [293] Taruskin has suggested that the interchangeability between male homosexual and aristocratic culture provided a tolerant milieu for attitudes towards homosexuality in Russia. [294] He also believes that the society into which Tchaikovsky was received — one which recognised his international standing with awards and accolades — was not one which viewed homosexuality as a matter which overwhelmingly defined one's character. [295] This would remain the case up *until* the trial of Oscar Wilde when new pathologising and 'essentialising' beliefs about homosexuality began to take hold.[296] Of this perceived threat to the status quo, Matich has suggested that 'Homosexuality displaced nature's law of perpetuating the species and subverted patriarchal gender restrictions.' [297]

In Europe at the start of the twentieth century, assumptions around the roles ascribed men and women according to their gender and sexuality were being questioned in closer detail.[298] Public discourse in Western Europe crystallised around the trial and prosecution of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) for his homosexuality (a crime in 1895).[299] Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labour for 'gross indecency with other male persons.'[300] Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, debates were triggered by an increasingly militant campaign fought by women for universal suffrage, and the figure of the New Woman (a character fictionalisation comprising the elements in women challenging the established boundaries of feminine identity) became the source of

[293] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, pp. 76, 77, 81, 82.
[294] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, p. 79.
[295] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, pp. 79–81.
[296] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, p. 82.
[297] Olga Matich, p. 8.
[298] Showalter, p. 9.
[299] Showalter, p. 171.
[300] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, p. 81.

theatrical productions and provoked critical comment in the media. [301] In Russia, discussions about sex in relation to religion were being aired with greater intensity.[302] Those like Diaghilev who were initially on the periphery of the Russian intelligentsia, were exposed to new debates around the role of religion and family. These were being publicly explored through the medium of religious and philosophical meetings which permitted fresh discussion around the function of religion and sexuality in family life between the years 1901 and 1903 in St Petersburg — until their ultimate censure by the ruling authorities in 1903.[303] These meetings, at which Gippius and Merezhkovsky were central figures, were attended by Diaghilev's stepmother Elena Diaghilev and her nephew Dmitri Filosofov who brought along his cousin and sometime lover Diaghilev.[304] Another element which has been identified as being incorporated into contemporary discourse was a tendency towards masculinisation which might be said to be embodied in such works as Marinetti's *Mafarka the Futurist* (1910).

As already described, the documented elements of *Jeux's* conception revealed the extent to which audience acceptability informed decisions about experimentation and the work's ultimate presentation on the stage. The decision having been made not to have Nijinsky dance *en pointe*, still raises many questions, not least about its having been considered in the first place. It was easy for discourse about any small advances which had been made to prejudice perceptions of women's power beyond the political sphere. For example, ballet at the beginning of the 20th century was numerically dominated by women but administratively remained with the male directors of specialist academies, choreographers, impresarios and designers. A gender imbalance in women's favour might be better recognised with respect to the traditional grammar of classical ballet. This favoured a standard arrangement showcasing a *corps de ballet* (or main body of the company) comprised of women alongside small ensemble pieces and feats of solo virtuosity

[301] Showalter, pp. 38–58.
[302] Olga Matich, p. 224.
[303] Olga Matich, pp. 212–13.
[304] Olga Matich, p. 219.

performed by principal dancers or ballerinas. The Ballets Russes altered this apparent balance of power in ballet. Women ensembles also featured in the opera *Prince Igor* but it was the Polovstian Dances performed by men (as described above) which gained the most critical attention.[305] Nijinsky's extraordinary acting ability and physical prowess in solo roles choreographed specifically for him, changed attitudes about how ballet might be presented. Giving this a broader contextualisation, Garafola has written:

> Diaghilev's dethronement of the ballerina was reflected not only in the diminished importance and overt misogyny of many female roles but also in the progressive devaluation of pointe work.[306]

Might the possibility of Nijinsky performing *en pointe* be a way of finding a form through which a feminised male body could be openly displayed without censure? Garafola has written of Nijinsky's performance that in his case:

> …the body was progressively feminized. Released from the decorum of conventional masculinity, it openly displayed its erotic attributes — a pliant, supple middle, soft, embracing arms, eyes lengthened and darkened with liner.[307]

In contrast *Jeux* stylistically defied the fluid movements of classical ballet through its angularity and would have de-feminised and diminished the prominence of elements associated with women in ballet, had pointe shoes been used by the characterisations of both men and women. A man dancing on points equally suggests the feminisation of the male body but also contradictorily the masculinisation (through the notion of appropriation and domination) of a style traditionally (and crucially solely) presented as feminine. Here, where it would seem that Nijinsky's choreography might suggest in the viewer a sense of the ambiguity of the sexes, we might consider Marinetti's own ideas about Nijinsky whose work he interpreted as distinctly masculine.

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[305] Garafola has written of how '…from the first the Diaghilev company privileged men, built upon the male presence, created ballets with male starts, and provided a different viewing experience for the audience, infecting spectators with the unfamiliar thrill of testosterone.' Garafola, pp. 34–35.
[306] Garafola and Baer, p. 252.
[307] Garafola and Baer, p. 263.

Can we imagine that it is where material might be interpreted as resonating with the masculinisation of the Polovstian Dances from *Prince Igor* or the striking presence of the male soloist in the Ballets Russes early seasons, that the emergent patterns which are above being identified can be intersected? Assuming the idea in *Jeux* for Nijinsky to have danced *en pointe* were to have gained approval, one could conjecture about any number of possible responses from critics and audiences. The information we have however needs restating for interpretive evaluation. Diaghilev and Nijinsky could not be open about any kind of queer relationship. Diaghilev is known to have been treated at the sanatorium of Baron Richard von Krafft-Ebing in Graz in 1902.[308] Sjeng Scheijen has suggested that it is here that Diaghilev may have come to terms with his sexuality, Krafft-Ebing's pathologisation of homosexuality having disrupted the established assumptions of its being psychological or immoral in essence.[309]

Diaghilev's motivation for being involved in the ballet came about from his association with the artists Benois and his enthusiasm for the genre. [310] It was also said to be — according to the dancer and choreographer George Balanchine — sexual in nature. [311] Charles Joseph's research into the working relationships between Stravinsky and the choreographer George Balanchine has identified Stravinsky's belief that Diaghilev's decision making was defined according to his sexuality. [312] Stravinsky also reported evidence of misogyny, with his observation of Diaghilev having frequently remarked that Nijinska would have been a great choreographer had she only been a male.[313] Balanchine himself is quoted as having been told by Diaghilev of the dancer Alexandra Danilova rehearsing for the ballet *Apollon Musagète* that 'her tits make me

[308] Scheijen, p. 121.
[309] Scheijen, pp. 121–22.
[310] Benois, p. 167.
[311] Charles M. Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine: A Journey of Invention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 52.
[312] Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, p. 52,53.
[313] Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, p. 53.

want to vomit' and being critical of Balanchine's own sexuality, referring to it as a 'morbid interest in women'. [314]

There was a suggestion by Lifar of an aversion to women following Diaghilev's contraction of venereal disease from a woman prostitute in his youth. Lifar — quoting Tolstoy also suggested how the disillusionment of such youthful liaisons could provoke 'eternal disgust'.[315] Even Lifar suggests however the possibility of Diaghilev loving and being rebuffed by a woman.[316] A similar counter argument makes the point that Diaghilev had close and enduring friendships with women throughout his life.[317] In discussing Diaghilev's sexuality, Arnold Haskell similarly wrote of his closeness to women friends and the care with which he valued their opinions. He also importantly mentions a link between sexual preference and directorial decisions which may have impacted on performances,

> In his actual choice of women dancers it gave him a taste for the slimmer and more boyishly built. He disliked the severely classical tutu that revealed a large expanse of thigh…[318]

Clarifying the nuances of Diaghilev's aesthetic response to sexuality and the male roles he elevated in founding the 'ballerino', Garafola writes:

> Obviously, women and heterosexual men were at a disadvantage. They might work for him, but they would never be his intimates; and although he might guide them, he would never fashion the company in their image or make them the instruments of his imagination.[319]

In Britain, the emergence of a modern male homosexual identity was reinforced through the publicity which accompanied the trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895.[320] A letter from Wilde to his publisher Leo Smithers records Wilde and Diaghilev having met when

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[314] George Balanchine from Robert Craft, *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 2:43n55. Quoted in Joseph, *Stravinsky & Balanchine*, p. 52.
[315] Lifar, pp. 31, 32.
[316] Lifar, p. 32.
[317] Scheijen, p. 30.
[318] Arnold Lionel Haskell and Walter Nouvel, *Diaghileff; His Artistic and Private Life: In Collaboration with Walter Nouvel* (V. Gollancz, 1947), p. 62.
[319] Garafola and Baer, p. 262.
[320] Showalter, p. 3.

Diaghilev wished to purchase works of the recently deceased illustrator Aubrey Beardsley and hoped that Wilde's contacts might help facilitate this.[321] Sjeng Scheijen has suggested that in the same vein as Oscar Wilde's high profile made his trial remarkable, Diaghilev ran a particular risk of being made an example of by the Russian authorities.[322] To this end, Scheijen remarks that, whilst there existed a degree of tolerance of homosexuality amidst the higher ranks of tsarist society, homosexuality remained a crime and convictions were not unknown.[323]

In his *Futurist Speech to the English* during a visit in 1910, Marinetti asked his audience to remember their 'dismal, ridiculous condemnation of Oscar Wilde'.[324] He stated his belief that men's homosexuality during periods in their lives was 'absolutely respectable'. Marinetti thought that such hypocrisy encouraged women's behaviour to be 'audaciously lascivious' in courtship and more importantly, that close sexual relationships between men were intensified by the camaraderie of sporting and athletic endeavour in youth.[325] Matching the cult of youth which spawned such works as the *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), (a work which was used in the trial as evidence against Wilde of his homosexuality) *Il Futurisme* forecast the Futurists' own aged obsolescence, hailing their intention to stand aside in readiness for supplantation by youthful successors and placing the manifesto alongside *Le Sacre*, significantly through its narrative impulse towards perpetual renewal. [326]

Marinetti's opinions on homoerotic culture seem to reflect both the shifting boundaries of sexuality redolent of the questions being raised at the *fin-de-siècle* and might also be considered significant through its having been delivered in the same year as the publication of the novel *Mafarka the Futurist* .[327]

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[321] Scheijen, p. 83.
[322] There is evidence of Diaghilev's cruising for casual sex in the Tauride Gardens. This was recorded in the diaries of poet and composer Mikhail Kuzmin. Scheijen, pp. 145–46.
[323] Scheijen, p. 144.
[324] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 72.
[325] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 72.
[326] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 53.
[327] Marinetti, Cox, and Diethe.

The closeness between homoeroticism, misogyny and homosexuality has been remarked upon with respect to Futurist work. For example, Barbara Spackman has drawn our attention to the disguising of homoeroticism in Marinetti's novel *Mafarka the Futurist* where a kiss between a male mother and son is obscured beneath the pall of familial relations.[328] But unlike *Jeux* the conflict came not between overt or covert homosexual expression before an unsympathetic public, but across the subtler lines which divided the preference of a male for other masculine company, of homosexual relations between men and the exclusion of women from male social 'club' circles.[329] This puts *Mafarka* on a trajectory with Garafola's withholding of sexual conjugation in the ballets of Nijinsky through its equivalent fantasy of an imagined redundancy of the women's role in the procreative cycle.

[328] Barbara Spackman, 'Mafarka and Son: Marinetti's Homophobic Economics', *Modernism/Modernity*, 1.3 (1994), 89–107 (p. 96) <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.1994.0064>.
[329] Blum, pp. 199–200.

Masculinisations

In his *Manifesto of Futurist Dance* July 8th 1917, Marinetti praised Nijinsky's choreographic style for its originality, formal angularity and specifically its masculinity.[330] Futurist dance would be 'anti-harmonic' and 'anti-gracious' and possess titles such as 'shrapnel dance' and 'the Machine-gun Dance'. The dancers described in Marinetti's manifesto were women. As with Marinetti's admiration for Nijinsky's 'pure geometry…without sexual stimulation' man would here be liberated from sentimentality and the disempowering charms of woman, to use her in objectified form.[331] Thus, in Marinetti's 'Machine-Gun Dance', her body is his weapon with which to tap out rapid-fire discharge with her feet becoming inadvertently a possible symbol, not of passivity but in this instance of violent and colonising domination.[332] As with *Il Futurisme*, the 'voice' of the woman is given an androgenised treatment which alters 'her' subjectivity so that 'grace' assumed here as feminine, is the corrupting, undesirable, state of movement whilst paradoxically woman remains the chosen form through which the Futurist, *masculinised*, dance must be expressed.

[330] L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman (eds), F.T. Marinetti *Futurism*, (Yale, 2009), pp. 234-239.
[331] Marinetti, 'Manifesto of Futurist Dance', p. 235.
[332] Marinetti, 'Manifesto of Futurist Dance', p. 238.

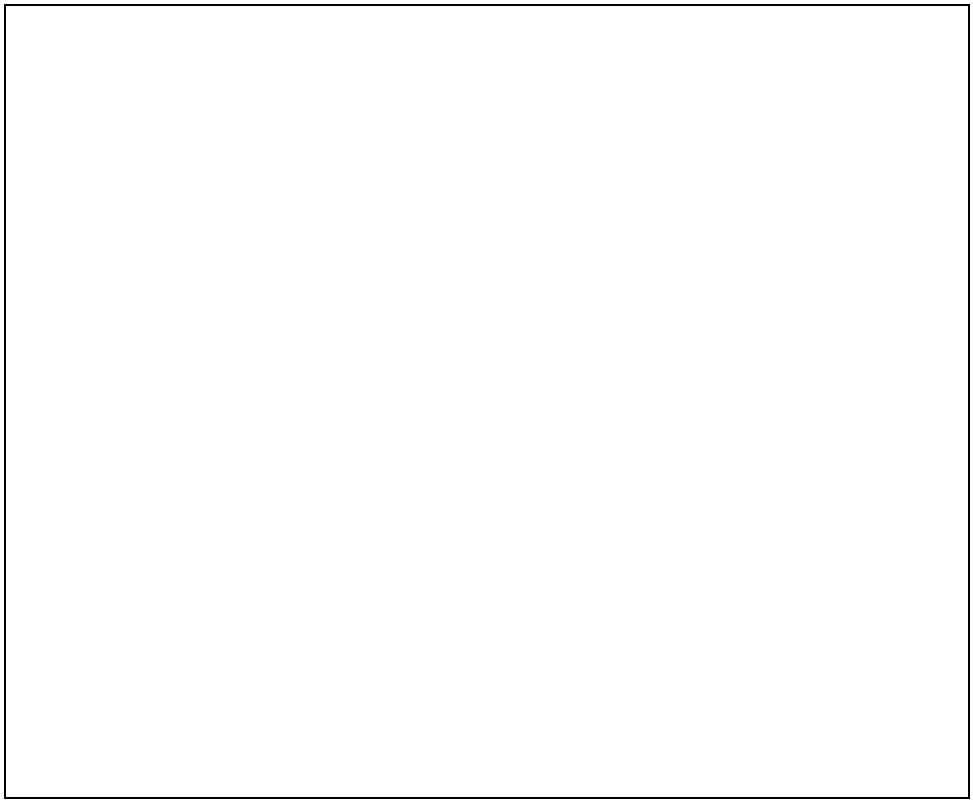

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Fig. 15

Alberto Martini, *Poetry*, 1 February 1905, cover page of llustrated paperback publishing, 25 × 26 cm [333]

The multiple subjectivity embodied by the concept of *woman* in *Il Futurisme* and the *Manifesto of futurist Dance* brings to mind the image created by Alberto Martini (1876-1954) which was used as the cover for *Poesia*, the periodical Marinetti founded (see Fig. 15 above).[334] This featured an idealised woman standing naked atop a high pinnacle having just slain a spurting, multi-breasted monster. Marinetti's associate, the painter, sculptor, dancer and writer Valentine de Saint-Point (a woman who garnered the greatest of respect in him), exhibited this concept

[333] '(Il Primo Numero Della Rivista Che Preparò Il Futurismo) Poesia. N.1 - 1905. - Catalogo - Libreria Di Frusaglia' <http://www.libreriadifrusaglia.it/prodotti/il-primo-numero-della-rivista-che-preparo-il-futurismo-poesia-n-1-1905> [accessed 27 August 2015].
[334] Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory, 1909-15*, New edition (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), pp. 32–33.

most effectively in her *Futurist Manifesto of Lust* given in January of 1913.[335] Saint-Point, like many of the Futurists, had studied Nietzsche and had taken from the concept of *Ubermensch* the idea of women being able to follow their desires unfettered by social convention.[336] In her manifesto she proclaimed 'WHAT WE MOST NEED, WHETHER MEN OR WOMEN, IS VIRILITY'.[337] Since it is impossible for a man to reproduce without a woman, Saint-Pointe's proposition seems to imply a state of non-being which could only be substantiated through a women's repression or self-denial. It also supports the fixed and total dichotomisation of the sexes as so often envisioned (but also contradicted) in the Futurist manifestoes.

A similar contradiction may have arisen for Umberto Boccioni a Futurist painter and sculptor whose work arose alongside his desire to develop a theory consistent with Futurist philosophy. Given the aggressive tone of the manifestoes, delivered under the rubric of group identity, one may presuppose a tension in trying to reconcile the image of the feminine subject (my case example here is of a work which transforms Boccioni's mother) with work which could be recognised by the public as consistent with the masculinised rhetoric upon which it was founded.

In brief, Boccioni's bust of his mother entitled *Antigraceful* (*L'antigrazioso)* was produced in the same year as *Le Sacre du Printemps,* 1913 (see Fig. 16). Here, any possible dissonance for a Futurist son is resolved through the application of a Futurist procedure. Boccioni's attempt to realise the principles of Futurist movement and dynamism through contrast in facial expression led to an adaption of geometry through the application of bold incisions which struck the surface of the face.

[335] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 130–32.
[336] Günter Berghaus and Valentine de Saint-Point, 'Dance and the Futurist Woman: The Work of Valentine de Saint-Point (1875-1953)', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 11.2 (1993), 27–42 (p. 27) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1290682>.
[337] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 110.

Fig. 16
Umberto Boccioni, *Antigraceful* 1913, bronze sculpture, 58.4 × 53.3 × 41.9 cm
Collection: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

This method may correspond with Futurist force-line theory whereby striations were used in painting to indicate correspondence between objects and their surrounding environment (discussed in the next chapter).[338] In Boccioni's bronze, cross-lateral incisions struck across the face dividing the expression between a prudish discontent and a reserved joviality. It communicated violence, corrective procedure, and anticipated the innovations which would arise in plastic surgery in the aftermath of World War I. [339]

Carefully sidestepping Nijinsky's famous acting ability and the roles he adopted which were considered to be more feminine in nature, the *Manifesto of Futurist Dance* (1917) praises Nijinsky's choreography as 'pure geometry'. Is Marinetti identifying in Nijinsky's choreographic style a tangibly masculine quality which he held in high regard? Boccioni's mother could be described as having been anti-feminised not only through the corrective lines, but through the title which simultaneously cleansed the sitter of the risk of stylistic feminisation through his Futurist treatment of her form. The title *Antigraceful* thus elevated Boccioni's mother from feminisation and separated Futurist philosophy from its uncomfortable aesthetic proximity of staticism in Cubist theory through its evocation of movement.

[338] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.
[339] Suzannah Biernoff, 'The Rhetoric of Disfigurement in First World War Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, 24.3 (2011), 666–85 (pp. 670–74) <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkq095>.

The performativity of the masculine within works of art is a feature of the *fin-de-siècle* recognised and written about by art historians such as Lisa Tickner. Using as a case example the *Danses des Apaches*, Tickner has challenged the common assumption that this dance was so easily derived from a real-life referent in the form of the Parisian gangs (coined 'apaches') whose violent altercations were widely reported in the Paris press between 1902-1914.[340] She instead frames the dance according to its being a symbolic representation of masculinity; a 'restaging of modern sexualities' and a locus of a male subjectivity which resisted identification with nineteenth-century restraint.[341]

This insinuation of contemporary experience into art, of art as metaphor for social anxiety, opens up the discourse which imagines the possibility of art as a displaced psychic space which expunges the trauma of real lived events.

Women's Experiences

If we think about the examples given earlier of themes around which ballet narratives were constructed, it is of concern to think how they could possibly be a transformation of the lives of women at the *fin-de-siècle*. A survey of French cultural conventions around the *fin-de-siècle* highlighted widespread practices which affirmed French women's status as second-class citizens during the period.[342] Wife-selling, whilst illegal, was an established, informal alternative to divorce which continued to deny women their rights as autonomous subjects.[343] Within marriage, domestic violence was not uncommon and the role of women as child bearers often to large families often compromised their health.[344] A mother was considered tainted and impure after having given birth. Custom dictated that she then must be 'churched' to be able to resume taking

[340] Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 83, 84.
[341] Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, p. 87.
[342] E. Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, Mass.: belknap Press, 1986), pp. 83–104.
[343] Weber, *France, Fin de Siècle*, p. 85.
[344] Weber, p. 86, 89.

meals with her family and be considered clean again.[345] In spite of all this, some changes as with British society, were instigated such as divorce which was reintroduced in 1884. Women were granted the right to their own bank accounts without requiring their husband's permission in 1886.[346]

Elisa Camiscioli has described how in 'European populationist discourse' a belief was held that a country's power lay within its 'demographic strength'.[347] Thus, concerns which already had been raised about the need for a sufficient workforce for an underpopulated France refocussed attention towards women's fertility.[348] Claudine Mitchell has suggested that in Paris, arguments within the suffrage movement which developed to help challenge male dominance in social and political life, centred on biological difference between the sexes. In France, however, a woman's role as mother and their apparent authority within the spatial and psychological confines of domesticity were also used *by women* to make the case for their value within society.

The real gains in women's suffrage came in spite of fierce resistance, as illustrated by the span of dates over which individual countries finally granted their women population their voting rights. New Zealand was the first with elections in 1893 to allow women the vote.[349] In Europe, Finland was 1906 and Denmark 1915.

In Britain, a series of reform acts between 1832 and 1884 granted voting rights to the majority of the male population.[350] This meant that women's exclusion was now solely on the grounds of their gender; an argument justified in terms of what was considered 'natural' and the

[345] A mother would require 'purification and benediction' by a priest in order to be considered clean after child birth. Weber, *France*, p. 85.
[346] Weber, *France*, p. 93.
[347] Camiscioli, p. 23.
[348] Camiscioli, p. 21,22,23.
[349] Toke S. Aidt and Bianca Dallal, 'Female Voting Power: The Contribution of Women's Suffrage to the Growth of Social Spending in Western Europe (1869-1960)', *Public Choice* 134 (2008), p. 391.
[350] Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 4.

assumption of women's rightful place being within the confines of the domestic sphere.[351] What was 'natural' however was challenged by these reform acts (1867 and 1884) because with a resulting increase in the number of constituents, the value of women as electoral campaigners was recognised and enacted. Their continued disenfranchisement from the voting process was however assured owing to the absence of male parliamentary representation sympathetic to women's voting rights.[352] Lisa Tickner has highlighted the differences between the obstacles to voting rights and the concrete advances made at municipal level where women were accessioned through their appointment to such authorities as school boards (1870) and county councils (1888).[353] She has suggested that it was not merely the 'cherished beliefs' about the natural occupations of women that emancipists had to challenge, but more specifically,[354]

> …it meant attempting to intervene in a proliferation of contemporary discourses that gave authority to those beliefs (including those of medicine, psychology, education and law), and into the representation of femininity which they secured.[355]

Representations of women are thus read both as symptomatic of contemporary discourse and as an affirmation of prevailing attitudes towards women. Elaine Showalter has described how:

> In revolutionary periods, the fear of social and political equality between the sexes has always generated strenuous counter-efforts to shore up borderlines by establishing scientific proof for the absolute mental and physical differences between men and women.[356]

In this sense art and literature can be placed amidst other recognised disciplines (Tickner's 'medicine, psychology, education and law') which like the necessary 'scientific proof' could be used as counterstrategies to resist any advances women activists hoped to make. Such a description of 'shoring-up' might also be applied to art production and for the very same reasons.

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[351] Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 4.
[352] Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 7.
[353] Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 5.
[354] Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 7.
[355] Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 7.
[356] Showalter, p. 8.

Text, Knowledge and the Unwitnessed

> There was something pathetic in their love-making without words, something unspeakably horrible in their murders — murders which do not allow their victim a single cry.[357]

The excerpt above from an article entitled *Russian Ballet at Covent Garden*, was published in the newspaper *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1913, nearly four months before the première of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. The author F.B, was referring to the power and mystery of music in combination with the mime and gesture of ballet, having just witnessed the London première of *Petrushka* the night before. In the next paragraph F.B. mentions how this was one of many ballets which included a murder. The quote may be as well applied to *Le Sacre*; perhaps in reference to the voiceless abductees or the silent but musically annihilating demise of the Chosen One.

The homoeroticism of *Mafarka the Futurist* which negated the role of woman in the reproductive process both mirrored and repudiated her function in *Le Sacre*. In *Mafarka*, the woman was superfluous to the reproductive process; homoeroticism further signified the negation of woman from the sexual encounter. In *Le Sacre*, she was made redundant as her death rendered her body expendable once the symbolic reproductive process was complete. She was however made essential by her creators to the reproductive economy; without the virgin's exchange, would not the earth remain barren?

The London programme synopsis, unlike the scant information in the Paris programme, made clear what it was the joint creators of *Le Sacre* wished to communicate. Thus we learn for certain that 'Part of the rite is a simulated abduction' and that there is a 'sacrifice of the young girl — who represents the mother of the future's unborn springs'. In *Le Sacre* imaginative possibilities emerged from textual information provided in the written synopsis. These aligned with uncertainties attendant with current national debate which sought to address questions

[357] F. B, 'Russian Ballet at Covent Garden', *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)* (Manchester (UK), United Kingdom, 5 February 1913) <http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/475617161/citation/F9BCD2F460FD4251PQ/1?accountid=14664> [accessed 16 July 2015].

surrounding the blurring of gendered boundaries. One might interpret the original ending as offering uncertainty but also the possibility of a symbolic life beyond what was seen on stage. This could be the promised renewal of the earth (as implied in the programme synopsis) for which the young girl's sacrifice was made.

The Chosen One is agonisingly expunged by her creators when she dances herself to death; her role in procreation is as the signifier; the renewal of the earth being the unwitnessed referent. Instead what the audience saw on stage was the 'necessary' death of the young girl, and not her death's objective as detailed in the programme synopsis which explained the death of the young girl as a symbolic function which would lead to the propitiation of the God Yarilo. This textual description heralded the woman's presence in the ballet, and one which was supported by the audience's imaginative anticipation in the run up to the performance on stage. This initiating contextualisation was then brought to bear upon the spectator consciousness upon witnessing the violent enactment on the stage. However, the process which we are led to believe will culminate in rebirth is interrupted when the ballet ends with the young girl's death. This climax to the ballet renders the possible renewal of the earth unwitnessed. The consequences of a young girl being sacrificed for the facilitation of the procreative process are unseen and therefore unknowable.

The original version of *Le Sacre* had a climax which was striking in its suggestion of open endedness. Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) described it as follows,

> …the Chosen One dances in rhythms marked by long syncopations. When she falls dead, the ancestors approach and, picking her up, lift her toward the skies…This theme, so single and free from symbolism, reveals its symbol today. In it, I recognise the prodromes of war…[358]

Lydia Sokolova who danced in the *corps de ballet* of the original performances wrote of Maria Piltz in the principle role,

> At the end of her dance, Piltz was lifted, lying full length, onto the shoulders of the tallest men of the company; then as the music crashed to a close, they raised her to the full

[358] Lederman.

> height of their upstretched arms and ran with her off the stage. This was a very impressive scene.[359]

This leaving of the stage so the audience could only imagine the climax of renewal, points towards a metaphoric continuity; of life over finality. Not knowing what then happens to the woman's body leaves a question open. To what is the body then subject; violation/burial/resurrection?

The Joffrey Ballet under the direction of dance historian Milicent Hodson attempted a revival of Nijinsky's version of the work in 1987. This however culminated in the raising of the limp body aloft to blackout, implying finality. With no suggestion of continuity choreographically or musically, even with knowledge of her death's purpose, the emphasis stays upon the negative outcome without hopeful consequence or specifically, realisation of the stated aim, beyond the sacrifice and toward renewal /rebirth. The focus then stays rested upon the gratuitous death. Hodson herself put it thus 'the Chosen One…is asphyxiated by her own motion.' But in recognition of the textual implications from the original London programme continues, 'In the logic of the rite, the dance does not stop: she does.'[360]

The dance of the Chosen One 'danse Sacrale' was choreographed by Nijinsky upon his sister Bronislava Nijinska who was to dance the original role.[361]

> It had taken Vaslav only two rehearsals to create the solo for me. In the third I performed the dance alone, and as Vaslav watched me I was radiant. I could see that he was pleased both with his own work and with my rendition of his creation.[362]

Nijinska described Nijinsky's fury at her becoming pregnant. He had 'screamed' that Nijinska was the only person capable of performing the role of the Chosen One.[363] Nijinska informed her brother of her pregnancy on the advice of their mother who believed that Nijinsky

[359] Sokolova, p. 43.
[360] Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's Choreographic Method', p. 74.
[361] Nijinska and others, pp. 448–50.
[362] Nijinska and others, p. 450.
[363] Nijinska and others, p. 462.

might allow her to perform less strenuously in rehearsals if she did so.[364] Garafola has pointed out that rather than preparing an understudy to dance in the event that Nijinska was not being able to, Nijinsky removed his sister from *Le Sacre* altogether even though she danced in other works during the same season.[365] Nijinska refers to Nijinsky needing to adapt the role for Nijinska's replacement, Marie Piltz. She wrote that Piltz's body was 'taller than I and did not have my high elevation and strong movements, nor my dance technique'.[366] This statement is very suggestive of the qualities for which Nijinsky was famed. Something of this continued dissatisfaction of Nijinsky's was alluded to in Rambert's mention of Nijinsky's rehearsals with Piltz. Rambert wrote that 'I watched Nijinsky again and again teaching it to Piltz. Her reproduction was very pale by comparison with his ecstatic performance, which was the greatest tragic dance I have ever seen.'[367] The suggestion is of a body less like Nijinsky's upon which he was less able to project his own vision for the work. This too brings to mind the extreme response to Nijinska's pregnancy and the possibility of procreative envy. Moreover that Nijinsky saw his own body in that of his sister, the power of the dance being performable on the male or androgenised body only.

The role of the Chosen One was notable for the 'exhausting' endurance necessary for the dancer to complete the performance.[368] Sokolova compared the choreography in her own performance as the Chosen One in Massine's version of the ballet to that of Piltz's rendition in Nijinsky's. She described Nijinsky's version as having been forgotten; Massine, never having witnessed that version began the choreography from scratch.[369] Sokolova stated of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre* that it was 'vague' in comparison to Massine's and 'had a sadness about it'.[370]

[364] Nijinska and others, p. 461.
[365] Lynn Garafola, annotation made to this PhD thesis, January 9th 2016.
[366] Nijinska and others, p. 463.
[367] Rambert, p. 64.
[368] Sokolova, p. 161,162.
[369] Sokolova, p. 162.
[370] Sokolova, p. 162.

Of her appearance as the Chosen One in the 1929 season, Marie Rambert wrote that Sokolova 'gave a powerful, unforgettable performance that would have made Nijinsky's heart leap with joy'.[371] The arduous process by which she learnt the steps for the Massine version of the work Sokolova described as follows:

> Once a step was worked out rhythmically we would plot it out, then go back to the beginning and add a little more to the dance. These repetitions got me into training for the ordeal of performing this exceptionally long and exhausting dance on the stage.[372]

Performing beyond physical exhaustion the ballet culminated in Sokolova's *actual* collapse on stage. 'Whatever it did to the audience it nearly killed me'.[373] She missed the curtain rising on the final scene several times and needed to be pulled to her feet before regaining consciousness.[374] Sokolova wrote how 'A specialist told me I had strained my heart, and after what I had been through with *Le Sacre*, this did not surprise me'.[375]

When choreographer Erich Walter reimagined *Le Sacre*, he showed the Chosen One gang raped just prior to dancing herself to death.[376] In a version of *Le Sacre* by German choreographer Pina Bausch (1940-2009) which premiered December 3 1975, the Chosen One was separated from the beige and black costumed company before the 'Sacrificial Dance'. She was ill-clad in a flimsy, red slip which would later fall apart. Her dance was characterised by repeated elbow stabs to the torso, silent staring in terror before staggering backwards from some unseen horror, agonised gripping of herself across her stomach and uncontrolled and violent convulsions. The breasts she repeatedly beat became uncovered through the brutality of her dance and her pleading gestures ignored by the company's silence and watching expectation.[377] Bausch had her

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[371] Rambert, p. 127.
[372] Sokolova, p. 160.
[373] Sokolova, p. 166.
[374] Sokolova, p. 167.
[375] Sokolova, p. 187.
[376] Susan Manning, 'German Rites: A History of Le Sacre Du Printemps on the German Stage', *Dance Chronicle*, 14.2/3 (1991), 129–58 (p. 143,144).
[377] operascenes, *Stravinsky- Rite of Spring 'Sacrificial Dance'*, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7pV2cX0qxs> [accessed 24 August 2015].

company dance on a stage which she had spread with black soil.[378] Patricia Boccadoro wrote of a performance of the work staged to mark the centenary of the first *Le Sacre*:

> Barbaric rites of sacrifice are played out on a vast expanse of dirt, the soil clinging to the dancers' sweat-covered bodies as they dance till they drop, the large cast sweeping over and across the stage in waves, until they collapsed from physical and mental exhaustion.[379]

Embraced by subsequent generations it was the bringing of the sacrificial body close to collapse which gave the performance its power. Dance historian Millicent Hodson has written:

> Nijinsky, because of his contact with authentic ritual traditions through Roerich and no doubt also because of his mastery of *unnatural* ballet technique, stressed the significance of *Le Sacre du Printemps* through increased strain, aggravated unnaturalness and effort.[380]

So there was mastery and subsequent deployment of an 'unnatural' ballet technique or maybe even a form of dancing Nijinsky wished to emulate which was not ballet. In this paper the derivation for technique remains non-specified for what it was Nijinsky garnered from Roerich's studies of 'authentic ritual tradition'. His interpretation was one which incurred extreme physical stress to the bodies of his dancers and it was this emphasis in which Hodson feels Nijinsky enacted his perception of the significance in *Le Sacre*. Susan Manning has written about the importance of Bausch's return to the original libretto for her choreography for *Le Sacre*. Manning makes the point that in doing so, the gender specificity of a woman's sacrifice; the original creators' contrivance in making a violent act towards a woman a social *necessity* became the critical focus. This meant that the morality as defined by the sexual difference in the narrative, then became unavoidable for subsequent choreographers of *Le Sacre* to address.[381] When put this way, this highlights a particular aspect of inauthenticity — the sacrifice of a woman — which as Hodson has highlighted, is curious given Roerich's 'commitment to archaeological

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[378] Manning, p. 146.
[379] Patricia Boccadoro, 'Culturekiosque', *Culturekiosque*, 2013 <http://www.culturekiosque.com/dance/reviews/pbausch_riteofspring829.html> [accessed 24 August 2015].
[380] Hodson, 'Ritual Design in the New Dance: Nijinsky's Choreographic Method', p. 74.
[381] Manning, p. 146.

authenticity'.[382] An embedding of a narrative of women's sacrifice has thus taken place through *Le Sacre's* canonic retelling and its repeated rechoreography to Stravinsky's score over a hundred year period.

I have suggested that the procreative aspect of *Le Sacre* was sign-posted and yet absent. Its positive *presence* resided solely within its title and the programme synopsis, the purpose of which was to declare its narrative intent. The work however was paradoxically constructed according to the lack of any stage presence at the climax of the ballet. If European humanity at the fin de siècle was defined according to male subjectivity, that is the phallocentric ideology which conceptualises the condition of woman according to the absence of the phallus, the state of phallic absence as it exists for the woman concretises the condition of femininity as incomplete. This assumes absence of the phallus as a negative in concord with women's sexuality. I would argue that *Le Sacre's* symbolism of absence asserts its incompletion as a form of positive rebellion. In this scenario Gippius's delivery of her epistolary child (see page 67) for the purposes of sacrifice becomes the epitome of the desired state. [383] We have seen how a plausible osmosis between homoerotic misogyny rooted in threat of effeminacy to the Italian national character and the negation of the feminine role in the rebirthing process might be read as congruent with the painful slaying of a woman in accordance with the act of renewing the earth's bounty. This then supports a reading of *Le Sacre* as a case of symbolic representation of sexual difference which typified gendered asymmetries of the era in Europe. An alternative reading makes an argument which sign-posts this lack of witnessing to the culmination of the procreative cycle in *Le Sacre*, (this non-representation upon the stage), as a form of symbolic freedom from unwanted pregnancy or from the destruction of a women's right to a happy and healthy life owing for example, to the frequently life shortening rigours of repeated child birth. In Nietzschean terms, its most powerful gesture is in the *tragedy* of the climactic death which can

[382] Millicent Hodson, p. 11.
[383] Olga Matich, p. 190.

proclaim its negative as a theoretical zenith.[384] This echoes the abstinence within Gippius's triangular marriage and in the unconsummated figures in *Jeux*. Here, in the negative, absent, philosophical space, the physical was transcended and the sexual purity which Tolstoy sought in life *and* in his repudiation of an afterlife could be realised.

The sense of procreative uncertainty which arises from the inability to witness the fate of the Chosen One's body, locates *Le Sacre* further as an atemporal piece, operating within the realms of doubt and prophecy; of surrogacy suits, third and same sex parenting and its accompanying panic and intolerance.

Here I need to return to Boccioni's *Antigraceful* to consider what I see as significance of the naming. Devoid of its curious physical form, the title *Antigraceful* for which the bust of Boccioni's mother, Cecilia Forlani Boccioni sat, becomes a floating word; formless and without clear signification, it alludes paradoxically to a non-state. What after all was this term which Boccioni had created? As a conjugation, *Antigraceful* has a presence, yet it is unspecifiable. If Boccioni had named his bust *Gracelessness*, we would have had an entity for reference, one which was at least graspable if only in one's imagination. Maybe we would have seen Nijinsky's awkward joint angles his dancers had to perform for *Le Sacre*. Instead we have an actively negative condition, —anti— without form, identifiable only as a signifier whose signified is ever shifting and, therefore, cannot be pinned down. It is not without precedent however, because — when discussed in these terms — *Antigraceful* is commensurate as a signification of an invisible yet existential condition which can be aligned to the disappearance of the Chosen One from the stage at the climax of Nijinsky's production of *Le Sacre*. Both these instances sign-post a desirable state in the form of a negative absence, and more pertinently — where we *can* get a grasp on the nature of what its presence might be — we can point to an apparent commentary on women in society in both these works. *Antigraceful* is an invisible state of women's *equality* (the raising to

[384] 'Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy) - Zotero://Attachment/410/', pp. 131–32 <zotero://attachment/410/> [accessed 26 August 2015].

male status of the beloved mother) which cannot be concretised within a framework of a Futurist imaginary where a gendered dichotomisation delineates men and women inconsistently and often along irreconcilable lines. The Chosen One's absence is (ironically) pregnant with possible meaning, our pre-existing knowledge of her death, signposting us towards inferences of her body's defilement or destruction.

Summary

The Ballets Russes was considered innovatory in its attitude towards modernity through the contemporaneity of its ballet techniques and the hire of non-traditional artists for its sets. One might add to this the transmission of contemporary anxieties around the fear of the power of women, through its narratives. These can be argued as distinct from those works which were reconstituted from ballets created in the mid-nineteenth-century where themes frequently echoed those of theatre.[385] An interweaving of procreative envy, anxiety about the presence of women in social spaces normally reserved for men may have been played out on the stage through the notable masculinised ensembles (the Polovstian Dances) and the presence of Nijinsky as an outstanding male soloist. Countering Marinetti's claim to a distinctively masculine male ballet persona and complicating simple readings across different male choreographers for Les Ballets Russes, Garafola argues that in Nijinsky's choreography the evidence from photographs books and drawings showed an explicit connection between 'ballet modernism' and homosexuality.[386]

In *Il Futurisme*, themes of resurrection, renewal, fears around the post-coital redundancy of the male reproductive role, allusions to rising phoenix and the resurgence of earthly life, enmeshed gender and procreativity, so far as to be almost impossible to disentangle. Many of the qualities with which the Futurists negatively identified as art having become suffused, were

[385] Weber has suggested that there was an expectation of theatre audiences in the two decades spanning the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, that theatre reflect closely the lives of everyday men and women. Thus French bourgeois theatre delivered narratives which dealt with marriage, romance, sex, money matters, 'historical feats, social conflict and ambition'. This however does not account for the nature of plots in Symbolist theatre of the same period. Weber, *France*, p. 162.

[386] Garafola and Baer, p. 263.

presented around ideas of sexual difference. This attitude in Futurist work manifested as an aggressive, masculine tone which developed in the earliest literary language of Futurism. Contradictorily, the Futurists also incorporated the female voice into manifestos, so that metaphorical woman could switch between being a weapon of male violence, a victim of male violence, a feared enemy and an enfeebling seductress. The poetic form of *Il Futurisme*, allowed for these plural subjectivities to be encapsulated into a single work. It doubled as a template for the architecture of work which was developing alongside ongoing Futurist research and experimentation.

The foundation of Futurist theory lay in its belief in the need for the suppression and metaphorical death of its classical past. This would pave the way for a resurrection, not of ancient ideology but of a national artistic identity reflective of contemporary life, internationally recognised and of which Italians could then be rightfully proud. Italian Futurist practice both methodologically and theoretically aligned itself with and appropriated extant political movements as a means of hailing their own cause such as that of Irredentism.[387] In a similar way their practice evolving as it did at the end of one century and the start of the next, chimed with artistic metaphors for death and resurrection/rebirth and renewal. Elements of Italian Futurist manifestos and speeches suggest a tapping into a latent anxiety around sexuality and sexual difference evident within European consciousness. These ironically appropriated mythological characters in order to make the case for a revitalisation of Italian aestheticism.

Diaghilev has been written into history as an innovator. He was nevertheless a person who was mindful of his own personal relationship — and that of art — to the past. Class cut across aesthetic culture and Diaghilev's early airs and pretensions are a reminder of the aristocratic culture into which he was born but also one from which he needed favour and investment. Appropriately enough, it would seem that Diaghilev internalised the idea of the dwindling power of aristocracy and used it as a metaphor for the death of an age as illustrated in

[387] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 10, 216.

his 1905 address. His continued associations with his class would nevertheless help resurrect ballet as an art form and support Diaghilev's aspirations to remake the dance genre anew.

Garafola's theory of restraint, redundancy and destruction in the themes of Nijinsky's choreographed ballets, pointed to a projection of male control over womankind during an age where such loss of control in wider society was perceived as a very real threat. A continuation of this idea inferred that a woman's placement within a narrative was such that it served to reinforce a man's power or ability to destroy. This is a fantasy shared with the Futurists whose contrivance of the feminine degenerate, contradictorily merged the destructive enfeebling capabilities of woman kind with their passivity.[388]

In seeking to ascertain the placement of 'resurrection' as a theme in the formation of art, its frequent intersection with gender has been shown to open up a space where assertions of male superiority could be enacted. This was argued to be the case in many of the ballets prior to 1913. *Le Sacre du Printemps* however demonstrated this effect through several instances. The unwitnessed fate of the 'Chosen One' in *Le Sacre* invited comparison with the absence of the female body to the reproductive process as was the case with the male and male mother parental union in *Mafarka the Futurist*. If the work of art can be theorised as an externalisation of emotional and psychical detritus; a dumping ground for society's anxiety or a fantasy projection substituting real life violence, then the Chosen One was a powerful receptacle of displaced aggression, provable by her contrivance by male creators for the sole purpose, focus and *emphasis,* upon her destruction. At the same time she, like Tolstoy's Maslova, held within her the power to resurrect. Only through Maslova can redemption and moral resurrection be granted and only through the sacrifice of the Chosen One can her creators realise earthly renewal from their imagined ancient wilderness. *Le Sacre* is therefore the ultimate climatic zenith to all these preceding ballet narratives. As the efficacy of *Le Sacre* relied upon audience interpretation of pre-existing ideas about Eastern and Oriental societies and contemporary debate around sexual

[388] Blum, p. 201.

difference, so too the Italian Futurists utilised the language of gender and nationalism to communicate their philosophy.

Works of art have been identified which would appear to exemplify woman as powerful and destructive. These became manifest across different art forms but within a narrow time frame and geography, supporting the idea of their occurrence forming within the cultural specificity of *fin-de-siècle* society.

The creators' dismissal of the sacrificed woman's personhood in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and the making redundant her reproductive value in *Mafarka the Futurist*, belied the *absolute centrality* of women's fertility to the narrative of both works. That they were conceived of at about the same time and with imaginative fabrications which both demonstrated a metaphor of resistance to the power nineteenth century feminists were promoting as their value within society, may be significant in the formation of interconnections between the social and political conditions of production and their ultimate visual and literary presentation.

Le Sacre du Printemps ends with negation in the form of death, lack and absence; symbolising not ongoing life, but the end of the procreative line. To an extent, this supports those readings of *Le Sacre* as a harbinger of World War I as had been declared once by Jean Cocteau.[389] More convincingly it places the work within a conscious rendering of a philosophy which sought to explore new ways of sexual being, destabilising the deadening assumptions which condemned unmarried women who gave birth and homosexual men and women who by biological definition could not deliver children from their union. A much discussed, hypothetical interpretation of *Jeux* proposed its being a disguised expression of Nijinsky's anxiety; of a repressed and sometimes coerced sexual life, as embodied in symbolic form in a publicly staged work of art. If we consider this in relation to *Le Sacre*, the irony in understanding Nijinsky's joy at

[389] Lederman, p. 13. Writing about the opening chapter of Modris Ekstein's *Rite of Spring*, Richard Taruskin praises as 'a tribute to myth' Ekstein's alignment of *Le Sacre* with the occurrence of World War I whilst cautioning against 'the romantic urge to elevate our artists into prophets'. 'Richard-Taruskin-Resisting-The-Rite.pdf', pp. 278–79.

modelling a role upon a body so close to his own — that of his sister's — is in our knowing its unrealisability; the performance as envisioned being left un(publicly) witnessed and unactualised through Bronislava's *pregnancy*.

What *Le Sacre* did was to express the social constraints of the times and purge them through a nihilist alternative; one perfectly in keeping with the destruction and iconoclasm which hallmarked Futurist philosophy. As Nietzsche had written, tragedy was an idealised expression of the limits of humanity, where the 'truly insoluble puzzles of human existence' could be played out and thereby sanctified.[390] This was a way of thinking born of the threads of philosophic entanglement and appropriated ideologies which had become markers of this period in European history. Viewed according to this framework, lack or absence could become an emancipatory signifier in particular within the context of the rethink around familial relations which preoccupied the Russian arts intelligentsia at around the time when our protagonists were practising. For Marinetti, Gippius, Tolstoy and Rosanov the apocalyptic, *anti-nature*, anti-romantic, anti-procreative philosophy was a positivist position which supported amongst other matters, the health of the nation and homo and hetero relational experimentation. These alternative models of thinking held the possibilities of a blue print for new ways of being originating in art and philosophy but with the potential for their transferability into everyday culture. The art and literature which emerged from this culture also served (intentionally and unintentionally) political and social ends as provocation, rebellion, spiritual and physical hygiene. In *Le Sacre* the pretext for a gratuitous death of a woman was in the absence of a rebirth. When considered within a context of anti-procreative debate, its symbolic, negative, climax, places the act of procreation as responsible for an undesirable consequence, making its *absence* a desirable state.

[390] 'Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy) - Zotero://Attachment/410/', pp. 131–32.

If one uses a model which identifies European distinctiveness according to a perception of what it was *not* then the threatened masculine identity might be affirmed only when aligned with qualities unique to women. Restitution of male power and identity could only then be made when women were subject to a male artist's transformation through a process of dismissal *(Mafarka),* distortion *(Anti-graceful)* or death *(Le Sacre).*

TABLE HIGHLIGHTING THE FUNCTION OF GENDER ASYMMETRY IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BALLETS RUSSES AND ITALIAN FUTURIST WORK

Role of Woman in work	RESPONSIBLE FOR A MAN'S DEATH OR PORTRAYED AS CRUEL OR CUNNING	DRIVES A MAN TO KILL HER ***OR*** SAVES THE MAN WHO KILLS HER	SOURCE OF PROCREATIVE ENVY	MEN CAN DO ANYTHING WOMEN CAN (plan for Nijinsky en pointe-challenge to women's domination of ballet)	MUST DIE FOR SOCIETY'S BETTERMENT	CAN EXERCISE HER POWER THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF A MAN
Giselle 1841		√				
Sleeping Beauty 1890	√					√
Cléopâtre 1909	√					
Il Futurisme 1909			√			
Schéhérazade 1910	√					
Marfarka the Futurist 1910			√	√		
Firebird 1910						√ (True in part)
Petrushka 13 June 1911	√					
Narcisse 26 April 1911	In this story, the vain youth Narcisse rejects the love of Echo. He is punished by the Gods who condemn him to a life of unrequited love. Narcisse falls in love with his own reflection in a 'crystal pool' and dies in his unfulfilled state.					
Jeux 1913				√		
Le Sacre du Printemps			√		√	√

INVISIBLE NOISE: Re-enactments of a Signified Style
Chapter II

Introduction

SARAH WOODCOCK: …The previous generation had been a depiction of the world, realism. Now, what you're looking at is a sort of emotional response to things. And simplification, that's the other thing.

CHRISTOPHER COOK: So, when we look at this costume, we should see this as being about perhaps emotion rather than an attempt by Roerich to carefully reproduce what he's discovered about ethnic fabrics, ethnic pattern-making?

SARAH WOODCOCK: I think it's a mixture of the two things. I think, after all, there's not a huge amount known, and I don't know how much he had to base, in fact, on, but primitive design is pretty similar across the world - it's one of the things he found out when he started to look at it, that really it's pretty similar and after all, what are basic designs? Wavy lines, straight lines, squares, circles - you know, they're fairly basic to all cultures, if you pick up a pencil and doodle, though he puts it together in quite a sophisticated way. But colour, yes, is immensely important to him and of course, a lot of artists, if you look at a lot of art criticism, talk about painting in terms of music. It talks of harmony and construction and symmetry and harmony and colour - some painters and musicians see in colour - Nicholas Georgiadis, the great designer in the 20th century saw very much of music in terms of colour.

CHRISTOPHER COOK: But there's dissonance here too, isn't there? If you look at those on the sleeves, the triangles with the aquamarine, they clash.

SARAH WOODCOCK: That's right and of course you've no way of knowing how this all looked under the lights en masse but I think this all ties into similar colours used on other costumes as well.

CHRISTOPHER COOK: Is that sense of dissonance, of clash, again perhaps part of a wider movement, which is, in the early 20th century a desire to escape what are thought to be refined traditions of western art, western painting, a desire to incorporate, I use the word advisedly and in inverted commas 'the primitive'?

SARAH WOODCOCK: There's certainly a greater awareness of the primitive I think, that comes in towards the end of the 19th century. After all, it's the age when people really become aware of, I'm talking about the average person, becomes aware of abroad, I think that happens at the beginning of the century and the opening out of Africa of course, and African culture and the starting of sciences of the 20th century, archaeology and anthropology studies and so on. I think it's all part of that. I don't think that it's really anything… We were getting a lot of new influences in but it's difficult to say how much it's conscious to say we deliberately went to make it. Stravinsky's doing something he feels he wants to do, which happens to tie into the time.[391]

[391] Digital Media webmaster@vam ac uk Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Audio: Costume from The Rite of Spring', 2012 <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/costume-from-the-rite-of-spring/> [accessed 30 August 2016].

I have taken this long extract from a transcript of a recorded conversation organised as part of the '2004 Proms Performing Art Season Talks' and downloadable from the internet from the Victoria and Albert museum's website under the heading, *Audio, Costume from the Rite of Spring*. Beneath this title is written, 'Christopher Cook and Sarah Woodcock talk about a costume designed by Nicholas Roerich for the 1913 ballet 'The Rite of Spring''. (Please also see image of costume below as shown on website.)[392]

I have reproduced it here because it raises a number of complexities and contradictions which are relevant to this chapter. These are suppositions about race and racial hierarchy, 'influence' and origin that are all in play during this conversation as is the legacy of *Le Sacre* and a the power of this work to revive, entrench or render enduring, attitudes which were prevalent at the time of its making. Below I shall be arguing the case for an association of an assumed 'simplification' in music and choreography in *Le Sacre* and how these connections might have played out in terms of audience reaction. In Woodcock's interview she states that 'primitive design is pretty similar across the world'. This is made difficult to challenge when there is no temporal, geographical or sociological qualification of what Woodcock is terming 'primitive design' and when she tells us there is not much known about the facts upon which Roerich based his designs. What is not in doubt is that the term 'primitive' is loaded with historical connotation within and beyond an historical aesthetic context. Thus, we can interpret Woodcock's 'primitive', without Cook's use of the word 'advisedly and in inverted commas' as being fully in accord with this particular meaning. Woodcock is assuming that her audience's understanding of the term 'primitive designs' and people, is the same as hers.

Here we might briefly wish to consider what kind of audience might be attracted to a conversation held as a public event, celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the first performances of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and given in association with the Victoria and Albert

[392] Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Costume from The Rite of Spring'. At the beginning of the full transcript we are told that Sarah Woodcock is a curator at the Theatre Museum (part of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London) where the costume is housed.

Museum. From what social class might they have been derived and were this known would it be any more possible to deduce what they (the audience) and Woodcock understood 'primitive' to mean? In the next paragraph Woodcock clears up any doubt by explaining how 'primitive' was associated with an age of interest in 'abroad' which tied in with 'the opening out of Africa of course, and African culture'. This clarifies to whom she was referring when in her second paragraph she described how design undertaken by any 'primitives' from any society, looked the same and were simple. However, placed in the hands of Roerich, the same patterns were 'put together in a quite sophisticated way'. The simple/sophisticated dichotomy here is made in alignment with clear insinuation of racial hierarchy and black versus white.

Woodcock and Cook were given the unenviable task of providing a public audience with an introduction to *Le Sacre* through analysis of a single design component i.e. a costume which presumably could provide routes to and stimulate further interest around the work and others of the Ballets Russes whilst honouring the museum's responsibility to make archive material and information available to the public as part of the anniversary celebrations. No-one could go into an extraordinary amount of detail in such a short space of time (18.41 minutes). However, the interview, the decisions about what to include and what aspects of *Le Sacre* to single out, are of interest to me. Some of the statements made are testament to the enduring nature of attitudes and assumptions promoted by European governments in the nineteenth-century to justify their colonial endeavours (discussed below). In the context of this thesis Woodcock's thoughts on Stravinsky are important because she is speculating as to whether or not his score may or may not have been responding to 'Africa'. The suggestion here is in part that this huge continent was homogenisable into a particular and universally understood set of ideas which might or might not have been transformed into a work of art. This chapter is based upon this very same supposition, or, rather I am arguing the case that what it is Woodcock and so many others like myself cannot quite articulate *is* articulatable but within a paradigm which properly acknowledges

the conditions under which non-Occidental people were present in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

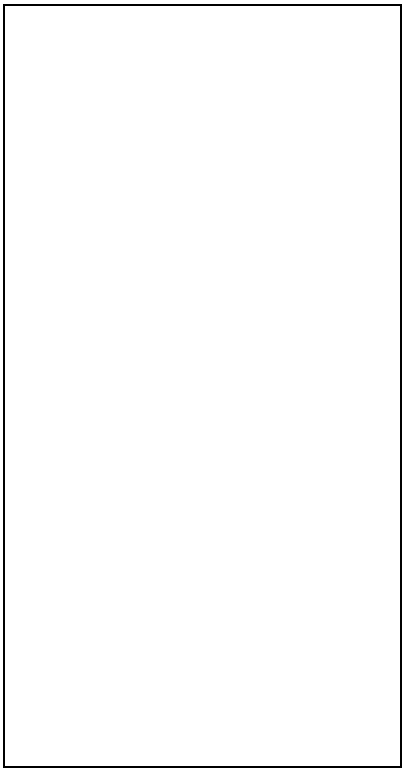
Identifying some of the problems which have historically accompanied Eurocentrism in anthropological documentation, Joann Wheeler Kealiinohomoku wrote:

> It is a gross error to think of groups of peoples or their dances as being monolithic wholes. "The African Dance" never existed; there are however, Dahomean dances, Hausa dances, Maasai dances, and so forth.[393]

When she critiqued the work of dance writer Lincoln Kirstein's *The Book of Dance* 1942 New York: Doubleday) she summarised his findings of 'primitive' dance as its being 'repetitious, limited and unconscious' and, echoing Woodcock's genericism, being 'almost identically formulated'. [394]

Kirstein was writing in 1942 about dance and Woodcock was speaking in 2004 about design in 1913 but there would appear to be a temporal collapse through charaterisations and an untroubled homogenisation of subject, which gives some foundation to my discussion ahead.

[393] Joann Wheeler Kealiinohomoku, *Anthropology and Human Movement: The Study of Dances*, ed. by Drid Williams, Readings in Anthropology of Human Movement, no. 1 (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997), p. 18. Lincoln Kirstein, *The Book of Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1942)
[394] Williams, pp. 18–19.



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Fig. 17

Nicholas Roerich, Costume for *The Rite of Spring* 1913,
Collection: (S.685-1980) V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

> *Le Sacre du Printemps*, with its revolutionary score by Stravinsky, was destined to be a landmark in the history of modern music. It was born from the new cult of the primitive. Nowadays we all know the story of how Gauguin's dream of noble savagery drove him off to the South Sea Islands, and we have been told that it was Picasso's fascination for Negro sculpture which led him, in 1907, to paint the first cubist picture, but in 1913 no one had imagined a primitive *ballet*.
>
> Lydia Sokolova beginning her description of *Le Sacre* on her memoirs. [395]

In the previous chapter, I discussed how challenges taking place within the wider, contemporary society, to the dominant patriarchal order of masculinity, were being enacted through reaffirmations of masculine identity as was evident in works of art. This identity was not being forged *a priori*, but as a reaction to what it was not. Thus, any suggestion that the parameters which defined gender may actually be porous or changeable, required a reassertion of

[395] Sokolova, p. 42. It should however be noted that Sokolova's memoirs were written by the ballet critic Richard Buckle.

the established masculine identity resulting in its philosophical and conceptual reification. The apparent need to make explicit what Marinetti viewed as the masculine elements that Nijinsky's choreography embodied (where he wrote of its originality and 'geometry' and its 'muscular system' which he lauded as being 'elevated to divinity' — *Manifesto of Futurist Dance,* 1917) not only supported this idea but functioned as a reiteration of the belief that angularity and linearity could be gendered, acting as a signifier for the masculine.[396]

During this same period, similar attempts at stabilising identity were being applied to the concept of race and ethnicity. Throughout Europe in the late eighteenth century, racial science had emerged to an extent that ethnology was becoming defined by its categorisation of the world's populations according to hierarchies of appearance and intelligence.[397] The practice evolved in part as a consequence of the exploration of regions previously unknown to Europeans and their subsequent colonial appropriation of those territories. This resulted in a burgeoning of public interest in peoples and cultures outside of Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. World fairs and national exhibitions were initially an opportunity for countries to compete for international recognition through comparative display of objects indicative of nations' 'progress' and development. In his study of the phenomenon of World Fairs, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (1988) Paul Greenhalgh identified the most popular shift from objects towards the display of human beings being around the period 1889-1914.[398] Russia is known to have held its first ethnographic exhibition in Moscow as early as 1867. In a show which encompassed examples of people from the expanse of the Russian empire, over three hundred mannequins were displayed

[396] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 235.
[397] Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 53.
[398] Greenhalgh, p. 82.

in their regional traditional dress.[399]A phenomenon largely of European and European speaking countries, such displays functioned not only as 'education' and entertainment, but also as a means of reinforcing racist ideology of alterity of colonised from non-colonised societies.[400]

Being able to gaze upon a subjugated, captured and incarcerated group of Dahomeyan 'warriors' for example supported a European national narrative of a belief in military superiority through violence and domination.[401] The practice would also claim to show the 'civilising' capacity of the European over the colonised societies.[402]

Italy's incursions into Africa for the purposes of colonisation and calls for the independence of Trieste from Austria were matters which Futurists wove into their unruly performances and formalised into Futurist theory and practice. [403] During a performance of Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* in Milan on September 15 1914 — and in the spirit of Irredentism (see thesis introduction) — Marinetti unfurled a huge Italian flag from a balcony and shouted "Down with Austria" whilst Boccioni unfurled and set light to an Austrian flag. [404] The Irredentist examples cited in the introduction, were of Futurist interventions within a ready-made, *geopolitical* arena of audience tumult and reactivity. I would like to pose the question, to what extent might we consider an overlay of the same climate upon *Le Sacre*, as being an invisible yet significant component which should be considered alongside the many other rich and varied theories which comprise our reading of the first performances.

Although advance press suggested that the public should expect something new and different from previous Ballets Russes productions, I would like to consider the possibility that interjections by the audience at the première may have arisen from a compulsion to find meaning

[399] Nathaniel Knight, *The Empire on Display: Ethnographic Exhibition and the Conceptualization of Human Diversity in Post-Emancipation Russia*, (The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Washington), 2001 p 1
[400] Pascal Blanchard, *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Empire*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel and others (Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 7, 8.
[401] Greenhalgh, p. 95.
[402] Greenhalgh, p. 95.
[403] Rainey, Poggi and Wittman, p. 19, 20.
[404] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 19.

in the absence of narrative and gestural explicity. Might this have contributed to the reports of affront and insult experienced by those at the première? [405] Were this so, one might construe an effective dynamism between *Le Sacre* and Futurist theory on the grounds that the inadvertent provocation of an audience expecting passively to receive its entertainment, might be argued as having led spectators toward a participatory role more common to Futurist performances.

Another point I wish to address is what I will identify as being the 'role' played by the inanimate, non-human presence of the auditorium lights. Stage lighting was something of which Diaghilev would himself take direct control for certain works.[406] In 1917, a joint production by the Italian Futurists and the Ballets Russes — *Feu d'artifice* — would cast coloured and moving lights across the sculptures on stage designed by Giacomo Balla and illuminate the audience itself.[407] Might the use of lights as performers have had a precedent in *Le Sacre du Printemps* where the auditorium lights were switched on and off during the performance and the audience responded by quietening down?[408] Can this be argued as having been integral to the performance?

But why should any effort be devoted to addressing the apparent similarities between the opening night of *Le Sacre* and Futurist theory, particularly when we know that the remaining performances passed off with little incident? Carl van Vechten described this as follows:

> Little by Little, at subsequent performances of the work the audiences became more mannerly, and when it was given in concert in Paris the following year it was received with applause.[409]

If what is brought to discussion of *Le Sacre* one hundred years after its premiere is a riot, then this immediately points to the role of the audience before the stage and musical performances. As Richard Taruskin has noted of *Le Sacre's* mythology, 'As those who know the

[405] Eksteins, p. 35.
[406] Barry Jackson, 'Diaghilev: Lighting Designer', *Dance Chronicle*, 14.1 (1991), 1–35 (pp. 7–10).
[407] Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 84.
[408] Marconi Transatlantic Wireless Telegraph to The New York Times, 'PARISIANS HISS NEW BALLET', *New York Times* (New York, N.Y., United States, 8 June 1913), section EDITORIAL Special Foreign Dispatches Sports Censored Want Advertisements, p. C5.
[409] Carl Van Vechten, p. 34.

story will recall, the protagonist of the *Rite*-as-event was the audience, whose outraged and outrageous resistance to the work took everyone by surprise…'[410]As Modris Eksteins has pointed out 'The audience was as much a part of this famous performance as the corps de ballet.'[411] Finding serious inconsistencies in the eye witness accounts of *Le Sacre* provided by Jean Cocteau, Carl Van Vechten and Gertrude Stein (who has implied she was present at the opening performance when she was not), the significance for Eksteins of *Le Sacre,* lay in these writers' need to have been present and … participating in this performance of 'provocation and event'.[412] To take Eksteins' identification of the audience as performers still further, if cultural memory dictates the terms of our perception of a work to the extent that its mythology persists after its debunking, then such terms require our consideration in the form of their contextualisation well beyond the immediate exploration of the work itself. In the words of Asa Bharathi Larsson in her book *Colonizing Fever: Race and Media Cultures in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden*, I too want to ask:

> What happens with our narratives of the past when visual representations of the colonial world, which have been previously hidden by blind spots, once again become visible and estrange our known histories?[413]

What if — for hypothetical purposes — we place across our existing archive a different lens or frame of reference? It might sharpen the clear lines which have so far demarcated between supporters and dissenters according to class and aesthetic inclinations. It also has the potential to blur them. What would happen for instance if we saw *Le Sacre* according to the racial make-up of the audience, a factor which probably — superficially at least — united those attending the first performances? Why would we do this? What possible relevance can it have apart from the seemingly obvious allusions to 'tribe' in *Le Sacre's* conception and 'narrative'? I

[410] Richard Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', *AVANT. The Journal Of The Philosophical-Interdisciplinary Vanguard*, 2013, p. 272 <https://doi.org/10.12849/40302013.1012.0008>.
[411] Eksteins, p. 36.
[412] Eksteins, p. 39.
[413] Åsa Bharathi Larsson, *Colonizing Fever: Race and Media Cultures in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden*, Mediehistorikt arkivv32, p. 11.

wish to look at race and ethnicity as a matter which unified rather than divided those in the audience because if we can think about the majority of those witnessing the first performance as being from a similar racial/ethnic background, then the political milieu, which helped to guide public thought, would have without a doubt entered the auditorium and shaped perceptions as to what was being witnessed. Such a consideration recognises both the sympathetic and unsympathetic attitudes amongst audience members towards *Le Sacre* whilst acknowledging their exposure to similar events, attitudes and social changes dictated by their living/staying within certain geographic parameters. This also takes into account the effects of the developments in technology which allowed for mass distribution of information by the media. For example, the success of any government propaganda aimed at reinforcing the need for acculturation of colonised people to European practices, might incline its European citizens towards a certain way of thinking. Might this have made those attending susceptible to a particular attitude which permitted them as French citizens (the likely majority) to see themselves as superior to colonised subjects? If even the possibility of such homogenised thought can be identified, then an argument can be made for the significance of racial ideology in *Le Sacre*, in the form of its intrusion upon the *non*-Othered and a mirror held up to Paris society of its potentially changing self. If, as John Bowlt has written, the Ballets Russes with its earlier works, '…titillated a blasé, complacent Edwardian public, bemused it with a heady mix of vaguely ethnographic appendages, and shielded it from the dramatic social and political changes taking place outside' then what possible escapism did *Le Sacre* provide? [414]

To escape the 'dramatic social and political changes' occurring outside the theatre auditorium does not preclude ones' still being subject to them within its environs, and it is this possibility which leads me to want to renegotiate the terms of our accepted understanding of the earliest responses to *Le Sacre* in this chapter.

[414] John E. Bowlt, *Moscow and St.Petersburg in Russia's Silver Age: 1900 - 1920* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2008), pp. 234–237.

What had changed by 1913 which countered the descriptions of triumphancy with which the first 1909 *Saison Russe* is still so often identified?[415] In her essay *The Sacre "Au Printemps": Parisian Audiences and the Ballets Russes,* historian Juliet Bellow has argued that the audience reaction was about the company's 'appropriation of avant-garde and modern-life elements deemed specifically "Parisian"'.[416] Bellow argued that in spite of the group consistently having delivered mixed programmes of traditional and more avant-garde themes, the focus of press and public centred on Othered and exoticised themes, with specific attention being paid to works demonstrating these elements.[417] Bellow suggests that from the start of 1912, the Ballets Russes' mixed affiliations became more overt which inevitably 'raised the specter of both cultural and corporeal miscegenation'.[418] In this chapter, I want to consider the Ballets Russes' presentations of Russianness as being inflected by their association with exoticism beyond the context of Eastern Europe. To this end I make arguments which go beyond the orientalist affiliations usually made with the company to make distinctions between perceptions of Russianness and people from territories colonised by Western Europe. This concerns a particular type of politically and socially mediated presence of colonised people in Paris (and elsewhere in particular Western Europe and North America) giving rise to additional readings which complicate the creators wanting *Le Sacre's* audience to receive the work solely as an impression of ancient tribal Russia. Such interpretations pertain specifically to matters of race. I want to see what might be inferred from looking beyond the theatre space to a society in which human zoos were popular, where national identity was tied up with colonial ambition and where, elsewhere, modernity in artistic practice appropriated decontextualized ethnographic material for its own ends. Can we draw any conclusion from the musical and choreographic use of repetition in *Le*

[415] *Diaghilev: Creator of the Ballets Russes: Art: Music: Dance*, ed. by Ann Kodicek, Rosamund Bartlett, and Barbican Art Gallery (London : Wappingers Falls, NY, USA: Barbican Art Gallery/Lund Humphries ; Distributed in the USA by Antique Collectors' Club, 1996), pp. 60, 89.
[416] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 156.
[417] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 156.
[418] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 163.

Sacre? My belief is that this can be deconstructed in accordance with post-colonial thinking. Rearticulated with clarity, it might be possible to add another layer to our understanding of the early recorded responses to the first performances.

The research by the musicologist Truman C. Bullard into the première of *Le Sacre du Printemps*'s went a considerable way to elucidating the reports of the night's events and laying bare the social and environmental circumstances which were in operation.[419]

Whilst the reports of rioting form a part of my analysis I will consider a potentially homogenising strand connecting *Le Sacre's* socially mixed audience. This will use evidence which makes visible attitudes to racial cultural difference in Europe when *Le Sacre* was produced, and *interpretations* of what the audience may have thought they were experiencing. It is these interpretations which permit my return to Italian Futurist theory and aspects of its intervention which engendered spectator experience of intrusion and provocation.

With this in mind I will review the discussion of *Le Sacre's* later success (as a concert piece independent of dance in 1914) as suggesting its *separation* from its original choreography in racial terms. What if any significance might be construed from a free floating score; cut loose from a failed choreography, albeit a dance which curiously seemed to arouse notable comment by many?

We know that the audience which was drawn from a socially privileged section of society (seat prices were doubled) were a strong presence at the première *Le Sacre,* as were the 'aesthetic snobs' who loudly supported the innovations in the arts and especially those instigated by the Ballets Russes.[420] Jean Cocteau dramatically framed the disturbances of *Le Sacre's* premiere by setting a contrasting scene of new theatre comfort and decadence.[421] Truman C. Bullard highlighted the usefulness of a subscription system of payment to our understanding of how the

[419] Truman C. Bullard.
[420] Eksteins, p. 33.
[421] Lederman, p. 13.

audience for *Le Sacre* was constituted.[422] He also quoted a letter to shareholders from Gabriel Astruc which stated of the opening day of the *Saison Russe* May 15 1913: 'Our grand subscription day, Thursday, has become adopted by Society as the most elegant cosmopolitan rendezvous in Paris'.[423] In his essay *The Mass Ornament*, Siegfried Kracauer identifies specifically the intellectually privileged as a group unable to identify the significance of and symbolic representation of reality, in large scale decorative displays of massed persons performing in unison stating how, 'They disavow the phenomenon in order to continue seeking edification at art events that have remained untouched by the reality present in the stadium patterns.'[424] Kracauer's essay supposes an aesthetic metaphor for the hiddenness of components contributing to totalising production, in the service of capitalism. I want to see if it is possible to adapt Kracauer's model to see if it could work as a template for *Le Sacre's* making visible an otherwise hidden reality?

> When significant components of reality become invisible in our world, art must make do with what is left, for an aesthetic presentation is all the more real the less it dispenses with the reality outside the aesthetic sphere. No matter how long one gauges the value of the mass ornament, its degree of reality is still higher than that of artistic productions which cultivate outdated noble sentiments in obsolete forms — even if it means nothing more than that.[425]

One might then — as many have — conjecture an intellectual elite's non-recognition of a signification of *Le Sacre's* representation. Bullard was able to identify the 'rich aristocratic Parisian set', 'foreign tourists', 'young artists and esthetes whose love of the new was perhaps surpassed only by their hatred of the upper class…' and a group of 'critics, composers, and students'.[426] This was a varied social group with some tickets reserved for Russian students sold at a mere three francs.[427] But is it possible to see *Le Sacre's* presentation as being a representation

[422] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 102–6.
[423] Truman C. Bullard, p. 102.
[424] Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 85.
[425] Kracauer and Levin, p. 79.
[426] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 108–9.
[427] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 109–10.

of capitalist expansion during the machine age and the movement of populations from rural to urban and more significantly from colony to 'mother' country? I am seeing this as a condition supposedly independent of and external to the theatrical space but somehow made into a visible reality through its *trans*formation/portation into its auditorium. Let us then suppose a suspension of the social and political reality external to the theatre space. This works in tandem with Bowlt's theory of the Ballets Russses shielding its Edwardian audience through displays of sumptuous fantasy.[428] With this suspension, the theatre is sanctified. I am thus proposing *Le Sacre* as a form of pollution or symbolic besmirching of a privileged space of escapism, repose and passivity.

Some Selected Witness Accounts

I will begin by highlighting just a few of the accounts from witnesses which are often repeated when the 1913 performances of *Le Sacre du Printemps* are discussed. I will draw upon these later in the chapter as a means of supporting the unfolding arguments.

The Comtesse de Pourtalès on witnessing *Le Sacre* is reported to have declared 'I am sixty years old and this is the first time anyone has dared to make fun of me'.[429] Jean Cocteau reported that some who attended the open rehearsal for *Le Sacre* prior to the première stated 'They are out to make fun of us. They take us for fools. We must defend ourselves!' [430]

Once again testing the reliability of such a report Stravinsky wrote of those attending the same rehearsal:

> Oddly enough, at the dress rehearsal, to which we had, as usual, invited a number of actors, painters, musicians, writers, and the most cultured representatives of society, everything had gone off peacefully and I was very far from expecting such an outburst.[431]

Stravinsky's account of the first performance of *Le Sacre du Printemps* read as follows:

[428] Bowlt, pp. 234–37.
[429] Eksteins, p. 35.
[430] Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', p. 280.
[431] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, pp. 81–82.

> I left the auditorium at the first bars of the prelude, which had at once provoked derisive laughter. I was disgusted. These demonstrations, at first isolated, soon became general, provoking counter-demonstrations and very quickly developing into a terrific uproar.[432]

Stravinsky also wrote in *Chronicle of My Life* (1936) of how 'Diaghileff kept ordering the electricians to turn the lights on and off, hoping in that way to put a stop to the noise'[433] Another report published in America described the electrics being operated by the then manager of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées Gabriel Astruc:

> *The Consecration of Spring* was received with a storm of hissing. The manager, M. Astruc. however has devised a novel method for silencing a demonstration. When hisses are mingled with counter-cheers as they were the other night, M. Astruc orders the lights turned up. Instantly the booing and hissing stop. Well-known people who are hostile to the ballet do not desire to appear in an undignified role.[434]

These reports are (largely) first-hand and cross referenceable. Assuming them probably to contain fragments of truth if not the essence of the excitement and upset, of the first night, I wish briefly to address the superficial correspondences between the selected events as described above and their possible affiliations to Futurist manifestoes published in 1913. I will also highlight some of the other features of the manifestoes relevant to this thesis.

The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting

The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting was written by the painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni and published 15 March 1913.[435] It showed evidence of the Futurists' awareness in the interest shown by artists then practising in Paris such as Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Ferdinand Léger and in ethnographic artefacts from beyond Europe. Early on in this manifesto, Boccioni referred to 'the primitives, the barbarians' as a group in which Italy might find the answers to its revitalisation.[436] Boccioni listed the '*anti-artistic* manifestations of our epoch' which, with old Italy swept aside, would germinate (alongside the spirit of the primitives) a 'new sensibility'. These were 'The café singer, the gramophone, the

[432] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 81.
[433] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 81.
[434] Times, p. C5.
[435] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 139–42.
[436] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 139.

cinema, electrical advertisements, mechanical architecture, nightlife, the life of stones and crystals, occultism, magnetism, velocity, etc. (my italics).'[437]

Boccioni's use of the terms 'primitives' and 'barbarians' was indicative of a contemporary attitude which privileged whiteness and reduced non-European/ non-Occidental persons to cultural markers of Otherness which justified economic and cultural plunder and colonialism (see below). Boccioni's language demonstrates the appeal of the 'other' to artists who considered themselves avant-garde (as I argued in my introduction). In Italian Futurist terms it also presented a contradiction; their ideological thrust being towards the art of the present and future, often — as we have seen — presented in their rhetoric as being in deep opposition to all things past.

Some of the ideas which Boccioni proposed had appeared in another guise in the *Futurist Painting Technical Manifesto* 11 April 1910 which had also been undersigned by Carrà, Russolo, Balla and Severini.[438] In this work, the artist's duty to make clear the integration of the human being with their surroundings — and in particular the modern environment — was important.[439] Boccioni founded his researches for his formation of a new Futurist painting technology upon the scientific developments of the era such as the X ray machine.[440] In his *Plastic Foundations* manifesto he quotes Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* of 1911 to explain the Futurists' adaptation and application of Bergson's vitalist theories to Futurist painting.[441] Bergson wrote and Boccioni quoted in the manifesto 'All division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division' and 'Everywhere movement, inasmuch as it is a passage from rest to rest, is absolutely indivisible'.[442] *Physical transcendentalism* was the term Boccioni coined to describe his interpretation of the indivisibility between matter which he

[437] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 139.
[438] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 64–67.
[439] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 65.
[440] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 65.
[441] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1911), p. 246,259.
[442] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.

perceived as emanations radiating from the core of, through and in between objects.[443] Whilst the object's emanations might be unseen, they remained intuited by the artist who (in recognition of the integration of all known objects based on new scientific discoveries such as X-ray and philosophical theory) made them visible through lines of force which made clear the manner of connection between different matter. Boccioni outlined his ideas on art in his book originally published in 1914 entitled *Pittura, Scultura, Futuriste*: *Dinamismo Plastico,* (*Futurist Painting and Sculpture: Plastic Dynamism*).[444]

For the London leg of the first Futurist Exhibition, the *Exhibition of the Works of the Italian Futurist Painters*, March, 1912, at the Sackville Gallery, the accompanying catalogue which had also outlined Boccioni's philosophy informed spectators that 'All the ideas contained in this preface were developed at length in the lecture on Futurist painting delivered by the painter, Boccioni, Circolo Internazionle Artistico, at Rome, on May 29th 1911.' [445]

The descriptions of three of Boccioni's works were as follows:

1. Leave-Taking

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

2. Those Who Are Going Away

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

[443] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.
[444] Umberto Boccioni and Zeno Birolli, *Pittura E Scultura Futuriste: Dinamismo Plastico*, Saggi E Documenti Del Novecento, 72 (Milano: SE, 1997).
[445] Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carra, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, 'Exhibition of the Works of the Italian Futurist Painters' (The Sackville Gallery, London, 1912), p. 19, British Library.

3. Those Who Remain Behind

The perpendicular lines indicate their depressed condition and their infinite sadness dragging everything down towards the earth. The mathematically spiritualised silhouettes render the distressing melancholy of the sole of those that are left behind.[446]

Below are illustrations of all three of Boccioni's *States of Mind* Series.

Fig.18
Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind I: The Leave-Taking* 1911, Oil on canvas,
70.5 × 96.2 cm Collection: Painting and Sculpture Dept. (64.1979), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 19
Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind II: Those Who Go* 1911, Oil on canvas,
70.8 × 95.9 cm Collection: Painting and Sculpture Dept. (65.1979), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

[446] Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carra, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, pp. 20–27.

Fig. 20
Umberto Boccioni, *States of Mind III: Those Who Stay* 1911, Oil on canvas,
70.8 × 95.9 cm Collection: Painting and Sculpture Dept. (66.1979), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Boccioni's emphasis on the integration between known objects brings to mind statements made in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* 1910, where the artist's perception of the reflection of light of objects upon other objects was held as an example of observable interplay between known matter. In *Leave Taking*, one can even discern an easy movement between musical analogy and emotional and psychological states. The transferability of Futurist theory into differing sensorial and art forms is supported by the witness statements of the first performances of *Le Sacre,* where the work was experienced as a condition which provided the means for integration between the 'work of art' and those who had come to observe it. For instance audience/performer reciprocity can be inferred from the reports of the auditorium lights being switched on and off to help regain order — perhaps by shocking noisome spectators

into submission.[447] A less painterly, more direct relation with *Le Sacre* — which alludes to the theatricality of audience/performer interplay — might be found within the detail of performances of the Italian Futurists and their ideas as stipulated in the *Variety Theatre Manifesto* of 1913.[448]

Music Hall, the Variety Theatre Manifesto of 1913, Serate and Sintesi.

The notion of integration between the work of art and performer was also a feature of Futurist theatrical performance. A good example of this would be Futurist *Serate* (Rainey states that this is plural — singular being the word *Serata* – for Soirée or "evening performance").[449] These were known for their audience provocation (insults to the audience were common). They were contentious events, sometimes political in content and accompanied by stories of audience members arriving armed with fruit and vegetables to use as projectiles during performances.[450]

The relationship between audience members and the performers on stage was a matter given great attention in the *Variety Hall Manifesto* of 29 September 1913. This manifesto had praised the noisy participation of music hall audiences and proposed a form of theatre where spectators could be made integral to the performance.[451] In it, Marinetti gave his reasons for his enthusiasm for the variety theatre as an art form. In a sentence which could almost have been written as a response to *Le Sacre* and its first audience (now infamous by the time of Marinetti's writing) Marinetti stated, 'With its swift, overpowering dance rhythms, the Variety Theatre forcibly drags the slowest souls out of their torpor and forces them to run and jump.'[452] Marinetti went so far as to identify the presence of cigar and cigarette smoke as a unifier of audience and performer promoting a sense of simultaneity between musicians, boxes and the

[447] Carl Van Vechten, p. 34.
[448] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 159–64.
[449] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 9.
[450] Kirby and Kirby, pp. 14–15.
[451] Gunter Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944*, First edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 171.
[452] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 160.

stage.[453] Kirkby has suggested that the Futurists worked in opposition to dramatic convention of the 'fourth wall' in theatre, promoting instead the active involvement of the audience in the performance.[454] The audience's *contribution* being as much the performance as the action on stage, brought Futurist work into the realms of a 'happening' or event well beyond the formal performance and bringing to mind the reports of the first performance of *Le Sacre*. In the *Variety Theatre Manifesto*, Marinetti even proposed specific methods through which an audience might be provoked into a response, including the introduction of an element of 'surprise', glue on seats, selling 'the same ticket to ten people', using itching powder, and shaping the audience composition for entertainment purposes by providing free tickets to the 'notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric'.[455] This manifesto and the Serate performances supported irreverence, a contemptuous attitude to its audience (in particular to its passivity) and a merge of low and high art; all of which chime with reports of the audience sense of being insulted/made fools of, its general reactivity and social disinhibition during *Le Sacre's* première.[456]

Sintesi

Futurist theatre proposed changes to the established theatrical formats which had been delivering formulaic narratives received passively by their audiences. This was a branch of thought from which emerged a favouring of the episodic over narrative structures in theatre.[457] Like their evening Serate, Futurist theatre would push their audiences into reciprocal communication with the action on stage.[458] A later manifesto *The Futurist Synthetic Theatre* of 1915,

[453] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 160.
[454] Kirby and Kirby, pp. 22–23.
[455] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 163.
[456] It should however be noted that whilst the audience chaos at the premiere would have been a desirable outcome for an Italian Futurist, Stravinsky's leaving the auditorium in disgust, clearly suggests his upset at the audience response. Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 81.
[457] Garafola, pp. 78–79.
[458] Gordon Ramsay, 'The Use of Objects in Sintesi of the Italian Futurists', *Performance Research*, 12.4 (2007), 115–22 (pp. 115–16) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528160701822726>.

would seek to alter the very structure of works with its theatrical sketches or *sintesi*.[459] In this manifesto it was proposed that complex material be distilled down to its most basic components and script length be reduced to only its most necessary outline.[460] A reduction in script also necessitated a reformation of narrative. This was suggested through the episodic, self – contained, concision which dispensed with standard formulae of established melodrama, romance and plot.[461] Lynn Garafola has remarked how Diaghilev's pre-World War I productions (with the exception of *Giselle* and the full-length operas) were short works closer to music-hall ballets than they were the works of Marius Petipa who had choreographed *La Bayadère* (1877) and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) for the Imperial Ballets.[462]

Writing of how he was expected to shorten the libretto for *Le Pavillon d'Armide* in 1907, Alexandre Benois stated how he was:

> …averse to short ballets, because the fashion for them revealed a somewhat unworthy attitude towards ballet, which at the time was gathering strength, probably under the influence of music-hall and variety numbers. Short ballets were included in the programmes only as gay and frivolous entertainments.[463]

Now I want to consider *Le Sacre's* being episodic and stylistically reduced in this same vein and if it could be argued as a further site of critical confluence with Futurist theory. Below I will examine the possible evidence for this.

Grammar

> Our task is to destroy four centuries of Italian tradition. Into the resulting void we must plant all seeds of potential which are to be found in the examples furnished by the primitives, the Barbarians of every nation…[464]

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[459] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 204–9. Regarding the meaning of this word, performance historian Felcia Mccarren has pointed out that in this context the word 'synthetic' refers to 'very brief'. Felicia M. McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 101.
[460] Gunter Berghaus, p. 176.
[461] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 204–9.
[462] Lynn Garafola, annotation made to this PhD thesis, January 9th 2016.
[463] Benois, pp. 241–42.
[464] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 139.

Writing in *The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Art* 1913 (quoted above) Boccioni stated 'Our race has always dominated and has always renewed itself through barbaric contacts'.[465] For Boccioni, the desirable qualities of the Barbarians and primitives were akin to what was new and contemporary such as the café singer and the gramophone (see above). What then were the qualities which artists found so beguiling?

Sintesi's distillation of form could be located around the changes in the aesthetic grammar, within and around the interest in and impact upon Western artists, of ethnographic artefacts. This recognition of the purely aesthetic qualities of such pieces — the co-opting of non-Occidental culture by European painters and sculptors such as Brancusi and Picasso — has been written about by Petrine Archer Straw as follows, 'few [artists] appreciated *L'art nègre* for its aesthetic beauty; instead, its crudeness was valued for its immediacy of expression.'[466] Archer Straw further states how 'few artists made a distinction between curios and genuine ethnographic objects'.[467] The decontextualisation of artefacts used for kinship, exchange or ritual purposes and assumed to be works of art, was unproblematic for avant-garde artists who saw in such work a means of stylistically appropriating and reassigning meaning to their own work as a statement of what was modern; this being the suggestion of 'subversion', 'anarchy and transgression'. [468]

Rivière

I want to continue further with the idea of paring down and stripping back ornamentation as a challenge to established forms of aesthetic practice at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The opening of Jacques Rivière's essay on *Le Sacre du Printemps* begins by referencing Nijinsky's view of the work as being 'without "sauce" '.[469] In an interview for the *Daily Mail* newspaper given the day after the London première, Nijinsky having praised the English

[465] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 140.
[466] Archer Straw, p. 55.
[467] Archer Straw, p. 55.
[468] Archer Straw, p. 51.
[469] Rivière, p. 82.

audience for its polite reception of the work, spoke with disdain about the critics' expectation that his choreographic work should display the grace shown in his renditions as a soloist of the romantic ballets such as *Le Spectre de la Rose* or *Les Sylphides*. By way of explanation Nijinsky had declared that his personal preference was to 'eat my meat without *sauce Béarnaise*.' [470] In his essay, Rivière's description of *Le Sacre* agreed that Nijinsky had realised his intended style of communication, proposing its closeness to Impressionism through its intentional lack of finish; the work being 'complete and unpolished', its comprising elements existing in a 'raw state' served 'without anything to facilitate their digestion'.[471] Garafola writes quoting the same essay:

> As in *Faune* and *Jeux*, Nijinsky formed that body anew. In *Sacre,* he trained stance and gesture inward. "The movement," wrote Jacques Rivière…, "closes over the emotion; it arrests and contains it…The body is no longer a means of escape for the soul; on the contrary, it collects and gathers itself around it; it suppresses its outward thrust, and, by the very resistance that it offers to the soul, becomes completely permeated by it…"[472]

Rivière's essay was first published in the publication of which he was editor: *Nouvelle Revue Française*. In his essay on *Le Sacre*, Rivière acknowledged the difficulty the opening night's audience had in assimilating what they saw, with what they understood ballet and music to be and proposed that the function of his essay was in part to mediate between the performance and the spectator.[473] This he proceeded to do by laying out what he perceived as the defining qualities of the most recent forms of musical performance so as to explain how *Le Sacre's* music and choreography departed from it.

Rivière combined his observation of the aural effect of technical strategies with recognition of departures from formation of stage direction and the overall impact on the spectator. For Rivière, the music of Claude Debussy could be hallmarked by its diffuse and allusive tonality; a 'vaporous quivering, the swaying of a thousand indistinct harmonics' radiating

[470] Macdonald, p. 100.
[471] Rivière, p. 82.
[472] Garafola, p. 69.
[473] Rivière, p. 91.

from its core and 'continually evaporating around us'.[474] This quality to which audiences had become accustomed was then contrasted with the clarity and starkness of Stravinsky's score with its careful choice of instrumentation. This led to Rivière's sense of its being stripped of all extraneous material to leave bare the absolute essence of its musical character.[475] Using as evidence a quote from an interview Stravinsky gave to the review *Montjoie ! : organe de l'impérialisme artistique français,* Rivière points out Stravinsky's deliberate avoidance of instruments whose dynamics created sounds close to that of the human voice.[476] This choice allowed Stravinsky to 'articulate directly, distinctly' through his orchestration and the *distinction* to which Rivière refers, was a carefully ordered spacing between parts and phrases which permitted their collision and expansion without their conflation or merger.[477] In describing Stravinsky's work, Rivière employs more digestive metaphors together with words reminiscent of Futurist art work and literature to convey his interpretations. In *Il Futurisme* where Marinetti writes of how he '*gulped* down' the 'bracing slime/nourishing sludge' from the 'Maternal ditch' which reminded him of his Sudanese wet nurse and praised the 'electric moons and 'bloated railroad/*greedy* railway stations that devour smoking serpents', his language of excess finds a counterpart in Rivière's description of one *Le Sacre's* melodies.[478] 'In his (Stravinsky's) work the melody has a kind of intimate force of ascension; it bites into height with an admirable ease; it gulps it greedily'.[479]

Rivière made the case for an absence of shimmer and diffusion in *Le Sacre's* music; a clarity of vision shared with Nijinsky who articulated a similar form of communication. The association of such a stripping back or paring down — like repetition — superficially operated in opposition to 'sophistication' and 'refinement' and — I would like to suggest — may have been

[474] Rivière, p. 82.
[475] Rivière, pp. 84–85.
[476] Rivière, p. 83.
[477] Rivière, pp. 84–85.
[478] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 49–53. In other translations (see after forward slash) alternative words are used. Please see for example F.T. Marinetti, *Marinetti, Selected Writings*, ed. by R.W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), pp. 40, 42.
[479] Rivière, p. 86.

mistaken for simplicity by looking to an audience like a less skilled presentation. This is clearly erroneous as we know that *Le Sacre* was an immensely difficult work to perform for both dancers and musicians, creating amongst them exhaustion and dissent, and meriting a huge number of rehearsals. Richard Taruskin has written of *Le Sacre* as follows:

> Stravinsky's radical simplification of texture, his static, vamping harmonies, and his repetitive ostinato-driven forms were the perfect musical approach to the primitivist ideal- the resolute shedding of conventional complexities of linear thought and their replacement by long spans of unchanging content, accessible to instant, as it were gnostic, apprehension and eliciting a primitive, kinaesthetic response.[480]

Permitting analysis of an audience's mistaken *interpretation*, allows us to consider associations of *Le Sacre's* being made with 'low' and Othered culture; and raises the spectre of infringements of social convention which I shall discuss later.

Whatever the source of Nijinsky's choreographic style, it was described by Rivière as introverted and inward. This placed it in opposition to the gestural explicity of classical ballet. I would like to suggest the possibility that not only was it *Le Sacre's* choreography but also its narrative configuration — as reduced and 'sketched' — which acted as an unintentional form of provocation. By this I mean that what Rivière describes as the pulling inwards of the body towards itself — which Rivière regarded as intensifying the choreography — might also have acted as a communicative barrier between audience and performer and in doing so provoked an intensity of audience reaction. There seems to have been an awareness of some form of 'barrier' which the creators decided to ameliorate for the London performances. An arrangement was made that Mr Edwin Evans of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, appeared before the curtain of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane to give a ten-minute address, apparently to 'explain' the *intention* of *Le Sacre's*

[480] Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 385.

creators. Greeted impatiently by some hissing from sections of the audience, one written response to this read as follows:[481]

> Undoubtedly the ballet, as presented in London, was more easily followed than when seen in Paris. In part, perhaps, the certain degree of familiarity helped; in part the stronger lighting of the stage during the second act of the London performances was assistance. But, chiefly, the greater intelligibility arose out of the explanations, verbal and printed, with which the spectator was forearmed. Antics which had been meaningless became invested with the shadow, if not the substance of plausibility; it became apparent what they were *intended* to mean, even if the meaning still seemed to fail of true expression.[482]

The programme notes below from the Paris and London performances illustrate the difference in detail between the two; the latter London performance being given over to greater explanation than the Paris one:

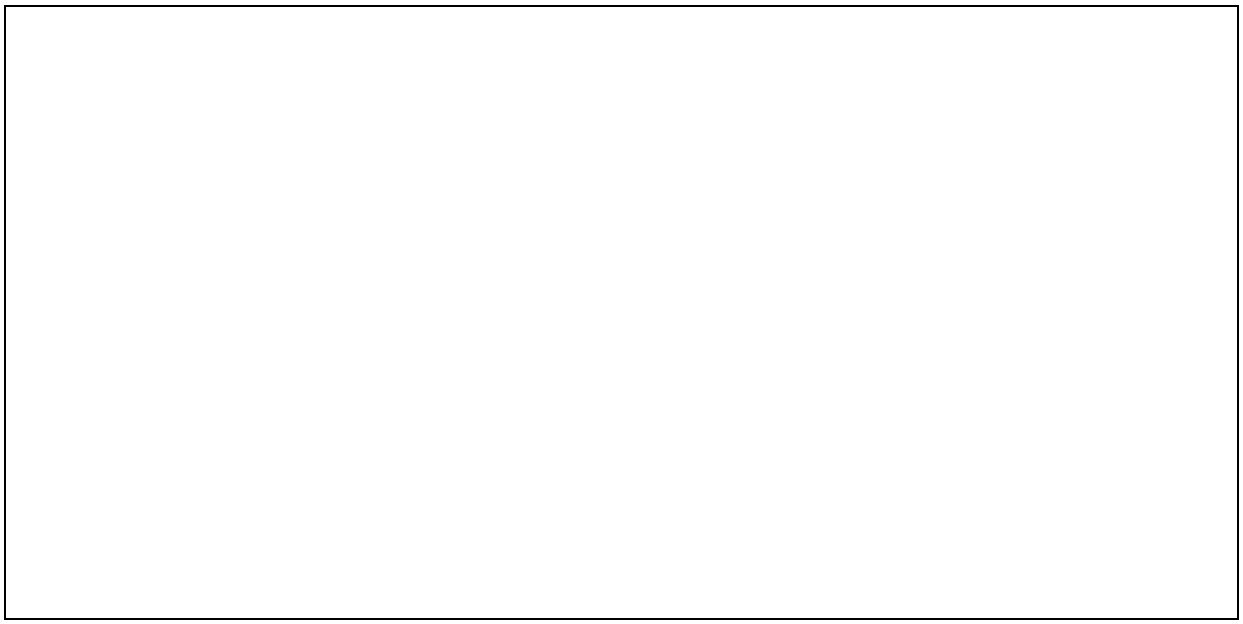

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Fig . 21
Extract from programme: Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *Direction Gabriel Astruc, Saison Russes 1913*, paper and photograph,
from Collection: Box II Item 6 (Paris) London.

[481] Macdonald, p. 97.
[482] A. E. and Bull, Rene (illus) Johnson, *The Russian Ballet, by A. E. Johnson; with Illustrations by Rene Bull*, 1st Edition. edition (London Constable & Co. Ltd, 1913), pp. 207–208.

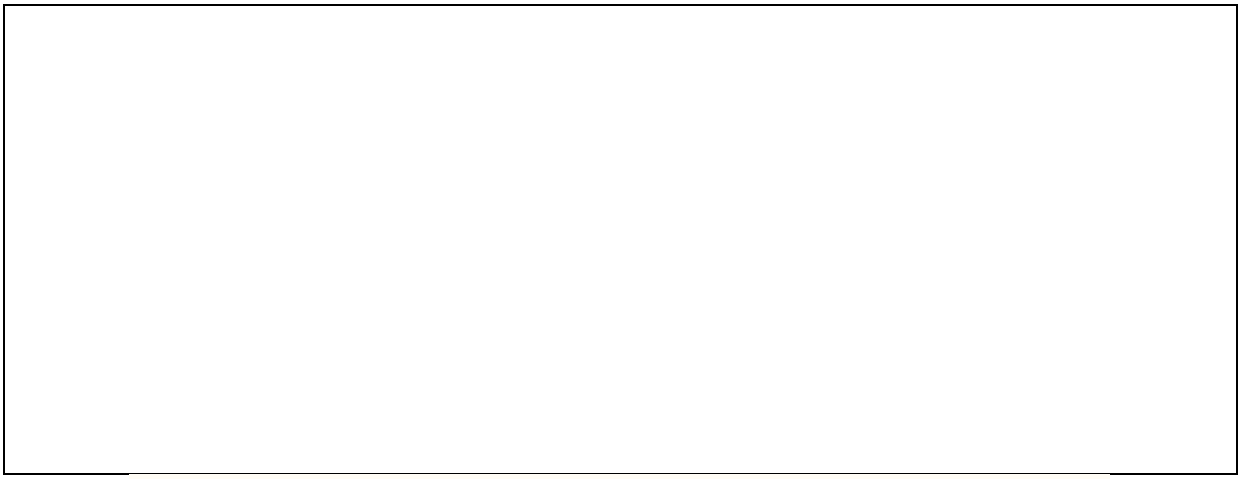

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Fig. 22

Extract from Programme: Theatre Royal Drury Lane London, *Direction Gabriel Astruc, Saison Russe 1913*, paper and photograph,
From Collection: Box II Item 6 (Paris) London.

Le Sacre Presented as Tribal

Le Sacre was publicised and intended to be understood as a return to an ancient Russian past. To some extent, this tallied with previous Ballets Russes performances which had an exotic appeal to Paris audiences of the fin-de-siècle. I would briefly like to consider the background to this interest in order to understand how particular ideologies around race may have manifested through artistic practice and to frame some of the difficulties it presented to audiences of the day.

Attitudes to race and cultural difference in France had been shaped by a number of factors including colonial expansion and an interest in the endeavours of 'explorers' and 'adventurers' into territories previously unknown to Europeans. The historian Alice L. Conklin has described how the formalisation of the study of the ethnic and racial diversity of the world's populations — and in particular by, those non-white populations of Africa, the Pacific and Asia — by white Europeans, resulted in a proliferation of related anthropological schools, museums and journals. Conklin researched the development of such institutions in Paris, proposed three principle reasons: 'ideological, practical and political' for the creation by the French government of a museum dedicated to ethnography, the Musée d'Ethnographie, in 1878. The first was the

need to house items gathered by independent or government financed 'adventurers', the second was to show how those being studied might be 'civilised' by Western intervention and the third was a response to the increased interest amongst the general public in cultures being colonised elsewhere in the world by France. [483]

Colonisation

Catharine Nepomnyashchy has written of how Russia:

> Unlike the countries of western Europe, which as early as the fifteenth century had both economic and expansionist interests overseas in Africa as a result of the trade in slaves and other commodities, the Russian Empire grew by incorporating contiguous lands and their inhabitants.[484]

Nevertheless, conflict with Japan over domination of Manchuria and Korea (the Russo-Japanese war 1904-1905) ended in Russia's defeat.[485] In Europe the competition for colonial expansion was in evidence. In 1890, Eritrea became the domain of Italy and between 1895-1896, attempts to colonise Ethiopia resulted in failure and mass casualties whilst those by Russia to found a colony and establish the Eastern Orthodox church in Ethiopia in 1889, had resulted in similar failure.[486]

Conklin has written about the attitudes of contemporary Western scholars and the developments in racial science in Paris from the second half of the mid-nineteenth-century:

> Armchair theorists in industrializing — and especially colonizing — nations compared, classified and ranked data (physical and cultural) about "primitive" peoples and "races" believed to be at an earlier evolutionary stage of political, social, and technological development… "race" was understood to correlate with civilizational levels, and it was assumed that all groups followed the same upward trajectory from ape to human just not at the same speed or with the same outcome. Hence the principal reason for

[483] Conklin, pp. 32–35.
[484] *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness*, ed. by Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Nicole Svobodny, and Ludmilla A. Trigos, Studies in Russian Literature and Theory (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2006), p. 9.
[485] Rosamund Bartlett, 'Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness', *The Russian Review*, 67.1 (2008), 8–33 (pp. 8–10).
[486] Patrick J. Rollins, 'Imperial Russia's African Colony', *Russian Review*, 27.4 (1968), 432–51 (p. 451) <https://doi.org/10.2307/127436>.

> anthropologists to study "primitives" was to reveal new information about the supposedly similar Stone Age predecessors of their own societies.[487]

Whilst these practices and their accompanying beliefs, had become widespread, a waning in public interest in such endeavours could be discerned from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century. The colonial and post-colonial literature scholar Chris Bongie, wrote of a widely held belief— which became manifest through the literature of the period — in 'the gradual loss of alternative horizons that resulted from the diffusion of "Western civilisation" to all corners of the globe.' [488] By this reckoning, the project of European 'exoticism' (which Bongie sees as the period of 'adventure' and colonial expansion prior to the disillusionment of the fin-de siècle) had already drifted into the realms of uncertainty by the time of the Ballets Russes first season in 1909. Bongie makes the point that exoticism in literature often relied upon Othering as a spatial concept into which the dominant culture could be imaginatively projected. Thus, the disillusionment which came with imperialism was specifically formulated by the overpowering and apparent dilution of non-Occidental culture which resulted from 'civilising' initiatives.

Foreign Presence in Paris

In the 1890s a crisis point had been reached regarding the depopulation of France which had raised enough concern to trigger governmental tabulation of foreign citizens.[489] The recognition of their importance to the labour market was however combined with negative questions about their effect on French culture.[490] Some race scientists sought to prove that the mixing of the French people with (specifically) other Europeans was not only acceptable, but important for 'reinvigorating' French society.[491] This was based on the assumption of non-

[487] Conklin, p. 2.
[488] Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 4.
[489] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 4.
[490] Carter, Waller, and Broude, p. 4,5.
[491] Camiscioli, p. 76.

French Europeans in being able to assimilate into French culture by the second generation (as compared with non-white colonial subjects).[492]

Attitudes to Slavs

As has been discussed in relation to Nijinsky's relationship with the aristocrat Prince Lvov and will be later concerning the sexual economy associated with the dancers' body, class was significant to the formation of social rank for Russia and its colonised territories. I nevertheless wish to focus upon the subtleties of ethnic distinction in relation to my wider arguments surrounding racial difference. Self-consciousness on the part of Russian artists of their difference from Western Europeans has been documented. Nijinsky who was ethnically Polish, was taunted as 'the little Japanese' by his Russian school peers for his 'Tatar features'.[493] Benois wrote of him that 'His features were almost vulgar, of slightly Mongolian type'.[494] Richard Taruskin has written of the irony in attitudes toward Tchaikovsky as a composer patronised as an inferior Russian in his dealings with Western composers, but one whose work was largely labelled as Western in style in Russia. Racialised taxonomies which fixed Russians along a trajectory which compared them negatively to Western Europeans, were likely to have failed to take into account the array of racial difference within the territories which came under Russian jurisdiction.

Migrants from the Slavic population were regarded as different from the French white population and as we shall see, this was both advantageous and costly to Ballets Russes' fortunes. Elisa Camiscioli described how 'whiteness' during the Third Republic was an 'intelligable category' which allowed for distinctions to be made between white, non-white and those who were white 'to different degrees'.[495] According to Camiscioli 'the immigrant's proximity to a

[492] Camiscioli, p. 76.
[493] Peter F Ostwald, *Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap into Madness* (New York, NY: Carol Pub. Group, 1991), p. 11.
[494] Benois, p. 289.
[495] Camiscioli, p. 75.

biocultural and essentialized notion of Frenchness, became the standard by which assimilability was measured.' [496]

In her discussion of European imperial politics and the subvariants of whiteness employed as justification for legislative restrictions upon the movement of non-whites in the fin de siècle, Camiscioli has written how:

> The racial hierarchy also included an intermediate category of more distant white populations: Slavs, Eastern European Jews, non-Arab residents of North Africa (i.e. Berbers, also referred to as Kabyles), and Levantines…Although racial theorists described these populations as fundamentally white, they were said to differ physically, intellectually, and morally from other whites, and to have less aptitude for productive labour.[497]

A hierarchical racialisation of the workforce was developed by work science theoretician Jules Amar, who categorised Moroccan and 'Negro' workers, as only able to fulfil unskilled roles within the workforce.[498] This came to be of particular significance because of the labour shortage of the period. Camiscioli describes evidence of racial taxonomy in a coal mining consortium survey which asked employers their preferences amongst their foreign workforce. The expected answers were implicit in the survey's listings which placed Slavs and Greeks after Belgians, Italians and Spanish but ahead of Africans and Asians.[499]

The Ballets Russes designer Alexandre Benois, declared himself 'a Westerner', stating in his memoirs 'Everything in Europe lying West of Russia is dear to me and there is no place in the world dearer than Paris, the city of genius…'[500]

> Yet, stifling deep in my heart my feeling of resentment at the forthcoming victory of the "Barbarians," I felt from the very first days of our work in Paris that the Russian Savages, the Scythians, had brought to the "World Capital," for judgement, the best of art that then existed in the world.[501]
>
> As things promised, the Russian season seemed to satisfy not only our "National Pride," but the needs of culture in general. Our French friends did nothing but repeat to us:

[496] Camiscioli, p. 11.
[497] Camiscioli, p. 13.
[498] Camiscioli, p. 63.
[499] Camiscioli, p. 64.
[500] Benois, p. 284.
[501] Benois, pp. 284–85.

> "You have come at the most suitable moment, you are refreshing us, you are leading us to new themes and feelings." I personally felt convinced that the Russian season of 1909 might initiate a new era of the theatre for France and indeed for all Western Europe.[502]

Juliet Bellows has written of how many critics often remarked of Ballets Russes success in geographic, racial and psychosocial terms which suggested that the refined French arts were becoming overwhelmed by the orientalised Russians.[503] Bellows suggests that with Ballet Russes' presence in Paris, such:

> binaries …failed to hold…In a few short years, the troupe reshaped Parisian art, homes, bodies. Rather than simply play out an Orientalist ideology structured around difference, the Ballets Russes' spectacles set in motion constantly shifting relations of self and other, East and West.[504]

This being the environment into which the Ballets Russes and the Italian Futurists wished to succeed, I would like to turn my attention to the early Ballets Russes productions and some of the ideas around race and nationalism as were expressed by the Italian Futurists at this time.

Racialisations in the Ballets Russes and Futurism

Commentators such as Bellow have identified the popularity of the Ballets Russes in relation to an assumed idea of Russia as the exotic, orientalist East. The composers whose music Diaghilev chose to accompany his ballets (the vast majority of whom were Russian) used melodic lines which employed intervallic shapes suggestive of the East which had novel appeal to Western audiences. These are what Taruskin has described as the 'tell-tale augmented seconds', the musical signs of 'Eastern export' which also included 'close little ornaments and melismas'.[505]

This association was strengthened by productions such as *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade* and the *Polovstian Dances* from *Prince Igor* whose music and lavish designs were all recognised by Parisians

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[502] Benois, p. 285.
[503] Juliet Bellow, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Farnham, Surrey ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 28, 29.
[504] Bellow, p. 29. Bellow's remark pertains to a particular social class, operating within the boundaries of fashion and decorative arts.
[505] Richard Taruskin, "'Entoiling the Falconet": Russian Musical Orientalism in Context', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4.3 (1992), 253–80 (p. 257).

according to assumptions around Russia's orientalist inclination.[506] Richard Taruskin describes how as early on as 1907 (and in contrast to Diaghilev's 1906 art exhibition and its 'snubbing of realist and nationalist painting') a misidentification of national identity through concerts which 'catered conspicuously to hackneyed Parisian notions of quasi-Asiatic Slav exotica'.[507] Bakst's costume designs for *Cléopâtre* and *Schéhérazade* stimulated fashion designers such as Paul Poiret and Jeanne Paquin to create their own versions for wealthy Paris patrons.[508] Such was the trend amongst the wealthy and fashionable for orientalist derived art, literature and personal display, that in Russia, the writer Zanaida Gippius (who presented many different images of herself to the public) most likely drawing upon her reading of Pushkin's *Egyptian Nights* (1835), dressed with a diamond hanging upon her forehead.[509] She also greeted her guests whilst reclining on a couch.[510] Benois write of the Ballets Russes' *Cléopâtre:*

> …the culminating point of *Cléopâtre's* performance was the bacchanale …The bacchanale called forth such enthusiasm in Paris that the conductor was obliged to stop the orchestra for several minutes. If the Polovstian Dances… had succeeded in satisfying the thirst of Parisians for primitive unrestraint, or *Le Pavillon* in pleasing their artistic taste in its love of eighteenth century refinement, the bacchanale in *Cléopâtre* was a wonderful vision of the radiant beauty of the ancient world.[511]

Of *Schéhérazade* Benois wrote of the characterisations:

> …absolutely inimitable are Zobeida (Madame Rubinstein) in her proud, cunning and unrestrained passion, the noble Shahryar (Bulgakov), a king from head to foot, and, finally, the Negro Favourite (Nijinsky), half-cat, half snake, fiendishly agile, feminine and yet wholly terrifying.[512]

With this in mind I would like to consider the Ballets Russes' 1911 production of *Petrushka* for its racialised characterisation. The Blackamoor (originally played by Alexander

[506] Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 9.
[507] Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, p. 206.
[508] Bellow, p. 129.
[509] Olga Matich, p. 171.
[510] Olga Matich, p. 171.
[511] Benois, p. 296.
[512] Benois, p. 316.

Orlov) appeared throughout the ballet.[513] The Moor's inclusion in *Petrushka* referenced the similarly placed 'intermezzo' from the Petrushka (Punch and Judy like) puppet shows of the ballet's designer Alexandre Benois's childhood upon which the production was based. In the traditional version, two Moor puppets would beat each other's heads with sticks.[514]

Alexandre's Benois's invention of the 'foolish Blackamoor' for *Petrushka* was discussed in the previous chapter. We might recall how he was pitted against Petrushka as a sexual rival who benefitted from 'the undeserved passion awakened in the Ballerina'.[515] The scene invented by Benois on hearing Stravinsky's music for the Blackamoor's room, was of an exotically decorated space with a chaise lounge draped in tiger skin, royal palms, sumptuous oranges, pinks and greens. It was the backdrop to the Moor's dance with a coconut. 'The ballerina appears at the moment of the Blackamoor's wild, religious ecstasy before the cocoanut [sic]'.[516] At this point in the ballet, the Moor bows down before the coconut in an act of fetish worship. This would have made sense to those Europeans who held a common perception at the fin-de-siècle of Africans as intellectually unsophisticated, heathenistic and idolatrous. The relationship between the ballerina and the Moor can be considered a transgression of racial boundaries; an acting out of a real fear of miscegenation, a matter which was being discussed in Paris at an official level (discussed above) and from a black racial perspective, a violation of cultural identity through mangled notions of intelligence and religiosity. This should be noted as a complex matter where the changes in the social order might be acted out through fashion and the arts; consider a later period in the 1920s and the high status of African American writers and performers in Paris.

To return to *Petrushka*, one of the production's backdrops presented a troupe of Goyaesque witches whose faces echoed the racially loaded, exaggerated lips and eyes of the Moor, thus equating him with witchcraft and black magic.

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[513] Richard Shead, 'Triumph of the West' in *Ballet Russes* (London: The Apple Press, 1989), pp. 20-71 (p.47).
[514] Benois, p. 326.
[515] Benois, p. 328.
[516] Benois, p. 329.

Fig. 23

Alexandre Benois, Design for the front cloth from *Petrushka* (Copenhagen revival), 1925, pen, ink, and tempera on paper, location unknown source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Petrushka_drop_curtain.jpg

The function of the backdrops operated not only as scene setting (we know the action takes place in St Petersburg because of the presence of St Isaac's Cathedral) but also to help navigate the audience along a particular path within the existing narrative.[517]

It is perhaps the weight given to race as part of the characterisation which marks it out as a comparatively striking feature when compared with other Ballet Russes productions; for instance Nijinsky's darkened skin for his role as the Golden Slave in *Schéhérazade*. This pertains to the essentialisation of recognisable specificities surrounding race such as orientalised dress, red lips, blackened skin as well as symbols such as coconuts, palm trees, witchcraft and superstition. Race is also shown through personality traits. Benois's reference to the Moor's brutish prowess, so bewitching to the ballerina coupled with his intellectual simplicity, raises the spectre of miscegenation once again.[518] But to what precedent might we owe the choices that the Ballets

[517] Richard Buckle, 'A God Twice Buried' in *In the Wake of Diaghilev* (London: William, Collins, Sons and Co Limited, 1982), pp.77-90 (p.78).
[518] Benois, p. 328.

Russes exponents made in developing particular roles according to western signifiers of racial difference?

Black Presence in Russia

Apart from their likely exposure to non-European ethnic groups through performances and national exhibitions whilst touring across Europe — in particular Paris — the creators of the Ballets Russes may have experienced such ethnic diversity from within Russia itself. Catharine Nepomnyashchy believes for example that amongst the elite social milieu of writer Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) 'Africans — called in Russian interchangeably *arapy, negry, efiopy* — (blackamoors, Negroes, or Ethiopians)' would have been a familiar presence owing to 'the rage for black domestic servants that swept the Russian court during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in imitation of the courts of France, England and Prussia'.[519] Abram Petrovich Gannibal (1696-1781) who was Pushkin's great grandfather is believed to have been born in either Abyssinia or Chad.[520] He was abducted by the Turkish Sultan and brought to Russia where he became part of Peter the Great's Court, was educated in France and became a 'respected military engineer.[521] In nineteenth-century Russia, African American sailors would also have been a noticeable presence whilst still occupying the lower echelons of society.[522] Allison Blakely's inquiry into the presence of black people in Imperial Russia revealed upwards of a few thousand people of African origin up to the twentieth century. She reports how data was unreliably

[519] Please also see Alexandre Benois's illustration for *Le Pavillon d'Armide* Fig.5 where the presence of the black child servants is a feature. Nepomnyashchy, Svobodny, and Trigos, p. 12. Lynn Garafola also reminds us of how 'in Diaghilev's version of *La Tragédie de Salomé* (1913), the period's most famous nymphet…danced for an all-male cast of "Negroes" and executioners, as well as the severed head of John the Baptist.' Garafola and Baer, p. 250.
[520] C. Wight, 'The Negro of Peter the Great' <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/blackeuro/pushkinnegro.html> [accessed 3 September 2016].
[521] C. Wight, 'Pushkin's African Background - the Pushkins and the Gannibals' <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/blackeuro/pushkinback.html> [accessed 3 September 2016].
[522] Nepomnyashchy, Svobodny, and Trigos, p. 13.

collated because black born Russians were recorded as 'Arabs and Jews'.[523] Blakely also described a settlement of a few hundred 'Black Sea Negroes' from the Caucasus Mountains whose origins were thought to possibly be a legacy of eighteenth century Turkish and Georgian slave ownership. [524] With this in mind and the knowledge that ethnographic exhibitions were held in Russia, I would like to begin the argument that *Le Sacre* was a derivative of forms of display such as World Fairs which were so prolific at the time, thus making it recognisable to audiences, but uncomfortable for its placement within a privileged space such as a concert hall. What further evidence might give credence to this supposition? I would like to begin with an overview of the phenomenon of the display of human beings throughout Europe.

Colonial Exhibition Practices [525]

The widespread practice of displaying primarily non-European human beings for the edification, entertainment or ideological reinforcement of national identity to the general public, was a Europe-wide phenomenon (which included Moscow, St Petersburg and English-speaking domains such as North America and Australia) during the nineteenth-century.[526] In London between 1830 and 1860 displays of exotic people were popular and therefore profitable. [527] Many such exhibitions which endured into the twentieth century were fraudulent. For example Robert Bogdan's research described how two men with learning disabilities from Ohio were displayed — along with an elaborate story of their capture — as Wild Men of Borneo for over fifty years up until 1905. Of the deception Bogdan makes the point that 'By knowingly drawing on images and symbols which appealed to public sensibilities, organizers and showmen created public

[523] Allison Blakely, 'The Negro in Imperial Russia: A Preliminary Sketch', *The Journal of Negro History*, 61.4 (1976), 351–61 (p. 353) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2717002>.
[524] Blakely, p. 354.
[525] I have borrowed this term from the African-Canadian art historian Charmaine Nelson who uses it in reference to her descriptions of the experiences of Saat-Jee Baartman; a South African woman whose body was displayed in Europe both during and after her death. Nelson, pp. 125–27.
[526] Blanchard, p. 32.
[527] Blanchard, p. 81.

identities for their exhibits which were guaranteed to 'pull in the punters'.[528] The dancer Lydia Sokolova, born Hilda Munnings (who danced the role of the Chosen One for Massine's production of *Le Sacre* in 1920) described the appeal of such displays, whilst explaining how as a child in London, one of her favourite treats was a visit to the music-hall:

> A company of Red Indians came several years running to the Hippodrome to take part in an amazing Wild West show. These men walked about London in all their feathers and war paint. The stalls were abolished and the whole ground floor became a battle field, which in the second half of the show was transformed into a Lake. Into this the Indian braves dived from horseback from a breathtaking height above the proscenium arch.[529]

That this satisfied in the spectator a pre-conception of associations of the Othered individuals with the performances they displayed as described above, was of great importance to the encounter. Regarding the display of ethnic villages which became a common feature of colonial and national and universal exhibitions, the different displays on offer:

> functioned along roughly similar lines: dances and processions with a musical accompaniment; picturesque costumes and interchangeable names for troupes; reconstructed battles; close association with animals in an exotic setting; cultural or cult attractions… 'village births' [530]

Of important note is the interchangeability of travelling troupes according to the likely expectation of their public, thus 'the same troupe could, for example, be 'from Dahomea' whilst performing in France and 'from Togo' in Germany.'[531] A general impression of what was thought to be African clearly sufficed. Asa Bharathi Larsson has stated how:

> …the staging of "racial diversity" was constructed around three distinct functions: to amuse, to inform and to educate. That meant that the same group could pass from an ethnological exhibition to music hall, from the science laboratory to a "native" village or circus act…Regarding shows in Sweden, ethnological exhibitions often combined a lecture and the actual show. It is important to note that a visit by the Swedish crowd was not just a chance to see racial diversity, but more importantly to understand one's own place within the racial hierarchy.[532]

[528] Blanchard, p. 90.
[529] Sokolova, p. 8,9.
[530] Blanchard, p. 33.
[531] Blanchard, p. 33.
[532] Bharathi Larsson, p. 149.

With such markers of difference as described above operating in tandem with visitor expectations, the same author has described a hotel advertisement for an event in Sweden in 1886.[533] The poster was an invitation to view an authentic and wild, African man named Uomogogowa, who worshipped the sun, moon and animals and who would perform dance and song in his national costume.[534] Larsson wrote:

> Even before the Swedish audience went to see Uomogogowa the crowd had received instructions on how to look, what to feel and experience. I argue that an imperial gaze structured these popular events, in which the Other was staged in a strict racial hierarchy. Both textual and visual displays reinforced the notion of where the audience would place themselves in the event…[535]

In Italy researchers point to ethnographic display working in tandem with Catholic missionary work and the use of human examples to support the 'civilizing' operations of Christian conversions abroad. This brought Italy in line with other human zoos in Europe where people captured from colonial territories were exhibited and forced to perform in such a way that would reinforce the superficial cultural distinctions between colonial subjects and the Europeans observing them.

In 1884 the Italian General Exhibition was held in Turin. Guido Abbattista and Nicola Labanca have described how this was the first of its kind in Italy and served to showcase the spoils (both human and object) of its military conquest of the Bay of Assab in Eritrea.[536] Abbysinians were displayed at the Palermo National Exhibition in 1891-2. Visitors would have witnessed 'family groups, domestic art, crafts, music, dances and forms of entertainment' purportedly replicating their social circumstances as they would have lived abroad. Citizens of major Italian cities between 1890 and 1906 were able to experience the international touring groups such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.[537]

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[533] Bharathi Larsson, p. 144.
[534] Bharathi Larsson, p. 144.
[535] Bharathi Larsson, pp. 144–45.
[536] Blanchard, p. 342.
[537] Blanchard, p. 344.

Stravinsky and Diaghilev may well have witnessed such spectacles. Oscar Thompson in his biography of Debussy wrote of how:

> The Cakewalk was then of exotic fascination to Debussy and his friends. Gabriel Astruc, who had visited New York and Chicago and observed the dance in all its strutting ascendency at the World's Columbian Exposition, was something of an authority on a subject in which the most serious-minded artists were absorbed around midnight or thereafter. Negroes of both sexes were imported to the music halls of Paris, there to tend the sacred fire. With them came such tunes as *Whistling Rufus*, which Americans will dimly remember as a two-step of a day when Cakewalk was already a legend. But the fad was of long duration in the French capital. When Debussy wrote *Golliwog's Cakewalk* for his adored little "Chou-Chou," the child whose death was so soon to follow his own, the new century was well under way.[538]

The art historian Petrine Archer-Shaw has described performances such as the Cakewalk as stemming from:

> a historical imperative whereby blacks learned to perform to white needs in order to survive in white societies. At the same time, it entrenched within blacks a self-loathing and the desire to be the masters of the whites rather than their slaves.[539]

Having crossed into vaudeville the dance itself became popular amongst both black and whites:

> The dance itself was based on a formal European *quadrille d'honneur* and was performed by blacks in fancy dress who mimicked high society 'white folks'. It involved much strutting and prancing and mannered gestures.[540]

It is not implausible that Marinetti too may have witnessed new dance styles whilst visiting World Expositions or witnessing the café/bar culture of Parisian nightlife when he left Egypt for Paris in 1893 to complete his Baccalaureate studies. In 1898 he moved to Milan where he would later found his art periodical *Poesia* 1905-9. Maintaining his links with Paris during the period, he published there in 1902 a poem *La Conquête des étoiles* and a play *Le Roi bombance* in 1905.[541] By 1917, the year in which Marinetti wrote his *Manifesto of Futurist Dance*, in which he described the mechanistic attributes of the Cakewalk, Paris had already played host to a number

[538] Oscar Thompson, *Debussy Man and Artist* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1940), p. 10.
[539] Archer Straw, p. 43.
[540] Archer Straw, p. 44.
[541] MoMA *The Collection Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Italian, 1876–1944)* http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=3771 accessed 4/10/14

of expositions which illustrated the peoples of the world.[542] In any case Marinetti already had a relationship with Sudanese and Egyptian culture (through his Sudanese wet nurse and North Africa birth place) which as already shown, was in evidence throughout his writing.

A famous example of the impact upon Western composers of the music showcased at international expositions is that of Debussy. Debussy, whom Stravinsky knew in Paris, visited the 1889 World Fair with two of his friends:

> New musical vistas were opened for him, not by the printed pages of imported domestic scores, but by unfamiliar sounds that attracted his sensitive ear at the Exposition Universelle of 1889-90. In the company of Paul Dukas and Robert Godet he turned musical explorer along the Champs de Mars and the Esplanade des Invalides, where in open air, or tents or booths, native musicians from the Far East brought to Paris a medley of the exotic.[543]

Thompson also remarks of how around the same time, Debussy attended concerts of Rimsky-Korsakoff's music, stating of Stravinsky's former teacher how:

> The globe-trotting Rimsky, always with an ear cocked for the exotic, recorded in his own memoirs his interest in some of the native orchestras he heard at the exposition, notably those from Algeria and Hungary, but found nothing in the new French music of the day to leave any indelible impression on his musical consciousness.[544]

To give yet another example in this vein, as a young fan of Antonin Dvořák's 8th Symphony, I sought out more of his work in our school library. I came upon his F Major Op. 96 (1893) known now informally as the American quartet. Its association with specifically *Black* America was made clear to me however on finding our particular copy which was entitled the 'Nigger' quartet (on the printed label). Dvořák had come to know African American spirituals through his association with the African American composer and baritone Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949) who was a student of his between 1892-1895 at the National Conservatory of Music, New York.[545] During his stay in America, Dvořák was criticised for encouraging Eurocentric composer's to incorporate elements of African American and Indian music into

[542] Marinetti, p. 138.
[543] Oscar Thompson, pp. 91–92.
[544] Oscar Thompson, p. 92.
[545] Samuel A. Floyd, 'The Invisibility and Fame of Harry T. Burleigh: Retrospect and Prospect', *Black Music Research Journal*, 24.2 (2004), 179–94 (p. 182) <https://doi.org/10.2307/4145490>.

their work.[546] Rather than a visit to a fair, Dvořák's 'exposure' to African American music was from direct contact with African Americans (he had other black students also).[547] His example is nevertheless illustrative of the burgeoning of interest and respect for music which was often marginalised and deemed worthless to mainstream, Eurocentric culture. It is also perhaps indicative of how advances in communication and travel made pre-existing cultures, formerly unknown to most ordinary Europeans, accessible.

Regarding the nationalist rhetoric which so often peppered Futurist proclamations, it is worth noting Blanchard's view that the practice of displaying human beings in zoos could be closely linked to 'the quest for identity associated with the construction of nation-states…'[548] Further on Blanchard writes:

> Scientific positivism and faith in progress can be understood only against the backdrop of the profound anthropological concerns which permeated the social fabric, undoing the collective psyche and obscuring the future from view. Human zoos were part of a larger attempt to provide reassurance concerning identity.[549]

Dalcroze, Rhythm and Ostinato

'It is horrible — I can hear nothing' [550] Claude Debussy's remark on hearing *Le Sacre.*

I want to begin to argue the case for *Le Sacre* as a performance of intrusion and provocation. This will be explored with regard to *ostinato* in the music and consequently the dance of *Le Sacre* and specifically as a referent which caused anxiety for its cultural composition of spectators. In exploring the extent to which Debussy appropriated aspects of Gamelan Orchestras of Java for his own work, Brent Hugh has described one particular element ostinato, in the following terms:

> An ostinato is a figure which is usually rather short and repeats many times. Because it repeats and typically does not change or develop much over time, an ostinato often

[546] Floyd, p. 182.
[547] Floyd, p. 182.
[548] Blanchard, p. 8.
[549] Blanchard, p. 9.
[550] Sert, p. 132.

> imparts a static quality to the music. An example of Debussy's use of ostinato is from "Pagodas."[551]

I will argue that ostinato created not only an intolerable aural and visual intrusion of the 'modern' — as has so often been argued — but a deeply uncomfortable sense of cognitive dissonance which I will suggest was triggered by an interpretation of transgression from social and racial boundaries.

Le Sacre's music is distinguished in places by its strident ostinato. In its most famous instance, the chord which introduces the 'Augurs of Spring' repeats itself throughout the work a total of two hundred and twelve times.[552] In *Stravinsky: A Critical Survey*, Eric Walter White's perception, was that the rhythm in *Le Sacre* functioned as audience provocation:

> More important if the music was to succeed in playing on the listeners' nerves, appealing to their instincts rather than their reason and inducing a feeling of real panic, was the question of rhythm. Stravinsky chose an undeviating metronomical beat for each movement or episode and banished all possibility of *tempo rubato*, except in the impressionist introduction to Part One. The metrical foundation is often underlined by *ostinato* accompaniments which show much variety of structure. Some are fully developed at their first appearance; others are built up as they go along. In the Ritual Dance there is a complex *ostinato*, mainly for percussion…[553]

Both supporters and detractors of the work highlighted rhythmic precedence as one of the score's most distinguishing components:

> The gestures are arbitrary, and have been specially designed by Nijinsky. The music is concerned, *apparently with nothing but rhythm* [my italics]. Of melody we find nothing to speak of; and as far as harmony is concerned, all those who have sought to be strident and unintelligible…will have a jealous eye for M. Stravinsky.[554]

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[551] Brent Hugh, 'Claude Debussy and the Javanese Gamelan', 1998 <http://brenthugh.com/debnotes/gamelan.html> [accessed 2 September 2016].
[552] Daniel K. L Chua, 'Rioting with Stravinsky: A Particular Analysis of the Rite of Spring', *Music Analysis*, 26.1–2 (2007), 59–109 (p. 63) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2249.2007.00250.x>.
[553] Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: A Critical Survey, 1882-1946* (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1997), p. 40. NB Tempo Rubato refers to flexibility in meter for expressive effect, as directed by a composer in a score and interpreted for example by a conductor. It is this absence of rubato in key passages through which White makes his point about Stravinsky's unrelenting ostinato in *Le Sacre*. NB the italicisations of ostinato in the quote are White's own.
[554] S.B.L, 'Nijinsky and the Dancing Revolution', *The Sketch*, 1913, 96 (p. 96). Quoted in Truman C. Bullard p. 358

The Times in London published an article which stated, 'What is really of chief interest in the dancing is the employment of rhythmical counterpoints in the choral movements….[555] In the years following *Le Sacre's* première, Stravinsky's music has been given precedence over Nijinsky's lost choreography, the former for its independence from the latter which was believed by many to be responsible for the uproar of the opening night.[556] Nijinsky's ballet was dropped from the Ballets Russes' repertoire following the first performances. This perception of success and failure somehow divides the music from the choreography in a manner which denies the originally intended integration of both; a matter considered notable to those first observers. Such a union had uncertain beginnings. Stravinsky himself initially showed some irritation with what he saw as Nijinsky's shortcomings in his understanding of rhythmic values in music and its notation:

> …in trying to explain to him the construction of my work in general outline and in detail I discovered that I should achieve nothing until I had taught him the very rudiments of music: values — semibreve, minim, crotchet, quaver, etc. — bars, rhythm, tempo, and so on.[557]

And further on:

> When, in listening to music, he [Nijinsky] contemplated movements, it was always necessary to remind him that he must make them accord with the tempo, its divisions and values.[558]

Stravinsky later refuted these claims about Nijinsky and it should be noted how the memoirs from which they emerged were written twenty years after the event. Still they recalled how Stravinsky had his own ideas about how the choreography *should* have been realised,

> In composing the *Sacre* I had imagined the spectacular part of the performance as a series of rhythmic mass movements of the greatest simplicity which would have an instantaneous effect on the audience, with no superfluous details or complications such as would suggest effort…
>
> Of the Sacrificial dance:

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[555] Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 104–5.
[556] Dr Davinia Caddy, *The Ballets Russes and Beyond: Music and Dance in Belle-Époque Paris* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 121.
[557] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 71.
[558] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 72.

> The music of that dance, clear and well defined, demanded a corresponding choreography — simple and easy to understand.[559]

Stravinsky proceeded to state how he did not feel Nijinsky achieved any of these aims. Interestingly however, his demand for 'a corresponding choreography' was akin to the well-documented aim which Diaghilev pursued of having Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's system of Eurythmics integrated into *Le Sacre's* choreography. Dalcroze's system for teaching rhythm advocated strict physical adherence to the rhythmic components of music with the body's arms replicating the music's rhythms whilst the legs corresponded to the note values.[560] Diaghilev, Nijinsky and his sister Nijinska visited Dalcroze's school in Hellerau, Germany in the winter of 1911-12.[561] It was following this that Marie Rambert (a student of Dalcroze) was employed by Diaghilev to assist Nijinsky in tackling the rhythmic complexity of Stravinsky's score. [562]A remark made by arts' critic Emile Vuillermoz's review in *La Revue Musicale* June 15, 1913, counters Stravinsky's sense of a failure of correspondence between music and choreography and Nijinsky's weak understanding of rhythm whilst still maintaining a disapproval of the method:

> There is nothing more irritating than the laborious practices [Nijinsky] borrowed from eurhythmics that often betray the rhythm…Dalcroze students have a peculiarly "metrical" approach; they are trained to hunt out the strong beats crouching in the melodic bushes. What service can this particular system render to dancers charged with clarifying a modern rhythm?[563]

I wish here to consider again the ballet *Petrushka*. Writing about it, Alexandre Benois remarked upon the success of the coupling of Fokine's choreography on stage with Stravinsky's music:

> To-day, when I listen to the music of this second act of *Petrouchka* and watch what the artist is expressing,…in his gestures and mime — *demonstrating* the absolute co-ordination of action and music — it is difficult even for me to believe that the music was not written to a set programme, instead of the programme being subsequently fitted to the music.[564]

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[559] Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, pp. 82, 83.
[560] Ostwald, p. 63.
[561] Truman C. Bullard, p. 34.
[562] Ostwald, p. 63.
[563] Lederman, p. 22.
[564] Benois, p. 328.

Richard Shead has added an interesting dimension as regards the favourable reception of Stravinsky's score at *Petrushka's* premiere.[565] He believes its being welcomed was owing to its having been performed within a theatre as opposed to a concert hall. There is a suggestion here that the dissociation of music and visual form would have rendered more pronounced the acuity of harsh dissonances and unrelenting repetition so indicative of this work. In combining theatre with music within a theatrical context, the lines that intersected between episodic narrative and semi-discordancy, attested to an apparent success of confluence of the familiar with the radically new. *Petrushka* therefore was a musical choreographic coupling with a familiar story-telling narrative, with reference to classical ballet (even if in the form of parody it was still present), and within an environment which removed the audience from its subject firstly through its depiction of a time and place not of Paris and through the action being presented as a stage within a stage, a proscenium arch containing the unfolding events. Early on in the ballet, the puppets' 'stage' within the proscenium stage extends this separation still further. This all points towards conditions being such that the difficulties presented in the newness of the music were made more digestible through the employment of the familiar narrative component and the physical and imaginative geographical separation of audience from the action on stage. It is worth recalling at this stage that according to Stravinsky, *Le Sacre* had 'choreographic succession' but 'no plot'.[566]

I wish now to switch my focus to another related matter. This further concerns observations of the relationship of rhythm to music in the realms of dance. In 1924 the dance critic André Levinson wrote of Stravinsky's work as indicating a return to the inseparability of music to dance as had been traditional in Baroque music of eighteenth century Europe.[567]

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[565] Shead, p. 47.
[566] Stravinskaja and Craft, p. 75.
[567] André Levinson, Joan Ross Acocella, and Lynn Garafola, *André Levinson on Dance: Writings from Paris in the Twenties* (Hanover, N.H: Wesleyan University Press : University Press of New England, 1991), p. 36.

> …music suddenly desires to become dance again, breaking through the shackles of counterpoint, stripping off its harmonic investiture and keeping only the lightest web of orchestration — a return to the primitive dance of the beginning of things.[568]

Further on in describing *Petrushka* Levinson writes,

> This music — (sound strongly formed and given shape by the force of its rhythm) — where countless suggestive harmonies dissolve into one vast general effect of motion, — this music dictates to the dancers their steps, their attitudes, their every gesture, burlesque or tragic as the case may be.[569]

He refers here to the de-anchoring effect of Stravinsky's attenuated tonality. Levinson made the point that *Petrushka's* tonal thinning or rather harmonic diffusion, underlined its pronounced rhythmicity which in turn made particular demands of the dancers and choreography. This has overtones of assumptions which presume particular responses of dancers to rhythm.

This suggestion is made more explicitly by Ramsay Burt writing in *Alien Bodies* who described the differences and similarities between Massine and Nijinsky's choreographies for *Le Sacre.* Regarding Massine's 1920 version of *Le Sacre* he wrote: 'It must nevertheless have conveyed some sense of the expressive power of ritual movement independent of any mimetic signification.'[570] Whilst elsewhere Burt makes clear the dislocation between European choreographers' direct experience of ritual practices and choreography premised around the same principles, the statement above suggests an intrinsic expressive, communicative, quality inherent in or rather natural to, the movement itself. Witness again a description of *Petrushka* and note in particular that the choreography was by Michel Fokine and that the Dalcroze method is not discussed by historians as being in anyway a feature of this work. The following account of the impact of solo role is therefore of particular note:

> The mimed monologue is expressed by the composer with all the freedom of a recitatif, and the dancer reproduces the musical line by responding to every slightest variation of

[568] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 36.
[569] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 37.
[570] Ramsay Burt, *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, 'Race' and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 167.

> the rhythm. This two-fold motion, at once poignant and laughable, holds the audience breathless.[571]

Were this the case then the reason for the close alignment of choreography to music was not for reasons of an imposition of the Dalcroze of Eurythmics upon the choreographer (often cited as the reason for the rigidisation in form identified as being problematic of Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre*) or a homogenised, literal, choreographic mirroring of the music, but because of the dictates of the orchestration and in particular its use of rhythm. My other point here would be that an audience held 'breathless' by such a combination is indeed remarkable and particularly notable for its being given as the reason for its amazement. Might the audience of *Le Sacre* have been startled for similar reasons?

I would like to return here to Levinson's view of the music having been stripped back to its rhythmic basis and then his further association of this with 'a return to the primitive dance of the beginning of things'.[572] What might we infer from this statement about Levinson's belief in what he terms 'primitive', having lived in a different location and historical time from pre-Slavic Russia? We might make some deductions based on another commentary of his on *The Negro Dance: Under European Eyes* published in 1925.[573] In it Levinson declared 'primitive dancing' (to this definition he included folk dances of many European countries but cited 'Negro "steps"' as a conspicuous example) as being 'based upon a direct and audible expression of rhythm.'[574] This he contrasts with classic dance which he suggests has a relationship with music whereby they 'each express the rhythm that is implicit in both, in two different but analogous ways.'[575] Further on he writes:

> Whether he is shod in the brodequins of Andalusia or the iron-rimmed boots of the Cossack, the primitive dancer stresses with a vigour, gay or savage, the heavy accents of a monotonous but striking rhythm.[576]

[571] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 38.
[572] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 36.
[573] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, pp. 69–75.
[574] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 71.
[575] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 71.
[576] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 72.

The suggestion that musical rhythm was once again dictating the essence of choreography, cannot be considered in (Western) historical isolation but instead must take into account the polemic of – to use the example that Levinson himself offers — classical versus the folk dancer. If the merge of high and low culture — itself a marker of modernity in Futurist terms — could be intersected with race, its significance to Levinson's examination was in the necessity of its being remarked upon owing to the *presence* of black people as performers in *La Revue Negre*. The signification of this commentary therefore extends to his and other commentators assumptions about the responses of dancers to the overt presence of rhythm in music, the association of such music primarily with 'low' or 'Othered' culture and the suggestion of impropriety which may have been construed from the *presence* within the concert hall of such music and dance in amongst other established, European dance forms.

The Score Untethered

('Harmony' — or otherwise)

To repeat, as many have concluded, that *Le Sacre's* offense was primarily about Nijinsky's choreography, is to ignore the well-documented fact that the choreography closely mirrored the score. I want to argue for the possibility that the separation of Stravinsky's music from Nijinsky's choreography *deintensified* its potency thus increasing its acceptability as a concert piece.

Let us consider further how the work came to be regarded in the subsequent years following its being dropped from the Ballets Russes' repertoire, until Massine's rechoreography of the work in 1920. When Stravinsky's score was performed as a concert piece without the ballet, the work became not only accepted but even celebrated. As Richard Taruskin has written, *Le Sacre* was 'rescued' and began its process to 'colossal iconic status' when it was first performed devoid of choreography in Paris in 1914:[577]

> It is an unequalled status (but for the single possible exception…); but what possesses that status is just the score, the artefact — or the experience —, that was vindicated by

[577] Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', pp. 273–74.

> Pierre Monteux on 5 April 1914, not the *Gesamtkunstwerk* that went down in flames on 29 May 1913.That night in May is the date that shimmers in history, but the permanence of The Rite was assured on that later night in April. It is from then that the unbroken tradition of the piece—that is, of the score—in performance dates.[578]

Might it have been the manner of *combining* the ballet and the score which made it go 'down in flames' giving it an indigestibility which made for at best, a luke warm/polite response in the performances immediately subsequent to the premiere —i.e. six more times in total in Paris and London — and at worst a source of consternation and argument.[579]

This correspondence between Stravinsky's musical score and Nijinsky's choreography was noted as a distinct feature to those first witnessing *Le Sacre* who wrote about it afterwards. An attendee of one of the first London performances wrote anonymously 9 August 1913, in response to a letter published in *The Times* as follows:

> A welcome analysis in *The Times* (26.7.13) showed that the admirable novelty in the choreography of *Le Sacre du Printemps* lay in its logical exhaustive exploitation of the composer's rhythms.

The commentator proceeds to compare *Le Sacre* with *Jeux* for the latter's music being less fore-fronted. Further on he writes in praise of *Jeux* for its non-verisimilitude, before again contrasting it with *Le Sacre*. This brings me to another revealing statement, this time written by musicologist and composer David Schiff:

> The most rhythmically charged sections of *Le Sacre*, the "Dancing out of the Earth," which ends part I, "The Naming and Honoring of the Chosen One," which begins the *Totentanz* of part 2, and the final "Sacrificial Dance" display intriguingly West African rhythmic patterns and textures…I can think of no precedent for this kind of rhythm in Russian or European music, but it strongly resembles the West African Husago dance transcribed by A.M. Jones. African sculpture was the rage among Parisian Cubist painters at the time; African music was imported as well.[580]

Schiff here refers in this quote to the musicologist A.M. Jones whose transcriptions of the music of the Ewe tribe of Ghana were published in two volumes in 1959.[581] Here then we should consider a critical factor which was paramount in A.M. Jones mind in his transcriptions.

[578] Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', p. 274.
[579] Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', p. 272.
[580] David Schiff, *The Ellington Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p. 81.
[581] Arthur Morris Jones, *Studies in African Music* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Pr, 1978).

Significantly, in the preface of the volume of A.M. Jones' work to which Schiff refers, he takes pains to explain that his omission of 'the interesting and highly skilled *Atsiagbeko* dance' was due to the inextricability of the accompanying drumming to which it corresponded.[582] 'Thus to describe *Atsiagbeko* one would have to mark on the score in detail the choreography as well as the drums — a process too complex for inclusion in a book which covers so much ground'.[583] With regard to the responses of the audience to *Le Sacre*, I believe the inseparability of music and choreography was precisely the point. I believe there was an intensification of the experience of the performance through the integration of music with dancing which made the experience not only powerful but intolerably intrusive. It might be noted here that the inseparability of dance and music which A.M Jones identified had wider application to ritual and folk expression beyond West Africa. Working in somewhat ideological opposition to those European explorers who removed and further decontextualised artefacts from their original environments through their display within European museums and art galleries, Jones recognised that the documentation of the music divested of its dance — and the context into which it was created and originally performed in West Africa — would be unscholarly.

The effects of a weighty, dissonant harmonic score with an augmented Symphony orchestra sometimes playing in deep, unison ostinato, often at fortissimo and for extended periods, is likely to have had a particular force. It would have led to a psychological intrusion and a specific racially inflected interpretation. The author scholar Toni Morrison has argued the case for the position as dominant of the white normative culture in American literature, as being dependent upon the — culturally marginalised — African-American presence. Morrison starts her argument using as an example, a passage from the book *The Words To Say It* (1975) by Marie Cardinal. In it, its white author identifies the start of her descent into psychological collapse at the point where she is overwhelmed with the brilliance of Louis Armstrong's trumpet

[582] Jones, p. vii.
[583] Jones, p. vii.

improvisation at a live concert. 'Gripped by panic at the idea of dying there in the middle of spasms, stomping feet, and the crowd howling, I ran into the street like someone possessed'[584]

Morrison comments upon how this incident as a trigger is unremarked upon by the author and the author's therapist. Morrison writes:

> What solicited my attention was whether the cultural associations of jazz were as important to Cardinal's "possession" as were its intellectual foundations. I was interested, as I had been for a long time, in the way black people ignite critical moments of discovery or change emphasis in literature not written by them.[585]

She states in summary after a further example: 'Again, an internal devastation is aligned with a socially governed relationship with race'.[586] These are cited by Morrison as examples of extreme cognitive dissonance caused by the obvious value of Black culture as it clashes with the entrenched axioms of supposed white superiority. For me, even the use of words such as 'stomping' and 'possession' in Cardinal's description give away something of the argument Morrison is trying to make because, like the reviews of *Le Sacre*, they allude to particular associations with non-Western music and Othered culture. As Morrison says 'Would an Edith Piaf concert or a Dvořák composition have had the same effect?'[587]

The impact of *Le Sacre* upon its Western European audience would have been mediated through any previous exposure to any non-Occidental individuals and their supposed cultural practices prior to the audience entering the auditorium of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. What if such introductions to other cultures were supplied through World Fairs, popular literature or museums, perhaps without a contextualising ethno-artefactual foundation, or biased by an agenda which supported an ongoing programme of imperial domination? Then the likelihood that a production labelled tribal from the outset, which featured heavy stamping in unison to equally rhythmic music, within a programme of traditional ballet, would prove difficult is

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[584] Marie Cardinal, *The Words to Say It: An Autobiographical Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Van Vactor & Goodheart, 1984).
[585] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. viii.
[586] Morrison, p. ix.
[587] Morrison, p. viii.

unsurprising, especially if considered alongside questions around what might and might not have constituted art and in what environments (formal or popular). To reiterate; *Le Sacre's* declaration of being tribal would have brought to the fore any pre-existing notions of what 'tribal' was understood to mean. Thus for both A.M Jones and the first audiences of *Le Sacre*, the combination of music and dance had a particular signification which could not be ignored.

I wish at this point to acknowledge a divergence from Futurist theory, in my arguing the case for an uncomfortable intensity of experience in the coupling of music with such closely corresponding dance in *Le Sacre*. For in his *Manifesto of Futurist Dance 1917,* Marinetti raised specific objections to the combining of dance with music. Dance in general he believed should be performed independently so as to keep it free from music's passéism and sentimentalism.[588] Is this indeed contradictory to my argument or does the rhythmic primacy in particular sections of *Le Sacre* and the aggressive drive of the music make this work the exception? I would like to suggest that Marinetti's praise of Nijinsky's masculine, anti-sentimentalist choreography and also of the Dalcroze system in the same manifesto is testament to my proposition. My theory supports the idea that the very combination of music and dance generated a powerful signifier which provoked a complacent audience into a wakeful, reactive state.

'Affinities'

Using race and ethnicity as a lens through which to view *Le Sacre*, adds another possible dimension to the work which necessitates our re-evaluation of the decontextualisation and appropriation of ethnographic material from specifically African and Pacific nations by artists, musicians and dancers of the early twentieth century. These were entangling factors which contributed to a continuous flow of changing attitudes and ideas of which the Ballets Russes was a prime example of fluctuations in public opinion. *Le Sacre* can be considered as an example of the tensions which would become apparent when the dabbling with a form of exoticism, of which fashion was an important tool, came up against racial hierarchy and social imperialism.

[588] McCarren, p. 100.

This uneasiness could be alleviated through the denigration of and distancing from the 'natives'; an extension of the economic exploitation and control which justified the status quo. A visitor to a human zoo could choose when to visit, how long to stay, what to see and when to leave. Human 'exhibits' were safely confined, told how to behave, where to go and what to do. The showman staging such events empowered his viewing public through their gaze, with absolute power and control.

Might we possibly then consider *Le Sacre* as turning the tables on its 'white' audience? But what evidence do we have for such a supposition?

As stated above, Truman C Bullard's important research revealed the audience for *Le Sacre's* opening night to be ticket subscribers:

> From a historical perspective it is fortunate indeed that *Le Sacre du Printemps* was first presented to a subscription audience, for even though the list of subscribers has been lost, a profile of its constitution and previous musical experiences in the series can be drawn…as part of a single, non-subscription program.[589]

Bullard raises this as a point upon which to found an argument around responses to *Jeux* and *Le Sacre*; the subscription audience would have experienced both. Bullard continues by quoting at length from observers of the audience. He draws upon Gabriel Astruc the director of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, who wrote whilst in a 'state of cynicism and discouragement' after the theatre's closure:[590]

> Now comes the spring and the Grande Saison de Paris; this is the moment when the people of North America, Argentina, Brazil, Italy and England descend upon our caravansaries, our restaurants, our theaters, and our racetracks.[591]

Astruc then speaks of the importance to these tourists in being 'seen everywhere', there being prepared to pay three times the usual fee for food, accommodation and entertainment and the aping of snobbish fashions between the newcomers and the Paris elite.[592]

[589] Truman C. Bullard, p. 104.
[590] Truman C. Bullard, p. 105.
[591] Truman C. Bullard, p. 105.
[592] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 105–6.

Bullard quotes the composer Roland-Manuel, describing the audience as 'imbecilic snobs, sentimental old ladies, and knot-headed foreigners…mixed with true artists' and further on as 'the audience which considers itself the elite (it has never been ascertained on what basis)…is honoured by the greatest names of the aristocracy and finance, nay, even diplomacy,..'[593] We will recall that Bullard believed the attendees to be roughly dividable into three groups: the foreign visitors, the social elite of Paris and the 'young artists and esthetes whose love of the new was perhaps surpassed only by their hatred of the upper class…'[594]

My presupposition that the majority of the audience for *Le Sacre's* first performances was white Caucasian is based on some deductions made from the information above. The most obvious being that productions staged in London and Paris are likely to draw an audience from close to those geographical locations from which a large portion of the populace was white Caucasian. Of the list of countries from which Astruc described the foreign attendees as originating from — being North America, Argentina, Brazil, Italy and England — it is possible to make certain likely deductions. North America, Argentina and Brazil had long been established as territories imperially dominated by Europeans, England's colonial domination extended to India, Ireland, the Caribbean, Kenya, Nigeria etc, and Italy aspired to its own colonial empire. For a tourist to have the financial resources to fund travel to Europe, implies wealth more associated with the dominant class of these territories making those foreigners most likely to be white Caucasian. Given this probability, I would propose that about this group of attendees and also the Paris elite (at the top of the social hierarchy in an imperial nation) one can draw likely conclusions concerning their attitude based upon the prevalent discourse around ethnicity at the time. By this I mean that those most likely to benefit, or have a vested interest in maintaining colonial rule, were more likely to support a narrative which favoured continued oppression of the first nation societies overthrown through European conquest: ergo white

[593] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 106–7.
[594] Truman C. Bullard, p. 108.

Caucasian. The response to the presence of this privileged class by the aesthetes was predictably incendiary but it should be noted that these too were likely to have been exposed to educative, social and political structures which inclined towards imperial domination. Were the complicating intersections of class and ethnicity as they are recognised today, as prevalent in the early twentieth century? The objections of the aesthetes as we have seen are usually voiced in terms of class and support for the new or different in artistic endeavour. What might we construe from the absence of any notable comment around ethnicity in the reviews of the aesthetes' responses to *Le Sacre*? The evidence suggests that class was foremost in the aesthetes' minds which suggests the possibility that attitudes to ethnicity more than likely unified most sections of the audience. This perspective might be summarised as at best regarding *Le Sacre* as something new and different (and therefore good) and at worst, an insulting and inappropriate display of material which should not have been presented in a theatre.

Le Sacre du Printemps might be argued as being an important projection of the developments in and responses to colonial expansion by European of non-European countries. There are elements at play here which can be identified as complicating the deconstruction of my argument as it has so far been developing which I would now like to address. The first are the floating impressions, the ontologically unsupported 'affinities' and deductions inferred from *apparent* similarities; be these of a sound alike or look alike nature. I wish to reassert that I am not suggesting a rootedness in West African music as a source of origin for Stravinsky's score. As was raised in my introduction, Richard Taruskin has made a scholarly argument which places Stravinsky's use of Lithuanian folk music as very much evident in *Le Sacre*.[595] Schiff's statement regarding the importation of African music *as well as* sculpture, suggests a causal link between its presence in Paris around the time *Le Sacre* was being written and its apparent closeness to the transcriptions of the Ewe as made by AM Jones. We might though consider its rhythm with respect to the *disimilarities Le Sacre* had to existing ballet music, thus distancing the sameness to

[595] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, pp. 895–900.

known works and reinforcing its similarities to others and more significantly 'Othered' music and culture like that of West Africa. If one is to be scholarly, *Le Sacre du Printemps* can only be alluded to as tribal in reference to the creators' collective intention; the idea of an ancient Russian culture they were trying to communicate. If no concrete evidence exists to connect Stravinsky's work with his possible exposure to West African music, then upon what premise can such a concept be raised and to what significance?

My point is about the *impression* given by such music and a perception of what tribal music and dance might *sound and look like* which the opening night's audience may have shared with the notion Schiff raises. As he notes, there are elements of *Le Sacre's* score that do intriguingly *sound like* how one might imagine West African music to 'sound'. However, this is more likely to be the case if you are without exposure or education as to the enormous range of practices which cover the entire African continent; regional, cultural, linguistic nuances and many other complicating factors which would support such knowledge. Schiff's impression here is important because he is not without knowledge and he is writing in 2012 as a contemporary observer with wide access to different kinds of music.

If in 2012, with access to the internet, as a university professor, Schiff is able to voice such an *impression* of Stravinsky's music, then in 1913, with less exposure to non-Western musical culture, any referent from a limited pool of available musical information would likely create a sense of certitude in one's conviction of *Le Sacre's* musical origins. The anthropologist Alfred Gell problematising the ethnocentric approaches to culturally diverse artefacts made the point as follows:

> Our value-system dictates that, unless we are philistines, we should attribute value to a culturally recognized category of art objects. This attitude of aestheticism is culture-bound even though the objects in question derive from many different cultures, as when we pass effortlessly from a Tahitian sculpture to one of Brancusi, and back again.[596]

[596] Jeremy Coote et al., *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics* (Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 40.

The statement makes clear the troublesome nature of uncritically placing Cubism alongside the new grammar of Nijinsky's choreography for *Le Sacre* (see quote from *Daily Mail* below re 'Cubist Dancing', page 192) whilst simultaneously revealing a motive for audience disgruntlement or strident support; in the recognition of the signs which indicated ethnicity/otherness, not art and therefore in the wrong location.[597] My point would be that it was what people *felt* they were hearing in 1913 which excited some and gave others a feeling of being insulted or made fools of. Gell's statement also helps us to see how such values intersected with those of class; the meaning attributed to philistinism as a lack of, taste, education (consider those who were invited to the rehearsal of *Le Sacre*) etc., together with ethnocentric assumptions about what actually constituted art.

I am interested in these misconceptions of rhythm as black/folk, rhythm as tribal, and rhythm as 'Stravinskyesque'; less in their being present and pervasive during the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and more for what such misconceptions might reveal.

I believe that the signification of *Le Sacre*, its declaration as 'tribal' and its location within a concert hall, its resonance with and temporal proximity to eugenical declarations of white racial superiority, meant that *Le Sacre* could be construed at best remarkable and to many, held up a mirror of inferred verisimilitude to races deemed inferior which made it distasteful and appealing in equal measure.

Truman C Bullard fully identified this effect when he wrote:

> Using [the same] stereotypes for their analysis, patriotic critics described the new ballet as "primitive" – not in the refreshing or redemptive sense but rather as barbaric, tasteless, and inappropriate to the refined art of ballet.[598]

[597] *Jeux* came in for similar comparison with Cubist painting. In an uncredited article cabled for publication in the *New York Tribune* dated 17. 5. 13 the Paris critic Paul Souday was quoted as saying of it 'this Russian ballet is far too rigid and geometrical and is to choreographic art what cubism is to painting'. Macdonald, p. 94.
[598] Truman C. Bullard, p. 209.

He continues by quoting Victor Débay in an article first published on June 15 1913 in *Le Courrier Musical* entitled 'Les Ballets Russes au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées'. I will requote it here for its significance to my argument.

> …things turned to scandalous on the part of the audience when *Le Sacre du Printemps* by M. Igor Stravinsky presented in its two acts dances which were a bit too primitive, which one is more likely to see at a zoo than on the stage of a theatre, where a band of savages, to the sound of discordant music, showed us the religious ceremonies and nuptial rites of their country. In this graceless spectacle the error of the choreography and of M. Stravinsky…was to think that in creating an artistic work it was enough to reconstruct faithfully for our eyes and ears whatever interest the past may offer in its naiive and often infantile beginnings.[599]

The quote suggests Débay's difficulty with the work because it refers less to attempts towards a revivification of a prehistoric past but to the presence of a contemporary referent. It addresses directly the discomfiture of spatial, geographical and temporal proximity of *Le Sacre's* significations. It's placement in a theatre, its suggestion of having brought the non-Occidental into the theatre space. Evidence of audience identification with the performance can be found in Emile Vuillermoz's review in *La Revue Musicale* June 15, 1913 where he stated:

> …you stamp briskly as the little men with cheeks on fire now bend toward the soil, now rear up, their fists high, their heads pressed back and down;…And when you reach home you drag from your memory chords of the *Rondes printanières*…you even bend your knees lightly in imitation of the Mongolian virgins with their tresses stiffened by bear grease.[600]

A quote from London's *The Times* below was significant for me because it supported my argument for the same racially loaded interpretation of *Le Sacre* even though it was written in response to the London performances and *not* the disrupted Paris première:

> The spectator has no difficulty in believing that some such scene of ritual dancing actually heralded the coming of many a spring. A London audience would have settled down quite quietly to the news the Maori do the like to this day. Indeed we, too, might find ourselves thus clustering in groups, stamping the ground and circling in panic, hands to head…For the first time we are here treated to an employment of dancing as an absolute medium. At one bound the ballet is removed from its time-honoured surroundings of unusual circumstances and is carried into the midst of life as everybody knows it.[601]

[599] Truman C. Bullard, pp. 209–110.
[600] Lederman, p. 21.
[601] Macdonald, p. 105.

The commentator clearly had a referent for an interpretation of what they believed to be the creators' intention. As such they were able to employ their knowledge of what they understood 'ritual dancing' to be in order to imagine themselves a participant of that environment. In the guise of playing at exoticism — like Zanaida Gippius adopting orientalist elements of the characterisation of Cleopatra — the commentator found no difficulty in thinking themselves into a role of a tribal Maori or the cultural decontextualisation that such a shift implied.[602] Like Levinson's black tap and folk dancers, or the young man who unconsciously thumped Carl Van Vechten's head (see below) in time to *Le Sacre's* beat, the commentator could imagine themselves overcome by the rhythm in the music and performing 'ritual dance' divested of any known ceremony. More importantly, the commentator was confident that their view was generalisable to the remainder of the London audience.

A famous example which appears to describe a similar response to *Le Sacre* was written by Carl Van Vechten in his 1915 work, *Music After the Great War*:

> I was sitting in a box in which I had rented one seat. Three ladies sat in front of me and a young man occupied the place behind me. He stood up during the course of the ballet to enable himself to see more clearly. The intense excitement under which he was labouring, thanks to the potent force of the music, betrayed itself presently when he began to beat rhythmically on the top of my head with his fists. My emotion was so great that I did not feel the blows for some time. They were perfectly synchronised with the beat of the music. When I did, I turned around. His apology was sincere. We both had been carried beyond ourselves.[603]

Alluding more specifically to the idea of the giving of oneself over to the production writer A.E. Johnson commented of *Le Sacre*:

> "Le Sacre du Printemps" certainly exacts a good deal from the ordinary spectator. The latter finds himself at sea from the very beginning, and quickly realises that if there is any solid meaning at all to be arrived at, he can only reach it by jettisoning all previous standards and conventions.[604]

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[602] Another matter to bear in mind here is that *Le Sacre* had no definite tribal precedent, so the commentator's filling in the 'tribal' gaps with the suggestion of Maori confirms even more a confident, unshaken understanding of what ritual dancing meant.
[603] Eksteins, p. 37.
[604] 'The Russian Ballet, by A. E. Johnson; with Illustrations by René Bull.', *HathiTrust*, p. 210 <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015023756433?urlappend=%3Bseq=9> [accessed 16 July 2015].

Here we might return to the unstable identities which were in evidence from the various commentaries which followed the early performances of *Le Sacre*. These simultaneously alluded to the 'barbarism' and seduction of Russian culture, the fear of its overwhelming French culture and pity for the Russians as identifiably white people not being allowed to perform the classical dance for which they were famed. One view presented by dance critic André Levinson, cast *Le Sacre's* score as a curse upon the refinement of the Russian ballet company:

> Whence comes the cruel charm of this piece that forces the Russian dancers, the most sensitive of modern artists, to obey its imperious commands, that grafts upon their Slavic sensibilities the pathetic and enthralled soul of primitive man?[605]

Similarly the *Daily Mail* wrote:

> 'Cannibal Island Dancing', someone said, *but it was in reality executed by some of our own Aryan ancestors in no tropic clime* [my Italics]…The dancing…is allied to recent manifestations in the other arts, and may perhaps be called 'Cubist dancing', …[606]

The above quotes make the point that to some, attention needed to be called to the fact that the performers were 'white' and therefore 'like us'. Unlike Nijinsky as the Golden Slave in *Schéhérazade* or Alexander Orlov as the Blackamoor in *Petrushka*, the performers were not 'blacked up' in *Le Sacre*. A still of Roerich's costume and make-up design showed the strangeness of 'the young girls' garb; their long plaited tresses, head bands and brightly coloured geometric shapes upon the cheeks of their very 'white' faces. As acknowledged in the quotes above this would have made it harder for audience members to see those on stage as so different from themselves. In a disruption to the temporality which comfortably located the tribal as a generic non-whiteness and in the form of a people living backwardly in modern times, this was a 'tribal' group which had in previous seasons been identified as a threat to French balletic superiority.

Summary

Nijinsky's choreographic distillation — together with the halting, fragmented, self-contained vignettes on display — was in itself a provocation, a denial of explicit information and

[605] Levinson, Acocella, and Garafola, p. 39.
[606] Macdonald, p. 99.

perhaps of the audience's ability to remain passive. Integrated into Nijinsky's angularised form, were elements of movement such as stamping and repetitive jumping more readily associated with non-western cultures than with classical ballet. This might be thought of as a language of signs made recognisable to contemporary audiences through the decontextualized re-enactments of ritual material as witnessed by European spectators at (for instance) World Fairs.

I have suggested that *Le Sacre's* score *together* with its choreography had an impact in 1913 which could not be measured by listening to the music alone. This might be one of a number of reasons for its speedy acceptability as a musical score when delivered without the weight, and *emotional charge* generated from its rhythmical doubling up in the choreography. This had been a potent combination evidenced by the many descriptions of weight and bludgeoning. It was consistent with those taking the trouble to report sections of the audiences' perception of being insulted, which I have suggested stemmed from a feeling of psychological and physical intrusion into a space of privilege. This sense of ownership came under further attack through *Le Sacre's* assault upon audience privacy; the assumed right to heckle becoming part of the whole performance but nullified when illuminated by the producers beneath the auditorium lights.

The mixture of audience responses shows consistency both with the enchantment of exoticism — which was a feature of the period — and the less positive attitudes which may have arisen from the denigration by European governments of non-white European cultures, for ideological purposes. The presence in French society of non-European workers to bolster labour during the fin-de -siècle raised the issue of intimate and working relations between native French and foreign workers. In *Le Sacre* such anxieties were internalised and the pre-existing tensions between the European and the racially Othered were transformed through a fusion of races into a dystopic vision of whiteness corrupted through its intersection with tribal culture. It differed from *Gesamkuntstwerk* and its stricture of definition whose emphasis pertained mainly to the

components of artistic production.[607] Instead, Futurist type provocation, audience affrontage, arguments between audience members amounted to reaction and co-penetration, highlighting the possibilities attendant with the reciprocity and integration of the social dynamic between the artistic presentation and those watching it being performed.

I think that the challenge which the impute of miscegenation presented, was in *Le Sacre's* denying its audience a familiar Moorish stereotype of recognisable red lips and startled, white, circled eyes inside 'black face'. The Russians were already uncertainly placed within the racial hierarchy as being *not quite* white. *Le Sacre* produced instead a bastard child of the French and its colonial subjects; white skinned citizens bedecked in tribal garb. Those on stage were not *Petrushka's* puppets but real people. I would like to suggest that, in the fashionable French public's finding elements of exoticism attractive, anxieties about the potential for an unstoppable power shift also surfaced. The intimation of sexual union between the races was already one which the Ballets Russes had transgressed in *Schéhérazade* and *Petrushka*.

The intersectionality between race with class for a performance publicised as tribal, cannot be ignored, especially if the interpenetrability of Futurist theory is also brought to the fore through the suggestion of a merge between low and high art. This is inferred through the spectre of blackness and folk culture in *Le Sacre*; of the precedence of rhythmicity and its corresponding synthesis with the choreography. The popular displays of the mock 'tribal' ranked closer to the café singer than to *Les Sylphides*. In Futurist terms, this draws us inexorably back towards the glorious, impropriety and incivility of such a performance in a concert space. The insinuation of a close relationship between the action on stage and the audience, the Slavic dancers in 'tribal' garb mediated then dissolved the imagined space between black African and white European, making the amalgamation actual for the time they appeared on stage and fusing that which had separated contemporary assumptions surrounding representations of high and low art.

[607] Shead, p. 22.

Of significance, is *Le Sacre*'s coinciding with a historically specific change in public attitude. This devalued the potentiality which had accompanied the European explorations of territories being colonised in the mid-nineteenth century. Critical to this idea was the absorption and eventual overwhelming of the Othered exotic's culture through imperial programmes of 'civilisation'. This destabilised the alliance of mutual interest between those designing the policies which formed part of the justification for exploitation of non-European lands, and the romantic adventurers whose forays into places previously unseen by European eyes had instigated the colonising process. This idea of the Othered space as somewhere to depart to, from the sterility of an industrialised Europe, is key to the clash of ideas which accompanies this investigation. Griselda Pollock writes:

> The metropolitan tourist from the civilized urban First World finds a place in the structures which First-World economies and ideologies colonize. There his/her gaze at the spectacle of nature and rural labour is protected and privileged, its pleasures are secured precisely through the privilege of proximate distance.[608]

The resistance to the changes which were becoming increasingly evident across Europe were of course precisely what the Futurists wished to highlight. My argument places *Le Sacre* at the heart of this resistance as the embodiment of social transition and the prescience and unavoidability of these tensions. The conflict can be identified between the idealised Othered which could be appropriated, controlled and essentially discarded or placed beyond the European gaze and psyche as was required, and the unsettling effect of and (the actual) intrusion by the Othered into a space of escapism and privilege. The 'spectacle of difference' of white European observers of the 'exhibits' amounted to a fetishization where:

> Through the tourist gaze, the work of other people/s and their accompanying rituals and festivals are refracted through the fictions of the picturesque, the exotic and the primitive. The fact of work, wage relations, commodity production, colonialism or imperialism are made irrelevant to the desired meanings of the scene.[609]

[608] Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888-1893*, p. 60.
[609] Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888-1893*, p. 60.

Le Sacre would have been uncomfortable for audiences who could outside the auditorium choose when they wanted to experience non-Occidental people, keep them safely contained in enclosures or within the bounds of their countries and in extending these forms of proximity to them, could affirm — at least in their imagination — their power and superiority over them. Like the intrusion of a new labour force, the suggestion of locational impropriety was significant.

I am arguing that the combination of music and dance had a power through its association with the non-Occidental. The trend in Paris for being swept up by all things ethnographic might easily be argued as colliding with a repulsion of proximity to those from whose cultures such work derived. This can be argued as being articulated through *Le Sacre* in the same way as Toni Morrison identified a jarring or racial clash; one which was threatening, even devastating, to the certainty of white superiority. Placing side by side the ethnographic and that which mimicked the ethnographic years after the event, provides some clarity in speculating about how *Le Sacre* was witnessed. I believe that when Nijinsky made the Chosen One stand rigidly in a catatonic-like state for bars on end and rehearsed his dancers' to near exhaustion with painful, repetitive, steps, that it made extreme physical demands of those dancers. It did not bewitch them or hold them in trance states. The pseudoethnicism of *Le Sacre* needs to be understood as it helps to elucidate the breadth and range of appropriations and make such distinctions which will not conflate material and reaffirm the insult initially meted upon those who were colonised or abducted and made to reenact their traditions as entertainment.

White skin colour was shared by those stamping on stage and those watching the first performances of *Le Sacre*. Being European, and more specifically white, was a cultural bond between audience and performer, reinforced by external social and political forays of European governments into other continents, which to some, would have jarred if interpreted in any way as a transgression of racial boundaries. This mirror held up to the audience; this suggestion of interpenetrability between those performing and those watching, would have been a powerful

assault on persons with beliefs in the superiority of the Aryan hierarchy of the world populations and the paternalistic 'civilising' initiatives of European society.

REGRESSIVE STONES AND PROGRESSIVE MACHINES:
Futurist Theory through Dehumanisation in *Le Sacre du Printemps*
Chapter III

> 'It is the life of the stones and the trees. There are no human beings in it. It is the incarnation of Nature — not of human nature.'[610]

Vaslav Nijinsky's proposition of *Le Sacre* as an aesthetic experiment in effacing the human/non-human boundary is a founding principle of this chapter. Speaking of *Le Sacre du Printemps* in an interview to the *Pall Mall Gazette* given 15 February 1913, Nijinsky identifies an aspiration for the ballet to create a new kind of dance embracing certain archaisms, through the deconstruction of the boundary between the human and the non-human. The ballet seeks to convey Nature, not human nature. My question is can this aesthetic idea be defined as dehumanisation? The usual understanding of that term is political. It refers to the denial of humanity to another human being. We might think of racism and notably the racism of enslavement and the colonial era as dehumanising its others in this sense.

This is to be viewed against a backdrop which takes into account the colonial imaginary of Western Europeans in the Imperial era being saturated with racist ideas of the primitive that, in effect, also 'dehumanised' others. What we might name a colonial imaginary was formed in the metropolitan centres by encounters with ethnographic exhibitions of peoples from the colonised world, perhaps performing their dance and music in costumes — as discussed in my previous chapter. This must be acknowledged as a frame for the reception of Nijinsky's archaicisms, perhaps in turn informed by early twentieth century ethnographic research into the cultural traditions of the peoples of the Russian lands. Keeping the senses of the word dehumanisation —aesthetic/philosophical versus political — distinct, it will be necessary to perceive their historical coincidence and its effects on audience perception and reception of *Le Sacre.* I am not proposing an identity between the two senses. I am suggesting that we need to track the said and the unsaid ways in which engagements with the archaic to produce the new, were inflected with

[610]Nesta Macdonald, *Diaghilev Observed by Critics in England and the United States, 1911-1929* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1975), p. 90.

the colours of a primitivising colonial imaginary and anxieties about women along an axis of that which is given status as the human and that which either negatively or creatively is considered beyond or below that status and meaning.

Up to this point, I have explored the possibility that certain confluences with Italian Futurist theory can be discerned in the first performances of the Ballets Russes' 1913 production of *Le Sacre du Printemps*. To this end, my analysis has made the case for the work *Le Sacre du Printemps* as a transformation and contestation around sexuality and social and reproductive freedom in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Europe. Elsewhere I have explored the possibility of an inference being made by sections of *Le Sacre's* audience, of its presentation as politically ambiguous, unsettling the established terms of Western Europe's racial and cultural hierarchy.

In this chapter I turn my attention to interpretations of *Le Sacre* which were made by the French artist Valentine Gross (1887-1968). Gross produced a record of the first performances through rough, quickly executed, sketches which she made in the semi-darkness of the auditorium of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.[611] In some instances, she recorded Roerich's designs of rock formations, or maybe they were groups of dancers, as though indistinguishable as living from non-living forms. Nijinsky's description of *Le Sacre* in the quote above appears to contradict our understanding of a work where human beings were indeed present both as dancers pursuing their stage careers and also as performers of character roles declared to be human — as evidenced through the titled sections of the libretto: for example in the second act *Le Sacrifice,* where two sections are titled *Cercles mystérieux des adolescents* (Mystic Circles of the Young Girls) and *Evocation des ancêtres* (Evocation of the Ancestors).[612] I am thinking here also of Stravinsky's characterisation of dancers given in a description to the newspaper *Le Figaro* some

[611] Valentine Hugo and Richard Buckle, *Nijinsky on Stage: Action Drawings by Valentine Gross of Nijinsky and the Diaghilev Ballet Made in Paris between 1909 and 1913* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), pp. 131–41.
[612] Igor Stravinsky and Nicolas Roerich, *The Rite of Spring (Le Sacre Du Printemps) Pictures from Pagan Russia* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1967), pp. 84, 107.

weeks prior to the première.[613] These referred to the 'young men', the 'old woman', 'young girls', 'wise old men' and the 'virgins'.[614] If Nijinsky declared there were no human beings in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, what function was served in naming these groups as though there were? Given that Diaghilev had stipulated that Roerich's synopsis be centred around 'Slavonic tribes…gathered together to celebrate Spring rites' one might consider if 'tribes' was intended to signify an assemblage of *people* with a shared *human* identity and draw once again upon racial and colonial discourse.[615] Were the creators tapping into assumptions about sub or pre-human qualities in colonised people? Such ideological contextualisation might add cogency to any imputation of political dehumanisation of characters in *Le Sacre,* if we recall those negative assumptions made about non-Occidental people as discussed in previous chapters.

In tracing Valentine Gross' experience of *Le Sacre* and the theoretical alignment of the works of art under scrutiny with a broader and ambivalent discourse around dehumanisation, I would like to explore the persistent recurrence of language on the part of artists and reviewers who drew attention to forms of dehumanisation in *Le Sacre*. In considering this, there are a number of elements concerning Gross' drawings as representations of movement which need to be addressed. This necessitates the contextualisation of her work within a climate which favoured a holistic, sensorial experience of works of art which will draw upon the philosophy of the Italian Futurists.

In this chapter I am exploring what significance we might attribute to Gross' drawing in the semi-darkness with only the stage-light for illumination. I want to consider to what extent the form of Gross' sketches, might accord with the idea of integration and immersion of the self into works of art, which were being proposed by the Futurists around 1913. To develop my argument, work which I recognised as being emblematic of futurist thinking and theoretical instances which bear significance to Gross' drawings have been selected.

[613] Joseph, *Stravinsky's Ballets*, pp. 83–84.
[614] Joseph, *Stravinsky's Ballets*, pp. 83–84.
[615] Shead, p. 70.

In the *Futurist Painting Technical Manifesto 11 April 1910* the Futurists stated that:

> …all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing. A profile is never motionless before our eyes but constantly appears and disappears.[616]

The Futurist thrust towards the capture of speed and movement within a static medium such as oil painting, presents the underlining objective of Gross' project only in a different form. I would like to ask, what resources might need to be harnessed in order to facilitate such a capture? In drawing in the semi-darkness, what psychological, emotional, sensorial processes could an artist rely on to be able to project onto paper a sense of what was being witnessed of *Le Sacre* and what was the quality and efficacy of this communication?

In *The Pleasure of Being Booed* of 1911 the idea of material interpenetrability (discussed later) — as had been explored on canvas by artists such as Umberto Boccioni — was transferred to the theatre through the provocation of interchange between audience and performer. Thinking methodologically, it seems obvious that a two way process of communication being enacted on stage between audience and performers might be interpreted as a reproduction of exchanges happening beyond the theatre space. Certainly the reciprocity of an audience offended by the barely acknowledged suggestion of racial impropriety — their heckling being a return of the offence — then the auditorium lights being switched on in response, followed in turn by their quietening down etc., seems to demonstrate what the Futurists had hoped for in stimulating theatre audience culture out of passive contemplation of the arts. It also shows — through the culturally determined nature of the audience reaction — how potentially reductive it would be when trying to understand the work of art, if it were separated from a complex terrain of social hierarchies and power relations from which it emerged, not to mention the overtones of myth-making to which *Le Sacre* is often made subject in contemporary discourse. I wish to add my own proposition that *Le Sacre* was a work of art greater than the sum of its parts. This is consistent with the shimmer which Walter Benjamin's aura (the one surrounding the original not

[616] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 64.

reproduced work of art) might generate as a theoretical after-effect.[617] It starts in the oft-made association of the Ballets Russes with *Gesamtkunstwerk* — a work which manifests as a harmonious amalgam of a multitude of arts.[618] What might happen if we were to suggest that the impression someone gave from a rough, patchy, sketch was in some way a more authentic summation of events witnessed than the individual printed, photographed, verbatim information we have of a famous work of art? It is the potential of this idea for our deeper understanding of the work which I wish to examine in this chapter.

To this end, I need to return to Umberto Boccioni's *Futurist Sculpture* April 1912, to help make clear the structure of the process of Futurist research of movement within and beyond works of art, its development across different art forms and — what I will argue to be — its applicability to *Le Sacre* and Gross' work. I will also reference the manifesto *The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells,* 1913 and its qualification of synaesthetic processes as a model for the interpretation of the everyday, lived, experience.

I want to know what is being realised in Gross' non-worked up studies of *Le Sacre du Printemps* regarding their closeness to the descriptions of the ballet as a brutalising work. How might we interpret this moment in history when we also consider how an aim of Futurist theatre was as Garafola writes, its 'mechanization, especially as applied to the performer'?[619] What might be garnered from Gross' choice to record *Le Sacre* immediately and in the time of performance in the semi-darkness of a theatre auditorium rather than from memory? Gross' production of this series of drawings in this manner may say something about a drive towards instantaneity and the experiential in art which may have been shared with other artists. Can the many ideas based around interpenetrability and merging in Italian Futurist theory help in any way to illuminate our understanding of the particularity of Gross' drawings of *Le Sacre* and the work itself? Can

[617] 'Walter Benjamin' <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm> [accessed 8 June 2016].
[618] Garafola, p. 45.
[619] Garafola, p. 79.

overtones of dehumanisation be expanded to encompass and contextualise Gross' *Sacre* sketches according to art works and performances recorded as representations of the wider industrial and technological developments of the era?

A contradiction which arises from proposing a relationship with the Futurists raises another question. To what extent can sense be made of the conflation — and yet apparent contradiction — of the appeal of an ancient past to the avant-garde and its being refashioned as the ultra-modern? This is a matter which has the potential to reveal how ideas could penetrate and work through different categories of art connecting them to the wider cultural landscape and bypassing our knowledge of whether or not Gross ever met the Italian Futurists. To make the case it is necessary to draw upon supporting material from works of art, art theory, philosophy and social and technological developments which were a feature of early twentieth century Europe and which would have likely impacted upon all persons coming within a particular temporal and geographical sphere. It is in drawing together these elements which makes an enactment of Futurist ideas in Gross' drawings a plausible supposition.

The Background of Valentine Gross

Valentine Marie Augustine Gross was born in Capécure, Boulogne-sur-mer in 1887.[620] She was educated by her schoolmistress aunt before attending a school for English girls in Boulogne where she won prizes for drawing but reportedly learnt no English.[621] In 1907 she began studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where in 1909 she was awarded the *seconde médaille d' esquisse peinte,* and in 1910 she won the 'prix Hautmont' in 1910.[622] Gross was present at the very first *répétition générale* (May 18) of the Ballets Russes's first 1909 season and reportedly never missed a performance until the outbreak of World War I.[623] When attending rehearsals

[620] Hugo and Buckle, p. 8.
[621] Hugo and Buckle, p. 8.
[622] Hugo and Buckle, p. 8.
[623] Hugo and Buckle, p. 11.

Gross recorded what she observed of the dancing. Between 1909 and 1914, she was said to have seen all Paris performances of the Ballets Russes.[624]

> At the theatre Valentine Gross used to scribble 'shorthand notes' of Nijinsky, Karsavina and the Russian dancers in the dark, without taking her eyes from the stage. Later she worked from these, corrected her sketches after further visits, polished them and produced finished pastels and paintings, which were sold in exhibitions or used to illustrate programmes or magazines…As her studies became more finished, approaching the final stage — and there were often many stages — so they became more mannered.[625]

Examples of these 'mannered' drawings were Gross' pastels illustrating the ballet *Jeux* which were published in *Comœdia Illustré* in 1913 along with other illustrations of the Ballets Russes by Gross and Léon Bakst (Fig. 18).

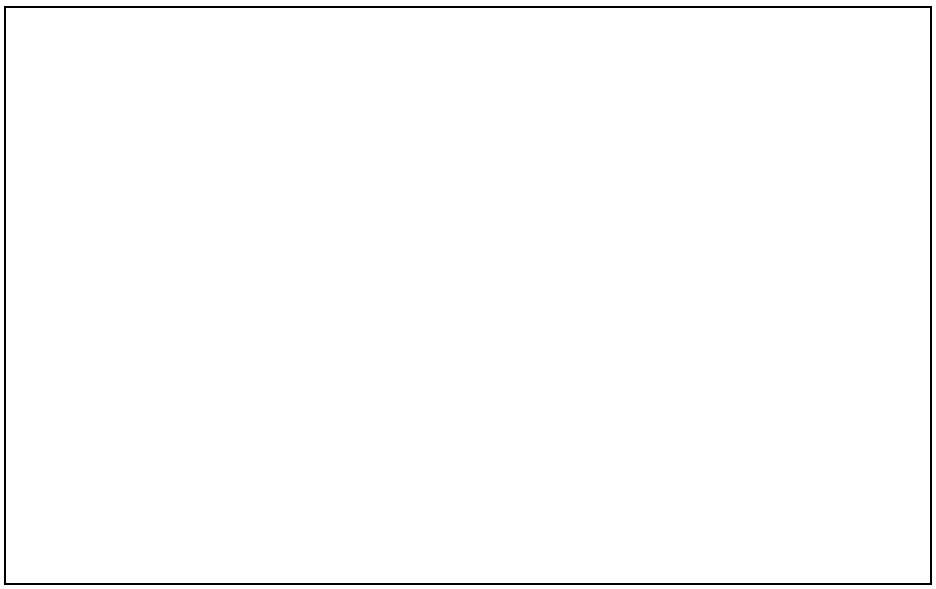

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Fig. 24
Valentine Gross, Illustration for *Jeux* published in *Comoedia Illustre* June 5, 1913, Paris

In 1914 Gross had her drawings of the dancer Tamara Karsavina in the ballet *Coq d'or* published in this same magazine and the *Gazette du Bon Ton*. In the same year she contributed

[624] Richard Buckle, 'Nijinsky, Karsavina and the Diaghilev Ballet 1909-1914 (Exhibition of Drawings by Valentine Gross)' (Hartnoll & Eyre Ltd, 1973), Ekstrom Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum Theatre and Performance collections, London.
[625] Richard Buckle.

pastel portraits of Nijinsky to an exhibition at Fine Arts in Bond Street, London.[626] Sir Claude Phillips of *The Daily Telegraph* (March 12) reviewed the exhibition remarking favourably upon a black chalk depiction of Nijinsky as 'Armida's favourite slave and dancer in *Le Pavillon d'Armide*' and Jacques- Émile Blanche's subtle portrayal of Nijinsky in 'absolute repose' in *La Danse Orientale.*[627] Of Valentine Gross (mistaken for a man and with misspelt name owing to a catalogue misprint) Phillips wrote:

> Mr. Valentine Cross [sic]… though he cannot suggest all that there is in his terpsichorean hero's dancing of suppleness beneath the strength, is moderately successful in his numerous studies from *Le Spectre de la Rose*. He fails, on the other hand, to evolve not only what here is of sinister force but of poignant tragedy in Petrouchka: of bestial lust in *Scheherazade*, of Italian comedy freakishness in *Le Carnaval*…[628]

Phillips's comparison between the live performances and their artistic representation may be showing some consistency with Buckle's commentary which suggests a watering down of emotional charge from the distance between the original sketches to the point of polished display for exhibition.

A description of the work below is given in the accompanying exhibition catalogue as follows:

> Also in the collection and part of the Jean Hugo donation is a sheet of green paper on which all eight drawings are printed from line blocks. For what purpose this broadsheet was made I do not know, but it would appear to be for insertion in some magazine.[629]

[626] Hugo and Buckle, p. 8.
[627] Macdonald, p. 110.
[628] Macdonald, p. 110.
[629] Richard Buckle.

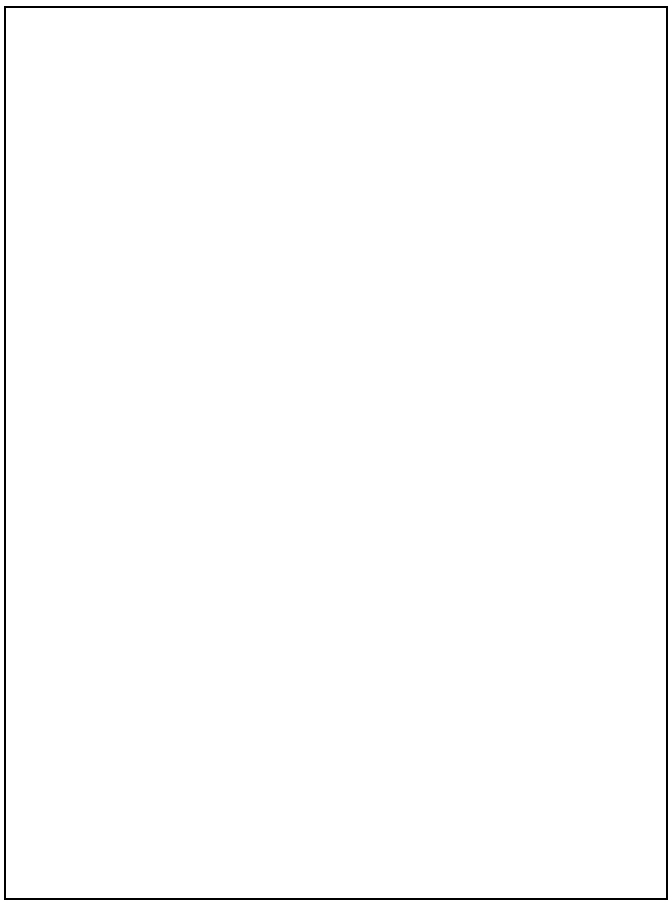

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Fig. 25
Valentine Gross, print, 1913, Ink on white paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive S.858-2012 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

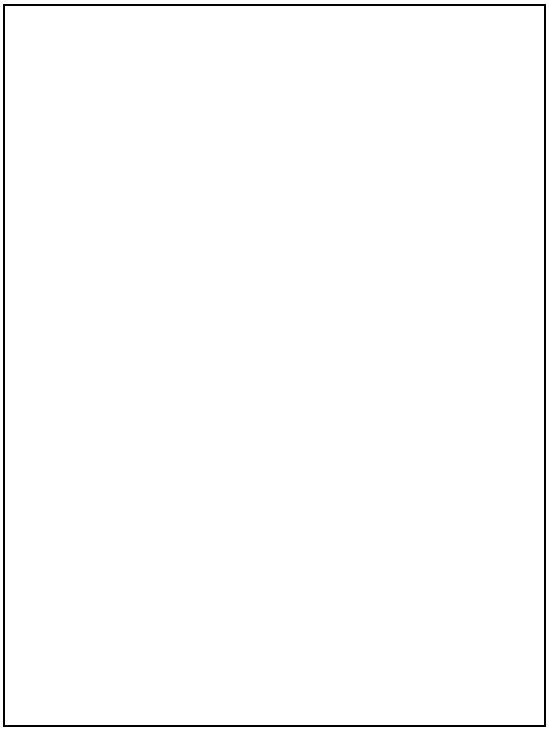

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Fig. 26
Richard Buckle, 'Nijinsky, Karsavina and the Diaghilev Ballet 1909-1914, Exhibition Catalogue of Drawings by Valentine Gross, Hartnoll & Eyre Ltd, 1973, Ekstrom Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum Theatre and Performance collections, London.

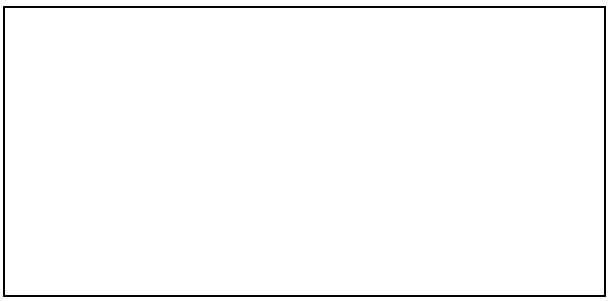

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Fig. 27
Caption for illustration as it appears on the opposite page of catalogue.

The researcher of dance history Millicent Hodson has highlighted discrepancies in Gross' account of the dates she was present at *Le Sacre*. Hodson concludes that Gross most likely recorded the performances of the second, fourth, sixth and thirteenth of June 1913, believing the

première perhaps to have been too disruptive for sketching.[630] Hodson had attempted to piece together the logical sequence in which Gross recorded her work in her notebooks: many of which whilst once connected, had since fallen apart. Drawings were sometimes in pencil but with others she used — what the archive holding her work describe as — a 'blue wax pencil'.[631] In all likelihood she used one notebook and a single drawing implement for each night.[632]

In his book *Nijinsky on Stage,* the dance critic Richard Buckle published what he subtitled as Gross' 'action drawings' of the Ballets Russes. Buckle described how Gross' finished pastels of different ballets — which had often been worked up from her sketches — were identifiable as Gross' work through a sameness of colour palette and their incline towards sentimentality.[633]

> Such is not the case with the 'unconscious' drawings made in the theatre: in these the artist is anonymous…Many give a vivid impression of the quality of the movement or of an emotion portrayed. As the artist's eyes follow the figure of Nijinsky on stage, she does not know whether her hand is drawing head, neck, arm or costume. Very often it is drawing none of these, but inventing — with the speed born of necessity — a symbol of movement.[634]

In highlighting Gross' instantaneous representations as a shorthand of *Le Sacre*, it is the power of the immediacy of the work which is most recognised. As Buckle also points out, in the most unfinished pieces, the value to the researcher is in knowing that what was recorded was, 'made at the Châtelet, at the Opéra or at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées from life, in the very presence of Nijinsky, Karsavina and Nijinska, while they danced.'[635]

---

[630] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. xxiii.
[631] Richard Buckle. The sketches and pastels in this chapter are held in the Valentine Gross Archive at the V&A Department of Theatre and Performance in London. In a catalogue which accompanied an exhibition and sale of Gross' work in 1971, Richard Buckle described how the series of drawings and pastels of *Le Sacre* and other ballets came to be part of this collection: 'On the artist's death in 1968, Jean Hugo [Gross' nephew] offered me a choice of her dance drawings for the Museum of Theatre Arts we were planning in London. It was the first scribbles *sur le motif* which interested me particularly from the point of view of a student of dancing; and it was mainly these I chose on behalf of the Friends of the Museums of Theatre Arts.'
[632] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, pp. xxiii–xxiv.
[633] Hugo and Buckle, p. 13.
[634] Hugo and Buckle, p. 13.
[635] Hugo and Buckle, p. 14.

To this end we might presuppose that Gross needed to summarise the breadth of available information in order to distil the vast array of artistic resources being projected from the stage or rehearsal environment. Gross herself refers directly to this condensing action — one not only of and between visual information but of music and dance — in a handwritten journal. Of her second viewing of *Le Sacre* she wrote,

> In the semi-darkness of the theatre, I took rough, stenographic notes, in my style, of the dance and music. Some of them became indecipherable among the hundreds of lines in motion on top of the debris of those underneath. For me, each one evoking the others, the dances of the ballet are alive among them and I cannot hear the music without seeing, almost in spite of myself, what I saw then.[636]

Nature and the Machine

Dance historian Ramsay Burt has written how, in their rejection of the traditional conventions upon which theatre dance had hitherto relied, 'Modernist dance artists embodied the deconstructed modern consciousness'.[637] He continued:

> The resulting 'modern' dance and ballet was by implication independent of the past and indeed a transitory tracing of an ever-disappearing present. The city, both as subject matter and as example, played a catalytic role in this process: it too, with the building sites and road works of its ever-changing streets, its newly opening shops and businesses, and the built-in redundancy of its trend setting fashions in clothes and popular entertainment — all this embodied the transitory nature of the experience of modernity.[638]

This idea encapsulates the reported wane in the popularity of the Ballets Russes, the broad variation in thematic choice for new ballets and the company's fame at the nexus of two centuries.

The Paris programme of the 1913 Saison Russes was opulent and contemporary in its design with, gold borders of simple, repeat pattern designs — comparable with Roerich's decoration for the trim of the smocks in *Le Sacre* — framing pages brimming with advertisements for women's couture houses and motor cars. Images of elegantly styled women were frequently placed opposite portraits of Ballets Russes performers. The placement of these

[636] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. xxiii.
[637] Burt, p. 21.
[638] Burt, pp. 21–22.

images so closely together, raises questions about the Ballets Russes as a commodity and as an art form able to impact on the forces of economic exchange and consumer choice. It also helps us to think how well placed the unknowable 'past' was, as a paradigm for a ballet which — from a musical and choreographic perspective — was radically new. In the previous chapter, we have explored how the reach of distant land and people was marketed as attainable through popular entertainments and European intermediaries from the fields of science, politics, art and literature who facilitated Western European access to those Othered worlds through their work. Within this context, there are clearly elements which made the choice of an ancient past as a theme for *Le Sacre* a logical choice, even with the arguably unforeseen consequences which provoked the mixed audience response. The presence of motor car advertisements inside a ballet programme of course says much about the affluence of many attending the performances, and it can be argued that it is no less surprising than any theatre programme which threw together the real and the concocted world of theatrical fancy in a manner calculated to benefit all parties. Modris Eksteins the author of *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* has written how Diaghilev was fully in favour of technological advances of the period and 'was keenly aware of modern methods of publicity and advertisement'.[639] I wish also here to recall Diaghilev's experience as an editor for *Mir Iskusstva* and his having been credited with revamping the programme for the Imperial Theatres. This indicates the placement of advertising suggesting speed and ultra-modernity alongside specifically nostalgic images, as having been executed with care and intent.[640]

[639] Eksteins, pp. 60–61.
[640] It should be noted that advertisements in souvenir programmes may have been more the responsibility of Gabriel Astruc as theatre director than Diaghilev.

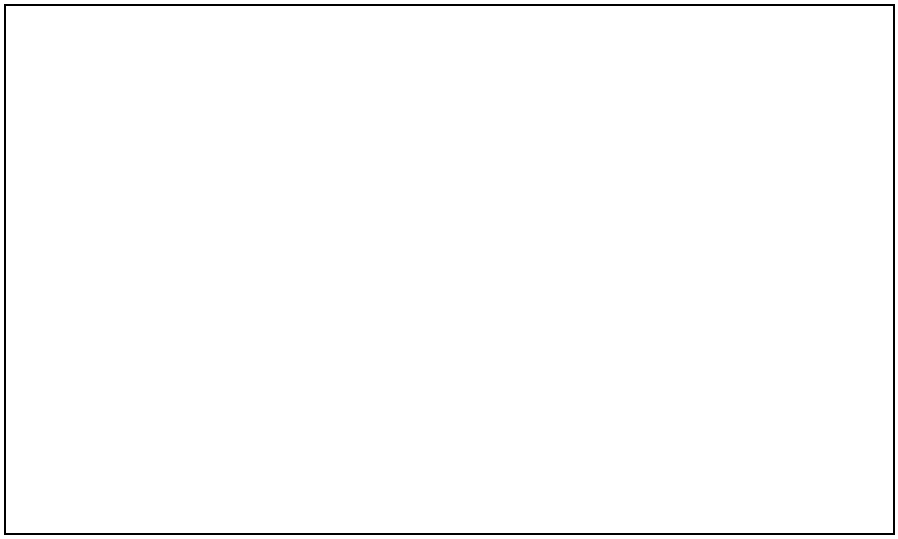

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Fig. 28
Programme for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*, Direction Gabriel Astruc, Saison Russe 1913*, paper and photograph,
from Collection: Box II Item 6 (Paris) London.

The photograph of a prettily adorned 'Mme Tamar KARSAVINA *dans le Spectre de la Rose'* (see Fig. 28) was placed opposite the scant, non-romantic, anti-narrative, description for *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Like the placement together of couture and performers in traditional costume, these images situated the audience between two alternative — yet coexistent — worlds. Here we have the romantic ballet opposite the skeletal description of a work which, whilst thematically of the 'past', would become associated with the modern. One might also read a contradiction between technological development (modernity, heavy, machine-like ostinati — the incessant rhythmic repetition with which Stravinsky's score is identified) and articulations of resistance to it, as embodied though ideas of return, nature, tradition and craft (natural environments, peasantry and fabricated 'ritual'): all elements of which *Le Sacre* was comprised.

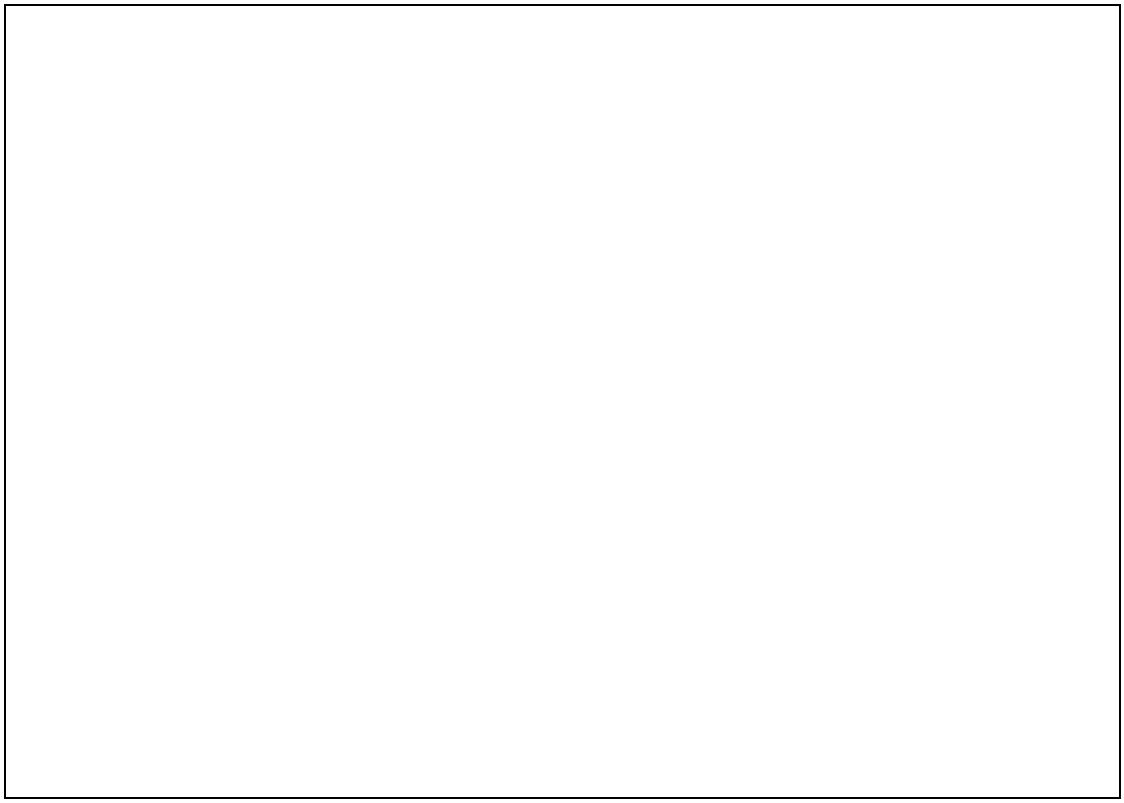

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Fig. 29
Programme for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *Direction Gabriel Astruc, Saison Russe 1913*, paper and photograph,
from Collection: Box II Item 6 (Paris) London.

Recalling here the use by the Futurists of mythological characterisations in *Il Futurisme* as a means of declaring their desire for Italy's national revival through the arts, we see again how Marinetti's 'birth of the Centaur' was a contradiction, given the use of the ancient world to promote ideas advocating the embrace of technological advance.[641] The above examples nevertheless show some consistency with another where a contrived past and a mechanical present signalling the future, appear to be intentionally juxtaposed.

The spontaneous and immediate reports of many of the responses to the *Le Sacre* resonated with Futurist ideas extolled back in 1911 in *The Pleasure of Being Booed.*[642] In it Marinetti

[641] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 49.
[642] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 97.

asserted the need for art to make evident within the theatre environment, the technological developments signalling modernity:

> One must introduce onto the stage the reign of the Machine, the great revolutionary shudders that move the crowd, the new currents of ideas and the great discoveries of science that have completely transformed our sensibility and our mentality as men of the twentieth century.[643]

Marinetti referred here to a sensibility which transcended the metaphorical. The 'shudders that move the crowd' are a recognisable reference to the noise and vitality of large scale industrialisation to which ordinary citizens were subject. These Marinetti referred to specifically as effecting 'our daily lives, stimulated by terrestrial, marine, and aerial velocities, dominated by steam power and electricity.'[644] This was the physical experience of the crowd finding ways to negotiate the newness of its industrial surrounds.

Gross' Sketches and Pastels of *Le Sacre*

Gross' drawings are a visual record of what may have most impressed upon the audience of *Le Sacre's* first performances: the iteration in *Le Sacre* manifested as both movement and music. In an effort to express this under pressure, she scribbled rhythmic loops and arches maybe evoking close groupings of figures or perhaps the rocks in Roerich's backdrop. The results are a conflation of human and rock. Was Gross unintentionally reducing the group's humanity in rendering them so quickly? Is what we are seeing merely an accident of the speed of execution which leaves us the viewer with an impression of the work which contradicts Gross' own view of what will be fully realised human forms in her worked up pastels? At this stage, and without seeing the later pastels, we might still suppose that Gross' massed groupings of hollow outlines without signifiers of any definite human or specifically gendered individuation, might be a subhumanisation or metaphor for critic Emile Vuillermoz's description as the 'strange troglodytes who people the scene'.[645]

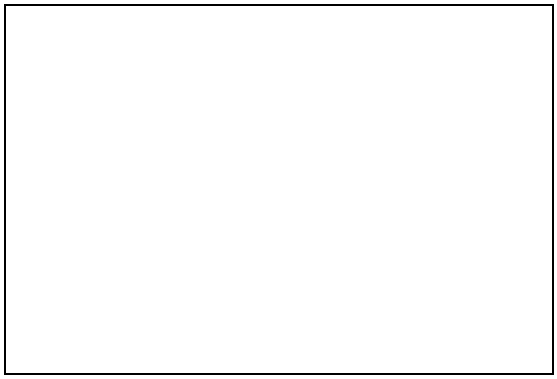
[643] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 97.
[644] Rainey, Poggi and Wittman, p. 97.
[645] Lederman, p. 21.

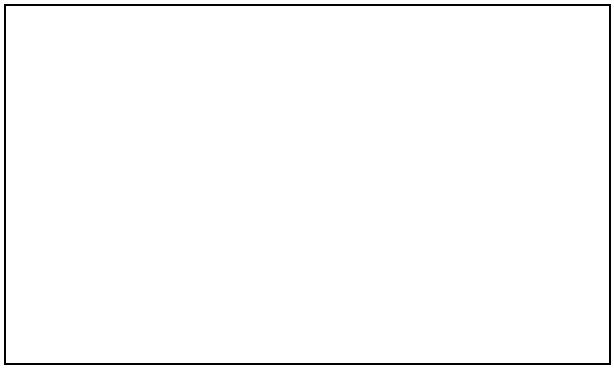
I wish here to raise some of the difficulties in isolating particular sketches from a body of work, those of which Barry Jackson in an article referencing *Les Sylphides*, stated:

> In *Nijinsky on Stage*, Richard Buckle deduces more than one would have thought possible from the apparently indecipherable squiggles of Valentine Gross' pencil notes made in Paris in either 1910 or 1911…[646]

Some of these sketches Gross would work up into polished, publishable illustrations and title as choreographic representations of the first performances. Is there value in reading into the more ambiguous drawings in the collection? By this I mean the work where it is less possible to decipher what it is Gross was trying to summarise of *Le Sacre*. First I would like to consider what it is I see as so striking about the images chosen to determine the basis for any speculation. To reiterate, it is not possible to decipher easily what it is we are seeing. This is particularly the case where we know that Roerich's backdrop for Act I showed a barren series of rocks arranged in a mystic circle and for Act II (Fig. 35), preoccupied, seated figures, one crouched with bow and arrow drawn and three men adorned in animal skins with bear heads and antlers, trudging up a rocky incline (Fig. 36).[647] Some of Gross' sketches seem to show the pointed hats of the men's costumes. Many circular shapes imply rocks. Most drawings by Gross which I have selected for scrutiny imply massed groupings or examples of images grammatically traceable to one another often through their suggestion of aural and visual repetition. I am working on the basis that the drawings I have selected are to my mind indexical of the whole project and the arguments I am trying to make.

[646] Jackson, p. 11,12.
[647] Lederman, p. 17.





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Left Above: Fig . 30 Valentine Gross, drawings, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper, Collection: Valentine Gross Archive (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Right Above: Fig. 31 Nicholas Roerich *The Great Sacrifice* 1912, Tempura on cardboard, 52.3 × 75.0 cm, The A. N. Radishchev Museum of Arts, Saratov.

The illustration Fig. 30 is one of the series of sketches Gross made of *Le Sacre*. The painting Fig. 31 is a study, a preliminary painting by Nicholas Roerich for 'The Great Sacrifice' (the working title of *The Rite of Spring*) (1910). Roerich's painting is clearly figurative, although the use of the same green, blue and greyish tones for the semi-circle of bearded men and the circular stone arrangements around which they are sat, suggests unity between the men and their sparse, 'natural' environment. This colour and compositional harmony of the men with the earth, contrasts with the lightness and ethereality of the yellow/blue clouded backdrop. Gross' sketch similarly implies an arrangement of grouped figures. I would suggest that it is what we already know about the men's costumes in *Le Sacre* which helps us to draw the conclusion that it is grouped, male, figures that we are looking at. This perception is drawn from one of the photographs which was taken in the dressing room of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées of the male dancers posed in costume. The peaked hats the men wear in the photograph are seemingly replicated in Gross' sketch and also in Roerich's painting *The Great Sacrifice* whose title corresponded closely with *Le Sacre*.These delineated, peaked arches become less distinct as Gross — drawing we assume from left to right — finishes the group as though receding behind one

another and formed according to a less figurative flourish of jagged, deformed, arches. Of these drawings the scholar and choreographer Claudia Jeschke has written:

> …Gross selected certain figures and drew over their outlines (in aesthetic translation) with suggestions of costumes, adding theatrical clarification to the map. This procedure gives particularly short shrift to the actions of groups, which become congeries of isolated individuals…[648]

In other drawings the distinction between human and rock is less obvious. Below (Fig. 32) one can see the illustration already shown, alongside its neighbours in the series. The bottom left hand sketch is strongly suggestive of figuration because it is possible to detect what could be limbs and interpret the composite of lines through their resemblance to stick figures. The two images to the right hand side are more enigmatic.

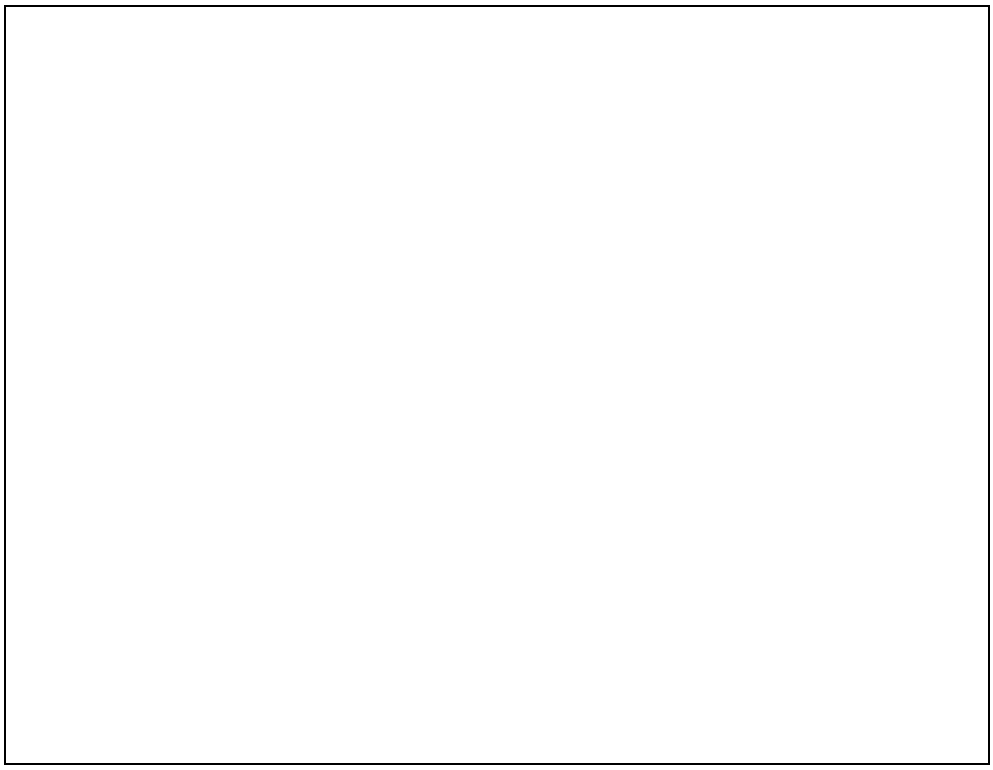

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Fig. 32
Valentine Gross, drawings, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

[648] Hermann Danuser and Heidy Zimmermann, *Avatar of Modernity: The Rite of Spring Reconsidered* (Boosey & Hawkes, 2013), p. 144.

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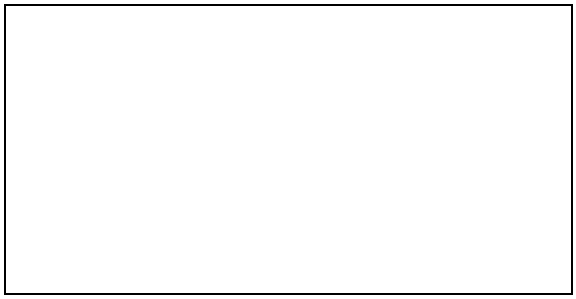
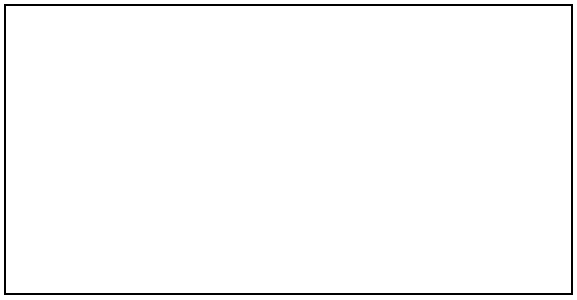
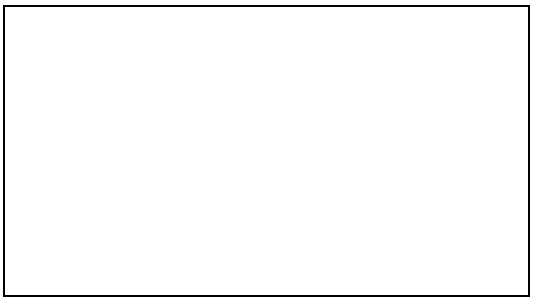
Fig. 33
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

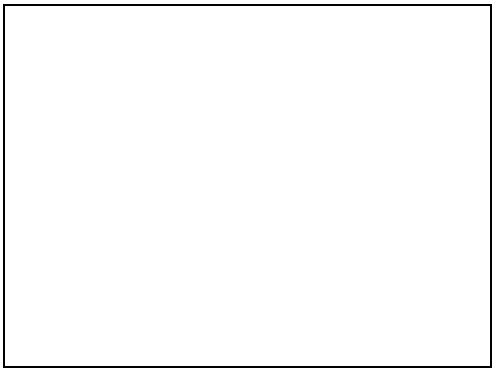
Gross' illustrations Fig. 33 can be interpreted with similar ambiguity. Vertical arches and rounded, incomplete loops, defy analysis according to definitive interpretations of figure/non-figuration.

The four sketches starting with Fig. 34 perhaps show stone circles, though when compared with Roerich's paintings alongside can we be sure this is what we are seeing? Maybe they show completed circles of people, where Roerich's painting is made a semi-circle perhaps to better include the viewer in the scene.









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Clockwise from Top Left: Fig . 34

Fig. 34 Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper, Collection: Valentine Gross Archive S.809-2012 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Fig. 35 Nicholas Roerich, *The Great Sacrifice* 1912, Tempura on cardboard, 52.3 × 75.0 cm, The A. N. Radishchev Museum of Arts, Saratov.

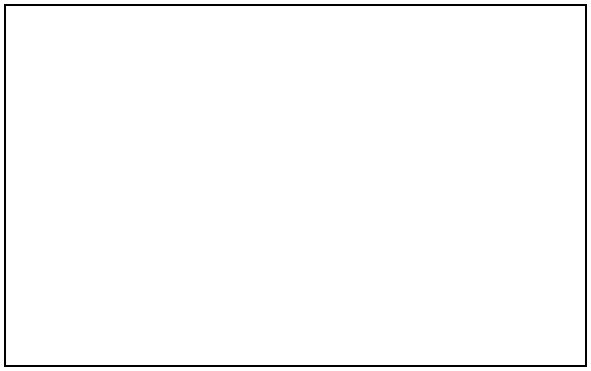
Fig. 36 Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper, Collection: Valentine Gross Archive (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Fig. 37 Nicholas Roerich, Detail from the *Adoration of the Earth* 1913, décor for curtain, location unknown, source, 'Plays: Rite of Spring, Introduction and Set Design'.[649]

My need to address the ambiguities presented in Gross' reproduction of what might be animate or inanimate forms, intensified on viewing the worked up-pastels Gross made of *Le Sacre*. Here a new complication seemed to undermine the legibility of some of the more interpretable sketches. If particular elements of Roerich's two backdrops for scene's one and two

[649] 'Plays: Rite of Spring, Introduction and Set Design' <http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Drama/plays/spring/1spring.html> [accessed 29 September 2016].

of *Le Sacre* can be assumed as present, it becomes much more difficult to decipher what it is Gross has reproduced. This I will explain through presenting copies of Roerich's designs:



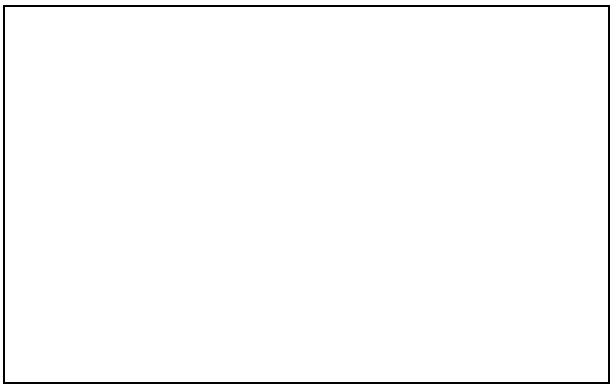


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Fig. 38
Above Left:
Fig) Nicholas Roerich, *Adoration of the Earth* 1913, décor for curtain, location unknown, source, 'Plays: Rite of Spring, Introduction and Set Design'.[650]

Fig. 39
Above Right: Nicholas Roerich *The Great Sacrifice* 1910, oil on canvas, 52.9 × 74.5cm, International Centre of the Roerichs, Moscow.

Roerich's backdrop for Act one appears above left and Fig. 38 and in close up Fig. 37. In the bottom left hand quarter of the image above left, one can see the suggestion of a completed stone circle, inside which — on slightly raised ground — is a large, dark, boulder, speckled with orange moss. In Fig. 40 we can see one of Gross' completed pastels. In it the same, darkened, mound of deeper pink, is distinguished by its colour difference and its shape which identifies it as the same

[650] 'Plays: Rite of Spring, Introduction and Set Design'.

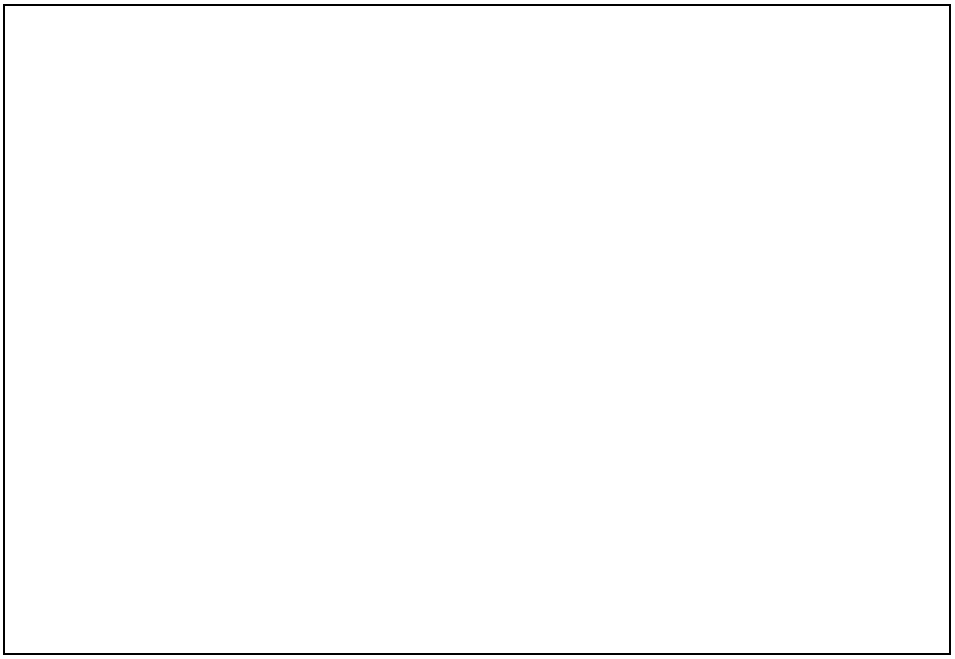

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Fig. 40
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, drawing in pastel on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive, S.196-1999 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

boulder in Roerich's backdrop. In the foreground, the groupings of dancers, according to their named characters are made distinct through their costume: the peaked hats of the men and the black plaited hair and head bands of the women in red costume being clearly decipherable. The stone circle as identified around the rock is not present in this pastel. Neither is it in the two images below:

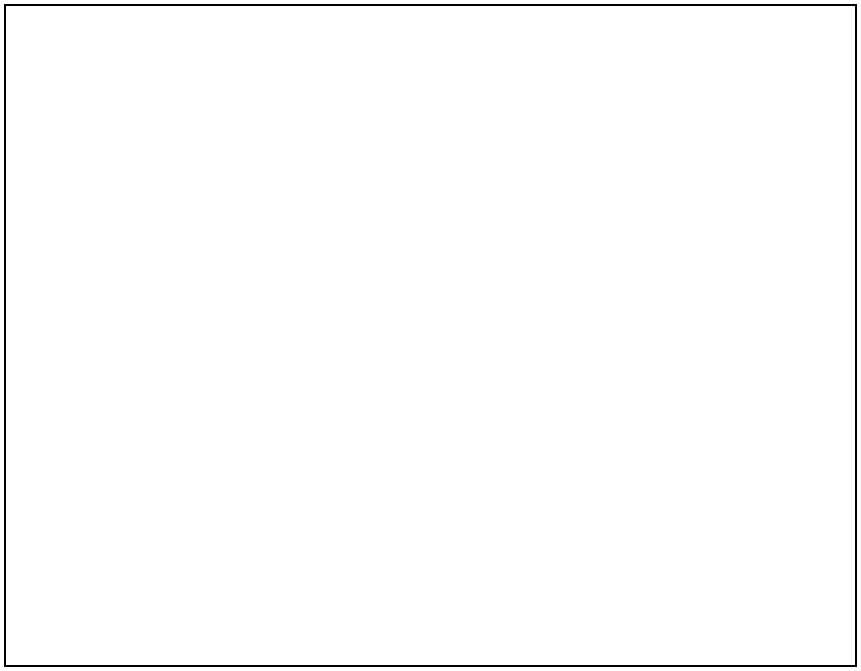

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Fig. 41
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, drawing in pastel on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive,
S.640-1989 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

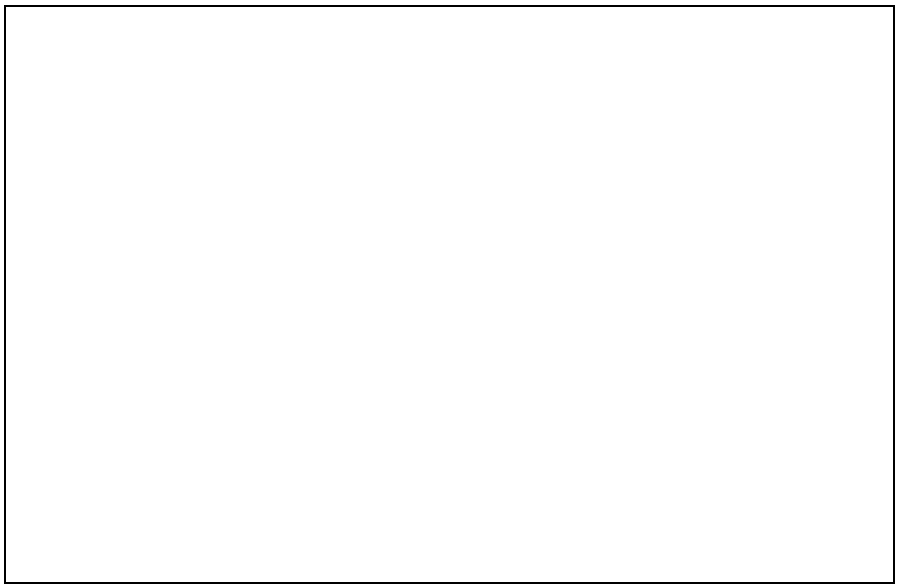

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Fig. 42
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, drawing in pastel on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive,
S.642-1989 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

In the bottom right hand space of Fig. 42 however, one can certainly discern mounds of circled, white stones or people. The suggestion that we are viewing people, comes from the sameness of colour that the circles share with the costumed figures of the first pastel Fig.40

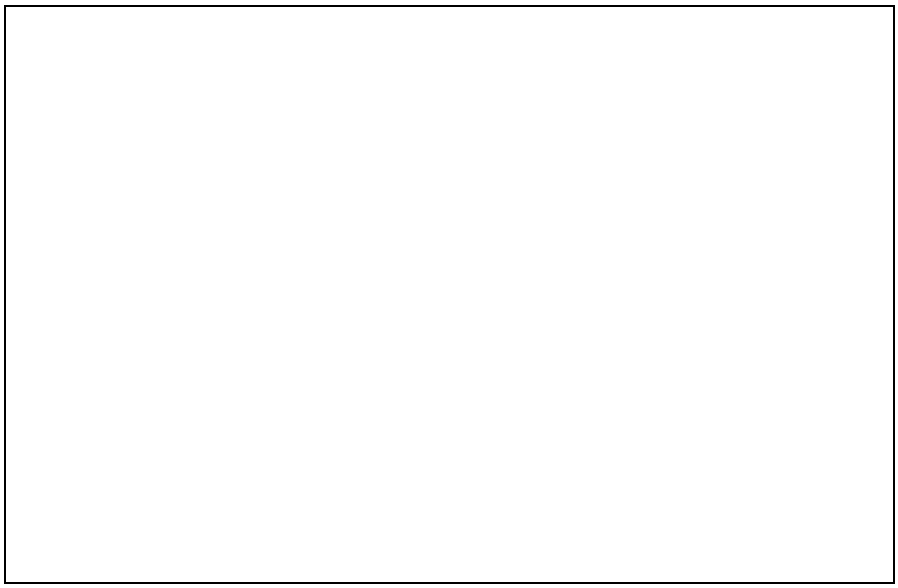

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Fig. 43
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, drawing in pastel on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive,
S.641-1999 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Any assertion that we are looking at people is both affirmed and undone by the image immediately above (Fig. 43). The bottom left hand quarter of the pastel shows colours consistent both with the pale mounds of possible stone and with the costumes of the male figures in first pastel. Similarly the red mound at the bottom right hand of the image can be likened in shape and colour with the darkened, pink boulder and the red, costumed women of the other pastels.

Possibly Gross had drawn the raised feet and crouched heads of the circled figures in red hats as if to suggest movement. The possibility of their being in the process of genuflecting, combined with continuation of the head movement towards the ground, takes these figures closer to becoming a fourth group or mound like the other three in the pastel and like the red mass of inwardly curled figures and the flattened white stone-like grouping immediately 'above'

it. It is this suggestion of *process,* of metamorphosis, to which I will return later to consider its significance in linking Gross' sketches of *Le Sacre* to Futurist theory and also in what I believe to be the necessary intervention of *process* as an idea which raises queries around what Gross is attempting to communicate when we read a confusion between animate with inanimate.

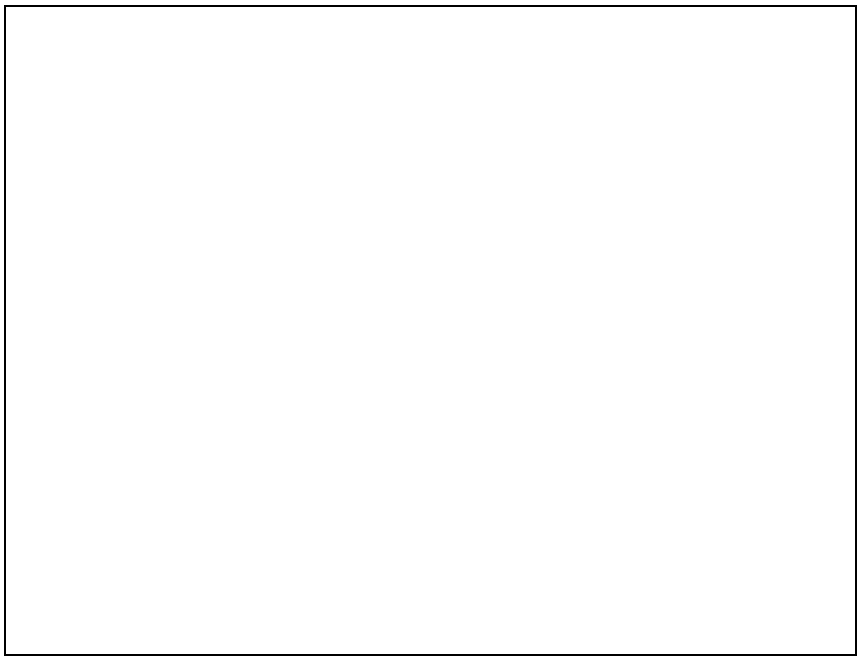

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Fig. 44
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, drawing in pastel on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive, S.643-1989 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

Taking this idea of *process* still further, I wish to look at another pastel from the same series of works as shown above in Fig. 44. In it, speed and anti-clockwise direction are suggested by the movement of the flow of the women's plaits. The way in which Gross renders the clothing of the women who circle the Chosen One (who stands centrally) is striking as their colours become dappled, broken and diffuse. To this extent, the figures gain a quality of transparency with the blueish hues of the background breaking through the white of the women's smocks. These changes however are determined by the trajectory of the dancers' movements and their position on stage. As the women circle towards the back of the stage their bodily forms appear to disintegrate into a brown/beige, closer to the greens of the background.

As the figures remerge again towards the foreground they resume their brighter, solid form of white before moving again back towards ethereality: the colours breaking apart with the whiteness of their smocks fragmenting as they circle towards the rear of the stage, almost disappearing altogether into Roerich's backdrop. In this pastel, red is the most strident colour and the only one which retains the sense of continuity throughout the entire circle of women.

Futurist Ideas and *Process* in Gross' Sketches

I have identified a number of Futurist manifestoes for analysis for what I will argue to be their pertinence to Gross' sketches. These I hope will help clarify what I believe to be the relationship between futurist theory and its relevance to the works shown above.

In declaring that '…all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing. A profile is never motionless before our eyes but constantly appears and disappears'. The *Futurist Painting Technical Manifesto* of 11 April 1910, recognised the significance of technological and scientific developments such as Eadweard Muybridge's rapid successive capture of single frames of movement of a running horse which was alluded to with respect to the Futurists' belief in the importance of conveying speed and movement in art.[651] The same manifesto cited Wilhelm Röntgen's discovery of X-rays as an example of the Futurist conviction that the work of art had a communicative potential beyond its material condition. Hence the statement, 'To paint a human figure you must not paint it; you must render its surrounding atmosphere'.[652] In this manifesto, there was recognition of the need to include the wider environment in communicating the essence of what the artist experienced of their subject.

> We declare,…that there can be no modern painting without the starting point of an absolutely modern sensation, and no one can contradict us when we state that *painting* and *sensation* are two inseparable words.[653]

The statement above, published as *The Exhibitors to the Public* 1912, was evidence of developing theory which was aimed at underpinning the work displayed at the first Exhibition of

[651] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 64.
[652] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 65.
[653] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 105.

Futurist Painting February 5, 1912 in Paris.[654] This accompanying catalogue made the case for the idea of *simultaneity* in Futurist work. Its utilisation in Futurist theory was an example of the group's eclecticism, because it referred to Albert Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* and the idea of 'two events occurring in the same space'.[655] In the catalogue the Italian Futurists gave examples of what they defined as simultaneity:

> In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room do not limit the scene to what the square of the window renders visible: we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced: the sun-baked throng in the street, the double row of houses which stretch to right and left, the beflowered balconies etc.[656]

The statement demonstrated the Futurists' intention to make simultaneously visible the subject, the subject's surroundings, their perspective (the subject's subjectivity) and the artist's interpretation of their experience in total. Highlighting a whole new subjectivity — that of the viewing spectator of the work of art — the statement continued:

> In order to make the spectator live in the centre of the picture, as we express it in our manifesto, the picture must be the synthesis of *what one remembers* and what one sees.[657] (My italics.)

Then as if to diffuse the delineation of these individual subjectivities to one another, the Futurists demanded that artists:

> …must render the invisible which stirs lives beyond intervening obstacles, what we have on the right, or the left and behind us, and not merely the small square of life artificially compressed, as it were, by the wings of a stage set. We have declared in our manifesto that what must be rendered is the *dynamic sensation*, that is to say, the particular rhythm of each object, its inclination, its movement, or more exactly, its interior force.[658]

The assumption was of an invisible energy which the artist could intuit and reproduce. Even more significant to Futurist theory were qualities specific to 'dynamic sensation': these being of movement and energy. In April 1913, Umberto Boccioni outlined his theory of

[654] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, pp. 13, 105.
[655] Ottinger, p. 54.
[656] Ottinger, p. 54.
[657] Ottinger, p. 54.
[658] Ottinger, p. 54.

'physical transcendentalism' in *The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting*.[659] This proposed a material essence or solidity, intrinsic to all matter which had a direct, quantifiable affiliation with its surrounding atmosphere. This would manifest as 'force-lines' suggesting the projection of colour and emotion beyond the picture frame and into the spectator space, immersing them in their own viewing experience, as had already been proposed in *The Exhibitors to the Public* of 1912.[660] *The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting* stated:

> The *distances* between one object and another are not just empty spaces, but are occupied by material continuities made up of varying intensities, continuities we reveal with perceptible lines that do not correspond to any photographic truth.[661]

These lines were theoretically assumed (as perceived by the artist) and had been physically evident in works such as his *States of Mind, Those Who Go* (1911) where lines were shown as connecting and intersecting with people, objects and one another (Please see Chapter II for illustrations.) It was not only artists' established perception of the relationship between objects which Boccioni wished to question but the nature of objects themselves. He wrote that the presence of these lines were:

> …why our paintings do not have just objects and empty spaces, but only a greater intensity and solidity of space. With this, what I meant by referring to the *solidification* of Impressionism becomes absolutely clear.[662]

References to Impressionism and Cubism were ways in which the Futurists could distinguish their work from previous and competing artists and named collectives. The simultaneous presentation of different viewpoints for a static subject as distinct from the same simultaneity but of all stages of a subject's progress through time, was one way in which the Futurists tried to make clear the difference between their theoretical aims and those which had become identifiable with the grammar of Cubist artists. In highlighting their belief in the communication of multiple senses, kinaesthetic and dynamic qualities beyond two or three

[659] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.
[660] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 107.
[661] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.
[662] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 141.

dimensional states, the Futurists made a clear dissociation between themselves (their own dynamic projections from the flat surface of the picture space) and the static planes displayed according to multiple perspectives in Cubism.

On the level at which we are reviewing the sketches of Valentine Gross, we can propose the relevance of Futurist theory as a strand of serial movement or *process*. It could for example be argued that Gross was showing movement through the suggestion of episodic stages of transition held together within a single image, but recording each element of movement in sequence. A good example of how this operated in Futurist work was Balla's *Girl Running on Balcony* of 1912. In this painting movement was encapsulated as a series of frames within a single image.

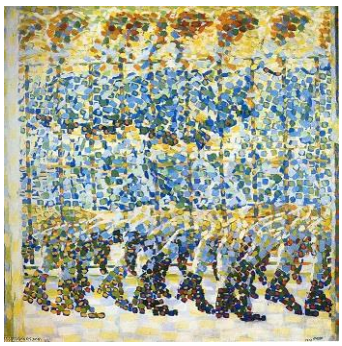

Fig. 45
Giacomo Balla, *Girl Running on Balcony* 1912, oil on canvas,
125 × 125cm Grassi Collection: Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milano.

We could for instance think of the pastel Fig. 43 with genuflecting men, as being like a film frame or a cartoon strip documenting a series of movements through time, the bending circles of semi-stood dancers transitioning into the next 'frames' which show them as having crumpled downwards into mounds of stillness. They then come to resemble the hills and mounds in Roerich's scenery.

Sentiency

Were we to suggest a conversion from human being to rock, would such a transformation substantiate or nullify the final result — the rock— as either retaining the capacity for human feeling or having reverted to its usual, non-sentient form? In other words —

on some level — might the conversion to stone as with Gross' metamorphosing of circling humans into circular mounds of stone, be as such that a sense of human emotion remains after the change to stone? Might this sentiency be the same presence of human emotion implied as the 'life' in a ballet where humans only exist in unspoken terms — according to Nijinsky's 'life of the stones and the trees'.[663] Were this the case, to what purpose might such sentiency serve? Within the realm of allegory, metaphor and ideological reproduction, it is possible to entertain such imaginative possibilities and offer interpretations accordingly. If some fairy tales were written for the purposes of edification, then to what service would a prince be magically converted into a frog? If we suppose that the fairy tale prince, once transformed, had consciousness of his unkissability — which the story relies upon for its tragedy: prefiguring the character's reconversion — then the prince's awareness of his own violation, is perhaps where the function of the narrative manoeuvre resides. This is understood as an emotional as well as physical assault on the human, as we the reader interprets the story according to our empathy with the frog/prince. This might be philosophically deconstructed according to a its being paralleled with my interpretation of Gross' pastel showing people transforming into stone. Gross' figures mounded groups in are *men and women* making their conversion a *non-gendered* transformation. I believe that the philosophical becoming stone alludes to non-sentiency and a reversion to a past time over and above a conversion to stone whereby sentiency was retained and thus politically dehumanising. Can an argument for political dehumanisation be made elsewhere in *Le Sacre*? Might absorption into a sensorial world of a staged imaginary which projects the symbolic murder of a woman be less a state of moral dehumanisation and more the concern of the rehumanisation through integration with one's surroundings: in recognition of the inherent value of the work of art with the humanity producing it? This brings me to what is clearly a contradiction between the philosophy behind Futurist works and the same declared by *Le Sacre's* creators who had proposed a direction of (temporal) movement in the form of return to an

[663] Macdonald, p. 90.

imaginary landscape of an ancient past. The Futurists on the other hand, envisaged humanity's advancement through a projection of movement into the future.

In a chapter which reviewed Nijinsky's choreographic notation, Claudia Jeschke wrote how — in relation to *Le Sacre* — Nijinsky's 'overinterpretation' of choreographic synchronicity to the music was able to 'turn choreography into an image in multi-layered motion' whilst shifting 'tradition away from the utilization of formal patterns toward the individual instrument'.[664]

A further suggestion perhaps then of a form of movement which compresses time in another way. I believe the idea of forward thrust or upwards evolutionary progression from the sea to land and ultimately the emergence of mankind was altered through the idea of regression and reversion in Gross' pastel. A movement from mankind back towards earth and stone. But what evidence is there for this? It has come from a sense that (probably stemming from my own largely twentieth century photographic, filmic and Western scribal imaginary) 'progression' is indicated by a movement from left to right. If we assume left to the right of a painting such as *Girl Running on Balcony* indicates progress through time, then we may wish to ascertain a reference point for assuming Balla was replicating movement according to this principle. Here we might return to Muybridge's photographic research which showed the process of movement through a series of rapidly captured photographic stills. These were experiments which were developed further by the brothers Antonio and Arturo Bragalia using their own technique which they named Photodynamism.[665] They were for a time strongly associated with the Futurist movement in spite of the veracity of photography as an art form being questioned by artists such as Umberto Boccioni.[666] The resulting images presented movement from left to right in the same way as we are left in no doubt by the position of the head and feet that the direction in which the girl is presented whilst running on the balcony is from left to right. If we can assume for a

[664] Danuser and Zimmermann, p. 140.
[665] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 314.
[666] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 314.

moment that Gross is using this trajectory to demonstrate the movement of time, then her pastel points towards regression from evolved humanity back towards the earth and sea. We might also speculate that this was an interpretation on the part of Gross of *Le Sacre's* creators' insistence, that what they were presenting was an evocation of an ancient past. On a broader level, it also makes sense to view Gross' compositional arrangement of her figures as being on the same continuum which emboldened artists to adapt and appropriate ethnographic and archaic material in which they saw a means of revitalising an etiolated Western aesthetic of non-stop refinement. From within the theatre environment, was Gross reproducing the energy and excitement of its external society through a fusion of combined sensory elements?

'Je verrai avec joie forceux les furieux.' 'I will see with forceful joy and fury'.[667]

Futurist intrusion into a broad spectrum of the arts — reflective of the variety of areas in which Futurist contributors practised — generated new possibilities attendant with the transferability (or otherwise) of Futurist theory across different art forms. In the Futurist manifesto *The Pleasure of Being Booed,* 1911 this idea of material interpenetrability is transferred from the picture plain to be made applicable to theatre and audience performer interaction being a variable form of the same idea which had first appeared in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*: In 1913, the manifesto *The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells* declared:

> We Futurists painters maintain that sounds, noises and smells are incorporated into the expression of lines, volumes, and colours just as lines, volumes and colours are incorporated into the architecture of a musical work. Our canvases, in that event, will express the plastic equivalent of the sounds, noises, and smells found in theatres, music-halls, cinemas, brothels, railroad stations, ports, garages, hospitals, factories etc., etc.

Another work of relevance here — Gino Severini's *Pan Pan Dance at the Monico* (1909-1911) — drew upon the rhetoric of the opening manifesto, this painting attempted to engage the

[667] Valentine Gross, 'Critics and Ballets Russes Program/ 1913 Season VG/MS', undated, p. 9, Valentine Gross Archive, V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London. V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.This sentence may have been authored by Valentine Gross or may be an uncredited quote. They are the only words written on the final page of an unpublished series of notes Gross made listing ballets from the 1913 season and excerpts from ballet reviews — mostly of *Le Sacre.*

spectator on a level which integrated them with the action being performed in the work. By placing next to each other deep, bold, colours and jagged shapes next to pale ones and repeating this many times over to fill the canvas, Severini achieved an inescapable sense of noise and movement. This created an optical effect which suggested incessant movement. These tiny contrasting fragments made up the narrative of a night club scene which spilled beyond the picture frame and out towards the viewer. The viewer's synaesthesic experience of the visual cacophony was as a further integration of imagined senses fusing together music, bright electric lights, noise, drinks and the crowd. The stage upon which the women in the painting dance further implicates the viewer in the spectacle. The dropping away of the perspectival line, running diagonally from the top right of the picture and ending invisibly beyond the picture frame and below the viewer's feet, confirms the artist's involvement of the viewer in the scene.

Between 1910 and 1911, Severini painted *The Black Cat*. The production of this painting, which coincided with a period during which Severini was experimenting with the idea of evoking sensation in his work, featured two black cats and was linked through its title, to a Cabaret in Montmartre often attended by local artists.[668] The sombre hues of this Divisionist work were echoed in another of 1911 *The Obsessive Dancer*. Here however, deeper greens and blues are punctuated with more vivid geometric maroons, illuminated by the shards of a light, the light itself quiet in tone but made distinct by its crescent forming rays at the picture's apex. In Severini's *Yellow Dancers* c. (1911-12) the brightness of this overhead electrical light, now perspectivally flattened and dominating the picture space, blurs the discernibility of the figures as dancers to near obliteration. Severini painted the light to splinter the perceptible, bolder fragments of ochre in the dancers' dress. Had they remained intact, these ochres would have allowed the eye to distinguish their extending skirts against the background dazzle of faint yellow and pastels, faded by the brilliance of the electricity.

[668] Ottinger, p. 170.

As Valentina Cefalù identified in a catalogue entry for a 2009 exhibition of Futurist work, *The Yellow Dancers* was a work faithful to the ideas laid out in *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto* (1910) in its statement that 'movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies' .[669] The painting both infers the fracture of solidity through the intensity of light upon the figures and a dynamism intrinsic to all 'solid' material, but optically misinterpreted — and therefore assumed — to be static. Optical reliability was a matter questioned when x-rays were discovered. With the knowledge of a world beyond that which was immediately visible, artists questioned the faithfulness of their representations and the ability of artistic conventions to faithfully render them as reality.

This thinking points towards a form of synaesthesia proffering interpretive conversions of sensory information, resulting in fresh (reinterpreted) motor output. This is potentially cyclical in nature and with the process of sensory stimulation leading to a transformation of the experiential into a new work of art. I would like to contextualise aspects of Gross' drawing according to the concept of music in visual form, using first an example given by Stravinsky of a dream he had in which he was able to envisage an interval, that is, the distance between two notes in music:

> Let me tell you about a dream that came to me when I was composing *Threni*. After working late one night I retired to bed still troubled by an interval. I dreamed about this interval. It had become an elastic substance stretching exactly between the two notes I had composed, but underneath these notes at either end was an egg, a large testicular egg. The eggs were gelatinous to the touch (I touched them), and warm, and they were protected by nests. I woke up knowing that my interval was right. (For those who want more of the dream, it was pink — I often dream in colour. Also, I was so surprised to see the eggs I immediately understood them to be symbols…) [670]

Threni was composed in 1958 but we might suppose a conceptual link to previous compositions and in particular in relation to his assistant Robert Craft's original question, which had begun by reminding Stravinsky of his conceptualisation of intervals in music as having weight. In the quote above Stravinsky describes of his having conceived his music in visual,

[669] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 66.
[670] Igor Stravinsky, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp. 17–18.

tactile (specifically textural) and reproductive terms. Returning to Gross' drawings, is it possible to make a short conceptual leap which relates to synaesthesic perception and output? If we again review the drawings which Claudia Jeschke has suggested 'gave short shrift to the actions of groups, which become congeries of isolated individuals…' then we might consider what formal qualities may have given rise to this observation? [671] In the drawings of 'groups' we can see how each strike of the pencil has been interpreted as an abbreviation for a cohort of amassed individuals. I would like to extend this perspective through first restating Gross' own words …

> In the semi-darkness of the theatre, I took rough, stenographic notes, in my style, of the dance and music. Some of them became indecipherable among the hundreds of lines in motion on top of the debris of those underneath. For me, each one evoking the others, the dances of the ballet are alive among them and *I cannot hear the music without seeing, almost in spite of myself, what I saw then*.[672] (My italics)

The inseparability of music and image for Gross of *Le Sacre* represents both an experiential amalgamation of aural and visual senses and a legible transformation of these first performances, in keeping with the Futurist recognition of the fusion and conveyance by the artist of sensorial states. With this in mind I would like to speculate as to the possibility of Gross' drawings being a record of the music as well as the choreography with each vertical strike of the pencil or crayon intimating a corresponding rhythmic value. What further evidence might I have for this supposition? I believe that the choice to draw in the semi-darkness rendered Gross' capture of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, an experience which emphasised the vibrational as much as the visual and aural senses. My argument is supported by the augmentation of the woodwind and brass sections of the orchestration from one to five players per instrument.[673] Musicologist Richard Taruskin has written of *Le Sacre's* score:

> The sounds of the music make a direct and compelling appeal to the listener's imagination, and the listener's body. In conjunction with Stravinsky's peerless [sic] handling of the immense orchestra they have a visceral, cathartic impact.[674]

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[671] Danuser and Zimmermann, p. 144.
[672] Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. xxiii.
[673] Danuser and Zimmermann, p. 86.
[674] Taruskin, 'Resisting The Rite', p. 287.

In discovering through Stravinsky's sketchbook for *Le Sacre,* how the increase in player numbers did not emerge immediately but rather 'at an advanced stage of the compositional process' musicologist Tobias Bleek wrote of how the:[675]

> … increase of the winds (especially in the lower register), the associated reinforcement of the strings, and the enlargement of the percussion *caused the weight and pressure of the sound to escalate*…At the same time, the low wind and the percussion instruments enhance both the material presence and the *sensual* and visual impact of the orchestral sound, *turning the violence of the ritualized stage action into an acoustical experience that can viscerally seize the listener in the live performance.* (My italics)[676]

Bleek's insight, points towards the power of the multisensorial experience of the spectator of *Le Sacre* to which Gross would have been subject. The immediacy of Gross' *impressions* of the work were akin to the immersion of the spectator into the work of art as was identified as a desired aim of the Futurists. It is here where I can begin to see the value of Gross' sketches with regard to the commentaries alluding to dehumanisation, because the capture of single instances of movement could not possibly convey the sense of brutality in *Le Sacre* so often written about. In any case, the spirit of Gross' sketches seem to suggest so much more than fleeting moments of decontextualised movement. If we take into account the absence of visual feedback (we cannot say how dark the auditorium was nor judge fully to what extent Gross' view of her own hands and what they produced, was obscured) we might consider if her senses turned elsewhere for guiding information. Certainly the massed grouping could be quickly and competently executed on paper through connecting arches of vertical projections. These could be made with accuracy if — neurologically speaking — the sensors in the joint spaces of the fingers remained stimulated by pressure and continued contact with the pencil on the paper. This proprioceptive feedback would have given Gross an awareness of the shapes she was producing on the page. Was Gross' attempt to replicate what she was experiencing of *Le Sacre*, through her aural and vibrational (sensorial) experience, as significant to her documentation as what she saw of her work when the auditorium lights were switched back on? To revisit Tobias

[675] Danuser and Zimmermann, p. 86.
[676] Danuser and Zimmermann, pp. 87–88.

Bleek's point about orchestral augmentation, with the possibility that Gross could not rely on visual feedback, might it be more likely that Gross was representing what she heard and felt through her sketches? If we return to the repetition of the previous chapter, and compare how the score looks with the repetition in Gross' work, we can imagine a form of association which disrupts the established delineation between music and art through music's identifiability through visual means. A successful application of Futurist merge of media perhaps? This differs from a score which remains moored to its function: representing the symbols analogous to an instrumentalists' motor function.

If in the absence of visual feedback, Gross' interpretation was as much guided by what she was hearing and feeling (vibrations) as by what she was seeing, then to what extent might we pose the question: did Gross' method of recording *Le Sacre* coincide with an Italian Futurist imaginary? Here we might consider again Carlo Carra's manifesto *The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells,* or maybe compare how Stravinsky's score for *Le Sacre* looked alongside the repetition in Gross' work. Are we seeing sound as well as speed in her work?

Michael Kirby has highlighted how in the *Variety Theatre Manifesto* 1913, a key element Marinetti wished to convey was the illogical/concrete nature of variety. The essence of this was the non-referential nature of work which placed an emphasis instead on its sensorial and experiential immediacy. This is where — as Kirby describes — 'a thing is experienced for its own sake rather that for its references and implications: it is "there" rather than referring to something that is not there.'[677] Kirby writes as follows:

> A performance or an element of that performance, therefore, can be thought of as being concrete to the extent that it maximises the sensory dimensions and minimizes or eliminates the intellectual ones.[678]

We may wish to recall here the difficulties regarding the lack of a narrative in *Le Sacre*, and a verbal explanation before the curtain as a prelude to the London performances. This interface

[677] Kirby and Kirby, pp. 20–21.
[678] Kirby and Kirby, pp. 20–21.

between performance and spectator was considered necessary being the intellectual interpolation of a verbal explanation which it was hoped would ameliorate the 'difficulty' of an ambiguous production. In his second essay on *Le Sacre du Printemps* written in 1913 for *Nouvelle Revue Française,* Jacques Rivière made allusion to a more instinctive approach which may have assisted the panicked uncomprehending audiences of the first Paris performances:

> We stand before it like children at a Punch and Judy show; they do not need 'to have it explained', but they laugh, they tremble, understand, as the show goes on.[679]

In a similar vein, arts critic Emile Vuillermoz wrote in *La Revue Musical* on June 15 1913:

> *Le Sacre du Printemps* demands no analysis. You submit to it with horror or pleasure, according to your temperament…[680]

Further on in the text and in terms distinctly Futurist in their advocacy of violence, Vuillermoz writes of 'the

fallacy of Nijinsky's exacerbated "cerebralism" stating:

> What is there cerebral and intellectual in Stravinsky's superhuman force, in the athleticism of his brutal art that continually parries direct hits to the stomach and right hooks to the chin? The music bends the men in rows, passes over the shoulders of the women like a hurricane over a wheat field, throws them to the winds, burns the soles of their feet. Stravinsky's dancers are not so much electrified by these rhythmic discharges, they are electrocuted…[681]

In the above quote, the troupe under Nijinsky's choreographic direction, become 'Stravinsky's dancers' and the 'superhuman force' of the music exhibits a dehumanising power through its degradation of the people on stage. From Vuillermoz's perspective, it is not merely the Chosen Maiden but the entire corps de ballet who are annihilated as *Le Sacre* proceeds. Vuillermoz's remarks are another example of the reported overpowering, emotional experience of witnessing the first performances of *Le Sacre.*

I would like to briefly return to the description by Lydia Sokolova of her experience as a dancer of Massine's revival of *Le Sacre*:

[679] Rivière, pp. 24, 101.
[680] Lederman, p. 21.
[681] Lederman, pp. 21–22.

> Possessed by an animal frenzy, I would dance myself to death so that the tribe might prosper and the crops not fail…The watchers beyond the footlights seemed to be echoing with their opera glasses this ancient gesture.
> The steps Massine had invented for my sacrificial dance bore so little relation to any kind of dancing that had ever been done before and were so violently contrasted one with the other, and followed each other so swiftly with sudden changes of rhythm, that I think the impression I gave was of a creature galvanised by an electric current…
> Whatever it did to the audience it nearly killed me.[682]

The above description shares descriptive confluence with Vuillermoz's comments above with its analogy with electrocution. It also reinforces a sense that what *Le Sacre* did in the choreographic violence of its original production, had an enduring appeal to choreographers — there were seven years between Nijinsky's forgotten ballet and Massine's version of *Le Sacre.*

As discussed previously, the evocation of an ancient people — as a theme for *Le Sacre* — within the context of contemporary European colonial ambition, was an important but uncomfortable reference point for the Paris performances. It was unstable as an emotional anchor for those wanting to remain passive spectators and highlighted the difficulty of the audience in being able to separate their understanding of the creators' intention — in the form of the written word — from what they (the audience) was experiencing of *Le Sacre* physically and emotionally. I would like to consider again how the programme notes for the Paris audiences may have been an inadvertent provocation to the first audiences who were accustomed to plot lines and story-telling, I wish here to quote Kirby who has written:

> A word is not concrete. That is, its concrete aspects — its sound or retinal pattern — are not its most significant parts. It is the symbolic process, the standing-for and representing something else, that is the essence of the word, and language is the combination of word/symbol into modified and accumulated meanings. Therefore, language process can be taken as the paradigm of logical experience.[683]

The narrative, explanatory programme notes were altered for the later London performances possibly in response to the disruption during the Paris staging. Language intervened between audience and performer as a means of protecting the audience from a sense of feeling unmoored. Without such explanation — as occurred in the Paris performances —the

[682] Sokolova, p. 166.
[683] Kirby and Kirby, p. 21.

vacuum which was left was given over to the non-logical/experiential. The suggestion is of an inability to separate the logic and rationality of the written, from an instinctive and overpowering sensorial intrusion, which integrated the audience with *Le Sacre* for the duration of the performance. Gross' decision to record in the semi-darkness came with the awareness that the key mediating elements of the process of sketched documentation would need to be overridden in the same way that the mediating function of language operated to salve an unreadable performance. In documenting *Le Sacre* in this way, Gross decreased the lag between the visual reception and her interpretation of the work on paper. In normal circumstances this might be as much determined by the visual feedback of seeing what one has just drawn, as the interpretative possibilities already forming in the artist's mind. In the opinion of Claudia Jeschke:

> The sketches have varying intensities of pencil stroke, with almost tentative lines nested in heavier outlines. They can be viewed as dynamic maps of the body and the traces it leaves behind in space, indicating accumulations of energy.[684]

Such 'accumulations of energy' might be argued as Gross' distillation of movement, bypassing logic — by necessity — and executed at speed. Like Umberto Boccioni's researches, this could be seen as a series of steps aggregated to form single frames or in other words, the essence of a span of memory through a concentration of time and space.

I would like to return for a moment to *Le Sacre du Printemps,* the essay written by Jacques Rivière about the 1913 Paris performances.[685] In it, Rivière describes works which were precursors to *Le Sacre* of which he believes the public had become accustomed. These he believed stood in contrast to the spirit of *Le Sacre*. Of these former works he wrote:

> Such music can express things only by allusions; it does not reach things; it merely points them out; it sends us vaguely towards them; it makes them stir, but it does not seize them.[686]

We can see how carefully this was placed and written to contrast with *Le Sacre* when we read Rivière's description — opening the chapter —on the previous page:

[684] Danuser and Zimmermann, p. 144.
[685] Rivière, pp. 82–107.
[686] Rivière, pp. 82–83.

> Here is an absolutely undiluted work. Acid and hard, if you will, but its brilliancy has been tarnished by no juice…Nothing is blurred, nothing diminished by shadows; there are no veils, no poetic blendings; there is no trace of atmosphere.[687]

It seems to me that in comparing such examples Rivière has directed our attention to a matter much in keeping with Futurist aesthetic aims within their theatre projects, those which supported unfettered, unromantic, delivery stripped back to its absolute essentials. The unworked up drawings certainly appear in line with this thinking. It seems however obvious yet worth stating that, the less worked up drawings are less romantic. Returning to Buckle's remark about the sentimentality of her finished sometimes published ballet work including those of *Le Sacre*. They seem to have a fluidity and tidiness to them which verges on the romantic. We might then ask if Gross would have wished for her sketches to have been published in their unfinished form? Were they unfinished or could they be argued as works which were completed by virtue of their immediate rendering of Gross' experience of *Le Sacre* and the accuracy with which they seem to accord with the written descriptions of the ballet.

Instances of Dehumanisation

With respect to what has been observed by some commentators of *Le Sacre* and some examples raised of the interpretations of the work by Gross, I would like to review instances of dehumanisation in the work of the Ballets Russes and the Italian Futurists.

In *L'après-midi d'un faune* of 1912, the title character which Nijinsky himself danced is a beast. As Richard Buckle has described in reference to Valentine Gross' work,

> In her drawings of Nijinsky's experimental *L'après-midi d'un faune*, the choreography of which was unlike anything that had been seen before, she grasped instinctively (almost as if they had talked it over) his attempt to dehumanise the body and treat it as the element of an angular composition.[688]

It was indeed the alignment of the faun's bestiality with the act of masturbation to ejaculation for which many of the work's critics primarily objected. Buckle proposes instead that Gross had 'grasped' how Nijinsky made his body less human through its being posed angularly,

[687] Rivière, p. 82.
[688] Hugo and Buckle, p. 13.

thus — in this instance — Nijinsky's dehumanisation of the body was specifically aesthetic and one more emblematic of the hard edges of a machine than the fluidity of movement which an animal might share with a human being. This brings to mind Marinetti's statement in the *Manifesto of Futurist Dance* of 1917 of how 'Noise is the language of the new human-mechanical life.'[689] Implying the hoped for human state of 'fusion' between 'man and machine'.[690]

The story of *Petrushka* of 1911 is that of three puppets who — through the skill of the Conjuror— are imbued with human emotions and characteristics. Of this work, Alexandre Benois wrote of his intention that:

> The dolls should come to life at the command of a magician, and their coming to life should be somehow accompanied by suffering. The greater the contrast between the real, live people and the automatons who had just been given life, the sharper the interest of the action should be.[691]

Michael A. Chaney has drawn attention to Stravinsky's interpretation of the status of Petrushka, first as a doll and then as the real Petrushka who appears as a ghost at the ballet's climax. Stravinsky concludes that this final act is a defiant nose thumbing to the audience who believe the puppet master's insistence that Petrushka is only a puppet. Such defiance Chaney believes can pass by unnoticed owing to the subject having been objectified in the first instance.[692]

In the previous chapter, instances of dehumanisation of particular ethnic groups which served ideological purposes (such as the Dahomeyans) were highlighted. In the works we have reviewed, the forms in which it could be identified as having arisen (with relevance to *Le Sacre*) are as follows. The argument is centred around the assumption and recognition of a relatability between the representations on stage and the assumptions about the inferiority of non-Occidental people, the proximity of location in a theatre and the inference of similarity with

[689] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 236.
[690] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 236.
[691] Benois, p. 326.
[692] Michael A. Chaney, 'E. E. Cummings's Tom: A Ballet and Uncle Tom's Doll-Dance of Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34.2 (2011), 22–44 (pp. 36–37) <https://doi.org/10.2979/jmodelite.34.2.22>.

audience and performer, which made for a supposition of insult and impropriety through *Le Sacre's* taking the form of racial transgression.

Keeping in mind my impressions of the lack of distinction between the forms which Gross records in her drawings — animate or inanimate — I would like to review some comments which have been made of *Le Sacre*. In her book *Diaghilev's Ballet Russes*' published in 1989, dance historian Lynn Garafola wrote that in Nijinsky's hands, 'design…attained a totalitarian function'. She explained this by citing an essay which was written in response to the first performances of *Le Sacre* by the writer Jacques Rivière in an article for the publication he edited, *Nouvelle Revue Francaise*. Rivière wrote of Nijinsky's choreography:

> …he takes his dancers, rearranges their arms, twisting them; he would break them if he dared; he belabors these bodies with a pitiless brutality, as though they were lifeless objects; he forces from them impossible movements, attitudes that make them seem deformed. [693]

Using Rivière's examples, Garafola pitted the grouped dancers against the individual, stating how these dancers, once a 'community' in the hands of Nijinsky's choreographic predecessor, were now 'a society of masses, [Nijinsky's] aggregate of individuals a collective of programmed ciphers'.[694]

These are not the only reviews which explain people's impressions of *Le Sacre* as a work which was brutalising to humans. Italian Futurist work more famously — also contained significant elements of dehumanisation and even violence.

When the futurist painter Giacomo Balla created *Macchina Tipographica* (The Printing Press) in 1914, it was as futurist historian Gunther Berghaus describes, 'to find an audio-visual expression for a linotype and a rotary printing-machine'.[695] The work would be performed by twelve performers who were dressed as automata and who performed onomatopoeic noises and

[693] Rivière, p. 100.
Rivière, p. 100.
[694] Garafola, p. 69.
[695] Günter Berghaus, p. 249.

movements as though they were machines.[696] Diaghilev was impressed with this work but unable to decide whether to stage it or another work by Balla *Feu d 'artifice* (Fireworks) 1917 which Diaghilev's regisseur Grigoriev described as follows:

> Diaghilev...devised a setting ordered from the Cubist painter Ballo [sic]. It consisted of various geometrical structures, such as cubes and cones, made of some transparent material that allowed of their being lit from within in accordance with a complicated lighting plot, which Diaghilev devised and worked himself. He maintained that it interested the music; and this Cubist fantasy proved much to the taste of his advanced artistic friends.[697]

Significantly, *Feu d 'artifice* took dehumanisation to the extent that it had no actors or dancers and consisted entirely of the designs upon the stage and the light effects. These effects were so extensive that — like the auditorium at the first performance of *Le Sacre* — the audience itself at intervals illuminated during the performance. This would have made the performance an immersive experience and integrating the audience with the movement on the stage.

Another Futurist work *I Selvaggi* ('The Savages') designed by Fortunato Depero bears similarities to *Le Sacre* in its references to killing, a vulnerable woman, stamping in the choreography, procreativity and the term 'savage'. It was part of Depero's *Balli Plastici* of 1918 and the last of a performance of four ballets which was well received by its audience which consisted largely of children and the well to do of art and society.[698] The work replaced people with giant marionettes and began with a fight between red and black 'savages' over a 'Great Female Savage'.[699] A cut to blackout then revealed a green eyed snake moving about the stage. The fight which then ensued between a red and black 'savage' culminated in a further blackout after which the belly of the 'Great Female Savage' opens to reveal a baby which is then consumed by the snake.[700] The numerous instances of dehumanisation in this work bear a remarkable resemblance to those already raised around *Le Sacre*.

[696] Günter Berghaus, p. 249.
[697] Grigoriev, p. 119.
[698] Günter Berghaus, p. 310.
[699] Günter Berghaus, p. 311.
[700] Günter Berghaus, p. 312.

Art historian RoseLee Goldberg has written how in 'Futurist Ballets':

> An essential motive behind these mechanical puppets and moving décor was the Futurists' commitment to integrate figures and scenery in one continuous environment. For instance, Ivo Pannaggi had in 1919 designed mechanical costumes for the *Balli Mecchanichi*, blending figurines into the painted Futurist setting, while Balla, in a performance of 1917 based on Stravinsky's *Fireworks*, had experimented with the 'choreography' of the setting itself.[701]

Here Goldberg makes an important point about the progression of futurist research beyond 1913 and experiments in integrating the performer with the backdrop, as Gross had realised with her pastel of the circling maidens dissolving into Roerich's backdrop for *Le Sacre*.

Violations

If one were to imagine a dehumanising process as a mediated space between Futurism and the first performances of *Le Sacre*, what would the nature of such a space be: perceptual, social, emotional? Can Gross' work be argued as infiltrating both instances? Consideration of this interpretation appears in accord with Futurist theory relating to form, style and interpenetrability: in particular as elements of Gross' work are consistent with Rivière's interpretation of *Le Sacre's* large groups as pre-lingual and interdependent, humanity.[702] The question is asked as to whether the homogenisation of human forms can be said to function as a symbolic space which might be interpreted as a reproduction of the rapidly evolving relationship between human and machine, as espoused in Futurist theatre.

The choice to draw in the semi-darkness rendered Gross' capture of *Le Sacre du Printemps* crucially an experience from which visual feedback was absent instead placing an emphasis on other senses. The speed and immediacy of her impressions were akin to the interpenetrability between all senses and the audience and the work of art, in which Italian Futurists aimed to root their practice. To capture a single pose in *Le Sacre* would have made the function of documentation redundant and in any case it was the impression given of dynamism and

[701] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, Thames & Hudson World of Art, 3rd ed (London ; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011), p. 24.
[702] Rivière, pp. 101, 104.

dehumanisation as reproduced through movement which hallmarked many of the reviews of the work.

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Fig. 46

Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive S.764-2012 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

This sketch above reminds me of the reviews of *Le Sacre* which refer to inhumanity and brutality. Is what we see here in the spirit of what the creators were trying to convey in *Le Sacre*? If this is a literal translation of what Gross was witnessing then it is highly uncomfortable to look at. In other images it is much easier to ascertain the manner in which Gross has interpreted a dancer's limbs which suggests to me that this is a drawing depicting an act of violence, one which we can speculate can be contextualised according to our understanding of *Le Sacre* as a work described by its first observers as a violating performance. I will return to this image later in the chapter). Reviewers reported that the dancers on the stage were violated by Nijinsky's exhausting and non-classical choreography and the Chosen One was violated in the work's narrative through the actions of the remainder of the group. The audience (some of whom felt

violated by the insult they perceived in being offered up such a performance) were reportedly physically and verbally assaulted by one another.

Nijinsky's remarks made to the *Pall Mall Gazette* published 15 February 1913, reinforce unequivocally his desire to convey in *Le Sacre* the power of nature above humanity,

'It is the life of the stones and the trees. There are no human beings in it. It is only the incarnation of Nature – not of human nature.'[703] In this statement, Nijinsky consciously seems to strip, the 'wise elder', 'young girls' and the 'Chosen Victim' of their humanity by declaring its absence in the ballet. Whilst nature here in *Le Sacre*'s design has been described as 'Neo-Primitivist', instinctive, irrational and stark like the scenic backdrop of act I, enactments of technology were threaded musically and choreographically through the work. This can be argued as being evident through the corps de ballet's rhythmic replication of heavy industry and machine-like homogeneity, reinforced through Nijinsky's choreographic adherence to the sections of pounding, unison, ostinato in Stravinsky's score. Here one might consider how in the view of historian and cultural theorist Felicia McCarren: 'The minimum gesture, aestheticized in modernist media, is also the iterated gesture of the assembly line'.[704]

In an article entitled 'Ballet Memories' in a *Radio Times* publication of 25 June 1937, Edwin Evans gave the following statement about Nijinsky:

> Like many artists he had a weakness for clever toys. I discovered in Chelsea a jointed wooden duck which was capable of assuming extraordinarily expressive angular attitudes. I procured one for him, and he was delighted with it. The following year, after *The Rite of Spring* had been produced with his angular choreography, one of his first questions to me was: 'Well, did you recognise it?' — 'What?' — 'Why, the duck, of course', and he told me that some of the most effective angular poses in the ballet had originated with the duck.[705]

In the *Manifesto of Futurist Dance* of 1917, Marinetti stated how:

[703] Macdonald, p. 90.
[704] McCarren, p. 20.
[705] Pritchard, *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909-1929 / Ed. by Jane Pritchard*, pp. 81–82.

We Futurists prefer Loie Fuller and the African American "cakewalk" (utilization of electric lights and mechanical movements). One must go beyond muscular possibilities and aim in the dance for that ideal *multiplied body* of the motor that we have so long dreamed of. Our gestures must imitate the movements of machines assiduously paying court to steering wheels, tires, pistons, and so preparing for the fusion of man with the machine, achieving the metallism of Futurist Dance.[706]

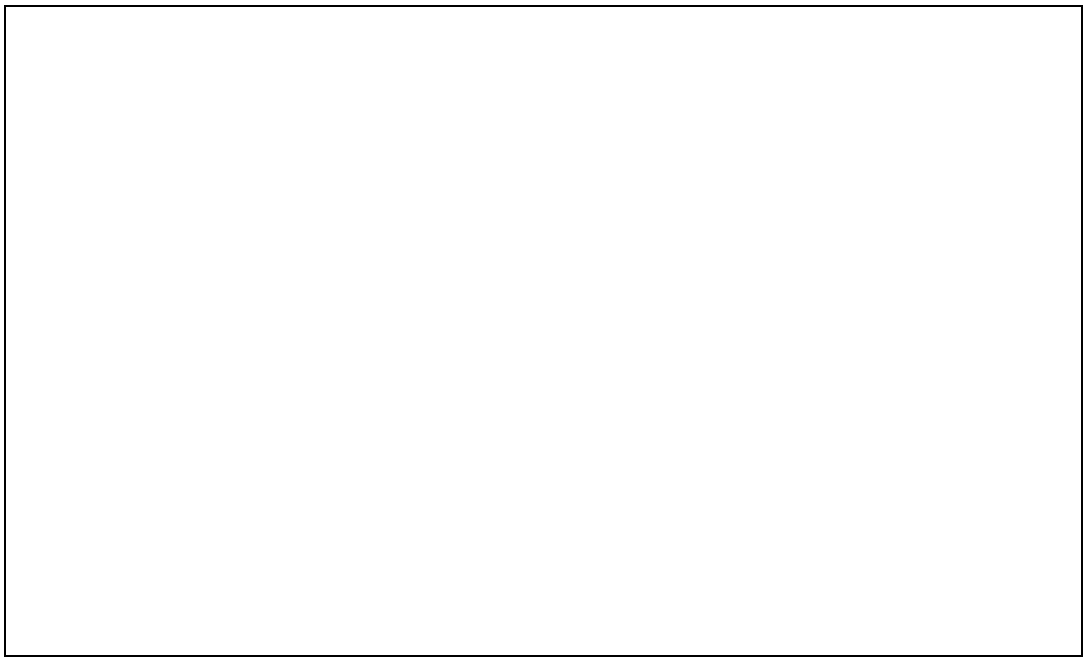

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Fig. 47
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive S.764-2012 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

[706] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 236.

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Fig. 48
Valentine Gross, drawing, 1913, blue crayon on tracing paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive Verso of S.764-2012 (THM/165), V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

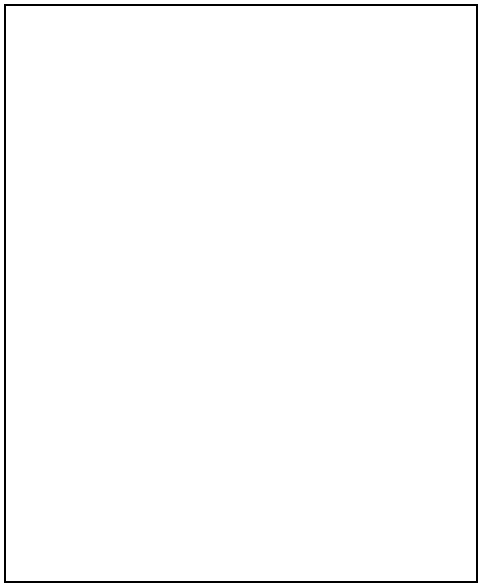

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Fig. 49
Valentine Gross, drawing and written notes, 1913, blue crayon on paper,
Collection: Valentine Gross Archive,V&A Department of Theatre and Performance, London.

I would like to review again the sketch Fig. 35 which I believe is supported by what can be discerned of the image on the verso of the page Fig. 36 and which can be seen through the note paper. One figure with one arm extended and the other brought across the body, bears striking resemblance to another in a series of unpublished written notes by Gross which include occasional, accompanying, explanatory sketches for. Fig. 37 shows the figure in the apparent same attitude but with accompanying notes. These are scribbled in disorderly hand writing with vigorous scorings out of errors, suggesting the need to record the information with urgency. What is legible of Gross' writing can be discerned as follows: 'the arms are in a sort of imploring fourth position and her whole attitude is wild, her feet almost on points, striking the ground like daggers'.[707] This supports the possibility of the figure being brutalised through the choreography and a consistency (owing to its location within the series) with readings of violation as implied by the previous sketch Fig. 36. It also signals political dehumanisation through a representation which can be interpreted as gendered asymmetry — as highlighted in the first chapter — in accordance with anxieties prevalent in Western European society at the fin de siècle which were being reproduced in works of art. In this case it manifests through a form which is egregious to the woman dancer's body. This is further imputed through the violence to the pointed toe (denied of the male dancer — recall Diaghilev's consideration that Nijinsky perhaps dance on pointe for *Jeux* 1913) and symbol of the feminine balletic. As Gross has interpreted what she

[707] I am assuming here that Valentine Gross as a ballet enthusiast and regular attendee of both the Ballets Russes rehearsals and performances was able to distinguish hopping en pointe (a staple of the female balletic vocabulary) and the more violent choreographic presentation within *Le Sacre's* narrative. My translator David Hutton recorded his interpretation of her notes which I include here: *French Text:* 'les bras sont dans une sorte de 4ème position suppliante et toute l'attitude est délirante les pieds presque sur les pointes frappant le sol comme des poignards The words are fairly easy to read although the alignment jumps about. Only the last word (daggers) is partly unclear. The word for a dagger is un poignard, and I think I can make out the i and the g very faintly when I enlarge the script. And looking at the scribbled sketch, that does make sense. The fact that she has insisted on *frappant (striking, hitting)* against the (illegible) crossed-out word shows that she wanted to emphasise that energy. Can you use the note itself as pictorial evidence?'

witnessed, the toes for this section of dance were not demi-or three quarter point but were almost full point before being actively and repeatedly stabbed into the ground. It is logical to assume that the figure to which Gross refers here is that of the Chosen One owing to the illustration's place in the series which is located alongside other sketches of a woman figure described in the singular and according to her sex. Above I have written how:

> Nijinsky's description of *Le Sacre* … appears to contradict our understanding of a work where human beings were indeed present both as dancers pursuing their stage careers and also as performers of character roles declared to be human — as evidenced through the titled sections of the libretto…

In the same vain as I have attempted to disentangle the complexities which confuse the articulations of reality between our knowledge of dancers on stage and what it is they are symbolically reproducing, a similar instance can be cited between the actual dehumanisation of the woman as a person forced to abuse her own body for her art and the transformed ideology she is replicating on the stage. We might raise here also the culture of prostitution amongst the women dancers of the Paris Opéra and of Nijinsky himself when a soloist with the Imperial ballets. As Sjeng Scheijen explains:

> In 1907 Nijinsky was under the protection of Prince Pavel Lvov. At that time it was customary for ballet dancers, male or female alike, to be 'looked after' by a patron who would finance them and introduce them to high society, typically in exchange for sexual favours.[708]

The spectre of poverty and the financial dependency on a ballet culture of which prostitution was integral, must be considered with respect to the artists having to perform out of economic necessity. Nijinsky's relationship with Prince Lvov, as well as himself, benefitted his sister and his mother who had been abandoned by their father.[709] It is the gendered inflections which concern me most for this particular argument. I would like to suggest that the symbolic abuse of the politicised body *becomes* political dehumanisation where the actual body of the woman dancer suffers physical torment through the process of reproducing the ideological

[708] Scheijen, pp. 161–62.
[709] Nijinska and others, pp. 197–99.

articulations of gendered asymmetry. In addition to having to stab the points of her toes onto a hard stage (in what would appear in the photos of the maidens to be soft shoes), we might also recall the complaints of (women) dancers interpreted as being due to their having to perform non-classical movements and the reports of exhaustion experienced in having to perform the *Le Sacre.*

Some of Valentine Gross' sketched interpretations of *Le Sacre* evidenced multiple strands of interpenetrability. On stage, the living and the non-living were fused and indistinguishable in her sketches. Images formed from an amalgam of sensations which in trying to sum up the essence of *Le Sacre* without the benefit of visual feedback, merged movement and staticism on stage and sound with vision. Gross' work pointed towards *Le Sacre's* humans as regressed or in the *process* of being formed into full humanity. In essence this was a pictorial rendition fully in accord with the spirit of *Le Sacre's* creators' (Nijinsky's declaration of *Le Sacre* to be 'the life of the stones, there are no humans in it') and articulations of dehumanisation which had been remarked upon by early commenters of the work.

In arguing that Gross sketched what she was perceiving aurally and vibrationally, I am making the case for the efficacy of *Le Sacre's* communicative qualities, the success of the creators' vision of the absence of humanity, their *actual* presence therefore denoting process — a subjecting to the process of dehumanisation — and its significance to arguments about *Gesamtkunstwerk*. I am suggesting that the holistic sensorial experience between spectator and the work of art had urgency over and above the synthesis of arts traditionally, physically and conceptually confined to the stage and orchestra pit. It is the *corporeality* of the experience of being witness to these first performances which brings *Le Sacre* into line with Futurist philosophy on the level of violation of the human form of 'arm twisting', 'electrocution' and 'bludgeoning'. Without *Le Sacre* being experienced as visceral, it could not also be understood as an abuse of the human form. The audience witnessed the performers' violation and some sections felt violated

themselves. My argument is that it was an extreme, immersive experience from which one could not easily escape until the end of the performance. This violation of the audience resonates with the aggression towards established theatre culture and audiences in Futurist rhetoric. It also brings to mind the Futurist's carefree attitude to the casualties of their philosophical violence which were of no concern to them. It was the *process* of violation which insulted, shocked, murdered. In the opening paragraph of *The Futurist Synthetic Theatre* written during the World War II in 1915, the manifesto makes a rallying call to the nation stating how:

> Italy must be fearless, tenacious, as swift and elastic as a fencer, as indifferent to blows as a boxer, impassive at the news of a victory that may have cost fifty-thousand dead, imperturbable at the news of a defeat.[710]

Art could be realised as a violating process and in particular in the case of *Le Sacre*, with its tiring choreography both in 1913 and in remakes such as that of Pina Bausch's where the corps de ballet were made subject to excessive exhaustion by the mud stage upon which they were made to perform (please see Chapter I).

Futurist rhetoric is contradictory in its regard for the humanity. It is frequently referred to not in terms of individual human beings but in the form of massed groupings often within a military context. In this way Futurist literature was a vehicle which could propagandically destroy people on an industrial scale for the benefit of the Italian nation. However, the choice of a black man as hero for his narrative of war and domination in *Mafarka the Futurist* appears deeply contradictory to the arguments made in support of Italy's having colonial aspirations and the nationalism which underpinned Marinetti's aesthetic philosophy. I would like to suggest that Mafarka's remarkable physical prowess is — as I have previously argued — consistent with the public airing of interrelated articulations of homo-social and -sexual relations which had begun in Europe after 1895.

Mafarka's race might also be contextualised according to the complexity of Marinetti's relationship with black culture, his being raised in Egypt and being wet nursed by a Sudanese

[710] Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, p. 204.

woman. One might speculate as to the ambivalence engendered through the reliance upon a human being which white Western culture saw as inferior or dominatable. Marinetti's description of gulping the 'muddy' water' from the ditch into which he crashes his car in *Il Futurisme*, draws for him comparison with his black wet nurse and I would conjecture, sense of his unchosen dependency upon the black woman's body and the resentment over the lack of control the infant has in being unable to return through time to undo the period of nurture.[711] In another twist, in keeping with the themes identified in my first chapter, this inverse situation — attuned to the polarities of black /white, positive/negative — is then reclaimed when the 'nourishing sludge' is drunk in defiant tones, contextualised according to Marinetti's car being revived from the mud.[712]

Returning to Gross' worked up pastels, what are we to make of the multiple strands of ambiguity they throw up? They might be seen as a representation of a performance at a theatre, pulling together a number of artistic elements which made up staged 'productions'. This would recognise both Gross' own multi-sensorial experience of *Le Sacre* as a spectator, but also as one who interpreted the physicality of dancers on a stage, the painted background and the music. Alternatively, the pastels might be interpreted as a form of imagined reality. By this I mean that she rendered a pastel drawing of a real space where people danced outdoors in a green valley, living so close to nature that at times a visitor observing might not be able to decipher their circled prostrations from the boulders which populate their environment. In both instances there is indecipherability between human beings and geologic formations. Gross' work articulated the contradictory elements of the creators informing the public that *Le Sacre* was a performed by named groups of people, whilst also declaring that there were no human beings present. In Gross' work there are forms of transition between rehumanisation and dehumanisation.

[711] Marinetti, p. 40.
[712] Marinetti, p. 40.

This suggestion of movement, transition, process, points towards a form of straddling past and present. It simultaneously implies movement — in the same way that Balla's *Girl Running on Balcony* follows time through space from the left to the right of the picture as with Muybridge's chronophotographic results. However, like these photographs, Gross' pastels and Balla's painting, process is frozen into a 'still' and an attempt to capture transition. It is this which paradoxically renders movement unrealisable except in the imagination of the spectator. The uneasy juxtaposition between past and future as was demonstrable in the programmes for the Ballets Russes 1913 Saison Russe and the deeply ironic use in Futurist manifestoes of metaphors which employed ancient mythology, were a tension of irreconcilability between co-existing states.

I Selvaggi was a work which was dehumanising on many fronts, though to what extent this was acknowledged at the time of production is unclear. In a number of instances it resembles a distilled version of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, made more horrible through its brevity, presentation at the time to children and privileged adults who (like some who watched *Le Sacre*) were apparently annoyed by the rhythmicity and dissonance of the accompanying music.

Summary

The immediate and immersive nature of Valentine Gross' experiences of the first performances of *Le Sacre* made their interpretive transformation into sketches akin to the researches into representations of speed and movement by the Italian Futurists. This is particularly so where attempts were made to distill serial action within a static, pictorial or sculptural form. I have suggested that a likely reliance on proprioceptive and vibrational feedback would have been necessary if Gross was unable to see clearly what she had recorded of her blue crayon sketches in the semi-darkness of the theatre auditorium.

I have suggested that Gross' sensorial interpretations of *Le Sacre* were the connections between herself, the art object and its surrounding space in the same way that Marinetti's agitations to

provoke interaction with audience members and Umberto Boccioni's researches into physical transcendentalism, intuited and represented the artist's relationship between themselves, the stage action, the theatre space and audience. In reviewing Futurist ideas which proposed the expansion of the work of art beyond its traditional pictorial confines I have found confluence with those who have written about the power of orchestral augmentation in Stravinsky's score and Gross' own account of reinterpreting the music in the form of drawings. This provided a particularly interesting dimension to what I saw as ambiguities in these rough early drawings. Were we seeing a series of the dancers in peaked hats or a record of the iteration in Stravinsky's music, or maybe even both? A similar ambiguity made it difficult to determine if what was being represented were rocks from Roerich's backdrop of a rugged scene or huddled groups of people. I have drawn upon Jeschke's description of Gross' sketches as shorthand for massed groupings to suggest that what we were witnessing in her work was a delivery of uncertainty or rather a reproduction of a society held in a state of simultaneous process and stagnation. This is the same uneasiness which showed up in the programme notes for *Le Sacre* indicating transition as an odd vacillation between old and new redolent of similar contradictions such as centaurs and motor cars in futurist manifestoes and the physical presence of 'traditional' drumming in international expositions and the mechanical developments of a new industrial age.

Whilst some of the drawings may have lost emotional potency from having been worked up for presentation, Gross' pastels were significant for different reasons. I believe that public access to images displaying the results of chronophotographic experiments provided a reference point for Gross' work and its relationship to time and space in contemporary discourse. In Gross' pastels, sometimes even *within* a picture, the trajectory indicating the passage of time followed from left to right in the same manner as the Muybridge's framic sequences. Progression was also suggested by the anti-clockwise movement of the dancers who disappeared following their apparent merge with Roerich's scenic curtain, and re-emerged from the back of the stage, with a thread of continuity through time indicated by an ever present red of the women's

smocks. If as I have suggested, we make left to right image stand for a transition towards progress we can also entertain its reverse as a regression or return in line with views held about evolutionary and racial hierarchy and opinions expressed as to what reviewers thought they were seeing having experienced *Le Sacre*.

Gross' attendance at rehearsals and her enthusiasm for the Ballets Russes was liable to have given her access to the creators' intention in forming the work. Her confidence in deciding to reproduce pastels of the ballet as if to show a real scene (as opposed to fictitious one of a theatre stage, with a painted backdrop, with dancers on it) may be one element of this thinking. Something which becomes so enigmatic when it is unclear whether or not we are witnessing an imagined landscape of bucolic serenity or aspects of Roerich's stage curtain mingled with the performers on a stage. Her careful selection of reviews specific to *Le Sacre,* may have affirmed her own impressions and reproductions of the work.

With this in mind, I brought into play the concept of dehumanisation as hypothetical framework for drawing together a number of elements for my analysis in this chapter. The naming of performing groups and individual figures in *Le Sacre*, the identifiable limbs and costumes of the figures in Gross' interpretation of *Le Sacre* and the humanising concentration on the role of the spectator in relation to the work of art and the sensorial intuitions of the artist in Futurist theory made humans beings present in the work of art. Without this signified humanity, it would not be possible to identify dehumanisation as a strand of confluence. In *Le Sacre*, the named groups/individuals were reduced to invisibility through declarations of their complete absence as performers in a ballet promoted as purely about nature, with no human beings in it. Their being present subjected them to a *process* of choreographic dehumanisation evident through reviews of the work which consistently reverted to descriptions of brutalising unsustainable, choreographic endurance test, and the cruelty which came with the expectation that the women playing the Chosen One stab their toes into the stage.

Affirming this ambiguity but contradicting interpretations acknowledging the effect according to the *presence* of humans, Gross *reduced* the humanity of the dancers through her ambiguity of rendition. This prevents us from separating the landscape and scenery of Roerich's painted backdrop from the shapes created by the amalgam of grouped figures moving upon the stage. Not only is it possible to interpret the temporal (sequential) movement of people reforming into rocks, but also the circular movement of dances around the Chosen One signals their continual, almost spectral disappearance into the background and re-emergence in solid form. I have speculated that Gross' work records the idea of return to an earlier age or in contemporary thinking to a way of living construed as earlier to European civilisation, associated with colonising societies as early, as a sequential process: as a reversion of human life back to nature and rocks.

Changes in technology in Western Europe were impacting on all forms of society, a matter which futurists vociferously agitated for being reproduced in contemporary works of art. Futurist work used the ancient past to describe a hoped for future and spanned past and present by articulating the mechanisation of human destruction for the benefit of national interest through enactments of aesthetic violation and repression.

In *Feu d'artifice* as with *Le Sacre*, a form of simultaneity between audience and the stage action occurred when the audience too became bathed in light as part of the performance. However, in *Feu d'artifice* when the audience too became immersed within the stage's field of performance, there was a contradiction because the significance of the spectator to the performance was enhanced, whilst at the same time it negated the necessity of human performers upon the stage.

Without making overt the presence of human beings in the work of art, it is not possible to instigate the concept of their dehumanisation. Rather than the romance of the power of nature over humanity, human presence was evoked in *Le Sacre* for the purposes of their active violation.

CONCLUSION

The gamble of this thesis was whether the thematic confluence of the Ballets Russes and the Italian Futurists could be realised through the exploration of three categories: the politics of social tension, stylistic repulsion and aesthetic dehumanisation. These were the headings derived from a sense of my protagonists' interests coinciding with one another according to biographical similarities such as shared masculine identities and social class, their exposure and reaction to social, political change and cultural stagnation conflicting with their creative ambitions. These sites of anticipated confluence I had developed around sub-categories — such as political violence, matters of nation and state, the importance of geography and Paris as the chosen location of performance and practice, transition between the centuries, sensation and provocation, intended and unintended — drawn up for comparative analysis as a means of seeing how the placing side by side of the groups might mutually illuminate the period of inquiry (the fin de siècle) and the works of art (in particular *Le Sacre*) which the groups produced.

In the 'politics of social tension' I hoped to address violence and aggressive incitement to action which seeped into Futurist rhetoric and made up the thematic and canonical narrative for *Le Sacre*. It was this chapter in particular which impressed upon me the need to cast the net more broadly, beyond the works of art identified for scrutiny, where I might find how writers in feminist art history and scholars of the historically specific treatment of homosexuality, could elucidate my understanding of contemporary anxieties and their representation in different works of art. This allowed me to consider how the articulation of gender and sexuality intersected in *Le Sacre* and other related works. In elaborating on Lynn Garafola's theory that the Chosen Virgin was 'above all, a creation of twentieth century male sexual anxiety' I have found confluence between groups as exemplified through the identification of strident affirmations of masculinity.[713] Reproduction or rather the annihilation woman as a symbol of women's reproductivity, was so elemental to the structure of *Le Sacre* that to find something of the same in

[713] Garafola, p. 72.

Mafarka the Futurist was unremarkable. Then unexpectedly, through broadening the social net in a very small way to include those on the periphery of the groups being studied such as Tolstoy and Gippius and others the articulations of masculine sexualities troubled by assertions of women's rights and the negative repercussions following the trial of Oscar Wilde, began to reveal thematic allegiance with works of art which manifested assertions of repudiation, absence and negativity.

My feeling was that 'stylistic repulsion' might serve as a starting point for explaining the appeal and disdain that the presence of the racially Othered symbolised for Western European society and how within it the 'blackness' which might be present in *Le Sacre* could be contextualised if it was indeed there. Aesthetic dehumanisation was well-established discourse within studies of Futurism and *Le Sacre* particularly in reference to the violent language of manifestoes and the choreographic lack of facial expression, physical demands of the dancers and style of its choreography. My sense was that the use of this term might intersect with Futurism on a number of levels thus testing its viability in deconstructing the works of Valentine Gross and Nijinsky's declaration of there being no humans in *Le Sacre*. I was shocked to find, in Valentine Gross' written notes for *Le Sacre* in the theatre and Performance archive of the Victoria and Albert Museum, reference to the toes of the Chosen One being stabbed into the stage during the performance. In the light of this and in reviewing the work of Chapter I, a reframing of the aesthetic masculinisation in Nijinsky's choreography was condensed according to views which I have found to have been already discussed by or alluded to by other writers such as an a) resistance to classical ballet's investment in the female body/ballerina b) the masculinisation of the choreography i.e. the violence of the physical demands of the choreography for the Chosen One. As Marie Rambert wrote of Maria Piltz's replacing Bronislava Nijinska who was being prepared for the role of the Chosen One 'Her reproduction was very pale by comparison with his [Nijinsky's] ecstatic performance, which was the greatest tragic

dance I have ever seen.' [714] This might imply that the choreography was over-demanding for the woman performer whose body was physically dissimilar from Nijinsky's. Most importantly for my thesis was another element: Resistance as a form of physical assault, the toes of the Chosen One being stabbed into the floor of the stage. Having assumed that I was dealing largely with Futurist theoretical, narrative and aesthetic forms of dehumanisation, the notes and some of the accompanying sketched material of Gross seemed to point directly towards the political dehumanisation of women which was raised as issue in Chapter I. The rich field of music, dance and theatre history provided a wealth of information on both groups upon which I have been able to draw for my arguments. However, without an increasingly wide-ranging transdisciplinary analysis including feminist social history of art, the broader implications of this choreographic direction in relation to the economic imperatives of women dancing for a living, and initiatives towards women's emancipation could not be fully grasped as an argument for their having been reproduced in *Le Sacre*. Neither could the confluence with Marinetti's resistance to and support of the British suffragette movement be so well elucidated. I feel that whilst thematic confluence between the two groups can be well argued as present prior to their convergence in 1917, it is more difficult to make a case for equal illumination of both groups through the methodology. My conclusion is that, whilst Italian Futurism has shed light upon the Ballets Russes it has been more difficult to argue the case for the reverse. I have found Futurism increasingly falling into the recesses of my research to play a supporting role. This may be owing to my perception of the originality of *Le Sacre* as compared with Futurism. Or it could indicate that the Ballets Russes achieved a longer lasting legacy than the Futurists.

Social art history asks us to consider what art is able to *do* with its materials; technical as well as ideological. I have argued that when *Le Sacre* was performed, it remodelled and destabilised the usual markers of difference, so its own 'materials', those of aesthetic, choreographic and musical practice, replayed miscegenic elements of an ideology of colonial

[714] Rambert, p. 64.

domination. The intrusion of 'primitivized bodies' into a space of privilege makes a case for the interconnections between artists sometimes relegated in the social history of art. They now become complementary to my analysis because the presence of 'blackness' as an inadvertent provocation to a European audience, becomes more visible when viewed through a Futurist lens. So too does the clash of classes between the aesthetes and the upper classes which I would argue are made justifiable by my more integrated approach to the investigation of the topic in its interdisciplinary entirety. In addition to a considerable literature supporting the study of the Italian Futurists and the Ballets Russes, as my research progressed I found it necessary not merely to be looking for information in the art, music, dance and post-colonial theory sections of the library, but critically for information which addressed aspects of sociology, anthropology and the politics of race, gender and sexuality.

African-Canadian art historian Charmaine Nelson has written of the 'white gaze':

> The critical point of intersection, that point of connection between the gaze and the image, is the process through which re-imagination becomes re-presentation; the process where what one "sees" is translated into an actual art or visual cultural object that represents another's body.[715]

It was the non-fixing of race in *Le Sacre* that reproduced a form of trauma through the merging of physical and psychological space reminiscent of the consistent thread running through Futurist philosophy. This had advocated the integration of the performer, the audience and the space which both inhabited and the violent consequences of these difficult juxtapositions. To quote Nelson again:

> The colonial practice of human display distanced the white observer, both literally and figuratively, from the primitivized bodies of the colonial subjects. Safely behind the carefully demarcated boundaries of the exhibitions and fairgrounds, the space of the colonial "other" was clearly separated from the privileged space of the white viewer/ "self".[716]

This 'structure' of the white gaze was articulated through *Le Sacre* when the 'white gaze' was projected back towards a European audience in the form of auditorium floodlighting and

[715] Nelson, p. 180.
[716] Nelson, p. 125.

the spectre of the white 'tribe' on stage. Not only is such undoing of boundaries or interruption of fixed positions in keeping with Boccioni's researches into aesthetic interconnection within and beyond his painterly experiments, but it correlates directly with calls for audiences to be provoked into unrest, hints at the reciprocity of audience performer interaction and at pro-nationalist objections to the imposition of foreigners in European territories.

My hypothesis before I began the thesis was that the 'black' in *Le Sacre* was akin to the story of *The Emperor's Clothes* in that scholars were aware of it but could not refer to it without seeming unscholarly. It was not because it was not there. Rather they (or rather I should say 'we') had a suspicion it was there but could not name it. The nature of this 'awareness', arose in relation to the ways in which the music sounded and how the ballet reportedly looked and was performed. Where the 'facts' were absent, it was only possible to discuss 'blackness' as something peripheral to *Le Sacre's* core elements. So the creators declared an intention to produce something akin to pre-Christian Russia, and the broader context of arts and crafts such as Russian neo-nationalism or the fascination with colonised culture to European society (through the lens of 'primitivism and Gauguin), were referenced repeatedly. As the research progressed the question *became* could 'blackness' be positively inscribed within *Le Sacre*? Were this so, where would I then stand as a Black woman whose values and identity were closely tied up with the world of 'Classical' music?

I am and always will be an Othered subject. I needed to know from my research what 'we' were in relation to this and other works which I was taught in school were so immensely valuable, not because I did not know this piece was of major cultural significance but because of the lingering suspicion that 'blackness' was more than just hovering around the periphery. Perverting the approach to a lot of the material I have been reviewing such as colonialism and appropriation, I have found myself asking whether or not I was claiming for Black people a major piece of history which was not ours to *take*? Bear in mind that *Le Sacre* is still a work which sometimes so overwhelms me by its brilliance that I cannot bear to hear it. So was my thinking

in any way like the arguments we used to have in the black band I played in about whether or not Beethoven was black?

I now understand that my writing black people into the canon of *Le Sacre,* was not only a theoretical possibility but was evidentially supported by their presence in France as performers of African descent. Rather than the language of imperial domination I want instead to align myself with the artist Faith Ringgold in consideration of her painting *Picasso's Studio* (1991) where the 'black' woman's body is recovered and made visible within the canon of Western art history.[717]

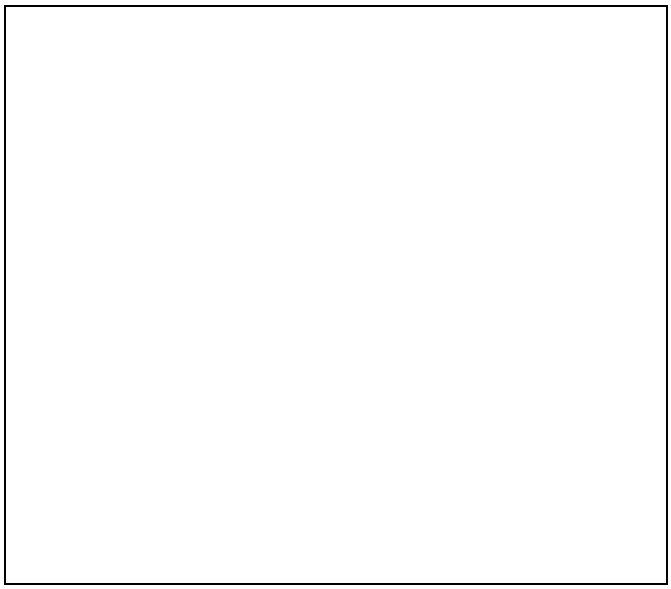

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Fig. 50
Faith Ringgold, *Picasso's Studio* 1991, acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border, 185.42 × 172.72cm The French Collection Part I; #7: Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts.

More than merely a suspicion, I now believe that the evidence for the black in *Le Sacre* is because 'we' were physically present in Paris and the European colonial imaginary at the fin de siècle. This is provable through the continual reproduction of 'blackness' in the works of art of both the Italian Futurists, the Ballets Russes and so many other European librettists, choreographers, composers and artists. I want to align myself with Ringgold's work because I

[717] 'Faith Ringgold - Picasso's Studio' <http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/d18.htm> [accessed 29 September 2016].

think the 'blackness' in *Le Sacre* was written and choreographed into the very fabric of *Le Sacre* by Stravinsky and Nijinsky themselves. However, it is in *naming* the complex nature of that presence — unveiling the architecture of Richard Taruskin's 'negrified Russia'— through a social history of art (a history of which we are all still living the repercussions) which demands an integrated and transdisciplinary, cultural analysis, one which makes visible the threads of connection .[718] It is in this project that I hope the value of my research lies.

[718] 'Richard-Taruskin-Resisting-The-Rite.pdf', pp. 286–87.

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