THE FOLK AND THE CHOSEN ONE: PRIMITIVISM, NATURALISM, AND NIJINSKY’S THE RITE OF SPRING

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ABSTRACT
Exploring how The Rite of Spring staged female victimization as the repressed barbarism upon which "civilization" depends, this essay addresses the issue of "folk" through a consideration of Vaslav Nijinsky's modernist engagement with primitivism as it intersected with naturalism, understood here less as a staging style than as a critical concern with representing human beings as determined by their environments. In doing so, it suggests that while Nijinsky's adaptation of traditional dance motifs reinforced conventional associations of the "folk" with the "primitive," his choreography also raised questions about the who, what, when, and where of the "primitive" that aligned The Rite of Spring not with the primordial past that it seemed to represent but with a problematic present that posed a challenge to modern claims of progress from the distant past and implied a need for evolution toward a more liberal future.

Vaslav Nijinsky is widely recognized as having transformed the representation of masculinity in the early twentieth century through his work as the lead male dancer for the Ballets Russes and through his choreography of and performance in the 1912 ballet Afternoon of a Faun. The central figure in his 1913 ballet The Rite of Spring was female, however: a young woman, the Chosen One, who is singled out for self-sacrifice to ensure the continuity of her ancient tribe. Exploring how The Rite of Spring staged female victimization as the repressed barbarism upon which "civilization" depends, this essay will address the issue of "folk" through a consideration of Nijinsky's modernist engagement with primitivism as it intersected with naturalism, understood here less as a staging style than as a critical concern with representing human beings as determined by their environments. In doing so, it will suggest that while Nijinsky's adaptation of traditional dance motifs reinforced conventional associations of the "folk" with the "primitive," his choreography also raised questions about the who, what, when, and where of the "primitive" that aligned The Rite of Spring not with the primordial past that it seemed to represent but with
a problematic present that posed a challenge to modern claims of progress from the distant past and implied a need for evolution toward a more liberal future.

As Shelley Berg has noted, set and costume designer Nicholas Roerich and composer Igor Stravinsky were closely associated with the "Neo-nationalist or Neo-Russian movement in painting and the applied arts," which was in turn linked to "a concurrent revival of interest in Russian folk art and culture" (1988, p. 8). Indeed, Roerich's interest in Russia's past and indigenous cultural traditions was so great that he has been described not only as an artist but as an "ethnologist" (Berg, 1988, p. 2), "ethnographer" (Banes, 1998, p. 100), and "archaeologist" (Banes, 1998, p. 100; Archer and Hodson, 1999, p. 34). Roerich was associated with two important artists' colonies devoted to Russian "national traditions in art and architecture" (Berg, 1988, pp. 8-9), including one at the country estate of Princess Tenisheva, who had amassed a large collection of antique Russian arts and crafts. In fact, early in their collaborative process for The Rite of Spring, Roerich and Stravinsky met at the Princess's estate, where they viewed her "collections of Russian ethnic art" and came up with "the plan of action" and "the titles of the dances" in The Rite of Spring and where Roerich began to design the sets and costumes based on "real costumes in the Princess's collection" (Stravinsky and Craft, 2002, p. 88). As well, as Richard Taruskin has demonstrated, Stravinsky drew upon and adapted "a multitude of genuine Russian folk melodies" in his score for The Rite of Spring (1982, p. 79), while Berg has suggested that "[f]olk dance forms provided the stylistic baseline" for Nijinsky's choreography (1988, p. 54). As Berg explains, in addition to the khorovod or round dance form upon which the choreography for the "Spring Rounds" section of the ballet was based and which was revisited in the "Mystic Circle of Virgins" section and again in the final "Danse Sacrale" (1988, p. 49, 50, 57), "The traditional forms and steps of dances such as the Polish mazurka and cracovienne, the Ukrainian hopak, and the Russian prissyatka and kazatchok were ideal for stylization and adaptation to Nijinsky's needs in Le Sacre" (1988, p. 52). Berg cites "[t]he positions he designed for the women's hands and arms" and the women's "harvesting" movements as being "especially evocative of their folk dance counterparts," but she also notes that many of the men's "steps and postures" had "reverberations in the vernacular of Russian folk dance" as well (1988, p. 52). Through the use of folk idioms, The Rite of Spring seemed to stage a primitive culture in a primordial world. Indeed, in a review of one of the Ballets Russes's London seasons, Richard Capell described The Rite of Spring as "the anthropological learning of 'The Golden Bough' in a half-hour's spectacle."

As Marianna Torgovnick has noted, primitivism has a long history dating back at least as far as Homer's Odyssey (1990, pp. 23-26), but its resurgence in conjunction with the emergence of modernism was related to the rise and development of the social science of anthropology,
together with its sub-field ethnography, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have noted, "Anthropology began as a kind of natural history, a study of the peoples encountered along the frontiers of European expansion," and constructed these "alternative cultures [...] through a notion of the exotic, which differentiated them from the European, or of the primitive, which saw them in a Darwinian way as stages in the 'development' of man" (2000, p. 85).

Anthropological and aesthetic constructions of "primitive" others are thus closely linked to Eurocentric constructions of the self: in Torgovnick's words, "the needs of the present determine the value and nature of the primitive" (1990, p. 9).

The temporal and geographic ambiguity that Torgovnick associates with primitivism was evident in The Rite of Spring. For one thing, the folk idioms that Stravinsky and Nijinsky adapted into the primitivist musical and choreographic vocabularies of the ballet were derived not from Russia's dead cultural past, but from its living cultural traditions, so that, as Lynn Garafola has stated, although The Rite of Spring seemed to be "set in a mythic Slavic past," it "came with the trappings of Russia's ethnic present" (1991, p. 92). Moreover, while the tribe in The Rite of Spring was supposed to be Slavic and the ballet is generally regarded as one of the Ballets Russes's "Russian" works, Russia was, in the early twentieth century, a liminal zone that was at once part of Europe and Europe's primitive "other"—in Nicoletta Misler's words, "a kind of local European Orient" (1988, p. 78). The seemingly "primitive folk" that The Rite of Spring represented in Paris in 1913, then, were at once invented and real, archaic and contemporary, local and exotic, self and other.

Elin Diamond has suggested that the notion of historical time is an invention of modernity and that "[i]f modernity's historiography invented the past/present divide, modernism's response [was] to smudge the line radically with a conglomeration of temporal effects" (2003, p. 10). Thus, Diamond argues, modern drama, as a manifestation of the larger drama of modernity, problematized the binary of past and present—and such related and politically interested oppositions as Old World and New World, self and other—on which modernity's notion of historical time depends, "collaps[ing] the planes of historicity, challeng[ing] the futurity of progress narratives, and provid[ing] a double optic on the idea of history itself" (2003, p. 13). The Rite of Spring provided this same kind of "double optic" on history, as is evident in critic Jacques Riviére's response to the ballet's premiere:

On the opening night of Le Sacre du Printemps, in the depths of my great admiration, there was something like drugs, an indefinable sadness, a certain despondency. In my heart there was the heaviness of physical things, a mineral inertia. For the first time I felt a sort of despairing possibility in the doctrines of evolution. I found in myself traces of a miserable supine state; I was once again
seized by the original stricture; it seemed to me that I had once been born of this anguish whose prodigious spectacle had just unrolled before my eyes. (1962, p. 106)

Rivière concludes,

Le Sacre du Printemps is a piece of the primitive globe preserved without having aged; with its inhabitants and its flora, it continues to breathe mysteriously beneath our eyes. It is a piece of wreckage from the past, teeming, eaten through by a familiar and monstrous life. It is a stone, full of holes, from which emerge unknown animals, busy with indecipherable tasks, which have long since been outstripped. (1962, pp. 106-107)

Rivière’s feeling of implication in the “anguish” that the ballet staged, his recognition of the co-existence in it of the “familiar” and the “monstrous,” his perception that it presented “a primitive globe” and yet one that had not aged, and his “despondency” at the “despairing possibilities in the doctrines of evolution,” together suggest a collapsing of past and present—and, implicitly, of here and there, us and them—that is evident in other early commentaries on The Rite of Spring as well. Critics referred to the ballet’s “futuristically primitive people” (H.K.M.) and “three-hundred-year-old modern women” (Alfred Capus, qtd. in Eksteins, 1989, p. 53), for example, and categorized its style as “Post-Impressionist” (Drey, 1914, p. 302) and “Cubist” (Richard Capell, qtd. in MacDonal, 1975, p. 99), while Charles Ricketts said the ballet made him want to “howl like a dog” (qtd. in Berg, 1988, p. 61) and Carl Van Vechten remarked that “primitive emotions are both depicted and aroused by a dependence on barbarous rhythm” in The Rite of Spring (1915, p. 87)—that the ballet was “an appeal to primitive emotion, through a nerve-shattering use of rhythm, staged in ultra-modern style” (1916, p. 33). As these reactions indicate, The Rite of Spring raised questions about the notion of historical progress and about the location, nature, and identity of the “primitive.”

Notably, although the ballet was in certain respects based on ethnographic research and the study of Russia’s cultural past, the sacrifice of the Chosen One was pure fantasy—a scene that Stravinsky claimed had come to him when he “dreamed of a scene of pagan ritual in which a chosen sacrificial virgin danced herself to death” (Stravinsky and Craft, 2002, p. 87). As Sally Banes has written, “There was no documented practice of human sacrifice among the ancient Slavs” (1998, p. 104). In his entry on “folk” in Keywords, Raymond Williams observes that

[a]ttempts to define folklore in [the late nineteenth century] centred on the sense of ‘survivals,’ following Tylor’s definition in Primitive Culture (1871) […] of elements surviving ‘by force of habit into a new state of society’. In this respect the formation belongs to a complex set of responses to the new industrial and urban society. (1983, p. 137)
Furthermore, Eric Hobsbawm has observed that "'[t]raditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" and that "[w]e should expect [the invention of traditions] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable" (1983, p. 1, p. 4). As Hobsbawn adds, such "invented traditions" are "normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature" and "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983, p. 1). In The Rite of Spring, the seemingly ancient tradition suggested by representation of the renewal of life through the sacrificial death of a young woman was in fact a modern invention born of the then-current world.

Remarking on the contradiction between designer Roerich's "commitment to archaeological authenticity" and the invention of a ritual of female sacrifice in The Rite of Spring, Millicent Hodson has noted that the "[d]eath of a young woman, or apotheosis of her spirit, is [...] the crux of Romantic ballet" and that the ritual sacrifice may have served to reconcile Roerich’s "desire to use an archaic subject with what he considered an appropriate way to end a ballet" (1986-87, p. 11). Richard Taruskin assigns responsibility for this ending to Stravinsky rather than Roerich, suggesting that "the idea of a culminating sacrificial dance by the prima ballerina could only have occurred to someone steeped in the traditions

and clichés of the romantic musical theater" (1996, p. 864). But if the death of the virgin in Roerich and Stravinsky's conception of The Rite of Spring echoed a conventional plotline of romantic ballet (Scholl, 1994, p. 77), its staging by Nijinsky was profoundly anti-romantic. Thus, although Nijinsky joined the creative team last, Riviére considered his contribution to the ballet to be more innovative and ground-breaking than that of Roerich or Stravinsky. As he explained,

However new the music of Le Sacre du Printemps may be, the very fact that we could compare it with the music of Moussorgsky shows that it keeps certain affinities with our habits and that we can discover aproximatively its filiation. This is not true of the choreography. This no longer has any kind of ties with the classical dance. Everything has been started afresh, from the very beginning, everything about it is reinvented. Its newness is so harsh, so raw, that we must not deny the public the right [...] of rearing up before it. (1962, p. 91)

Marie Rambert described the "basic position" of The Rite of Spring as "feet very turned in, knees slightly bent, arms held in reverse of the classical position, a primitive, prehistoric posture" (1972, p. 63). Funneled through this fundamental choreographic position and staged "in an alien atmosphere devoid of nostalgia and charm" (Kirstein, 1975, p. 143), Nijinsky's modernist adaptation of folk dance idioms in The Rite of Spring was a major departure from the demi-caractère and
caractère dances that provided the local color in classical ballet and that have been described by Lincoln Kirstein as, respectively, "a blend of ethnic movement on a classical scaffold" and "a more 'authentic,' less bland transposition of national dances" (1975, p. 38). Nijinsky's innovation was not confined to technique and style, however; rather, his inversion of the classical ballet ideals of turn-out and elevation was integrally linked to his rejection of the conventional gender politics of nineteenth-century ballet, which romanticized the sacrificial victimization of women and, in doing so, reinforced the social order that sanctioned such victimization.

The centrality of the victimized female figure in The Rite of Spring has to some extent been eclipsed by the various accounts of the anarchic premiere of the ballet in Paris on May 29, 1913: reports of people whistling, shouting, and fighting in the audience, making so much noise that the dancers were unable to hear the enormous orchestra and forcing Nijinsky to stand on a chair in the wings to shout out the count of Stravinsky's difficult music, have become part of the popular mythology of modernism. Amid the pandemonium in the auditorium, however, and amid the cacophonous dissonance of Stravinsky's music and Nijinsky's swirling, stomping, involuted choreography—at the eye of the hurricane, so to speak, and the climax of the ballet—was the Chosen One, the virgin girl singled out from her tribe to stand eerily and blankly still within its midst until, as if without volition, she danced herself to death. Bronislava Nijinska recalled of the Paris premiere, "it was not until near the end of the ballet, when Maria Piltz [as the Chosen One] began to dance her solo, that the public quieted down" (1981, p. 470). As Kevin Kopelson has noted, "The Chosen One performed her solo centre stage and facing her audience—the ballet's only exception to the exclusion of its audience" (1997, p. 189)—thus inviting empathy for the victim so that her harrowing choreography was, in a more literal sense than Riviére intended in his famous description of the ballet, "spring as it is seen from the inside" (1962, p. 105). Stravinsky stated that The Rite of Spring had "no plot" (qtd. in Eksteins, 1989, p. 9), but the death of the Chosen One was undoubtedly the ballet's culmination and seemed by its end to have been the narrative destination toward which the preceding scenes had been leading. Certainly the sacrifice of the Chosen One was the heart of the ballet for Nijinsky, who, as his sister Bronislava recalled, began his choreographic process by working out her extraordinary solo (Nijinska, 1981, pp. 449-450). In a sense, then, the choreography of the Chosen One's dance of death was, as Shelley Berg has suggested, "the conceptual matrix of the whole ballet" (1988, p. 58). Marie Rambert, who was Nijinsky's assistant during rehearsals for The Rite of Spring, regarded dancer Maria Piltz's "reproduction" of the Chosen One's solo as taught to her by Nijinsky as "very pale by comparison with" Nijinsky's own "ecstatic performance" while demonstrating the role, described by Rambert as "the greatest tragic dance I have ever seen" (1972, p. 64). For Jean Cocteau, however, the Chosen One's solo in the Paris premiere was "the most overwhelming theatrical spectacle" that he could remember (1975, p. 18).
Although Stravinsky's libretto called for the Chosen One to "[sacrifice] herself in the presence of the old men in the great holy dance" (qtd. in Eksteins, 1989, p. 10), Milicent Hodson has described the Chosen One's solo as she reconstructed it for the Joffrey Ballet in terms of "entrapment": "The Ancestors encircle her. Unable to escape in a horizontal direction, she starts to spin, as though winding herself up to escape vertically." Later in the solo, Hodson continues, "[a]s the Chosen One grows exhausted," she begins "her obsessive jump-and-collapse pattern—a blunt, primitive statement of aspiration for the sacred. She throws herself passionately into the air, trying to reach the sun deity, to consummate the marriage of earth and sky" (1987, p. 65). In Hodson's description, the Chosen One's vertical movement is rationalized in terms of divine aspiration, but her dance of death is choreographically motivated by her encirclement by the male ancestors. Indeed, noting the possible "influence of ritual dance forms" on the "spatial designs" of Nijinsky's choreography, Shelley Berg has remarked that "[t]he sense of being surrounded and encircled is a central theme" of The Rite of Spring (1988, p. 55). This theme was enhanced by the circular patterns on the stage floor, within which the Chosen One's solo was confined (Hodson, 1987, p. 65).

The Rite of Spring has been understood as an anticipation of the impending cataclysm of World War I (Cocteau, 1975, p. 13; Eksteins, 1989, pp. xiv-xv) and as an expression of "twentieth-century male sexual anxiety" (Garofola, 1989, p. 72), yet neither of these readings adequately accounts for the pathos of the Chosen One as choreographed by Nijinsky, both in her initial choreographic immobilization and in her subsequent outward-directed, blank-gazed, vertically oriented dance of death encircled by male ancestors. As Sally Banes has written, "There is less anxiety in Rite about the Chosen One's sexuality than evident sympathy with the figure of woman as victim, as sufferer" (1998, p. 107). Indeed, Stravinsky at one point referred to his score by the title "The Great Victim" (qtd. in Berg, 1988, p. 21), and as Modris Eksteins has noted, although "[t]he usual interpretation of the ballet is that it is a celebration of life through death, and that a maiden is chosen for sacrificial death in order to honor the very qualities of fertility and life that she exemplifies," the use of the word "victim" in this variant title was "hardly affirmative" (1989, p. 39). Indeed, Martin Zelck has argued for "a general change in interpretation from sacrifice to murder" (1998, p. 74), suggesting that in Nijinsky's choreography, "The victim behaves not like a Chosen One, who dances herself to death in ecstasy," but "as a threatened person before a murder" (1998, p. 71).

The image of female entrapment and death within male-dominated surroundings that was the choreographic matrix and narrative climax of The Rite of Spring echoed the naturalist "structure of feeling" that Raymond Williams identified as having emerged in the nineteenth century in conjunction with a shift in consciousness that understood human existence not in relation to 'outside' forces and powers" such as fate or God but, rather, "in its immediate setting" and in "strictly
human and contemporary terms" (1973, pp. 384-385). This shift was reflected in Émile Zola's call in 1878 for a theatre that would keep pace with nineteenth-century developments in the natural sciences by moving toward a more accurate representation of the relation between "man and nature" (1995, p. 1183). Zola's conception of a naturalistic theatre in which, following Darwin, "the environment [...] determine[d] the character" (1995, p. 1187) depended on direct observation of contemporary life by a dramatist who was in a sense the equivalent of ethnography's participant-observer. In the place of the elevated characters of romantic drama, the new naturalist drama represented ordinary "folk"—in George Bernard Shaw's words about the characters in Henrik Ibsen's prose plays—"ourselves in our own situations" (646).

While Zola's conception of a naturalistic representation of environment depended on the objective depiction of contemporary characters, settings, costumes, and speech, Ibsen and other modern dramatists soon made clear that the determining "natural" environment of human beings needed to be understood not simply in physical but in social, political, and moral terms as well. Indeed, for Raymond Williams, naturalist drama was distinguished not by realistic staging conventions but by an understanding of human existence in terms of a fundamental tension between what individual subjects "feel themselves capable of becoming, and a thwarting, directly present environment" (1973, p. 386); as Williams explained, "Ibsen had to make rooms on the stage in order to show men trapped in them" (1973, p. 387)—although, of course, it was more often women than men who were trapped in the rooms of Ibsen's plays. Later dramatic and theatrical forms such as expressionism and epic theatre were, in Williams' analysis, not actually "rejection[s] of naturalism" but, rather, rejections of, and developments from, the earliest representational conventions by which the fundamental naturalist structure of feeling was dramaturgically and theatrically realized (1973, p. 383). With its representation of a seemingly ancient tribal culture and its inversion of the classical ballet ideals of turn-out and elevation, The Rite of Spring has been regarded as an example of primitivism, but the entrapment of its central female figure within and by her own society suggests that the primitivism of The Rite of Spring might be regarded as another such "development of the heart of the original naturalist claim" (Williams, 1973, p. 383). In this sense, although primitivism and naturalism might initially seem to have been radically different aesthetic resonances to modernity, they were in fact allied by their common interest in the observation of humans in relation to "nature" and by their engagement with contemporary life.

Early commentators certainly recognized a connection between primitivism and naturalism in The Rite of Spring. André Levinson, for example, associated what he perceived as an effort on the part of the ballet's creators to achieve "archaeological exactitude" with the early staging conventions of naturalism (1982, pp. 53-54), whereas Jacques Rivière implied a more profound relation when he described The Rite of Spring as "a soci-
ological ballet" representing "the movements of man at a time when he did not yet exist as an individual" (1962, p. 104), but also as "a biological ballet"—"not only the dance of the most primitive man; it is, in addition, the pre-man dance" (1962, p. 105). Elaborating on the "biological" dimensions of the ballet, Riviére employed language drawn from the natural sciences:

it is the effort, the spasm, the cleavage, of spring. We feel as if we were witnessing a drama under the microscope; it is the history of karyokinesis; the deep need of the nucleus which makes it separate from itself and reproduce itself; the division of birth, scission, the reversion of restless matter to its own substance; great swirling accumulations of protoplasm; germinating masses; zones; circles; placentas. We are plunged into the lower realms; we witness the obtuse movements, the witless oscillations, all the fortuitous whirlwinds through which matter little by little rises to life. Never was there any more beautiful illustration of mechanistic theories. (1962, p. 105)

Linking the biological and sociological levels of meaning that Riviére saw in The Rite of Spring was the common theme of separation or differentiation—cell from cell, individual from group—and indeed, the ballet might be said to have staged the emergence of the individual through distinction from the collective mass of anonymous "folk" that constituted its encompassing and determining environment.

Indeed, the power of The Rite of Spring derives largely from the tension between the collective mass of dancers liberated from the vocabulary of classical ballet and the choreographic isolation, paralysis, and re-mobilization of the female victim, who, singled out by virtue of a perceived weakness—she falls (Hodson, 1987, p. 58)—that differentiates her from the rest of the women and surrounded and contained by male ancestors, emerges near the end of the ballet as its key figure. Until this point, André Levinson noted, "As if depersonalized by the cult, knowing no individual impulse, the dancers move in locked groups, shoulder to shoulder" (1982, p. 53). Thus, whereas Torgovnick has noted that "those who study or write about the primitive usually begin by defining it as different from (usually opposite to) the present" (1990, p. 8), Nijinsky's "primitivism" affirmed the insights of modern drama, with its persistent interest in the immobilization of the female figure within the fundamental social unit of the "civilized" bourgeois household. For Riviére, "[t]he great originality of Le Sacre du Printemps" was "to have done without 'sauce'"—that is to say, to have been "an absolutely undiluted work" (1962, p. 82). As Joan Acocella has written, while "[s]uperficially a portrait of precivilized society," The Rite of Spring "was also, by extension, an exploration of primitive impulses in the heart of civilized man" (Acocella, 1988, p. 105). More specifically, through its primitivist staging of an invented ritual of female sacrifice, The Rite of Spring suggested that social continuity and reproduction depended on the scapegoating of women who individuate themselves through difference.
and in doing so reveal themselves as weak links in the communal circle. To borrow Bronislava Nijinska’s words, the Chosen One was indeed "killed by her own dance" (1981, p. 461).

The seemingly conventional association of folk idioms with the "primitive" in Nijinsky’s choreography of The Rite of Spring thus ultimately functioned to suggest the primitivism of the "folk" who were in fact, in Shaw’s words, "ourselves in our own situations"; and in this representational rather than experiential objective, the ballet again allied with naturalism, which Williams described as "an inherently critical form" (1973, p. 393). Christopher Innes has identified "two complementary facets" in avant-garde primitivism: "the exploration of dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche; and the quasi-religious focus on myth and magic, which in the theatre leads to experiments with ritual and the ritualistic patterning of performance." Both facets, Innes adds, "are variations of the same aim: to return to man’s ‘roots’, whether in the psyche or in prehistory" (1993, p. 3). The Rite of Spring departed from this fundamentally nostalgic aim, serving less to involve spectators in a transcendent experience or, in Innes’s words, to "[liberate] the primitive side of the psyche" (1993, p. 4) than to engage them critically in the question of the relation of a purportedly primitive "past" to a purportedly "civilized" present and a still-unfolding future.

NOTES
1 See also Taruskin (1980); Taruskin (1999, pp. 891-933); and Morton (1979).
2 Of Nijinsky’s choreography of the women’s hand and arm movements, Berg writes:
   in some instances, [...] the women rest their cheeks against the open palms of their hands, or lay their chins on their lightly clenched fists. [...] At a moment, the women clasp their hands behind their necks with the elbows pulled sharply forward. [...] This movement is characteristic of Russian folk dances, especially of the Ukraine. It is a gesture employed when a woman wants to "show off" her kokoshnik, or headdress, and display the ribbons that hang down her back. Performed by an individual woman, it is a sign of feminine coquetry and pride; done en masse, as Nijinsky used it in Le Sacre, it becomes a poignant image of vulnerability. (1988, p. 52)

Of the harvesting movement, Berg writes:

   The legs and feet are held parallel, with the knees slightly bent and the body folded forward at the waist. The accompanying movement is usually a gentle, pulsing, sidestepping motion, found in many folk dance styles. [...] The dancer reaches down with her arms, gently "turning the earth," the hands first twisting in toward the body and then opening forward, with the palm flat and open. [...] A shuffle-like skip, moving either forward or back, is another distinctive folk dance movement. The dancer holds the body erect, while one leg is drawn up in parallel alignment in front of the body, like a hook, with the knee and foot flexed. Nijinsky invented a number of variations on this spare motif for both the men’s and women’s dances. (1988, pp. 51-52)

3 See, for example, Berg (1988, p. 19).
4 See also Garafola (1987, p. 16); Burt (1995, pp. 76-78); and Farfan (2008, p. 83).
5 See also Hodson (1986-87, pp. 9-11) and Taruskin (1996, p. 88).
6 While some have suggested that the idea for The Rite of Spring originated with Roerich (Rambert, 1972, p. 63; Nijinska, 1981, p. 448; Hodson, 1986-87, p. 7), Stravinsky claimed that the idea originated with him (Stravinsky and Craft, 2002, p. 87). Whichever the case, Stravinsky and Roerich began to collaborate, and Nijinsky joined them later in the creation process.
7 For accounts of the premiere, see, for example, Nijinsky (1933, pp. 198-200; Buckle (1971, pp. 299-301; Berg (1988, pp. 44-47); and Stravinsky and Craft (2002, p. 91). Modris Eksteins reviews various accounts of the premiere and points out inconsistencies among them in order to clarify how the premiere has come to epitomize "modernism as above all a culture of the sensational event" (1989, p. 16).

8 According to Garafola,

At the heart of the ballet's synthetic myth is the fin-de-siècle obsession with the "feminized" artist, that enervated androgynous symbol of symbolist fiction, painting, and drama. In Sacre, however, the image has been tamed; shorn of its subversive sexuality, it assumes the "safe" guise of a young girl, ballet's traditional instrument of redemption. (1989, p. 72)

9 Banes's reading of the representation of gender in The Rite of Spring differs from mine in its emphasis on religion. For Banes, the ballet "expresses a deep appreciation of the pre-Christian past, but more drastically, it identifies the Virgin Mary with ancestor worship and orgiastic pagan cults. In its correlation of the mysteries of the adolescent girls [...] with the mystery of another virgin who conceived a god at the time of the spring equinoct, Rite, while nationalistic, unearths aspects of the Russian past—including attitudes toward women, marriage, and sexuality, linked up with spirituality—that were deeply subversive of the official Russian values of its time." (1998, pp. 107-108)

10 Stravinsky also referred to the second part of The Rite of Spring as "The Great Victim" (qtd. in Garafola, 1989, p. 65). 

11 Henrik Ibsen's 1890 play Hedda Gabler is a classic example of naturalism as defined by Williams and, like The Rite of Spring, it stages the protagonist's sense of entrapment within her determined environment through a kind of encirclement motif: as Bert Stites has observed, the play constructs a sort of "Ptolemaic universe" at the centre of which is the Tesmans' drawing room (1985, p. 62) and, as Elin Diamond has added, "Hedda is the centripetal centre" of the play's centripetal stage world (1997, p. 26).

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