

Mark Nicholls

Who Saw Her Die? Unfixing the *Danse sacrale* in *Le Sacre du printemps*

This article focuses on the last moments of *Le Sacre du printemps*, which opened in Paris on 29 May 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Concentrating on the discourse of the creative practice that brought these moments into being, it seeks to add to our understanding of *Le Sacre* from the evidence of those most intimately involved with this first production. Analysis of *Le Sacre* demonstrates the equal viability of a great variety of readings of the work. Such readings are enabled by analysis, which regards any aspect of a creative work and its best interpretation as happily unfixated and unstable. It has sometimes been accepted that the job of critics and theorists is to fix interpretations of creative works and to demonstrate conveniently closed theses about them. Creative artists are not always willing to join their critical colleagues. This was certainly the case with *Le Sacre*. By reading the final seven seconds of its *Danse sacrale* through the accounts of the work's primary creators – composer Igor Stravinsky, designer Nicholas Roerich, and their creative intimates – this article highlights an engrossing instability of intention and interpretation. It questions the idea that *Le Sacre* is a sacrificial ritual in the light of how Stravinsky himself considered his work in terms of coronation and consecration.

Mark Nicholls is Senior Lecturer in Cinema Studies at the University of Melbourne and has an extensive list of stage credits as a playwright, performer, producer, and director. He is the author of *Lost Objects of Desire: The Performances of Jeremy Irons* (Berghahn, 2012), *Scorsese's Men: Melancholia and the Mob* (Indiana University Press, 2005), and co-editor of the special issue, *Il Gattopardo: Sicily, Italy, and the Supernatural Cultural Imaginary* (*Spunti e ricerche*, XXXIV, 2019). Ten of his plays are published as *Unconventional Women* (Prahran Publishing, 2019).

Key terms: Ballets Russes, Stravinsky, Roerich, creative practice, discourse, critical history.

Discourse

Consideration of the relevant primary documents largely assembled and analyzed by Robert Craft, Vera Stravinsky, Thomas Kelly, and a variety of scholars and critics in the field, in chronological order, presents a picture of how a received version of the libretto of *Le Sacre du printemps* and its interpretation has been created. It also indicates how much that discourse has expanded what audiences can reasonably understand to have happened in the final *Danse sacrale* on the stage in May 1913. Above all, such an analysis demonstrates the limited extent to which any settled version of *Le Sacre's* libretto and interpretation can be made without damaging the richness of the work and its creation as a whole.

Letters and articles from 1910 indicate how early ideas about *Le Sacre* shed light on the *Danse sacrale*. Roerich's outline for the work, *Supreme Sacrifice*, in an interview for the *St Petersburg Gazette* (August 1910) makes no mention of a specific *Danse sacrale* at all but indicates ideas of 'a sacred [summer] night', 'several scenes', 'ritual dances', and the pursuit of Roerich's ideal of antique reproduction. Noteworthy here is Roerich's ambition that the work should be 'without any explicit story'.¹ A version of the libretto in Stravinsky's handwriting, cited by Vera Stravinsky and Craft as being written in 1910, concurs with Roerich's ideas of the sacred or holy. It also mandates the intended work's lack of plot. In other respects, however, Stravinsky's

libretto reads quite differently to Roerich's outline. It stresses the idea of spring rather than summer, games rather than rituals, the presence of virgins and tropes of consecration, honouring, victimhood, sacrifice, self-sacrifice, marriage, and a 'great holy dance'.² A letter from Stravinsky to Roerich and another to their Ballets Russes colleague, Alexandre Benois, in that same year indicate the possibility of a slight shift in the composer's emphasis for the work. Initially referring to it as 'the Great Sacrifice', in a third letter Stravinsky changes tack and calls it 'the Great Victim'.³

In the context of the business of producing *Petrushka*, amongst other distractions of 1911, a single letter stands as useful for present purposes. In this letter of 26 September, Stravinsky writes to Roerich about Part One of the work, saying, 'I am convinced that the action must be danced, not pantomimed'.⁴ This again raises the issue of the relationship between an opposition to the storytelling properties of mime and how that opposition stands in relation to its creators' articulated ambitions for a plotless or story-less work in general.⁵ Again, it is important to establish that this is a general statement about the work, not relating directly to the *Danse*. It does, however, provide context for the interpretation of the *Danse* as part of the intentions for the whole work and suggests some limitation as to how much the *Danse* may be read in narrative terms and as some sort of narrative climax.

When Stravinsky was first composing *Le Sacre* in March 1912, the Russian title he gave to what would become known after 1926 as the *Danse sacrée* ('L'Élué') ['Holy Dance (The Chosen One)'] was 'Dance, the Sacrifice'.⁶ This suggests an altogether significantly different meaning. A potential sign of Stravinsky's ambivalence over the overwhelming centrality of the *Danse* to the whole work, and a sign too that *Le Sacre* was merely a set of disconnected, or casually connected, ritualistic dances, is found in the apparent confusion at this point about the work's name. Stravinsky's letters of November 1911 and early January and late March 1912 refer to the work in the French title, which has endured to this day. In a letter to Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov on 7 March and another to Florent Schmitt in November,

he writes of the work under the plural term, *Les Sacres du Printemps*.⁷ The question of emphasis is again raised in Roerich's letter to Diaghilev in the spring of 1912, outlining the work.

Restating current ideas of games and a sacrificial victim as articulated in 1910, Roerich's description of Part One offers a more positive, communally affirming view of the work than may be read in other contexts. He writes of an environment of 'golden bloom', 'the people dance for joy . . . pick flowers and bow to the red sun . . . kiss the rich soil . . . stomp on the earth with great gladness'.⁸ In the light of this emphasis and in the context of his apparent ambivalence over the naming of the work, it is relevant that Stravinsky, in a letter to Roerich on 14 December, refers to their work by the abbreviation 'Spring', and he does so three times without resort to his usual 'Sacre' or its plural.⁹ Seemingly bringing many of these variations together, the oft-cited plot as told to newspaper editor Nikolai Findeizen by Stravinsky in a letter the next day, 15 December 1912, reconfirms the ideas of sacrifice, games, victimhood, and even marriage.¹⁰ This letter also points to the eradication of mime which stands out in earlier plot outlines. New to the discussion as advanced by Stravinsky in this letter are the ideas of the Chosen One's explicit death and a general note of celebration. Notions such as self-sacrifice and consecration/honouring are not present here and the idea of 'fate' as a factor is less emphasized.¹¹

Sometime in the final months before the opening night in 1913, Roerich wrote to Diaghilev about his intentions for *Le Sacre*. Given that this part of the letter reads like a libretto, it is important to note that it provides Roerich's own vision of the ballet to its producer quite late in the process, around February or March. This libretto presents the work's actions more literally and gives no indication of the idea of games or the 'as if' simulations of warfare or abduction and/or rape. It clearly confirms existing ideas of springtime joy and lush new flowering. While not referring to sacrifice, it is explicit in its attribution of victimhood, honouring the Chosen One and dedicating her 'last dance' to 'the god Yarilo'.¹² Pre-production interviews with

Stravinsky and Nijinsky, granted to English newspapers that February, explicitly indicate Roerich's spring emphasis and the celebration of its glory and innocence.¹³ Nijinsky lends evidence to a reading of the work as abstractionist and, by implication, one lacking a plot. He depersonalizes the work by saying, "There are no human beings in it . . . concrete masses, not individual effects."¹⁴ Later, Stravinsky went to considerable lengths to distance himself from the comments attributed to him in an interview in the journal *Montjoie*, published on the day of production.¹⁵

What is significant about this interview is that, although it describes the Chosen One as 'she whom Spring must consecrate', it indicates that she dances 'the Sacrificial Dance', eventually falls 'senseless', and is lifted up 'towards the sky'. Nothing says explicitly that she dies.¹⁶ The printed programme for the work, which greeted the audience on the opening night, brings together almost all the ideas raised in the discussion thus far, including the use of sacrificial, metaphorical language to imply the death of the Chosen One. Although hardly a libretto in any sense, it is important to point out that the programme notes describe the actions about to be seen and heard not as a single ceremonial trajectory or rite/ritual, but as 'the rites'.¹⁷

This links back to the Roerich's idea as articulated in the *St Petersburg Gazette* in 1910. It is also reinforced by Stravinsky's (perhaps unconscious) late 1912 uncertainty over whether the work's title should be in the singular or plural. Alexandre Benois first published his *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet* in 1941 and had almost nothing to do with *Le Sacre's* first production. However, his importance to the company and its operations at that time cannot be underestimated, and his recollection of *Le Sacre* as 'devoted to the evocation on the stage of certain rituals of the pagan Slavs' – 'rituals' plural – cannot be ignored.¹⁸

In the days following this most notorious of opening nights, audience member John Gould Fletcher wrote to his fellow English balletomane Cyril Beaumont, referring directly to the *Danse*: 'a young girl (done marvellously by Pilts [*sic*]) is dedicated to the Gods.'¹⁹ However, none of a suite of contemporary reviews

of the work, or of those that followed later in 1913, makes any significant reference to the *Danse*, to Maria Piltz in the role of the Chosen One, or to her character's death. Incomprehension, confusion, and even ridicule seemed to dominate reviews. Louis Vuillemin, signing off his review as 'the least intelligent man in the theatre', captured this negative spirit in his complaint that 'the audience should have been better informed of what this choreography wanted to signify'.²⁰ Among the impressions sketched by Valentine Gross at the second performance on 2 June are images that may appear to represent Maria Piltz lying down. These were little more than lines on a page, but nothing in Gross's worked-up sketches or subsequent paintings show her explicitly in the pose of death.²¹

Despite the relative silence of contemporary reviewers surrounding the Chosen One, discussions of *Le Sacre* in the years following the first performance concentrated firmly on her and the *Danse*, thus in step with Stravinsky's best-known statements about the work in his ghost-written 1936 autobiography. In 1915, Carl Van Vechten enters the naming debate, translating the title as 'The Sacrifice of Spring'. In his 1916 book, Van Vechten wrote, 'I remember Mlle Piltz executing her strange dance of religious hysteria . . .'²² The Russian critic and author André Levinson, when writing up his reviews in 1917–18, places a similar emphasis on what was happening in the last moments of the work:

. . . the terrible spasms that made such a lamentable thing of Marie Piltz's gracious body, already stiffening at the approach of death.²³ . . . the chosen maiden – the sacrifice . . . she dances the fatal dance of the doomed . . . until the chosen maiden falls lifeless into the arms of the old men.²⁴

Jean Cocteau, who was also at the first performance, confirms her death in his memoirs of 1918 and adds a similar note concerning the Chosen One's passivity in the ritual. At the same time, Cocteau supports the idea that she 'dance[s] herself to death', as Stravinsky would do later in the 1930s.²⁵

The combination of naming the *Danse sacrale* in the revised full score of 1926 and Stravinsky's 1936 quotation, which is often

cited, sustains the focus on the Chosen One and her fate, as well as the question of her level of active participation in the entire process: '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 *Le Sacre du printemps*.'²⁶ Stravinsky would continue his advocacy along these lines in various interviews that he gave in the 1960s, of which this quotation is indicative: 'I had dreamed a scene of pagan ritual in which a chosen sacrificial virgin danced herself to death.'²⁷

Finally, from Stravinsky in 1962, there is the useful statement over the ambivalence that he had felt over the very title of the work itself:

At this time, incidentally, our title for the ballet was *Vesna Sviashennaiia* – *Sacred Spring*, or *Holy Spring*. *Le Sacre du printemps*, [Leon] Bakst's title, was good only in French. In English, 'The Coronation of Spring' is closer to my original meaning than 'The Rite of Spring'.²⁸

Publication of Bronislava Nijinska's *Early Memoirs*, largely put together in the 1960s and 1970s, concludes the picture of interpretation by primary evidence of the *Danse* and the work as a whole from the point of view of the sister of the choreographer and, indeed, the dancer who was to originate, if not 'create', the role: 'Vaslav did not explain the story of *Sacre* before starting work with me; he simply told me that the solo he was about to show me was a ritualistic sacrificial dance.'²⁹

Nijinska continues:

As I envisaged the primitiveness of the tribal rites, where the Chosen Maiden must die to save the earth, I felt that my body must draw into itself, must absorb the fury of the hurricane. Strong, brusque, spontaneous movements seem to fight the elements as the Chosen Maiden protected the earth against the menacing heavens. The Chosen Maiden danced as if possessed, as she must until her frenzied dance in the primitive sacrificial ritual kills her.³⁰

Millicent Hodson, in her detailed account of her reconstruction of the work (1996), marshals, among myriad sources: evidence from the annotated scores; the 'promptbooks' of May 1913 which were published in the late

1960s; Marie Rambert's notes and score annotations which Hodson saw in the 1980s; and materials compiled by Vera Krassovskaya, published in the 1970s, which rely on Nijinska's notes and were corroborated by Maria Piltz in 1968.³¹ Hodson calls the *Danse* 'Scene 5: Sacrificial Dance', although the four-hand score depicted from the 'promptbook' renders the title as '*Danse sacrale (L'Élue)*'. She cites Nijinska's intention that the Chosen One should clearly be 'unbreathing' before her final fall, but elects to follow Stravinsky's notes to have the Chosen One 'reach up' after her final fall, the easier to be gathered by the bear-skinned Ancestors. The final choreography seemingly prolonged her life by a few seconds, at least.³²

The discussion of those who created and witnessed *Le Sacre* shows a not unexpectedly wide-ranging variety of opinion about it. Four particular ideas emerge from this discussion, reflecting the richness of opinion and experience involved. *Le Sacre* is: a story-less/plotless work; holy ritual; victim sacrifice; and coronation or consecration. These are useful points for the purposes of a summary intended to give a clearer understand of the *Danse sacrale* and how it may be viewed in relation to *Le Sacre* as a whole.

Abstraction

It is possible that the most satisfactory account of *Le Sacre*, and therefore of the *Danse*, is that, in strict narrative or plot terms, nothing happens at all. This is to suggest that, in the original performance of *Le Sacre*, the audience experienced little more than bodies moving, and not moving, in curated space, accompanied by music. In this context, *Le Sacre* can be understood in non-narrative terms as a dance and musical work that creates images and sounds without meaning, thus defying interpretation or, at least, interpretation based on principles ultimately derived from classical narrative forms.

On the repeated evidence of the three key creators, the ambiguity of the printed programme notes for the opening night, and apparent critical incomprehension or silence then and afterwards, the idea that the work is

without a story or plot is compelling.³³ In the face of this historically repeated assertion, it appears difficult to find a firm basis for having any particularly focused reading of *Le Sacre* and the *Danse* at all. Given what follows in dance after *Le Sacre*, both within and beyond the Ballets Russes, this is hardly surprising. Considering the history of story-free or plot-suspending dance work and the reliance of the Ballets Russes on variants of this idea with such *divertissement* ballets as *Le Festin* (1909) and *Les Sylphides* (1908–9), this idea was hardly new to Diaghilev and company. Michel Fokine's influential choreographic reforms clearly distinguished the variety-style 'turn' of *Le Festin* and the unified ambitions of *Les Sylphides*, both of which he had choreographed.³⁴ Yet neither of these two works approaches the level of modernist abstraction in dance that followed in the wake of the Ballets Russes; and this may well be relevant to a reading of *Le Sacre* insofar as the lack of plot and story preceded *Le Sacre* and its specific context, which would become associated with the creative revolutions bringing about the end of Romanticism in the arts and, as Hodson writes, 'the mandate of new dance in the twentieth century'.³⁵

In letters to Roerich (1911) and Findeizen (1912), Stravinsky's insistence on removing mime in *Le Sacre* reflects on the limitation on their work's explicit storytelling potential. This interjection against mime does not exclude story or plot from dance work as such, but it does distance work of this kind from traditional and explicit storytelling practices in dance. The fact is that there was nothing new in this idea for the Ballets Russes. Fokine had been questioning the role of mime or dance pantomime in his choreography from at least as early as 1907, when he first submitted his libretto for *Daphnis et Chloé* for consideration by Vladimir Arkadievich Teliakovsky, the Director of the Imperial Theatre.³⁶ In 1916, Fokine published an article in the Russian *Argus*, significantly questioning the established role of mime in their affairs.³⁷ He expanded his notion of the redundancy of 'stereotyped hand pantomime and ballet gesticulations for the development of the plot on stage' by excluding them 'completely', as he

writes, from his choreography for *The Firebird* (1910), which was Stravinsky's first composition for the Diaghilev company.³⁸

Fokine's extensive critique of Nijinsky's choreography of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912) dismissively indicates the work's distance from real 'dance' by referring to it as 'pantomime'.³⁹ Fokine's rhetorical distance from mime technique in no way eradicates story or plot in his own works – at least to the extent that this rhetoric should be considered as having had an overwhelming non-narrative influence on *Le Sacre*. Stravinsky's expression of the idea in 1911 suggests, quite likely, that he picked it up from among Fokine's 'wearying homiletics', as he refers to them, during their first work together on the creation of *The Firebird*.⁴⁰ It is quite possible that questioning the role of story in dance had found purchase in *Le Sacre* as an article of faith that had developed in the Ballets Russes. Fokine uses the word 'pantomime' to lampoon Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, and, if carried over to apply to Nijinsky's work on *Le Sacre*, this might seem to contradict Stravinsky's ambition for *Le Sacre* and the idea of the work as progressive and innovative.

Fokine does not wish, in his critique of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, to dismiss Nijinsky's choreography as antiquated but to point to its distance from anything resembling 'dance'. In attempting to fortify his own reputation for innovation, he uses the term 'pantomime' to trivialize Nijinsky's work. However, in doing so, Fokine seems to confirm the extent to which Nijinsky, with *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Jeux*, and later Stravinsky with *Le Sacre*, were actually taking up Fokine's non-traditional idea and carrying it into more radical territory. This territory is what Garofola considers to be Nijinsky's break with the Mariinsky Theatre, his embrace of the West, and 'the first shock of ballet modernism'.⁴¹ According to Karsavina, it was Nijinsky's 'feud against Romanticism' in which he 'bid adieu to the "beautiful"'.⁴²

Holy Ritual

Before discussing the predominance in the primary sources of notions of victim sacrifice

and 'the Sacrificial Dance', it is useful to point out the way in which their discourse often refers to concepts of the 'sacred' or 'holy'. These words and their connotations have a significantly moderating effect on the idea of 'sacrifice', which appears prominent in the discourse because of its more dramatic, violent, and sensational associations.

A great deal in the sources associates the Chosen One's final dance with the idea of sacrifice as death. However, the *Danse sacrale*, as Stravinsky named it in the 1926 revised score, cannot be translated from French into English without question as 'the Sacrificial Dance'. As demonstrated above, Stravinsky and Roerich both repeatedly, although not consistently, engaged notions of 'holy ritual' in their outlines of the work as a whole. Also, Roerich specifically alludes in 1910 to the final dance as the 'great holy dance'.⁴³ Nijinska and Benois, as well as Van Vechten, Anatolii Lunacharsky, Fletcher, and the programme entry, despite their use of notions of 'sacrifice', also pick up on the idea of the 'holy' through their accounts. Clearly a notion of '*sacrale*' is as important to *Le Sacre* as '*sacrificielle*' but they are not the same thing. Naming and confirming his title for this section as *Danse sacrale*, Stravinsky clearly had his reasons. As he demonstrates in arguing for 'Coronation' rather than 'Rite' in the English translation of Leon Bakst's French title for the whole work, Stravinsky obviously had a clear idea of the difference and the various corresponding ideas he wished to invoke.⁴⁴

The idea of *sacré* does not directly imply a brutal or bloody sacrifice, but they do not rule it out. For all Roerich's significant scientific rigour and reputation,⁴⁵ the pursuit of anthropological or ethnographic truth in this dance work, which he put together with a composer and a dancer under the patronage of Diaghilev, a self-confessed charlatan, is, perhaps, of limited value. Clearly demonstrating the twentieth-century Orientalist fascination with barbarism which is pandered to in *Le Sacre* – at least on the stage and in the orchestra pit – Lynn Garafola exposes something of the work's compromised historicism and its early twentieth-century primitivist fantasies. She writes of the Chosen One:

'Dreamed up by Stravinsky, archaized by Roerich, and given life by Nijinsky, the Chosen Virgin is a creation of the early twentieth century, cousin to the invented myths of W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Sigmund Freud.'⁴⁶

Richard Taruskin's advocacy of Roerich's archaeological rigour and expertise in the creation of *Le Sacre* adds to a genuine ambivalence that exists over the creative practice of the Ballets Russes in relation to the issue of its archaeological accuracy.⁴⁷ A sustained attribution of anything more scientific than a compromised archaeology, or psychoanalysis, to the 'sentimental reconstruction', as Benois called the Ballets Russes practice, ignores the essential rough and tumble of its show-making.⁴⁸ My purpose for pointing out the holy/sacrificial distinction here is to indicate the variety of ideas, not to mention the confusion over these ideas and a certain cavalier use of them, that should be taken into account when considering *Le Sacre* and the *Danse*. The extent to which *Le Sacre* may be seen to represent, at least, a show-folk version of a repeated and ordered holy ritual, with community-affirming objectives, which can be linked to Roerich's more nuanced and authentic notions of sacrifice, raises the potential for it to be distanced from more extreme readings, sensationally lusting after barbaric rites of bloody sacrifice.

Victim Sacrifice

Roerich and Stravinsky occasionally appear to distance themselves from the more brutal connotations of victim sacrifice.⁴⁹ It is interesting that they do this in popular journals, perhaps deferring to certain notions of late belle époque public taste and propriety in both Russia and the United Kingdom. As demonstrated above, many reviews reflected this distance over the exact stage business of the *Danse* either through incomprehension or disinterest. Such reviews distract their readers from any such extreme interpretation of it. Even so, almost all written or interview sources addressed here engage explicitly or implicitly with the idea that the *Danse* involves a victim sacrifice, whatever they mean individually by that notion.

Notwithstanding the problems of Ballets Russes ethnography, it is revealing to consider what the company and its associates thought they meant by this concept of victim sacrifice. Prior to 1913, the company had dealt with this very idea in over a third of its productions. *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (1909), *Cléopâtre* (1909), *Giselle* (1910), and *Thamar* (1912) all paraded femmes fatales in various audience-tantalizing, man-killing scenarios. *Schéhérazade* (1910) culminated in the queen's (Ida Rubinstein) extravagantly spectacular suicide. *Giselle*, *Le Dieu bleu* (1912), and *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) involved a notion of virgin sacrifice, although in the 1912 works, the victimized dancer is rescued from the ultimate sacrifice by the intervention of the responsible deity.⁵⁰ For *Le Sacre* only Stravinsky, it seems, was particularly interested in the idea of the Chosen One's sacrifice as an explicit act of auto-sacrifice; and he maintained that interest from 1910 onwards.⁵¹ Even so, there is no mention of such an idea in the Findeizen libretto of 1912. The majority of sources write of this act of sacrifice as a passive, robotic response imposed on the Chosen One by the ritual and through the force of the group-think carrying it out. This reflects the ecstasy and the 'religious hysteria' that Bronislava Nijinska and various reviewers saw in the *Danse*.⁵² It also indicates something of its impersonality and lack of 'individual effects' that Nijinsky emphasized, and which Cocteau and Fletcher had also noticed, semi-mandated to do so by the programme notes.⁵³ In the disputed *Montjoie* interview, Stravinsky even blamed it on Spring, accounting for a certain passivity on the part of the Chosen One, referring to her as 'she whom Spring must consecrate'.⁵⁴

Only Stravinsky, Bronislava Nijinska, Cocteau, and André Levinson write that they saw her die. Clearly their colleagues saw the Chosen One 'sacrificed' as 'a victim', 'dedicated to the Gods', but there can be no certainty as to what exactly these concepts meant in the circle of the Ballets Russes before and immediately after May 1913. In 2023, the notion of 'sacrifice' might well be attributed to anyone dedicated, for example, to a lifetime of unpaid, voluntary service in the charity

sector. The word might just as easily be used to describe someone who has merely had to cut short their three-week summer holiday by a day to return to work for an unforeseen staff meeting. Within the context of *Le Sacre* and the discourse around it, it might be assumed that the meaning of sacrifice was generally held to be somewhat more profound or mythical. It might also relate to Roerich's extensive work and contemporary general discussions about scientific work in the field – if only for the necessary sensations of publicity and company devotee enthusiasms. These assumptions, however, must remain just that.

It cannot simply be accepted, then, that there was, or should have been, an actual death.⁵⁵ Doubtless someone died once in this connection but, most likely, it happened in very different circumstances to those represented in *Le Sacre*. Whatever its accuracy, to whichever moment in the history of this ritual practice, nothing in the discourse surrounding *Le Sacre* makes it clear whether it represents the moment of the original death or certain, subsequent celebrations associated with that original moment. In Christian terms that may ring slightly more familiarly, the question is whether *Le Sacre* may be compared to the actual moment of the death of its central subject, or to one of the variety of recitals or performances of the Passion that the Christian world reprises each year in Lent.

Another notion, which seems to support the strain of Stravinsky/Ballets Russes rhetorical sensationalism over the *Danse*, is that the Chosen One is a 'virgin'. Garafola, extending her ideas in relation to invented Ballets Russes myths, writes:

Indeed, [Freud's] *Totem and Taboo*, offered to the public in the same year as *Sacre*, also turns on human sacrifice, in this case, the murder of the primal father, rather than the primal daughter. At the heart of the ballet's synthetic myth is the *fin-de-siècle* obsession with the 'feminized' artist, that enervated androgyne 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. A *Giselle* reimagined through the primitivism of the golden horde, the Chosen Virgin is, above all, a creation of twentieth-century male sexual anxiety.⁵⁶

Doubtless this idea appeals to a variety of patriarchy's most precious perversions and carries with it increased shock value for the scene. Apart from Roerich, Stravinsky, company member Lydia Sokolova,⁵⁷ and a reference by Calvoceressi twenty-one years later, none of our sources has anything to say about it. Were the Chosen One a virgin, short of some choreography of gynaecological inspection in the action of *Sacre*, no one could have possibly known this detail without being told.

The Coronation of Spring

However much these gloomy but sensational ideas of sacrifice and victimhood predominate in the discourse around *Le Sacre*, there is a balancing version of the nature of these things contained within their final expression. This is to read *Le Sacre* and the *Danse* with a more literal emphasis, based on the meaning of the words as expressed about it, and stressing a more positive, celebratory, and community-affirming view of what occurs.

Accounts of spring celebration, earth unity, joy, gladness, sun worship, celestial triumph, and honouring and glorifying the victim, as expressed by Roerich and Stravinsky, more than qualify the 'virgin sacrifice' gloom expressed elsewhere.⁵⁸ Hodson speaks of it thus:

The actual event of the ballet that gives meaning to the whole thing is this question of sacrifice. And the idea is that there is this marriage between a member of this ancient tribe and the sun god . . . the young woman dances in order to save the earth. I don't see it as a primitive and brutal thing that this woman dances herself to death. I see it as an expression of faith that human activity can have that impact.⁵⁹

Considering these issues in the context of historicism and ethnography, Garafola holds to the gloomy view insofar as it relates to the creative views of Stravinsky and Nijinsky:

For Stravinsky, as for Nijinsky, the past was only a metaphor, a vehicle for conveying the tragedy of modern being. *Sacre* exposed the barbarism of human life: the cruelty of nature, the savagery of the tribe, the violence of the soul. It saw community as a Damoclean sword hovering over the individual, and fate – powerful, atavistic, aleatory – as

the ruler of a godless universe. Above all, it presented a society governed by instinct, the brute instinct of Eros in his Freudian guise – wedded indissolubly to Thanatos.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, in Roerich's conception of *Le Sacre* as a 'primal scene in a reconstituted past' Garafola observes the potential for a different reading: neither violence nor modernity disturbs this primal paradise. Innocence reigns, and harmony: at peace with god, tribe, nature, and self, man is restored to spiritual wholeness through recreated ritual.⁶¹

Further supporting the celebratory tone of *Le Sacre*, and distancing it from the fatality interpretations of sacrifice, is the description of 'games' in the libretti of Stravinsky, Roerich, and the programme's depiction.⁶² Almost all of *Le Sacre's* synopses demonstrate the way in which metaphor and simulation pervade general understandings of what was represented on the stage. With Bronislava Nijinska's comment, 'the Chosen Maiden danced as if possessed', the 'as if' – the metaphorical aspect of the plot – directs the reader to consider its more general application when considering the action of the work's finale.⁶³ Both Stravinsky and Roerich describe the way 'games' are employed to stand in for the actual events of so-called marriage by capture and inter-tribal warfare.⁶⁴ Cocteau and Levinson both pick up on the notion of games in their reviews.⁶⁵

As may be gleaned from much of this, at least on some level, it is clear that Stravinsky and Roerich both saw that the range of the work's plot-points did not represent unself-conscious acts of abduction/rape, tribal warfare, celebration, and sacrifice. Nor should an audience accept them as such, any more than it might accept that the '300-Year-Old Woman' is actually three hundred years old, or that the senior men of the group are really bears in their mime work and not, as Cocteau writes, 'like bears'.⁶⁶ These acts are performed as structured rituals, games, and, above all, rounds and dances. Furthermore, in 'The Ritual of Abduction' the men do not grasp the women and abduct or rape them, in accordance with theatrical codes of the suspension of disbelief that audiences might reasonably understand. To employ Shelley Berg's language,

they 'grasp the women in a *gesture* of stylized rape'.⁶⁷ 'The Rituals of Two Rival Tribes' are such that the men 'perform a ritual-like game' and mock-battles.⁶⁸ Frequently, therefore, throughout various published accounts of *Le Sacre*, the reader is made patently aware that what it represents is not a ritual but the performance of a ritual.

If it can be accepted that there is neither abduction nor warfare in the internal world of *Le Sacre*, but merely games – 'rituals of' or 'gestures of' – there seems ample reason to accept that the Chosen One's death, among other notions represented, may be understood in similar terms. After these many acts of simulation, the idea that the Chosen One's death is the only literal event of the work may be appealing to certain readings of it, but it cannot be taken for granted. Equally potent is a reading of the *Danse* as a celebratory dance, one of many rituals and games representing a life-affirming thetic communication. Such a reading no more requires the literalism of spilling blood, or the expiration of breath, than any of a variety of sacrificial traditions of the modern world, including those well known to the celebrations of the post-Reformation, transubstantiation-denying ritual of the Christian communion.⁶⁹

Various Notions of the Obvious

Based on a reading of the primary evidence, all four readings of the *Danse* discourse that I have presented are viable. None is definitive. The substantial use of these four readings is to demonstrate that, if there is a discourse which attaches itself to *Le Sacre*, it is, above all, discordant and contradictory. *Le Sacre's* 'subject' or 'argument', as it can be assembled through analysis and discussion of the various sources discussed above, is a confused front, a deficient label or artistic statement potentially covering its true nature. Therefore, rather than perversely dismissing *Le Sacre* as entirely abstract, evaluating it in such terms highlights the ever-expanding possibilities of what such a work may be. Most importantly, reading *Le Sacre* and the *Danse* in this multiple way allows audiences and scholars to gain insight into the broader question of its creative

practice history and what this can say about the entire enterprise of the Ballets Russes.

No one would be chided for describing *Le Sacre* as a modernist dance work in which young, energetic, and sexually charged dancers try to step over each other in their obscure but pressing ambition. In the chaos of their combat, they are confronted with old but powerful leaders, mainly men, who desire the next new thing, demand obedience from the young dancers, and almost instantly receive it. One dancer is excluded from the group of young people and, later, another is isolated and singled out for the kind of role that any dancer might greatly desire, but also mightily fear. This dancer is put to work and works herself up into a frenzy of activity, which she cannot stop. As her peers and elders look on, she works herself up into such a state that it seems to destroy her.

Stripped back to its bare essence, what else could this ballet be about but ballet, theatre-making, or at least show business, and its enduring myths and approximate corresponding realities? The critic Henri Quittard railed against *Le Sacre* because he considered it to be a joke in poor taste.⁷⁰ But perhaps the joke is that *Le Sacre's* message is so obvious. The fact that *Le Sacre* has had such a profound effect demonstrates Modris Eksteins's point about the Ballets Russes' aestheticism against criticisms of 'art for art's sake' tendencies.⁷¹ When *Le Sacre* presents truths about its own world of theatre and its own creative practice history, it may strike the audience as a joke, and it may even offend its particular sense of propriety, but it is a joke or a perversion that undoubtedly tells the truth. This self-conscious theatricality points to *Le Sacre* as being just as much about 'God give us a new show' as it is about 'God give us a new spring'. It is the desire for 'work', but it is also a desire for something 'new', for creative regeneration.

Insofar as *Le Sacre* had anything to do with its own discordant critical discourse, it is clearly a work of creative sacrifice containing all the mysteries, contradictions, personal dilemmas, perversions, and humanly self-conscious and narcissistic individual histories that inevitably make their way into an ensemble outcome. Louis Laloy was close to

Stravinsky and engaged with *Le Sacre* from the moment he heard the composer and Claude Debussy play it as a piano duet in the summer of 1912. His response to the work is an example of *Le Sacre's* contemporary observers who fully embraced this discordant discourse and understood the artists' rights of ambiguity in the creation of such works.⁷² In 2009, talking about a restaging of her remarkable reconstruction, Millicent Hodson spoke of the *Danse* in a most useful way:

In order to make the sun return, one of the maidens of the tribe had to dance herself to death. This is not a brutal slaughter. This is an act of sacrifice on the part of one person who is selected from the tribe, but it is actually what dancers do every day of their career. They work to the end of their energy and this is like a model of what it is to be a performer, especially a soloist.⁷³

In this statement, Hodson is reiterating an idea established in the preface to her book on the reconstruction in 1996, where she writes of 'the ballet's inherent paradox – creation through sacrifice – which, however reinterpreted, makes it relevant to every generation of struggling artists'.⁷⁴

It would be a contradiction of everything presented about the discourse surrounding the *Danse* in this article to reduce it to a thesis relying on Hodson's idea and pointing solely to the self-conscious practice-based reading advanced. I have attempted to point out the obvious ideas of ritualism/theatrical self-consciousness, victimization, physical and mental sacrifice, and brief individual glorification and honouring in *Le Sacre's* broader discourse. Given these notions, it is essential not to forget that, at the heart of the work, there is not only a simple understanding of the thing itself, but a sophisticated understanding of the fact that the work is inevitably and unavoidably the result of complex creative practices, that is 'what dancers' – and choreographers, composers, and designers – 'do every day'.

Notes and References

1. Bronislava Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, trans. and ed. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson (Durham and

London: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 448; Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882–1934* (New York: Knopf, 1999), p. 174; Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 866.

2. Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 75, 78.

3. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 79–82.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 83; Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 64. See Stravinsky's letter to Nikolai Findeizen, 15 December 1912, in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 92.

5. Stravinsky, *Daily Mail and London Budget*, 13 February 1912, in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 95.

6. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 78, 81.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 83–4 and p. 90.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 75–6. (Note the similarities to Roerich's 'Neolithic fantasy' in his article 'Joy in Art' of 1909: see Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, p. 861.)

9. *Ibid.*, p. 92. Stravinsky's letter to Steinberg, 3 July 1913, calls it 'Holy Spring' (Stravinsky and Craft, *In Pictures*, p. 102). A September 1911 newspaper report on the progress of the work refers to its 'new name: Festival of Spring' (Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring*, p. 174).

10. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, refers to 'martial dances' (p. 92), which is surely a misprint for the intended 'marital' of Stravinsky's 1910 libretto (in *ibid.*, p. 75).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

13. Stravinsky, *Daily Mail and London Budget*, in *ibid.*, p. 95.

14. Vaslav Nijinsky, *Pall Mall Gazette*, in *ibid.* See also Shelley C. Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps: Seven Productions from Nijinsky to Martha Graham* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988) p. 28–9.

15. Thomas Forrest Kelly, *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 351; Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring*, p. 207–8.

16. Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 330; Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 99–100.

17. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 100; Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 303–4.

18. Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*, trans. Mary Britnieva (London: Putnam, 1945), p. 347.

19. Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 321–2.

20. Boschot, Linor, and Quittard (30 May) in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 304–8; Pawlowski, Vuillemin, and Schneider (31 May) in *ibid.*, p. 308–13; *Gil Blas* and Linor (4 June) in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 100–1; Schmitt (4 June) and Anon. (5 June) in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 313–15; Vuillemoz (15 June) in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Minna Lederman (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), p. 21; Anatoly Lunacharsky in Stanley J. Rabinowitz, 'From the Other Shore: Russian Comment on Diaghilev's Ballets Russes', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, XXVII, No. 1 (2009), p. 1–27 (p. 10–13); Vallas (June–July) and *The Times* (27 July) in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 316–17; and Jacques Rivière, 'Le Sacre du Printemps', *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise* (1 November, 1913), trans. Miriam Lassman, in Lincoln Kirstein, *Nijinsky Dancing* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975) p. 164–8. Walsh

demonstrates the way in which Diaghilev cultivated critics as what I call 'creative intimates' and thus may be viewed as much a part of Ballets Russes creative practice as they were critics independent of the company (Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring*, p. 138–89).

21. 'Le Sacre du Printemps', V&A Collection, <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?offset=0&limit=15&narrow=&extrasearch=&q=Le+sacre+du+printemps&commit=Search&quality=0&objectnamesearch=&placesearch=&after=&before=&namesearch=&materialsearch=&mnsearch=&locationsearch=>>>, accessed 22 April 2021.

22. Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 323. Sergei Grigoriev picks up this theme ('Maria Piltz who danced the one solo part of the sacrificial victim') in *The Diaghilev Ballet 1909–1929* (Hampshire: Dance Books, 2009), p. 84.

23. André Levinson, from 'Stravinsky et la Danse', in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 26–8 (p. 28).

24. André Levinson, *Ballet Old and New*, trans. Susan Cook Summer (New York: Dance Horizons, 1982), p. 53–7.

25. Jean Cocteau, in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 13.

26. Igor Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), p. 140; *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 147.

27. Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 140.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

29. Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, p. 450.

30. *Ibid.*; compare Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi's 'strangely inhuman, hysterical dance of the maiden before the sacrifice' (Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 328).

31. Millicent Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for 'Le Sacre du Printemps'* (Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press, 1996), p. xxi–xxiv.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 199–200.

33. Roerich (August 1910) in Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, p. 448; Stravinsky (February 1912 and 13 February 1913, *Daily Mail*) and Nijinsky (15 February 1913, *Pall Mall*), in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 75, 95; Stravinsky (1920) in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 26; Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, p. 63.

34. Michel Fokine, *Fokine: Memoirs of a Ballet Master*, ed. Anatole Chujoy, trans. Vitale Fokine (London: Constable, 1961), p. 145.

35. Tamara Karsavina, *Theatre Street: The Reminiscences of Tamara Karsavina* (London: Columbus Books, 1988), p. 236; Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. xix; Martin Zenck, 'Ritual or Imaginary Ethnography in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*?' *The World of Music*, XL, No. 1 (1998), p. 61–78 (p. 66, 68).

36. Fokine, *Memoirs*, p. 71–2.

37. Melonie B. Murray, 'Maestro: Enrico Cecchetti and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes', *Dance Chronicle: Studies in Dance and the Related Arts*, XL, No. 2 (June 2017), p. 176–7.

38. Fokine, *Memoirs*, p. 168.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 206–7.

40. Stravinsky and Craft, *Expositions*, p. 129; Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Memories and Commentaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p. 77.

41. Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, p. 51.

42. Karsavina, *Theatre Street*, p. 236.

43. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 75.

44. Stravinsky and Craft, *Expositions*, p. 141.

45. Nijinska, *Early Memoirs*, p. 264, 442, 448–89; Benois, *Reminiscences*, p. 299; Florent Schmitt, in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 314–45; Maria Shevtsova, *Rediscovering Stanislavsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 120.

46. Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, p. 70–3.

47. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, p. 890–1; Millicent Hodson, 'Death by Dancing in Nijinsky's Rite,' in *The Rite of Spring at 100*, ed. Severine Neff, Maureen Carr, and Gretchen Horlacher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), p. 47–80 (p. 68). Benois, no dilettante himself, exemplifies this ambivalence in his stated preference for Golovin as designer for *The Firebird* over original designers Ivan Bilibin and Dimitri Steletzki, 'experts on Russian style' whom he considered to be 'too keen on the ethnological and archaeological side' (*Reminiscences*, p. 306).

48. Benois, *Reminiscences*, p. 317; Pierre Lalo, in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 288.

49. *St Petersburg Gazette* (August 1910); *Daily Mail and London Budget* (13 February 1912), in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 95.

50. Alastair Macaulay, 'Michel Fokine', *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture*, XVII, No. 1 [*Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes: A Tribute to the First Hundred Years*] (January 2011), p. 245–55 (p. 248). For an expansion of this context and inheritance, see Annegret Fauser, 'Le Sacre du printemps: A Ballet for Paris', in *The Rite of Spring at 100*, ed. Neff et al., p. 83–97 (p. 85–7).

51. Taruskin's summary of this tendency is exquisite: '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 theatre. That describes Stravinsky, not Roerich' (*Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, p. 864). Taruskin also comments on the lack of sources for human sacrifice (*ibid.*, p. 880). 'She may not be condemned to die but does not acquiesce in her fate,' comments Lynn Garafola: 'A Century of Rites: The Making of an Avant-Garde Tradition', in *The Rite of Spring at 100*, ed. Neff et al., p. 17–28 (p. 22–3).

52. André Levinson, in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 27; Richard Buckle, *Nijinsky: A Life of Genius and Madness* (London: Weidenfeld, 2012), p. 351; Van Vechten and Calvocoressi, in Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 323, 328.

53. Nijinsky, in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 95.

54. Rivière in Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, p. 58.

55. Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, p. 50; Richard Buckle, *Diaghilev* (London: Weidenfeld, 1993), p. 353.

56. Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, p. 72.

57. Lydia Sokolova, *Dancing for Diaghilev: The Memoirs of Lydia Sokolova*, ed. Richard Buckle (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1989), p. 43. Sokolova went on to dance the role in the 1920 production and used the term 'Chosen Virgin' to describe that role, which may account for her use of it in relation to Piltz's character in 1913.

58. Stravinsky and Roerich, in Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 75, 77, 92, 94; Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 303–4.

59. Hodson in the video documentary *The Search for Nijinsky's 'Rite of Spring'* (Judy Kinberg and Thomas Grimm, 1989); Hodson, 'Death by Dancing,' p. 49.

60. Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, p. 67–8.

61. *Ibid.* Taruskin reads Roerich's article 'Joy in Art', *European Courier*, No. 2 (1909), as a precursor to his work with Stravinsky a year later. Emphasizing notions of

Stone Age 'creative ecstasy' and 'the purest joy or art', this reading places Roerich's advocacy in a positive spirit, as opposed to concurrent discourses inclining more towards a 'dark' interpretation (Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, p. 851–4).

62. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 75, 77, 92, 94.

63. 'In the first scene,' wrote Lydia Sokolova, who danced in the ballet, 'I remember a group of Ancients with long beards and hair, who stood huddled together, shaking and trembling as if they were dying with fear' (*Dancing for Diaghilev*, p. 43).

64. Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures*, p. 75–7. In an undated letter to Diaghilev (February or March 1913?) Roerich does not use the word 'games' and is generally more literal when accounting for the action (*ibid.*, p. 77).

65. *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 13–20 (Cocteau), 26 (Levinson).

66. Kelly, *First Nights*, p. 286; Vuillermoz in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Lederman, p. 21. Various sources describe her as a witch (see e.g. Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, p. 48).

67. Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, p. 48–9 (my emphases); Buckle likewise refers to 'the Ritual of

Abduction' and 'a gesture of stylized rape' (*Nijinsky*, p. 349).

68. Berg, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, p. 49; Buckle refers to these as 'ritual games' and 'warfare' (*Nijinsky*, p. 350).

69. In this I am drawing on ideas of sacrifice as expressed by Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 75–8; and her *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 130–1.

70. Buckle, *Nijinsky*, p. 360–1.

71. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan 1990), p. 73.

72. *Louis Laloy (1874–1944) on Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky*, trans. Deborah Priest (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999), p. 271, 275.

73. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPh7yq_5UBM>, accessed 10 August 2022.

74. Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, p. vii. Garafola picks up on this idea as a theme in the Ballets Russes: 'Like the Golden Slave in *Schéhérazade*, the Chosen Virgin expires in an ecstasy of self-immolation; like Petrouchka, she takes upon herself the sins of the artist, the wages of psychic difference' (Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, p. 71).