Primitivism and the Parisian Avant-garde, 1910-1925

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To my mother and the memory of my father

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Abstract

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the primitive played a crucial role in the emerging European modernist aesthetic. While art historians have been exploring the role of primitivism in modern art for decades, this area of research has received little attention in musicology. In this dissertation I examine how primitivism is constructed in modern French culture as manifest in three of the most important avant-garde stage works of the first part of the century: the *Ballets Russes*'s *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913) and *Les Noces* (1923), and the *Ballets Suédois*'s *La Création du monde* (1923). Relying on primary sources such as reviews, other historically relevant documents, as well as the art historical literature, I trace the evolution of the cultural role of primitivism in pre- and post-World War 1 French culture.

French critics of *Le Sacre* viewed the work as a portrayal of Russian "Otherness" against which they could assert or question their own identity. Whereas the primitivism of *Le Sacre* was understood to be radical, excessive, even prophetic and apocalyptic, the primitivism of *Les Noces* was perceived as a manifestation of the classicist "call to order" and as an emblem of American-style mechanization. That it was also understood in terms of the post-war avant-garde's emphasis on classical ideals of austerity, dryness, and sobriety reflects the Purists' belief that machines heralded the new classicism.

Jazz was the ultimate symbol of both primitivism and modernity, and was initially hailed by the avant-garde as a revivifying source for the French tradition. In their attempt to neutralize the racial and political threats perceived to be inherent in jazz, the avant-garde emphasized its rationality, precision, and economy. *La Création du monde* represents the

avant-garde's complete assimilation of jazz and *l'art nègre* into the French classical tradition.

Résumé

Au début du XXe siècle, le primitivisme jouait un rôle crucial dans l'esthétique moderniste européenne en émergence. Si, pendant des décennies, les historiens de l'art étudièrent le rôle du primitivisme dans l'art moderne, cette avenue de recherche ne reçut que peu d'attention dans le domaine de la musicologie. Dans cette thèse, j'examine le rôle du primitivisme dans le modernisme parisien tel qu'il se manifeste dans trois des plus importantes oeuvres scéniques de la première partie du siècle : *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913) et *Les Noces* (1923), par les Ballets russes, et *La Création du monde*, par les Ballets suédois. M'appuyant sur des sources primaires comme des critiques et d'autres documents historiques pertinents, ainsi que sur des travaux de recherche en histoire de l'art, je retrace l'évolution du rôle du primitivisme dans la culture française d'avant et d'après la Première Guerre mondiale.

Les critiques français du *Sacre* virent dans cette oeuvre un reflet de la spécificité russe face auquel ils pouvaient affirmer ou remettre en cause leur propre identité. Le primitivisme du *Sacre* était considéré radical, excessif, voire prophétique et apocalyptique, alors que le primitivisme des *Noces* était vu comme une manifestation du rappel à l'ordre du classicisme et comme une oeuvre emblématique de la mécanisation à l'américaine. Ces critiques associaient aussi ce primitivisme à l'accent mis sur les idéaux classiques de dépouillement, de rigueur et de mesure par l'avant-garde de l'époque, ce qui reflète la conviction des Puristes que les machines annoncaient un nouveau classicisme.

Le jazz était le symbole par excellence du primitivisme et de la modernité à la fois, et il fut d'abord salué par l'avant-garde comme une source pouvant revivifier la tradition française. Dans leur tentative de neutraliser les menaces raciale et politique considérées inhérentes au jazz, l'avant-garde fit valoir sa rationalité, sa précision et son économie. *La Création du monde* représente l'assimilation complète du jazz et de l'art nègre à la tradition française classique.

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Chapter 1: Primitivism and Modern Culture

In short, you are Men in nothing, but so far as you resemble us, whom you call savages.[1]

Introduction

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, modern artists working in all media turned to the primitive in order to consolidate the emerging modernist aesthetic. Although the role of primitivism in modern art has been thoroughly investigated in art history and, to a lesser extent, in literature, in musicology it has received relatively little attention.

Three of the most important stage works in the first quarter of the twentieth century—the *Ballets Russes*'s *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913) and *Les Noces* (1923), and the *Ballets Suédois*'s *La Création du monde* (1923)—were received by their Parisian audiences as being both very modern and very primitive. In this dissertation I will examine the reception of these three productions, as well as the cultural contexts that inform that reception, in order to show how the relationship between the modern and the primitive manifested itself in these works; how French critics used these works to construct their own, constantly fluctuating notions of the primitive; and how the French avant-garde used the primitive to reflect, question, validate, or otherwise define their own, evolving, modern culture.

In this chapter, I provide a general history of and background to the role of primitivism in Western culture. I then critically assess the extensive art historical literature on modern primitivism, in order to outline the various methodologies that have been established in approaching this topic. After defining the term primitivism as it has been used in art history, I move on to the small body of musicological literature dealing with the topic. I summarize the work that has been done, attempting to situate it methodologically within the broader art historical debates. Finally, I outline my own methodology, objectives, and rationale.

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[1] TomboChiqui, an archetypal American Indian who appeared in a play by John Cleland in 1758, quoted in Edward J. Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought From the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973) ix.

The Savage and the West

The primitive has long been a powerful image in Western culture. Indeed, ever since there has been a sense of "civilization," there seems to have been a cultural need for the existence of some form of the "primitive."[2] In Western culture, the term primitivism has been used not only to designate a specific condition or state of being, but also to confirm, question or undermine the value of its dialectical antithesis, civilization. The form assumed by the primitive, and the function it serves in Western culture, depends on the particular historical moment of its manifestation, and the socio-cultural stresses specific to that time. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose "Noble Savage" is perhaps the most famous primitive of the Enlightenment era, himself admitted that the primitive state "no longer exists, has perhaps never existed, and probably will never exist," yet "it is nevertheless essential to form a correct notion [of it] in order rightly to judge our present state."[3]

By the end of the Middle Ages, if not earlier, the primitive, in the Western mind, had acquired two personae, each one dependent on a corresponding attitude of the West towards nature, and towards its own culture. If, for example, nature was viewed as the site of horrible struggles, against which society offered order and protection, then the savage served as an example of what would become of those who rejected society and its norms. If, on the other hand, nature was seen in a more pastoral light, and society as a decline from some original state of natural perfection, then the primitive served as a desirable alternative to civilization's forms of social organization. These contrasting representations of the primitive—the ignoble vs. the noble savage—remained constant from the medieval period through the Enlightenment and into the modern era: variations on these two themes are as numerous as are the European thinkers who engaged them. The former attitude (the primitive as ignoble) prevails in the writings of intellectuals ranging from Machiavelli through Hobbes and Vico to Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre, while the latter attitude can be found in the thought of Locke and Spenser, Montesquieu and Rousseau, Albert Camus and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[4]

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[2] See Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, eds., *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965).

[3] Quoted in Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 222.

Colonialism, Ethnography and Anthropology

With the rise of European colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the relationship between the West and the primitive underwent significant change; so, too, did Western representations of the primitive. European colonialist enterprises in Central and Southern Africa, the Americas, and Oceania introduced the West to a wealth of new cultures. Not only did Europeans "discover" the inhabitants of these geographically distant locales, but they also "discovered" their arts and artifacts, often destroying them in their missionary zeal, but also often shipping them back home, where they found their way into curio shops, museums of ethnology and, later, into the collections of modern artists and aficionados of modern art.[5]

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[4] These ideas have been paraphrased from Hayden White's essay, "The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea," *The Wild Man Within,* eds. Dudley and Novak, 28.

Colonialism shared, if unwittingly, a mutually beneficial relationship with the recently established fields of ethnography and anthropology. Colonialism provided ethnographers and anthropologists with access to the raw materials, while the research of early ethnographers and anthropologists helped (though often unintentionally) to justify the unequal and generally destructive relationship between the West and its colonies, primarily by providing scientific "evidence" for the superiority of the West over its colonies. Ethnographic exhibitions of native peoples and their arts and artifacts, for example, not only symbolized the extent of the "mother" country's territories, but also indicated the lower evolutionary stages that the West believed these cultures represented, thus justifying European control over colonial territories.[6] At the Dresden Zoo in the summer months between 1905 and 1910, Samoan, Sudanese and Indian villages, replete with human inhabitants, provided summer entertainment, while simultaneously complementing the Benin bronzes and Mexican artifacts on display in the Dresden Ethnographic Museum of anthropology and ethnology.[7] Likewise, France displayed its colonial "possessions" at the 1889 Universal Exhibition, at whose center were erected native habitations, populated by imported natives, and decorated with tribal objects.[8] According to William Walton, a British journalist who wrote about the Exhibition, "The colonial department include[d] Cochin Chinese, Senegalese, Annamite, New Caledonian,

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[5] See Jean Laude, *The Arts of Black Africa,* trans. Jean Decock (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971). For a history of the European "discovery" of primitive art see Christian F. Feest, "From North America," *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,* vol. 1, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984) 85-98; Jean-Louis Paudrat, "From Africa," *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art,* vol. 1, 125-178; and Philippe Peltier, "From Oceania," *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art,* vol. 1, 99-124.

[6] Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 94.

[7] See Rhodes, *Primitivism* 91-96; Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage From Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1994) 77-78.

[8] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989): 125.

Pahouin, Gabonese and Javanese villages, inhabitants and all. Very great pains and expense have been taken to make this ethnographic display complete and authentic."[9]

Darwin and Freud: The Primitive and the Childhood of Humanity

The belief that tribal societies represented an earlier phase of social development through which European society had already passed—and were thus preserved, living remnants of the "childhood of humanity"—was extremely popular around the turn of the twentieth century. The idea was put forth by Darwin, and later "confirmed" by Freud. Darwin, in *The Descent of Man* (1871), placed the savage at the origin of the social, cultural and psychological development of humanity. In the twenty years following the publication of his *The Origin of Species* in 1859, several classic studies of primitive society appeared, including those by Johannes Bachofen, Henry Maine, N.-D. Fustel de Coulanges, Sir John Lubbock, John Ferguson McLennan, Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Burnett Tylor. Virtually all of these anthropologists postulated a linear progression from primitive society to modern society. They strayed from Darwinian thought in that they believed that human history progressed in a unilinear fashion, and that evolutionary change took the form of leaps between one stage of development and another.[10] Darwin's theories were popularized at the turn of the twentieth century through Ernst Haeckel's internationally read book *The Riddle of the Universe* (1899). The prevailing view of cultural evolution at the time is illustrated by Haeckel's description of the evolution of the human mind:

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[9] Quoted in Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native" 125. This painstaking authenticity was not part of the ethnographic displays in the Bronx in 1906, however, where natives were exhibited in cages. See Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 78: "In 1906 a Batwa pygmy named Ota Benga, initially brought to America by the white missionary Samuel Phillips Verner and showcased at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, was displayed in a cage with orangutans at the Bronx Zoo. Similarly, when the two returned to Africa, Verner submitted to being placed in a caged enclosure for viewing by the natives."

[10] Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London: Routledge, 1988) 2-3.

> For the profitable construction of comparative psychology it is extremely important not to confine the critical comparison to man and the brute in general, but to put side by side the innumerable gradations of their mental activity. Only thus can we attain a clear knowledge of the long scale of psychic development which runs unbroken from the lowest, unicellular forms of life up to mammals, and to man at their head. But even within the limits of our own race such gradations are very noticeable, and the ramifications of the "psychic ancestral tree" are very numerous. The psychic difference between the crudest savage of the lowest grade and the most perfect specimen of the highest civilization is colossal—much greater than is commonly supposed. By due appreciation of this fact, especially in the latter half of the [nineteenth] century, the "anthropology of the uncivilized races" has received a strong support, and comparative ethnography has come to be considered extremely important for psychological purposes.[11]

Similar views, often augmented by descriptions of the primitive as pre-rational or childlike, were elaborated on and disseminated by influential ethnologists such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). However, as anthropologist Adam Kuper explains, while the anthropologists took primitive society as their subject, that society merely provided a distorting mirror for their own, modern one. The pioneer anthropologists defined modern society by the territorial state, monogamy, and private property; therefore, they reasoned, primitive society was nomadic, ordered by blood ties, promiscuous, and communist. Assuming that modern society had evolved from primitive society, anthropologists studied the past in order to understand the present.[12]

Freud, writing in 1912, also asserted that savages represent a stage in the development of modern civilization: "We can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well-preserved, early stage of our own development."[13] Freud's interest in the primitive goes further, of course; in his explorations of the unconscious he uncovered what he considered to be primitive drives, instincts, and conflicts, which, through the mediation of the ego and the superego, had to be controlled by society and civilization. With Freud, the self is characterized by internalized conflict between primitive instincts, drives, and desires, on the one hand, and cultural authority and social demands on the other. Thus "civilized behaviour" is constantly threatened by internal forces.[14] Just as colonialist Europe catalogued, categorized, and thus contained the primitive societies it set out to conquer, so too did Freud take inventory of the primitive impulses of the unconscious, and explicate the ways in which the civilizing forces of the ego contained, or failed to contain, the psychological primitive. In the early decades of the century, as the primitive within increasingly surfaced, so the primitive without acted more and more as a mirror image of Western identity in crisis.

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[11] Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Joseph McCabe (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1900; Grosse Pointe: Scholarly Press, 1968) 103.

[12] Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society* 5.

Primitivism and Progress: Transcendence and Renewal

The fundamental claims of Social Darwinism and Darwinian evolution reflect the Enlightenment faith in the notion of progress: technological and cultural progress were (and continue to be) the yardstick by which the West measured its achievements as a civilization. Throughout Western European cultural history, for those whose faith in progress was unwavering, the negative attributes of the primitive (uncivilized, unrefined, irrational) served to delimit the positive qualities of Western achievement. Nevertheless, since antiquity there has been dissension at times of rapid technological and cultural development; the fourth-century (B.C.) Cynics, following Socrates, for example, saw progress as the result of pathological desires to acquire material goods and pursue unessential pleasures.[15]

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[13] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913; London: Routledge and Paul, 1950) 1.

[14] See Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 94ff.

Many members of the increasingly industrialized and urbanized society of the early twentieth century also questioned the notion and value of progress; more and more, intellectuals recognized its dark side. The technological developments that allowed increased economic productivity, time standardization, and more efficient communications and travel also resulted in a sense of alienation, from both nature and community, as already crowded cities grew into huge metropolises; progress also resulted in the advanced weaponry and unprecedentedly gruesome warfare that characterized World War I.[16] As science attained gospel status, religion and its attendant belief in a higher power, under attack since the eighteenth century, continued to lose any governing status left to it. In the absence of God's absolute authority came a liberating personal freedom, but also a problematic individualism, in which people focused so intently on their individual lives, on the "petits et vulgaires plaisirs,"[17] that they lost sight of others, of their place within a community, and of a larger sense of purpose and meaning.[18] In the absence of an external authority which transmits moral imperatives, people were left to feel alienated and alone, unsure about how best to negotiate an awareness of their internal motivations with the pressures of society.

The unprecedented scientific and technological progress that defined modern Western civilization, therefore, contained, for some, the seeds of that civilization's own destruction.[19] Those who questioned the alleged benefits of progress and the purported wisdom of a civilization constantly driven forward, often invoked the primitive as a site of transcendence and renewal. At the turn of the twentieth century, the notion of primitive society provided a progress-free realm, a world free of modernity's malaises. Contemporary primitive societies were perceived, in opposition to modern society, to exist outside the unrelenting march of time and progress, somehow suspended in the realm of the eternal as preserved remnants of an unchanging and constant past.

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[15] See Boas and Lovejoy, *Primitivism and Related Ideas* 118.

[16] See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) on time standardization, communications, travel and warfare; see Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989) on modern warfare.

[17] Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1981) 385, quoted in Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1991) 4.

[18] See Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, esp. ch. 1.

Artists and Modernity, Artists and the Primitive

At the beginning of the twentieth century, artists of all media expressed their discontent with the state of modern civilization, as well as with the academicism of late Romantic art. Many scholars have commented on the intrinsic and central irony of the modern movement. According to Peter Gay, "Modernists hated modernity—they hated, in other words, the rule of the machine, the vulgarity of bourgeois society, the pretensions of parvenus, the waning of community."[20] Lionel Trilling also characterizes the modern element in literature as "hostility to civilization," the "canonization of the primal, non-ethical energies. . . , the disenchantment of our culture with culture itself."[21] Charles Taylor finds modernist writers and artists "in protest against a world dominated by technology, standardization, the decay of community, mass society, and vulgarization."[22]

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[19] See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972).

[20] Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 22. It should be noted that not *all* modernist movements were hostile to modern life and the machine age; the Italian futurists, for example, extolled its virtues in the pre-World War I period, as did the Purists in the post-War period (see chapter 3 on Purism).

[21] Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York: Viking Press, 1965) 19.

[22] Taylor, *Sources of the Self* 456.

Matei Calinescu describes two modernisms, one cultural and one aesthetic. He identifies

> . . . modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization—a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism—and modernity as an aesthetic concept. . . . [T]he relations between the two modernities have been irreducibly hostile, but not without allowing and even stimulating a variety of mutual influences in their rage for each other's destruction.[23]

Clement Greenberg sees the self-criticizing attitude as the defining feature of modernism; his explanation of the means by which modern artists criticized the modern enterprise is particularly insightful:

> Western civilization is not the first to turn around and question its own foundations, but it is the civilization that has gone furthest in doing so. I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant. . . . The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself--not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. . . . The self-criticism of modernism grows out of but is not the same thing as the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its more accepted sense does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized.[24]

In the early twentieth century, many artists and thinkers sensed that Europe was reaching the end of an epoch, an era described by Thomas Mann in 1922 as "the bourgeois, humanistic, liberal epoch, which was born at the Renaissance and came to power with the French Revolution, and whose last convulsive twitchings and manifestations of life we are now beholding."[25] Modern society was perceived to be increasingly and tragically estranged from the earth; human culture was becoming, as the Russian poet Alexander Blok wrote in 1908, "ever more a thing of iron, of machines; more and more it resembles a gigantic laboratory in which vengeance upon *stikhiya* [elemental spontaneity] is made ready; science grows so as to enslave the earth . . . ."[26] Mann and Blok were among the many who echoed the sentiments pervading cultural life at the beginning of the century; Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf also emphasized the sense of disenchantment, decay, and degeneracy prevalent at the time, as did artists such as Gauguin, Picasso, Vlaminck, Matisse, Kandinsky, Kirchner and Klee, among many others. All of these writers and artists turned at some point in their careers to the primitive, searching for a revitalizing force for art, for psychological and cultural beginnings and origins, for an alternative to what they saw as Western degeneracy; however, like the early anthropologists, what these artists and writers ultimately found was themselves, both as individuals and as members of modern European society.

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[23] Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977) 41.

[24] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison with the assistance of Deirdre Paul (New York: Harper and Row, 1982) 5.

The rejuvenatory, transcendental role played by primitivism in early modern culture has received a great deal of attention, especially in the art historical literature (see below). Ironically, after World War I, a new phase of primitivist cultural activity began, one in which modernists seemed to have reconciled themselves with the very elements of modern life that earlier modernists had disavowed. This new phase of primitivism has received considerably less attention in the literature, despite its paramount role in post-war modern French culture. While early twentieth-century primitivists sought transcendence and renewal through contact with utopian primitivist loci (Gauguin comes to mind here), post-war primitivists often attempted to incorporate the defining features of modern Western life, notably mechanization and the urban topos as exemplified by America, into their primitivist works. By assimilating the defining aspects of modern culture, avant-garde artists and intellectuals co-opted the notion of progress: progress, as epitomized by the American machine age, became yet another site of transcendence, whereby Europe would escape its troubled past, and order would be restored to a traumatized land. Just as the pre-war primitive facilitated the early modernists' escape from Western tradition, the post-war primitive propelled Europe on its flight into the future.

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[25] "Goethe and Tolstoy," trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter, *Essays of Three Decades* (New York: Knopf, 1947) 170, and *Thomas Mann: Werke, Schriften und Reden zur Literatur, Kunst und Philosophie* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 1967), I, 212, translated by and quoted in J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 24.

[26] Alexander Blok, "Poèziya zagovorov i zaklinaniy," *Sobraniye sochineniy v shesti tomakh* vol. 5 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravda," 1971) 279, translated by and quoted in Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), vol. 1, 850.

Establishing a Methodology

I have attempted in the dissertation to establish a methodology which takes into consideration recent research in the field of modern primitivism, yet which accommodates the examination of the stage works, particularly their reception by French critics and members of the avant-garde. By critically approaching the reception of cultural products that were received as both modern and primitive (such as the three stage works in question, as well as, for example, the work of American composer George Antheil [see chapter 3], and African-American jazz [see chapter 4]), I analyze the ways in which French society conceived of both the modern and the primitive, and the role the latter played in creating, elucidating, or questioning French modern culture.

While I do not take any one scholar or approach as my model (rather I draw on a variety of approaches and use various tools for my own purposes), my work has of course been informed by the debates that have taken place in the literature that deals with modern primitivism. This topic has been dealt with most extensively in the art historical literature; only recently has it been broached in any detail by musicologists. Although art historical research in this area was undertaken in North America as early as 1938[27], the vast majority of publications dealing with modern primitivism and its attendant issues appeared following a controversial exhibition which took place at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York in 1984. This exhibition was important not only for introducing the public to the fundamental role played by tribal artifacts in the emergence and establishment of a modern language in the visual arts, but also for sparking an important debate concerning methodology. This debate has not been reviewed in the musicological literature, even in the small body of literature that deals with modern primitivism. In the following pages, then, I will outline the primary facets of the debate as it has unfolded in art history, with the goal of bringing this debate to a musicological audience, defining relevant terminology, situating the musicological literature methodologically within the parameters of the more extensive art historical literature, and establishing my own methodology.

Curated by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe, the 1984 MOMA exhibition "Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern," attempted to illustrate the relationship between modern and primitive art objects, by indicating cases of "direct influence," "coincidental resemblances," and "basic shared characteristics" or affinities.[28] These relationships were demonstrated through the juxtapositions of modern works with

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[27] See Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

[28] See Rubin's introduction to the catalogue, "Modernist Primitivism: An Introduction," *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art* 1-79.

"primitive" works which may or may not have been seen by the Western artist in question. Thus, for example, Picasso's *Guitar* (1912) was juxtaposed with a Grebo Mask, Alexander Calder's *Apple Monster* (1938) was placed beside a Papua New Guinean Imunu figure, and Paul Klee's *Poster for Comedians* (1938) was displayed next to a piece of painted fabric from Zaire. The exhibition was substantiated by a hefty two-volume "catalogue," which contains an extensive and informative introductory essay on modern primitivism, scholarly essays on the arrival of tribal objects from North America, Oceania and Africa in Europe, as well as extensive academic essays on individual artists, including Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, Brancusi, Giocometti, Klee, and several others.[29]

The exhibition and its catalogue provided the first major attempt to expand on the seminal work of Robert Goldwater, who, in his 1938 book *Primitivism and Modern Art,* undertook a full-scale examination of the modern primitive movements. Through his discussions of Gauguin and the School of Pont Aven, the Fauves, the Brücke, the Blaue Reiter, Picasso, Dada, and Surrealism, Goldwater analyzed the assumptions that underlie the various facets of modern primitivism. Primary among these assumptions, according to Goldwater, is that social or cultural "externals" are complicated and therefore undesirable, and that a reaching under the surface will reveal something simple and basic and therefore more emotionally compelling. Modern primitivists deemed simplicity and basic-ness to be more profound, more important and more valuable than the complexity and sophistication that define modern civilization; they assumed that the closer one gets to historical, psychological or aesthetic origins, the simpler things become.[30] This search for beginnings held not only cultural but also physical and emotional interest for the moderns:

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[29] Rubin, ed., *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art.* For reproductions of the cited examples, see pp. 20, 58, and 59, respectively.

[30] See Goldwater, *Primitivism* 251.

for this reason Goldwater describes their quest as a search for "lower," not "higher" origins.[31] In this search for simplicity and for "lower origins," modern artists valued tribal arts, whose intensity and directness of emotional expression they believed to be more important than the technique employed to fashion the object. In addition to artifacts of foreign provenance, modern artists also appreciated certain European arts, such as those produced by peasants, children, and the insane, where, again, a direct conveyance of emotion was thought to overshadow the medium itself. [32]

William Rubin, whose introduction to the MOMA exhibit catalogue provides an excellent overview of the history and development of modern primitivism in Western art, follows Goldwater in that his interests lie in the Western context in which modern artists "discovered" primitive sculpture, rather than with the specific function and significance of the primitive objects themselves.[33] To this end, Rubin gives a history of the artistic significance of the term primitivism in Western Europe. The word was first used in France in the mid-nineteenth century to denote primarily the paintings of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian and Flemish masters; it could also, however, connote Romanesque and Byzantine art, as well as non-Western arts ranging from the Peruvian to the Javanese. Nineteenth-century primitivist painters preferred pre-Renaissance Western styles over the then official highly illusionistic styles. As Rubin explains,

> The more that bourgeois society prized the virtuosity and finesse of the salon styles, the more certain painters began to value the simple and naive,

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[31] Goldwater, *Primitivism* 253.

[32] Goldwater, *Primitivism* 254. Another important early work is Jean Laude's *La Peinture française (1905-1914) et "L'Art nègre"* (Paris, 1968). For a general, introductory yet thorough and up-to-date text on primitivism in modern art, see Rhodes, *Primitivism.* For a further inquiry into the idea of technique as contamination, see Ernst Gombrich, "The Dread of Corruption," *The Listener* (15 February 1979): 242-245. (This article is a transciption of the first in a series of four radio lectures given on Radio 3 BBC titled "The Primitive and Its Value in Art.")

[33] Rubin, "Modern Primitivism" 1.

> and even the rude and the raw—to the point that by the end of the nineteenth century, some primitivist artists had come to vaunt those non-Western arts they called "savage." Using this word admiringly, they employed it to describe virtually any art alien to the Greco-Roman line of Western realism that had been reaffirmed and systematized in the Renaissance.[34]

By the end of the nineteenth century, what was thought of as primitive art ranged from that of the ancient Egyptians to the Aztecs of Mexico, to the Japanese masters to the art of Persia, India, Java, Cambodia, Peru and Polynesia. The styles of these so-called "primitives" were valued by Gauguin and his generation for many of the qualities that twentieth-century artists—Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Picasso, and so on—would prize in African and Oceanic art. Indeed, by 1906, in Paris, the term *art nègre* was interchangeable with "primitive art."[35] All of these so-called primitive arts were so highly valued because they carried an expressive force thought to be lacking in European realism.

The strength of Rubin's essay lies in his elucidation of the impact of primitive art on modern art from the point of view of a formalist. That is, Rubin's interest in the context in which European artists "discovered" primitive art is limited to the realm of morphology: in what ways, and for what artistic purposes, did European artists adapt the *stylistic* features of primitive art to modern art. Rubin, although he does provide a general cultural background to the issue, does not look at broader issues of cultural contextualization. For example, he acknowledges, and proceeds according to the acknowledgement, that modernism's interest in primitivism was consistent with its essentially critical posture.[36] He leaves it to other scholars, however, to explore fully the ways in which modern artists used primitive art to criticize modern culture.

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[34] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 2. This split between the academies and the primitivists in the 18th and 19th centuries leads Frances Connelly, in *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) to define primitivism as the Other of classicism: "It is my argument that the prinicipal framework of ideas that defined 'primitive' art was that of the *classical tradition* as institutionalized in academies of art throughout Europe. The classical norm cast the "primitive" as a dark mirror image of itself" (9). For an alternative viewpoint, see my chapters 3 and 4, where I discuss the co-option of primitivism by the avant-garde classicists of the 1920s.

[35] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 2-3.

Given his formalist approach, one of Rubin's most interesting postulations is that modern artists "discovered" primitive art only when it was needed[37], and, furthermore, that the discovery of primitive art did not fundamentally alter European art history, but rather reinforced and sanctioned developments already under way.[38] Ethnographic museums containing African and Oceanic objects, such as the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris (now the Musée de l'Homme), had been open to the public for several years (the Trocadéro opened in 1882). Furthermore, didactic shows of tribal culture could be seen at the International Expositions of 1889 and 1900, and curio shops carried African and Oceanic sculptures well before the turn of the century. Around the middle of the first decade of the twentieth-century, however, something happened in the course of modern art that led artists to be receptive to tribal art. Rubin identifies this event as a shift from artistic styles rooted in visual perception to styles based on conceptualization.[39] Although this shift was signaled by Manet, reflected by the *japonisme* of the 1860s, and begun by Gauguin, it became particularly emphatic in 1906, the year of the large Gauguin retrospective held at the Salon d'Automne, and the year that Vlaminck acquired a Fang mask which he sold to his friend Derain, at whose home Picasso saw it. With Picasso's revolutionary *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907, tribal art "became an urgent issue."[40] The shift from a perceptual approach to a conceptual approach reached its pre-War peak in Picasso's Synthetic Cubist period (around 1912), in works such as *Guitar,* whose ideographic idiom was acknowledged by Picasso to have been influenced by a particular Grebo mask that the artist had in his possession.[41]

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[36] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 7.
[37] See Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 11.
[38] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 17.
[39] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 11.
[40] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 13.

Rubin's formalist approach was forcefully challenged in the years following the MOMA exhibit. The abundant and overwhelmingly critical reactions to the exhibition provided the basis for much current thought on modern primitivism.[42] Art historians who opposed the formalist approach proposed their own methodologies, most of which were concerned with the contextualization of tribal objects and issues of cultural relativism. For example, chief among the complaints was that the curators, while giving extensive background on the Western modern artists involved, did not sufficiently contextualize the tribal pieces on display, and thus reinforced Western hegemony and modernist absolutism; this perception was heightened by the exclusive emphasis placed on the *formal* similarities between the tribal objects and the modern works. James Clifford pointed out that the displays of primitive art perpetuated the notion that primitive societies are located outside of history, in a perpetual past, whereas in reality tribal life continues to be vibrant and productive today, and its traditions have evolved historically, even, indeed especially, through contact with the West.[43] Also criticized was the missing sense of fetishistic transgression that was inherent in the moderns' original appropriation of the primitive. Although the moderns' conceptual orientation was confirmed by the morphological properties of tribal art, they were also drawn to less tangible attributes of the primitive models: the sense of magic, power, spirituality, and often overt or exaggerated sexuality and violence perceived to be characteristic of tribal works.[44] Finally, critics frequently judged Rubin and Varnedoe to be guilty of rendering invisible the more disquieting aspects of modernism, such as racism, colonialism, and other inequalities of power relations. The most extreme critic equated modern artists with colonial pillagers, claiming that primitivism "manages the ideological nightmare of a great art inspired by spoils," and that the moderns' discovery of the primitive represents the latter's death.[45] For Hal Foster, the line between modern artist and gun-toting colonialist is a fine one.

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[41] See Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism" 18-20 for an analysis of *Guitar* and the influence of the mask on the work.

[42] See Yves-Alain Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage," *Art in America* (April 1985): 178-188; James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *The Predicament of Culture: 20th-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988): 189-214; Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 45-70; Hilton Kramer, "The 'Primitivism' Conundrum," *The New Criterion* (December 1984): 1-7; Thomas McEvilley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief: 'Primitivism in 20th-Century Art' at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984," *Artforum* (November 1984): 54-60; Cynthia Nadelman, "Broken Premises: 'Primitivism' at MOMA," *Art News* 84 (February 1985): 88-95. For a response to the criticism, see Kirk Varnedoe, "On the Claims and Critics of the 'Primitivism' Show," *Art in America* 73 (May 1985): 11-21.

[43] Clifford, "Histories" 209-214. Many authors point to one indication that tribal communities are not actually ossified relics of prehistory: the Zuni forbid the display of Ahauuta, or traditional war gods. For this reason, only a photograph of the Ahauuta putatively seen by Paul Klee in Berlin was displayed next to his 1932 *Mask of Fear*. See Clifford, "Histories" 209; Bois, "La Pensée Sauvage" 182.

Post-MOMA Directions

Criticism notwithstanding, the MOMA exhibit paved the way for further inquiry into modern primitivism. Since 1984, art historical research on the topic has developed in several directions. While some scholars have continued in the formalist/analytical vein established by Rubin et al., others have broadened their critical framework to include psychoanalytic and political approaches, feminist critique, the category of the "Other," and discourse theory; most have also taken a more critical stance with regard to modernism as a cultural phenomena, and locate primitivism within this larger scope.

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[44] See Thomas McEvilley, "Marginalia," *Artforum* 28 (March 1990): 19-21. That Picasso was initially attracted to the the magical, fetishistic aspect of African art is evident in his description of his trip to the *Musée d'Ethnographie* in 1907: "When I went to the old Trocadéro, it was disgusting. . . . I was all alone. I wanted to get away. But I didn't leave. I stayed. I stayed. I understood that it was very important. . . . The masks weren't just like any other pieces of sculpture. Not at all. They were magic things. . . . The Negro pieces were *intercesseurs,* mediators. . . They were against everything—against unknown, threatening spirits. I always looked at fetishes. I understood; I too am against everything. I too believe that everything is unknown, that everything is an enemy!. . . I understood what the Negroes used their sculpture for. Why sculpt like that and not some other way? After all, they weren't Cubists!. . . But all the fetishes were used for the same thing. They were weapons. To help people avoid coming under the influence of spirits again, to help them become independent. They're tools. If we give spirits a form, we become independent. Spirits, the unconscious . . ., emotion—they're all the same thing. I understood why I was a painter. All alone in that awful museum, with masks, dolls made by the redskins, dusty manikins. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* must have come to me that very day, but not at all because of the forms; because it was my first exorcism-painting—yes absolutely!" André Malraux, *Picasso's Mask*, trans. June Guicharnaud (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974) 10-11.

[45] Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art" 61.

The chapter on primitivism in Kirk Varnedoe's 1990 book *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* is a good example of the formalist trend. Varnedoe does provide basic historical background on the cultural phenomena of modern primitivism, locating the primitive's dual nature in the conflicting traditions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. He is, however, most concerned with the stylistic history of modern art and its continuing power to captivate us. In his discussion of Gauguin and Picasso (with emphasis on the latter), he builds on the work of Rubin[46] and Adam Gopnik[47] to demonstrate the extent to which modern artists' encounter with the primitive was, in effect, predetermined: the effects in Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* which are usually attributed to the influence of primitive art were as much the result of experiments already underway as his much-cited revelatory exposure to African art at the Trocadéro in 1907. Picasso's experimentation with caricature and "doodling," for example, led him to use markings that resemble the scarification and mask-like faces often attributed to the influence of African masks, masks which he could not possibly have seen (according to Rubin) before the completion of the *Demoiselles*; experiments involving the simplest, most banal, conventions of drawing, not African sculpture, lead to the most contorted figure in the *Demoiselles* (the crouching woman on the extreme right); and earlier experiments in structural inversion were merely confirmed by Picasso's use of a Grebo mask as a model for his *Guitar*.[48] "At the heart of darkness, astonishingly," Varnedoe quips, "lies a doodle."[49] Varnedoe's analyses are fascinating investigations of Western art's collision with the primitive, and the stylistic overlap between "low" art, primitivism, and "high" art; Varnedoe does not, however, extricate himself from the modernist/formalist enterprise which he has been criticized as perpetuating.

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[46] Rubin, "Modernist Primitivism."

[47] "High and Low: Caricature, Primitivism, and the Cubist Portrait," *Art Journal* (Winter 1983): 88-101.

Solomon-Godeau is one of several writers (among whom Marianna Torgovnick, Susan Hiller, and Hal Foster) who draw to greater or lesser extents on discourse theory, in conjunction with other critical tools, including psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory, and political critique.[50] Underlying the work of these critics is a desire, be it implicit or explicit, to problematize the presumed universality of the modernist canon. For modern artists and many present-day art historians (especially Rubin; see Torgovnick's critique of him), this presumed universality was and is confirmed not so much by the fact that Western artists have imitated tribal art, and thus gained access to some universal expressive realm, but rather by the very notion of an underlying affinity between European artists and "primitives."[51] Like the critics of the MOMA project, many present-day critics are skeptical about this presumed affinity, and work toward contextualizing the problematic relationship between the modern and the primitive. These critics see the modern appropriation of the primitive not as confirmation of modernism and its universalizing aesthetic, but rather as a sign of Western political dominance, informed by racial and sexual fantasies, and motivated by a crisis of representation occurring in modern art and culture, all as manifest not only in the works of art themselves, but also in the discourse generated around them.

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[48] See Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990) esp. 196-205. On *Guitar* (and synthetic cubism in general and African art) see also Yves-Alain Bois, "La leçon de Kahnweiler," *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 3 (Spring 1988): 29-56.

[49] Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard* 204.

[50] Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive;* Susan Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism: Collections on Art* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991); Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," and "Primitive Scenes," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Autumn 1993): 69-102.

[51] McEvilley, "Marginalia" 20.

While some scholars have chosen to apply these critical techniques to the concept of modern primitivism as a cultural phenomenon, and even to the very field of art history and its attendant myths, others have chosen to focus on individual artists and works. On the one hand, then, is Marianna Torgovnick, who in her 1990 book *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives*, (one of the few post-Goldwater book-length investigations of modern primitivism[52]) keeps issues of politics, race, and gender in the forefront, as she tackles Tarzan, the early anthropologists, Conrad and Lawrence, Freud, Lévi-Strauss, and, of course, William Rubin. On the other hand is Solomon-Godeau, in an article of much narrower scope, who, by emphasizing the construction of Brittany as a discursive object posits a "Bretonism" whose Brittany is conceived as the Other of contemporary Paris. While Torgovnick's focus is broad, taking into account literature, painting, anthropology, high and low art, and examining the place of modern primitivism within this macrocosmic view, Solomon-Godeau focuses on a microcosmic strain of modern primitivism: the myth of Gauguin as it has evolved over the past century.

One of the primary concerns of writers such as Torgovnick and Solomon-Godeau is the way in which the Western sense of self determines the form of the primitive. For Torgovnick, the interface between primitivism and sexuality is what provides the former with much of its impact[53]; to this end Torgovnick investigates the ways in which the desires, fears and fantasies of Western writers and anthropologists are projected onto the native other. Solomon-Godeau also sees racial and sexual fantasies as providing modern primitivism's raison d'être[54]: the structures of desire created by modern artists (and perpetuated today in objects as banal as Club Med brochures) are often those that perpetuate the elision of nature, woman and the primitive in the Western, male imagination. Both Torgovnick and Solomon-Godeau see the Westerner's encounter with the primitive Other as primarily an encounter with the body of the Other:

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[52] Others include Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism;* Rhodes, *Primitivism;* and Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[53] See Solomon-Godeau's review of Torgovnik's *Gone Primitive* and Price's *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* in *Art in America* 79 (February 1991): 41.

> How that alien body is to be perceived, known, mastered or possessed is played out within a dynamic of knowledge/power relations which admits of no reciprocity. On one level, what is enacted is a violent history of colonial possession and cultural dispossession—real power over real bodies. On another level, this encounter will be endlessly elaborated within a shadow world of representations—a question of imaginary power over imaginary bodies.[55]

Patricia Leighten, in an article on Picasso's *Demoiselles*, focuses on this complex interplay between real power over real bodies and imaginary power over imaginary bodies.[56] By situating the *Demoiselles* within its broad context of colonialist atrocities and European political unrest, she exposes the violently political subtext of modern primitivism. Leighten reveals that the French public in 1907 was aware of the cruelty and exploitation that was being inflicted by the French on the very colony its was supposed to be "civilizing." Picasso's and the moderns' celebration of a romanticized African culture, whose primitivism was deemed "authentic," in opposition to the decadence of the

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[54] Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native" 120.

[55] Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native" 124. Art historians view Brittany as Gauguin's first "primitive" terrain, a place and influence whereby he began to develop the modern primitivist style that would come to fruition in Tahiti.

[56] Patricia Leighten, "The White Peril and l'Art Nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism," *Art Bulletin* 72.4 (1990): 609-30.

West, went beyond a search for a representational power thought missing in European art; it was politically subversive, and functioned explicitly as social criticism. Leighten substantiates her view by demonstrating Picasso's involvement with anarchist, anti-colonial movements of the time. The moderns' critical attitude toward the bourgeoisie and its long-held values and concurrent hypocrisy (as was being demonstrated in the colonies, where the presumedly "civilized" Europeans were savagely brutalizing the native "primitives") was thus highlighted through radicalizations of form and content: "Picasso's primitivism subverts aesthetic canons of beauty and order in the name of 'authenticity,' as a way of contravening the rational, liberal, 'enlightened' political order in which they are implicated."[57] Additionally, for Picasso, the African is neither an inferior nor an equal, but rather an absolute other who possess a primordial power unfortunately lost to modern culture.[58] In this formulation, a reductionist view like that of Hal Foster, who sees art itself as furthering the brutality of colonialist enterprise, becomes highly problematic.

The notion that the primitive is constructed by the West in terms of the West's projections of fears, fantasies and desires, all often manifest in a particularly violent manner, is essentially a Freudian view of interpersonal relationships, extended to cultures. Hal Foster brings Freud out into the open in a provocative article on Gauguin's, Picasso's and Kirchner's encounters with the primitive.[59] Foster views modern primitivism as at least in part a crisis in masculine subjectivity, a crisis whereby a particularly modern, masculine subjectivity is projected onto the primitive. Foster is most interested in the desires and fears that cause this modern subjectivity to be projected as such, and uses

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[57] Leighten, "The White Peril" 627.
[58] Leighten, "The White Peril" 627.
[59] Foster, "Primitive Scenes."

Freudian psychoanalytic theory (albeit critically) to explore this projection. He takes as his starting point the notion that primitivism is an association of racial others with instinctual impulses.[60] The modern artist in effect uses (subconsciously) the primitive as a means of expressing tensions inherent in the modern sense of self, a sense of the body and of the psyche which was being challenged and transformed by both imperialist encounters and increasing industrialization. Thus, supposedly "primitive" practices, including taboos such as cannibalism and incest, become ambivalent, sometimes transgressive fantasies in the Western mind.[61] Artistically and psychically, the modern artist is both attracted to and repelled by the primitive, both identifies with and desires it. In this play of identity, wherein the modern artist tries to break down cultural oppositions of European and primitive while, in effect, reinforcing difference, the Westerner repeatedly maps

> racial onto sexual difference and vice versa in a conundrum of oppositions of black and white, female and male, nature and culture, passive and active, homosexual and heterosexual. However, since ambivalence governs these mappings—since 'the primitive' both attracts and repels these artists, since they both desire and identify with it—such oppositions are pressured to the point where they begin to falter, where the white heterosexual masculinity founded on them begins to crack.[62]

More specifically, Picasso's, Gauguin's and Kirchner's identity crises reveal themselves in their paintings in the constant, aggressive, and subjugating slippage between woman, primitive, and nature, a slippage which indicates a desire for and an anxiety over insufficient masculine mastery and homoerotic impulses:

> But is an image like *Spirit of the Dead Watching* or *Les Demoiselles* a pure

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[60] Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 71-72.

[61] See Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 73-76.

[62] Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 75-76.

> expression of masculinist mastery, or is it not also a compensatory fantasy that bespeaks a feared *lack* of this mastery? Does a masterly subject make such anxiously aggressive moves, or is there not performed in these images a fraught ambivalence—performed to be managed, perhaps, but never completely so? A critique that does not allow for this ambivalence may simplify, indeed totalize, and so center, indeed affirm, a particular construction of white masculinity. That is, it may mistake a desire for mastery for the real thing; it may bestow on such masculinity the phallus that it never had.[63]

The modern, masculine self, therefore, finds itself in a problematic relationship with the primitive indeed. No longer is the primitive simply either the savage opposite of civilization, or the noble alternative to civilization; rather, the primitive (as of course it always was) is that which lurks within individuals and within civilization: instincts and impulses, but more specifically, the conflicts, desires, fears and anxieties that these instincts and impulses arouse. While modern artists expressed an explicit desire to destroy the binary oppositions traditionally inherent in the European/primitive axis—sexual repression vs. sexual license, culture vs. nature, active vs. passive, masculine vs. feminine—they simultaneously insisted on these oppositions, revealing "a revulsion at any such crossings-over." The primitivist "seeks to be both *opened up to difference* (to be made ecstatic, literally taken out of the self sexually, socially, racially) *and* to be *fixed in opposition* to the other (to be established again, secured as a sovereign self)."[64] For Foster, this tension between the desire for difference and the need for a fixed identity accounts for the aggression found in much modern primitive art.[65]

The critics of MOMA and their scholarly descendants succeeded in highlighting the various ways in which the lack of historical, geographical, colonial, and ethnographic contextualization of primitive objects, and all that the lack of contextualization implied (a false affirmation of the universality of modernism, or a glossing over of imperialist exploitation, for example) comprised the primary failure of Rubin, Varnedoe, the MOMA exhibition, and the formalist approach in general. However, I would like to suggest that the primary weakness of the MOMA project, and, indeed, in many of the reactions to it, lay elsewhere;[66] in this dissertation I hope to redress this lacuna.

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[63] Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 79-80.
[64] Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 93-94.
[65] Foster, "Primitive Scenes" 85.

Rubin and Varnedoe did not set out to create an exhibition of tribal art, but rather to illustrate perceived affinities between tribal art and modern art (and although some critics problematize that affinity, there is no question that tribal art did play a role—however problematic and complex—in the development of modernism). However, if their intention was to highlight certain currents in modern art, their emphasis on formal affinities, however fascinating, overshadowed any attempt to contextualize the *modern* works on display. Although extensive contextualization may not be feasible within the context of a museum exhibit, where extensive supporting texts may occlude the works of art themselves, perhaps certain visual objects could have been added to the show to provide contextual information. Certainly if the curators had wanted to contextualize at least the Western works on display, they could have added the anarchist cartoons of French brutality in colonial Africa, which may have had an impact on Picasso at around the time of the creation of the *Demoiselles,* images of Josephine Baker's *revues*, posters advertising the African-American *spectacles* prominent in Paris in the 1920s and 30s, or drawings of dancers at the *Bal Blomet.* (Attempts at this type of contextualization did take place in the catalogue, where, for example, in an essay on Léger's *La Création du monde*, the author discussed the cultural craze for Africana and the role Africana played in *La Création* and in Léger's approach to his work on the sets. However, as many visitors would not have been reading the catalogue while visiting the show, they would have been unaware of this and other contextualizations). Although modern primitivist works are partly about the move toward abstraction, the shift from a perceptual to a conceptual orientation, they are also "about" much else: disillusionment with Western civilization itself, for example.

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[66] Not having seen the exhibition, I speak only from my reading of the reports and the catalogue.

A more nuanced contextualization of the Western perspective that comprises the modern primitive phenomenon would have clarified or highlighted many of the complexities inherent in the relationship between the West and its Others; furthermore, this type of contextualization reveals that racism and colonialism are *not* the only determining factors in this relationship. Foster claims that the regeneration of Western culture is based on the breakup and decay of other societies,[67] but modern primitivism is founded just as directly on the perceived breakup and decay of Western society through various aspects of modernization. After the First World War, a popular perception in the West was that European society was being directly threatened by the influx of primitive music and dance (i.e., African-American popular entertainment), as well as by immigrants from the colonies and, perhaps most importantly, the onslaught of American culture. The MOMA perspective, as well as the perspective of the critics, tended to assume that all cultural confrontation was one-sided: the West borrowed or stole from the non-West, on non-Western territory. However, especially after World War I, the non-European other confronted Europe on its own soil. This confrontation, in which the notion of Africa is located in urban America as much as in the Congo, adds a further dimension to the equation. As the threat of the other became more and more tangible, it also became in many ways more and more convoluted, and power relations became less clear. Given that the boundary between West and other was constantly shifting, I do not believe that one can always distinguish between the two as facilely as many of the critics do.

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[67] Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art" 47.

Furthermore, many of the critics used the exhibition, and its own modernist, Westernizing perspective, to implicate art and artists in the larger-scale imperialist/colonialist pillaging of its colonies and other non-Western peoples. While cultural production is implicated in larger-scale societal upheavals and events, I think the relationship between the two is not as simplistic as some of the critics imply. For example, Patricia Leighten has shown how Picasso's *Demoiselles* can be construed as an anti-colonial statement, rather than, in the words of Foster, "a great art inspired by spoils."[68] Again, contextualization of the Western works, and not necessarily the primitive artifacts, would have helped delineate the evolution of the modern primitivist aesthetic. This type of contextualization would explain, for example, why the same artifacts that many pre-war modernist artists drew on in order to emphasize "primal" energies were used, after the war, as confirmation of order, purity, precision, economy, and the classical tradition.

Defining Primitivism

Before proceeding to the musicological literature, it will prove useful to define the term primitivism, as it has been used in art history, and to distinguish primitivism from the exoticism that characterized much nineteenth-century art and music.

At the beginning of the twentieth century an important shift took place between *fin-de-siècle* orientalism and early modern primitivism. While these two trends share much in common, an examination of the differences between them will help clarify our definition of early modern primitivism. Images of Otherness constitute much of the history of European art, particularly during times of colonial expansion. Accordingly, European images of exotic, oriental and primitive others increased in frequency over the course of the nineteenth century. Not every image of otherness, and not even every image of primitive subject matter, however, can be considered primitivist.

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[68] See note 45.

Colin Rhodes, in his book *Primitivism and Modern Art*, thoroughly illustrates what distinguishes the modern artists' use of the primitive from earlier Western artists' use of foreign materials.[69] In European art from the Renaissance through the end of the nineteenth century, artists tended to represent non-Western cultures such that the threat of the unknown inherent in any confrontation between the West and the non-West was contained and neutralized through accepted Western representational practices. Thus, for example, eighteenth-century visitors to Oceania might represent, as did Arthur Devis in his painting *Judee, One of the Wives of Abba Thule* (1788), the wife of a Tahitian king in traditional European portraiture style. In this portrait, the woman sports a European hairstyle, and her features conform to notions of beauty standard in eighteenth-century Western Europe. Ironically, Devis's use of European conventions does not highlight the *similarity* between the Tahitian and a European woman, but rather serves to foreground her *difference,* while simultaneously containing and neutralizing its threat.

Similarly, the works of nineteenth-century orientalist painters such as Jean-Léon Gérôme and John Frederick Lewis render the Orient in an academic, highly illusionistic, naturalist style, in which key cultural markers (a mosque, a veiled woman, a snake charmer) serve to identify the Oriental subject matter. The Westerner, absent in the actual painting, but present in the controlling gaze of the artist and of the Western art consumer, regards the scene and its inhabitants as picturesque objects. The Orient(al) itself is effectively silenced; its own modes of self-representation do not affect the photographic style of the painting. Thus, a psychological distance is maintained between the viewer and the viewee, and the exteriority of the Western observer is preserved.[70]

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[69] See Rhodes, *Primitivism* 74-87. The following paragraphs are paraphrased from this passage.

Primitivism shares with orientalism a connection to colonialism "as the arbiter of knowledge about 'subject peoples.'"[71] However, as Rhodes explains, the orientalists' image of an East irredeemably alien to the West implies that orientalism cannot be used as a means of questioning European cultural conventions; primitivism, on the the other hand, can be used as a means of criticism. Indeed, primitivism in modern art "is predominantly about making the familiar strange or about maintaining the strangeness of unfamiliar experiences as a means of questioning the received wisdom of Western culture."[72]

The example of Max Pechstein's *Palau Triptych* (1917) serves to highlight the differences between orientalism and primitivism in the visual arts. Painted after his return from the South Seas at the outbreak of World War I, Pechstein's triptych portrays domestic life in the Palau Islands. However, unlike an orientalist image of otherness, Pechstein's painting gives the viewer the impression that his own style has been influenced by both the art and the life of the Palau Islands. Never does the viewer mistake his work for that of an Island artist, however; rather, the viewer is prompted to see a connection or a similarity between Pechstein's modern European style and the visual language used by the people of Palau to create images of themselves. Unlike the orientalists' stylistic insistence on exteriority, Pechstein's modern style suggests involvement and identification with the primitive. Pechstein's attempt to synthesize subject matter and style is what differentiates his work from nineteenth-century representations of otherness, and is the fundamental, defining characteristic of modern primitivism.

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[70] This exteriority is the main premise on which, according to Said, orientalism is defined.
[71] Rhodes, *Primitivism* 78.
[72] Rhodes, *Primitivism* 74-75.

It is precisely this impact of subject matter on style that differentiates modern primitivism in music from orientalism, folklorism, or other quotations, borrowings, or pastiche. Although nineteenth-century composers often borrowed non-Western or folk materials, setting them within the conventions of the Western musical tradition, it is only with early modern masters such as Stravinsky that the primitivist materials become an essential element, even the foundation, of a new, modernist language. Furthermore, just as the modern artists' goal was to make the familiar strange or to maintain the foreignness of the unfamiliar in order to question received wisdom and academicism, many modern composers who turned to the primitive maintained a critical stance and an anti-academic bias.

Modern Primitivism as a Critical Category in Musicology

Although primitivism has occasionally appeared as a subcategory of modern music in music history textbooks, until recently musicologists have been seemingly unaware of the pervasive trend of modernists not only to evoke the primitive, but also to rely on "primitive" materials as the foundation for the emerging modernist languages of the early twentieth century. Of course, many musicologists have explored and analyzed the use of folk materials by composers such as Stravinsky and Bartók, and the pervasive use of popular musics such as jazz by composers such as Krenek, Milhaud, and again Stravinsky. However, with few exceptions, no-one has delved into the cultural-historical significance of these trends, especially with regard to that cauldron of cultural activity in the twentieth century, Paris.

Not surprisingly, Stravinsky's oeuvre has received a great deal of attention from musicologists, specifically regarding the ways in which it uses Russian folk materials to create an international, cosmopolitan, modernist language.[73] Although the quotation of folk materials in itself does not necessarily result in a modern primitive work of music, the use of these materials to create a modernist language in which a certain immediacy of expression is paramount does correspond to the art historical definition of modern primitivism, and is useful in determining what, in the extensive Stravinsky literature, is relevant for a study in modern primitivism. Indeed, at least two musicologists have looked specifically at the ways in which folk materials provide the basis for the development of a modernist language by Stravinsky (Margarita Mazo and Richard Taruskin, both of whom I discuss below). This approach may be compared to Rubin's in art history in that it assumes a shift from a perceptual to a conceptual perspective, and in that it is in part formalist and analytical. In Stravinsky's modern primitive works, he does not merely quote folk songs as he heard them, but rather extrapolates the properties of folk music and uses them to create a modernist language; only through rigourous analysis can the musicologist uncover the use of these materials, and determine exactly how they were manipulated in order to produce startlingly new effects. An important difference exists between the musicologists who adopt this approach and the formalist art historians, nevertheless, in that the musicologists are extremely interested and well-versed in the contextualization of the "primitive" materials in question. Furthermore, Stravinsky's own familiarity with his primitive materials is documented and brought to the fore.

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[73] As my primary concern here is the cultural phenomenon modern primitivism, the abundance of analytical/theoretical material devoted to Stravinsky's oeuvre will not be discussed, as it does not broach this subject. The most recent, in-depth analyses of Stravinsky's primitivist works, such as those by Allen Forte (*The Harmonic Organization of the Rite* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978]) and Pieter van den Toorn (Pieter van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983]) do not make explicit the relationship between the folk sources and the final product, and do not situate the works within their cultural contexts. These strictly analytical works go beyond the formalism of Rubin and Varnedoe in art history, largely ignoring the close contacts Stravinksy had with Russian folk materials and with Russian avant-garde artists, thereby precluding any discussion of the impact of folk materials on Stravinsky's language.

Margarita Mazo, in an article titled "Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Russian Village Wedding Ritual,"[74] shows in great detail the ways in which Stravinsky assimilated both musical and ritualistic elements of the village wedding ritual (particularly the lament) in *Les Noces.* Mazo highlights affinities between the melodic and formal procedures, texture, and rhythmic-metric patterns characteristic of both folk music and *Les Noces;* she also demonstrates that Stravinsky's understanding of the wedding ritual as a whole informed the composition of *Les Noces.*[75] The connection between the depersonalization inherent in folk ritual, where the participants' impersonal responses to the requirements of the ritual result simultaneously in emotional intensity and personal detachment, and the Stravinskyian quality of depersonalization (characteristic of much modernist artistic undertaking) is typical of modernist Western European artists' approach to the primitive, where an implied connection, rather than a studied differentiation, between the modern and the primitive exists. Equally significant is the information Mazo provides concerning the Russian cultural context of Stravinsky's forays into the world of folk practice, which took place at a time when Russian modernists considered folk religion, mythology, and authentic folklore to be crucial issues (much as tribal art had become an urgent issue for artists such as Picasso).

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[74] Margarita Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Russian Village Wedding Ritual," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43 (1990): 99-142.

[75] Other scholars who have studied the connections between folk song and structural elements in musical language include Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* as well as several Russian scholars, including Boris Asaf'yev (Igor Glebov), *A Book About Stravinsky,* trans. Richard F. French (Ann Arbor, 1982) and Rafail Birkan, "O tematizme 'Svadebki' Stravinskogo (On Thematicism of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*)," *Iz istorii muzyki XX veka (Russian Music History of the 20th Century),* eds. Semen Ginzburg and Mikhail Druskin, (Moscow, 1971): 169-189; Valentina Kholopova, in *Voprosny ritma v tvorchestre kompozitorov XX veka (Issues on Rhythm in Music of the Twentieth-Century Composers)* (Moscow, 1971) examines the interrelations between folk song and rhythmic and temporal procedure and text articulation.

The strength of Mazo's approach lies in her use of formalist analysis, cultural contextualization and ethnographic inquiry. Like Rubin and Varnedoe in art history, Mazo is concerned with illustrating affinities between the original folk sources and the final modern work. However, she draws on cultural and ethnographic contexts in order to explicate the significance, both structural (formal) and cultural, of Stravinsky's choices. Furthermore, in showing the extent to which Stravinsky himself was aware of the original contexts of the folk materials, she goes one step further than many of the art historians, regardless of their orientation. For although Western artists were rarely cognizant of the origins and cultural significance of the primitive objects that had such an impact on their work, Stravinsky, as Mazo demonstrates, often had intimate acquaintance with his folk sources, which were much more a part of his heritage than African masks were part of Picasso's (for example). The type of relationship that existed between Picasso and African masks does not find its corollary in the relationship of Stravinsky to his folk sources, then, but rather, in my opinion, in the relationship between Parisian high society and Stravinsky's primitivist works. In other words, as we shall see in chapters 2 and 3, Stravinsky and the *Ballets Russes* became identified to some extent as primitive in relation to their Parisian audience.

Simon Karlinsky also explores the links between folk practice and Stravinsky's stage works. In "Igor Stravinsky and Russian Preliterate Theater," he demonstrates how our understanding of Stravinsky's music is enhanced through familiarity with Russian cultural context.[76] After outlining the indigenous forms of Russian dramatized rituals and folk entertainments, which include the enactment of pagan agrarian rituals, dramatized village wedding customs, itinerant folk entertainments, pre-Lenten carnivals, and performances by illiterate soldiers and Siberian convicts of orally transmitted folk plays, Karlinsky shows the ways in which Stravinsky's major theatrical works from the years 1910 to 1918 draw on these traditions: *Le Sacre* enacts a pagan agrarian ritual, *Les Noces* a wedding ritual, *Renard* is a revival of the *skomorokhi* (the itinerant minstrels), *Petrushka* a portrait of the pre-Lenten carnival, or *maslenitsa,* and *Histoire du soldat* shares features with soldier and convict oral folk drama.

The scholar who is currently primarily responsible for expanding the inquiry into Stravinsky's connections with Russian folk practices is Richard Taruskin, who, over the past twenty years or so, has produced a series of articles which have culminated in his immense survey of Stravinsky's music and career up to and including *Mavra* (1923) (he also touches on a few later works).[77] While anthropologists like James Clifford criticize art historians for insufficiently contextualizing the primitive artifacts admired by modern artists, Taruskin, like Mazo and Karlinsky, excels at just that: the provenance and original contexts of Russian sources elucidated by these scholars provide a rich complement to their accounts of the moderns' attraction to primitive materials, and the significant cultural role these materials play in early twentieth-century modernism.

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[76] Simon Karlinsky, "Igor Stravinsky and Russian Preliterate Theater," in *Confronting Stravinsky,* ed. Jann Pasler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 3-15.

[77] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (see note 26). The articles include "Russian Folk Melodies in the Rite of Spring," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 33 (1980): 501-43, in which Taruskin discusses Stravinsky's relationship to folklore and his later attempts to downplay that relationship; "The Rite Revisited," in *Music and Civilization: Essays in Honour of Paul Henry Lang* (New York: Norton, 1984) 183-202, in which he explores the cultural context for the scenario of *Le Sacre,* as well as the pagan antiquities embodied in the scenario; "From Subject to Style: Stravinsky and the Painters," in *Confronting Stravinsky: Man Musician, and Modernist,* ed. Jann Pasler (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986) 16-38, in which he examines the *World of Art* neonationalist movement and Stravinsky's relationship to it; and "Stravinsky and the Traditions" *Opus* 3 (June 1987): 10-17, which comprises a basic outline of *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions.*

In *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* Taruskin addresses many of the issues that are pertinent to the study of modern primitivism: the Russian artists' and intellectuals' fascination with and attraction to folk practices; the anti-academicism of the *World of Art* circle, with whom Stravinsky became involved at the turn of the century, initiating his break with the Rimsky-Korsakov group and ultimately launching his international career; the ways in which Stravinsky broke with his predecessors by treating folk materials as elements of style rather than just subject matter. Taruskin, however, uses the term "primitivism" sparingly, specifically in his discussion of *Le Sacre.* Rather, he prefers the terms "nationalism" and "neonationalism," using them to refer to "stylistic renewal in the professional assimilation of motifs derived from folk and peasant arts and handicrafts."[78] (This terminology better supports his insistence on Stravinsky's political views, and the continuing importance of his Russian heritage in his works through to *Mavra.*) Nevertheless, the cultural and musical processes described by Taruskin in the name of nationalism closely correspond to the modern primitivist movement as described by art historians.

The dynamic relationship between style and subject matter characteristic of modern primitivism, for example, forms the basis of many of Taruskin's historical accounts and musical analyses; these discussions are fascinatingly augmented by Taruskin's descriptions of the striving for national character which formed the backdrop against which these developments unfolded. For example, in his early "Song of the Cloister" (1907) on a text by Sergey Gorodetsky (1884-1967), Stravinsky was accused not only of writing an imitation folk song but also of being too addicted to modernism.[79] Indeed, Rimsky-Korsokov did not like the song, precisely because of the role folklore played in it:

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[78] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 487.

> . . . to a composer of Rimsky-Korsokov's generation, folklore was an element of "content," not "style." Even in Rimsky's latest, most advanced operas, the Russian folkloristic element always had a citational aspect. It never partook of, or contributed to, Rimsky's "progressive" side, the part of his creative personality that delighted in harmonic or timbral novelties. The folkloric/diatonic and the fantastic/chromatic were strictly parallel strains for musicians in Glinka's tradition. . . .
>
> In a word, an artist of Rimsky-Korsakov's generation sought in folklore only thematic material, which he then usually subjected to a conventional and increasingly routinized treatment, the main features of which had been more or less canonized by the end of the 1860s. Art that sought to base a novel, even a self-consciously "modern," style on elements appropriated from folklore doubly aroused Rimsky-Korsakov's suspicion, for not only did such a practice seem parodistic to a member of Rimsky's generation, it also contradicted the liberal social viewpoint that the populist-realist art of the nineteenth century had embodied. To borrow artistic elements created by the people so as to create an art that was unintelligible to them seemed an implicit mockery.[80]

As Taruskin explains, at the end of the century, national character had more to do with subject matter than with style, as well as with an appropriate attitude of sympathy towards that subject matter.[81] Paradoxically, while Stravinsky's approach to folk materials cost him his reputation among Russian composers,[82] it garnered him recognition as a quintessential "Russian" composer in France, where he was regarded as the musical descendant of Rimsky-Korsokov and Balakirev.[83] As we will see (in chapter 2), this recognition encouraged the popular perception in France that Russians, although in some ways Western and therefore civilized, remained nevertheless "primitive" in comparison to their Western neighbours.

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[79] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 349.

[80] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 355.

[81] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 497.

[82] See, for example, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 500-501, where Taruskin says that Stravinsky's critics claimed that he did not belong to the Russian national school, despite Rimsky-Korsakov's influence on him.

Taruskin's demonstrations of the ways in which Stravinsky used Russian folk material as the foundation of his style constitute the main thrust of the book. Taruskin identifies three qualities inherent to Stravinsky's musical style; these qualities can be understood as deriving from the stylistic assimilation of folk materials, and are ultimately the qualities that give Stravinsky's works (especially *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces*) their primitivist cachet. Long passages of arrested root motion and pulsing rhythm create the impression of *nepodvizhnost'*, or immobility; *uproshcheniye* implies simplification, and *drobnost'* refers to the "calculated formal disunity and disjunction," or the quality of being a "sum-of-parts," rather than an organic, developmental whole.[84] All three qualities are implicitly "inimical to the linear, harmony-driven temporality of Western classical music."[85] These qualities set Stravinsky apart as the prime example of modern primitivism in music.

The work of Mazo and Taruskin represents an interesting admixture of the approaches taken by art historians; it combines the formalist approach of Rubin and Varnedoe with the contextual approach to the original sources advocated by McEvilley and Clifford, among others. Both Mazo and Taruskin combine the best in the Western analytical tradition with an ethnomusicological bent, thus adding significantly to the findings obtained through strict analytical approaches to Stravinsky's music such as those of Allen Forte and Pieter van den Toorn.[86]

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[83] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, vol. 1, 988. At the time there was debate in Russia about whether the "real" art of Russia consisted of peasant antiquities or the Europeanized eighteenth-century styles revived and propagated by Diaghilev prior to 1905. See Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, vol. 1, 518-519.

[84] See Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, vol. 1, 383-85.

[85] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, vol. 2, 1501-02.

Furthermore, Taruskin in particular can not be accused of rendering invisible the more disquieting aspects of modernism (as Foster, Solomon-Godeau, Torgovnick, and other art historians have accused Rubin and Varnedoe); on the contrary, his obsession with Stravinsky's putative fascism, and his efforts to implicate Stravinsky's musical language in Turanianism, reveal that more was at stake than merely the emergence of a new musical language.

Although the work of Taruskin, Mazo, and Karlinsky is crucial to understanding the primitivist strain in modern music, it does not deal explicitly with primitivism as a topic unto itself. The only musicologist to explicitly investigate primitivism in modern culture at any length is Glenn Watkins, who, in his 1994 book *Pyramids at the Louvre*, dedicates six chapters to modern primitivism in France, Germany, Russia, and the United States.

Although Watkins's approach is not analytical, as is Mazo's and Taruskin's, it is nevertheless more closely aligned with the formalist approach of Rubin and Varnedoe than with the contextualist approaches of their opponents or the discourse theoretical approaches that followed the MOMA debate. Like Rubin and Varnedoe, Watkins, in many ways, participates in the perpetuation of modernist myths. He shies away from questions of cultural identity and crisis, and explicitly refuses to engage the issues which dominate the current art history literature. Watkins, again like Rubin and Varnedoe, perpetuates the myth of primitive societies living in some sort of "communion with the primordium,"[87] rather than contextualizing the West's need to construct such an Other against which it could juxtapose the perceived malaise and degeneracy of its own culture. Watkins also takes great pains to claim that artists and composers were consciously, if idealistically, trying to "sensitize their own society to values inherent in the Primitive."[88] While it is true that supposedly primitive values were upheld by many artists to be more worthwhile or authentic than Western values, those values perceived as primitive were created and valued by the artists themselves, rather than being necessarily inherent within the primitive. Furthermore, the primitive, more often than not, was portrayed as being barbarous and savage (Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* Picasso's *Demoiselles* and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre,* for example), and these supposedly primitive characteristics were not upheld as values which the artists wanted their societies to be sensitized to, but rather as reflections of their societies' moral and social degeneracy.

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[86] Forte, *The Harmonic Organization of the Rite*; van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky*.

Watkins makes his approach explicit from the beginning:

> . . . the perceptions recorded here were intended less as a lively, frontal assault on a recent species of musicological reductionism given to pruning away contextual detail than as an affectionate attempt to return to the musicological discourse many of the approaches that have been somewhat aggressively strained out in recent years . . . .[89]

Specifically, Watkins wants to create a narrative history, free from an excessive amount of critical, aesthetic, or formalistic theory.[90] Watkins's affection for his subject matter shines through on every page, and indeed makes for a refreshing alternative to some recent writing on similar subjects. Nevertheless, his defensiveness with regard to recent musicological and critical inquiry sometimes detracts from his arguments. For example, in chapter 6, "Josephine and Jonny," Watkins includes as an illustration a poster used to advertise *La Revue nègre*, a music-hall act performing at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris in 1926. The black performers portrayed in the poster are caricatured such that they clearly resemble baboons: from our late-twentieth-century North American perspective, we can not help but cringe. In response to this anticipated reaction, Watkins tries to dismiss the reader's immediate impression by explaining that caricature in this case can be traced to the tradition of parody and burlesque connected with minstrelsy, and that the painter, Paul Colin, did not intend his work to be racist, but rather was merely interested in ethnology and history.[91] While statements such as these may be true, Watkins's discussion of the matter would have been greatly enhanced had he addressed not only the intent of the artist, Paul Colin, but also the ways in which images such as these were received by the European public. In this way he would have made explicit some of the pervasive views (acknowledged implicitly by Watkins elsewhere in the book) held by Europeans regarding Africans and African-Americans. As Watkins illustrates in his discussion of Josephine Baker, African-Americans may have been subjected less overtly to racism in Paris than in New York; nevertheless, Africa, like the Orient, functioned as "them" to Europe's "us," representing Europe's own pre-history, a place and time lower down and further back on the evolutionary scale (ironically, African culture would come to be thought of by some in the 1920s as superior to European culture; see my chapter 4).

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[87] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 64.
[88] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 79.
[89] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 8.
[90] See Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 9.

Primitivism in modern culture must be seen within the context of the critical stance taken by the moderns to many of the cultural institutions and disciplines of the modern West, and, indeed, to modernism itself. In their search for and summoning of the primitive, modern artists confronted in various ways the notion of scientific progress, increasing urbanization, rationalism, and formalism; confronted, in sum, the very foundations of modern Western civilization.

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[91] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 142-43.

The time is ripe to view works such as *Le Sacre* in light of the Modernist's disillusionment with modernity itself. Yes, as Watkins clearly demonstrates, *Le Sacre* was received as "primitive," and its critical reception reveals the mutability of the primitivist identity in the pre-World War I period: *Le Sacre's* "barbaric" rhythms, while often understood to be relics of pagan Russia, were just as easily interpreted as African, Oriental, Caribbean, and North American Indian. But how did the work, in its music, dance and set design, critique or even transgress Western values? We would demean Stravinsky in no way by considering the highly cherished Western binarisms that were destabilized by the composer et al. in *Le Sacre*: individual/collectivity, nature/culture, us/them, to name a few. In several ways, Stravinsky and company implied that the eminently civilized Parisian audience was not as distant from the primitives portrayed on stage as they would like to have believed; indeed this suggestion was confirmed at the outbreak of World War I one year after the premiere of *Le Sacre*.

As Edward Said and other authors have argued, the Orient as such (as well as Africa, Oceania, and other non-Western cultures) is to some extent an invention of the West; the West used (and still uses) the East as a site of projective identification, a mirror with which to explore aspects of its own identity. Whether or not devaluation and plundering are involved is in some respects almost irrelevant; more important is the fact that cultural appropriation, with or without attendant exploitation, allows the West continually to confirm, challenge and create its own identity. Watkins often hints at this state of affairs, but never states it explicitly, again, I think, for fear of accusing composers themselves of cultural exploitation, devaluing and plundering (much as Foster accuses modern artists and the MOMA curators of these crimes).

Watkins's description of modern primitivism is reminiscent of Robert Goldwater's:

> [Primitivism] tends to imply a return to first principles through the discovery of some elemental and vitalizing energy observable in preindustrial societies, and particularly in peasant, tribal, and folk repertoires. . . . Characteristically, Primitivism tends to connote those tribal or folk expressions which carry the suggestion of the unaffected and the unstudied, the powerful and the essential, and which hint at a communion with the primordium typically observable in art developed outside the system of patronage in Western culture.[92]

Given that musicians and composers in the early modern period often associated and collaborated with artists and writers, it is not surprising that they would respond to the same impulses that led artists and writers to find inspiration in tribal artifacts. Lack of exposure to African and Oceanic music was no obstacle to composers such as Stravinsky, Milhaud, Bartók, Villa-Lobos, and others; modern composers often found their "primitives" in European popular and folk art and music, in the study of Scythian civilization and peasant design in Russia, and, later, in non-European popular and folk repertoires and African-American jazz. According to Watkins, all of these repertoires "carried connotations of first times, encouraged composers to perceive such repertoires as the earliest recoverable musical materials, and served the composer's need for an idealized model."[93] And indeed, it is the use of these materials to construct a modernist musical language that Watkins takes to be indicative of musical modern primitivism. In this way he follows the art historians, who see the primitive "influence" as coinciding with the search for an immediacy of expression inherent in the modernist language. This broad definition permits Watkins to encompass such seemingly diverse composers as Stravinsky, Milhaud, Antheil, and Villa-Lobos. His use of well-chosen quotations to reveal the popular acceptance by contemporary audiences of certain works as primitive confirms his choices.

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[92] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 63-64.

[93] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre,* 73.

Watkins focuses his investigations into musical modern primitivism around major works and people: *Le Sacre du printemps, La Création du monde, Jonny Spielt Auf,* Schoenberg, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, George Antheil, Jean Cocteau, Josephine Baker, and Nancy Cunard, among others. He also interpolates the lesser-known players and their contributions to modern primitivism: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and John Alden Carpenter, for example. He brings together some of the many cultural forces acting on the construction of the primitive not only in modern music but also in the minds of Western consumers, thus revealing the extreme mutability of the primitive in the Western mind. For example, in his discussion of *Le Sacre du printemps,* Watkins goes into great detail tracing the prominence of North American Indian culture in both Europe and Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, as portrayed in and disseminated by Buffalo Bill's Wild West tours and German author Karl May's classic fantasies of Native American life. He shows that the *Ballets Russes* may have been influenced by exposure to American Indians in their construction of a Russian, pagan primitive to which they had little access, and claims that the perceived compatibility of foreign tribal practices with national folk styles added to the impact of the *Ballets Russes* productions.[94] Indeed, critics did on occasion connect North American tribal practices with the choreographic style of *Le*

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[94] See Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 90-97.

Sacre. Pierre Lalo, for example, asserted that "The dances of Esquimaux in the natural state are exactly like those of the *Sacre*, which could be mistaken for them. . . ."[95]

The remaining five chapters that deal with primitivism are devoted primarily to the importance of jazz in the musical construction of the primitive in the post-World War I era. With well-chosen quotations, Watkins highlights the interplay between, on the one hand, early jazz and the primitivist works of the *Ballets Russes—Le Sacre, Les Noces*—and on the other hand these same works and the post-war jazz age. The art historian Maurice Brillant, for example, speculates on the influence of jazz on *Les Noces:* "But you see what the art of a Stravinsky, so original nevertheless—and especially his rhythms—owes to the influence of the jazz-band. I wonder whether the orchestra of *Noces* could have been born, such as we know it, without jazz."[96] André Coeuroy and André Schaeffner, by contrast, think that without Stravinsky, jazz would have had no success in Europe:

> It is possible . . . that without the previous arrival of Le Sacre in Europe jazz would have had no chance of being understood: the work of Stravinsky, born in full view of the discoveries of *l'art plastique nègre,* in the previously unutilized deployment of the percussion, in the violence of the brass, in the hard insistence of its rhythms, and finally by the brusque and successive reinforcements of the tutti, brought us to an appreciation of this hirsute form of music in a manner similar to that by which the Afro-Americans were persistently drawn to modern string instrument makers.[97]

Although today we may find it curious that Stravinsky's orchestration of *Les Noces* resulted from the influence of jazz, or that *Le Sacre* was in any way responsible for the popularity of jazz in Europe, the above observations reveal the ways in which modern primitivism transgressed and thereby ruptured the boundaries of "high" and "low" art. At a time when a "great divide" increasingly separated high modernism from popular and mass entertainment,[98] members of the avant-garde took great delight in frequenting venues of popular entertainment—the circus, fair, music-hall, café-concert, cabaret artistique.[99] Given that these same artists, writers, composers, and intellectuals would have been well aware of Stravinsky's compositions, it should not surprise us that they would draw stylistic connections across the high/low divide, especially since composers like Stravinsky and Milhaud were indeed interested in popular sources like jazz. Like the visual artists, composers often found in popular sources not only inspiration for, but also confirmation of, their modernist experimentations. The influences may not have been exerted in exactly the way Brillant, Coeuroy, and Schaeffner laid them out, but the cultural connections were certainly there.

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[95] Pierre Lalo, "Remarks on the Ballet *Le Sacre du printemps,*" trans. Mrs. Daniel Gregory Mason, *The New Music Review* 12 (October, 1913): 440-443, quoted in Truman C. Bullard, "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps,*" Diss., The University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1971, vol. 2, 243.

[96] Quoted in Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 133.

[97] André Coeuroy and André Schaeffner, *Le jazz* (Paris, 1926): 98-99, translated by and quoted in Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 133.

Furthermore, these observations confirm the shifting identity of the primitive in the Western mind. As Watkins demonstrates, American Indians inform the portrayals of pagan Russians, who in turn are linked to African Americans; this melange collectively "carr[ies] us back to prehistoric times. . . . An American revue, with its black bamboulas, today seems to reconnect the origins of the human race with the centuries of social convulsions, this art of the savages to the painting, to the music, to the choreography of the Occident."[100] George Antheil was perhaps the most vociferous in tracing the development of musical primitivism in the first quarter of the twentieth century:

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[98] See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[99] See Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[100] Jacques-Emile Blanche, *Propos de peintre: De Gauguin à la Revue nègre* (Paris, 1928) 225-226, translated by and quoted in Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 137.

> Since Wagner, music has had two gigantic blood transfusions; first the Slavic, and in recent times the Negroid. The Russian Five, leading gradually into young Debussy, and eventually into young Strawinsky, seemed to pass naturally into the present Negroidian epoch, especially after the great and world-shaking events of the *Sacre du Printemps* and *Noces* . . . . Wagner at the very height of his northern music culture succeeds to Strawinsky who, at the very height of his eastern Tartar culture, succeeds to the Congo. Clockwise the Viking passes on to the Slav, and again the Slav passes on to the African.[101]

Antheil sees both primitivist trends—Slavic and African-American—as inextricably linked to the historic changes of the period:

> The Negro music, like the Negro, has been living for a number of million years under terrible heat; Negro music has, in consequence, been baked as hard and as beautiful as a diamond; it was the only thinkable influence after the *Sacre* and *Noces* had exhausted once and for all every last drop of blood that the primitive Slavic music had in it. The first Negro jazz band arriving in Paris during the last year of the great war was as prophetic of the after-war period immediately to come as the Sacre was prophetic of this selfsame war, declared only a year after the stormy scenes at the Champs Elysees Theatre [*sic*]in 1913.[102]

The perceived relationship between Stravinsky and jazz, between Slavic primitivism and African American primitivism continues well into the 1930s, when the talents of both Earl Hines and Duke Ellington were seen by some critics to be of the same nature as those of Stravinsky.[103]

One of the primary issues facing the musicologist who wishes to investigate the

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[101] George Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral or A Method of Negro Music," *Negro: An Anthology,* ed. Nancy Cunard (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) 346.
[102] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 346.
[103] See Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 193.

Slavic/African (-American) axis of musical modern primitivism is the difference between the ways in which composers of different stylistic temperaments—say, Stravinsky and Milhaud—used "primitive" materials to develop a musical language. Watkins attributes the differences in compositional practice to historical context and changing cultural trends. More specifically, he places a work such as *La Création du monde* within the framework of post-war neoclassicism, in contrast to *Le Sacre.* In the latter, according to Watkins, folk elements are "submerged," whereas in the former, jazz elements sit "on the surface in the manner of the models for the New Classicism."[104] Although Watkins often makes observations such as these regarding stylistic and compositional matters, he rarely provides analyses to support these observations. If, in the models for neoclassicism, musical features such as jazz remain superficial, how do we account for Stravinsky's use of jazz elements (such as syncopation) in his neoclassical works? Watkins is primarily interested in stylistic genesis and basic musical influences (Stravinsky was influenced by Russian music, Milhaud by South American music and jazz); he does not attempt to analyze the compositional function of these influences (as do Mazo and Taruskin), or to situate the different styles within their broader cultural contexts: why, for example, did Milhaud attempt to reconcile jazz with neoclassicism? (See my chapter 4.)

Watkins's tome is extremely important in that it outlines the paths of modern primitivism in music; he also indicates some of the ways in which this material can be approached. However, his panoramic perspective does not allow him to use these modes of inquiry to plumb the depths in great detail. The strength of his study lies in its broad perspective, not in interpretations of individual works. Watkins makes no attempt to account theoretically for the diverse phenomena he discusses or for the ways in which music interacts with culture, political context, or various other elements of the modern environment.[105]

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[104] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 132.

Objectives and Rationale

This dissertation is informed by much of the work that has been done in art history, in addition to the work of Taruskin, Mazo, and Watkins. I have, however, attempted to establish a methodology which is specific to my own objectives. Although I do not aim to approach modern primitivism as a formalist (as do Taruskin and Mazo), I also am not interested in contextualizing the primitive materials which the moderns made use of (which has also been done for some works by Taruskin and Mazo). Rather, my primary interest lies in contextualizing the Western aspects of the works under question, determining how the Western sense of self shaped the constantly shifting form of the primitive, how primitive materials, as they were interpreted and reconstituted by Western artists, and especially as they were received by their Western audiences, reflected and in turn formed modern identity. I am interested not only in what modern artists and composers thought about primitive materials, but also what they thought or implied through their works and their writings about modernism and the nature of modern European society. My work is informed by discourse theory, yet I do not engage issues of colonialism or race except insofar as these issues inform the reception of modern primitive works in Paris. Racism and colonialism therefore make only brief appearances in chapter 4, where they are necessary to elucidate some aspects of the reception of jazz in Paris after the First World War.

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[105] Joseph Auner makes these same observations in his review of Watkins's book, published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49 (1996), p. 162

Thus, as World War I approached, the primitive was construed as savage, barbaric, communal, agrarian, pagan, the Other of Parisian high society, but at the same time a reflection of its unconscious impulses, fears, and desires (see chapter 2). After the war, with French society radically altered by its debt to America, as well as the increasing presence of mechanization and American industrial practices, the primitive became a highly mechanical construction, with which France would rebuild itself in the image of the future while simultaneously hailing a new classical era (see chapter 3). Finally, as the French tried to reestablish their identity within the new political order, the mechanical chaos and sexual/racial frenzy of jazz and African-American popular entertainment became assimilated into the classical French tradition (see chapter 4).

By thoroughly exploring the cultural contexts of these works, with the aid of primary sources such as reviews, various other works of historical significance, and the art historical literature which elucidates the broad artistic tendencies of the time, I situate the works within their cultural contexts, thereby revealing the shifting nature of both the primitive and its crucial function within French modern culture.

I have chosen to focus on stage works of the two ballet companies that were integral to the development of the avant-garde aesthetic in Paris during the teens and twenties: the *Ballets Russes* and the *Ballets Suédois*. While neither of these troupes was "born" in Paris, they were both created for export to the French capital, and they formed an integral part of the wider group of artists and intellectuals comprising the Parisian avant-garde. The three productions I discuss were received by Parisian critics as being evocative of both the Modern and the Primitive. Furthermore, these productions were often linked in the critical writings of the time: *Les Noces* was thought by many to be an aesthetic prolongation of *Le Sacre*, and critics connected *La Création du monde* to *Le Sacre.* The productions demanded intimate collaboration among the various creative personalities involved—composers, artists, designers, and choreographers. This is significant because the close collaboration brought composers into a creative relationship with visual artists, in whose history the role of primitivism has been more thoroughly explored. Finally, these works, especially the two Stravinsky works, occasioned voluminous commentary, thus attesting to the significance of their role in the avant-garde and in Parisian culture in general. Since one of the key characteristics of modern primitivism is the synthesis of style and subject matter, for the purposes of this dissertation I avoid "absolute" music, whose "subject matter" is elusive and difficult to determine at best. Nevertheless, I do think that the study of more "abstract" components of style can be extrapolated from musical characteristics initially associated with specific subject matter.[106]

In chapter 2, I examine the early seasons of the *Ballets Russes* and the reception of *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913). While this historical moment is one of the most analyzed and documented in music history, I have attempted nevertheless to provide a new perspective, by first of all situating the Parisian reception of the *Ballets Russes* within the broader picture of Franco-Russian political and cultural relations. Within this context, I examine the ways in which French critics used the *Ballets Russes*'s productions as a means of criticizing, questioning, or asserting French cultural values. I also attempt to explain the strong reaction of Parisians to the image and idea of the collectivity presented on stage in *Le Sacre*. Throughout the nineteenth century, the presence of urban masses had occasioned both fear and scrutiny, and informed cultural production. As Anselm Gerhard has noted, the affluent classes were well aware of the misery of the growing proletariat; as poverty came to be equated with criminal tendencies, the ever-present fear of crime masked a deeper fear that the social order, based as it was on injustice, would be overthrown.[107] These fears made themselves felt in the cultural productions of the day, for instance in *grand opéra,* where the chorus often played the role of a destructive mob[108], or in the novels of Émile Zola. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the urban masses and their role in society took on new and greater significance, as the study of irrational impulses and unconscious mental life increasingly informed social psychology, and as key political events highlighted the vulnerability of crowds to suggestion.[109] With the rise of fascism during the first half of the twentieth century, interest in and fear of crowd behaviour only intensified; today the often savage behaviour of crowds continues to inform our daily lives. At the premiere of *Le Sacre,* the sight of pagan tribes enacting a barbaric nature ritual on stage could only have exacerbated popular sentiment, which considered the masses to be a feature of modern life but also a throwback to primitive barbarism. Whereas Taruskin has written at length about the tendency of Stravinsky's score to encourage identification with the masses rather than with the victim, he does not explore the significance of this fact, and indeed the whole notion of prioritizing the collective over the individual, with regard to French modern culture. Some of the reviews of the pre-1913 *saisons russes* cited in this chapter have not previously been published.

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[106] See Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, vol. 2, 1443, where he illustrates how in Stravinsky's minor instrumental works of the Swiss years "we may see how features of his art that entered by way of its subject matter finally solidified into 'abstract' components of its style" (for instance in *Ragtime* and *Piano-Rag-Music*).

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[107] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 20.

[108] See Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera* 9.

[109] The classic of social psychology is Gustave Le Bon's 1895 study *The Crowd* (New York: Viking Press, 1960). Freud explored the full implications of Le Bon's claims in his own first monograph on the subject, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,* trans. James Strachey (New York: Bantam Books, 1960) in which he devoted a chapter to Le Bon's book; these works informed some of the writings of the Frankfurt School, which in turn have had a continuing influence on contemporary American social psychology. Robert K. Merton, in his introduction to Le Bon's book, comments on the roles of Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair in Le Bon's formulations. On Boulangism, see xx-xxv; on the Dreyfus Affair, see xxvi.

In chapter 3, I move on to the post-war period, where the excessive, savage image of the primitive presented in *Le Sacre* gives way to a primitive both mechanical and classical, sign of the machine age and the post-war call to order. An examination of the reception of the premiere of *Les Noces* prompts an investigation of the Purists, who, at the forefront of the avant-garde, saw the new machine age, brought to France by America, as a harbinger of a new classicism. After the war, many modernists had come to terms with modernity; no longer feeling the need to question modern civilization, on the contrary they extolled the virtues of the machine age and evoked the mechanistic aesthetic to serve the attainment of classical ideals: that *Les Noces* enacted and embodied—for its Parisian audience—this range of avant-garde preoccupations has not heretofore been explored. Many of the reviews of *Les Noces* cited in this chapter have not previously been published.

The primitive as mechanical and classical appears again in chapter 4, albeit in a completely new context: the post-war fascination with African-American popular entertainment, and specifically jazz, informs my inquiry into Milhaud's desire to use jazz as a classicizing element in *La Création du monde*. The ultimate form of modern primitivism, jazz had its roots both in deepest darkest Africa and in the mechanized urban jungles of America. As is well known, *le tout-Paris* was captivated by jazz; the avant-garde's relationship to the art form was somewhat more complicated. While at first used by the avant-garde, in conjunction with *l'art nègre*, as a revivifying force for French art, jazz came to be assimilated into the post-war classical aesthetic as a means of neutralizing its inherent threat, a threat lurking in both the unbridled primitivist passions perceived to be characteristic of jazz, and the seemingly unstoppable Americanization of which jazz was understood to be a main component in the post-war period. Most of the reviews of *La Création* cited in this chapter have not previously been published.

Through these three case studies, primitivism emerges as a sort of prism through which are refracted some of the most important issues of the early twentieth century: nationalism, the rise of mass society, mechanization, and the growing divide between high and popular culture (which was often bridged, as we shall see, by primitivism).

Chapter 2: The Russians in Paris

> . . . I don't believe I am exaggerating when I assure you that in the Russian Empire live the unhappiest men on Earth, unhappy because they suffer simultaneously the inconveniences of both barbarity and civilization.[1]

Introduction

The critical uproar following the premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913 has become part of musicological lore. Indeed, the legendary riot and subsequent flurry of activity in the daily and periodical press contribute to our present-day reception of the work as a landmark of modernity, a monolith of twentieth-century music.[2] Although some scholars claim that altogether too much emphasis has been placed on the reaction to the premiere of *Le Sacre*, its initial enactment and subsequent recountings in memoirs and textbooks continue to draw musicologists and cultural historians back to the (literal and figurative) scene of the crime.[3] As James Johnson so aptly articulates:

> Public expression, although freely chosen, is drawn from a finite number of behaviours and styles of discourse shaped by the culture. *Le Sacre du printemps* did not cause a riot on its premiere at the Théâtre du Champs Élysées in 1913; fighting in the theater, rather, was one of several possible responses expressing extreme divergence in taste. Why fighting in the aisles

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[1] Astolphe de Custine, *Lettres de Russie: La Russie en 1839* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 366. All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.

[2] In his dissertation "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*," 3 vols., The University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1971, Truman C. Bullard has collected and translated the 66 reviews, articles, and studies of *Le Sacre* which were published in Paris within the year 1913. Included also are selected London reviews from the same year as well as selected reviews of *Jeux* (music by Debussy, scenario and choreography by Nijinsky, decor and costumes by Bakst), which also premiered in 1913. In addition to providing useful background information (including, for example, the significance of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the 1913 premiere of Debussy's *Ballets Russes* commission, *Jeux*, to the reception of *Le Sacre)*, Bullard analyzes the reviews, summarizing the various critics' opinions with regard to the music, dance, and set design. See also *Igor Stravinsky, Le Sacre du printemps, Dossier de presse*, collected by François Lesure (Éditions Minkoff: Genève, 1980). This collection offers reviews and articles from several cities, including Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Berlin, Rome, Buenos Aires, and New York. Preponderance of place is given to reviews of and articles concerning the Paris premiere; however, reviews of both the 1920 version with choreography by Massine, and the concert version, are included.

[3] Richard Taruskin, for example, proclaims that "The first showing of *The Rite of Spring* is one of the most appallingly, nay absurdly, overdocumented events in the history of music." *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 1006.

> was an available behaviour in 1913—and, indeed, why the spectators that night opted for this rather than other expressions of mutual contempt—is a question better posed to politics and society than to the music of Stravinsky.[4]

In this chapter, I would like to begin to address this issue: what factors in Parisian cultural life prompted such a response from this incendiary spectacle imported from Russia? What significance did these scenes of pagan Russia hold for the Parisian *haut monde*, the intellectual, artistic, and aristocratic *fervents* who frequented the *Ballets Russes?*[5] What cultural, political, and societal issues were brought to bear in this meeting of East and West, primitive and super-civilized?

French Attitudes Towards Russia at the Fin-de-Siècle

Russia had long been viewed by the French as primitive, barbaric, violent, and uncivilized. Accounts penned by French travelers to Russia from as early as the sixteenth century describe Russians as barbaric, and Muscovy as "infinitely brutal."[6] Russians, according to these early Westerners, "wallow in filth, drunkenness, gluttony, sexual promiscuity, sodomy and bestiality, and superstition. They are routinely dishonest and suspicious to the point of paranoia."[7] The explorers record sensational accounts of torture and cruelty, in which they describe "the torments of the knout [a type of whip whose use could cause death], . . . the deflowering of a Ukrainian bride, and the humiliations awaiting her parents if her nightgown shows no blood the next morning."[8] Equally lurid are tales of wife beating to the point of broken bones, of body parts falling off due to frostbite, and of peasants driven to murder and cannibalism during a famine.

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[4] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 3-4.

[5] For information on the makeup of the *Ballets Russes's* Parisian audience and the ways in which Diaghilev cultivated that audience, see Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially chapter 10, "Paris: The Cultivated Audience" (273-299). According to Garafola, the mainstay of Diaghilev's Parisian audience was "an amalgam of financiers, bankers, and diplomats, members of the city's foreign and Franco-Jewish communities, and personalities from the worlds of fashion, music, entertainment, and the press"; members of the aristocracy also formed part of this community (279). By 1913, tourists and other foreign and native "pleasure-seekers" altered the demographic (see 297-298). See also dance historian Joan Acocella's "The Reception of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* by Artists and Intellectuals in Paris and London, 1909-1914," diss., Rutgers University, 1984. In chapter 5, "The Reception in Paris" Acocella gives a detailed description of the *fervents,* those members of the artistic and intellectual elite (including, among many others, Proust, Cocteau, Gide, Renoir, Chagall, and Modigliani), who were ardent admirers of the *Ballets Russes.* Many of these artists and writers incorporated images of and references to the *Ballets Russes* into their works of art (see 303-317).

[6] See Michel Mervaud and Jean-Claude Roberti, *Une infinie brutalité: L'image de la Russie dans la France des XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris: Institute d'Études Slaves, 1991).

These early impressions seem to have persisted well into the nineteenth century and beyond. In 1839, the Marquis de Custine, a well-known if dubious figure in Parisian literary society (Custine had been severely rejected by the aristocratic society in which he had been raised due to his homosexual orientation) spent two and a half months in Russia, where he visited St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kostroma, Nijni, and Tilsit.[9] On his return to France, he spent three years editing his four-volume travelogue, which became extremely popular in France and the rest of Europe, running through at least six legitimate French editions within a few years, and several pirated editions in Brussels; it was soon translated into German and English.[10] Banned in Russia, pirated copies nevertheless made their way to the fabled land, provoking a wide range of reactions. Custine's work had a huge impact on future accounts of Russia.[11] Despite its many flaws (the author was criticized for being unfamiliar with many aspects of Russian society), the book was and still is considered perceptive for its penetrating insight into the hypocrisy surrounding the notion of liberty in Russia and into certain aspects of the Slavic character.[12] Both the French historian Charles Corbet and the American diplomat and scholar George F. Kennan claim that Custine's travelogue helps us today to understand Soviet Russia. Kennan wrote in 1941 that "Even if we admit that [Custine's] *La Russie en 1839* was not a very good book about Russia in 1839, we are confronted with the disturbing fact that it was an excellent book, probably in fact the best of books, about the Russia of Joseph Stalin, and not a bad book about the Russia of Brezhnev and Kosygin."[13]

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[7] Thomas Barran, review of *Une infinie brutalité*, by Mervaud and Roberti, *Slavic and East European Journal* 38 (Spring 1994): 205-7.

[8] Barran, review of *Une infinie brutalité* 206-7.

[9] See George F. Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine and His Russia in 1839* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) for a summary of Custine's life, his travels in Russia, his travelogue, and reactions to it.

[10] Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine* vii.

[11] The French historian Charles Corbet states that "pour longtemps desormais, parmi ceux qui s'exprimeront publiquement sur la russie, rare seront ceux qui échapperont a l'influence de Custine, qu'ils citent son nom ou qu'ils le passent sous silence." *L'Opinion française face à l'inconnue russe (1799-1894)* (Paris: Didier, 1967) 225.

In his work Custine expressed great concern for Europe's future in light of the Russian move towards the West: "All I can say is that since I have been in Russia, the future of Europe looks black to me. . ."[14] Most significant for future accounts of Russian culture, and for the eventual reception of the *Ballets Russes* in Paris, was Custine's assessment of Russia's so-called civilization. For Custine, any appearance of civilization in Russia was merely superficial, cloaking as it did the persistent state of savagery, barbarity, and primitivism inherent in Russian culture and attributed by Custine to the tyranny and Eastern despotism which had reigned over Russia for centuries. This notion of civilized barbarity emerges repeatedly in Custine's descriptions: "In Russia, regardless of appearances, beneath everything lies violence and arbitrariness. . . . I don't believe I am exaggerating when I assure you that in the Russian Empire live the unhappiest men on Earth, unhappy because they suffer simultaneously the inconveniences of both barbarity and civilization."[15] Russia represented for Custine, as for the future audiences of the *Ballets Russes,* a meeting of East and West, a convergence which served, however, to reinforce the image of a savage people only recently touched by civilization:

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[12] See Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 222 and 223. M. J. Chaudes-Aigues, writing in *La Revue de Paris,* accused Custine of not understanding the Russian government, military, maritime resources, legislation, industry, commerce or literature. See Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 226. Corbet confirms that Custine had no profound knowledge of Russia: being an unititiated foreigner, he could judge the country only by its facade: "Il lui a de toute façon manqué une connaissance intérieure de la Russie, qu'il n'a jugée que sur une façade seule accessible à son regard d'étranger non initié" (227).

[13] Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine* 124.

[14] "Tous ce que je puis vous dire, c'est que depuis que je suis en Russie, je vois en noir l'avenir de l'Europe. . ." Custine, *Lettres de Russie* 221.

> Imagine our governments, . . . put at the service of a society still young and ferocious; Western administrative procedures with all their modern experience helping Eastern despotism; European discipline sustaining Asian tyranny; the police hiding barbarity in order to perpetuate it rather than extinguish it; brutality, disciplined cruelty, European military tactics, serving to fortify the politics of the Oriental courts: there you have the idea of a half-savage people, regimented without being civilized; and you understand the moral and social state of the Russian people.[16]

According to Custine, the Russians seemed to have missed out on an important stage of their development, leaping from primitivism to precocious corruption before having passed through a real civilizing phase, a phase of coming gradually to maturity (Custine compares this phase to adolescence): "Here you have men whose savage state has led them astray and whom civilization has passed over, and the terrible word of Voltaire or Diderot, forgotten in France, comes to mind: 'The Russians are rotten before having ripened.'"[17]

One of Custine's most fascinating insights, and also quite significant for the future reception of the *Ballets Russes* in Paris, was his observation of the striking absence of personality among the Russians, who are all reduced to machines, automatons: "This member [of society], functioning according to a will that is not within himself, has as much life as a gear in a clock; yet in Russia he is called a man! . . . The sight of these voluntary automatons scares me; there is something strange about an individual who has been reduced to a machine."[18] If an individual Russian does express his own, unique opinion, he runs the risk of being labeled a traitor. The complete disregard held by Russians for the rights to individual thought, freedom of expression, and personal justice must have horrified the French writer, whose tradition valued individuality, "la pensée," free speech, and justice above all.

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[15] "En Russie, quelle que soit l'apparence des choses, il y a au fond de tout la violence et l'arbitraire. . . . [J]e ne crois pas exagérer en vous assurant que l'empire de Russie est le pays de la terre où les hommes sont le plus malheureux, parce qu'ils y souffrent à la fois des inconvénients de la barbarie et de ceux de la civilisation." Custine, *Lettres de Russie* 366.

[16] "Figurez-vous l'habileté de nos gouvernements, . . . mise au service d'une société encore jeune et féroce; les rubriques des administrations de l'Occident aidant de toute l'expérience moderne le despotisme de l'Orient; la discipline européenne soutenant la tyrannie de l'Asie; la police appliquée à cacher la barbarie pour la perpétuer au lieu de l'étouffer; la brutalité, la cruauté disciplinées, la tactique des armées de l'Europe servant à fortifier la politique des cours de l'Orient: faites-vous l'idée d'un peuple à demi sauvage, qu'on a enrégimenté sans le civiliser; et vous comprendrez l'état moral et social du peuple russe." Custine, *Lettres de Russie* 177.

[17] " Voilà des hommes perdus pour l'état sauvage et manqués pour la civilisation, et le terrible mot de Voltaire ou de Diderot, oublié en France, me revient à l'esprit: 'Les Russes sont pourris avant que d'être mûrs.'" Custine, *Lettres de Russie* 110.

The impact of *La Russie en 1839* on French opinion was both profound and lasting; the work came out in a popular edition in 1854, at the beginning of the Crimean War; in 1930, in Russia, where the *Société des détenus et exilés politiques* published an abridged translation; and again, in France, in 1960, published by Henri Massis. Among those who fell under its influence was Gustave Doré, who, in his *History of Holy Russia* (1854), recounts in prose and over 500 illustrations a satiric history of the country, emphasizing repeatedly the aptitude for violence and barbarism attributed to the Russians since at least the sixteenth century. Published during the Crimean War, when French Russophobia was at a peak, Doré's tongue-in-cheek descriptions and illustrations of the major events of Russian history and the primary characteristics of Russian society reveal the extent to which the French continued to view the Russians as backward savages. Aside from Doré's portrayals of the constant bloodshed wrought by Russian leaders from the country's inception to the present day (images of dismembered bodies abound), his continual references to the knout reinforce the image of Russia as a land of barbaric cruelty (see, for example, the Rabelasian debate between Masters Bludgeonov and Shlagovitz on the virtues of the two- vs. the three-knotted knout, prefaced by Doré's facetious interpretation of the instrument of torture as a "great civilizing force . . . that wonderful invention upon which, as we shall see, Russian culture came to be based" [p. 81]).

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[18] " Ce membre, fonctionnant d'après une volonté qui n'est pas en lui, a autant de vie qu'un rouage d'horloge; pourtant on appelle cela l'homme, en Russie!... La vue de ces automates volontaires me fait peur; il y a quelque chose de surnaturel dans un individu réduit à l'état de pure machine." Custine, *Lettres de Russie* 70. This idea of individuals being subsumed in the machinery of the whole emerges in the reception of *Le Sacre*, and, even more so, in the reception of *Les Noces* (see chapter 3).

Fear of and scorn toward Russia dominated French opinion for much of the nineteenth century, continually aided and abetted by popular literature such as that of Custine and Doré, among many others, including, for example, Prosper Mérimée (*Une année en Russie* [1847], dedicated to Custine). Honoré de Balzac also traveled in Russia, and while he did not write a travelogue as did many of his confreres, he did describe the Slavic race as he understood it in *La Cousine Bette* in 1846: "The Slavic race has a childlike side, as do all primitively savage peoples . . . . Ukraine, Russia, the plains of the Danube, indeed the Slavic people, are a hyphen between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarity."[19]

Russian barbarity, Russia's oppression of Poland, and Czarist absolutism in opposition to Western democracy became the focus of anti-Russian sentiment in the nineteenth century.[20] The intensity of these sentiments varied over the course of the century, peaking during the Crimean War (1853-56), and subsiding somewhat before the Franco-

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[19] "Il y a chez les Slaves un côté enfant, comme chez tous les peuples primitivement sauvages . . . . L'Ukraine, la Russie, les plaines du Danube, le peuple slave enfin, c'est un trait d'union entre l'Europe et l'Asie, entre la civilisation et la barbarie." Honoré de Balzac, *La Cousine Bette* (Paris: Bordas, 1948) 177.

[20] Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 461. It seems that Russia wasn't always fond of France, either. Alexander III declared that "Les Français sont le peuple le plus infect du monde, on ne s'allie pas avec une pourriture" (quoted in Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 464).

Prussian War (1870-71). In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, French attitudes towards Russia underwent a complete volte-face, due in part to the introduction to the French public of the literature of Turgenev, followed by that of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and in part by the necessity of military alliance with Russia, which finally took place in 1893-94.

The role played by Russian authors in altering France's view of Russia at the end of the nineteenth century cannot be underestimated. France was one of the last European nations to acknowledge Russia as a cultural equal; no other foreign nation had as much difficulty obtaining France's esteem as Russia. This delayed acceptance of Russia by France is often attributed to the cultural inequality presumed to have existed between the countries.[21] The emergence of a distinguished body of Russian literature towards the end of the nineteenth century was paramount in overcoming this perceived discrepancy; Le Vicomte E.-M. de Vogüé's *Le roman russe* of 1886—a collection of articles on Russian literature that opened the doors of the *Académie Française* to Vogüé, a novelist and regular contributor to the *Revue des deux mondes*—underscored in France the importance of Russian literature.[22] The role of Russian authors extended from the cultural into the political realm: Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, whose works were warmly welcomed in French translation in the years preceding the alliance, helped to eliminate whatever traditional, that is scornful, attitudes remained among the French toward Russian culture, thus facilitating the alliance.[23]

The alliance itself played an important role in reversing French opinion at the end of the century. As Corbet has demonstrated, changes in French opinion towards Russia corresponded to changes in French society itself: with the growing imperialism of Bismarck, France and Russia looked to each other for mutual military support against the common German peril.[24] After 1871, France's military need of Russia helped to mollify anti-Russian sentiments. By 1900, the popularity of the Alliance and the emerging image of a new and better Russia was such that Henri Boucher, the Minister of Commerce, could use it as a premise for his argument in favour of France hosting the 1900 *Exposition Universelle*: he claimed that Russia "needed the opportunity of a great exposition to demonstrate how she had been transformed."[25]

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[21] Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 7.
[22] See Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 409 ff.
[23] Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 460.

In order to help pave the way for the alliance, the French government encouraged private investment in the Russian economy; the first Russian loan was raised in Paris in 1888.[26] Indeed, financiers and other members of the banking community were among those who championed the benefits of alliance with Russia. Even before the alliance—from the mid-1880s until the onset of World War I—Russia had become the site, in a manner of speaking, of French economic imperialism. Concurrent with French colonial expansion in North Africa and Indo-China towards the end of the nineteenth century, was a financial, economic, and industrial move to the East: France dedicated unprecedented amounts of capital to Russian industry from 1885 to 1914. Foreign capital—most of it coming from France and Belgium—accounted for roughly one-half of all new investment in Russian industry during this period.[27] French and Belgian investment was so significant that the Brussels correspondent of *This Week (Nedelia)*, the voice of the petit bourgeoisie, was dismayed to overhear a "respectable Belgian lady" ask in all seriousness, "All Russia is for sale, isn't it?"[28] From the late 1880s on, the Russian government distributed French translations of the annual state budget in Paris.[29] At the 1900 *Exposition Universelle,* France gave prominence to the Russian exhibits, whose primary goal was to reveal the nation's transformation while attracting French investment: samples of raw materials vied for place with boilers, textile machinery, and electrical equipment; a map of France made by Russian jewelers represented each French *département* with a different gem stone, with platinum wires representing railway lines connecting major cities (Paris was a ruby, Rouen a sapphire).[30] The "Galoshes Pavilion," which featured a mountain of 35,000 pairs of boots, attested to the technological advances taking place in Russia (even if these advances could only occur with the co-operation of the West, in this case the Russian-American Rubber Company).[31]

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[24] According to George Kennan, the alliance was "an arrangement conceived as a response to various events of the 1870s and 1880s: the Franco-Prussian War, the Russo-Turkish War, the domination of European diplomacy by Bismarck, the Austro-Prussian Alliance of 1879, the Triple Alliance, the frustrations experienced in Russia's Balkan policies. It was, if you will, a delayed response to all these situations." See *The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 247.

[25] Richard Mandell, *Paris 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) 49.

[26] R.D. Anderson, *France 1870-1914: Politics and Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) 148.

Westerners came to Russia not only with investment capital, but also with expertise, entrepreneurial drive, and the latest in technology. Critical of any deviation from Western industrial practices, and holding very low opinions of Russian industrial techniques, Westerners were rewarded for their role in Russian industry by high salaries, good fringe benefits, and career opportunities.[32] However economically deprived and industrially retarded Russia appeared to foreigners, the enormous potential of her untapped resources was universally recognized in the West.[33] Doing business with the Russians was culturally challenging, yet financially rewarding.

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[27] John P. McKay, *Pioneers for Profit: Foreign Entrepreneurship and Russian Industrialization 1885-1913* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) 380.
[28] McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 292.
[29] McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 78.
[30] Mandell, *Paris 1900* 79.
[31] Myroslava M. Mudrak and Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "Environments of Propaganda: Russian and Soviet Expositions and Pavilions in the West," *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West, 1910-1930* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1992) 67.
[32] McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 106.

French economic imperialism in Russia differed in one important aspect from French colonial expansionism in Africa and Asia. Because Russia was and remained an independent, sovereign nation, there was never an imbalance of power in the foreigners' favour; because the Russian government always enforced its own laws and regulations, the looting, exploitation, and coercion that did occur in European colonies in Africa and Asia did not occur in Russia, where profit was linked to business skills rather than extortion.[34] According to McKay, the consistent state of co-operation between Westerners and Russians accounts for the ultimate success of foreign entrepreneurship in Russia, which played such an important role in bringing about Russia's relatively successful industrialization. The partnership was such that by 1914, Russia was approaching entrepreneurial self-sufficiency. While still lacking techniques and capital in comparison with western Europe, Russian businessmen could recognize industrial opportunity, co-ordinate industrial production, engage foreign technicians, and acquire foreign capital when necessary.[35]

This is not to say, however, that age-old views of Russia did not persist in the face of this partnership. One Jules Nagelmackers, an important Belgian banker, approached the Russian finance minister, Count Witte (who was primarily responsible for designing Russian economic policy in the 1890s) in an effort to recoup postal fees due his company by the Russian government. Witte, after asking to see the contract, proceeded to tear it to pieces and throw it in the wastepaper basket with no explanation whatsoever. After his interview with the Count, Nagelmackers declared furiously: "I am leaving this very evening, . . . and I will never come back to this country of savages."[36] Longstanding notions of Russia as primitive, rural, and technologically backward were reinforced by the household items and crafts displayed at the Russian pavilion (dubbed locally "Le Trocadéro Kremlin") at the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, despite attempts by the Russian Imperial Commission to alter this perception through its publication for the *Exposition*, *La Russie à la fin du 19ème siècle,* whose aim was to make known "the present condition of the industries in which the Russian people are engaged to visitors of the Exposition and the foreign jurors."[37]

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[33] See McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 381-383 as well as 106: ". . . it seems certain that foreign engineers believed that indigenous Russian industrial techniques were poor and inadequate. Reports on existing Russian-owned coal mines were harsh, even contemptuous, as were those on Russian gold mines. Imputing technical backwardness to Ural steel producers was proverbial among foreigners, partly because it was proverbial among Russians themselves. Thus from the viewpoint of industrial technology, able foreigners were convinced that Russia lagged far behind the West with obsolete or inadequate practices. The existence of such a technological gap is a theme connecting reports handed decision makers."

[34] McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 385-6.

[35] McKay, *Pioneers for Profit* 368.

Despite the ever-present cultural differences, in the years preceding World War I, Russia and the West experienced a multi-faceted *rapprochement*. While some Russians saw the West as destroyers of their agrarian society, many welcomed the "harbingers of industrialization." M. Bulgakov, a leading spokesman of the Legal Marxists, proclaimed enthusiastically: "Every new factory, every new industrial concern, leads us forwards, increasing the number of people capable of intellectual Europeanization. . . . For Russia there is only one way of development, inevitable and undeniable: it is the way from East to West. It is high time!"[38] Similarly, in France, Russia's late, ongoing, and somewhat difficult transition to industrialization highlighted her backwardness, but also her progress (as it was perceived) towards "Europeanization," civilization, and the attainment of culture.

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[36] "Je m'en vais ce soir même, . . . et je ne reviendrai jamais dans ce pays de sauvages." Maurice Bompard, *Mon ambassade en Russie, 1903-1908* (Paris, 1937) xxxi.

[37] M.W. de Kovalevsky, *La Russie à la fin du 19ème siècle,* cited in Mudrak and Marquardt, "Environments of Propoganda" 67.

By the turn of the century, any lingering traces of Russophobia in France had been overshadowed by unbridled enthusiasm, even infatuation:

> We reserve the choice locations for Russian production in our exhibitions. We buy Russian products. We have unlimited confidence in Russia's finances. We adopt Russian styles and habits. We gorge ourselves into a state of intoxication on Russian literature, to the point where our angry critics talk of a disdain for our national literature. But the public doesn't listen to critics: it remains faithful to Russian novelists, despite the reservations of patented connoisseurs.[39]

Not only was Russia accepted by the French as having taken its proper place among the culturally advanced nations, its presence in French popular thought was imposing, as is attested to by Émile Delage, whose travels in Russia led him to publish his impressions in 1903. In the introduction to his book, he explains the significance of the Russian attraction:

> At the dawn of the twentieth century, Russia occupies a considerable place in the universal public mind.
>
> Its extraordinary expanse of territory, stretching without a break from the Baltic coast to the Sea of Japan; its formidable military power, a necessary consequence of the strict subjugation to its political law of its

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[38] Nemo [Bulgakov], *Novoe slovo* pt. 2 (June 1897): 57, cited in Richard Kindersley, *The First Russian Revisionists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) 218.

[39] "On réserve des emplacements de choix à la production russe dans nos expositions. On achète les produits russes. On fait à la Russie une confiance financière illimitée. On adopte des modes et des usages russes. Quant à la littérature, on se gave de ses productions jusqu'à l'intoxication, au point que la critique se fâche et parle d'un dédain de la littérature nationale. Mais le public n'écoute pas la critique: il reste fidèle aux romanciers russes, malgré les réserves des connaisseurs patentés." Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 461.

> peoples, all of whom meet in this unparalleled uniterritorial domain; its ambitious designs on central Asia, where it poses a direct threat to English power for the border of India, and to the interests of all other conquering powers in a disintegrating China; its immense natural riches; its enormous and expanding industrial energies; the effective and fearsome competitions in preparation for the completion of its economic organization, to its ardent activities to monopolize clients world-wide, all this justifies the attention of which she is everywhere the object.[40]

In the pre-World War I period, any lingering fear of Russia in France seemed to evaporate in the face of the common Germanic threat. Even Russia's march into central Asia was welcomed as an advance of civilization against barbarity.[41] Such a *renversement* of opinion seems nothing short of miraculous. However, according to Corbet, fin-de-siècle Russomania was merely a superficiality necessitated by the acceptance of political circumstances; underlying the French celebration of Russian culture, an unexpressed or at least partially veiled attitude—an *"opinion silencieuse"*—carried the traditional attitudes towards Russia forward into the twentieth century.[42] Anti-alliance political groups like the socialists, for example, continued to harbour traditional anti-Russia sentiments. As Corbet explains, there is more continuity in French opinion than appearances would have one believe; mobility in French opinion is a superficial phenomenon linked to urgent necessity.[43]

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[40] "La Russie tient dans l'esprit public universel, à l'aurore de ce vingtième siècle, une place considérable./Son extraordinaire étendue de territoire, sans solution de continuité depuis les côtes de la Baltique jusqu'à celles de la mer du Japon; sa puissance militaire formidable, conséquence nécessaire de l'assujetissement étroit à sa loi politique de tous les peuples qui se rencontrent sur ce domaine uniterritorial sans pareil; ses calculs ambitieux sur l'Asie centrale, où elle menace directement la puissance anglaise, par la frontière de l'Inde, et jusqu'aux intérêts de tous les autres peuples conquérants dans la Chine en désagrégation; ses immenses richesses naturelles; ses énormes énergies industrielles en train de se distendre; les concurrences effectives et redoutables qu'elle prépare, pour le temps prochain où elle aura parachevé son organisation économique, à l'activité des plus ardents à accaparer les clientèles mondiales, tout justifie bien cette attention dont elle est partout l'objet." Émile Delage, *Chez les Russes: Études et impressions de voyage mêlées,* 3rd edition (Paris: Dujarric et Cie., 1903) xv. Delage goes on to say that public opinion, regardless of its strength, is based on perceptions, not facts.

[41] Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 461.

[42] Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 462.

The popularity of Russian literature, the Franco-Russian alliance, and French economic imperialism heralded the meeting of East and West in the period preceding World War I. Unlike France's "real" colonies (i.e., in Africa and Asia), whose occupants seemed completely foreign, completely "other" to their French colonizers, Russia provided a strange but seductive mix: both savage and urbane, Russia fluctuated unnervingly between east and west, between pagan and Christian, agrarian and industrial, primitive and modern. By the time Diaghilev brought his *Ballets Russes* to France, the boundaries between east and west had become thoroughly blurred. Not only did *le tout-Paris* welcome the Russians, it adulated them, modeled its fashions and design on their aesthetic, and even celebrated them for bringing French dance home to France. An "*opinion silencieuse*" persisted, however, surfacing during the premiere of *Le Sacre*; for many audience members, the Russians' adaptation of European theatrical, musical, and choreographic languages merely cloaked the underlying, innate, primitivism of the artists and the culture that produced them.

Diaghilev's pre-*Ballets Russes* export ventures

Much has been written about impresario Sergei Diaghilev's entrepreneurial sense. Lynne Garafola, for example, states, "The success of the *Ballets Russes* rested on Diaghilev's intuitive sense of the marketplace, his feeling for its liberating possibilities, and, above all, his grasp of how it might be manipulated to serve the traditional ends of high art."[44] With Russomania at its peak, he could not have picked a better time to begin exporting Russian culture to France. Diaghilev's Parisian productions began in 1906 with the Exhibition of Russian Art at the *Salon d'Automne*. His aim, apart from propagating Russian art in the West, was to to present "a faithful image of Russian art from our time with its sincere attraction, its respectful admiration for the past and its ardent faith in the future."[45] Diaghilev knew that Russian art would have an important impact in the West: "Russian art will not only begin to play a role; it will also become, in actual fact and in the broadest meaning of the word, one of the principal leaders of our imminent movement of enlightenment."[46]

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[43] See Corbet, *L'Opinion française* 462: ". . . il y a donc dans l'opinion française plus de continuité que les apparences ne donnent à le croire. La mobilité de l'opinion française est un phénomène de surface. Dans le cas considéré, il s'agissait en grande partie d'un phénomène d'acceptation de nécessités impérieuses."

In 1907 Diaghilev continued his export enterprise with the *concerts historiques russes,* which formed part of the Lamoureux concert series and featured the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Glinka, Borodin, Liadov, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, and others.[47] Knowing that his Parisian audience thought that the "Mighty Five's" music, with its quotations of Russian folk songs and brash orchestral colour, best represented Russian exoticism, in his choice of programming Diaghilev favoured it over the works of Tchaikovsky.[48] In 1908, having decided that "Concerts by their very nature are, as spectacles, rather dull,"[49] Diaghilev and his entourage decided to bring Russian opera to Paris: the 1908 production of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* was an immense success.[50] Finally, in 1909, Diaghilev began integrating ballet into his operatic programmes: in addition to Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Maid of Pskov* and other opera excerpts, Diaghilev presented as part of his *saison russe* in Paris, *Le Festin,* a suite of dances on the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Glinka, and Glazunov, along with the *Polovtsian Dances, Cléopâtre, Les Sylphides,* and the first full-scale *ballet russe, Le Pavillon d'Armide.* The public's preference for ballet was clear, and Diaghilev, dependent as he was on public taste, thenceforth limited his Parisian repertoire primarily to ballets.[51]

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[44] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 200. Art historian John E. Bowlt refers to Diaghilev's "ability to win over a wealthy patron a few hours before a vital performance, . . . to display a remarkable tenacity and patience in the attainment of his goals. . . ." See *The Silver Age: Russian Art of the Early Twentieth Century and the "World of Art" Group*, Oriental Research Partners Studies in Russian Art History (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1979) 150.

[45] ". . . une fidèle image de la Russie artistique de nos jours avec son entraînement sincère, sa respectueuse admiration pour le passé et sa foi ardente dans l'avenir." Untitled preface by Diaghilev in the catalogue for the *Salon d'automne. Exposition de l'art russe* (Paris, 1906) 7; cited in Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 170. For more details on this exhibition, see Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 169-171.

[46] Sergei Diaghilev, "V zashchitu iskusstva," *Rus* no. 50, St. Petersburg (8 March 1906), translated by and quoted in Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 170.

[47] This was not the first time the Parisian public had come into contact with Russian music, of course. In 1889 Borodin's posthumous opera *Prince Igor* received its Paris premiere, and by 1903, the *Union des artistes Russes à Paris* was established to help promote events, concerts, and exhibitions. For a history of musical contact between France and Russia, see André Schaeffner's "Debussy et ses rapports avec la musique russe," in Pierre Souvtchinsky, ed., *La Musique russe* (Paris, 1953): 95-138 (Schaeffner covers the period from 1873-1902). See also Elaine Brody, "The Russians in Paris, 1889-1914," in *Paris, the Musical Kaleidoscope 1870-1925* (New York: George Braziller, 1987):190-212. Brody summarizes the activities of Russian musicians in Paris at the time.

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[48] Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* 526. In "Stravinsky and the Apaches," Jann Pasler discusses the Parisian avant-garde's interest in Russian music during the pre-war years. She writes, "When Dyagilev came to Paris in 1907 for the historic concerts of Russian music..., [the critic Calvocoressi] brought the impresario to his friends who tried to persuade him to produce *Boris Godunov* rather than a Tchaikovsky opera the following year," adding that, "Calvocoressi claims that he and Ravel had been studying this work since 1904 and felt it far superior to any of the Tchaikovsky operas which Dyagilev had in mind." Jann Pasler, "Stravinsky and the Apaches," *Musical Times* 123 (June 1982): 404.

[49] According to Serge Grigoriev, a dancer with the *Ballets Russes.* See Serge Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet 1909-1929,* trans. and ed. by Vera Bowen (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960) 12.

[50] According to Alexandre Benois, one of the first artists to work with Diaghilev, "When all Paris gathered for the première [of *Boris Godunov*], it was amazed by the beauty of the performance." Alexandre Benois, "The Origins of the Ballets Russes," in Boris Kochno, *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes,* trans. by Adrienne Foulke (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 5.

The *Ballets Russes* and the East

Throughout the early seasons, the *Ballets Russes* were firmly linked, in the French mind, with the East, and especially the Far East. Although Diaghilev himself hated seeing Russia regarded "as an exotic country offering to the curious regard of the West only a picturesque bazaar,"[52] he had, as dance historian Joan Acocella says, ". . . tickets to sell, and barbarism sold tickets."[53] Having won the praises of *le tout-Paris* with his orientalist and slavic exotica in 1909, Diaghilev turned repeatedly to the east for subject matter, creating "a repertory manufactured specifically for export."[54] Although orientalia had figured prominently in French culture throughout the nineteenth century, the *Ballets Russes* were to a large degree responsible for fostering both an Oriental image of Russia as well as the unprecedented orientalist fashion frenzy: the veritable craze for "oriental" fashions in the pre-World War I years dates from Diaghilev's first ballet performances.[55] Works such as *Cléopâtre* (1909), *Schéhérazade* (1910), *Le Dieu Bleu* (1912), and *Thamar* (1912) fueled the fin-de-siècle fascination in Paris with all things Oriental, while the ever-popular *Polovtsian Dances* (1909) enticed the audience with its "rousing display of Russian temperament."[56] The Russians provided cultural passage to the perceived opulence and splendour, but also the presumed barbarity, of the East. As one critic duly noted in *Figaro,* "The taste for oriental art came to Paris as a Russian import, through ballet, music and decoration. Russian artists have acted as intermediaries between the East and us, and they have given us a rather greater taste for oriental colour than a taste for their own art."[57] Recalling in 1913 the extent to which the orientalism of the *Ballets Russes* influenced fashionable Parisian society, the xenophobic critic Jean Perros quipped: "Thus it was for a year or two. Exoticism reigned as lord among us. Along with the Russians we wanted to get to know and admire the Persians. The only bearable party was one inspired by Teheran or Ispahan. The flashing colours of the Orient held us in their sway to the point that even fashions felt their effect. . . ."[58] Perros's conflation of Russia and Persia was not uncommon. In his important article on *Le Sacre du printemps* in *La*

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[51] Benois remembers how, "Looking to the future, Diaghilev saw himself, quite contrary to his own taste, forced to limit his Parisian repertoire to ballets, and having to relinquish the operas." "The Origins of the Ballets Russes" 16. Nevertheless, Diaghilev did continue to produce some opera, including Moussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* (1913), Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* (1914), and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* (1914). Although Diaghilev had received, prior to 1909, tremendous financial support from the Russian Imperial régime, which maintained autocratic control over the arts in Russia, by the time of his establishment of the *Ballets Russes* in 1909 the State perceived the threat of Diaghilev's foreign enterprises to its cultural monopoly. This perceived threat, in conjunction with various court and political intrigues, resulted in the withdrawal of any further Imperial subsidies to Diaghilev. Grigoriev recalls: "One day, in the middle of the season, we heard that Diaghilev had been dismissed 'without leave to appeal'. Everyone was amazed: to be dismissed 'without leave to appeal' meant that he could never again be officially employed. . . . [The people involved in the production of Delibes's *Sylvia,* which Diaghilev had been hired to produce for the 1909 season] disliked his artistic ideas and his modern outlook. They considered that he was undermining the academic traditions of the Imperial Theatres. Prince Volkonsky . . . asked Diaghilev to relinquish the production. Diaghilev . . . not only retired from the production of the ballet but also refused to continue editing the annual report on the theatre's activities. . . . Prince Volkonsky dismissed him 'without leave to appeal'" (11). Furthermore, Czar Nicholas II did not look favourably on Diaghilev: he "distrusted strong-willed and gifted personalities" (Benois, "The Origins of the Ballets Russes" 4). Thus Diaghilev was catapulted into the international marketplace, completely reliant on private and commercial patronage. The contacts he had made through his previous export ventures, and his own entrepreneurial sense, assured him of continued success in the West. (For further details on Diaghilev's relationship with the Imperial regime, see Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes,* 147-176.)

[52] "comme un pays exotique n'offrant aux regards curieux de l'Occident qu'un pittoresque de bazar," Robert Brussel, "Avant la féerie," *La Revue musicale* no. 110 (1 Dec. 1930): 38, translated by and quoted in Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*" 330-331.

[53] Acocella comments that, "For the group of Westernizing aesthetes who created the *Ballets Russes,* it was, to say the least, a mixed pleasure to find themselves loved for artless, precivilized vigor by a self-styled 'overcivilized' West," "The Reception o f Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*" 329.

[54] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* 552.

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[55] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 287. Much has been written about the resounding success of the *Ballets Russes* and the impact they had on French culture in the pre-war period. See, for example, Charles S. Mayer, "The Impact of the *Ballets Russes* on Design in the West, 1909-1914," in *The Avant-Garde Frontier: Russia Meets the West, 1910-1930,* eds. Gail Harrison Roman and Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992):14-44. Their prominence was such that Marcel Proust claimed that the *saisons russes* created as much excitement in Paris as had the Dreyfus affair. See *À la recherche du temps perdu,* ed. Pierre Clarac and André Ferré (Paris: NRF-Pléiade, 1954) vol. 2, 411. According to Grigoriev, Diaghilev "was talked of and written about everywhere; and no praise seemed too high for what he had achieved." See Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet* 52. For more information on the orientalist leanings of Parisian taste, see Peter Wollen, "Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/The Body," in *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 1-34.

[56] I am borrowing this phrase from Grigoriev, who remembered that *Sadko* (1911), like the *Polovtsian Dances,* satisfied the Parisians' desire for a "rousing display of Russian temperament." *The Diaghilev Ballet* 63.

[57] Delhi, "La Vie de Paris. Le Goût oriental," *Le Figaro* 4 June 1913: 1; translated by and quoted in Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 287.

[58] Jean Perros, "Après les Ballets Russes," *La Critique independante,* 8 (15 June 1913): 1.

nouvelle revue française, the eminent music critic Jacques Rivière observed, "Through the fault of Rimsky and Balakirev, and also of ballets like *Shéhérazade* and *Thamar,* we have been confusing Russia with Persia. Nonetheless I believe that there are some slight differences between these two countries. . . ."[59]

Diaghilev's emphasis on orientalia in the pre-war seasons reflected the financial and aesthetic constraints imposed on him by his position of dependence on his audience. Having lost the financial security previously afforded him by Imperialist Russia, Diaghilev's ballet company was totally reliant on private and commercial funding. As Garafola comments, "if removal of institutional constraints opens the field of artistic choices, the loss of financial security imposes its own set of imperatives."[60] Diaghilev was dependent on public taste, and the public clearly favoured the exotic over the traditionally European.[61] During the *saisons russes,* the audience, dressed in their Paul Poiret-designed orientalist fashions, en route to their parties "inspired by Teheran and Ispahan" had the opportunity to view its alter-ego on stage.[62] As the author and critic Paul Morand observed, the flamboyance and opulence of the stylized Orient presented by the *Ballets*

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[59] "Par la faute de Rimsky et de Balakirew, et aussi de ballets comme Schéhérazade et Thamar, nous avons fini par confondre la Russie avec la Perse. Je pense qu'il y a tout de même quelques petites différences entre ces deux pays. . ." *La nouvelle revue française* 7 (1913): 706; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 283, n. 5 (English), vol. 3, 250, n. 4 (French).

[60] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 287.

[61] While the Parisians loved the *Polovtsian Dances* (1909) and *Schéhérazade* (1910), *Les Sylphides, Carnaval,* and *Giselle* either met with lukewarm applause or were complete failures. On the relative popularity of the various works, see Alexandre Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet,* trans. Mary Britnieva (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977) 298; Grigoriev, *The Diaghilev Ballet* 51, 63, 90; Valerian Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet in Paris," *Dancing Times* no. 231 (December 1929): 263-274.

[62] Peter Wollen describes the "Thousand and Second Night" party thrown in 1911 by the renowned fashion designer Paul Poiret: "At the Thousand and Second Night fête Poiret himself was dressed as a sultan, lounging on cushions under a canopy, wearing a fur-edged caftan, a white silk turban, a green sash and jewelled velvet slippers. In one hand he held an ivory-handled whip and in the other a scimitar. Nearby was a huge golden cage in which his wife, Denise Poiret, his 'favourite,' was confined with her women attendants. When all the guests were assembled, dressed in costumes from tales of the Orient (*absolument de rigueur*), Poiret released the women. . . . The whole party revolved around this pantomime of slavery and liberation set in a phantasmagoric fabled East. . . . From then on, alongside the all-pervasive influence of Sergei Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, the Oriental look dominated the fashion world and the decorative arts." *Raiding the Icebox* 1-2.

Russes in their most popular productions mirrored "the boldness of the audience's dress, its immodesties, extravagant coiffures, depilated bodies, cosmetics."[63] Thus, the *Ballets Russes*, with Diaghilev at its head, implicated itself in a circle of influence: its productions dictated fashion and taste, but only in response to the dictates of the tastes of the audience. Accused in 1910 in the Russian press by Vladimir Telyakovsky, Director of the Imperial Theaters, of pandering to Parisian tastes, Diaghilev nevertheless "managed to transform a genre of limited possibilities into a commercially exploitable formula."[64]

The *Ballets Russes* and the Rejuvenation of French dance

The brilliance of the *Ballets Russes*, with its glittering orientalist and slavic exotica, both cast a long shadow on the pathetic state of French dance, and illuminated a way out. The status of ballet had reached an all-time low in France by the turn of the twentieth century. While still prominent at the *Opéra* as well as at the *Opéra-Comique*, its artistic merit was questionable. The works themselves, as well as the composers who wrote for them, lacked distinction; the ballerinas were debased, and were believed to epitomize moral impropriety and low social origins.[65] Finally, the subscribers were "sexual huntsman," who considered the Opéra and its ballerinas their "all-female preserve."[66] Arnold Bennett summarized the miserable state of affairs in 1910, claiming that "The Opéra is the splendid prey of the high officers of State. If such a one wants an evening's entertainment, or a mistress, the Opéra is there, at his disposition. The *foyer de la danse* is the most wonderful seraglio in the western world, and it is reserved to the Government and to subscribers."[67]

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[63] Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. May 1925," *Dial* (June 1925): 154; translated by and quoted in Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 287.

[64] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 287.

[65] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 273.

[66] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 274.

Small wonder, then, that the public and the critics welcomed the new vision proffered by the *Ballets Russes.* To the French public, "[i]t seemed impossible that a dead art could be resurrected and made to blossom so gorgeously."[68] Indeed, many critics came to see the Russian aesthetic, as embodied by the *Ballets Russes,* as a viable source for the rejuvenation of French culture; the *Ballets Russes* became the site for the fulfillment of French national creative aspirations. Taruskin has shown how the avant-garde, and specifically the writers for *La nouvelle revue française* (namely Jacques Rivière and Henri Ghéon) co-opted Stravinsky as a primary agent in its classicizing agenda.[69] Many other critics evoked the primitivism of the *Ballets Russes* as a means of criticizing the overly cerebral, worn-out state of French culture; the *Ballets Russes* became a site of both transcendence and renewal.

From the beginning, the *Ballets Russes* was perceived by many members of its French audience as primitive. In his *Reminiscences,* Alexandre Benois, the most Western of the World of Art crowd, and the set and costume designer for *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (1909), *Petrushka* (1911), *Le Rossignol* (1914), and the 1927 production of *Le Coq d'or*, described the noisy hotel inhabited by the troupe: "It is well known that Russian people, even when they are well-bred, have a certain freedom of manner and difficulty in controlling themselves; even for a simple question or a piece of ordinary news, they express themselves with excessive temperament and in so loud a voice that 'Europeans' just shrug their shoulders and murmur: '*Que voulez-vous, ce sont des sauvages!*'"[70] In the early seasons at least, this primitivism, as manifest on stage, would provide the French with a source of cultural salvation. Speaking of their first season, which featured *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, as well as the far more exotic and hence more popular *Cléopâtre* and *Polovtsian Dances*, Benois exclaimed:

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[67] Arnold Bennett, "Russian Imperial Ballet at the Opera," *Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People* (New York: George H. Doran, 1913) 67; cited in Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 274.
[68] Valerian Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet in Paris," 264.
[69] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 2, 989ff. Also see David Bancroft, "Stravinsky and the 'NRF' (1910-20)," *Music and Letters* 53 (1972): 274-83. Although the aesthetic orientation of the *NRF* was avant-garde, its political stance was conservative: these inclinations fused in the journal's goal to re-establish the French classical tradition in avant-garde artistic endeavour, thus presaging Cocteau's post-war *rappel à l'ordre*.

> It was Russian culture that triumphed in Paris, the whole essence of Russian art, its conviction, its freshness, its spontaneity. . . . Our primitive wildness, our simplicity revealed itself in Paris as something more refined, developed, and subtle than the French themselves could do. The success of the ballets is based on the fact that Russians are still capable of believing in their creations, that they still retain enough spontaneity to become absorbed, just as children are completely absorbed in their play, in the God-like play which is art. This secret has been lost on the Western stage, where everything is technique, everything is consciousness, everything is artificiality, whence have gradually disappeared the mysterious charm of self-oblivion, the great Dionysiac intoxication, the driving force of art.[71]

Benois's emphasis on immediacy of expression and the subjugation of technique and artificiality resonates strongly with the tenets of modern primitivist movements in art. However, the resentment he expressed "at the forthcoming victory of the 'barbarians,'" reveals his awareness that only a very sophisticated technique can create the illusion desired by the Parisian audience for whom the *Ballets Russes* were created. He recognized that "from the very first days of our work in Paris . . . the Russian Savages, the Scythians, had brought to the 'World Capital,' for judgment, the best of art that then existed in the world."[72] The juxtaposition of Russian and French culture, with the former embodying freshness, spontaneity, primitivism, wildness, and simplicity, as opposed to French refinement, subtlety, technique, and artificiality, became a recurrent theme in the French reception of the *Ballets Russes*. The Russian dancers were described repeatedly as instinctive, natural, animal-like, youthful, savage, corporeal, visceral, and simple, in opposition to the rational, civilized, complex, and sophisticated French, who, unlike the Russians, were endowed with history and tradition.

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[70] Benois, *Reminiscences* 286.

[71] Translated by and quoted in Prince Peter Lieven, *The Birth of the Ballets-Russes* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936) 99. This is a translation of Alexandre Benois, "Russkiye spektali v Parizhe," *Rech'* (25 July 1909): 2. It is also cited in Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 1, 549-50, and Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" 330.

[72] Benois, *Reminiscences,* 284-85.

Critics frequently mentioned the company's, and particularly Nijinsky's, animality, their reliance on instinct, their natural beauty: one critic discussed the "palpitating swarming of animal life,"[73] another "their lovely animality . . . . [E]verything Nijinsky gives back to us [has a] natural beauty, free and savage. His art, his great art is that he forgets to be a stupefying dancer, and that he wants to be simply the beautiful work of nature with all its reflexes, instincts, impulses, and virility."[74] Henri Ghéon, writing of *Schéhérazade* in *La nouvelle revue française* stated that the unleashing of instincts was the primary idea of the ballet.[75]

The critics' evocation of Russian animality, instinct, natural beauty—"*libre et sauvage*"—and virility is often posited as diametrically opposed to the disposition of French dancers, and sometimes, French (or more specifically, Parisian) society as a whole.

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[73] ". . . grouillement palpitant de vie animale. . ." No author, "Ballets Russes, 'Petrouchka', 'Schéhérazade,'" *Comoedia illustré* (1911): 614-617.

[74] "leur belle animalité . . . . [t]out ce qu[e Nijinsky] nous restitue de beauté naturelle, libre et sauvage. Son art, son grand art est lorsqu'il oublie d'être un danseur stupéfiant et qu'il veut être toute simplement la belle oeuvre de la nature avec tous ses reflexes, ses instincts, ses impulsions, sa virilité. . . ." Auguste Mangeot, "Les Ballets Russes," *Le Monde musical* (1911): 172.

[75] "Le mouvement de ballet entraine à sa suite une succession ininterrompue d'images parfaites, complètes dont aucun détail ne vient en avant, et qui toutes expriment, n'expriment que l'idée maîtresse du drame: dans Shéhérazade le déchaînement des instincts. . . ." Henri Ghéon, "Propos divers sur le Ballet russe," *La nouvelle revue française* 4 (1910): 208. Also writing in 1910, about the *Polovtsian Dances*, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer points to "les ambitions de l'instinct" which "ignorent toute frontière." "Variations sur les Ballets Russes," *La Revue de Paris* (July 1910): 334.

The opposition between the French and the Russian artistic and cultural mentalities, as evidenced in dance, became a crucial rhetorical device:

> We no longer know what dance is. We are no longer savage enough. We are too civilized, too ordered, too unobtrusive: we have lost the habit of expressing our feelings with our whole body. . . . We are too cerebral. Our body has, so to speak, been abandoned; we no longer inhabit it; it has become for us something poor and foreign, it has lost that thrilling sincerity that makes savages and wild beasts so beautiful.[76]

Bonnard (a novelist, poet, and essayist) was not alone in using the *Ballets Russes*'s primitivist productions as a means of criticizing French ballet and culture. The Count Adhéaume de Chevigné, for example, wrote in 1909 that during the Russian season the French "borrowed from the still recent civilization of this people . . . a flavour that our old routine and our so-called experience would be wrong to scorn."[77] Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, a writer and (later) museum curator, emphasized the sense of age and fatigue felt by many artists and thinkers to characterize Western society from the turn of the century through the pre-war years; the Russians, in their youthful, primitive, child-like vigour, served to accentuate the formulaic routine, the lack of curiosity, and the overcivilization believed to be characteristic of French culture at the time:

> Having remained barbaric in a Europe that is, if you will, so civilized it is worn out, the Russians are at the most productive, the most beautiful moment of their development. Very new, avid and as sincere as children, they give themselves entirely and feverishly invent themselves. They are

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[76] "Nous ne savons plus ce qu'est la danse. Nous ne sommes plus assez sauvages. Nous sommes des gens trop civilisés, trop policés, trop effacés: nous avons perdu l'habitude d'exprimer notre sentiment par tout notre corps. . . . Nous sommes tout en tête. Notre corps est pour ainsi dire abandonné; nous ne l'habitons plus; il nous devint quelque chose de pauvre et d'étranger, il perd cette sincerité frissonnante qui rend si beaux les sauvages et les bêtes fauves. . . ." Abel Bonnard, "Le Ballet Russe," *Le Figaro* (18 June 1910): 1.

[77] " emprunte à la civilisation encore récente de ce peuple . . . une saveur que notre vieille routine et notre soidisant expérience aurait tort de mépriser." "A propos de la 'Flute Enchantée' et de la 'Saison Russe,'" *Le Courrier musical* 12 (1 July 1909): 443; translated by and quoted in Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" 323.

> not shackled, like us, by formulas, and incredulity hasn't annoyed them; they know not occidental satiety. They haven't yet worn anything out.[78]

Next to Russia, Europe looked "aged, tired, hardly curious anymore."[79] According to the poet Fernand Gregh (an early friend of Marcel Proust), only the naive vitality of the Russians could renew the ancient, but overripe culture of the French:

> . . . these dances reveal such virgin powers of sorrow and joy, such vitality, such naivete, such faith, in a word, that we can even ask ourselves if the people who express themselves in them might possess the secret of that venerable ingenuity created by the Divine, and if they might be apt to give, one day, the new form which will be reclaimed by our older races, in our time already too ripe on the tree of destiny.[80]

Writers such as Bonnard, de Chevigné, Vaudoyer, and Gregh, among others, consistently construe the *Ballets Russes* as primitive, in order to criticize the current condition of French ballet and French culture in general, as well as to offer a way out. The aged French need only look to the innocent children of Russia to escape their cultural impasse. By reawakening the primitive wholeness lying dormant in the long-forgotten origins of Western culture, the *Ballets Russes* will renew French culture: "these pages of Borodin [i.e. the *Polovtsian Dances*] touch that which is the most primitive in us, they awake deep within us the unformed image of Asia, the suppressed memory of the great mother."[81]

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[78] "Restés barbares dans une Europe qui est, si l'on peut dire, civilisée jusqu'à la corde, les Russes sont au moment le plus fécond, le plus beau, de leur développement intérieur. Très neufs, avides et sincères comme des enfants, ils se donnent tout entiers et se cherchent avec fièvre. Ils ne sont pas entravés comme nous par les formules, et l'incredulité ne les a pas énervés; ils ignorent la satiété occidentale. Ils n'ont encore rien usé. . . ." Vaudoyer, "Variations sur les Ballets Russes" 351, 352.

[79] " . . . agée, fatiguée, plus guère curieuse." Vaudoyer, "Variations sur les Ballets Russes" 352.

[80] ". . . ces danses révèlent de telles puissances vierges de douleur et de joie, une telle vitalité, une telle naiveté, une telle foi, en un mot, qu'on peut se demander même si le peuple qui s'exprime en elles ne possède pas le secret de cette auguste ingenuité qui crée le Divin, et ne sera pas apte à lui donner, un jour, la forme nouvelle que vont réclamer nos races plus anciennes, en nos temps déjà trop mûrs sur l'arbre du destin." "Ce que disent les *Danses du Prince Igor,* " *S.I.M., Revue musical* 9 (July-Aug. 1913): 11, quoted in Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" 324.

Such was the admiration of the public and critics in the early *saisons russes* that many thought the Russians would single-handedly return French dance to the French. Although thoroughly debased in France, the ballet had been preserved, transfigured, and revived in Russia:

> The Russian ballet was not a purely national product; it was something that had been imported and had continued its existence in its new country through foreign talent. . . . [T]he fact that we had shown Europe something *European,* something that had been miraculously preserved in our country and there transfigured and revived, gave our productions a particular significance that contributed largely to their success.[82]

Benois, the grandson of an emigré to Russia from eighteenth-century Royalist France, was extremely proud of the *Ballets Russes*'s ability to "outFrench" the French. Benois had a passion for Versailles, for late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, an era he considered to epitomize the physical and spiritual wholeness and cohesion sought after by many Russian symbolists.[83] His belief that Versailles was a monument to the finest of ages informed his paintings, drawings, sets and costume designs, all of which were undertaken with an ethnographic accuracy and attention to historical detail.[84] Of his *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (libretto by Benois, after Théophile Gautier's *Omphale,* music by Nicholas Tcherepnine, choreography by Mikhail Fokine) which premiered in 1907 at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg and in 1909 at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris,

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[81] "ces quelque pages de Borodine . . . viennent toucher ce qu'il y a de plus primitif en nous, elles réveillent au fond de nous l'informe image de l'Asie, le souvenir étouffé de la grande mère." Jacques Rivière, "Les Scènes polovtsiennes du *Prince Igor,* aux Concerts Colonne," *La nouvelle revue française* 5 (1911): 172. Rivière's later description in the same article, "O musique brusque, haletante, ton ivresse est la stupeur de la mélancolie, tu es la consolation par la violence" (173), reveals not only the association of the *Ballets Russes* with violence, but the extent to which characteristics such violence and other primitivist, supposedly Russian, qualities were refreshing to French cultural critics.

[82] Benois, *Reminiscences* 375.

[83] See Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 182ff.

[84] Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 192-93.

Andrei Levinson wrote

> His *Pavillon d'Armide* is not the luxurious and capricious dream of the colorist, igniting the canvases of the decors with an incandescent play of colors; it is, first and foremost, the recreation of the past. The searching curiosity of the artist-researcher who delights in every typical or unusual detail. . . was able to create a very interesting and diverse picture. . . .[85]

A distinctly Russian rendition of eighteenth-century rococo France, in which a Vicomte falls asleep in front of a Gobelin tapestry of Armida, falls in love with her as she comes to life, and dies under her spell, *Le Pavillon,* according to Benois, "fulfilled its mission in Paris. The examination had been passed, the reputation made. The 'barbarians' had not only proved to be up to standard in their own 'barbaric' and wild demonstrations, but had even beaten the 'Athenians' themselves on their own ground."[86]

Nevertheless, it was the most primitive, not the most "French" productions that were most loudly applauded by the Parisians; and these were precisely the works that served as models for the renewal of French ballet. Stravinsky's early works for the *Ballets Russes* in particular—*l'Oiseau de feu, Petrushka,* and, for some critics, *Le Sacre*—were appropriated as manifestations of a quintessentially French aesthetic. The novelist, playwright, and critic Henri Ghéon, for example, one of Stravinsky's early supporters and co-founder of the *NRF,* wrote rapturously of *l'Oiseau de feu,* "A ballet of art, of enchantment, the dream of Mallarmé, our dream, realized—and not by us."[87] Ghéon saw, moreover, an implicit connection between the primitive art of the Russians and the classical aesthetic of the French: "This is without a doubt Russian, the Russians are the creators, but this is also so very French! What fantasy in the measure, what simple gravity, what taste!"[88] Jacques Rivière, also in the *NRF,* lauded the naturalness, spontaneity, and simplicity of the Russians, all qualities that would remove French art from the confusion, aimlessness and elaborateness characteristic of the turn of the century.[89]

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[85] Andrei Levinson, "Russkie khudozhniki-dekoratory" *Stolitsa i usadba* no. 57, Petrograd (1 May 1916): 12, translated by and quoted in Bowlt, *The Silver Age* 193.

[86] Benois, *Reminiscences* 292.

[87] "Ballet d'art, féerie d'art, le rêve de Mallarmé, notre rêve se réalise—et non par nous." Henri Ghéon, "Propos divers sur le Ballet russe," *La nouvelle revue française* 4 (1910): 199.

Several critics pointed to the most "primitive" qualities of Stravinsky's early *Ballets Russes* works—simplicity, robustness, clarity—as providing feasible alternatives to the dominating tendency in French music, namely, Impressionism. Roland-Manuel, then a young student composer writing for *Montjoie!,* an avant-garde arts magazine whose progressive aesthetic tendencies, right-wing politics, and extreme nationalist sentiments were more exaggerated than those of the *NRF*[90], evoked the simplicity and clarity, as well as the robustness and crudity he perceived to characterize *Le Sacre,* as a means of criticizing the vain rhetoric and artifice of Debussyiste Impressionism:

> The most striking thing at first, in spite of the apparent complexity of it, is the robust simplicity of this work which is in no way marred by rhetoric. Robust and clear: you might say this of a collection of recently unearthed and uncut jewels with their rather rough and heavily set brilliance. . . . [T]he ardent mystery of springtime. . . is not evoked by the mumblings

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[88] "Que cela est donc russe, que des Russes créèrent, mais que cela est donc aussi français! Quelle fantaisie dans la mesure, quelle simple gravité, quel goût!" Ghéon, "Propos divers" 211.

[89] Bancroft, "Stravinsky and the *NRF*" 277.

[90] See Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol. 2, 996 for a more detailed description of *Montjoie!* and Stravinsky's relationship to the magazine. It was in *Montjoie!* that Stravinsky's "Ce que j'ai voulu exprimer dans *Le Sacre du printemps,*" was published on the morning of the premiere. Authorship of the article was disavowed repeatedly by Stravinsky but is believed by Taruskin to be authentic. See *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* 996ff.

> that attenuate the artifices of a vain coquettishness.[91]

Jacques Rivière, too, posited *Le Sacre* as the first masterful alternative to French impressionism. Like Roland-Manuel, he appreciated the lack of artifice— "Bitter and harsh, if you will, but a work in which no gravy deadens the taste, no art of cooking either smooths or spices the edges. It is not a 'work of art' accompanied by all the usual fuss. . . . [I]ts ingredients remain raw. . . . [E]verything here is blunt, intact, clear, and rough. *Le Sacre du printemps* is the first masterpiece that we can stack up against those of impressionism."[92] By virtue of their primitivist qualities—simplicity, clarity, directness—the *Ballets Russes* fulfilled the highest aspirations of the French avant-garde.[93]

The chasm between the overrefinement and worn-out culture of life in the "West," and the simplicity and newness of life in some imagined "East" was carefully negotiated by Diaghilev during his *saisons russes à Paris.* Enticingly packaged in the by-then nostalgic symbolist language of the 1890s,[94] and drawing on "the supercivilized, *raffiné* European Russia the French knew nothing about,"[95] the Russians presented to the French rousing and provocative works of Slav and orientalist exotica. And many among the audience devoured them, projecting onto the *Ballets Russes* their dreams for a new French aesthetic.

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[91] "Ce qui frappe tout d'abord, c'est en dépit de l'apparente complication, la robuste simplicité d'une oeuvre que ne dépare aucune réthorique [*sic*]. Robuste et claire: Vous diriez d'un assemblage de joyaux puis et non taillés, à l'éclat un peu fruste, et lourdement sertis; nul chuchotement trompeur: l'ardent mystère du printemps . . . ne s'évoquent point par des balbutiements qu'atténuent les artifices d'une vaine coquetterie." Roland-Manuel, "*Le Sacre du printemps," Montjoie!, Organe de l'impérialisme français* 1 (June 14-29, 1914): 13; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 174 (English), vol. 3, 156-57 (French).

[92] "Aigre et dure, si vous voulez; mais dont aucun jus ne ternit l'éclat, dont aucune cuisine n'arrange ni ne salit les contours. Ce n'est pas une 'oeuvre d'art,' avec tous les petits tripotages habituels. . . L'oeuvre est entière et brute, les morceaux en restent tout crus; ils nous sont livrés, sans rien qui en prépare la digestion; tout ici est franche, intact, limpide et grossier. *Le Sacre du printemps* est le premier chef-d'oeuvre que nous puissions opposer à ceux de l'impressionnisme." Jacques Rivière, "*Le Sacre du printemps," La nouvelle revue française* 7 (1913): 706; translated by and quoted in Bullard "The First Performance," vol. 2, 269-70 (English), vol 3, 237 (French).

[93] This issue is also discussed by Taruskin, in *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* 989, and Bancroft, in "Stravinsky and the *NRF.*"

[94] See Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" and Jann Pasler, "Debussy, Stravinsky, and the Ballets Russes: The Emergence of a New Musical Logic," diss., University of Chicago, 1981, on the symbolist language of the pre-war *Ballets Russes.*

[95] Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol 1, 549-50.

Le Sacre du printemps and *"L'opinion silencieuse"*

By 1913, the year of the premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps*, some critics seemed to be growing weary of Russian-style primitivism and what its Parisian reception implied about French culture. Emile Vuillermoz, a composer and music critic whose enormous role in French cultural life spanned more than fifty years[96], for example, wrote at the beginning of the 1912 season: "Once again, the Barbarians of the North have come to demonstrate to us Latins the superiority of their instinct over our culture, and to humiliate the West with all the subtle splendour of oriental wisdom. We will docilely take our annual lesson in painting, decorative art, choreography, staging, and orchestration."[97] This more critical stance towards the *Ballets Russes* was exacerbated by the sense of burgeoning nationalism that preceded the First World War. Jean Perros, for example, was exceedingly bitter and sarcastic in his appraisal of the Russians, and determinedly upheld the supremacy of traditional French culture. In his review of *Le Sacre*, he succinctly summarized the ways in which the Russians had facilitated the criticism of French culture:

> Our antiquated civilization prevented us from viewing nature from its true aspect. Misled by centuries of bookish culture we lived in the realms of the artificial and the conventional. The laws, principles, habits and customs which we had learned through force of habit and heredity, had isolated us from the real and prevented all contact with the world as it

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[96] Vuillermoz was instrumental in setting up the *Société musicale indépendante* in 1909; in 1911 he became editor-in-chief of the *Revue musicale*; he contributed prolifically to *L'Illustration, L'Éclair* and *Comoedia,* often championing contemporary music.

[97] "Une fois de plus, les Barbares du Nord viennent démontrer aux Latins que nous sommes la supériorité de leur instinct sur notre culture et humilier l'Occident de tout de subtil éclat de la sagesse orientale. Nous allons prendre docilement notre leçon annuelle de peinture, d'art décoratif, de choréographie, de mise en scène et d'orchestration." Émile Vuillermoz, "Igor Strawinsky," *S.I.M.* 8 (15 May 1912): 15; cited in Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" 375.

> truly is. Every one of us saw as we were told to see and not for himself, and no one imagined that the world could be other than we thought it to be. . . .
>
> [The Russians] taught us youth, candor, and truth. They offered us their innocent soul, their young sensitivity, their ingenuous feelings. Their simplicity, their ardor, their devotion in the presence of nature—this is what explained their art and made them so admirable. Like children they were instinctive. They did not rationalize their life, they let it follow from the impulsion of their senses, and everything they did, everything they saw, everything they said, bore the overwhelming mark of genius.
>
> Primitivism! Primitivism!
>
> How we were to be redeemed by just being with them, to inspire ourselves by their methods! But was it possible, and could one hope to shake off in one lifetime the centuries of hateful and barbaric “civilization?”[98]

Perros abandons the sarcastic tone, and goes on blatantly to assert the supremacy of French culture over the Russian lack thereof:

> Too much impulse, no truth, no restraint, no taste—in a word—no civilization.
>
> . . . It is culture which makes for true superiority. If animals could paint and dance without a doubt they would compose ballets like the Russians! Tigers, leopards, lions, gazelles would have those supple and powerful movements which are the glory of Nijinsky and his partners.
>
> As for us, we know how to be men; and that is, in a sense, to be gods. . . . One studies the world, one grasps it through finesse, not through violence.

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[98] “Une trop vieille civilisation nous empêchait de voir la nature sous son véridique aspect. Egarés pour des siècles de culture livres que nous vivions dans l’artificiel et le convenu. Les lois, les principes, les modes, les procédés que nous avions appris, l’habituel et l’hérédité nous isolaient du réel et nous interdisaient tout contact avec le monde tel qu’il est en vérité. Chacun de nous voyait comme on lui disait de voir, et non par lui-même et personne n’imaginait que le monde peut être autrement que nous le pensions. . . [Les Russes] nous enseignaient la jeunesse, le candeur et la vérité. Ils nous offraient leur âme innocente, leur sensibilité jeune, leurs sentiments ingénues. Leur simplicité, leur ardeur, leur dévotion en face de la nature, voilà ce qui expliquait leur art et le rendait admirable. Ils étaient instinctifs comme des enfants. Ils ne raisonnaient pas leur vie, ils se laissaient aller à impulsion de leurs sens, et tout ce qu’ils faisaient, tout ce qu’ils voyaient, tout ce qu’ils disaient portait la marque éblouissante du génie. Primitivisme! Primitivisme! Combien devions-nous gagner à les fréquenter, à nous inspirer de leurs méthodes! Cela nous était-il encore possible et pouvions-nous espérer nous débarrasser, en une vie, de plusieurs siècles d’odieuse et barbare civilisation?” Jean Perros, “Après les Ballets Russes,” *La Critique independante* 8 (15 June 1913): 1; translated by and quoted in Bullard, “The First Performance,” vol. 2, 153-54 (English), vol 3, 136-37 (French).

> We must not think that it is solely our pride that makes us say that, and that we judge those whom we do not understand to be somewhat inferior to us. On the contrary, we very well grasp their good qualities, we see the nature of them and perceive their limits. A hereditary experience spanning several centuries guides our impressions and our feelings, forms our principles and our judgments. We cannot err. Our daily life offers us proof of this in all of its manifestations. What civilization surpasses ours? And how pleasant it is to live with our ideas, under our laws, among our monuments and our works of art! A wise reason hovers over all of this and it is that which clinches our superiority.[99]

Nationalist criticism was also aimed at the founder and manager of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Gabriel Astruc, for his tendency to hire foreign talent and programme non-French productions. One of the most important impresarios operating in Paris, Astruc was repeatedly accused of promoting German, Italian, and Russian art at the expense of French products. In 1911, several theatrical unions threatened to strike in protest against Astruc's engagement of Italian musicians for a *saison russe* at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt.[100] In addition, criticism was leveled at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées itself for the foreign, and specifically German, influence on its design and decor. Designed by "the father of modern French architecture," Auguste Perret, the Theatre was one of the first generation of buildings to be built with reinforced concrete[101]; this, and the lack of ornamentation (compared, for example, to Garnier's *Opéra*), among other architectural and design elements, contributed to the public's dislike of the Theatre and prompted claims that it was an example of "that style from a foreign provenance in which our most precious traditions in taste and national art could well be swallowed up. . . . [It has] the cold nudity of the ornamental peristyle . . . [and] an industrial rigidity."[102] Astruc's engagement of foreign artists and the foreign influence on the Theatre's design only served to reinforce the alterity of the *Ballets Russes* in the eyes of certain members of its audience.

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[99] "Trop d'impulsion, pas de vérité, pas de mésure, pas de goût, en un mot pas de civilisation./ Nous nous plaignions tout à l'heure de notre culture, voici qu'elle nous réapparaît admirable et précieuse. C'est la culture qui fait véritable supériorité. Si les animaux peignaient et dansaient, nul doute qu'ils ne composassent des ballets comparable à ceux des Russes. Les tigres, les léopards, les lions, les gazelles auraient ces mouvements souples et puissants que font la gloire de Nijinsky et de ses partenaires./ Nous, nous savons être des hommes, c'est à dire, en quelque sorte, des dieux. Il y a de l'intelligence et de l'exquise sensibilité dans notre art. C'est par leurs qualités rares et fines que les choses nous plaisent. Nous leur découvrons des vertus cachées, une beauté secrète, et c'est ce qui nous réjouit le mieux. On pénétre le monde, on le comprend par la finesse et non par le violence./ Ne croyons pas que notre seul orgueil nous fasse dire cela, et que nous jugions inférieurs ceux que nous ne comprenons pas. Nous saisissons, au contraire, très bien leurs qualités, et nous en voyons la nature et en aperçevons la fin. Une expérience héréditaire de plusieurs siècles guide nos impressions et nos sentiments, forme les principes de nos jugements. Nous ne pouvons pas nous tromper. Notre vie quotidienne témoigne par toutes ses manifestations. Quelle civilisation l'emporte sur la nôtre? Et comme il est agréable de vivre avec nos idées, sous nos lois, parmi nos monuments et nos oeuvres d'art. Une sage raison préside à tout cela et c'est elle qui assure notre supériorité." Jean Perros, "Après les Ballets Russes," *La Critique independante* 8 (15 June 1913): 1; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 156-57 (English), vol 3, 139-40 (French).

[100] Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 297-8. See also Gabriel Astruc, *Le Pavillon de fantômes* (Paris: Grasset, 1929).

While not all the reviews of *Le Sacre* were critical, many writers were troubled by the sudden and expansive leap from the picturesque fantasies of *l'Oiseau de feu* and *Petrushka* to the harsh modernist brutality of *Le Sacre.*[103] The collaborators' willingness to adapt the style (of the music, choreography, and set design) to the subject matter was what most irked many critics. Putative pagan rituals were not wholly represented and reinterpreted through Western eyes and ears, but rather were perceived to be merely presented on stage as they were believed to have been performed in "real life." Unlike *l'Oiseau* and *Petrushka*, the strange was not made familiar; rather, its strangeness was highlighted through the perceived lack of artistic mediation. This perceived unwillingness on the part of the authors to "translate" these scenes into a more familiar language became one of the central points of debate in the critical response to the work. The parameters of the debate make it obvious that this stylistic primitivism constituted the transgressive nature of the production.

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[101] J. M. Richards, ed., *Who's Who in Architecture* (New York, 1977) 252.

[102] "ce style de provenance étrangère où pourraient sombrer nos plus précieuses traditions de goût et d'art national. . . . [Il a] la nudité froide du péristyle . . . [et] la rigidité industrielle." Perrin, "Le Théâtre des Champs-Elysées: Une Révolution de L'Architecture," 8; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance" vol. 1, 72. Bullard notes that the flaunting of tradition perceived to be inherent in the stark simplicity of the Theatre's design influenced the audience's reception of *Le Sacre.* See vol. 1, 65-76.

[103] Calvocoressi, however, thought that *Le Sacre* completed the vision set out in *l'Oiseau de feu* and *Petrushka:* "l'harmonieux triade de ballets évoquant sous leurs aspects les plus saisissants, les plus caractéristiques, des périodes diverses de la vie légendaire ou réelle de la russie est désormais complète. . . je dirai même parfaite." M.D. Calvocoressi, "Critique musicale du *Sacre du printemps,*" *Comoedia illustré, supplément artistique* 5 (5 June 1913): N. pag.; quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol 3, 105.

Gustave de Pawlowski, for example, while highly critical of the behaviour of the audience (he begins his front page review with the sentence, "Où donc ont-été élevées tous ces salauds-là?") suggested that the French should not adopt foreign styles (which he actually sees as a lack of style) unless they are suitably "translated":

> . . . whatever our ethnographic interest in druidic monuments may amount to in France, we should hardly expect to adopt their decorative style in our own private lives; only the Munich-inspired art of interior decorating could make such a mistake. If one uses ugliness in art it should be used only as a point of comparison. . . . When a writer such as J.H. Rosay describes to us with gripping realism the life of primitive tribes, he does not write his novel in the style of that age, nor does he offer us a series of crude and crazy onomatopoeia: he writes in the beautiful French language.[104]

Critics reveal a sense of confusion regarding the "authenticity" of what was presented on stage. While definitely not European, and not even "translated" into a language the French could understand, the *spectacle* was nevertheless not the "real thing." The well-known musicologist and critic Louis Laloy, who would lecture on Chinese music at the Sorbonne after 1921, pointed out, somewhat ironically, that if Nijinsky (whose choreography he did not like) had been just a little bit more authentic, if he had only "observed those savages which he took for his models rather than leaf through ethnographic treatises," he would have "perceived in their most disorganized dances a kind of grace, and it is that grace that he should have tried to reproduce, *not by their means but through ours*" (emphasis added). Laloy goes on to elaborate:

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[104] "Quelle que soit, par exemple, en France, notre curiosité ethnographique pour les monuments druidiques, nous ne saurions décemment en adopter le style décoratif dans notre vie privée; l'art munichois de l'ameublement peut se conçevoir de telles erreurs. Si l'on utilise la laideur dans l'art, ce ne peut être que comme terme de comparaison. . . . Lorsqu'un littérateur comme J.-H. Rosay nous décrit avec une vérité saisissante la vie de peuplades primitives, il n'écrit point son roman dans la langue de l'époque, il ne nous offre pas une suite d'onomatopées bizarres et rudes: il écrit en belle langue française." Gustave de Pawlowski, "Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: *Le Sacre du printemps*, ballet en deux actes de M. Igor Stravinksy," *Comoedia* 7 (31 May 1913): 1; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol 2, 41 (English), vol. 3, 33 (French). The "Munich-inspired art of interior decorating" refers to the German influence on the construction and decoration of the *Théatre des Champs-Élysées.*

> The composer who imitates an exotic orchestration does not dispense with the instruments of his own country to do so [perhaps this is why Laloy had only praise for Stravinsky's music]; the dance, like the music of our countries has its own language which is appropriate to our values, our temperaments, our traditions, our ways of thinking and feeling. It is in this language that the artist should translate the impressions he receives from nature or from a foreign art; he will be led occasionally to enrich it with new manners of speech, but it is vain to suppose that one can replace it with another language which nobody understands—not even he who speaks it in parrot fashion as he articulates signs whose sense escapes him.[105]

According to Laloy, then, any artistic merit that may be found in "savage" art is nonetheless recognized only by its similarity to what is valued in the West (in this case, grace); it should be extracted, and then translated into and reproduced in the language of the West, thereby upholding, rather than questioning or undermining, the values, temperaments, traditions and ways of thinking and feeling common to the West.

Le Sacre was commonly understood to be a stylization of "the original barbarism." Many critics, however, took offense to the term "stylization," insisting that *Le Sacre* was not a stylization, but rather a crude representation or reenactment. Pierre Lalo, son of the composer Edouard Lalo and one of the most prominent figures in the musical life of Paris, explained:

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[105] "Le musicien qui imite un orchestre exotique ne renonce pas pour cela aux instruments nationaux; la danse comme la musique de nos pays a son langage, approprié à nos moeurs, à nos tempéraments, à nos traditions, à nos façons de penser et de sentir. C'est dans ce langage que l'artiste doit traduire les impressions qui lui viennent de la nature ou d'un art étranger; il sera conduit parfois à l'enrichir de locutions nouvelles; mais il est vain de prétendre le remplacer par un autre langage, que personne n'entend, pas même celui qui le parle à la façon des perroquets, articulant des signes dont le sens lui échappe." Louis Laloy, "La Musique," *La grande revue* (25 June 1913): 612-613; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 180 (English), vol. 3, 162 (French).

> Believe me, I can fully appreciate all the value to our so-called amateurs and real snobs of an esthetics which represents things further back by principle or system of esthetics than the farthest archaeology, and aspires to discover the principles of the primordial humanity and to "stylize," as they say in their jargon, the original barbarism.
>
> But it is impossible for me to agree with them. There is no "stylization" in the *Sacre du printemps*, —one may note in passing that people never spoke so much of "style" as now, in a time which is almost destitute of it. The dances of Esquimaux in the natural state are exactly like those of the *Sacre*, which could be mistaken for them, and neither of them has any style, for the simple reason that neither the crude nor the barbarous can have style.[106]

In other words, the ritual portrayed in *Le Sacre* was not wrapped in a Western package, but rather was seemingly left to speak for itself.

Many understood the primitivist stylization of *Le Sacre* to be an invocation of a time before art, or, more bluntly, an indication of artlessness. Jean Marnold, a writer and leading drama critic for the symbolist journal *L'Ermitage*, early enthusiastic supporter of Debussy, and friend and supporter of Stravinsky, wrote that

> *Le Sacre du printemps* takes us back to one of those legendary times not far from the mythological where mankind, still in the process of being born, communed with nature through rudimentary theogonies, acted out barbaric rites, and showed through them an instinct for symbolical ceremonial,

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[106] Pierre Lalo, "Remarks on the Ballet *Le Sacre du printemps*," trans. Mrs. Daniel Gregory Mason, *The New Music Review* 12 (October 1913): 440. Quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol 2, 243.

> where little by little the seeds of a primordial art took root.[107]

This is consonant with the popular view of the "primitive" as an earlier stage in the development of civilization; not only does *Le Sacre* represent the beginnings of civilization, but also the beginnings of one of the key aspects of civilization, art. Lalo echoes this belief. For him, however, *Le Sacre* is not an evocation of the beginnings of art and civilization, but rather the destruction of both by their very association with the primitive; in his view, "barbarism" and art are mutually exclusive:

> Since dancing began to be an art, all effort has been made to give to the human form, to the lines of the body in movement, the greatest possible appearance. . . .The dancing of the *Sacre du printemps*, is, on the contrary, the negation, the destruction of the art and of the style of the dance. It is in vain to hope to interest me in it under the pretext of the evocation of I know not what primitive savage. . . . And it is perfectly true that the ballet conceived by this young dancer is barbaric and purely barbarous: that is why I want none of it. I refuse to forget for a moment the conception of grace and organized beauty which civilized people have always called the dance, to admire distractedly this mass of confused movement and chaos of ugly savages. Between barbarism and art my choice is made.[108]

Lalo, like many critics, observed that the dancers are not dancing in the common sense of the term:

> The dancers, almost always squeezed into tight and compact groups stay jammed together, making only clumsy, short, crabbed, and constrained gestures, the motions of the crippled or the ataxic. . . . They never *dance*: all they do is jump, paw the ground, stamp, and shake convulsively in

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[107] "*Le Sacre du printemps* nous transporte en quelqu'une de ces époques légendaires, voisine encore du mythe, où l'humanité en genèse communiquait avec la nature à travers des théogonies rudimentaires, ébauchait des rites barbares et constituait d'instinct des cérémonies symboliques, où germaient peu à peu les semences primordiales de l'art." Jean Marnold, "Musique," *Mercure de France* (1 October 1913): 623; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 254 (English); vol. 3, 221 (French).

[108] Lalo, "Remarks. . .", quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance, vol. 2, 244.

> place. . . .[109]

Having revived French dance and theatre, the *Ballets Russes,* with *Le Sacre,* had inexplicably proceeded to destroy it.

Presented with what seemed to be an ethnographic display such as one would see at the *Trocadéro* or the *Exposition universelle*, rather than a work of art worthy of an audience that considered itself cultivated and sophisticated, the audience, having grown accustomed to seeing its alter-ego fed back to them by the *Ballets Russes,* was deeply insulted.[110] Except for the most avant-garde critics, no longer did the majority of French commentators see this seemingly unmitigated depiction of pagan Scythians as the fulfillment of French national aspirations. The symbiotic relationship between audience and stage had been disrupted. After decades of *rapprochement* between France and Russia, and just at the moment when Russia was asserting its own economic and industrial independence from the West, this "regression" to primitivism fostered feelings of betrayal: the sense of partnership and acceptance prevalent in the early years of the century were deeply challenged by this display of pre-Christian barbarism and seeming disavowal of traditional European values and influence. In 1909 the *répétition générale* that inaugurated the *saison russe* resembled "something like a Russian return to Paris, a new tightening of the alliance. Only this time the Russians have come not with ships and sailors to conquer our sympathy, but with singers, dancers, and decorators to conquer our admiration. . . . [T]his was a politico-artistic manifestation of the highest importance."[111] In 1913, however, the premiere of *Le Sacre* merely foreshadowed the ruptures and disruptions that were to come.

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[109] "Danseurs et danseuses, presque toujours serrés en groupes épais et compacts, demeurrent [sic] fassés sur eux-mêmes, ne faisant que des gestes maladroits, raccourcis, rétrécis, étriqués, des gestes d'infirmes et d'ataxiques. . . . Ils ne dansent jamais: ils ne font que tréssauter, trépigner, piétiner et trembloter convulsivement sur place. . . ." Pierre Lalo, "Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées," *Le Temps* (3 June 1913), 3; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 86 (English), vol 3, 73-74 (French).

[110] How interesting that the audience then proceeded to mimic the "savage" behaviour of the "pagan barbarians" on stage.

The Sacrifice of the Individual to the Collective

With *Le Sacre,* Diaghilev's company tapped into a deeply-rooted anxiety that held special significance in Paris in the pre-war years: the fear of the masses, of the collectivity's triumph over the individual. That the French should see this as inherent in this work of striking Russianness is not surprising: lack of individuality had been a defining feature of the Russian mentality in French public opinion since before the nineteenth century (one need only recall Custine's commentaries).

In *Defining Russia Musically* Richard Taruskin addresses the issue of the collectivity in *Le Sacre.*[112] Following Theodor Adorno,[113] Taruskin sees *Le Sacre*'s musical, choreographic, and narrative emphasis on the collective, at the expense of the individual and individual subjectivity, as the key to both the powerfully threatening nature of the work, and to what he sees as immanent fascist ideology. In Taruskin's view, the very processes which mark the work as innovative, modern, and primitive, are those that reflect the "coherent cluster of values and ideas" that was to wreak havoc throughout the twentieth century, values and ideas in which Stravinsky has been shown to have taken part to some extent.[114]

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[111] "Un Monsieur de l'orchestre," "La Soirée. La Saison russe au Châtelet," *Le Figaro,* 20 May 1909, 5, cited in Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 275.
[112] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 381-88.
[113] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music,* trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973) esp. 157-60.
[114] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 387.

According to Taruskin, the attenuation of functional harmonic relationships in *Le Sacre* implies a denial of psychology and a loss of individual subjectivity, as the musical means of portraying or evoking desire are absent.[115] The long passages of arrested root motion and pulsing rhythm create the impression of *nepodvizhnost'*, or immobility, a feature of the music that was often mentioned in the early Russian reviews of *Le Sacre*, and which also implies "the annihilation of the subject and the denial of psychology."[116] The early Russian reviewers also used the word *uproshcheniye,* or simplification, to describe *Le Sacre*. This simplification was perceived as one of the most disquieting and primitivist elements of the work, as Taruskin explains:

> *Le Sacre*, for all its novelty and its inscrutability and the dazzling virtuosity of its orchestral presentation, is not a complex score. Elaborate analytical procedures can make it look far more complicated than it is, even if that complexity is introduced only in order to be whittled down in turn to an orderly structural scheme. Why is this felt to be desirable? Because a rational complexity is far less disquieting than a mystifying simplicity. 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, kinesthetic response.[117]

Finally, the Russian critics commented on the "calculated formal disunity and disjunction," or the quality of being a "sum-of-parts," rather than an organic, developmental whole: *drobnost'*, in Russian. Implying an absence of recall and forecast, and therefore an absence of memory, *drobnost'* denotes a lack of humanism, of the human element.[118] For Taruskin, *nepodvizhnost', proshcheniye,* and *drobnost'* fit in with "that special congeries of ideas that *The Rite* embodies . . . —biologism, sacrifice of the individual to the community, absence of compassion, submission to compulsion, all within a context defined by Slavic or Russian national folklore."[119] Taruskin goes on to cite Ernest Gellner, a prominent contemporary social philosopher, who details the values and ideas that governed the policies of the Nazi regime: "nationalism, biologism, communalism, hierarchy, corporatism, acceptance of authority, territoriality, aggression, rejection of compassion."[120] For Taruskin, the parallel between the values inherent in *Le Sacre* and Gellner's list says it all.[121]

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[115] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 382.
[116] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 383. French critics also used the term immobility, but in reference to the choreographic style, not the music.
[117] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 385.

The French critics were both fascinated and repulsed by the loss of individual subjectivity foregrounded in the music, choreography, and scenography of *Le Sacre*; indeed, they often saw this trait as peculiarly Russian, again in opposition to Western values. For the French critics, the collaborative nature of the production itself was as indicative of the foreignness and primitiveness of Russian culture as were the tribal masses stomping and stamping on stage. The implicit connection between the authors and the primitives being portrayed could only serve to enhance the work's modernist stance; the authors were thought to be in touch creatively with the primordium inhabited by their distant forbears, witnesses to the birth of a new art.

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[118] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 383-4. Matei Calinescu discusses the modernist concept of "dehumanization," which seems akin to Stravinskyian depersonalization: "Today we can say that the antihumanistic urge of writers and artists during the first decades of the twentieth century was not only a 'reaction' (against romanticism or naturalism) but a strangely accurate prophecy. Distorting and often eliminating man's image from their work, disrupting his normal vision, dislocating his syntax, the cubists and the futurists were certainly among the first artists to have the consciousness that Man had become an obsolete concept, and that the rhetoric of humanism had to be discarded." See *Faces of Modernity: Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977) 125. See also José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art,* trans. Helene Weyl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[119] Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 387.

[120] Ernest Gellner, "Mind Games," *The New Republic* (22 November 1993): 38; cited in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* 387.

[121] Taruskin insists that Stravinsky was susceptible to Nazism. See *Defining Russia Musically* 385-86.

French aficionados of the *Ballets Russes* had commented on the Russian ability to work as a collective as early as 1910. Speaking of *L'Oiseau de feu,* Ghéon emphasized the sense of unity which he thought constituted the primary contribution of this ballet to French dance: "*L'Oiseau de feu,* a work of intimate collaboration between the choreographer, the musician, and the painter, offers us a marvelous equilibrium, exquisite beyond our wildest dreams, between sounds, movements, and forms."[122] Of *Petrushka,* he wrote of the effacement which lead him to declare, "I see only one author."[123] In the reception of *Le Sacre,* this ability to work as one was often emphasized, and was one of the qualities that defined the work's primitivist aesthetic. Jacques-Émile Blanche, a well-known painter and art critic, for example, suggested that the audience "get to know the collaborators whose personal contributions are almost impossible to distinguish; one might almost say they are anonymous"[124]; he later points to the "almost miraculous fusion of associated energies, of men whose individualities are hidden one behind the other, none passing in front of his neighbour to show off."[125] In 1929, the dance critic Valerian Svetlov stated that the novelty of the *Ballets Russes* was the collective nature of the *corps de ballet:*

> Until the appearance of the Russian Ballet, the public had been accustomed to seeing the ballerina as the centre of all action, and the dancing of the *corps de ballet* as a sort of "padding," contrived for the

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[122] "L'Oiseau de feu, oeuvre d'une collaboration intime entre le choréographe, le musicien et le peintre nous propose le prodige d'équilibre le plus exquis que nous ayons jamais rêvé entre les sons, les mouvements et les formes." *La nouvelle revue française* 4 (1910): 210.

[123] ". . . je ne vois plus qu'un seul auteur." *La nouvelle revue française* 4 (1910): 211, cited in Bancroft, "Stravinsky and the *NRF*" 275, and in Acocella, "The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" 321.

[124] "apprend à connaître des collaborateurs, presque impossibles à y distinguer dans leur contribution personnelle, on dirait anonyme." Jacques-Émile Blanche, "Un Bilan artistique de 1913," *La Revue de Paris* (1 December 1913): 517-534; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 314 (English), vol 3, (French).

[125] "c'est une fusion presque miraculeuse d'énergies associées, d'hommes qui s'effacent l'un derrière l'autre, nul ne passant jamais devant son voisin pour parader." Blanche, "Un Bilan artistique"; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 321 (English); vol 3, 288 (French).

> moments of the ballerina's rest, for grand closing marches and for the final transformation scenes. With "the Russians," however, a *corps de ballet* was a necessary part of the whole, a unit in itself, a sort of collective artist, imbued with the idea and the style of the production, living in it and collaborating.[126]

This ability to act collectively hearkens back to nineteenth-century accounts of the charming *âme slave* but also to the lack of personality, individuality, even agency of the Russians (as Custine emphasized in his memoirs); in the French reception of *Le Sacre,* collective authorship is interpreted as a racial characteristic. M. Casalonga, for example, points to the fact that Stravinsky, Roerich, and Nijinsky are all of the same race: "One senses, moreover, a close cooperation between the composer, the decorator and the creator of the dances, all three artists of the same race."[127] The ability to submerge one's identity in the collective is often juxtaposed to the failings of Western liberal individuality, particularly in the writings of right-wing critics such as Jacques Rivière. Writing for *La nouvelle revue française,* Rivière emphasizes the merits of the collective as opposed to the individual:

> Who is the author of *Le Sacre du printemps*? Who created it? Nijinsky, Stravinsky or Roerich? That preliminary question which we cannot evade is meaningful only to occidentals such as we. With us everything is individual; all of our fine and characteristic works always bear the mark of a single mind. This not the case with the Russians. Albeit they cannot communicate with us, among themselves they have an extraordinary ability to meld their souls, to feel and think the same thing collectively. Their race is still too young for all those thousands of little idiosyncrasies to have developed in each man, those delicate personal reticences, those thin but impenetrable defenses which guard the threshold of the cultivated mind. Their originality is not a fragile balance of heterogeneous feelings as it is in us. Theirs is more liberated, more hardy, less easily damaged. And having

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[126] Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet" 264.

[127] "On sent, d'ailleurs, une étroite collaboration entre le musicien, le décorateur et l'auteur des danses, tout trois artistes de même race." M. Casalonga, "Nijinsky et *Le Sacre du printemps," Comoedia illustré, supplément artistique* 5 (5 June 1913); translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 117 (English), vol 3,.103 (French).

> these qualities, an individual's creative spirit can engage itself and lose itself for a moment in others'.[128]

Blanche more explicitly evokes the collaborative nature of the production as a criticism of modern Western individuality. Like Rivière's, Blanche's commentary resonates with the right-wing, nationalist political agenda of writers like Maurice Barrès, who sought to formulate a notion of the French collective in opposition to liberal individualism[129] :

> A disturbing fact, then, for the French School—more and more wrapped up in its hopes and promises of a classic and national renascence—is the arrival of the Russians, who in one stroke of the magic wand have once again animated and brought life to a new theater and pointed out through a daring work, with all its bitter flavour and disconcerting power, the dangers of the regrettable individualism in which we are presently wandering. . . . *Le Sacre du printemps* remains as anonymous as a gothic cathedral; the signature of the creators is purposely kept hidden. This utterly original work is an unconscious protest against the particularism in which we have

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[128] "Qui est l'auteur du Sacre du printemps? Qui a fait ça? Nijinski, Stravinsky ou Roerich? Cette question préliminaire que nous ne pouvons pas éluder, pourtant n'a de sens que pour les Occidentaux que nous sommes. Chez nous, tout est individuel; une oeuvre forte et caractéristique porte toujours la marque d'un seul esprit. Il n'en pas de même chez les Russes. S'il leur est impossible de communiquer avec nous, lorsqu'ils sont entre eux, ils ont une extraordinaire faculté de mêler leurs âmes, de sentir et de penser la même chose à plusieurs. Leur race est trop jeune encore pour que se soient construites en chaque être ces milles petites différences, ces délicates réserves personnelles, ces légères mais infranchissables défenses qui abritent le seuil d'un esprit cultivé. L'originalité n'est pas en eux cette balance fragile de sentiments hétérogènes qu'elle est en nous. Elle a quelque chose de plus libre, de plus rude, de moins facile à endommager.C'est pourquoi elle peut s'engager et se perdre un instant dans les autres." Jacques Rivière, "*Le Sacre du printemps,* " *La nouvelle revue française* 7 (1913): 309; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 220-21 (English); vol. 3, 202-203 (French).

[129] See, for example, "La Terre et les Morts," *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme* (Paris, Plon, 1902), an excerpt of which is reproduced in *Le Nationalisme français 1871-1914,* ed. Raoul Girardet (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966): 185-189. Barrès locates the "moi" within larger social collectives, thus calling into question the existence of individuality: "Voilà une notion à laquelle pour ma part je me suis attaché passionnément. L'individu! Son intelligence, sa faculté de saisir les lois de l'univers! Il faut en rabattre. Nous ne sommes pas les maîtres des pensées qui naissent en nous. Elles ne viennent pas de notre intelligence; elles sont des façons de réagir où se traduisent de très anciennes dispositions physiologiques. . . . Il n'y a pas d'idées personnelles; les idées même les plus rares, les jugements même les plus abstraits, les sophismes de la métaphysique la plus infatuée sont des façons de sentir générales et se retrouvent chez tous les êtres de même organisme assiégés par les mêmes images. . . C'est tout un vertige où l'individu s'abîme pour se retrouver dans la famille, dans la race, dans la nation" (186-87). See also Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français,* cahiers de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques 182 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972).

> dried up.[130]

The collaborative nature of the authorship, however, did not impact on the critics as much as the images of the collective represented on the stage. Many critics merely mention the "dancing masses,"[131] the "massive crowds"[132] and the lack of solo performances as a matter of observation: "*Le Sacre du printemps* is only a diversion for ensembles wherein solo dances have practically no place. . . ."[133] The collective nature of the choreography provoked an almost xenophobic critic such as "La Dame au Masque," however, writing in the nationalist *La Critique indépendante*, to describe the Russian dancers as an uncivilized mass, in opposition to the refined individuality of members of French society:

> There was once a time when France dictated its laws to the universe, when it imposed upon others its civilized and refined values, causing these customs, the products of good taste and freedom, to be loved and adopted. The world thought with the brain of France. . . . Intelligent people spoke French when they came to pay their respects; the others, the masses, stayed home. . . .
>
> Now . . . we have been invaded this spring by a horde of

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[130] "Un fait inquiétant pour l'École française, de plus en plus engagée dans ses espoirs et ses promesses d'une renaissance classique et nationale, c'est l'arrivée des Russes, qui, d'un coup de baguette magique, ont une fois de plus animé, fait vivre un nouveau théâtre et prouvé par une oeuvre audacieuse, d'une saveur âpre, d'une puissance déconcertante, les dangers du fâcheux individualisme où nous nous égarons. . . . *Le Sacre du printemps* reste anonyme comme une église gothique; la signature des auteurs veut s'effacer. Cet ouvrage si original est une inconsciente protestation contre le particularisme dont nous sommes desséchés." Blanche, "Un Bilan artistique"; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," conflation of two passages, vol. 2, 312 and 336 (English), vol 3, 280 and 304 (French).

[131] ". . . des masses dansantes. . ." No author, "Ce qu'il faut faire à Paris," *L'Illustration* (June 1913): 546; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 70 (English), vol. 3, 60 (French).

[132] ". . . ces groupements massifs. . ." Jean Marnold, "Musique," *Mercure de France* (1 October 1913): 623; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 258 (English), vol 3, 225 (French).

[133] "*Le Sacre du printemps* n'est qu'un divertissement d'ensemble, où les pas en solo ne tiennent à peu près aucune place." Gaston Carraud, "Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées: *Le Sacre du printemps,*" *La Liberté* 58 (31 May 1913): 3; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 60 (English), vol. 3, 51 (French).

> mountebanks who have no talent, no personality, no art. . . .[134]

Maurice Touchard, writing in *La nouvelle revue,* also identified the masses on stage, as well as the lack of individual agency evidenced by them, as primitive and animalistic:

> This sheeplike throng, these fearful herds, these stampings and prostrations, these maniacal gestures of caged animal, these sudden flights of panic, and this puppet-like automatism, are indeed, I vouchsafe, the actions of an undeveloped humanity, since one can still find vestiges of them in our day in some uncivilized tribes.[135]

Louis Laloy, more sympathetic to the production and its modernist aesthetic, evoked the primitive collectivity in a less critical manner, finding vestiges of it, like Jacques Rivière's "grande mère," somewhere deep inside the Western soul:

> . . . [this is] music proposed to reflect the feelings not, as before, of one man among men, but of a tribe in which everyone loses his sense of individuality in a collective enthusiasm at the occasion of a feast where the blind power of nature is celebrated . . . and long after it is over we hear the

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[134] "Il fut un temps où la France dictait ses lois à l'univers, où elle imposait ses moeurs aimables et policées, faisait aimer et adoptés ses coutumes faites de bon goût et de laisser-aller. Le monde pensait avec le cerveau de la France. . . . Les gens intelligents parlaient le français et venaient nous montrer leur savoir, les autres, le grand nombre, restaient chez eux. . . . nous sommes envahis, le printemps venus, par une horde d'histrions sans talent, sans personalité, sans art. . . ." La Dame au Masque, "La grande saison française," *La Critique indépendente* 8 (15 June 1913): 2; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 144 (English), vol. 3, 127 (French).The mountebanks seemed to some to have also invaded the audience, whose demographic had evolved from 1909-1913. By the premiere of *Le Sacre,* the community of aristocratic connoisseurs who frequented the early seasons had been augmented by tourists and pleasure-seekers; Garafola characterizes the new segment of the audience as consumers rather than collectors (see *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 297-98). Even though some critics placed the blame for the riot on the shoulders of the newcomers, period documents support Garafola's claim that "the noisiest spectators—Madame Mühlfeld, Comtesse René de Pourtalès, the woman who called Ravel "a dirty Jew"—were French" (297). (Léon Vallas wrote in *La Revue française de musique*: "A good half of the so-called Parisian audience is made up of people who are as foreign to France as they are to art, and that more than a quarter of the remainder are socialites who are incapable of being moved by a daring artistic venture. We are constrained to believe that the audience which ordinarily frequented the *théâtres lyriques* and concerts was not heavily represented in the shocking racket that has been heard throughout all the performances of *Le Sacre du printemps.*" *"Le Sacre du printemps," La Revue française de musique* 14 [June-July]: 601; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 182 [English], vol 3, 164 [French]).

[135] "Cette cohue moutonnière, ces groupements peureux, ces piétinements et prosternations, ces gestes maniaques de bête en cage, ces paniques soudaines, cet automatisme guignolesque sont, je le veux bien, le propre d'une humanité mal dégrossie, puisqu'on en retrouve de nos jours des vestiges chez telle peuplade inculte." Maurice Touchard, "Ballets Russes et Français," *La nouvelle revue* 8 (1 July 1913): 116; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 195 (English), vol. 3, 175 (French).

> mysterious echoes which it still awakens, this time in the depths of our souls.[136]

Jacques Rivière, one of the most important and insightful of *Le Sacre*'s critics, clearly portrays the lack of individuation among the tribe members, the victim's total submission to the collective good, her complete acquiescence to her function in society:

> We witness the movements of man at a time in which he did not yet exist as an individual. These beings still hold themselves in a mass; they move by groups, by colonies, by layers; they are held in the horrid indifference of the society; they are devoted to the god which they formulate together and from whom they do not yet know how to distinguish themselves. Nothing of the individual is painted on their faces. Not for one instant during her dance does the Chosen Maiden betray the personal terror which must fill her soul. She accomplishes a rite, she is absorbed into a function of the society, and without giving one sign of comprehension or interpretation, she reacts to the powers and the shaking of a being more vast than she, of a monster full of ignorance and cravings, of cruelty and of darkness. . . .[137]

Modernism, Primitivism, and the Masses: Gustave Le Bon

In France, and particularly in Paris, the images of masses presented by the *Ballets Russes*, and the music's incitement to identify with the mass, rather than with the victim, obviously resonated strongly. For over the course of the nineteenth century, and on into the twentieth, the masses became an increasingly prominent part of the urban landscape, in political life, in the imaginations of popular authors such as Émile Zola, and in the emerging field of mass psychology.

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[136] "la musique assumait de répondre aux sentiments non plus d'un homme entre les hommes, mais d'une tribu où chacun perd la conscience de soi dans l'enthousiasme collectif, à l'occasion d'une fête où la puissance aveugle de la nature est célébrée . . . et longtemps après qu'elle a cessé on écoute encore les échos mystérieux qu'elle éveille, cette fois au profond de notre âme." Louis Laloy, "La Musique," *La grande revue* (25 June 1913): 612-13, quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 177 (English); vol 3, 160 (French).

[137] "Nous assistons aux mouvements de l'homme au temps où il n'existait pas encore comme individu. Les êtres se tiennent encore; ils vont par groupes, par colonies, par bancs; ils sont pris dans l'affreuse indifférence de la société; ils sont dévoués au dieu qu'ils forment ensemble et dont ils n'ont pas su encore se démêler. Rien d'individuel ne se peint sur leur visage. A aucun instant de sa danse, la jeune fille élue ne trahit la terreur personnelle dont son âme devrait être pleine. Elle accomplit un rite, elle est absorbée par une fonction sociale et, sans donner aucun signe de compréhension ni d'interprétation, elle s'agite suivant les volontés et les secousses d'un être plus vaste qu'elle, d'un monstre plein d'ignorance et d'appétits, de cruauté et de ténèbres. . ." Jacques Rivière, "*Le Sacre du printemps,*" *La nouvelle revue française* 7 (1913): 706; translated by and quoted in Bullard, "The First Performance," vol. 2, 303 (English), vol. 3, 271-72 (French).

Serge Moscovici, in his book *The Age of the Crowd*,[138] attributes the rise of the masses to a series of crises which took place over the course of the nineteenth century, crises which resulted in radical societal upheavals:

> The first was the collapse of the pre-capitalist *ancien régime* under the repeated onslaught of capital and revolutions. With it collapsed too the traditional religious and political framework and spiritual institutions. The stable world of families, neighbourhood groups and the countryside was breached and split. Men were uprooted from their land and their church spires and siphoned off in huge numbers to the unstable world of growing and developing towns. The move from tradition to modernism threw onto the market a multitude of anonymous individuals, social atoms with no links between them.[139]

The growth of urban masses that resulted from the crises described by Moscovici became one of the primary features of the modern geographical and cultural landscape; the psychology and behaviour of the masses received unprecedented attention in politics, literature, and theoretical psychology. One of the earliest and the most influential theoretician of the masses was Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). Le Bon claimed that the masses held the political key to France's future and the modern world in general.[140] He sought a cure for the disorders brought about by the masses, and believed that the cure was to be found not in history or economics, but rather in psychology.[141] Le Bon exposed what he called the "crowd soul," which consisted of basic impulses and strong beliefs, and which was not governed by experience or reason; the crowd responded to the suggestions of the leader, who, having taken control of the group soul, could encourage it to do things an individual would or could not.[142] According to Le Bon, if France's parliamentary democracy acknowledged the findings of psychology, unpleasant though they may be, its weaknesses could be eradicated. If the ruling classes understood the laws that govern crowds, a return to the long-compromised status quo could easily be achieved.[143]

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[138] Serge Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd,* trans. J.C. Whitehouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981); originally published as *L'âge des foules,* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

[139] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 20-21.

[140] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 53.

[141] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 53-4.

These ideas, many of which were put forth in Le Bon's enormously widely read book *La Psychologie des Foules,* published in 1895, brought to his doorstep some of the most prominent and important men of his time, including the psychologists Ribot and Tarde, the philosopher Bergson, the mathematician Henri Poincaré, the poet Paul Valéry, the princesses Marthe Bibesco and Marie Bonaparte, both of whom played a large part in spreading his ideas, and the politicians Raymond Poincaré, Briand, Barthou, and Roosevelt.[144] His admirers were convinced of the importance of his view of human nature, although it was a difficult one to accept. His ideas, already well-known at the turn of the century, were at the height of their influence in the 1920s, when "the appeal of the new discipline [i.e. mass psychology] was strongest for the democratic elites who saw it as a conceptual device that confirmed their deepest fears about the masses, but also gave them a body of rules for the manipulation and control of their violent potential."[145] His work was read throughout Europe and Great Britain, enjoying a particular vogue in Germany and Austria, where its basic tenets were taken up and expounded on by Freud in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), and where it was attributed great importance by the Frankfurt School. Le Bon's work continues to inform present-day North American sociology textbooks.[146]

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[142] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 54.
[143] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 54.
[144] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 54.
[145] R.A. Nye, *The Origin of Crowd Psychology* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1975) 169.

Le Bon's work on mass psychology was revolutionary in several respects. Unlike his predecessors, he recognized that modern-day crowds were not merely "criminal mobs," but rather, were made up of everyone living in modern society[147] :

> the mass is not synonymous with the plebs, the populace, the poor, the ignorant, the proletariat, the *hoi polloi* as opposed to the elite or the aristocracy. The crowd is everyone, you, me, all of us. All men, when they come together, become a mass, and there are no distinctions in this matter. . . . Masses made up of aristocrats or philosophers, of readers of *Le Monde* or the *Nouvel observateur,* that is, non-conformists very aware of their own individuality, would react just the same as any other.[148]

For Le Bon, any possible interpretation of modern society has at its centre the masses.[149] Although thinkers have recognized the difference between individual behaviour and crowd behaviour since at least the time of the Roman Empire,[150] Le Bon was struck by the preponderance of the masses, their sheer number, and the prevalent role they played in modern society. Indeed, he linked their rise to the very factors that define modern society, specifically, the destruction of the religious, political, and social beliefs on which Western civilization is founded, and the creation of the new conditions of existence and thought that are the result of modern scientific and industrial progress.[151]

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[146] See Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 55-6.

[147] Gabriel Tarde, for example, wrote about group criminality in *L'Opinion et la foule* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1901).

[148] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 75. For an outline of Le Bon's system of crowd psychology, see 90-91.

[149] S. Giner, *Mass Society* (London: Martin Robinson, 1976) 58.

[150] A Roman proverb states, "The senators are all good men, the Roman Senate is an evil beast." See Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 14 for this and other examples of observations of differences beteen individuals and crowds.

[151] Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (New York: Viking Press, 1960) xiv.

The masses, then, were a modern phenomenon. Yet at the same time, they were marked by their primitivism. Fear of the masses, as Andreas Huyssen explains in *After the Great Divide*, was "always also a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries."[152] As we have seen, this group of "fears" forms the crux of primitivism in modern thought: the primitive was thought of as feminine in opposition to masculine culture, the primitive lived in and formed part of nature, it functioned according to unconscious instincts and drives, it was overtly sexual and sexually liberated, and it lived collectively, in communal tribes.[153] Just as slippage between woman, nature, and the primitive is a feature of early modernist painting, so too slippage between the masses and the primitive attains its modernist status in *Le Sacre*. In the ballet, and more specifically in the ballet's reception, the masses serve as a recipient of projections of modern society's fears (of the masses, of nature out of control, of the loss of identity) onto the primitive other as a means of exorcism.

Much of Le Bon's work was based on several books on crowds published in Italy, many of which emphasized the fear caused by a perceived return to barbarism.[154] Indeed Le Bon's descriptions of the masses reveal the extent to which they were believed to be primitive:

> So far as the majority of their acts are considered, crowds display a singularly inferior mentality; yet there are other acts in which they appear

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[152] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) 52.

[153] These ideas are expounded on in the art-historical literature. See, for example, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989): 118-29; Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (1985): 45-70 and "'Primitive' Scenes," *Critical Inquiry* (Autumn 1993): 69-102. See also Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London, 1988).

[154] Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd* 52.

> to be guided by those mysterious forces which the ancients denominated destiny, nature, or providence. . . . [155]

In addition to being, like the primitive, of "inferior mentality," and "guided by nature," the masses act unconsciously: "Crowds, doubtless are always unconscious, but this very unconsciousness is perhaps one of the secrets of their strength. In the natural world beings exclusively governed by instinct accomplish acts whose marvelous complexity astounds us. . . ."[156]

It is the very primitiveness of the masses that posed such an immense threat to modern society, and foretold the fall of Western civilization:

> Today the claims of the masses are becoming more and more sharply defined, and amount to nothing less than a determination to utterly destroy society as it now exists, with a view to making it hark back to that primitive communism which was the normal condition of all human groups before the dawn of civilization. . . . Certainly it is possible that the advent to power of the masses marks one of the last stages of Western civilization, a complete return to those periods of confused anarchy which seem always destined to precede the birth of every new society.[157]

Le Sacre, and particularly its reception in Paris, therefore, articulates some of the current, very explosive thoughts of its time regarding the perceived, and, as Taruskin insists, very real, threat of the masses, which by their very definition are both modern and primitive.

Indeed, Stravinsky himself was preoccupied with the "debased masses" while he was working on *Le Sacre.* As he says in his *Autobiography*, taking time out of his description of the composition of *Le Sacre:*

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[155] Le Bon, *The Crowd* viii.
[156] Le Bon, *The Crowd* ix.
[157] Le Bon, *The Crowd,* conflation of two passages, xvi and xviii.

> But is it at all surprising that such confusion [between art and religion, referring to Wagner] should arise at a time like the present, when the openly irreligious masses in their degradation of spiritual values and debasement of human thought necessarily lead us to utter brutalization? People are, however, apparently fully aware of the sort of monster to which the world is about to give birth [i.e. World War I]. . . . But to return to the *Sacre*. . . .[158]

Stravinsky was not the only one to connect the masses to the coming war: Charles de Gaulle, among others, also saw the war as the culmination of a "collective spirit" that had been building for generations as a consequence of universal suffrage, compulsory education, industrialization, city life, the press, mass political parties, trade unions, and sport. Modern life had subjected people to mass movements and mechanization, both of which preconditioned them for the mass mobilization and brutality of World War I.[159]

Conclusion

At a time of sudden, rapid, and irreversible change, *Le Sacre*, with its stomping, primitive, pagan, brutal masses, perhaps struck too close to home. On the eve of the Great War, with nationalist sentiment growing, with masses overtaking both the streets and the sanctuaries of high art, the era of scintillating orientalist excess had to come to an end. Cultural changes, as much as provocative music, dance, and set design, were responsible for the Parisian reception of *Le Sacre*. The *Ballets Russes* had always both mirrored and created its public: by putting primitives on stage, it anticipated their appearance in the audience, and, indeed, across Europe.

In this light, *Le Sacre* can be seen as truly prophetic: just as its modernism was defined precisely by its primitivism, so too the Great War, the first modern war, revealed that progress and civilization merely cloaked, but did not hide, the primitive underbelly of modern society.

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[158] Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1962) 39.

[159] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) 307.

Chapter 3: From *Le Sacre* to *Les Noces:* Primitivism and the Changing Face of Modernity[1]

Introduction

The significance of primitivism in French cultural life shifted dramatically from the pre- to the post-War period. Whereas the primitivism of *Le Sacre du printemps* was understood by its contemporaries to be radical, excessive, even prophetic and apocalyptic, the primitivism of *Les Noces* was perceived, at least to some extent, as a manifestation of both the classicist "call to order" and the mechanistic aesthetic of the post-war period. While French critics of *Le Sacre* viewed the work as a portrayal of Russian "Otherness" against which they could assert—or question—their own identity, many critics of *Les Noces* more readily identified with the scene on stage, seeing in the Russian peasant wedding ritual a symbolic depiction of the brutal social and religious machinery with which civilization makes its members into obedient marionettes.[2]

At a very basic level, the primitivist rhetoric remained constant in the reception of both *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces*. The primitive continued to be defined as instinctive and youthful: ". . . they [the dancers in *Les Noces*] are still mixed up in the confusion of youth, their instincts and desires indefinite. . . ,"[3] as well as natural: "For Stravinsky the height of art seems to be a return to the state of nature. . ."[4] Its primary musical sign was still understood to be rhythm, although in *Les Noces* instrumentation (percussion and choirs) also played a large role. According to Gustave de Pawlowski, ". . . the instrumentalists were almost all replaced by earnest singers who called out to each other in Russian, with a raucous indignation and a jarring rhythm generally used in the warrior dances of cannibals";[5] André Coeuroy explained that "As for the music, it is constrained to draw on only the most primitive elements of the orchestra: percussion and four pianos, to which is added choirs. Each of these elements represents a sonorous material in its raw state. . . ."[6] Finally, the primary choreographic sign of the primitive was still the dancing masses, which Henry Malherbe described so provocatively: "These rhythmic swarmings of a Russian crowd, these complicated maneuvers of an unarmed troop, whipped by the sonorous knout of a brutal music, these pyramids of anxious gymnasts, these jumps of louts, these torturing exercises of a squad, under the orders of the implacable amazon that is Mlle Nijinska. . . ."[7]

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[1] An article drawn from this chapter was awarded the 1998 George Proctor Prize of the Canadian University Music Society, and published in the *Canadian University Music Review* 20/1 (1999): 9-21.

[2] Emile Vuillermoz, "Chroniques et notes. La Musique en France et à l'étranger. France. Les Théatres Lyriques. Noces. — Igor Strawinski," *La Revue musicale* 10 (1 August 1923): 71. All translations mine unless otherwise indicated. Many of the reviews of the Parisian premiere of *Les Noces* have been collected by Drue Fergison, and are provided, with translation, in her dissertation "'Les Noces': A Microhistory of the Paris 1923 Production," Duke University, 1995. Where applicable, I give the page numbers of the review in Fergison's dissertation along with the original source information.

[3] ". . . ils sont encore mêlés dans la confusion de la jeunesse, les instincts et les désirs non définis. . ." Gérard d'Houville, "Mes Spectacles. Les Ballets Russes de Serge de Diaghilew," *Le Gaulois,* 23 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 427-432. See also Jane Catulle-Mendes, "Les Premières. Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Le Théâtre artstique de Moscou," *Patrie,* 24 October 1923: "Cette troupe réunit donc les éléments essentiellement caracteristiques de son pays . . . nous voyons vraiment se mouvoir sous nos yeux une humanité antipodale de la nôtre, d'une bestialité torse et phénoménale dont la force cérébrale n'existe que pour le décuplement et l'exaspération de l'instinct. Quelle illustration des théories de Freud!"

The two works were perceived by the critics to be linked by several common elements:

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[4] "Le comble de l'art semble être pour lui [Stravinsky] le retour à l'état de nature. . . ." Gustave de Pawlowski, "Les Ballets Russes à la Gaîté. 'Noces,'" *Le Journal,* 18 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 414-16. Many other critics mention nature.

[5] ". . . les instrumentistes étaient presque tous remplacés par des choristes convaincus qui s'interpellaient avec une rauque indignation en langue russe sur le rythme saccadé qui encourage generalement les danses de guerriers chez les cannibales." Pawlowski, "Les Ballets Russes à la Gaîté."

[6] "Quant à la musique, elle se contraint à ne tirer parti que des éléments les plus primitifs de l'orchestre: la batterie (instruments à percussion) et quatre pianos, auxquels s'adjoignent des choeurs. Chacun de ces éléments représente une matière sonore à l'état brut. . ." André Coeuroy, "Noces, ballet en quatre tableaux d'Igor Stravinski, représenté pour la première fois au Théâtre municipal de la Gaîté-Lyrique, le 16 juin 1923 (Saison de Ballets Russes)," *Larousse mensuel,* no. 201 (November 1923): 300. See also Charles Tenroc, "Théatre de la Gâité-Lyrique: Les Ballets Russes; Noces, ballet de M. Igor Stravinsky," *Le Courrier musicale* 13 (July 1923): 265; Michel George-Michel, "Les Spectacles. Les Ballets Russes à la Comédie-Française," *L'Éclair*, 18 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 390-92.

[7] "Ces fourmillements rythmés d'une foule russe, ces manoeuvres compliquées d'une milice désarmée, fouettée par le knout sonore d'une musique brutale, ces pyramides de gymnastes anxieux, ces sauts de lourdauds, ces exercices torturants d'une escouade, sous les ordres de l'implacable amazone qu'est Mlle Nijinska. . ." Henry Malherbe, "Feuilleton du Temps du 27 juin 1923. Chronique Musicale. Aux Ballets Russes: 'Noces', scènes chorégraphiques russes avec chant et musique composées par M. Igor Strawinsky," *Le Temps,* 27 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 441-450. Fergison's translation.

the lack of the picturesque, the static nature ("People have criticized this dance for being too static; the music of *Noces,* which chops rather than connects, imposed this on it"[8]), the lack of narrative and action,[9] the representation of a sacrificial ritual through symbolic, essential gestures. André Coeuroy and Boris de Schloezer, for example, two of Paris's leading music critics, are among those who discuss some of these issues. Coeuroy, co-founder (with Henry Prunières) of the *Revue musicale*, founder and director of the series *La musique moderne* and *Les maîtres de la musique ancienne et moderne,* and music critic for several daily newspapers as well as many French and foreign music journals, observed that, "These dances [*Les Noces*], descended from *Le Sacre,* repudiate all picturesque elements to make room only for essential gestures, purposefully artificial, of seriousness or joy. . . ."[10] Boris de Schloezer wrote:

> *Les Noces* is a picture of ancient Russian peasant wedding rites, but, as in the dances of *Sacre,* those of *Noces* have no anecdotal, descriptive, or archeologic signification: they are the transformation of ritual attitudes and gestures (themselves merely a symbolic transposition of real-life actions)

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[8] "On a reproché à cette danse d'être trop statique; la musique de Noces, qui hache au lieu de lier, le lui imposait." Fernand Divoire, "Les Commentaires de la Quinzaine. I. — Les Arts. La Danse," *La Revue de France* (September 1923): 183.

[9] The critics frequently mention the lack of "anecdote," by which they seem to imply a lack of a conventional, straightforward storyline or narrative.

[10] ". . . Ces danses [Les Noces], issues elles aussi de celles du 'Sacre', répudient de leur côté tout élément pittoresque pour ne faire place qu'aux gestes essentiels, et volontiers synthétiques, de la gravité ou de la joie. . ." André Coeuroy, "Chronique Musicale. Padmavati et Noces," *Tentatives* (15 August 1923): 88-89.

> into pure *plastique*.[11]

While many critics commented that both *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces* depicted rituals, a few of the more astute understood just how much the wedding ritual had in common with the sacrifice of the young virgin in *Le Sacre*. These critics realized that the wedding ritual contained an element of sacrifice, again the sacrifice of a young virgin, not to the god of spring, as in *Le Sacre*, but rather to the mundanity and weariness of married life. The connection between beginnings and endingss is clear in both works: in *Le Sacre* and in *Les Noces*, death, be it literal or symbolic, ensures the continuation of life. But in *Les Noces*, as its reception history reveals, the process comes full circle: death ensures life, which continues mundanely towards death.

Gérard d'Houville's evocation of life's circularity, for example, suggests the connection between the wedding ceremony and the funeral ceremony:

> Mixed with the popular gaiety, the poetry, and the national vigour of these beautiful choirs is an element of grief, of almost lugubrious seriousness; the

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[11] "Les Noces sont un tableau des anciens rites nuptiaux de la Russie paysanne, mais de même que les danses du Sacre, . . . celles des Noces n'ont aucune signification anecdotique, descriptive, archéologique: elles s'inspirent des gestes et attitudes rituels (lesquels eux-mêmes ne sont qu'une transposition symbolique des actions de la vie réelle) pour aboutir à leur transposition purement plastique." B. de Schloezer, "Notes. Les Noces," *La nouvelle revue francaise* (August 1923): 247. This transposition of daily activity into ritual into "pure" *plastique* seems to be a hallmark of both modernism and primitivism.

Other critics who perceived (but did not define so concisely) a similarity of spirit include Yvonne Sérac, "La Danse. Suédois et Russes," *Tentatives* (15 August 1923): 90-91: ". . . je ne puis m'empêcher de relier 'Le Sacre du printemps' à 'Noces' au point de vue de l'esprit et de l'execution. . ."; no author, "Les Revues et la Presse, Dernier Echo de 'Noces'," *La Revue musicale* (November 1923): 93: "Pour la technique les Noces s'apparentent au Sacre. . ."; Raoul Brunel, "Les Ballets Russes. Noces. Scenes chorégraphiques russes en 4 tableaux. Paroles et musique de M. Igor Stravinsky," *L'Oeuvre*, 17 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 402-404: "*Noces* est une suite de quatre scènes villageoises russes, ou l'on retrouve un peu le symbolisme barbare du *Sacre du printemps*. . ."; Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine Musicale. Les Ballets Russes à la Gaîté-Lyrique—Les 'Noces,' d'Igor Stravinsky," *L'Eclair*, 25 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 436-440: "Voisines, de loin en loin, par l'esprit. . ." ; Emile Vuillermoz, "Premières. Ballets Russes: 'Noces', d'Igor Strawinsky," *Excelsior*, 18 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 411-14: "*Noces* est un prolongement esthetique du Sacre. . ."; Gustave Bret, "Spectacles. La Musique. Ballets Russes: *Noces*, de Stravinsky," *L'Intransigeant*, 16 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 393: "Quoi de plus logique que l'évolution qui le conduit du *Sacre* (1912) [*sic*] aux *Noces* (1917) [*sic*], en passant par *Renard*?"

> wedding already foreshadows the requiem; life goes on toward death; the whiteness of the marriage celebrations will become that which frames the funeral shroud, and it's a grand allegory of human existence, in two colours, where all is black and white, joy and sadness, pleasure and pain, childhood and old age, dawn and night. . . .[12]

Henry Malherbe also perceived in the wedding ritual the sombre atmosphere of a burial:

> M. Stravinsky, Mmes Nijinska and Gontchorova wanted, I suppose, to let us hear all that is tragic, savage, tyrannical and bitterly comic in the Russian marriage ceremony. Their bizarre and bitter work merits an attentive examination, to which I will apply myself soon. For the moment, will I confess that these *Noces* have to me the lugubrious atmosphere of a burial?[13]

And Paul Dukas, eminent composer and critic, described both the fiancé and fiancée as victims, destined to live out their miserable lives, with *Les Noces* itself as humanity's funeral music:

> He seems to evoke from the depth of the ages, in the guise of a popular celebration, the eternal sacrifice of humans to the perpetuity of a miserable existence. The fiancé, the fiancée are the victims. The altar, the humble nuptial bed, god, blind Destiny. And these 'Noces', the funeral chant of Very Sad Humanity.[14]

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[12] "Ces beaux choeurs mêlent aussi à leur allègresse populaire, à leur poésie et à leur vigueur nationale je ne sais quels accents de deuil, quelles gravités presque lugubres; la noce prévoit déjà le requiem; la vie s'en va vers la mort; les blancheurs des épousailles deviendront celles du linceul et s'encadreront des crêpes funèbres, et c'est une grande allégorie en deux couleurs de l'existence humaine, où tout est noir et blanc, joie et tristesse, plaisir et douleur, enfance et vieillesse, aube et nuit. . . ." Gérard d'Houville, "Mes Spectacles" (see note 2 above).

[13] "M. Stravinsky, Mmes Nijinska et Gontchorova ont voulu, je suppose, nous faire entendre tout ce que la céremonie du mariage, en Russie, a de tragique, de farouche, de tyrannique et de comique amer. Leur ouvrage bizarre et âpre mérite un examen attentif, auquel je m'appliquerai prochainement. Pour l'instant, avouerai-je que ces Noces m'ont fut l'air lugubre d'un enterrement?" Henry Malherbe, "Feuilleton du *Temps* du 20 Juin 1923. Chronique Musicale. . . . A la Gaîté-Lyrique: Ballets russes," *Le Temps,* 20 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 426-27.

[14] "Il nous semble alors évoquer du fond des âges, sous l'apparence d'une fête populaire, l'éternelle immolation de la créature à la perpétuité d'une espèce misérable. Le fiancé, la fiancée sont les victimes. L'autel, l'humble lit nuptial, le dieu, la Destinée aveugle. Et ces 'Noces', le chant funèbre de la Très Triste Humanité." Paul Dukas, "Les Spectacles. Les Ballets Russes. 'Noces' d'Igor Stravinsky," *Le Quotidien,* 27 June 1923.

Whether or not these three critics were aware that the notion of sacrifice and death are inherent in Russian peasant wedding rituals, their perceptions were extremely accurate: as Margarita Mazo's research has shown, Russian initiation rites (of which the marriage ceremony is a prime example) "are bound to representations of death so tightly that it is impossible to deal with one without dealing with the other."[15] Indeed, one of the ritual activities of the Russian wedding ceremony is called "killing the bride," during which the bride,

> [a]ccompanying her laments with sobbing . . . collapses to the floor or to the table, beating herself with the whole weight of her body; not infrequently she repeats this procedure until the lower parts of her arms, from elbows to wrists, which take upon themselves the whole weight of her falls, became swollen and bruised.[16]

The lament, so essential to both the traditional wedding ritual and *Les Noces,* even shares the same tune-formula with funeral laments in many local traditions.[17] While not every critic commented explicitly on the parallels between marriage and death, many did see the ceremony, as portrayed in *Les Noces*, as a depiction of a passage into the vulgar and mundane life to be lived by the young newlyweds. The relationship between this interpretation of the work and the post-War primitivist aesthetic will be explored below.

From *Le Sacre* to *Les Noces*: A Distillation of Ritual Gesture

Critics perceived a trajectory from *Le Sacre* to *Les Noces*, a trajectory defined by the underlying principals of execution and composition common to both works, but involving an evolution in overall aesthetic effect from one work to the other. One critic implied that *Le Sacre* was to be understood as the primitive prehistory of *Noces*, and that the beings who, in *Le Sacre,* represented a "humanity in gestation," were now wrought with terror and "the pain of things learned" while celebrating the bittersweet marriage of their daughter.[18] However, most critics saw *Les Noces* as being even more primitivist than *Le Sacre*. Michel Georges-Michel, for example, saw the "prehistoric nightmare" of *Le Sacre* as "mild and blessed" when compared to the "extraordinary violence of sonority" in *Les Noces*.[19] Paul Dukas attributed the primitivism of *Les Noces* to the continuous, obsessive rhythms and the lack of gradation, contrast, and development, all of which results in an "angelic drunkenness" that resembles the action of "whirling dervishes, fakirs, and other savages."[20]

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[15] Vladimir Propp, *Istoricheskie korni volshebnoi skazki* (Leningrad, 1946) 141, quoted in and translated by Margarita Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Russian Village Wedding Ritual," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43 (1990): 121.

[16] F. Istomin and G. Diutsh, *Pesni Russkogo naroda sobrannye v Arkhangel'skoi i Olonetskoi guberniiakh v 1886 godu* (St Petersburg, 1894) xviii, translated by and quoted in by Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces"* 108.

[17] Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces"* 121. In his musical treatment of the folk materials, Stravinsky seems to have heightened what many listeners may have seen as the primitive elements in these Russian traditions. The Russian composer Alexander Kastalsky, a noted folk-music expert who composed his own theatrical representation of folk rituals in 1913, disparaged Stravinsky's treatment of folk procedures in *Les Noces* as too dissonant and "barbaric." See Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces*" 112-114.

Musicologist and critic Louis Laloy attributed the "pure" and "natural" state of *Les Noces* to the lack of orchestral colour, claiming that *Le Sacre* "made us listen to the music of the Earth," while *Les Noces* "is the music of Man," but "Man," as he makes clear, in his natural state, "Man" as representative of transcendent Humanity:

> *Noces,* such will be the present this year. I can affirm that it is lovely

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[18] "Enfin, je ne puis m'empêcher de relier 'Le Sacre du printemps' à 'Noces' au point de vue de l'esprit et de l'exécution. Je veux dire que ce sont bien là deux étapes d'un même peuple. Ce sont les mêmes êtres qui, dans le 'Sacre' . . . étaient agités d'une terreur primitive, d'une humanité en gestation; et qui, aujourd'hui, célèbrent les noces de leur fille avec un reste de frayeur, avec la douleur des choses apprises, avec une âpre volonté de joie, et dont les bonds farouches, désespérés, qui ébranlaient le plancher de scène, avaient quelque chose de déchirant. . . ." Yvonne Sérac, "La Danse" (see note 10 above).

[19] "Je laisserai dire au critique musical ce qu'il pense de l'extraordinaire violence de sonorité obtenue par M. Stravinsky, grâce à une orchestration composée. . . . Les choeurs, eux aussi, ajoutèrent encore à la rudesse de cette oeuvre, auprès de laquelle le cauchemar préhistorique du Sacre du printemps semble être terre molle et bénie." Michel Georges-Michel, "Les Spectacles" (see note 5 above).

[20] "Car tout ici, dans la musique, se ramasse et se crispe en un martèlement continu, obsédant, des mêmes effets particuliers. Ni gradation, ni contrastes. L'auteur s'interdit les plus sommaires développements et procède par accumulation et par répétition des mêmes formules pour atteindre à l'ivresse angélique selon la méthode d'action des derviches tourneurs, des fakirs et autres sauvages." Paul Dukas, "Les Spectacles" (see note 13 above).

> because I already know the music, and I know how the spectacle will be modeled on the music. It was last summer that Stravinsky came to play for me the freshly completed score, and I immediately recognized a work equal in power to *Le Sacre du printemps,* but of a totally different form and, until now, without precedent.
>
> I once wrote even here, reviving the famous comparison of a Chinese philosopher, that *Le Sacre du printemps* made us listen to the music of the Earth. Here, it is the music of Man. A wedding ceremony is reduced to its essential rites. . . . The choirs . . . will celebrate that holiday which, in all times and with all peoples, is the holiday of humanity, its necessary and joyous celebration. No particular resolution, no liturgy affirming a dogma, no local colour. The orchestral mixtures will not be applied on the strength of melodies which will appear in a pure state, a natural state, enveloped only by the sonorous quivering of four pianos. . .[21]

Henry Malherbe, writing in *Le Temps,* also comments on the instrumentation, seeing *Les Noces* as a "concentrated Sacre":

> . . . *Les Noces,* in effect, a synthesis of *Sacre,* a concentrated *Sacre.* Already, a Slavic musician turned up his nose at strings, and in the prelude of *Le Sacre du printemps* used only the woodwinds that are most dry, most clean, and least rich in easy expression. Today, the author of the *Symphonie pour instruments à vent* [*sic*], in an exaltation of poverty, throws far from himself these dry woodwinds, in order to parsimoniously

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[21] "Noces, tel sera le cadeau de cette année. Je puis affirmer qu'il est beau, car j'en connais déjà la musique et je sais comment sur cette musique sera modelé le spectacle. C'est l'été dernier que Stravinsky est venu me jouer sa partition à peine achevée, et j'ai reconnue aussitôt une oeuvre égale en puissance au Sacre du printemps, mais d'une forme toute différente et jusqu'ici sans précédent.

"J'ai écrit jadis ici même, en reprenant la comparaison célèbre d'un philosophe chinois, que Le Sacre du printemps nous faisait entendre la musique de la Terre. Ici, c'est la musique de l'Homme. Une cérémonie nuptiale réduite à ses rites essentiels. . . . Des choeurs . . . célébreront cette fête qui, dans tous les temps et chez tous les peuples, est la fête de l'humanité, sa fête nécessaire et joyeux. Pas de détermination particulière, pas de liturgie affirmant un dogme, pas de couleur locale. Les mélanges orchestraux ne seront pas appliqués sur la force des mélodies qui apparaîtront à l'état pur, à l'état natif, enveloppées seulement par le frémissement sonore de quatre pianos. . . ." Louis Laloy, "Les Ballets Russes è la Gaïté-Lyrique," *Comoedia,* 4 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 363-65. Fergison's translation. Laloy also reviewed *Les Noces* in *Le Figaro* ("Au Jour le Jour. Les Ballets Russes a Paris," *Le Figaro,* 31 May 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 358-360). Here too he recalls what he said about *Le Sacre* and compares the work to *Les Noces.*

> keep only the percussion instruments, even more dry.[22]

According to many of the critics, the process of concentration perceived to have taken place between *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces* resulted in a primitivist style characterized by its extreme simplicity, its excessive austerity, its purity and stripped down sobriety—in short, its *classicism*.[23]

Many of the most qualified critics used the term "classical" to differentiate *Les Noces* from *Le Sacre*. Roland-Manuel's views are particularly compelling, as his own compositional style and attitude toward music (he was a composer, writer and popularizer of music) stood in firm opposition to Romantic self-glorification; his attention to form, sobriety and elegance reflected his affinity for both eighteenth-century French keyboard composers and the music of Debussy and Ravel. In his review in *L'Éclair*, Roland-Manuel compares the romanticism of *Le Sacre* to the classicism of *Les Noces*: "Neighbours, at a distance, in spirit, *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces* differ curiously in terms of structure. . . . The peculiar romanticism of *Le Sacre* gives way to a sort of grand, stripped-down classicism, which clearly emphasizes an orchestral arrangement whose simplicity is extremely bold."[24]

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[22] "*Noces* est, en effet, une synthèse du Sacre, un Sacre concentré. Déjà, le musicien slave faisait fi des cordes, et dans le prélude du Sacre du printemps, n'utilisait que 'les bois, plus secs, plus nets, moins riches d'expressions faciles.' Aujourd'hui, l'auteur de la Symphonie pour instruments à vent [*sic*], dans une exaltation de pauvreté, jette bien loin de lui ces bois secs, pour ne garder parcimonieusement que les instruments de la batterie, plus secs encore." Henry Malherbe, "Feuilleton du *Temps* du 27 Juin 1923" (see note 6 above).

[23] See, for example, Albert Jeanneret, "Musique. Noces," *L'Esprit nouveau* 18 (November 1923): "Gontcharowa dont on sait la turbulence habituelle, parfois tapageuse, est ici d'une excellente sobriété de l'effet le plus pur"; no author, "Les Revues et la Presse" (see note 10 above): "Pour la technique les Noces s'apparentent au Sacre; mais, dans l'ensemble, l'oeuvre est plus plastique, de contours plus purs; la couleur est reléguée au second plan"; Raymond Charpentier, Georges Linor, and André Levinson, "Les Ballets Russes à la Gaîté-Lyrique. 'Noces'. Ballet de M. Igor Stravinsky," *Comoedia*, 16 June 1923, section on "Le décor, la chorégraphie," by André Levinson; Fergison, "Les Noces" 354-90: "L'austérité y apparaît aussi excessive que l'était naguère la volupté des coloris orgiaques"; Gustave Bret, "Spectacles" (see note 10 above): "Musique sans fard et sans vêtements, drue, sèche, et nue. . .; Yvonne Sérac, "La Danse" (see note 10 above): "dépouillés de tout ce qui fut leur richesse et leur éclat. . ."

Boris de Schloezer, in *La nouvelle revue française,* says that Nijinska's choreographic style is "classicism in the large sense."[25] Sérac, in *Tentatives*, speaks of the alliance of classical and modern.[26] André Levinson implies the classical aspect of *Les Noces* when he compares it to Picasso's "Ingrist" works.[27]

Classicism, austerity, purity, sobriety: by 1923, the significance of these vital cultural catchphrases was multifaceted. As early as the beginning of the century, French critics, reflecting the growing anti-Germanic and anti-Romantic sentiments of French composers, had begun to establish a definition of classicism founded on "clarity, simplicity, austerity, sobriety, pure construction, precision, discreet harmony, and formal perfection."[28] After World War I, this conglomerate of aesthetic attributes came to be applied to the emerging avant-garde trend that first made its appearance in the visual arts during the war, the *Nouveau classicisme.* As Scott Messing explains, until the 1920s, the *Nouveau classicisme* remained more or less distinct from what we now refer to as "neoclassicism" (that is, the use of pre-Romantic formal procedures by twentieth-century composers). The former was described by Maurice Brillant, in an essay written in 1921, as a style which emphasized "great care of construction, a great austerity, and a sobriety provoked by renunciation of impressionist colours."[29] The term "neoclassicism," on the other hand, maintained the pejorative connotation that had been associated with it since the turn of the century, when French critics often used it to describe the music of Brahms and Mahler, who, in their opinion, sacrificed originality and musical substance for structural imitation.[30] Only in the early 1920s did the term "neoclassicism" lose its derogatory meaning, and come to imply both tradition (through its reliance on pre-Romantic formal procedures) and innovation (through its use of the anti-Romantic language of the avant-garde). Scholars are divided on whether it was Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* or his Octet that was first labeled neoclassic. As Messing explains, however, the expression never appeared in reviews of the premieres of these works; its seemingly random attachment to Stravinsky in 1923 afforded it sufficient stature to sustain its use.[31] For the critics, the classicism of *Les Noces* (which premiered on the same program as the neoclassical *Pulcinella)* was not dependent on the use of pre-Romantic formal maneuvers; it referred solely to what was perceived to be its use of the avant-garde language of the time, to its bare, austere, simple, essential nature, to the transformation of real life actions into ritual gesture into "pure" *plastique.*[32] The perceived classicism of *Les Noces* was the hallmark of its modernism; the critics situated the work squarely within the "call to order" which had been articulated by Cocteau in his book *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* in 1918 (published with several other essays in 1926 under the title *Le rappel à l'ordre)* and which dominated modernist tendencies in France throughout the 1920s.[33] Furthermore, the aesthetic attributes associated with both neoclassicism and *le nouveau classicisme* were shared with the primitivist tendencies of the period.[34]

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[24] "Voisines, de loin en loin, par l'esprit, le *Sacre* et les *Noces* diffèrent curieusement d'aspect et de structure. . . . Le romantisme particulier du Sacre laisse la place à une espèce de grand classicisme dépouillé, que met nettement en valeur une disposition orchestrale dont la simplicité est extrêmement hardie. . . " Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine musicale" (see note 10 above).

[25] "classicisme au sense large." B. de Schloezer, "Notes," (see note 10 above). Here he is not using the term "classical" to differentiate *Les Noces* and *Le Sacre,* but rather to link them in terms of choreography; he is referring to Massine's choreography (not Nijinsky's) for the dance of the chosen maiden.

[26] ". . . l'alliance du classique et du moderne. . . ." Sérac, "La Danse" (see note 10 above).

[27] " De force, l'artiste inscrit le folklore russe décoloré dans le contour ténu des dessins dits "ingristes", de Picasso." Raymond Charpentier, Georges Linor, and André Levinson, "Les Ballets Russes à la Gaîté-Lyrique" (see note 22 above).

[28] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic,* Studies in Musicology, no. 101 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988) 10.

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[29] Maurice Brillant, "Les oeuvres et les hommes," *Le Correspondent,* 25 February 1921, 744-45, translated by and quoted in Messing, *Neoclassicism* 81.

[30] Messing, *Neoclassicism* 14.

[31] Messing, *Neoclassicism* 88.

[32] See note 10 above. See George Antheil's discussion of *Pulcinella* and Stravinsky's neoclassicism in his autobiography, *Bad Boy of Music* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1945) 100-103.

[33] Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes* (Geneva: s.n., 1946-51). For more on Cocteau's aesthetic vision and its context, see Messing, *Neoclassicism* 79.

No group of artists explored so thoroughly the intimate relationship between the classic and the modern as did the Purists in the pages of their review *L'Esprit nouveau.* As we will see, this relationship provided fertile ground for the development of a post-war primitivist aesthetic. The reception history of *Les Noces* can best be understood when situated at the intersection of these discrete yet convergent trends.

Purism and *L'Esprit nouveau*

L'Esprit nouveau was founded in November 1921 by the architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (later to come to fame as Le Corbusier, one of the leading architects of the twentieth century), his good friend the painter Amédée Ozenfant, and the poet Paul Dermée. An important voice for the Parisian avant-garde, the review began as the penultimate and most successful of a series of attempts to found a post-Cubist magazine in Paris, but soon became a magazine of "general progressive culture," embracing fields as diverse as architecture, painting, sculpture, product design, music, literature, philosophy, psychology, politics and economics.[35] Running from late 1919 to the middle of 1925, its lifespan was longer than any other modern-movement periodicals except *Der Sturm* and *de Stijl*, both of which it surpassed in terms of the number of illustrations and length and number of articles.[36] Despite the diversity of subject matter, the aesthetic views of its editors revealed a particular overriding sensibility. An emphasis on reason, logic, mathematics, science, mechanization, and technology pervaded its pages: the editors and contributors were committed to order, precision, engineering, the machine, and the classical tradition.[37]

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[34] Messing also observes this connection: "Our survey of contemporary appraisals of Stravinksy's music after *Le sacre du printemps* has demonstrated that the rhetoric of simplicity, childhood, and objectivity was a shared affinity with French modernist trends in music, literature, and the visual arts. We may, however, recognize another concurrent tendency which was also characterized by a similar language of purity, concision, and naiveté: the influence of non-Western primitive cultures on the European avant-garde. In 1916, when Egon Wellesz observed that 'the sudden and wide-spread interest in primitive music, in folk-music, and in the music of savage races seems to indicate that this new tendency has already received its theoretical foundation,' he was stating an already obvious cliché." *Neoclassicism* 111.

[35] Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: The Architectural Press, 1960) 208.

The aesthetic vision which dominated the art, architecture, and ideology showcased in the pages of *L'Esprit nouveau* was known as Purism. Inasmuch as it reflected an artistic climate that valued formal, pure, objective values, Purism participated in the large-scale *rappel à l'ordre* which dominated French cultural life after World War I. According to Romy Golan, "The most immediate impulse at the end of World War I was for a return to order, and nowhere was this yearning more evident than in the emergence of Purism." The Purists

> advocated a pictorial syntax based on mathematical measurements, universal laws, stability, solidity and a striving towards perfect harmony. If the War had left behind piles of debris, Purism, both antidote and cure, prescribed a world—as this self-coined "ism" plainly indicated—of utter purity.[38]

The basis of the Purist aesthetic was reason: in two early articles published in *L'Esprit nouveau*, Jeanneret and Ozenfant declared that logic alone "controls and regulates the often fantastic progress of intuition, and allows it to move forward with certainty."[39] For Jeanneret and Ozenfant, reason regulates not only scientific inquiry, but also artistic undertaking:

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[36] Banham, *Theory and Design* 208.

[37] See Christopher Green, *Léger and the Avant-garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976) 203, 204, 209, 211, 243-44; Banham, *Theory and Design* 207-210; John Golding and Christopher Green, *Léger and Purist Paris. The Tate Gallery, 18 Nov. 1970-24 Jan. 1971* (London: Tate Gallery, 1970-71); Romy Golan, "Modes of Escape: the Representation of Paris in the Twenties," *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis,* ed. Jean Clair (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1991) esp. 336-45.

[38] Golan, "Modes of Escape" 336.

[39] Green, *Léger* 203.

> Nothing justifies us in supposing that there should be any incompatibility between science and art. The one and the other have the common aim of reducing the universe to equations. We shall prove that pure art and pure science are not watertight domains. They have a common mind. . . . [A]rt and science depend on number.[40]

The Purists greatly admired modern machines as well as *l'esthétique mécanique*. Indeed, the second paragraph of the first issue of *L'Esprit nouveau* emphasizes the importance of the machine aesthetic:

> Today no-one denies the aesthetic that is revealed by the constructions of modern industry. More and more, the construction of industrial machines relies on proportions, the play of volumes, and material in such a way that many of them are veritable works of art, because they involve number, that is, order. Now, the elite individuals who make up the world of industry and business, and who consequently live in this virile atmosphere where undeniably beautiful works are created, believe themselves to be quite far from all aesthetic activity; they are wrong, because they are among the most active creators of the contemporary aesthetic. . . . [I]t is in general output that one finds the style of an epoch, and not, as we too often believe, in a few ornamental productions.[41]

Although the Purists often drew analogies between the machine and the work of art, they never advocated making machines the subject of paintings.[42] Furthermore, although they championed modernity and mass production, the Purists maintained a strict, hierarchical division between high and low art, fine arts and mass culture.[43] Parallels between the work of art and the machine were of great interest to them:

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[40] Translated by and quoted in Banham, *Theory and Design* 207; see also Green, *Léger* 204.

[41] "Nul ne nie aujourd'hui l'esthétique qui se dégage des constructions de l'industrie moderne. De plus en plus les constructions industrielles, les machines s'établissent avec des proportions, des jeux de volumes et de matières tels que beaucoup d'entre elles sont de véritables oeuvres d'art, car elles comportent le nombre, c'est-à-dire l'ordre. Or, les individus d'élite qui composent le monde de l'industrie et des affaires et qui vivent par conséquent dans cette atmosphère virile où se créent des oeuvres indéniablement belles, se figurent être fort éloignés de toute activité esthétique; ils ont tort, car ils sont parmi les plus actifs créateurs de l'esthétique contemporaine. . . . [C]'est dans la production générale que se trouve le style d'une époque et non pas, comme on le croit trop, dans quelques productions à fins ornementales. . . " *L'Esprit nouveau* 1 (October 1920): (before numbered pages begin; 2nd paragraph. This tract is placed before each of the articles in the series "Des Yeux que ne voient pas" [see note 48 below].)

> each was an ordered organism constructed according to clearly understood laws, using standardized parts in conformations at once the result of calculation and of intuition, finding that to each economy and precision of action was essential, but finding that where the machine aimed at utility alone, the work of art aimed alone at the beauty of a perfectly balanced sensation.[44]

Analogies between the machine and the work of art were extended by many artists in the 1920s; according to Golan, the "mechanomorphic style" adopted by many artists at this time reflected their search for the relationship between mechanical and psychological states of mind.[45]

For Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, the new Machine Age heralded a new classical age. Their works exemplify this belief inasmuch as their mechanistic qualities (for example, the overlapping of objects which results in the outlines of cogwheels and pistons) always coexist with allusions to classical art and architecture.[46] For the Purists, objects such as the aeroplane, the steamship, and especially the motorcar served to link modern aesthetic values and mechanization with the classical, "pure," aesthetic values of ancient Greece.

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[42] Green, *Léger* 265. One of the painters best known for his mechanical aesthetic was Fernand Léger, himself a member, in the first half of the 1920s, of the Purist group. While the Purists' belief in the analogy between the work of art and the machine led them to tolerate and even admire artists such as Léger who actually incorporated the machine into their work, his trademark paintings of machines are not considered to be representative of the Purist aesthetic; rather his *Paysages animés* of the early 1920s best reflect the Purist view of art and life, specifically the relationship between man, nature, and architecture. See Green, *Léger* 250-85.

[43] Golan, "Modes of Escape" 339.

[44] Green, *Léger* 209.

[45] Golan, "Modes of Escape" 361.

[46] See Golan, "Modes of Escape" 337.

In the July 1921 issue of *L'Esprit nouveau,* Le Corbusier makes the connection between the modern and the classical explicit. In the third of a series of articles titled "Des yeux qui ne voient pas," Le Corbusier, whose primary purpose in the article is to incite architects to consider mass-produced housing, draws a parallel between the automobile and modern machinery, and the Parthenon.[47] For Le Corbusier, the Parthenon is the end product of progress, while the automobile is progressing towards its own attainment of perfection (and should therefore be a model for contemporary architecture):

> Let us therefore show the Parthenon and the automobile so that people understand that in these different domains, it is a question of two products of selection, one having succeeded and the other in progress. This ennobles the automobile. So! So it remains to confront our houses and our palaces with automobiles. It's here [in architecture] that things don't work anymore. It's here that we don't [yet] have our Parthenons.[48]

Le Corbusier further insists on the connection between the Parthenon and modern machinery (probably the very machinery intended to mass-produce automobiles):

> Its perfection is so much outside the norm, that the sight of the Parthenon can today only strike us with very limited sensations—unexpectedly, mechanical sensations; [the perfection of the Parthenon reminds us of] the great and impressive machines

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[47] Le Corbusier-Saugnier, "Des Yeux qui ne voient pas. . . III: Les Autos," *L'Esprit nouveau* 10 (July 1921): 1139-1151. The first article in this series dealt with steamships (*L'Esprit nouveau* 8 [May 1921]), and the second with aeroplanes (*L'Esprit nouveau* 9 [June 1921]). While our primary concern here is not architecture, it is worthwhile to remark on Le Corbusier's derogatory attitude towards architects. In *Vers une architecture,* Le Corbusier compares engineers and architects, elevating the former to the status of noble savage, far better suited to designing houses than are architects: "Our engineers are healthy and virile, active and useful, balanced and happy in their work. Our architects are disillusioned and unemployed, boastful or peevish." Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: The Architectural Press, 1946) 18. See also Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) 255.

[48] "Montrons donc le Parthénon et l'auto afin qu'on comprenne qu'il s'agit ici, dans des domaines différents, de deux produits de sélection, l'un ayant abouti, l'autre étant en marche de progrès. Ceci ennoblit l'auto. Alors! Alors il reste à confronter nos maisons et nos palais avec les autos. C'est ici que ça ne va plus, que rien ne va plus. C'est ici que nous n'avons pas nos Parthénons." Le Corbusier, "Des Yeux qui ne voient pas," 1145. "Selection" is a term used frequently by the Purists. See p. 1144 of the article under discussion: "La culture est l'aboutissement d'un effort de sélection. Sélection veut dire écarter, émonder, nettoyer, faire ressortir nu et clair l'Essentiel."

> that we have seen and that appear to us to be the most perfect results of present activity, the only really successful products of our civilization.[49]

For Le Corbusier, the automobile is important and aesthetically pleasing not merely because it has been mass-produced, but also because it parallels the purity and harmony found in ancient Greek art and architecture: "All automobiles have the same essential disposition. The sense of harmony, which is nothing else but purity, has here been solicited."[50]

For the Purists, the symbols of modern life—the steamship, the aeroplane, the motorcar—which before the war had been symbols of dynamic simultaneity,[51] became, after the war, symbols of a new, mechanized "call to order," more in touch with committed, modern-life realism.[52]

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[49] "Cette perfection est ici tellement en dehors des normes, que la vue du Parthenon, ne peut à l'heure actuelle s'accorder en nous qu'avec des sensations très limitées, constatation inattendue, les sensations mécaniques; qu'avec ces grandes machines impressionnantes que nous avons vues et qui nous sont apparues comme les résultats les plus parfaits de l'activité actuelle, seuls produits véritablement aboutis de notre civilisation." Le Corbusier, "Des Yeux" 1148-49.

[50] "Les autos ont toutes les mêmes dispositions essentielles. Le sens de l'harmonie, qui n'est autre chose que pureté, a été ici sollicité." Le Corbusier, "Des Yeux" 1142.

[51] Simultaneity refers to a mode of representation explored by the Cubists, the Orphists, and the Futurists, in which more than one view of the same person or object is depicted. One of the primary practitioners of simultaneous representation was Robert Delaunay (1885-1941; other artists concerned with simultaneity include Léger, Picabia, Duchamp, and Kupka), whose Orphist style was related to Cubism, but grew out of the desire to bring more lyricism and colour to the austere intellectual Cubism of Picasso, Braque, and Gris. The Orphists' concern with dynamism and dynamic simultaneity is aptly summarized in the following excerpt from the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting," published in *Comoedia* on 18 May 1910:

> The gesture which we would reproduce on canvas shall no longer be a fixed *moment* in the universal dynamism. It shall simply be the *dynamic sensation* itself. Indeed, all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing. A profile is never motionless before our eyes, but it constantly appears and disappears. On account of the persistency of an image upon the retina, moving objects constantly multiply themselves; their form changes like rapid vibrations, in their mad career. Thus, a running horse has not four legs, but twenty, and their movements are triangular. (Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos* [New York: Viking Press, 1973] 27-28.)

See Sherry A. Buckeberrough, *Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneity* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982).

[52] Green, *Léger* 208-9.

The Machine Aesthetic and Music: George Antheil

Artists and architects such as Léger and Le Corbusier were not the only ones on whom the machine age had an aesthetic impact. Many musicians, music critics and composers were equally enthralled. In May 1923, just one month before the premiere of *Les Noces*, Roland-Manuel published an article in *Le Ménestrel* called "Musique et Mécanique," in which he discussed various new mechanical instruments, such as the automatic piano, as well as new instrumental needs. His opening paragraph reveals the extent to which the machine penetrated all aspects of daily life as well as all levels of cultural and aesthetic activity:

> The machine, modern god, becomes more demanding every day. One could say that it makes us pay dearly for the unquestionable commodities it gives us. Let's take our part without hoping that the monster, which accelerates the rhythm of our life while voraciously eating away at it, should spare much. Mass production, harsh and cold, but of excellent output, has taken over several forms of aesthetic activity. We also begin to see the suppleness of the human body constrained at times to give way to the precision of the insensitive mechanical.[53]

This dual attitude toward the machine—both monster and god, cold but productive, insensitive yet precise—is reflected in the contemporaneous musings and compositions of the American composer George Antheil, who lived in Paris from 13 June 1923 until mid-1927. Fascinated by the machine aesthetic, Antheil composed several "mechanical" works in the early and mid-1920s: *Second Sonata* (1921), *The Airplane* (1921), *Sonata Sauvage* (1923), *Death of Machines* (1923), *Jazz Sonata* (1923), and *Mechanisms* (c. 1923), all for piano solo, as well as the First Violin Sonata (1923), and the work he is best known for, *Ballet mécanique* (1923-25; originally scored for sixteen player pianos; rescored in 1926 for one player piano, two pianos, three xylophones, electric bells, small wood propeller, large wood propeller, metal propeller, tamtam, four bass drums, and siren; revised again in 1952 for pianos, percussion and recordings of airplane sounds). He regarded the *Ballet mécanique* as a synthesis and expansion of the piano works;[54] all of these works are characterized by driving, irregular rhythms, insistent ostinato patterns, static harmonies, repetitive melodic structures, lack of dynamic nuance, and the use of musical blocks.[55]

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[53] "La machine, déité moderne, montre des exigences de jour en jour accrues. On peut estimer qu'elle nous fait payer cher les incontestables commodités qu'elle nous donne. Prenons-en notre parti sans espérer que le monstre, qui accélère le rythme de notre vie en la rongeant avec voracité, puisse épargner beaucoup de choses. Le travail en série, rude et froid, mais d'excellent rendement, a gagné plusieurs formes de l'activité esthétique. Aussi commençons nous à voir la soupplesse de l'organe humaine, contrainte quelquesfois de céder le pas à la précision de l'insensible mécanique." Roland-Manuel, "Musique et Mécanique,"*Le Ménestrel* 21 (25 May 1923).

Antheil considered the mechanical aesthetic to be both beautiful and dangerous, as well as a symbol of the spiritual exhaustion of the times, as his description of his *Ballet mécanique* makes clear:

> The words 'Ballet mécanique' were brutal, contemporary, hard-boiled, symbolic of the spiritual exhaustion, the superathletic, non-sentimental period commencing 'The Long Armistice.' . . . Rather a 'mechanistic' dance of life, or even a signal of these troubled and war-potential 1924 times placed in a rocket and shot to Mars. . . .[56]

Like Léger (who collaborated with Antheil and the American cameraman Dudley Murphy in 1923 and 1924 to create a film using the score of *Ballet mécanique*[57]) and the Purists, Antheil had no intention of actually imitating machines:

> . . . at the time I did consider machines very beautiful, and I had even advised aesthetes to have a good look at them; still, I repeat again and

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[54] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 139.

[55] See Linda Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil 1900-1959* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) 88-91 for an introduction to Antheil's mechanistic style as manifest in *Airplane Sonata;* see 103-11 for a thorough discussion of *Ballet mécanique.*

[56] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music,* conflation of two passages 139-140. Antheil originally intended to call the work *Message to Mars.*

[57] See Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 106.

> again, even frantically, I had no idea . . . of *copying* a machine directly down into music, so to speak. My idea, rather, was to warn the age in which I was living of the simultaneous beauty and danger of its own unconscious mechanistic philosophy, aesthetic.[58]

What is particularly noteworthy about the machine aesthetic in Antheil's music is that it is permeated to varying degrees by primitivism: in the *Sonata Sauvage*, the repetitive rhythms and ostinati so typical of his mechanical style underscore in the first movement a melody labeled by Antheil "like a nigger dance" (the three movements are titled, "Niggers," "Snakes," and "Ivory"). Many of Antheil's critics also drew the connection between the mechanical and the primitive: one writer credited the mechanistic Antheil with being "in cahoots with powerful 'elementary' forces," claiming that his music "had the extraordinary power of either chasing demons or evoking them,"[59] while another, after attending the second private performance of *Ballet mécanique* at the Maison Pleyel (arranged for single pianola), wrote:

> The *Ballet mécanique,* far from being a barbaric production offering a discordant mingling of industrial alarums and metallic noises, is a dignified work, conceived, it is evident, by a musician whose greatest effort is aimed at the achievement of perfect form in music. A number of the expert listeners thought they detected African and oriental rhythms, however, for the time-beat was primitive, which may prophesy the new music of to-day.[60]

The following reviewer was even more explicit in connecting the mechanistic aesthetic of the modern age with both primitivism, and the primacy of "work" (which is also significant in the reception history of *Les Noces;* see below):

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[58] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 140.

[59] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 135.

[60] "Ballet mécanique Has New Hearing," printed review, no date, preserved at Manuscripts Division, Princeton University Library, Sylvia Beach Papers, X. Scrapbooks of Clippings and Related Material of Beach Family and Shakespeare and Company . . . Box 265, Scrapbook No. 1. No author given; quoted in Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 23.

> . . . The sounds and rhythms come directly from this age, unstrained [*sic*] by musical tradition and convention, but their organization has foundation in the classics and opens up long vistas back to the primitive, and ahead to the sort of future which has troubled all observant modern minds. . . . There is terror in the grinding of machinery, in the ominous thumps and groans and whirrs, but there is also dignity in the persistence with which humanity bends it back to a new load and starts it pulsing into a macabre sort of jazz. It is the ancient song of work, the old mills of God, fitted up with electric power and polished steel [this last sentence underlined by Antheil in the printed newspaper article].[61]

While Antheil's conflation of the primitive and the mechanistic can be understood as a "sign of the times," it was definitely also a manifestation of the enormous influence Stravinsky exerted on Antheil in the teens and twenties. Antheil met Stravinsky in Berlin in 1922, and every day for the two months Stravinsky spent in Berlin, the two composers met and discussed music in America and other matters (much to the older man's annoyance, by some accounts).[62] Antheil was particularly attracted to his mentor's anti-Romantic, mechanistic style: "Stravinsky's music, hard, cold, unsentimental, enormously brilliant and virtuous [*sic*], was now the favorite of my postadolescence. In a different way it achieved the hard, cold postwar flawlessness which I myself wanted to attain. . . ."[63] As Antheil biographer Linda Whitesitt points out, Antheil's summation of his own style is very close to his description of Stravinsky's: "I represented the anti-expressive, anti-romantic, coldly mechanistic aesthetic of the early twenties."[64] According to Whitesitt, Stravinsky was the primary influence on Antheil's compositional style in the twenties.[65] As his contemporaries make clear, Antheil's fascination with, and absorption of, Stravinsky's style was not limited to the anti-Romantic mechanical aspect, however; he seems also to have absorbed the latter's use of primitivistic stylistic elements.

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[61] Elliot H. Paul, "'Ballet mécanique' is Successful as Musical Interpretation of Age," *Chicago Tribune,* Paris edition, July 18, 1926, included in letter from Antheil to his American patron Mary Louise Curtis Bok (1876-1970; founder of the Curtis Institute [1924]), July, 1926, LC; quoted in Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 26.

[62] Stravinsky had apparently been waylaid in Berlin, waiting for his mother, who was to arrive on a ship from Leningrad at the nearby port of Stettin. See Antheil, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 30-40.

[63] Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 29.

[64] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 8; Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 10-12.

[65] Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 10.

Many writers past and present have commented on the influence of Stravinsky on Antheil. Although today Antheil merits little more than a paragraph in most textbooks on twentieth-century music, in the early 1920s he was considered by many to be the luminous Stravinsky's primary competitor. Indeed, no less a critic than H.H. Stuckenschmidt, in an article written in early 1923, named Antheil as the only composer to have gone past Stravinsky with music that addressed the most important compositional problems of the day.[66] Ezra Pound, a good friend of Antheil and advocate of his music, also described him as Stravinsky's strongest competitor in modern music.[67]

Antheil caught up with Stravinsky again in Paris in 1923, attending the premiere of *Les Noces* on his first night in the French capital. In his autobiography *Bad Boy of Music*, Antheil describes Stravinsky's work: "[*Les Noces*] turned out to be a big bustling percussion piece, from Stravinsky's best (early) period. It had plenty of pianos in it, chorus, and a wealth of fine mechanistic clatter."[68] After this performance, however, the two composers had a falling out.[69] Although their estrangement depressed Antheil, he did admit that the sort of hero worship he had felt for Stravinsky was one of the greatest dangers to a young composer.[70]

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[66] H.H. Stuckenschmidt, "Umschau: Ausblick in die Musik," *Das Kunstblatt* VII (July, 1923): 221-22; translated by and quoted in Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 12.

[67] Letter, Ezra Pound to Mary Louise Bok, Dec. 15, 1923, Music Division, Library of Congress, George Antheil Correspondence, ML 94.A65, Box II. Referred to by Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* xviii. Pound actually published a small book titled *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), against Antheil's wishes and much to his embarrasment: "Ezra's flamboyant book, couched in language calculated to antagonize everyone first by its ridiculous praise, then by its vicious criticism of everybody else, did me no good whatsoever; on the contrary, it sowed the most active distaste for the very mention of the name 'Antheil' among many contemporary critics, prejudiced them before they had even so much as heard a note of mine." Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 120.

[68] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 104.

[69] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 103-108.

Indeed, the influence of *Les Noces* was difficult for Antheil to escape. In describing his *Ballet mécanique*, which itself had a huge impact on its Parisian audience at its premiere in 1924 (and on its American audience, which rioted on 10 April 1927 at the work's Carnegie Hall premiere), Antheil said: "My original idea in the work was to both synthesize and expand the piano sonatas. Also to eliminate whatever effect '*Les Noces*' might have made upon me through the first movement of the First Violin Sonata. . . ."[71] Elsewhere, Antheil refers to the influence of *Les Noces* on the First Violin Sonata, which in turn influenced his *Ballet mécanique.* In *Bad Boy of Music* he describes his attempt to resolve a creative impasse he encountered after finishing the first movement of the First Violin Sonata by taking a trip to Tunis with his wife, Böski; the trip provided the stimulus needed to complete the work in September 1923: "Finally, one day, I had to recommence the First Violin Sonata in spite of myself. I told myself that I was at least thankful that I had interrupted it for the trip to Africa. For now it began to be utterly unlike 'Les Noces' at last. The pernicious Stravinsky sound was out of my ear."[72]

Antheil, however, was never completely successful in eliminating the influence of Stravinsky, and particularly *Les Noces,* on his mechanistic/primitivist works. Writing in 1962, Eric Salzman pointed to the influence of *Les Noces* on *Ballet mécanique:* "Obviously the big influence [in *Ballet mécanique*] is that of Sravinsky's 'Les Noces'. . ."[73] The French critic Raymond Petit, writing about a 1925 private performance of two excerpts from the *Ballet mécanique,* performed on a single player piano, stated that despite the obvious rhythmic and thematic resemblances between Antheil's work and Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and *Le Sacre*, the *Ballet Mécanique* exhibited expressive and dramatic intensity and promised a brilliant future for the American composer.[74] Even a cursory listening to the *Ballet mécanique* reveals vestiges of *Les Noces:* despite Antheil's efforts, the ostinati, perpetual motion, and fragmented melodic cells point to the important influence of his Russian mentor.

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[70] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 108.

[71] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 139.

[72] Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* 127.

[73] Eric Salzman, "Disks: Wyner, Shapey and Antheil," *New York Times,* March 4, 1962, sec. 2, p. 11, col. 2, quoted in Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* xviii.

Although to listeners today the differences between *Les Noces* and *Ballet mécanique* are more obvious than the similarities, the common connection between the mechanistic and the primitive not only points to a prevalent trend in Parisian cultural life, but, as we will see, also illuminates the reception history of *Les Noces*, and helps us to appreciate the significance of the primitive in the machine age. For, surprising as it may be to us today, perhaps the most striking aspect of the critical reception of *Les Noces* is the emphasis placed on the machine aesthetic and the mechanistic implications of the scenario; the interface between the mechanistic and the primitivist aesthetic in the cultural life of the 1920s is vividly brought to the fore.

***Les Noces* and the Machine Aesthetic**

Critics repeatedly used words such as *"mécanique"* when discussing *Les Noces.* They used it to describe the quality of the music itself and to describe the scenario, the ritual unfolding, or, in the words of Stravinsky's expatriate compatriot Nicolas Nabakov, the unwinding like a metal spring on stage.[75]

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[74] Raymond Petit, "Ballet Pour Pleyela par George Antheil," *La Revue musicale,* n.d., 78-79, included in letter from Antheil to Bok, January 1, 1926, LC; translated by and quoted in Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil* 23.

Emile Vuillermoz attributed the special quality of *Les Noces* to its machine aesthetic: while *Les Noces* was, for him, an aesthetic prolongation of *Le Sacre,* its special atmosphere, sustained by music both savage and barbaric, was created by Stravinsky's "sound factory":

> . . . all he [Stravinsky] needs, to create his special pathos, is a solid machine with which to forge beautiful accents, a machine to hit, a machine to lash, a machine to fabricate automatic resonances. His genius resides in the organization of the rhythmic gasping of this sound factory, a gasping so new, so strong, so right, which dominates you, which carries you along, which subjects you to its fantasy without a reviving break.[76]

In a slightly later article, Vuillermoz takes his analogy even further:

> It is impossible to describe the irresistible effect of Stravinskyian rhythm, which is always unpredictable and unexpected, always accurate. Don't take what follows for a joke: if I was the director of a big metallurgical factory, if I had at my disposal, for example, the workshops of Creusot, I would not hesitate to organize a big celebration for the apotheosis of modern labour, and I would entrust Igor Stravinsky with the task of composing a score using the very instruments of work . . . with a few simple yet striking melodies given to the crowd of workers. I am certain that I would thus permit the author of *Le Sacre* to write, to the glory of

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[75] Nicolas Nabokov, "The Peasant Marriage *(Les Noces)* by Igor Stravinsky," *Slavica Hierosolymitana: Slavic Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* III (1978): 277.

[76] ". . . il n'a besoin, pour créer son pathétique spécial, que d'une solide machine à forger de beaux accents, machine à frapper, machine à cingler, machine à fabriquer des résonances automatiques. Son génie réside dans l'organisation du halètement rythmique de telle usine sonore, halètement si nouveau, si fort, si juste, qui vous domine, qui vous entraîne, qui vous asservit à sa fantaisie sans cesse renaissante." Emile Vuillermoz, "Premières" (see note 10 above).

> iron and fire, an extraordinary masterpiece.[77]

Vuillermoz was not the only critic to liken *Les Noces* to a sound factory. Roland-Manuel describes the instrumentation in terms of Stravinsky's "factory," overseen by the "engineer" Ansermet: "Under the surveillance of the chief engineer Ansermet . . . the machines from the Stravinsky factory obtain, in *Les Noces,* an output which surpasses the most optimistic forecasts,"[78] as does Gustave Bret: "All of this [the instrumentation] creat[es] an implacable sonorous factory, turbulent and precise, of a dynamic efficiency, superior to everything that has been done in the genre."[79] Albert Jeanneret, brother of Le Corbusier and *Professeur de Rythmique* (Dalcrozian-influenced eurhythmics) at the Conservatoire Rameau in Paris drew on assembly-line imagery, without using the actual term "factory," to describe Stravinsky's instrumentation:

> Stravinsky's old orchestra was a web of sonorities with which he wove the marvelous embroideries we know; his present orchestra is a mechanism organized with a view to the work to be realized, where each producer of sound has its exact function; no longer do we see "Mr. Flute" waiting three hours to play the only note he'll play all night. The preoccupation of the work has permitted the reduction to the very minimum of sound material and the suppression of all the useless gears that so lamentably encumber and congest the great orchestras. The sureness of sound thereby becomes pure. . . . Stravinsky's orchestra has something of the mechanical. We mean

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[77] "Il est impossible de décrire l'effet irrésistible du rythme strawinskyste, toujours imprévu et inattendu, toujours juste. Qu'on ne prenne pas ce qui va suivre pour une plaisanterie: si j'étais directeur d'une grande usine métallurgique, si j'avais à ma disposition, par exemple, les ateliers du Creusot, je n'hésiterais pas à organiser une grand fête du travail pour l'apothéose du labeur moderne, et je confierais à Igor Strawinsky le soin de composer une partition en se servant des instruments mêmes de ce travail . . . avec quelque mélopées très simples mais frappantes confiées à la foule des ouvriers. Je suis certain que je permettrais ainsi à l'auteur du Sacre d'écrire, à la gloire du fer et du feu, un extraordinaire chef-d'oeuvre." Emile Vuillermoz, "Chroniques et Notes" (see note 2 above). Vuillermoz continues the "worker against the aristocracy" analogy in his description of the instrumentation: "Les fils de ces marionnettes sont à l'orchestre, et quel orchestre! . . . On sait que la grosse caisse, le triangle, le tambour et en général tous les instruments de la batterie, longtemps humiliés par la toute-puissance des instruments à archet, ont pris leur revanche brutale sur leurs aristocratiques oppresseurs."

[78] ". . . les machines de l'usine Stravinsky obtiennent, dans *Noces*, un rendement qui dépasse les prévisions les plus optimistes." Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine musicale" (see note 10 above).

[79] "Tout cela composant une usine sonore implacable, turbulente et précise, d'un rendement dynamique supérieur à tout ce qui a été fait dans le genre." Gustave Bret, "Spectacles" (see note 10 above).

> something that plays normally and that produces effortlessly.[80]

In *Memories and Commentaries,* Stravinsky claimed that only one of the themes of *Les Noces* was derived from folk music, and that that theme was "not really a folk melody, but a worker's melody, a proletarian song," given to Stravinsky by his friend Stepan Mitusov at least 10 years prior to the composition of the final tableau of *Les Noces,* where the theme appears.[81] Whether this claim, dubious though it may be (Mazo and Taruskin have thoroughly identified Stravinsky's many folk sources for *Les Noces*), reflects the work's reception history, or whether Stravinsky intended the connection between marriage and work from the beginning, remains open to debate.[82]

Several other critics do not use factory imagery to describe *Les Noces* (and specifically its instrumentation) but do use the term "mechanical" to describe its effect. André Coeuroy, for example, comments on the way Stravinsky creates a human music from almost mechanical elements,[83] while Paul Souday describes the mechanical effect as dynamic, material, barbarous, foreign, and headache-inducing.[84] Henry Malherbe compares *Les Noces* to an industrial machine, whose lines of mathematical construction stand out, rigid and magnified;[85] for Dominique Sordet, Stravinsky's aesthetic is "lit by the light of the choice of this singular sonorous material, whose properties are dryness, force, and mechanical cleanness."[86]

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[80] "L'ancien orchestre de Strawinsky était une trame de sonorités dont il tissait les merveilleux brocarts que l'on sait; son orchestre actuel, c'est un appareil organisé en vue de l'oeuvre à réaliser où chaque organe producteur de son à son exacte fonction; on n'y voit plus le monsieur-flute qui attend trois heures pour pousser la seule note qu'il sortira de toute la soirée. La préoccupation de l'oeuvre a permis de réduire au strict minimum le matériel sonore et de supprimer tous ces rouages inutiles qui encombrent, empâtent si lamentablement les grands orchestres. La sureté du son y gagne ainsi que sa pureté. . . . L'orchestre de Strawinsky a quelque chose de mécanique. Nous voulons dire quelque chose qui joue normalement qui produit sans effort." Albert Jeanneret, "Musique. Noces" (see note 22 above).

[81] Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Memories and Commentaries* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981) 97. See Mazo, "Stravinsky's *Les Noces*" 106-107 for a discussion of this melody.

[82] A parallel can be drawn with Manuel de Falla's one-act opera *La vida breve* (1904-05; premiered in Paris in 1913), in which workers' songs representing the toil and difficulty of life are present throughout the work, and intensify as Paco's wedding to Carmela approaches.

[83] André Coeuroy, "Noces" (see note 5 above): "Chacun de ces éléments représente une matière sonore à l'état brut, et la véritable intérêt est de voir comment Stravinsky parvient à créer une musique humaine, dont les éléments sont presque mécaniques. . . ."

[84] ". . . et en somme l'effet est surtout mécanique. Du dynamisme, si vous voulez, mais matériel, barbare, forain et qui finit par donner mal à la tête." Paul Souday, "Hier a la Gaîté. Les Ballets Russes," unidentfied paper, 15 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 382-83.

André Levinson extended the machine/mechanical imagery into the realm of choreography: ". . . Elementary rhythm, performers without personality, automatized motions (the so-called 'biomechanics' of Meyerhold) make such choreography look like machinery: mechanical, utilitarian, industrial. It seems like electrification applied to ballet."[87]

Over the course of the nine years Stravinsky worked on *Les Noces* his own interest in the mechanical surfaced.[88] Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, in his *Souvenirs sur Igor Strawinsky,* tells of the years 1918-19, when Stravinsky was working on the orchestration for *Les Noces* in Morges, a community which he described as "quite hostile to all novelty":

> He [Stravinsky] even rivaled the carpenter's ribbon saw and the garage-owner's motors; and if I search for where his affinities would have been, where he would have found sympathy, it is not at the bourgeois apartments, of which there were so many in the vicinity. . . : it is in these

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[85] Henry Malherbe, "Feuilleton du *Temps* du 27 Juin 1923" (see note 6 above).

[86] "Toute l'esthétique de M. Stravinsky s'éclaire à la lumière du choix de ce singulier matériel sonore, dont les propriétés sont la sécheresse, la force, la netteté mécanique." Dominque Sordet, "La Semaine Musicale. Les Ballets Russe," *L'Echo national*, 25 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 433-435. Fergison's translation.

[87] André Levinson, "Ballets Russes: Les Noces," unidentified paper, (Russia), no date; Fergison, "Les Noces" 453-56. Fergison's translation. The description of the performers as "without personality" and the motions as "automatized" bring to mind Custine's remarks on Russian society (see chapter 1).

[88] Stravinsky began the composition of *Les Noces* in late summer/early autumn 1914. He was interrupted by his work on *Renard* in 1915, and resumed intensive work on *Les Noces* at the beginning of 1917. The short score was finished in April 1917. He then proceeded to score the first scene for an orchestra of 150. He wrote only a few pages using this orchestration, after which he experimented with separating the instrumental groups on stage. His next vision for the work's orchestration included an electrically driven mechanical piano and harmonium, an ensemble of percussion instruments and two Hungarian cimbaloms. After scoring the first two scenes along these lines, he realized the difficulty of finding two good cimbalon players, as well as the difficulty of synchronizing the mechanical elements with the singers and non-mechanical instrumentalists. Finally, in 1921, he found the definitive solution: the vocal parts accompanied by a percussion orchestra divided into pitched and non-pitched instruments. The greater part of this instrumentation was carried out in 1922, and the orchestral score was completed on 6 April 1923. See Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 215-216.

> workshops where the machines operated at full-speed as if in competition, . . . each part of the machine having its own particular sound and speed, while out of these superimposed sonorous elements a new rhythm was born; the multiple and conflicting aspects resulted in a rhythm both simple and persistent.[89]

It is not surprising that Stravinsky's second version of *Les Noces*, undertaken during his stay in Morges, includes a mechanical (or "player") piano.[90] He had been interested in the mechanical piano since 1914, the year in which the Orchestrelle Company of London issued four rolls of the Four Studies, Opus 7; in 1917 he wrote his *Etude for pianola* for the Aeolian Company in London.[91] In 1921, he signed a contract with Pleyel in Paris, allowing him to transcribe several of his works on to perforated paper rolls.[92] In the following years he arranged *The Firebird, Petrushka, Le Sacre du printemps,* the *Song of the Nightingale, Pulcinella,* and *Piano-Rag-Music,* among other works, for the Pleyela.[93] Stravinsky's interest in the player piano was twofold: not only did it allow him to set down definitively his intentions, thus eliminating what he considered to be the problematic role of interpretation in performance, but it also presented him with many interesting compositional problems not inherent in other media:

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[89] ". . . assez hostile à toute nouveauté. . . . Il [Stravinsky] concurrençait même la scie a ruban du menuisier, les moteurs du garagiste; et si je cherche où auraient dû être ses parentes et où il aurait dû trouver des sympathies, ce n'est pas à ces appartements bourgeois dont il y avait un grand nombre aux environs . . .: c'est à ces ateliers dont les machines fonctionnaient soudain à plein comme prises d'émulation; . . . chaque organe de la machine ayant son bruit particulier et son allure particulière, tandis que de ces éléments sonores superposés et de leur superposition même naissait comme un rythme nouveau, dont la résultant était simple, persistante, les facteurs multiples et contrariés." Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, *Souvenirs sur Igor Strawinsky* (Lausanne: Éditions de l'Aire, 1978) 72-84.

[90] Stravinsky was to work with mechanical pianos for much of his career. See Rex Lawson, "Stravinsky and the Pianola," in *Confronting Stravinsky,* ed. Jann Pasler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 284-301. Lawson believes that Stravinsky found escape from the demands and buffooneries of socialite Paris by working with mechanical pianos: "In a socialite Paris brimming with rich princesses, worthy musicians, and adoring acolytes, donning a metaphorical boiler suit and joining the musical mechanics must on occasion have been a great relief" (293). See also Jean-Michel Nectoux, "Stravinsky par lui-même: Premiers enregistrements parisiens," *Revue musicale de Suisse romande* 38, no. 3 (September, 1985) esp. 106-08.

[91] The *Etude for Pianola* was issued as part of a series, along with works by Malipiero, Casella, Eugene Goossens, Herbert Howells, and several others. See Lawson, "Stravinsky and the Pianola" 290.

[92] Nectoux, "Stravinsky par lui-même" 106. Stravinsky's contract with Pleyel was the most lucrative and secure financial arrangement he had in the early 1920s.

[93] Lawson, "Stravinsky and the Pianola" 293.

> It was at this time [1921] that my connection with the Pleyel Company began. They had suggested that I should make a transcription of my works for their Pleyela mechanical piano.
>
> My interest in the work was twofold. In order to prevent the distortion of my compositions by future interpreters, I had always been anxious to find a means of imposing some restriction on the notorious liberty, especially widespread today, which prevents the public from obtaining a correct idea of the author's intentions. This possibility was now afforded by the rolls of the mechanical piano, and, a little later, by gramophone records. . . . These transcriptions . . . enabled me to create a lasting document which should be of service to those executants who would rather know and follow my intentions than stray into irresponsible interpretations of my musical text.
>
> There was a second direction in which this work gave me satisfaction. This was not simply the reduction of an orchestral work to the limitations of a piano of seven octaves. It was the process of adaptation to an instrument which had, on the one hand, unlimited possibilities of precision, velocity, and polyphony, but which, on the other hand, constantly presented serious difficulties in establishing dynamic relationships. These tasks developed and exercised my imagination by constantly presenting new problems of an instrumental nature closely connected with the questions of acoustics, harmony, and part writing.[94]

Stravinsky clearly states his interest in the mechanical qualities of precision and velocity; his extensive reworking of the orchestration of *Les Noces* was also indicative of his search for the mechanical. In the words of the composer, the final instrumentation of *Les Noces* "would fulfill all my conditions. It would be at the same time perfectly homogeneous, perfectly impersonal and perfectly mechanical."[95] Stravinsky was to be the engineer and the inventor of "perfectly oiled mechanisms."[96] And indeed, the first audience for *Les Noces* heard precisely that.[97]

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[94] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (1936; rpt. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1962) 101.

[95] Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) 118. In light of this statement we must question whether Rex Lawson is correct when he implies that a mechanical sounding performance must be avoided: "What can make a performance sound mechanical is not excessive regularity, but regularity without dynamic interest, or illogical hiccups in that regularity. These faults must be avoided" (293).

Primitivism and America

The expression of a primitivist theme through what was perceived to be an aesthetic of both classicism and the machine merits further investigation. The worship of the machine and of modern technology prevalent in much of the French avant-garde reflects the obsession in France with America: Machine-age America, with its industry, technology, and popular culture, was seen by the French as a land of promise, celebrated as "ultraperfect, rational and utilitarian and universal."[98] Indeed, as a Vanity Fair writer pointed out in 1922, Americans going to France after the war to get away from America and visit the seat of Western civilization were often dismayed to find the French idolizing all things American:

> Young Americans going lately to Paris in hopes of drinking culture at its source have been startled to find young Frenchmen looking longingly toward America. In France they discover that the very things they have come to get away from—the machines, the advertisements, the elevators and jazz—have begun to fascinate the French at the expense of their own amenities.[99]

Due in large part to the role of America in the War, the French felt indebted to America;

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[96] See Nectoux, "Stravinsky par lui-même" 106: "Les musiques d'*Histoire du soldat* et le *Ragtime* illustrent bien . . . cette vie intense de mécanismes parfaitement huilés dont Stravinsky serait l'ingénieur et l'inventeur quelque peu apprenti-sorcier."

[97] At least some critics seem to have been aware of Stravinsky's experiments with the Pleyela; certainly his exploits were publicized. This awareness could have further contributed to the reception of the work as "mechanical." See, for example, André Coeuroy, "Chronique musicale" (see note 9 above): ". . . et l'on sait avec quelle passion Stravinski continue ses recherches pour le Pleyela."

[98] El Lissitzky, "'Americanism' in European Architecture," *Krasnaya Niva,* no. 49 (1925), reproduced and translated in Sophie Lissitzky-Kuppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (Greenwhich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1968) 369, quoted in Elizabeth Hutton Turner, *American Artists in Paris 1919-1929* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1988) 46.

[99] Edmund Wilson, "The Aesthetic Upheaval in France," *Vanity Fair* 17 (February 1922): 49.

some even conjectured that France was becoming a colony of America.[100] At the same time, America represented the land of the future, the one "best equipped to usher in the new age: the naive master of the machine, unencumbered by the weight of tradition."[101] America and its machine age became viable as an alternative to tradition; poets and artists defined America "as a society of, by, and for the machine."[102]

The view of America as free of tradition, existing in a permanent and vibrant present, predominated European thought from at least the nineteenth century. In 1887, the founder of the German Social Democratic Party Wilhelm Liebknecht commented that: "No traditions, no handed-down prejudices" prevented Americans from taking part in a "fresh, pulsating present."[103] Unencumbered by tradition, living in a constant present, youthful and naive: these typically primitivist catchphrases were consistently applied to America and American culture by Europeans, particularly in the post-war period; America became a new site by which France (and Europe in general) could transcend history's fate.

The benevolent, utopian primitivism associated with America's youthfulness, naivete, and lack of tradition was complemented by the association of America with the putatively malefic presence of native Indians, and the activities of the "Wild West," all of which had been extensively popularized in Europe as early as 1826, the year in which James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* was published in French translation, only a few months after its appearance in America. Indeed, the presumed savagery of

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[100] William Wiser, *The Crazy Years: Paris in the Twenties* (New York: Atheneum, 1983) 12.
[101] Hutton Turner, *American Artists* 2.
[102] Hutton Turner, *American Artists* 50, 59. On the pervasive presence of America in post-war French life, see Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), especially chapter 6, "The Americanization of Europe in the 1920s."
[103] Quoted in Honour, *The New Golden Land* 248.

American Indians was a favourite source of entertainment in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. In 1828 visiting members of the Osage tribe were introduced to Italian royalty; in 1845 American Indians performed tribal dances at the opening of an exhibition of George Catlin's Indian paintings at the Salle Valentino in Paris; in 1876 Karl May began his series of novels fantasizing the Native American—these novels gained widespread popularity in the 1890s; in 1886 a group of Sioux Indians traveling under the sponsorship of a Berlin agent went to Budapest, where they set up their tents on the grounds of the Zoological Garden; and in 1887 Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which depended prominently upon Native Americans, gave two command performances for Queen Victoria in honour of her Golden Jubilee during its tour of the United Kingdom. In 1889 Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show appeared in Paris for the World's Fair, during which the Indians were taken up the Eiffel Tower in full regalia; after seven months in France, the troupe traveled to Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Scotland, and Ireland. The troupe toured Europe from 1902-1906. The widespread popularity of William Cody's show is further attested to by Picasso's 1911 cubist painting of Buffalo Bill.[104] As Glenn Watkins explains, "In all instances the European press reported them as a vanishing race, destined according to laws of social Darwinism to disappear under the domination of white civilization."[105] The extent to which Buffalo Bill and his native Americans influenced European views of America even after World War I is attested to by the French poet Philippe Soupault, a friend of the poet Guillaume Apollinnaire, who, in a tiny treatise written in 1930 titled *The American Influence in France,* observed:

> To members of the older generation the United States is simply a foreign nation, a friendly nation, an allied nation, an enemy nation, a creditor

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[104] This chronology is paraphrased from Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) 90-97.
[105] Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre* 91.

> nation, or what not. . . . For these old Frenchmen the United States is symbolized by its armed strength and by the dollar. Thus much for their logic. But they [members of the older generation] have also created legends, and in this world of ready-made images the United States still remains the country of Fenimore Cooper's redskins, of Buffalo Bill's cowboys, of millionaire uncles. New York means skyscrapers; Chicago, factories and meat-packers. . . . And it must not be believed that a minority thinks of the United States in these terms; after careful thought one is forced to the conclusion that an immense majority of Frenchmen still cling to these childish illusions.[106]

More than one reviewer of the *Ballets Russes*'s primitivist productions assumed the performances to be representative of native Indian dance and music. Marcel Azais, for example, reviewing *Les Noces,* quipped, "In 1920 I saw, during the small jokes of that fateful season, a certain 'frontier-dance' which surprisingly resembles this one [he is referring to the 1920 performance of *Le Sacre*]. . . [T]heir frolics of Sacre are ugly. One can say as much for *Les Noces*."[107]

While Europeans obviously understood that there was a distinction between native Indians and "Americans," the spirit of the former seemed to infuse European perceptions of the latter. Writing in 1882, Nietzsche explained:

> There is an Indian savagery, a savagery peculiar to the Indian blood, in the manner in which the Americans strive after gold: and the breathless hurry of their work—the characteristic vice of the New World—already begins to infect old Europe, and makes it savage also, spreading over it a strange lack

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[106] Philippe Soupault, *The American Influence in France,* trans. Babette and Glenn Hughes (Seattle: University of Washington Book Store, 1930) 7-8.

[107] "J'ai vu en 1920, lors des petites plaisanteries de cette année fatidique, une certaine "danse-frontière" qui ressemblait étonnamment à celle-ci. . . [L]eurs ébats du Sacre sont laids. On peut en dire autant de *Noces.*" Marcel Azais, "Chronique musicale. Les Ballets Russes," *L'Action française,* 19 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 417-23. See Watkins *Pyramids at the Louvre* 90-97 on the idea that Nijinska and Nijinsky would have known more about American Indian tribal dance than about ancient pagan Russian dance, and that therefore there is some validity to the several critics who make the comparison.

> of intellectuality. . . .[108]

Nietzsche's description of the breathless hurry of work characteristic of America and Americans foreshadows the wave of labour organization known as Taylorism which swept France (and the rest of Europe and Russia) during and especially after the war. The Philadelphian Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915) set out his *Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911. His primary goals as expressed in this treatise were to "secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee," and to develop "each man to his state of maximum efficiency, so that he may be able to do, generally speaking, the highest grade of work for which his natural abilities fit him."[109] In order to accomplish his goals, Taylor timed the movements of factory workers (Taylor himself was foreman at the Midvale Steel Company), and regulated their actions to promote the greatest efficiency and productivity. As Sigfried Gideon explains in his book *Mechanization Takes Command*, "The human body [was] studied to discover how far it [could] be transformed into a mechanism."[110] In Taylor's vision, the workers themselves became fully automated, performing only those tasks that a machine could not yet perform: "Human movements become levers in the machine."[111] Taylor's ideas were taken up by industrialists and psychologists over the next few decades, and led eventually to the development of fully automated assembly lines, such as those first developed by Henry Ford. Although Taylor optimistically hoped that his management techniques would benefit both workers and employers, in practice workers were often heedlessly exploited, "driven at an inhuman pace by foremen picked for their brutality," unable to turn their heads, rest, or even go to the bathroom, unless a substitute was ready to relieve them.[112]

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[108] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Sanctus Januarius—The Joyful Wisdom Book IV," *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzche*, ed. Oscar Levy (London: T.N. Foulis, 1910) vol. 10, 254, quoted in Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come: European Architecture and the American Challenge, 1893-1960* (Paris: Flammarion; Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1995) 68.

[109] Frederick Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York and London: Harper and Bros, 1913) 9.

[110] Sigfried Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948) 98.

[111] Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command* 99.

Taylorism was first implemented in France in some of the war industries, then in metallurgical production and on construction sites; it developed most quickly in the automobile and associated industries.[113] On 26 February 1918, the Ministry of War in France distributed a circular signed by Georges Clemenceau pointing out the "imperative necessity of the study and application of methods of work according to the principles of 'Taylorism'."[114] Even before the spread of Taylorism in France, however, tourists, journalists and urban reformists such as Georges Benoit-Lévy had reported on the world of American Enterprise.[115] Hand in hand with Taylorism came its extension, Fordism, "a mode of labor organization based on the introduction of the assembly line and mass production on the one hand, and on the other, a generous wage policy that creates a mass consumer market for manufactured goods."[116] Ford's own books were immediate bestsellers in Europe and around the word.[117] First-hand accounts of Fordism at work in America were popularized in books such as *Standards* by Hyacinthe Dubreuil, who became a close friend of Le Corbusier.[118]

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[112] Robert L. Cruden, *The End of the Ford Myth*, International Pamphlets no. 21 (New York, 1932), quoted in Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command* 122.

[113] Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come* 74-75.

[114] Sudhir Kakar, *Frederick Taylor: A Study in Personality and Innovation* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1970) 2.

[115] Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come* 74. For more information on Taylorism see Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management;* Frederick Taylor, *Shop Management* (New York: Harper, 1904); Sudhir Kakar, *Frederick Taylor*; Judith A. Merkle, *Management and Ideology: The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Maurice de Montmollin and Olivier Pastré, eds., *Le Taylorisme,* (Paris: La Découverte, 1984). For a satirical account of the effects of Taylorism on daily French life, see Herve Lauwick, "Taylorisons," *L'Intransigeant,* 26 April 1923, 1. In the article the author questions whether the evolution of the modern era and the mechanization of society are on the right track after his friend, having tried to "Tayolorize" not only his department store but also his home, received the following letter from his wife: "Je me suis levée à 8 heures. J'ai déjeuné à 9 heures 11. J'ais mis 48 minutes 30 secondes 2/5 à faire ma valise. À 11 heures 58, j'ai téléphoné à l'homme que j'aime que j'étais prète. J'ai pris dans le coffre-fort 39.225 fr. 35. Nous sommes partis pour la gare du Nord dans le taxi 1597-G-7, numéro du châssis: 9.917, série A. Nous avons pris le train pour Bruxelles, à 12 heures 58, dans le wagon WW-197. L'homme que j'aime est né le 3 décembre 1890. Sa taille est de 1m. 75. Son poids est de 70 kilos. Adieu, et cent dix fois zut! Je préférerais 1.234.567 fois durailler que te revoir! . . ."

[116] Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come* 70.

America, then, represented a strange but alluring amalgam of the primitive and the modern, where the rhythms of tribal music melded with the incessant rhythms of daily life and work, and particularly with the machines which the French admired and associated so strongly with the New World. In this primitivist scenario, the anonymity and lack of individuality associated in the French mind both with Russia and with the primitive takes on a new dimension. In *Le Sacre,* the Chosen Maiden "accomplishes a rite, she is absorbed into a function of the society, and without giving one sign of comprehension or interpretation, she reacts to the powers and the shaking of a being more vast than she, of a monster full of ignorance and cravings, of cruelty and darkness. . . ."[119] In *Les Noces*, the chosen ones—the fiancé and the fiancée—are also absorbed into a function of society; a society which, like that in *Le Sacre,* is rooted in the earth. But unlike in *Le Sacre,* the vast being to which the victims are submitted is not nature, god or the elders, but rather the immense machinery of daily life. The fiancé and fiancée are but cogs in this machine, automatons playing their part in a depersonalized, purely mechanical ritual over which they have no control. Gideon himself draws the implicit parallel between the mechanical and the primitive when he states, "Quite possibly this form of mechanical work [i.e. the assembly line, where humans mechanically perform the tasks which machines can not yet do] will in some future day be pointed to as a symptom of our barbarism."[120]

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[117] Henry Ford, *My Life and Work* (London: Heinemann, 1923); Henry Ford, *My Philosphy of Industry* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1929).

[118] Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come* 70. Hyacinthe Dubrueil, *Standards* (Bruxelles: Le Monde de Demain, 1946). See also Dubrueil's personal account of mechanization in the American workplace, *Robots or Men? A French Workman's Experience in American Industry* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1930).

[119] "Elle accomplit un rite, elle est absorbée par une fonction sociale et, sans donner aucun signe de compréhension ni d'interprétation, elle s'agite suivant les volontés et les secousses d'un être plus vaste qu'elle, d'un monstre plein d'ignorance et d'appétits, de cruauté et de ténèbres." Jacques Rivière, "Le *Sacre du printemps,* " *La nouvelle revue française* (1 November 1913); translated and quoted in Truman C. Bullard, "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*," diss., Eastman School of Music, 1971, vol. 2, 303-4 (English), vol. 3, 271-2 (French).

Les Noces and the Mechanisms of Everyday Life

Indeed, many critics commented on the mechanistic aspects of the scenario itself. The portrayal of the peasant wedding ritual was understood to represent the mechanisms of daily life, the familial, social, and religious rites that exercise absolute control over all aspects, even the most intimate, of human life and love. Emile Vuillermoz sums up this vision most succinctly in his two reviews of the work:

> They [the dancers] mime the ceremonies of a common marriage. It's painful, mechanical, machine-like, burlesque and moving. . . like life! These two humble destinies are brutally pushed towards each other by all the obscure and unstoppable forces of social discipline. The choreography demonstrates, one by one, before our eyes, the workings of family and civilization. It's a terrible and unforgettable spectacle! The music, with a savage and barbarous exaltation, comments on this daily tragedy, lends it a hallucinatory atmosphere. . . .[121]
>
> We are very far from humanity, and yet everything leads us back to it with a startling force. These mechanical families, built exactly on the same model, who push towards each other their two children, who will continue toward their humble destiny, have an incredibly moving character. . . . All the mechanicalness and automatism of civilization appears here isolated and brutally illuminated by the footlights. In the play of social and

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[120] Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command* 118.

[121] "Elles miment les cérémonies d'un mariage populaire. C'est douloureux, mécanique, machinal, burlesque et émouvant. . . . comme la vie! Ces deux humbles destins sont poussés brutalement l'un vers l'autre par toutes les forces obscures et irrésistibles de la discipline sociale. La chorégraphie démonte, un à un, devant nous, les rouages de la famille et de la civilization. C'est un spectacle terrible et inoubliable! La musique, avec une sorte d'exaltation sauvage et barbare, commente cette tragédie quotidienne, lui prête une atmosphère hallucinante. . . ." Emile Vuillermoz, "Premières" (see note 10 above).

> religious rites, are we anything other than obedient marionettes?[122]

What is significant here is not only the description of the mechanical nature of society, but also the fact that Vuillermoz repeatedly draws parallels between that depressing vision and modern life: "like life!" in the first excerpt, and "In the play of social and religious rites, are we anything other than obedient marionettes?" in the second.[123]

Roland-Manuel also sees the work as a manifestation of implacable fate:

> An immense melancholy hovers over it all. An implacable fatality bends the heads of the old parents, guides the games of the assistants and the traditional jokes of the guests. These actors of daily drama, borrowed from popular imagery, appear to us to be schematic, living expressions of the inexorable mechanism that rules the actions and even the loves of all people.[124]

Sordet, too, mentions the mechanical, artificial conception of life presented in the work, while Beaudu points to its out-of-joint and mechanical soul.[125]

The tendency of the critics to comment on the mechanistic aspects of daily life, and even to identify to some extent with the victims, may be attributed to various currents in post-

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[122] "Nous sommes très loin de l'humanité, et pourtant tout nous y ramène avec une force saisissante. Ces familles mécaniques, taillées exactement sur le même modèle, et qui poussent l'un vers l'autre leurs deux enfants qui continueront leur humble destin, ont un caractère incroyablement émouvant. . . . Tout le machinisme et l'automatisme de la civilisation apparaissent ici isolés et brutalement éclairés à la lumière de la rampe. Sommes-nous autre chose, dans le jeu des rites sociaux et religieux, que des marionnettes obéissantes?" Emile Vuillermoz, "Chroniques et Notes" (see note 1 above).

[123] This view of daily life is echoed in Sérac's commentary (see note 10 above), in which he mentions "the acceptance of the vulgarity of existence" ("l'acceptation de la vulgarité de l'existence,"), and in d'Houville's (see note 2 above): "Sur un fond gris, gris comme la vie de tous les jours . . . dans la grise toile de fond, grise et unie comme la monotonie quotidienne. . ."

[124] "Une immense mélancolie plane sur le tout. Une implacable fatalité courbe la tête des vieux parents, mène les jeux des assistants et cite jusqu'aux plaisanteries traditionnelles des convives. Ces acteurs du drame quotidien, empruntés à l'imagerie populaire, nous apparaissent ici comme schématisés, expressions vivantes du mécanisme inexorable qui règle les actions des hommes, et jusqu'à leurs amours." Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine Musicale" (see note 10 above).

[125] Dominique Sordet, "La Semaine Musicale" (see note 85 above):. ". . . cette conception si mécanique et si artificielle de la vie"; Edouard Beaudu, "Ballets Russes: répétitions," *L'Instransigeant,* 10 June 1923; Fergison, "Les Noces" 372-374: ". . . comme une âme désaxée et mécanique. . . ."

War French culture. The perceived austerity, simplicity, grittiness, and stripped-down realism of the peasant wedding resonated not only with the Purist "call to order," but also with the political and sociological call to order that characterized France's devastated, if victorious, position after the war. With its entire northeast in ruins, 1.3 million dead and hundreds of thousands injured and mutilated, the "call to order" had concrete ramifications in the social and political spheres. Women, for example, who before the war had fought for the right to vote, and during the war had worked as nurses, farm workers, and factory and munitions workers, and were militant in union activity (they, unlike their male colleagues, did not run the risk of being sent to the trenches if they threatened to strike), were told, after the war, that their duty to France was to raise families, not to activate politically; the Catholic church urged its members to produce children in the interest of the nation.[126]

Indeed, the social demands placed on the family and on society in general in the post-War period may help to explain the differences in the way *Le Sacre* and *Les Noces* were received, and consequently the differences in the function of the primitive in modern French culture. In *Le Sacre,* the sacrificial ritual propitiates the god of spring, ensuring the continuation of life and bringing forth spring form the frozen ground. In *Les Noces,* the sacrificial ritual serves to perpetuate the miserable existence of the participants; no God dictates their actions, only the inexorable machinery of daily social existence. The romanticism of rebirth promised in *Le Sacre* is negated by *Les Noces*, in which the unstoppable drudgery of daily existence takes its place.

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[126] Douglas Johnson and Madeleine Johnson, *The Age of Illusion: Art and Politics in France, 1918-1940* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987) 19, 8. As the authors explain, the stagnation of the population was one of the three primary post-war issues in France (the other two being France's finances and France's relations with other European and international powers). Even before the war, the birthrate had been dropping; during the war, in addition to the number of French men killed and permanently disabled, there had been an increase in civilian deaths and the birthrate had obviously dropped substantially due to the lack of men.

Conclusion

That *Les Noces* would be received as not only primitive, but also mechanical and classical in this atmosphere in which the avant-garde reveled is not surprising. After the war, modernists had come to terms with modernity, with the rule of the machine and scientific progress. The primitive no longer served as an Other against which the West defined and transcended itself: the Parisian audience of *Les Noces* adapted this most Russian of works as a reflection of its own, American sponsored, machine-driven society. As Peter Wollen summarizes, while orientalism—and, I would add, early primitivism—was crucial to the emergence of modern art, modernism was consolidated by Americanism, by

> an aesthetic of the engineer obsessed by machine forms and directed against the lure of the ornamental and the superfluous. . . . [A]n art of the leisure class, dedicated to conspicuous waste and display, gave way to an art of the engineer, precise, workmanlike and production-oriented. This trend, which grew alongside and out of an interpretation of cubism, culminated in a wave that swept across Europe: Soviet constructivism, the Bauhaus, De Stijl, purism, Esprit nouveau. All of these were variants of an underlying functionalism which saw artistic form as analogous to (or even identical with) machine form, governed by the same functional rationality.[127]

In *Les Noces*, the sound of the Russian peasant merges with the sound of the American worker: the folk rhythms which propel the mundane cycles of life conflate with the factory rhythms which propel Europe out of its own disturbing past and forward into the machine age; the echoes of age-old tradition are transformed into the incessant beat of the new.

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[127] Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 35 and 13.

Chapter 4: *La Création du monde:* Jazz and the Post-war Avant-garde

> . . . we welcomed this sunburnt and primitive feeling, we laid our blankets in the sun and it killed all of our civilized microbes. The Negro came naturally into this blazing light, and has remained there. . . . [1]

> Stravinsky has lent me his drum and I play it as often as I can—I love the instrument for various reasons, poetry not excluded. . . . If some kind person should say to you, "Isn't your son the leader of a Negro jazz band?", please tell them: "Yes. We think it's the best job he's ever had."[2]

> I am not among those who adore machines. The word "modern" always seems naive to me. One thinks of a negro prostrate before a telephone.[3]

Introduction

No image so firmly and effectively embodied modern primitivism in the post-war period as the American jazz band, and the dancing bodies—both black and white—it accompanied. As Parisian culture became increasingly saturated with the rhythms of the jazz band, the role of jazz in post-war modernism evolved; as jazz infiltrated popular culture throughout the 1920s, it continued to make inroads into the realm of the avant-garde, which, in its inimitable fashion, transformed this most recent manifestation of the primitive in order that it serve the modernist purposes of the moment.

In this chapter, I will use the *Ballets Suédois*'s 1923 premiere of the *"ballet nègre," La Création du monde* (music by Darius Milhaud, scenario by Blaise Cendrars, choreography by Jean Börlin, sets by Fernand Léger) as both an example of, and a window into, the post-war avant-garde's obsessions with and transformations of Africana and African-American popular entertainment, specifically jazz. Still living in the shadow of both German romanticism and the continuing threat of a German uprising after the war, French intellectuals and artists, responding to the call to order set forth in both artistic and political circles, searched for new means to reconstruct a French tradition based on simplicity and French popular sources.[4] With the rising tide of Americanization after the war, however, French popular sources became increasingly overshadowed by African-American popular entertainment. While the avant-garde initially embraced the revivifying potential of jazz, it soon came to reject it outright, or, in the case of the *La Création du monde,* to adapt it as a model for French classicism: pure, precise, economical, balanced.

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[1] George Antheil, "The Negro on the Spiral or a Method of Negro Music," *Negro: An Anthology,* ed. Nancy Cunard (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) 351.

[2] Jean Cocteau, letter to his mother, quoted in *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene,* eds. Alexandra Anderson and Carol Saltus (New York, 1984) 25.

[3] "Je ne suis pas de ceux qui adorent les machines. Le mot 'moderne' me semble toujours naïf. On pense au nègre prosterné devant un téléphone." Jean Cocteau "Jazz-band" (4 August 1919), *Carte Blanche: Articles parus dans Paris-Midi du 31 mars au 11 août 1919*, reprinted in *Le Rappel à l'ordre*, in Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes* (Geneva: s.n., 1946-51) vol. 9, 127-28. All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.

The diverse reactions to African-American jazz in the general public as well as in avant-garde circles reflect the double-edged threat of jazz: its roots lay in the primitive heart of Africa, yet it flourished among the skyscrapers of the New World. Simultaneously primitive and modern, the threat to European culture and civilization was embodied in jazz's unbridled rhythmic force, perceived to emanate both from the heart of the Congo and from the mechanistic rhythms of the metropolis. The peril was linked to both race and nation: Europe was being invaded by the African tam-tam and the urban jungle, by the colonies seeking independence from French rule, and the mass, mechanized society threatening irreparably to corrupt the refinement of European civilization. The reception of jazz and the avant-garde's interpretations of jazz illuminate the multi-faceted nature of this most modern manifestation of primitivism: the avant-garde's ultimate use of jazz as a new source for the classical reveals not only the changing relationship between high art and popular entertainment, but also the nationalistic, and, paradoxically, conservative side of the post-war Parisian avant-garde.

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[4] See Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). France continued to feel threatened by Germany during the post-war peace negotiations and into the early 1920s. France would accept the replacement of pre-war alliances by an international peace-enforcing organization only if the new system provided protection agains future German aggression; British and American disarmament talks were often perceived as being hypocritical and against the interests of France because they did not guarantee protection against German aggression. The Bolshevik Revolution further complicated matters for France because it negated the possibility of alliance with Russia. See David Strauss, *Menace in the West: The Rise of French Anti-Americanism in Modern Times,* Contributions in American Studies, No. 40 (Westport, Conn., and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1978) 112; and W.M. Jordan, *Great Britain, France, and the German Problem, 1918-39* (London, 1943) 206.

The Arrival of Jazz in Europe

Parisians were exposed to American popular music and dance from at least 1889, when Patrick Gilmore and his 22nd Regiment Band performed at the *Exposition Universelle*; in the spring of 1900, John Philip Sousa brought his band to Paris to play at that year's *Exposition Universelle.*[5] According to Nancy Perloff, the most exciting part of Sousa's tour was the performance of what some consider to be a precursor to jazz, American syncopated dance music, including popular American dance pieces such as Kerry Mills's *At a Georgia Campmeeting.*[6] As Perloff explains, these syncopated dance numbers—called "cakewalks" by the Parisians, and "ragtimes" by the Americans—became an overnight sensation, sparking an intense interest in African-American music and dance.[7]

It was not until America entered the war in April 1917, however, that what came to be called "jazz" alighted on European soil. The earliest bands, such as James Reese Europe's

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[5] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 46-47.

[6] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 47.

[7] See Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 49. For detailed information on the dissemination of American popular music and dance in Paris, see 45-64. For the early history of jazz in Europe, see Robert Goffin, " Jazz in Europe," chapter 5 of *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1944).

369th Infantry Regiment's Hellfighters, were not conceived as jazz bands, but did feature "dance music with raggy inflections," and some jazz-oriented numbers.[8] The Hellfighters, featuring dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson as drum major, were assembled at Colonel William Haywood's request to get together "the best damn brass band in the United States Army." The Hellfighters' enormous success prompted other military bands to "jazz up" their music: the 350th Artillery Band, under the direction of Lieutenant Tim Brymm, for example, developed "a military symphony engaged in a battle of jazz"; Lieutenant Will Vodery's ensemble was described in the press as "the jazziest, craziest, best tooting outfit in France."[9]

In 1919 the first real jazz *artistes* brought their music to Paris, catching the attention of club and theatre-goers and especially of the avant-garde. The New Orleans clarinettist and saxophonist Sidney Bechet was the first major jazz musician to perform in Europe, as part of Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra; Louis Mitchell's Jazz Kings, accompanying the well-known dancers Harry Pilcer and Gaby Deslys, caught the attention of one of the guiding lights of the avant-garde, Jean Cocteau.[10] Cocteau's reaction to the *spectacle* echoed the popular perception of jazz as being somewhat chaotic, and demonstrates the close association of jazz music with both rhythm and dancing:

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[8] Quoted in A. David Franklin, "A Preliminary Study of the Acceptance of Jazz by French Music Critics in the 1920s and Early 1930s," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 4 (1988): 3; see also Ted Gioia, *The Imperfect Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 22-23 and James Lincoln Collier, *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978) 315.

[9] Gioia, *The Imperfect Art* 23; Franklin, "A Preliminary Study" 2. See Tyler Stovall, *Paris noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996) 34ff for a portrait of black nightlife in Paris in the 1920s.

[10] Robert Goffin says that Louis Mitchell was the first musician to bring a jazz band to Europe, in 1917; he was apparently paid 7,000 francs for a week's engagement (according to Goffin, almost 10 times the salary of a Cabinet member). See Goffin, *Jazz* 68-69. Goffin, a Belgian, along with the Frenchmen Charles Delaunay and Hughes Panassié, was one of the first European jazz enthusiasts and critics.

> The American band accompanied them on banjos and big nickel-plated horns. On the right of the small black-clad group was a barman of noise behind a gilded stand laden with bells, rods, boards, and motorcycle horns. He poured these into cocktails, putting in a dash of cymbals every now and then, getting up, strutting, and smiling to the angels.
>
> M. Pilcer, in full-dress suit, gaunt and well rouged, and Mademoiselle Gaby Deslys, a great ventriloquist's doll with porcelain face, corn-colored hair, and ostrich-feathered gown, danced through this tornado of drum and rhythm, a sort of domesticated catastrophe which left them intoxicated and myopic, beneath a shower of six anti-aircraft searchlights.[11]

From the very beginning, jazz critics emphasized the connection between jazz, dancing, and rhythm. The very term "jazz" had no clear definition in most French writing about jazz well into the 1920s. As William H. Kenney III explains, the word often carried visual, rather than aural, connotations. In the mid-1920s, well-known jazz musicians such as Sidney Bechet, Tommy Ladnier, Arthur Briggs, Claude Hopkins and Doc Cheatham played for all-Black Broadway stage shows such as the *Revue nègre* (1925, in which Josephine Baker gained instant notoriety and was catapulted to stardom), *Blackbirds of 1926,* and *Blackbirds of 1928.* This led the Parisian audience to associate jazz with dancing and theatrical productions; indeed, French audiences used the term "un jazz" to refer to any venue that showcased dancing African-American entertainers.[12] Likewise, the drum set was often called "un jazz," thanks to its introduction to Europe by Bennie Payton's band and Mitchell's Jazz Kings.[13] Some writers also called the orchestra itself "un jazz"[14]; Milhaud used the word in this manner when describing *La Création du*

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[11] Jean Cocteau, quoted in Frank Driggs and Harris Lewine, *Black Beauty, White Heat: A Pictorial History of Classical Jazz* (New York: William Morrow, 1982) 206.

[12] William H. Kenney III, "*Le Hot:* The Assimilation of American Jazz in France, 1917-1940," *American Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 6.

[13] Kenney, "*Le Hot*" 6-7.

[14] Kenney, "*Le Hot*" 7.

monde: "In my ballet *La Création du monde,* I wanted to treat my subject symphonically and I set out to compose something in the most sombre style, expressed by a slightly augmented jazz orchestra [un orchestre qui est un jazz un peu augmenté]."[15] Furthermore, "Le Jazz" referred to a specific American dance step.[16] When the word "jazz" *was* used to refer to a style of music or set of performance practices, writers were inconsistent regarding which stylistic features constituted jazz: did the big white bands such as Paul Whiteman's best represent jazz? the popular Parisian duo Wiéner and Doucet?[17] African-American musicians only? or the tin pan alley style of Irving Berlin? According to jazz historian André Hodeir, "for a European, the word jazz evoked small coloured bands, large white orchestras like Paul Whiteman's, and even whimsical ensembles in which car horns competed for the spotlight with musical saws."[18] The more sophisticated writers were able to differentiate various types of American and African-American popular music. Milhaud, for example, distinguished among the types of jazz being played in New York in 1922:

> I quickly grew weary of the perfect, but inhuman and conventional jazz of Broadway [probably big bands like Whiteman's], while on the other hand Harlem constantly attracted me. Uptown, the black jazz bands were harsher, less perfect, but more African and more dramatic. They let

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[15] " Dans mon ballet: *La Création du monde*, j'ai voulu traiter mon sujet symphoniquement et je me suis appliqué à une écriture aussi sobre que possible, exprimé par un orchestre qui est un jazz un peu augmenté." Milhaud, "Les Ressources nouvelles de la musique," from a lecture given 22 May 1924 at the Groupe d'études philosophiques et scientifiques pour l'examen des idées nouvelles, at the Sorbonne, Amphithéâtre Richelieu, transcribed in *L'Esprit nouveau* 25 (1924): N. pag.

[16] Kenney, *"Le Hot"* 7.

[17] Wiéner and Doucet were a popular piano duo who played at the Gaya bar (established by Wiéner and Milhaud) in the rue Duphot. Wiéner was a champion of modern music, bringing Schoenberg's work, for example, to the attention of French composers; he was also a jazz amateur and friend of Milhaud and his circle, and played an important role in the dissemination of jazz music in Paris in the 1920s. See Tobias Widmaier, "Der weiße Neger vom 'Boeuf sur le toit': Jean Wiéner und die Jazzrezeption im Umkreis der Groupe des Six," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 15 (September 1993): 34-36; and Jean Wiéner, *Allegro appassionato* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1978).

[18] André Hodeir, *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence,* trans. David Noakes (New York: Grove Press, 1956) 247.

> themselves go in intense improvisations that resulted in counterpoint of great complexity. Hot jazz obviously came from there. . . . I also went to see the black theatres and musical comedies. . . .[19]

André Schaeffner and André Coeuroy, esteemed jazz critics of the time, distinguished among the various types of African and African-American musics, but also pointed out their similarities: "Schaeffner is therefore perfectly justified when he says that from the violent musics of Africa, to the plantation chants of the Antilles or Louisiana, to spirituals, and, finally, to jazz, all concern but one musical act, whose basic characteristics vary little: and this expression, reduced to a minimum, has no less than conquered three continents."[20] Still others distinguished between *musique nègre,* which was African, and jazz, which was American.[21]

The Primitive in Jazz

The close association of jazz with African-American dance and rhythm consolidated the popular perception of jazz as a manifestation of the primitive. Well before the coming of jazz to Paris, French colonialist writers depicted the putative savagery of African dancing, which they characterized as primitive, unrefined, and explicitly sexual: a frenzy whipped up by the persistent beat of the tam-tam. Subsequently, writers in the 1920s often made a point of connecting the current European dance trends with what they perceived to be their primitive roots in Africa.[22] The connection between dancing and unbridled sexuality served to reinforce the primitivism associated with jazz. The surrealist writer Philippe Soupault made this association explicit when he wrote in 1928:

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[19] " J'ai été vite lassé des jazz de Broadway parfaits, mais inhumains, conventionnels, par contre Harlem m'attirait constamment. Chez les Nègres de New York, uptown, les jazz bands étaient plus rudes, moins parfaits, mais plus africains et plus dramatiques. Ils se laissaient aller à des improvisations dans l'intensité qui aboutissaient à des contrepoints d'une grande complexité. C'est évidemment de là qu'est sorti le jazz Hott. . . . J'allai aussi voir des théâtres nègres et des comédies musicales. . . ." Darius Milhaud, "La musique 'pas sérieuse,'" *Jazz* 325 (January 1984; taken from a lecture given at an earlier, unspecified, date): 55.

[20] "Schaeffner est donc parfaitement fondé à dire que des musiques violentes d'Afrique aux chants des planteurs des Antilles ou de la Louisiane, aux spirituals, au jazz enfin, il ne s'agit toujours que d'un même fait musical, dont les aspects, au vrai, sont peu variés: et cette expression réduite à un minimum n'en a pas moins conquis trois continents." André Coeuroy, "Le Jazz," *L'Art vivant* 2 (15 August 1926): 616.

[21] See, for example, Henry Malherbe, "Musique nègre," *Feuilleton du Temps* (4 September 1929).

> I am not among those who say that sex plays a primary role [in dance], but I agree that its importance is primordial, I admit even that a dance, even a funeral march, must be, in certain ways, erotic. It is definitely because of this that puritans from all eras and all countries have tried by all means possible to disfigure, or more precisely, to 'desexualize' dance.[23]

Pierre Loti, one of the most widely read of the nineteenth-century authors of colonialist fiction, vividly recounted scenes from African colonial life for his readers back home in France. In his widely read novel *Le Roman d'un spahi* (1881), Loti exemplified the association of music, rhythm, dancing, and unbridled sexuality believed by Europeans to be characteristic of the African tam-tam:

> *Anamalis fobil!*—shouted the *Griots* while hitting their drums,—eyes inflamed, muscles taut, sweat streaming down their bodies.
>
> And everyone repeated, clapping their hands frantically: *Anamalis fobil!—Anamalis fobil!* . . . the translation [of these words] would burn these pages . . . *Anamalis fobil!* the first words, the most important, the refrain of this possessed chant, drunk on ardour and license,—the chant of the springtime *bamboulas*!
>
> *Anamalis fobil!* howl of unbridled desire,—of black sap overheated in the sun, and torrid hysteria . . . a halleluliah of negro love, a hymn of seduction, sung also by nature, by the air, by the earth, by the plants, by fragrances!
>
> At the *bamboulas* of spring, the young boys mingled with the young girls, who had just donned, with great ceremony, their nubile

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[22] Indeed, the connection between dance and the primitive was entrenched in European society. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* Sir William Lucas says, "What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy!—There is nothing like dancing after all.—I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies." To which Mr. Darcy replies, "Certainly Sir;—and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world.—Every savage can dance." Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* ed. Donald J. Gray (1813; New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966) 16.

[23] "Je ne suis pas de ceux qui disent que seul le sexe dit jouer un rôle [dans la danse] mais je conviens que son importance est primordiale, j'avoue même qu'une danse, fût-elle une marche funèbre, doit être, par certains côtés, érotique. C'est bien à cause de cela que les puritains de tous les temps et de tous les pays ont cherché par tous les moyens à défigurer ou plus exactement à "désexualiser" la danse. . . ." Philippe Soupault, *Terpsichore* (Paris: Émile Hazan, 1928) 95.

> costume, and, with crazy rhythms, with maddening notes, they all sang and danced on the sand: *Anamalis fobil!*[24]

More than forty years later, René Trautmann, a French army doctor in Africa, described the overtly sexual aspect of African dancing in his novel *Au Pays du "Batouala"*:

> . . . [T]he native tam-tams indicate, with the negroes, very particular preoccupations . . . [such as] love stripped of all the idealization that our civilized culture has added to it. . . . [O]ur spiritual refinement is taken back to its point of departure, the sexual instinct . . . [It] is no longer a sentiment, but a function.[25]

Trautmann's interpretation of African dancing was echoed repeatedly by critics of jazz and the dances it accompanied in Paris. Trautmann himself lamented the fact that "certain current French dances tend to imitate some of the attitudes dear to the virtuosos of the *tam-tams!"* [26] Indeed, the colonialist vision of African music, rhythm, and dancing informed much of the reception of jazz in Paris in the 1920s, reinforcing the belief that jazz was of "primitive" origins. Ernest Ansermet, for example, in describing the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in 1919, commented on the way the musicians "let themselves go . . . according to their heart's desire," about how they "dance the music within themselves," while playing it, and "abandon themselves" to their favourite effects, whereupon "the doors suddenly open onto an immense orgy."[27] Similarly, Gustave Fréjaville, *Comoedia*'s music-hall critic, discussed the apparent loss of control in a 1924 jazz-accompanied tap-dance routine:

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[24] *"Anamalis fobil!*—hurlaient les Griots en frappant sur leur tam-tam, —l'oeil enflammé, les muscles tendus, le torse ruisselant de sueur./Et tout le monde répétait en frappant des mains, avec frénésie: *Anamalis fobil!—Anamalis fobil!* . . . la traduction en brûlerait ces pages . . . *Anamalis fobil!* les premiers mots, la dominante et le refrain d'un chant endiablé, ivre d'ardeur et de licence, —le chant des bamboulas du printemps!/Anamalis fobil! hurlement de désir effréné, —de sève noire surchauffée au soleil et d'hystérie torride . . . alleluia d'amour nègre, hymne de séduction chanté aussi par la nature, par l'air, par la terre, par les plantes, par les parfums!/Aux bamboulas du printemps, les jeunes garçons se mêlaient aux jeunes filles qui venaient de prendre en grande pompe leur costume nubile, et, sur un rythme fou, sur des notes enragées, ils chantaient tous, en dansant sur le sable: *Anamalis fobil!*" Pierre Loti, *Le Roman d'un spahi* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1900) 111-12. According to William Schneider, Loti's novel went through forty-nine editions from its appearance in 1881-1900. See William H. Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982) 193.

[25] ". . . tous ou presque tous les tam-tams indigènes indiquent, chez les nègres, des préoccupations très spéciales...L'amour dépouillé de tout l'idéal que lui ont ajouté notre culture, notre civilization, notre raffinement spirituel, est ramené à son point de départ: l'instinct sexuel, ce n'est plus un sentiment, mais une fonction." René Trautmann, *Au Pays de "Batouala": Noirs et blancs en Afrique* (Paris: Payot, 1922), conflation of two passages 83, 18. Translated by and quoted in Jody Blake, "Le Tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900-1930," diss., 2 vols., University of Delaware, 1992, 287. This dissertation has since been published with the same title (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Not all of the material from the dissertation has been included in the book, however, where possible I provide references to the book rather than the dissertation. Blake, an art historian, covers ground that overlaps significantly with some of my research in this chapter. We have both examined many of the same sources, often coming to similar conclusions; I have attempted at all times to cite her when our research has overlapped or when I have relied on her findings to substantiate my own ideas.

[26] " Je regrette à ce propos de constater que certaines danses françaises actuelles tendent à imiter quelques-unes des attitudes chères aux virtuoses des tam-tams!" Trautmann, *Au Pays de "Batouala"* 83; translated by and quoted in Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 327.

> Sometimes, suddenly seized by a sort of delirium, he abandons himself to the broken rhythms of the jazz band with such a fury, such an audacious disarticulation, such a free imagination, that one is surprised to see him subsequently spring up and right himself, smiling and with his chest thrown out, always master of himself, regulating the singular outbursts of lucid folly which characterize his original talent.[28]

While critics such as Ansermet and Fréjaville, in their use of colonialist/primitivist rhetoric, merely implied the connection between jazz and the African tam-tam, many other critics explicitly claimed that jazz and popular dance descended directly from African music and dance. André de Fouguière, for example, wrote that "the fox trot, the one step, the tango are clearly of exotic origin; the cadence of them is jerky and essentially rhythmic. These dances that we call modern because of their recent importation, derive from a prehistoric age, in as much as they are close relatives of negro dances."[29] Jazz aficionados also drew the parallel between jazz and African music. André Coeuroy's observations on this connection have already been noted above; Milhaud, too, linked the two traditions: "With them [i.e., African Americans] dance has kept an African, savage character; the insistence and intensity of the rhythms and melodies make it tragic and desperate."[30]

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[27] ". . . j'imagine que, connaissant la voix qui leur est attribuée dans l'ensemble harmonique, et conscients du rôle que doit tenir leur instrument, ils peuvent se laisser aller, dans un certain sens et à l'intérieur de certaines limites, selon leur coeur. Ils sont si entièrement possédés de la musique qu'ils jouent qu'ils ne peuvent s'empêcher de la danser en eux-mêmes, de telle sorte que leur jeu est un vrai spectacle, et lorsqu'ils se livrent à un de leurs effets favoris qui est de prendre le refrain d'une danse dans un mouvement subitement deux fois plus lent et avec une intensité et une figuration redoublées, il se passe vraiment une chose saisissante: il semble qu'un grand vent passe sur un forêt, ou que des portes se sont brusquement ouvertes sur une immense orgie." Ernest Ansermet, "Sur un orchestre nègre," *La Revue romande* (15 October 1919): 11; partially quoted in Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 121. My translation, after Blake.

[28] "Parfois, saisi soudain d'une sorte de délire, il s'abandonne aux rythmes brisés du jazz-band avec une telle fougue, une désarticulation si audacieuse, une si libre fantaisie, qu'on est tout surpris de le voir ensuite jaillir et se redresser, sourisant et cambré, toujours maître de lui, réglant avec une étonnante maîtrise ces singuliers accès de folie lucide qui charactérisent son talent original." Gustave Fréjaville, "Chronique de la semaine," *Comoedia* (1 January 1925), in Gustave Fréjaville, "Chronique du music-hall," Collection Rondel, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ro 16, 443, vol. 3; translated by and quoted in Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 343.

The close connection commonly believed to exist between jazz and "primitive" Africa elicited a defensive response among some European critics, who perceived a potential threat inherent in the primitive nature of jazz; this perception can only have been exacerbated by social, political, and demographic changes taking place in France, including the incipient drive for independence in France's African colonies, and the growing black presence in France.[31] Indeed, many critics articulated a veritable fear of racial confrontation and even miscegenation. George Antheil, in his article "The Negro on the Spiral," in which he described what he saw as the ever-widening geographical spiral of music, claimed that "Europe has been impregnated, and impregnated deeply [by 'African' music]."[32] He described a reaction of panic on the part of Europeans; after having fallen in love with the music of "the Congo," the Western nations staged a defensive attempt to become more thoroughly Western. According to Antheil, however, the French, the German, the British, and the Americans could not escape the influence of Africa:

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[29] "Les autres danses, le fox trott, le one step, le tango sont nettement d'origine exotique; la cadence en est heurtée et essentiellement rhythmique./Ces danses que nous appelons modernes, parce que d'importation récente, dérivent d'un âge préhistorique, tant elles sont proches parentes des danses nègres." André de Fouguière, "Les Danses à la mode," *La Danse* 1 (October 1920): np; translated by and quoted in Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 55.

[30] "Chez eux la danse garde un caractère africain et sauvage; l'insistance et l'intensité des rythmes et des mélodies en font une chose tragique et désespérée." Milhaud, "L'Évolution du jazz-band et la musique des nègres d'Amérique du Nord," *Études* (Paris: Éditions Claude Aveline, 1927) 58-59.

[31] In the post-war period the black presence in Paris and elsewhere in France increased considerably, due both to immigration from Africa and the Caribbean, and the growing political activism of the population, as witnessed at the First and Second Pan-African Congresses held in Paris in 1919 and 1921, for example. See Philippe Dewitte, *Les Mouvements nègres en France 1919-1939* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1985).

[32] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 349.

> Then, frightened at the gigantic black apparition, each European people scurried hurriedly towards their own racial music; the Latins became more Latin, and the Germans more German (and the Britons and white Americans of that time, having mixed French impressionism with Russian and German avant-gardism, became absolutely incomprehensible). From 1920 to 1925 we see one definite trend. . . . [N]o matter how absolutely Latin the Latins might become, . . . or how Germanic the Germanics might become, . . . deep down (or perhaps not even concealed at all) . . . is *ever* present the new *note* of the Congo.[33]

And here, Antheil emphasized that this music is not American, but African; its source is rhythmic, arising from the groins, the hips and the sexual organs.[34] Using Civil War imagery, Antheil described the attempt of European composers to ward off the African threat:

> Waking up one morning somewhere around 1925, the musical world of Europe became alarmed at its racial problem, even as once long ago North America woke up after the Civil War of 1865 frightened to death with the spectre of a mulatto or an octoroon population. Thereupon came the reaction. Every time a white composer was caught consorting with Negro music he was promptly run off and musically lynched; after a vigorous year of campaigning Europe sat back and told itself that Negro music was no more.[35]

No matter how hard they tried, however, European composers could not escape the "insidious" African influence: in the post-war music of Stravinsky, Weill, Krenek, Schoenberg, Milhaud, and Auric, "we find the note . . . the technic . . . the *aesthetic* of the Congo . . . all the more important and insidious in its influence because now it is more deeply hidden but now *everywhere* present."[36]

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[33] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 346.
[34] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 346.
[35] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 348.

Antheil's tone, playful though it is, echoes the more astringent tone of many of the critics of jazz and African-American popular entertainment throughout the 1920s. Like Antheil, these critics focused almost exclusively on the Africanness of the spectacles, seeing the rise of jazz and its associated entertainments in France as a specifically racial threat which had the potential to lay waste to French culture. Especially towards the end of the decade, with the overwhelming success of dance and music spectacles such as *La Revue nègre* (1925) starring Josephine Baker, some critics became almost hysterical in their tone of disapproval.[37] Maurice de Waleffe, for example, in 1926, advocated taking action to protect the future of France's culture from the "African" invasion: "the future of our arts and of our luxury industries depends perhaps on an action that we will know how to make in time, before being swamped by the invasion of *l'art nègre* and of la bamboula!"[38] Similarly, in André Reuze's *La Vénus d'Asnières, ou dans les ruines de Paris* (1924), African archeologists discover that the self-destruction of European culture was foretold by an uncontrollable dancing craze.[39] Jacques-Emile Blanche, in his review of *La Revue nègre* in *La Revue nouvelle*, noted that "The Cassandras claim that our country will soon belong to all people except our own, that our nationality will somehow dissolve, absorbed by younger ones."[40] And Jean Botrot, perhaps one of the Cassandras mentioned by Blanche, asked, in 1925, "Has the conquest of old Europe by young and frantic tribes already begun?"[41] Also speaking of *La Revue nègre*, Robert de Flers, in *Le Figaro* (the newspaper of choice for *tout-Paris)* claimed that

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[36] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral" 348.

[37] For Josephine Baker, see Phyllis Rose, *Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in Her Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1989); Josephine Baker and Jo Bouillon, with Jacqueline Cartier, *Joséphine* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1976); Lynn Haney, *Naked at the Feast: A Biography of Josephine Baker* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981); Marcel Sauvage, *Les Mémoires de Joséphine Baker*, illustrated by Paul Colin (Paris: S. Kra, 1927).

[38] "L'avenir de nos arts et de nos industries de luxe dépend peut-être d'un geste que nous saurons faire à temps, avant d'être submergés par l'invasion de l'art nègre et de la Bamboula!" Maurice de Waleffe, *"Le Charleston indésirable," Journal* (5 September 1926), in file on "Danses diverses modernes étudiées en particulier," Collection Rondel, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, Ro 10, 057, vol. 1, 49; translated by and quoted in Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 253.

[39] See Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 296, n. 296.

> It represents, in effect, the most direct offence that French taste has ever received. . . . We have been invited to celebrate the cult of ugliness, the reign of disequilibrium, the apotheosis of discord. . . . One offers us a spectacle . . . stripped of all civilization, even elementary . . . which seems to make us reascend to the ape in much less time than it took us to descend from it.[42]

The African-ness of American popular entertainment was also stressed by French authors in the 1920s, who often evoked the figurative and literal impotence felt by Europeans in the face of the African-American influence. Philippe Soupault, for example, in his book *Terpsichore,* describes a scene in "un café de la rue Blomet" (probably what was to become the fashionable dance club "Le Bal Nègre") where people from Martinique and Guadaloupe "gathered Saturday and Sunday evenings to dance for pleasure. Other negros from all the ports and all the plantations of the world, having learned of the existence of this ball, came to this place and took their turn to dance." Soupault, sitting inconspicuously in a corner, watched the final dance of the evening: "Observing it all from my corner, I felt ashamed of myself and my frigidity. And I fled before it ended, as all intruders and parasites must."[43] Similarly, Paul Morand, one of the epoch's most astute travel writers (and a friend of Cocteau), contrasted the mechanical strength of Africans with the delicacy of Europeans: "They copy us, admire us. . . . They adopt the mechanical like a new religion. Tomorrow they will be at home in this new universe, this gallery of machines where we, the Whites, too delicate, will suffocate."[44]

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[40] "Des Cassandres prétendent que notre pays appartiendra bientôt à tous les peuples, sauf le nôtre, que notre nationalité se dissoudra en quelque sorte, absorbée par de plus jeunes." Jacques-Emile Blanche, "La Revue nègre," *La Revue nouvelle* (Feb. 1926), reprinted in *Propos de peintre: De Gauguin à la revue nègre,* 4th edition (Paris: Emile-Pau Frères, 1928): 209-10.

[41] "La conquête de la vieille Europe par des tribus jeunes et frénétiques aurait-elle déjà commencé?" Jean Botrot, "Les Ballets nègres à l'Opéra," *Paris Soir* (26 November 1925): 2.

[42] "Il représente, en effet, l'offense la plus directe qu'ait jamais reçue le goût français. . . . L'on nous convie à célébrer le culte de la laideur, le règne du déséquilibre, l'apothéose de la discordance . . . qui semble nous faire remonter au singe en beaucoup moins de temps que nous n'avons mis à en descendre." R. de Flers, "La Semaine dramatique: Théâtre des Champs-Elysées Music-Hall: La revue nègre," *Le Figaro* (16 November 1925): 1; translated by and quoted in Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 268.

African culture and African-American culture in general were frequently confused in the European mind in the 1920s. It was this imagined connection, even fusion, however, that elevated jazz to a place of prominence in the avant-garde's continuing fascination with primitivism. For it was precisely the connections between "primitive" Africa and "modern" America that allowed the avant-garde to transform jazz into a vehicle for classical expression.

Jazz as a Symbol of Modernity

In post-war jazz reception images of the frenetic pace of American life were conjured up alongside of, and sometimes replaced, images of the African tam-tam; indeed, despite—and because of—its primitivist connotations, jazz became the prime symbol for modern, mechanized, urban America.[45] Lucien Farnoux-Reynaud, for example, evoked both the African tam-tam and American machinery in his description of jazz:

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[43] ". . . des Martiniquais et des Guadeloupéens se réunissaient le samedi et le dimanche soir pour danser selon leur bon plaisir. D'autres nègres de tous les ports et de toutes les plantations du monde, ayant appris l'existence de ce bal, se précipitaient en ce lieu et dansaient à leur tour." Soupault, *Terpsichore* 77, 81.

[44] "Ils nous copient, nous admirent. . . . Ils adoptent la mécanique comme une religion révélée. Demain, il sera chez lui dans cet univers nouveau, cette galerie des machine où nous, les Blancs, trop délicats, étoufferons." Paul Morand, *Paris-Tombouctou* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1928) 271. For more on Morand's travel writing, particularly his views on America and African Americans, see Strauss, *Menace in the West* 74-75. Strauss observes that Morand, in several of his shorter works, "portrayed the tension between the environment of urban America and the instincts of Afro-Americans" (75).

[45] This is no surprise, at one level: As Frank Costigliola points out, "Europeans interpreted virtually every manifestation of American culture, whether it was music, films, or automobiles, as the product of a society dominated by technology and the machine. . . . In virtually every cultural aspect, there was significant interchange between America and Europe during the 1919-1933 period, with most, but not all, of the influence flowing eastward." *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 19-20. See also below.

> These blues and Charlestons come to us intact from across the Atlantic with this mixture of mechanical hyperaesthesia and primitive African verve. From this duality, tam-tam and frenzy of the combustion engine, emanates . . . a tragic nostalgia of exiled slaves corresponding curiously with that of an extreme civilization bullied by machinism. . . . These melodies succeed in translating our hours at once primitive because of the domination of material worries and decadent because of the exacerbation of our nervous system. This frenzy, this will for immediate and brutal satisfaction, is not born of a sweetness of life, but of the fear of tomorrow.[46]

Likewise, for Maurice Montabré, the charleston is not only “bestial” but also “symbolizes [our] totally mechanized epoch, ruled by money-making machines.”[47]

Many were the writers who heard the mechanized metropolis in the sounds of the jazz band. André Warnod, for example, believed the jazz-band to better represent modern life than the music of Marinetti’s futurists:

> the jazz-band, it is the gasping of the machine, the vibration of the automobile; the train that grates on the rail, the tramway that passes clanging its bell. It is the railway catastrophe, the boiler that explodes, the howling siren of the sinking ship, and all that carried along by an infernal whirlwind, frenetic, which mixes everything together, which dashes

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[46] “ Ces blues et charlestons nous arrivent intacts d’outre-atlantique avec ce mélange d’hypersthésie mécanique américaine et de verve primitive et africaine. De cette dualité, tam-tam et fièvre du moteur à explosions, émane tour à tour un humour fantastique, un peu simiesque parfois, et une nostalgie tragique d’esclaves exilés correspondant curieusement à celle d’une extrême civilisation brimée par le machinisme. . . . L’Époque du jazz-band leur révélait son âme véritable. Pourquoi seules ces mélodies parviennent à traduire nos heures à la fois primitives par la domination du souci matériel et décadentes par l’exacerbation du système nerveux. Cette frénésie, cette volonté de la satisfaction immédiate, brutale, ne naissent pas d’une douceur de vivre, mais de l’épouvante du lendemain.” Lucien Farnoux-Reynaud, “L’Époque du jazz-band,” *Le Gaulois* (6 March 1926): 1; translated by and quoted in Blake, “Le Tumulte noir” 424.

[47] “bestial . . . symbolise une époque totalement mécanisée, sous le règne des machines-à-faire-de l’argent.” Maurice Montabré, “Pour une Renaissance: Eloge du Charleston,” *Intransigeant* (26 March 1927; date incorrect according to Blake), in file on “Danses diverses modernes étudiées en particulier,” Collection Rondel, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Paris, Ro 10,057, vol. 1; quoted in Blake, “Le Tumulte noir” 460, n. 72. Translation mine.

> everything down in the unpitying droning of the horn.[48]

Le Corbusier, after visiting New York, repeatedly linked jazz to modernity, and specifically to the urban sound of machinery. In *When the Cathedrals Were White,* for example, he proclaimed that

> In an excited Manhattan, the Negroes of the USA have breathed into jazz the song, the rhythm and the sound of machines. . . . In Harlem as on Broadway, the Negro orchestra is impeccable, flawless, regular, playing ceaselessly in an ascending rhythm: the trumpet is piercing, strident, screaming over the stamping of feet. It is the equivalent of a beautiful turbine engine running in the midst of human conversations. Hot jazz.[49]

In another passage, he compares, in a disparaging manner, the vivid mechanical uproar that is jazz to Gounod and Massenet:

> The radio broadcasts the Negro spirit into the home. The Negroes have virgin ears, a fresh curiosity. The sounds of life echo in them. New sounds, of everything and from everywhere, perhaps ugly or horrible: the grinding of the streetcars, the unchained manes of the subway, the pounding of machines in factories. From this new uproar around our lives, they make music! Meanwhile, the "conservatories" of Europe teach Gounod and Massenet.[50]

Not only did jazz evoke the frenetic pace and chaotic sounds of the metropolis; the jazz band itself, with its rhythmic precision and instrumental exactness, was often compared to a machine:

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[48] "Le jazz-band, nous paraît beaucoup plus représentatif de la vie moderne [than Marinetti's futurists]./Le jazz-band, c'est le halètement de la machine, la trépidation de l'automobile; le train qui grince sur le rail, le tramway qui passe en agitant sa cloche. C'est la catastrophe de chemin de fer, la chaudière qui fait explosion, la sirène hurlant du vaisseau en perdition, et tout cela entraîné dans un tourbillon infernal, frénétique, qui mêle tout, qui précipite tout dans le ronronnement impitoyable du klakson; le jazz-band, c'est un cataclysme à la blague qui vous fait éclater de rire." André Warnod, *Les Bals de Paris* (Paris, 1922) 292; translated by and quoted in Blake, "Le Tumulte noir" 124.

[49] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White: A Journey to the Country of Timid People,* trans. Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), conflation two passages, 164 and 161.

[50] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals* 160.

> Here we recognize a mode of expression adapted to a mechanical civilization. Doesn't a big American jazz band evoke the idea of a beautiful, well-adjusted mechanism? Sparkling under the projectors, as complicated as tools of precision, the instruments are lined up in sequence. A brief sign from the conductor: the machine is set in motion. With a meticulous exactitude the notes lead to a cadence as impeccable as the metallic movement of crankshafts and pistons. . . [51]

Emile Vuillermoz further emphasized the analogy between jazz and the machine when he credited the modern appetite for speed and machinery for the popularity of jazz and the interest of modern composers in jazz:

> It is a mechanically provoked drunkenness, but a drunkenness just the same. And men of our time can not pretend to escape it, because it is the drunkenness of speed and the intoxication of movement.
>
> This essentially modern appetite, this new joy, can not confine itself prosaically to locomotion. It must, little by little, find its expression in the arts. The triumph of the mechanical is a phenomenon whose crushing tyranny can not be eluded in any domain of contemporary activity. . . .
>
> These researchers [i.e., Stravinsky and other composers who study jazz] are attracted instinctively by the mysterious promises of the infernal machine.[52]

Although many writers glorified and welcomed the impact of machinery and American modernism, there were those in whom the pervasive Americanization that characterized the post-war period elicited a nascent, defensive nationalism. For these readers, the Americanism embodied so fully by jazz posed an even greater threat than the primitive, African side of jazz. Alongside the fear of miscegenation and racial confrontation grew a rising anti-Americanism that reflected shifts in the broader scope of Franco-American relationships in the 1920s.

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[51] " Nous y reconnaissons un mode d'expression adapté à la civilisation machiniste. Le spectacle d'un grand jazz d'Amérique n'éveille-t-il pas l'idée d'une belle mécanique bien ajustée? Etincelants sous les projecteurs, compliqués comme des outils de précision, les instruments sont alignés en bon ordre. Un signe bref du conducteur: la machine se déclanche. Avec une exactitude méticuleuse les notes s'enchaînent à une cadence impeccable comme en un mouvement métallique de bielles et de pistons. . . ." Bernard Champigneulle, "Jazz and l'après-guerre," *La Revue française* (25 October 1932): 784.

[52] "C'est une ivresse mécaniquement provoquée, mais c'est une ivresse tout de même. Et les hommes de ce temps ne sauraient se flatter d'y échapper, puisque c'est l'enivrement de la vitesse et la griserie du mouvement./Cet appétit essentiellement moderne, cette joie nouvelle ne pouvaient se confiner prosaïquement dans la locomotion. Ils devaient, peu à peu, chercher leur expression dans les arts. Le triomphe du machinisme est un phénomène dont l'écrasante tyrannie ne saurait être éludée dans aucun domaine de l'activité contemporaine.. . . /Ces chercheurs sont attirés instinctivement par les mystérieuses promesses de la machine infernale." Émile Vuillermoz, " Rag-time and Jazz-Band," *Musiques d'aujourd'hui,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Éditions G. Crès et Cie, 1923) 212.

Frank Costigliola identifies two waves of Americanization in the post-war period, the first one consisting of the 2,000,000-man American Expeditionary Force which, from 1917-1919, impressed Europe with its power, efficiency, and know-how. The second wave, which took place after the Dawes Plan (1924) and the Locarno Pact (1925) had been set in place, brought American business and culture to Europe. From 1917 throughout the 1920s, then, soldiers, tourists, expatriates, Hollywood film, and other American cultural exports to Europe served to advertise American products and life-styles.[53]

The United States was intricately involved in helping France reestablish its political equilibrium after the war. While France initially welcomed the solutions proposed by the American government, a certain level of resentment was inevitable.[54] (Lindbergh's 1927 flight across the Atlantic was used by the U.S. State Department to counter the growing European resentment of American power, which by 1926 had led to anti-American demonstrations.[55]) Indeed, in the post-war period, the role of America in French political and intellectual life was transformed from that of benevolent ally to that of absolute Other. With the Locarno Plan diverting attention from tensions with Germany, and problems in Asia subsiding, by 1926 French statesmen and intellectuals were increasingly disturbed by the power of the United States.[56]

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[53] See Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion* 167. Costigliola defines two aspects of Americanization: American cultural penetration of Europe and the simultaneous process of European modernization (22).

[54] Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion* 23.

[55] See Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion* 167, 180.

Concerned with the problems of France and Europe, and faced with the growing power and influence of America, many French intellectuals assessed American culture (or the perceived lack thereof) in relation to that of France. American cultural penetration took place within the context of increasing antagonism between France and the United States, involved as they were in disputes over debts, disarmament, security, and reparations. The growing influence of American cultural products—jazz, film, the assembly line—fed the widespread belief among French intellectuals that France was no longer a world power, and, furthermore, that it was ceding its position to the United States.[57]

The threat of American cultural hegemony was broadly discussed in intellectual circles, where American mass culture was held responsible for the collapse of Western intellectual values. The difference between American culture and European classical and Renaissance civilization was emphasized throughout the 1920s by European humanists, who provided many of the critical accounts of America. Humanists countered the specter of an American mass culture, based on technology, positivism, and the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure and profit, with an idealized image of European culture, based on moderation, refinement, and the cultivation of aesthetic and spiritual values.[58] American culture was accused of valuing mass society over the individual, and material values over spiritual ones. French humanistic intellectuals believed that in America, the assembly line, mass production, advertising, and film had eliminated the individual, sacrificing autonomy to the rule of mass society. American mass society offended the French because it challenged their long-cherished belief in the primacy of the individual.[59]

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[56] See Strauss, *Menace in the West* 94.

[57] See Strauss, *Menace in the West* 4ff.

[58] Mathy, *Extrême-Occident* 11.

The Avant-garde's Response to America

Members of the circle surrounding Cocteau and *Les Six* addressed themselves primarily to the American factor in jazz and other African-American popular entertainment of the era. Cocteau, Auric, and Milhaud, for instance, more explicitly identified American jazz (rather than African music or dance) as the culprit in the undermining of an idealized French culture, based on moderation, refinement, order, and intellect. Cocteau, in his article "Jazz-band," initially credited the New World, with the jazz-band at the center of its forces, with pointing Europe in a new direction:

> Machines, skyscrapers, steamships, negroes: these were certainly the beginning of a new, excellent direction. They marched on Capua like an army of elephants.
>
> The curve, the garland, the rebus, precious dissonances, gave their place to a more brutal disorder.
>
> Savage contacts. Art is revitalized. . . .
>
> The jazz band can be considered as the soul of these forces. They

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[59] Strauss, *Menace in the West,* conflation of two passages, 176, 183. Important French studies from the 1920s of the United States include André Seigfried's *Les États-Unis d'aujourd'hui* (1927), André Tardieus's *Notes sur les Etats-Unis* (1927), and Lucien Romier's *Qui sera le maître, Europe ou Amérique?* (1927). Their ideas were disseminated popularly by, for example, Georges Duhamel (*Scènes de la vie future* [1931]), Luc Durtain (*Quelques Notes d'U.S.A., Quarantième étage* [1927], *Hollywood dépassé* [1928], *L'Attentat de Market Street* [1926], *Captain O.K.* [1931]), and Paul Morand (*New York* [1930]). By 1930 these authors had achieved the status of authorities on America, and played an important role in creating the new image of America. For these men, the rise of the United States provided an explanation for the decline of Europe. See Strauss, *Menace in the West* 66 ff. The parallel between this assessment of the subjugation of the individual to mass culture and 19th- and 20th- century accounts of Russian collectivism and the lack of individuality (as summarized in chapter 2) is striking and thought-provoking.

> lead to it, and there they sing their cruelty, their melancholy.[60]

In the same article, however, Cocteau goes on to say that the French should not emulate American jazz: "Let us never do what specialists can do better." Rather than being whisked away by the American cyclone, French composers should be prodded by the American model to develop their own new music and art: "Let us find our own specialty. Do not despair if our specialty is more delicate, smaller. We gain in finesse what we lose in force."[61]

Cocteau claimed that the reaction against "le jazz-bandisme"—the new order that will emerge from chaos—is more important than the jazz band phenomenon itself:

> For the rest, jazz-bandism does not date from yesterday. Athens reports that "the Romans, weary of the sweetness of flutes, invented cymbals." "Cymbals! Cymbals!" he writes. "They hit oyster shells together. They made cymbals with whatever they could."
>
> Now, what would interest me would be to know the reaction against the cymbals. Because, from these turmoils, a new order always emerges.[62]

Similarly, Georges Auric, as early as 1919, bid adieu, literally and figuratively, to New York, both in his fox-trot *Adieu, New York!,* and in an article he wrote for the broadsheet Le Coq in June 1920. As Nancy Perloff explains, by ceasing to incorporate, in *Adieu,*

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[60] "Machines, gratte-ciel, paquebots, nègres, furent certainement l'origine d'une direction neuve, excellente. Ils marchèrent sur Capoue comme une armée d'éléphants./La courbe, la guirlande, le rébus, les dissonances précieuses, cédèrent la place à un désordre plus brutal./Contacts sauvages. L'art se virilise. . . . Le jazz-band peut être considéré comme l'âme de ces forces. Elles y aboutissent, y chantent leur cruauté, leur mélancolie." Cocteau, "Jazz-band," 127-28.

[61] "Ne faisons jamais ce que les spécialistes peuvent faire mieux. . . Cherchons notre spécialité. Ne nous désespérons pas si notre spécialité se dessine plus délicate, plus petite. On retrouve en finesse ce qui est perdu en force." Cocteau, "Jazz-Band" 127-128.

[62] "Du reste, le jazz-bandisme ne date pas d'hier. Athénée rapporte que 'les Romains, lassés par la douceur des flûtes, inventaient les crymbales [*sic*].' 'Des crymbales [*sic*]! Des crymbales [*sic*]!' écrit-il. 'On frottait des coquilles d'huître les une contre les autres. On crymbalisait [*sic*] avec n'importe quoi.'/Or ce qui m'intéresse serait de connaître la réaction contre les crymbales [*sic*]. Car, de ces tumultes, un ordre neuf se dégage toujours." Cocteau, "Jazz-Band" 128.

New-York!, blue notes, strains, and syncopation, Auric bid farewell to jazz, and ended the period of American influence.[63] The nationalist subtext of Auric's view is substantiated by both his own article in *Le Coq*, and by an article written by Raymond Radiguet in the same publication in May 1920. In the earlier article, Radiguet praises the merits of Cocteau's *Tambour*, and specifically the images by Roger de la Fresnaye, which Radiguet claims are masterpieces of clarity, grace, and equilibrium, whose musical equivalents are the Parisian chansons of Poulenc, and the Fox-Trot of Auric, "intentionally titled *Adieu, New-York!*"[64] In the next issue of *Le Coq,* Auric, in an article titled "Après la Pluie le beau temps" ("After the rain the good weather"), expresses a view similar to Cocteau's concerning jazz and its influence on French music. Claiming that French composers (himself included) turned to French popular music (the circus, the music-hall, the *foire de Montmartre)* because it was necessary to escape romanticism and impressionism, he says that unfortunately the "profound seductions" of Debussy and the "amiable grace" of Ravel were dispersed too explosively. And while the jazz band astounded French composers, it is now time to reinvent nationalism, which means plugging our ears to the same jazz music that awoke us to these new sounds.[65]

While Auric and Cocteau were the prime nationalists of the circle surrounding and including *Les Six,* Milhaud and Poulenc also voiced their opinions on the role of popular music, including jazz, in reconstituting a French musical voice.[66] Poulenc was perhaps the least interested in American popular sources, relying more exclusively on French sources in his efforts to return French music to classical ideals of "simplification," "counterpoint," "melody," and "precision."[67] Of the group, Milhaud seemed most interested in the popular idioms of foreign cultures. Yet he acknowledged that jazz was being replaced by classicism.[68] While he seems never to have adopted as nationalistic a tone as some of his colleagues, he was outspoken in his love of "the real French tradition" of Rameau; as Nancy Perloff explains, even American popular idioms could serve to attain the desired French traits:

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[63] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 175.

[64] ". . . intentionnellement intitulé: Adieu, New-York!" Raymond Radiguet, "Bonjour Paris," *Le Coq* no. 1 (May 1920). Perloff says that this article is also by Auric, but it seems to be by Radiguet.

[65] "Mais aujourd'hui, et ceci fixe bien la fatigue d'une époque, nous avons dû réinventer le 'nationalism.' Je veux penser comme je l'entends, maintenant que me voici d'aplomb. Le Jazz-band nous a réveillés: bouchons-nous les oreilles pour ne plus l'entendre." *Le Coq* no. 2 (June 1920). Cocteau's ploy was typical of many intellectuals in the 1920s.

[66] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 109.

> For Milhaud, however, classical ideals of simplicity, balance, proportion, and restraint were not simply associated with Bach, Rameau, and other composers of the eighteenth century. He imposed these ideals on the popular musics he loved. Thus American syncopated dance music, blues, and Parisian music-hall songs became models of classicism as well as inspirations for contemporary composers who wished to incorporate the eighteenth-century ideal. By identifying his favourite French and American popular idioms with features of classicism, Milhaud granted popular music an exalted status.[69]

The Avant-garde Reappraisal of Jazz

Ironically, it was precisely the mechanical aspects of jazz, its incarnation as a symbol of modern life, which permitted the avant-garde to transform what was popularly thought of as a primitivist idiom into a classicizing force, thus purging the potential threat sensed by many to be lurking in the foreign art form. Among the members of the avant-garde who transformed jazz in this way, the circle of artists and intellectuals surrounding Le Corbusier (many of whom, like Milhaud, contributed to the Purist journal *L'Esprit*

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[67] See Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 99.

[68] "But already the influence of jazz has passed like a beneficial storm after which one again finds a clearer sky and more stable weather. Little by little the renascent classicism replaces the broken gasps of syncopation." Milhaud, "La Musique française depuis la guerre," *Études* (Paris: Editions Claude Aveline, 1927) 22.

[69] Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 104.

nouveau), as well as Jean Cocteau and his circle (including *Les Six*), alluded to the constructive and reconstructive powers inherent in what they saw as jazz's classical or classicizing qualities; several other prominent modernists, including George Antheil, André Salmon, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Emile Vuillermoz commented on the classical and classicizing properties of jazz.[70]

At first glance the Purists' professed appreciation of jazz and *art nègre*, outlined in several articles in their journal *L'Esprit nouveau* and elsewhere, seems to contradict their adherence to the classical tradition and the "pure" values of logic, geometry, and rationality. If any group could be imagined to shun the pre-war conception of the primitive as instinctive, irrational, and so on, it should have been the Purists. In the period following the war, however, the Purists reconstrued the primitive, as it manifest itself in jazz and *l'art nègre,* with the result that it conformed most thoroughly to the post-war call to order espoused by Cocteau, Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, and their cohorts.[71] In their writings, the Purists and other members of the avant-garde focused above all on the rhythmic aspect of jazz, which they interpreted not as chaotic or frenzied, but rather as precise, economical, and mechanical. In their reinterpretation of the rhythmic nature of jazz, they managed to link what had been theretofore associated with the primitive realm more exclusively to the modern machine age. From this connection it was but a short step to the classical: as I noted in chapter 3, for the Purists, the machine age was a harbinger of classicism; industrial machines, as well as modern marvels of engineering, best represented the classical perfection first attained in ancient Greek architecture.

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[70] For Purism and the Purists, see chapter 3 as well as Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: The Architectural Press, 1960); Christopher Green, *Léger and the Avant-garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976); John Golding and Christopher Green, *Léger and Purist Paris. The Tate Gallery, 18 Nov. 1970-24 Jan. 1971* (London: Tate Gallery, 1970-71); Romy Golan, "Modes of Escape: the Representation of Paris in the Twenties," *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis,* ed. Jean Clair (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1991); Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven, 1995); Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1989); Kenneth Silver, "Purism: Straightening Up After the Great War," *Artforum* (March 1977): 56-63; Amédée Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret [Le Corbusier], "Le Purisme," *L'Esprit nouveau* 4 (1921): N. pag. On Cocteau, see Francis Steegmuller *Cocteau* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); Alexandra Anderson and Carol Saltus, eds., *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene,* (New York, 1984).

[71] Blake also discusses the Purist reinterpretation of jazz and *l'art nègre*; see *Le Tumulte noir* 137-162.

In the opening paragraph of his article "Le Nègre et le Jazz," Albert Jeanneret laid bare the principles upon which the avant-garde transformed jazz into a tool for the restoration of European music: founded on a principle of economy and maximal sonorous output, jazz brought to European music "an imperative call to rhythm."[72] The lesson of rhythm, proposed by the "savages of yesterday," carries "the vital ferment" which will put music back on its feet, in working order, after the debilitating effects of (one presumes) romanticism, impressionism, and serialism.[73] Furthermore, according to Jeanneret, through their encounter with America, Africans have learned the lesson of time, allowing them to transform a musical element of savage origins—rhythm—into a sign of modernity: "From the American, the negro learned the value of time, this compact time that requires effort, that securely organizes him, that values him powerfully. Sign of a modern mentality. That was the lesson of America."[74]

Jeanneret concludes by illustrating how jazz will lead European music into the machine age, an age based on the attainment of maximum production by the most economical means. For Jeanneret, the physical and instinctive basis of rhythm provides the foundation for a "fecund" mathematics, which will orient European music towards the new ideals of order and economy.[75]

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[72] "À la musique, [le nègre] apporte le jazz, restauration sur un principe d'économie et de rendement sonore maximal de l'orchestre symphonique actuel. Le nègre apport a la musique européenne un rappel impératif au rhythme." Albert Jeanneret, "Le Nègre et le Jazz," *La Revue musicale* 9 (1 July 1927): 24.

[73] "De même, la Musique, hier encore allongée sur des couches parfumées, ou vouée à des étreintes passionnées, ou encore à des expériences cruelles de vivisection, se doit de faire jouer aujourd'hui le ressort qui la mettra enfin sur ses pieds, en ordre de marche./Cette renaissante rythmique que nous proposent des sauvages d'hier en une forme d'art secondaire, il est vrai, qu'est la musique de danse, porte en elle le ferment vital dont les musiciens de notre génération sauront tirer la leçon du rythme." Jeanneret, "Le Nègre et le Jazz" 26.

[74] "Ce que le nègre a appris de l'Américain, c'est la valeur du temps, ce temps serré qui tire le meilleur parti de l'effort, qui l'organise avec sécurité, qui le valorise puissamment. Signe d'une mentalité moderne. Ce fut la leçon de l'Amérique." Jeanneret, "Le Nègre et le Jazz" 26.

Le Corbusier himself—Purism incarnate—commented extensively on the reconstructive powers of jazz, its mathematical precision, its rigour and exactitude. Not only was jazz "the melody of the soul joined with the rhythm of the machine," but it was also "[t]he music of an era of construction: innovating. . . ."[76] For Le Corbusier, Louis Armstrong was "mathematics, equilibrium on a tightrope. . . . [His orchestra's] precision is staggering. Nothing in our European experience can be compared to it. That implacable exactitude expresses American taste; I see in it an effect of the machine. . . . The men are tireless, like a smoothly running turbine."[77] The "rigor of exactitude," and its specifically American pleasures, also makes itself felt in the art of African-American tap dancers, who are, in Le Corbusier's opinion, "as mechanical as a sewing machine." Their art embodies Le Corbusier's "[i]dea of a masterpiece: exactitude."[78]

In the same article Le Corbusier mentions the merits of the working-class Parisian dance known as the *java.* According to Jody Blake, the java, also known as the apache or the

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[75] "On peut donc dire qu'une pensée spiritualisée, conditionnée par les moyens d'une mathématique féconde retrouvant à la base l'élément physique et l'instinct, orientera notre création musicale vers un sentiment neuf d'ordre et d'économie./Schumann, Wagner, Franck, nous ont légué une machine monstrueuse, disproportionnée à nos besoins, ceux d'une époque machiniste, à rendement maximal par un principe d'économie, et où l'invention, la juste appropriation, un lyrisme contrôlé s'avèrent comme les qualités dominantes de notre mentalité actuelle." Jeanneret, "Le Nègre et le Jazz" 27. Jeanneret takes his argument further in a 2-part series of articles titled *"La Rythmique,"* in *L'Esprit nouveau* 2 and 3. Here he elaborates his notion of rhythm as the foundation of modernity, the base of the arts and indeed of life itself. In "La Rythmique," he describes the human body as a "rhythmic machine" (183).

[76] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White* 158.

[77] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White* 159.

[78] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White* 160.

valse chaloupée (rolling waltz), was a close relative of the waltz, danced by Paris's own "savages . . . whose 'wild' and 'bloodthirsty' ways won them the epithet 'apaches'." The java was the only competition for the African-American dance steps on the music-hall stage.[79] How interesting, then, that Le Corbusier should find in this French popular dance "mathematical France, precise, exact; I find in it the masses of Paris, a society worthy of interest, so measured, precise, and supple in its thought."[80] In the mind of Le Corbusier, the mathematics and precision of African-American jazz confirmed what he and other members of the French avant-garde wished to see as the Frenchness of France: the classicism and rationality indigenous to the French people, found, after the war, not in the rarefied music of the *conservatoire*, but rather in the popular entertainment of the day.

Even jazz's predecessors in Africa were described by some avant-garde writers not only as mechanical, but also as prime examples of mathematics and engineering, the two fields of endeavour most highly valued by the Purists. The travel writer and artist Lucie Cousturier commented on how the "indefatigable rhythm" of the rowing of Nigerian oarsmen seemed to transform the men into "the large cog wheels, the burnished steel connecting rods of some heavenly machine."[81] Likewise, George Antheil commented on the machine precision of African choirs, claiming "one can scarcely believe that one has not to do with a highly civilized race, masters of steel, mathematics, and engineering, in hearing these choruses from the Congo." Having "existed under the broiling sun for thousands of years . . .[Negro music] has survived and built up an incredible musical machinery."[82]

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[79] Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 103-104.

[80] Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White* 163.

[81] This is according to André Schaeffner and André Coeuroy, who, in *Le Jazz* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1988; originally published 1926), comment, "Lucie Cousturier, remontant à bord d'un chaland le cours du Niger, nous parle de ce 'prestigieux ballet dont le rythme infatigable' l'a comme 'pétrie' durant trois jours: manoeuvre 'mécanique, saccadée',–'bruit rythmé du pas des hommes, trois pas lourds et précipités, tandis qu'ils poussent, trois pas légers suivis d'un silence, d'une syncope, tandis qu'ils retournent vers le relancement des perches comme à un assaut',–impression si forte que la vue, 'lasse, ne distingue plus des hommes, mais plutôt de grands rouages, des bielles d'acier bruni de quelque machine céleste. . ."

Milhaud contributed an article to *L'Esprit nouveau*, in which he, like most, if not all, contemporaneous commentators on jazz, focused to a large degree on rhythm. For him, as for Jeanneret and Le Corbusier, rhythm acted as an element of construction and equilibrium, rather than as an instigator of libidinous chaos and confusion; similarly, the piano became an instrument of precision: "when Mr. Buddy, the drummer of the Syncopated Orchestra, executes a percussion solo, we are confronted with a constructed piece, rhythmically balanced and of an incredible variety of expression. . . . [T]he piano [has] the dryness and the precision of a drum and a banjo. . . ."[83] Milhaud's vocabulary, drawn from the avant-garde aesthetic lexicon of the early 1920s, serves to elevate jazz to the level of classicism: "The stripped melody, sustained by very clean and sober rhythmic designs, the percussion barely perceptible, more and more inward. . . ."[84] Constructed, balanced, dry, precise, stripped, clean, sober: jazz embodied the classical ideals so ardently sought by the Purists, Cocteau, Satie, members of *Les Six*, and other avant-garde artists of the time; these are the key words used to describe avant-garde cultural products as diverse as *Les Noces* (see chapter 3), jazz, the architectural designs of Le Corbusier and the paintings of Léger.

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[82] Antheil, "Negro on the Spiral," 346; he compares these choirs to "a colossal *Noces* fabricated by a *single* people for ages . . . broader . . . wider . . . infinitely more intricate and at the same time more epic; not accompanied by four pianos in a Parisian ballet, but by the gigantic xylophones of a thousand wooden drums fashioned from the hollow trunks of trees. . . ." (347).

[83] ". . . lorsque M. Buddy, le 'drummer' du Syncopated Orchestra exécute un solo de percussion, nous nous trouvons en face d'un morceau construit, equilibré rythmiquement et d'une incroyable variété d'expression . . . [L]e piano ayant la sécheresse et la précision d'un tambour et d'un banjo. . ." Milhaud, "Les Ressources nouvelles" np.

[84] "La mélodie dépouillée, soutenue par des dessins rythmique très nets et très sobres, la percussion à peine sensible, de plus en plus intérieure." Milhaud, "Les Ressources nouvelles" np.

Like Jeanneret, Le Corbusier, Cousturier, and Antheil, Milhaud found the "primitive" rhythms of African music to be at the root of the modern, mechanical, classical precision that he thought characterized jazz. Furthermore, the primitive foundation of jazz supported two discrete but related branches: jazz bands like Paul Whiteman's, and African-American *musique nègre*, which consisted primarily of blues and spirituals; both of these branches embody classical ideals:

> Besides this mechanized music, as precise as a machine, due to its clean writing and the absolutely unique ensemble execution that the American jazz orchestras have obtained, we find a music that, while deriving from the same source, has evolved in a totally different manner with the North American negros. We must obviously look for the origin of jazz music with the Negroes. The primitive African side has remained profoundly anchored with the blacks of the United States, and it is there that we must see the source of this formidable rhythmic power, of these expressive melodies that are endowed with the lyricism that only oppressed races can produce. The first pieces of negro music published are the *Negro Spirituals*, religious songs of the slaves, of very old popular origin. . . . [85]

Although Milhaud describes bands like Paul Whiteman's as precise, clean (nette), and mechanical, thereby linking them to the avant-garde classical aesthetic, he also equates the more "primitive," African branch of jazz with European art music, for example when he discusses a singer in a "petit dancing" like the Capitol (in New York), who sings

> the same melody for more than an hour, an often poignant melody with a design as pure as any beautiful classical recitative, sustained by a jazz [band] that forms a background of incessantly renewing melodies. The

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[85] "A côté de cette musique mécanisée et aussi précise qu'une machine, grâce à son écriture si nette et à l'exécution d'un ensemble absolument unique qu'obtiennent les orchestres de jazz américains, nous trouvons une musique qui, bien qu'issue de la même source, a évolué d'une manière toute différente, chez les nègres de l'Amérique du Nord. Il faut évidemment rechercher l'origine de la musique de jazz chez les Nègres. Le côté primitif africain est resté profondément ancré chez les noirs des Etats-Unis et c'est là qu'il faut voir la source de cette puissance rythmique formidable, ainsi que celle de ces mélodies si expressives qui sont douées du lyrisme que seules les races opprimées peuvent produire. Les premiers morceaux de musique nègre publiés sont les Negro Sprituals, chants religieux d'esclaves, d'origine populaire très ancienne. . . ." Milhaud, "Les Ressources nouvelles" np.

> variations are such that they take on the fullness of a symphony. . . . Here we find the very source of this music, in the profoundly human side that it can have and that overwhelms as completely as any masterpiece of universally recognized music.[86]

Many were the writers who equated jazz with the classical tradition, commenting on its status as "high" art, drawing parallels with European music and musical institutions. In remarking that "One quickly realizes that the jazz band is an organized force, obeying obscure laws, conforming to a secret technique. . . . The jazz band is not a game of chance. Its sonorous disorder is only superficial," the music critic Émile Vuillermoz removes jazz from the murky lairs of chaos, disorder, and chance, reclaiming it in the name of organized force, law, order, and technique.[87] Writing for *Le Gaulois,* Lucien Farnoux-Reynaud goes so far as to wed classicism and instinct, the conservatory and Harlem:

> One could therefore take pleasure in this marvelous diversity and spontaneity of rhythms, more vigorous, livelier, than in Russian music, for example, and discern the instinctive classicism that joins them. Certain fugal passages irresistibly evoke an unpolished Bach, others the clavecinists of the eighteenth century. . . . It's a veritable conservatory of negro music there [i.e., in Harlem], capable of nourishing generations of musicians who will want to search through its treasures.[88]

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[86] ". . . la même mélodie pendant plus d'une heure, mélodie souvent poignante et d'un dessin aussi pur que n'importe quel beau récitatif classique, soutenue par un jazz qui forme un fond de mélodies incessamment renouvelées. Les variations sont telles qu'elles prennent l'ampleur d'une symphonie. . . . Là nous touchons à la source même de cette musique, au côté profondément humain qu'elle est capable d'avoir et qui bouleverse aussi completement que n'importe quel chef-d'oeuvre de la musique universellement reconnu." Milhaud, "Les Ressources nouvelles" np.

[87] "On s'aperçoit vite que le jazz-band est une force organisée, obéissant à des lois obscures, se conformant à une technique secrète. . . . Le jazz-band n'est pas un jeu de hasard. Son désordre sonore n'est qu'apparent." Vuillermoz, "Ragtime et jazz band" 209.

[88] "On pouvait donc, là, se complaire sans réserve à cette merveilleuse diversité et spontanéité des rythmes, plus drues, plus vives que dans la musique russe, par exemple, et discerner le classicisme instinctif qui les associe. Certain passage fugué évoque irrésistiblement un Bach fruste, d'autres les petits clavecinistes du dix-huitième. . . . C'est un véritable conservatoire de musique nègre qui se trouve là-bas, capable d'alimenter les générations de musiciens qui voudront fouiller ses trésors." Lucien Farnoux-Reynaud, "L'époque du Jazz-Band" 786.

The avant-garde reinterpretation of jazz as precise, mechanical, and classical, reflects the broader post-war reinterpretation of *l'art nègre*. Artists in many fields were attempting to equate African culture with the European tradition, and French society, perhaps grateful to the role played by African soldiers during the war, was beginning to take African culture seriously. Man Ray's *Black and White* shows the black Venus as "peer and rival of a classical Aphrodite."[89] In 1922, the Prix Goncourt, France's most prestigious literary award, was awarded to an African writer, René Maran, for his *Batouala: Véritable roman nègre* (1921). Maran, an assimilated Frenchman from Martinique who worked for ten years as a French colonial administrator in central Africa, was strident in his criticism of French colonial rule. Maran's anti-colonialist views shocked many French readers: "Civilization, civilization, pride of the Europeans, and charnel house of innocents. . . . You build your kingdom on corpses." Nevertheless, the presentation of the Prix Goncourt to Maran demonstrated that black literature and culture had earned the respect of the French cultural elite.[90]

After the war, *l'art nègre* was less frequently considered a means of entry into the realm of primitivism in its pre-war sense, and more often as a way to gain access to the highest levels of civilization. Jean Cocteau, in a letter addressed to "Paul Guillaume, négrier," and published as part of the programme to a 1917 evening of poetry and music at Guillaume's gallery at 108 Faubourg Saint-Honoré, concluded "Negro art is not related to the deceptive flashes of childhood or madness, but to the noblest styles of human civilization."[91]

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[89] Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 87.

[90] See Stovall, *Paris noir* 32. René Maran, *Batouala: Véritable roman nègre* (Paris: A. Michel, 1921); *Batouala: A True Black Novel,* trans. Adele Szold Seltzer (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1922).

Even those who had gloried in the lustiness and degeneracy of the pre-war primitive suddenly began to comment on the formal purity of African art. André Salmon (poet, novelist, art critic, and friend of many members of the avant-garde including Picasso [who drew and painted him], Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and Cendrars) is notable for the transition he made from his pre- to his post-war views. In his *La Négresse de Sacré-Coeur*, a *roman-à-clef* written during the last days of the war (1917-1919) but recounting the adventures of the *bande-à-Picasso* in Montmartre in the pre-war period, he tells the story of artists, prostitutes, and various other characters living on a "plantation" in Montmartre, replete with African fetishes and tropical atmosphere:

> . . . For it was solely upon this evening and upon this occasion that the miserable corner of the Jungle possessed all the luxuriant beauty of a tropical plantation.
>
> The baobab was really a baobab, and in the wild grass cropping up between old pots and broken bottles the hallucinations of night produced sprouting aloes wherever the eye chose to see them.
>
> The cabin where the idols sat grinning, the wattled cabin with its roof lying in moonlight, created on the summit of Montmartre a perfect setting for "The Indian Cottage."
>
> . . . Here [among the idols] were all the savage lands, nourished by anguish and by light, by wild pleasures and nostalgia, by indolence and fever, all the lands of this vast world, lands we have one day dreamed of in European fog, our foreheads pressed against the window of a hotel room overlooking the harbor. . . . [92]

The association of primitivism with sexuality is implicit in the narrative. For example, during a discussion concerning a Dahomeyan fetish, Sorgue (the Picasso character) says that only one other example exists in Europe, in the collection of Lord Pellingbrook. To this statement Florimond (the André Salmon character) replies "The protector and benefactor of working girls? He who built them palaces for home? It doesn't astonish me. . . . There's a close relation between the two passions."[93]

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[91] Jean Cocteau, "Lettre à Paul Guillaume, négrier," *Das Querschnittbuch* 3 (March 1923), translated by and quoted in Jean-Louis Paudrat, "From Africa," *"'Primitivism' in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern," ed. William Rubin* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984) 157.

[92] André Salmon, *The Black Venus*, trans. Slater Brown (New York, 1929) conflation two passages, 120, 85-86.

However, it must be noted that even in this typically pre-war rendition of the primitive, Africa makes a brief appearance as a classicizing element, when the black body of the titular character is momentarily credited with providing the very structure for the story:

> But subsequently I realized that I should substitute the title I will try to justify: The Black Venus.
>
> The negress strutted. I am grateful to you, O Venus of Rue Caulaincourt! And you have your own place in my book.
>
> May your long, lithe body, your flesh of burnished bronze, be its firm structure.
>
> May your scarlet petticoats, fragrant and swinging, be its luminous and melancholy inspiration!
>
> At the threshold of the cabaret, I turned.
>
> the negress had ceased dancing.[94]

Nevertheless, the explicitly sexual associations of the "negress's" body override any constructive values attributed to it. Similarly, when examining a mask, thought by Sorgue to be Churonepentec, the Mexican god of the harvest (but later revealed to be a Dahomeyan fetish), Florimond says "For you, Sorgue, and for me and for our host perhaps, all the art that we must gain . . . attain . . . or feign, is defined by the severe economy of this flat face which a minimum of contiguous planes enriches with high relief."[95] The attribution of economical and formalistic qualities to the mask does not, however, undermine the essentially colonialist vision of the primitive in the book as irrational, sexual and violent, as "Other."

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[93] Salmon, *The Black Venus* 90-91.

[94] Salmon, *The Black Venus* 11.

[95] Salmon, *The Black Venus* 90-91.

It is striking, therefore, that in 1920, Salmon focused on African art exclusively as a source of the classic and the constructive values espoused by the post-war avant-garde:

> Our concern with order, with constructive values, the desire for form and harmony which have since come to govern our aesthetics, were totally lacking in the undisciplined and irritable impressionist [i.e., Gauguin].
>
> A public convinced of the excellence of its own culture is at a loss to understand the anguish which drove modern artists to seek lessons from barbarian image-makers. When they had completed their tour of the world and their tour through the ages, the most thoughtful of our contemporary artists went back to the negro village, which remains unchanged from century to century. They did not do so, however, in order that they might wallow naively in some shameful cannibalism. Impressionism and symbolism yielded in Europe enough material for savagery. They were, on the contrary, irresistibly drawn towards an art, primitive indeed in a sense, but already highly developed, unshadowed by any Academy, or by any Renaissance. Such an art, if its logic were studied, was capable of reviving the dried-up sources of the classic.[96]

Suddenly, primitive and primitivist art was recognized for its scientific value: ". . . Now we do not cherish Rousseau for his barbarism, but for his science."[97] And African art is raised to the level of, if not above, the European masters:

> The negro sculptor conceived his theme as did after him the great masters of our civilization. . . . Negro sculpture is admirable through its balance, its nobility of form, its sum of naked beauty. . . . Since 1906 purity has been visible in the black statuary of the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Senegal and the Pacific Isles. The lesson was one which was aspired to by young men not anxious to steep themselves in barbarism, when they fled from something worse, but desirous of a method, properly speaking of a method of decomposition, tending to a renaissance of composition. . . . But we are

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[96] Salmon, "Negro Art," *Burlington Magazine* (April 1920): 165. Blake makes a similar observation in her book, 164. She attributes his change in stance to his important role in the emergence of formalist art criticism in the late teens and early twenties.
[97] Salmon, "Negro Art" 166.

> justified in claiming that the logic of the noblest artists' life that has been led since the golden age in Italy should lead them to recognize in the grandiose and savage fragments of antique negro sculpture the very principles of art.[98]

Saint-Quentin, a contributor to *L'Esprit nouveau,* also focused on the morphological properties of African art—"la valeur plastique pure"—and makes no mention of the irrational and fetishistic associations of *l'art nègre*:

> It is certain that the negroes know that the language of forms is a powerful motivic medium and that they know much more about its properties than most European artists. . . [T]heir great anonymous artists were those who used the purest means for the expression of an elevated soul.[99]

After the war, writers increasingly acknowledged that African culture, primitive though it may be, had always had a monopoly on art and civilization.

***La Création du monde*: Assimilating Jazz**

As we have seen, jazz was commonly understood to be both primitive and modern, to have its roots both in deepest, darkest Africa and the urban jungles of America. We have also seen the avant-garde turn to jazz, along with its cultural cousin, *l'art nègre,* as a revivifying source of the classical for European art, as a model of formal integrity and purity, precision and economy. This avant-garde appropriation of jazz, however, must be understood as an attempt to neutralize a perceived threat to European (and specifically French) tradition. Jazz's association with Africa and America, both of whose value systems differed greatly from that of France, and whose political relationships with France were in the midst of change and upheaval, served to link the cultural phenomenon of jazz to larger-scale societal and political phenomena.[100]

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[98] "Tenons pour certain que les nègres savent que la langue des formes est un moyen motif puissant et qu'ils en connaissent beaucoup mieux les propriétés que la plupart des artistes européens. . . . [L]eurs grands artistes anonymes ont été ceux qui ont usé des moyens les plus purs pour l'expression d'une âme qui avait de l'élévation." Salmon, "Negro Art" 166-172.

[99] *L'Esprit nouveau* 21 (1923): N. pag.

In his ballet *La Création du monde*, Milhaud was able to take the "exotic" sounds of African-American jazz which so entranced him, and place them at the service of French music, purging them of both the African racial threat and the American political threat, and imbuing their characteristic musical qualities with the traditionally French values of simplicity, balance, and classicism so sought after by the post-war avant-garde. In so doing, however, Africana lost its shock value and passed into the mainstream of French culture. Laura Rosenstock summarizes

> . . . the public's great interest in African and, by extension, black American culture was due in large part to their extrapolation in theater and ballet during those years. At first vanguard theater was marked by Dada spontaneity and excess; primitivism (among other devices) was a means of provocation. In time . . . vanguard artists increasingly offered themselves in the service of fashion and were co-opted by the cultural establishment. . . . It was in this assimilated mode that primitivism entered the cultural mainstream.[101]

Several Africanist avant-garde events which took place in the late teens and early 1920s fueled the growing fixation with Africana, and anticipated *La Création du monde.*[102] In May 1919, the art dealer, gallery owner, and champion of African art Paul Guillaume presented his “Première exposition d’art nègre et d’art océanien” at the Galerie Devambez.[103] While this was not the first exhibition in the French capital of African and Oceanic art, its unprecedented popularity succeeded in attracting large crowds and generating overwhelming enthusiasm.[104] Guillaume’s exhibition, as well as his earlier publication *Première album de sculptures nègres* (1917) helped to confer official status and prestige on African art.[105] In June of the same year several artists and entertainers, including Blaise Cendrars, organized *La Fête nègre,* an evening of avant-garde performance presented at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* and attended by *le tout-Paris.* Like *La Création du monde, La Fête nègre* was based on the African legends compiled by Cendrars in his *Anthologie nègre.* According to art historian Jody Blake, the event included dances performed by Caryathis (Elise Jouhandeau) and Marcel Herrand; the score, composed by Arthur Honegger, featured African instruments; and costumes and makeup, including *tatouages,* were designed by Kees van Dongen.[106] In March of 1920, Börlin’s solo dance *Scultpure nègre,* in which he dressed—and danced— as a wooden African sculpture, was presented on a program of solo works, also at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.* The dance critic Pierre Scize described the way in which Börlin’s body “bend[ed] as if under the weight of an abominable compulsion, . . . as if ossified by years of contemplative immobility.”[107] During the war Africanist events were already taking place, specifically at the official headquarters of the Zurich dadaists, the Cabaret Voltaire, where women, wearing long black caftans and face masks, participated in the groups' organized "African Nights."[108] The advent of jazz served to catapult the fascination with Africana—for some time active in avant-garde circles—into the public realm.

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[100] Jody Blake sees the avant-garde reinterpretation of jazz as an outright rejection of and backlash against primitivism and all it represented. She sees the Purists' re-evaluation of African art as an attempt to control the perceived primitiveness that surrounded them in the form of animalism and machinism. See "Bamboula in the Temple of Auguste Perret: The Call to Order," chapter 4 of *Le Tumulte noir.*

[101] "Léger, 'The Creation of the World'," *"'Primitivism' in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,"* ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984) 483.

[102] Although avant-garde painters had been interested in African art and statuary since the first decade of the century, in the immediate postwar years it commanded widespread public attention. On the pre-war interest in African art see Gerard G. Le Coat, "*Art Nègre* and *Esprit Moderne* in France (1907-1911)," *Double Impact: France and Africa in the Age of Imperialism*, ed. G. Wesley Johnson, Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies, no. 16 (Westport, Conn.; London, England: Greenwood Press, 1985) 239-258.

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[103] Guillaume was extremely important for the popularity of African art and the willingness of the public to see it as art rather than as artifact. See Paudrat, “From Africa” 152ff.

[104] See Paudrat, “From Africa” 157. Guillaume’s scholarly interest in African art was consolidated in 1929 with the publication of his *La Scultpure nègre primitive* (Paris: Editions G. Cres et Cie., 1929).

[105] See Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 87.

[106] Blake, *Le Tumulte noir* 88. See André Salmon’s account of the event in “Negro Art” 164. He says that unfortunately while this event contributed to the fashion for *l’art nègre*, it did not promote the “pure idea”: “And so although many amateurs of negro art . . . will have taken the trouble to revisit the incomparable collection at the British Museum, we cannot feel sure that each of them will see it with . . . eyes completely purified from a love of the curious and picturesque.”

[107] Quoted in Häger, *Ballets Suédois* 13-14.

La Création du monde was the avant-garde's most widely accessible, long-lasting, and learned appropriation of the jazz/*art nègre* idiom. Premiered in 1923 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, by the *Ballets Suédois*, the company who, in the post-war period, came closest to overthrowing the *Ballets Russes*'s monopoly on avant-garde ballet, it was, perhaps, the decade's most erudite assimilation of jazz.[109]

The artists who collaborated on *La Création du monde* all had strong personal interests in jazz. Milhaud's experience of "authentic," African-American jazz, in 1922, was revelatory, taking its place in Parisian cultural history alongside Picasso's first visit to the Trocadéro in 1907.[110] On a trip to the United States, Milhaud sought out a nightclub in Harlem, where he heard the music which would spawn *La Création*:

> . . . Harlem had not yet been discovered by the snobs and aesthetes: we

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[108] See RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Abrams, 1979) 42.

[109] The *Ballets Suédois* promoted itself as young, innovative, experimental, anti-academic, the "only representatives of contemporary life"; their publicity implied that they were the fresh new alternative to the *Ballets Russes,* who were by then firmly established in the Parisian cultural firmament. The 1921 publicity leaflet states, "Les Ballets Suédois sont les seuls qui 'osent'. Les Ballets Suédois sont les seuls représentatifs de la vie contemporaine. Les Ballets Suédois sont les seuls qui soient vraiment contre l'académisme. Les Ballets Suédois sont les seuls qui puissent plaire au public international parce que Rolf de Maré ne pense qu'au plaisir de l'évolution. Les Ballets Suédois ne cherchent pas à être anciens, ne cherchent pas à être modernes; ils sont en dehors des absurdités que l'on nous montre sous prétexte d'ART THÉATRAL; ils vont propager la RÉVOLUTION par un mouvement d'où les conventions sont chaque jour détruites pour y être remplacées par l'invention." Reproduced in Garafola, "Rivals for the New" 69. As Garafola explains, de Maré largely succeeded in ousting Diaghilev as head of avant-garde nightlife in Paris between 1921 and 1924. For an analysis of the ways in which Milhaud incorporated the jazz idiom, see David Ross Baskerville, "Jazz Influence on Art Music to Mid-Century," diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1965, 1126-42.

[110] Picasso's account of his visit reveals the profound artistic and personal impact it had on him. It was this visit to the Trocadéro that many art historians see as being responsible for his use of the primitivist style in *les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907). See A. Malraux, *Picasso's Mask*, trans. J. Guicharnaud (Paris, 1974, New York, 1976) 10-11. For commentary, see, among others, Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Abrams, 1990) 183ff.

> were the only white folk there. The music I heard was absolutely different from anything I had ever heard before, and was a revelation to me. Against the beat of the drums the melodic lines criss-crossed in a breathless pattern of broken and twisted rhythms. A negress whose grating voice seemed to come from the depths of the centuries, sang in front of the various tables. With despairing pathos and dramatic feeling, she sang over and over again, to the point of exhaustion, the same refrain to which the constantly changing melodic pattern of the orchestra wove a kaleidoscopic background. This authentic music had its roots in the darkest corners of the negro soul, the vestigial traces of Africa no doubt. Its effect on me was so overwhelming that I could not tear myself away. . . .
>
> . . . At last in *La Création du monde,* I had the opportunity I had been waiting for to use those elements of jazz to which I had devoted so much study. I adopted the same orchestra as used in Harlem, seventeen solo instruments, and I made wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling.[111]

Milhaud's interpretation of jazz as coming from "the depths of centuries," the "darkest corner of the Negro soul," exhibiting "vestigial traces of Africa," echoes the reaction of many Europeans to jazz; his use of jazz to convey a purely classical feeling reflects the attempts of the French avant-garde to reestablish the French tradition in the post-war period.

Before visiting Harlem, Milhaud had been exposed to the jazz idiom during a visit to London in 1920, where his ballet *Le Boeuf sur le toit* was being performed at the Colliseum. At the Hammersmith Palais de Danse, the music of Billy Arnold and his band, "straight from New York," impressed Milhaud with its extreme subtlety of timbre and the constant syncopation:

> . . . the saxophone breaking in, squeezing out the juice of dreams, or the

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[111] Darius Milhaud, *Notes Without Music,* trans. Donald Evans (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1952), conflation two passages, 117-118, 227. Robert Goffin, in *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan,* claims that it was *Aunt Haggar's Blues* that inspired Milhaud's *Création* (81). Perloff claims that the instrumentation for *Création* was based on Maceo Pinkard's musical theatre piece *Liza,* augmented by oboe, bassoon, and horn. See Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 201-202.

> trumpet, dramatic or languorous by turns, the clarinet, frequently played in its upper register, the lyrical use of the trombone, glancing with its slide over quarter-tones in crescendos of volume and pitch, thus intensifying the feeling; and the whole, so various yet not disparate, held together by the piano and subtly punctuated by the complex rhythms of the percussion, a kind of inner beat, the vital pulse of the rhythmic life of the music. The constant use of syncopation in the melody was of such contrapuntal freedom that it gave the impression of unregulated improvisation, whereas in actual fact it was elaborately rehearsed daily, down to the last detail.[112]

On his trip to America in 1922, Milhaud, wishing to take advantage of his stay to find out all he could about African-American music, heard several different types of jazz. In New York, he deemed Paul Whiteman's orchestra "a sort of Rolls Royce of dance music," having the "precision of an elegant, well-oiled machine," but "whose atmosphere remained entirely of this world and without inspiration."[113] By contrast, the Negro spirituals, folk-tunes, and hymns played for him in Boston by Harry Burleigh (who arranged spirituals in a Romantic style[114]) "interested [him] keenly," as, it seems, did the jazz orchestra of the Hotel Brunswick, where a party in his honour was hosted. Again, timbre and rhythm were the musical elements which most impressed him:

> The jazz orchestra of the Hotel Brunswick was conducted by a young violinist called Reissmann, who got from his instrumentalists an extreme refinement of pianissimo tones, murmured notes and glancing chords, whisperings from the muted brass and barely formulated moans from the saxophone, which had a highly individual flavour. The regular rhythm was conveyed by the muffled beat of the percussion, and above it he spun the frail filigree of sound from the other instruments, to which the high notes of the violin lent an added poignancy. It made a great contrast to Paul Whiteman's lively orchestra. . . [115]

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[112] Darius Milhaud, *My Happy Life,* trans. Donald Evans, George Hall, and Christopher Palmer (London, New York: M. Boyars, 1995) 98.

[113] Milhaud, *My Happy Life* 109.

[114] See Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 251.

[115] Milhaud, *My Happy Life* 109.

But it was his revelatory trip to Harlem, where he was introduced to "the pure tradition of New Orleans jazz," that most steeled his resolve to use jazz in a chamber-music work.[116]

Milhaud's collaborators for *La Création du monde*—impresario Rolf de Maré, choreographer Jean Börlin, scenarist Blaise Cendrars, and set and costume designer Fernand Léger—were likewise fascinated by Africana.[117] Rolf de Maré, hailed by the French press as "the Swedish Diaghilev," had always been interested in folk culture in general.[118] As an agricultural student he had visited Asia, Africa and Europe (he maintained a second house in Africa in the twenties[119]), where, "drawn to the popular arts in all their manifestations," he began to collect indigenous art objects and study various national dances.[120] For de Maré, folk dance represented "the purest and most complete expression of the modern state of soul."[121]

Jean Börlin had been familiar with *art nègre* since 1919, and had performed a solo work that year at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* titled *Sculpture nègre,* for which he had undertaken the study of the dances of whirling dervishes in North Africa.[122] He had long dreamt of creating a *ballet nègre.*[123] Börlin studied the ethnography of African civilization in libraries and museums. According to the eminent dance critic André Levinson (who himself spoke disparagingly of the Ballets Suédois[124]), Börlin was especially impressed by West African dancing on stilts and on all fours, both of which he adapted to his choreography.[125]

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[116] Milhaud, *My Happy Life* 110.

[117] Although jazz is an African-American idiom, it was often considered to be a manifestation of African culture. As Laura Rosenstock explains, "Although 'primitive,' that is, traditional African society and contemporary black American life constituted very different cultures, Europeans of the 1920s frequently confused them; in their naive understanding of black culture they viewed the two as essentially one and the same" ("Léger's 'The Creation of the World'" 478).

[118] Erik Näslund, "Animating a Vision: Rolf de Maré, Jean Börlin, and the Founding of the Ballets Suédois," *Paris Modern: The Swedish Ballet 1920-1925,* ed. Nancy Van Norman Baer (Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1995) 38.

[119] James Harding, *The Ox on the Roof: Scenes From Musical Life in Paris in the Twenties* (London: Macdonald, 1972) 99.

[120] Rolf de Maré, "Naissance et Évolution des Ballets Suédois," *Les Ballets suédois dans l'art contemporain* (Paris: Editions du Trianon, 1931) 20.

[121] Rolf de Maré, "Les Ballets Suédois en Amerique," *La Danse* (October 1923): np.

[122] Garafola notes that Wigman's dance style probably had an influence on S*culpture nègre* as well as on Börlin's style in general. See "Rivals for the New" 78.

Like so many artists of the time, Léger was acquainted with African art and statuary. In preparing to create the drop curtain, decor, and costumes for *La Création du monde,* Léger studied and copied the reproductions of African sculpture found in Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik* and Marius de Zayas's *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art.*[126] Léger transformed some of these reproductions into costumes and sets for the ballet. Léger may have modeled the backcloth, which suggested mountains and clouds, on decoration found on African pottery.[127] As Milhaud observed, "Léger wanted to adapt primitive Negro art and paint the drop-curtain and the scenery with African divinities expressive of power and darkness. He was never satisfied that his sketches were terrifying enough."[128] However it must be noted that Léger's interest in African art differed from that of contemporaries such as Picasso, who valued it for its formal and magical properties. For Léger, the interest of African art lay in what he took to be its spontaneous, vigorous qualities; this vitality attracted Léger to jazz and black revues as well.[129]

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[123] *Les Ballets suédois dans l'art contemporain* 67.

[124] See, for example, his comments in *La Danse d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Duchartre et Van Beggenhoudt, 1920) 400-401. Bengt Häger claims that Levinson's "persistent scorn" for the company resulted in the *Ballet Suédois*'s inferior status in dance history, especially when compared to the role of the *Ballets Russes* (see Häger, *Ballets Suédois,* trans. Ruth Sharman [New York: Abrams, 1990] 64). However, Garafola claims that the perception of the *Ballets Suédois* as not contributing very much to dance history has more to do with de Maré's "persistent de-emphasis of its dance legacy." See Garafola, "Rivals for the New" 82.

[125] André Levinson, "La Création du monde," *Comoedia* (28 October 1923); cited in Rosenstock, "Léger's 'The Creation of the World'" 480.

[126] Lois Sacks, "Fernand Léger and the Ballets Suédois," *Apollo* (June 1970) 465; Rosenstock "Léger's 'The Creation of the World'" 480.

[127] Elisabeth Blondel, *Fernand Léger et les arts du spectacle,* diss., Université de Paris, 1969, 46, cited in Rosenstock, "Leger's 'The Creation of the World'" 482.

[128] Milhaud, *Notes Without Music: An Autobiography,* trans. Donald Evans (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953) 148.

Machine parts also influenced many of Léger's designs.[130] According to the art historian Judi Freeman, Léger remained

> faithful to the general outlines of African sculptures but [made] them into mechanocubist figures. . . . These were especially mechanomorphic when seen set against the open, unpopulated landscape of a virgin world. . . . [T]he first man and woman were at once primitive and futurist in conception. . . the human figures [were] a cross between primitive sculpture and calligraphic renderings of jazz-age figures.[131]

In alluding to modern machinery, not only did Léger connect jazz with its urban American origins, but he also revealed to what extent the primitive was imbued with mechanical qualities in the 1920s.

Although all the collaborators took their research for the ballet and their interests in African art and culture seriously,[132] the poet and writer Blaise Cendrars most thoroughly immersed himself in African culture; indeed, as Cendrars biographer Jay Bochner claims, he was well-known as the central figure in the enthusiasm for Africana and "le jazz-band."[133] Having traveled extensively in Africa and South America, Cendrars brought explorers, scientists, and anthropologists to fashionable parties, such as those thrown by the sculptor Mariette Mills, where "The ambition of the moment seemed to be to become as African-Negroid as possible, and after dinner, when guests congregated in the studio, a great deal of stamping and shouting, and primitive dancing and singing, took place."[134] Cendrars's first research project to be published was his *Anthologie nègre* (1921), a collection and translation of African folk literature and mythology, parts of which formed the scenario for *La Création du monde.* According to Bernard Moralis, *L'Anthologie nègre* marked the "passage from an attitude of exoticism, whose strategy is to subordinate observed reality to its observer, to a scientific attitude, which claims to present us with positive knowledge of its object."[135] The *Anthologie* was followed in 1928 by *Petits Contes nègres pour les enfants des blancs,* and in 1930 with *Comment les blancs sont d'anciens noirs,* both of which reveal Cendrars's "irony about the presumed superiority of white civilization." Bochner explains that Cendrars's interest in "the so-called primitive societies" derived from his belief that they "lived closer to reality in all its particulars."[136] The *Anthologie* reveals Cendrars's deep appreciation for the poetic value and cultural significance of African folklore, for the richness and specificity of the African languages.[137]

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[129] See Rosenstock, "Léger's 'The Creation of the World'" 482. For Léger's preoccupations with dynamism and spectacle (as Rosenstock explains, the African theme of *Création* was another point of departure from which to express these interests) see Léger, "Le Ballet-Spectacle, L'Objet-Spectacle," *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne,* (1925), reprinted in Léger, *Fonction de la peinture* (Paris: Gonthier, 1965).

[130] According to Rosenstock, "Léger's pencil study of a Bambara antelope headdress illustrated in de Zayas's book is transformed into a costume design for a brightly plumed bird" ("Léger's 'The Creation of the World'" 480); she demonstrates this claim with images of Léger's study, the original headdress, and the final costume (the connection is not wholly convincing).

[131] Judi Freeman, "Fernand Léger and the Ballets Suédois: The Convergence of Avant-garde Ambitions and Collaborative Ideals" *Paris Modern: The Swedish Ballet 1920-1925* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1995) 100. Also see Perloff, *Art and the Everyday* 203.

[132] "La documentation de tous ces collaborateurs fut extrêmement sérieuse; ils étudièrent, dans les musées d'ethnographie, les documents concernant les civilisations noires." *Les Ballets Suédois dans l'art contemporain* 67.

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[133] Jay Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars: Discovery and Re-creation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) 67.

[134] Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1968) 122. McAlmon and Boyle were "Lost Generation" American writers living in Paris in the 1920s.

[135] ". . . [le] passage d'une attitude exotique, qui subordonne à une stratégie propre à l'observateur la réalité observée, à une attitude *scientifique* qui prétend nous faire accéder à une connaisance positive de l'objet présenté et qui trouverait sa forme la plus achevée dans l'Anthologie" (emphasis in original). Bernard Moralis, "Note sur l'Anthologie nègre," *Europe* no. 566 (June 1976) 176.

[136] Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars* 186.

[137] Arthur B. Spingarn, who wrote the introduction to the 1927 English translation of the *Anthologie, The African Saga,* reprinted by Negro Universities Press in 1969, quoted in Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars*187.

The Reception of *La Création du monde*

While Milhaud intended to sublimate the sounds of Harlem in the service of the classical tradition, the commentators present at the premiere of *La Création* were not uniform in their interpretation of the work: some heard and saw merely another manifestation of exotic savagery, while others viewed the work as cold and intellectual, thoroughly purged of any threat, African or American.

Pierre de Lapommeraye, for example, writing in *Le Ménestrel,* was most distressed when the pleasant prelude, played by a simple string quartet, gave way to the dissonance and savagery of jazz:

> A sometimes melodic prelude, sung by a simple string quartet sustained by wise and often happy interventions from the percussion, partly opened a door through which filtered a sweet clarity, and suddenly a storm blown by the brass and the woodwinds brutally closed it, and the most dissonant, the most savage, jazz, such as one must hear among the most backwards peoples indulgently unleashed itself.[138]

According to Lapommeraye, the rhythmic nature of the work did not evoke the precision and economy of means characteristic of jazz (and therefore suitable for the reconstruction of a French classical tradition, in the opinion of the avant-garde), but rather, the African tam-tam, noise, and regression:

> Yes, the rhythm and the movement have an undeniable force, this has been recognized for a very long time: the dynamism of the drum has been used for numerous centuries to encourage the march of soldiers; but the drum

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[138] "Un prélude quelquefois mélodique, chanté par un simple quatuor à cordes soutenu avec de sages et souvent heureuses interventions de la batterie, entr'ouvrait une porte par laquelle filtrait une douce clarté, et soudain une tempête soufflée par les cuivres et les bois la ferma brutalement, et le jazz le plus dissonant, le plus sauvage, tel qu'on doit en entendre parmi les peuplades les plus arriérées se déchaîna sans indulgence." Pierre de Lapommeraye, "Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.—Ballets Suédois: La Création du monde, ballet de M. Blaise Cendrars, musique de M. Darius Mlhaud," *Le Ménestrel* (2 Nov. 1923).

> has never, as far as we know, given birth to works of music: it must remain what it is, an auxiliary, muscular instrument. To go back to the tam-tam, to the xylophone, to the howls of brass, to noise, is not to progress, and one is surprised to see this music qualified as avant-garde, when we should be calling it music of the *arrière-garde*. *L'art nègre* can be very interesting from a documentary point of view, we can even borrow some of its means of expression, but it belongs to a distant past which it is useless to resuscitate.[139]

This type of rhetoric is reminiscent of the conservative reaction to *Le Sacre du printemps*; Lapommeraye certainly does not seem aware of the role of jazz and *art nègre* in the avant-garde, nor does he distinguish between Africana and African-American jazz. This latter confusion was obviously provoked by the work itself, influenced as it was, in set design and music, by both African idols and machine parts. This dualism allowed critics to focus on either the African or the American side of the equation.

Adolphe Boschot, writing in *L'Echo de Paris,* echoed those critics of jazz who saw it as a contamination of French high culture, when he wrote of the work: "Such adventures are an offence to artists who respect their art. Let us go purify ourselves, fortify ourselves on the high summits of music."[140]

Roland-Manuel, on the other hand, thought that Milhaud had managed to assimilate the spirit of "la musique nègre" without succumbing to exoticism:

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[139] "Oui, le rythme et le mouvement ont une force indéniable, cela est reconnue depuis fort longtemps: le dynamisme du tambour est utilisé depuis nombre de siècles pour scander la marche des troupes; mais le tambour n'a jamais, que l'on sache, donné naissance à des oeuvres musicales: il doit rester ce qu'il est, un instrument d'adjuvant musculaire. Revenir au tam-tam, au xylophone, au hurlement des cuivres, au bruit, ce n'est pas progresser, et l'on est surpris de voir qualifier cela de musique d'avant-garde, alors que c'est musique d'arrière-garde qu'on devrait dire. L'Art nègre peut être documentairement fort intéressant, on peut même lui emprunter des moyens d'expression, mais il appartient à un passé lointain qu'il est inutile de ressuscier." Lapommeraye, "Théâtre des Champs-Élysées."

[140] "De telles aventures sont une offense aux artistes qui respectent leur art. Allons nous purifier, nous fortifier sur les hautes cimes de la musique." Adolphe Boschot, "Les Ballets Suédois," *L'Echo de Paris* (29 Oct. 1923).

> Without any excess, without any foregone conclusion in the writing, Milhaud offers accents of a naive and poignant tenderness. Let's commend him for assimilating the spirit of negro music while avoiding the quagmires of exoticism. Let us thank him for knowing how to play an angel without being a fool. Singular merit today.[141]

His interpretation of the work perhaps best complies with the efforts of some of the avant-garde to "classicize" and "Frenchify" jazz.

Jean de Merry, writing in *L'Éclair*, conforms to the post-war equation of African culture with high art and European civilization. In his review he suggests that the cubist sets of Léger better portray Adam and Eve and original chaos than the Italian masters (if only because they are better able to evoke the paleontological reality of chaos):

> We have become so used to the idea of a humanity which has been superiorly constituted since its beginnings, that it is difficult for us to glimpse Adam and Eve other than through the canvases of the Italian school. Paleontology displeases us with its unpleasant revelations, its monsters of ugliness evolving in an apocalyptic framework. Without approving entirely of cubist theories, one is obligated however to admit that these decorations correspond perhaps more to the reality of chaos. . . .[142]

Several important critics identified conflicting tendencies in the work's primitivist aspects. Jane Catulle-Mendès saw the interpretation as too civilized, too translated:

> Mr. Jean Börlin and his troupe are conscientiously trying to mime and

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[141] "Sans aucune outrance, sans aucun parti pris d'écriture, Milhaud retrouve ici les accents d'une tendresse naive et poignante. Louons-le d'avoir assimilé l'esprit de la musique nègre en évitant le fondrières de l'exotisme. Remercions-le de savoir faire l'ange sans faire la bête. Mérite singulier aujourd'hui." Roland-Manuel, "La Quinzaine Musicale," *L'Éclair* (29 Oct. 1923).

[142] "L'on nous a tellement habitués à une humanité supérieurement constituée dès ses débuts, qu'il nous est pénible d'entrevoir Adam et Eve, autrement que par les toiles de l'école italienne. La paléontologie nous déplait avec ses révélations désagréables, ses monstres de laideur évoluant dans un cadre apocalyptique. Sans approuver entièrement les théories cubistes, l'on est obligé de convenir cependant que ses décors correspondent peut-être plus à la réalité du chaos. . . ." Jean de Merry, "Les Ballets Suédois," *L'Éclair* (28 Oct. 1923).

> dance these rudimentary savageries, but their grace, their civilized education betrays them, and they would have needed, in order to translate such a work, veritable negro corybants, with frenzied instincts, whose joy of living is still mixed up with a Tellurian primordial paroxysm.[143]

Likewise, Emile Vuillermoz could not understand why the collaborators would use a modern, cubist language to represent original chaos; according to him, this language should be used only for scenes from everyday life:

> There can be a fairly audacious stake in the cubist interpretation of a scene from modern life: but there is no merit at all in using this special plastic language to represent 'compact masses still in gestation,' unfinished beings whose bodies intermingle and all the confused and unverifiable forms of original chaos.[144]

André Levinson, the era's most prominent dance writer and a strident critic of the *Ballets Suédois*, also identified a conflict between media. After criticizing Léger for imitating Picasso and Bakst, he discussed the influence of African statuary, claiming that this purely plastic medium can not be translated into the medium of dance, concerned as it is with movement:

> Now, this admirable sculpture embodies the notion of plasticity in its pure state. It is prodigious in the free and logical agency of volumes, in its disdain of immediate realities, in its will to abstraction. The "barbarous" statuary of negroes is not therefore an imitative art; it proceeds by symbols and expresses itself in a specific language of forms. Thus, what an aberration to engage living dancers to imitate by contortions the formulas of exotic sculptors! One can never create a work of dance by translating through saltatory movements the conventions belonging to the plastic

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[143] "Consciencieusement M. Jean Börlin et sa troupe s'essaient à mimer et à danser ces sauvageries rudimentaires, mais leur grâce, leur éducation civilisée les trahissent et il eût fallu, pour traduire une telle oeuvre, de véritables corybantes nègres, au instincts forcenés dont l'allégresse de vivre reste encore mêlée au primordial paroxisme tellurien." Jane Catulle Mendès, "Les Ballets suédois: *La Création du monde,*" *La Patrie* (28 Oct. 1923).

[144] "Il peut y avoir une gageure assez audacieuse dans l'interprétation cubiste d'une scène de la vie moderne: mais il n'y a aucun mérite à se servir de ce langage plastique spécial pour représenter 'des masses compactes encore en gestation,' des êtres inachevés dont les corps s'entremêlent et toutes les formes confuses et invérifiables du chaos originel." Emile Vuillermoz, "La Musique: Ballets Suédois," *Excelsior* (29 Oct. 1923).

arts.[145]

And although the score—which he characterized as cold and intellectual— made him think of Milhaud's Harlem singer, something essentially primitive was lacking: "As for the learned and cold score, it makes me dream of that old negress in the New York 'saloon' which Mr. Darius Milhaud evoked, in a remarkable article—the nostalgic and incantatory song, the 'sybilline sob.' What has become, in all this, of the immense and poignant emotion of primitive man alone before nature?"[146] Levinson seems to lament the assimilation of primitivism by the avant-garde's classicizing agenda: a cold and intellectual language of forms leaves no room for poignant emotion and nature.

Conclusion

Indeed, in jazz-age Paris, the immense and poignant feeling of primitive man before nature was replaced by the immense and poignant feeling of primitive man in his encounter with the metropolis. The shattering rhythms of the urban jungle provided a particularly appropriate backdrop against which France's own encounter with the machine age could unravel. While originally fascinated by both Africana and Americana, some of the post-war Parisian avant-garde ultimately annexed jazz, attempting to assimilate it with the values of the French classical tradition, in an attempt to purge the multi-faceted threat present in the music. Like Europeans' other encounters with the primitive, the Parisian avant-garde's confrontation with African-American jazz ultimately revealed French culture itself: in their discovery of the primitive, post-war Parisians ultimately reaffirmed their own language.

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[145] "Or, cette sculpture admirable incarne la notion de la plasticité à l'état pur. Elle est prodigieuse dans le libre et logique agencment des volumes dans son dédain des réalités immédiates, dans sa volonté d'abstraction. La statuaire "barbare" des nègres n'est donc pas un art imitatif; elle procède par symboles et s'énonce dans un langage de formes spécifique. Aussi, quelle aberration que d'engager des danseurs vivants à imiter par des contorsions les formules des sculpteurs exotiques! Jamais on ne fera oeuvre de danseur en traduisant par des mouvements saltatoires les conventions propres aux arts plastiques. . ." André Levinson, "Les Ballets Suédois," *Comoedia* (28 Oct. 1923).

[146] "Quant à la savante et froide partition, elle m'a fait rêver à cette vieille négresse du 'saloon' new-yorkais dont M. Darius Milhaud évoqua, dans un article remarquable, le chant nostalgique et incantatoire, le 'sanglot sibyllin.' Qu'est devenu, dans tout ceci, l'immense et poignant émoi de l'homme primitif seul devant la nature?" Levinson, "Les Ballets Suédois."

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

Growing out of the orientalist/exotic aesthetic of the *Ballets Russes*'s early seasons, pre-War primitivist works were often used to criticize the state of French dance and French culture in general. Indeed, the *Ballets Russes* functioned as primitive other to French high society. The premiere of *Le Sacre* marked a divide between the general public and some members of the avant-garde: while many were shocked, dismayed, and offended by the overt primitivism of the work, certain members of the avant-garde adopted Stravinsky as their new leader. The very qualities typical of his primitivist aesthetic—simplicity, clarity, robustness—came to be the standard for emerging French modernism.

After the war, the unbridled violence of the primitive apparent in *Le Sacre* was reigned in: *Les Noces*, whose scenario, choreography, and music continued to draw on material perceived to be primitive by its Parisian audience, was understood in terms of a "sound factory," an emblem of American-style mechanization. That it was also understood in terms of the post-war avant-garde's emphasis on classical ideals of austerity, dryness, and sobriety, is not surprising considering the interests of those on the cutting edge of the avant-garde, namely the Purists, who believed that the machine age represented the new classicism.

In the 1920s, the rhythms of jazz also came to be considered mechanical. Believed to be both typical of the frenzied African tam-tam and representative of the blaring, jarring sounds of the urban American metropolis, jazz was the ultimate symbol of both primitivism and modernity, and was initially hailed by the avant-garde as a revivifying source for the French tradition. However, in the face of the racial and political threats perceived to be inherent in jazz, some members of the avant-garde attempted to neutralize the impressions of raucous chaos popularly associated with the art form by attributing rationality, precision, and economy to it. *La Création du monde* represents the avant-garde's complete assimilation of jazz and *l'art nègre* into the French classical tradition.

Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to situate the ever-shifting identity of the primitive by locating it within the broader social and political arena. The reception of the pre-war *Ballets Russes* seasons represents a microcosm of the larger-scale Franco-Russian economic, political, and cultural *rapprochement* of the turn of the century; nevertheless, long-held views of the French concerning Russian barbarity and savagery persisted both in society at large and in the critical reception of the *Ballets Russes*. The post-war reception of *Les Noces* can only make sense within the contexts of the emerging American mechanization of the post-war period, and the post-war political and cultural call to order. The reception of jazz and jazz-informed avant-garde works reflects the pervasive post-war infiltration of American culture into France, as well as the changing relationship between France and its colonial peoples. In all three cases, the primitive served to question or confirm traditional French values, be they cultural, political, or social.

I have also tried to show how each work taps into the tensions inherent in French society at each given historical moment. In *Le Sacre*, the emphasis on the collectivity at the expense of the individual resonated strongly with increasing anxiety in some quarters about the masses in modern urban life; it also highlighted political divisions among critics of the *Ballets Russes*: right-wing avant-garde writers applauded the work's emphasis on the collectivity at the expense of the individual, whereas others condemned the sacrifice of individuality made explicit in the work. After 1918, modernists, intent on championing the machine age, aimed to restore order to the chaos wrought by the war: the reception of *Les Noces* reflects these preoccupations, as well as the attempts of the avant-garde to merge mechanization with traditional French values of classicism, purity, and rationality. Finally, the reception of jazz and *l'art nègre,* as well as of the avant-garde works created in response to these forces, reveals to what extent French culture felt itself threatened by increasing foreign presences in France. The dependence of France on Russia before the war, and the indebtedness of France to America after the war, clearly informed the reception of these work and the controversy they aroused.

As cultural historians have remarked, Western civilization—perhaps any "civilization"—has always had a cultural need for some notion of the primitive. Whether the primitive actually exists or not, the West must construct an image of it in order properly to assess its own state. My case studies reveal that the construction of the primitive at the beginning of the twentieth century shifted in reaction to the fault-lines of history. Although art historians have acknowledged that the constant creation and recreation of the primitive was of the utmost importance for the emergence of modernism in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the fundamental role played by the primitive (a primitive constructed and configured by the West as part of an ongoing dialogue within cultural history) in modern French culture can now be seen to be operative in key avant-garde, multi-media stage works as well. Many of the cultural forces identified by art historians as operative in modern primitivism in painting also seem operative in the performing arts.

In discussing the performing arts I have relied to a large extent on critical reception: this has allowed me to analyze the ways in which Western European audiences and critics constructed the primitive, and used these constructions as a means of questioning or confirming Western values. Therefore, even though artists, composers, writers, and choreographers may have been involved in the "search for lower origins" described by Robert Goldwater,[1] it becomes apparent that the Western consumers of these works were also involved in such a quest. Thus their attraction to the explicit violence and sexuality of the early *Ballets Russes* seasons; the basic-ness and simplicity the avant-garde found in *Le Sacre*; and the various interpretations of jazz, where this dance music was commonly thought to embody basic, primitive impulses.

Just as many visual artists developed a primitivist aesthetic in order to achieve immediacy of expression seemingly at the expense of technique,[2] so too did the composers, set designers, writers, and choreographers involved in the *Ballets Russes*'s and *Ballets Suédois*'s stage productions create the illusion of subordinating technique to immediacy of expression. Specifically in *Le Sacre*, the illusion was so highly constructed that the seemingly complete obliteration of artistic mediation provoked a violent reaction in the audience.

One of the most interesting conclusions to be drawn from this study is that the classical and primitive were inextricably linked in the post-war period. As Frances Connelly has shown, prior to the twentieth century the primitive generally served as an Other to the classical, academic, and official modes of artistic representation. In the 1920s, however, the primitive converged with the classical: in *Les Noces* a primitive ritual is perceived by the critics to be rendered in a classical language expressed through an aesthetic of the machine, while in *La Création,* Milhaud harnessed the primitive, mechanical energy of jazz, in the service of a renascent French classicism. In both cases, the Western sense of self determined the classical, mechanical form of the primitive. The increasing mechanization and Americanization of the post-war period radically altered the Western sense of self; the subjugation of individuality in the onslaught of American mass culture and all it implied threatened European traditions. The reception of *Les Noces* illustrates the ways in which the Parisian audience attempted to manage increasing mechanization in the post-war period: by conflating the classical with the mechanical, Western critics could reconcile their European past with what seemed to be their increasingly Americanized future. Many critics, however, perceived the downside of this trend: the mechanical drudgery of everyday life, perhaps exacerbated by the post-war political call to order, achieved full expression in the work as well. In this light, the post-war primitive as manifest in *Les Noces* was but a continuation of the pre-war primitive as manifest in *Le Sacre,* where the individual merely serves a function in the larger collectivity, playing his/her role in a depersonalized, primitive, mechanical ritual, sacrificed for the greater good: the individual becomes a cog in the machine, a worker on an assembly line, a member of a tribe.

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[1] See Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) 251-52.

[2] Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* 253-54; Ernst Gombrich, "The Dread of Corruption," *The Listener* (15 February 1979): 242-245 (transcription of the first in a series of four radio lectures given on Radio 3 BBC titled "The Primitive and Its Value in Art").

Hal Foster claims that both imperialist encounters and increasing industrialization challenged the modern sense of self: the reception of jazz and African-American popular entertainment clearly reflects these challenges, and reveals the ways in which the primitive acted as a site for the association of racial others with instinctual impulses and/or symptomatic conflicts.[3] *La Création* constituted an attempt to manage the French encounter with its colonial peoples and with America. Milhaud attempted to purge this double-edged threat by assimilating jazz with the classical tradition; the critics' divergent responses to the work reveal to what extent the threat was, or was not, effectively managed. In *Création,* Milhaud, specifically in his attempt to use jazz to construct a classical aesthetic, co-opted difference in order to consolidate Western notions of quality and feelings of superiority. As Thomas McEvilley claimed of the MOMA exhibit, "The need to coopt difference into one's own dream of order, in which one reigns supreme, is a tragic failing. Only fear of the Other forces one to deny its Otherness."[4]

In all cases the extreme mutability of the primitive is revealed in the critical reception of the works discussed. The ways in which the same cultural phenomena mutate to serve the purposes of the historical moment or the specific needs of a particular segment of society underscore the contingency of the primitive within modern culture: by no means a monolithic construction, the primitive is transfigured in response to the changing needs of the modern sense of self. As Gill Perry, Marianna Torgovnick, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and other art historians and cultural critics have demonstrated, the journey out is always and above all a journey in.[5]

It is crucial now to extrapolate from the stage works to more abstract works, in order to understand the many ways in which the vernacular, the popular, the "vulgar," have informed the development of a modern language in music. While so many composers over the course of the twentieth century have devoted themselves to the creation of a language which is as remote from the wellsprings of popular sentiment as is artistically possible, others have gloried in the uprising of popular culture. While never completely abandoning the ship of high culture, these artists have often turned to the modern primitivist aesthetic in order to bridge the gap between high and low, urban and rural, Christian and pagan, intellectual and instinctual, irrational and rational: the great divides that mark the twentieth century.

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[3] Hal Foster, "Primitive Scenes," *Critical Inquiry* (Autumn 1993): 71-72.

[4] Thomas McEvilley, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief: 'Primitivism in 20th-Century Art' at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984," *Artforum* (November 1984): 59.

[5] See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989): 120.

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