

**Dancing Modernisms:
rhythmic bodies articulating cultural change
(1909-1939)**

**By
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Abstract

This thesis explores the issues that arise from posing the question: how could the silent dance-body articulate cultural ideas in the early twentieth century, a period which witnessed a dramatic turn of expression in dance, literature and the arts that was retrospectively designated as modernist? In this thesis I read these bodies as they are traced in images and discourses around dance, movement and the body. I argue that interrogating specific examples of the radical, new dance aesthetics and examining the meanings produced by their dance-bodies is key to understanding the new attitudes to dance, health and gender that emerged in the early twentieth century.

I begin with the ballet-bodies of Vaslav Nijinsky's unique choreographic vision and examine how these bodies might ask questions about modern identities through their new ballet forms. I then move to the free-dance of Isadora Duncan and address its challenge to the traditional ballet-body, analysing how Duncan's dance makes connections between the primitive in neo Hellenism and the modern in the female self.

The active body of the quotidian New Woman then brings the focus of my thesis to the movement-bodies in the practices of Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* and Molly Bagot Stack's system of '*artistic body training*'. I evaluate the community of individual women represented in these practices as they move through traditional gender constraints in a collective driven by utopian energies.

My case studies here suggest a re-definition of the Hellenic and the co-option of modern science and technology lie at the base of this rhythmic movement paradigm, thereby revealing the paradoxes in such utopian responses to the dystopia of modernity.

My aim with this thesis is to foreground how the rhythmic, moving body articulates the profundity of the cultural changes in the early twentieth-century, with a particular focus on how this manifests in Britain, and exposes the often-contradictory impulses behind new visions of the human body and its role in cultural and social practices.

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Introduction

The audience surround all four sides of a tiny performance space, in a deprived area of a former city slum, as her body writhes, stretches and contracts, around, over and under other bodies as the group performs a work in contemporary dance. She feels the spectators' breath and their discomfort with her proximity, on and in her body. When the choreography demands she remains in stilled motion, some spectators comment on her body while others pull back from the edge of the temporary floor cloth, as their own body unconsciously registers sympathy for her. As she takes turns en pointe and stretch jetés across the wide, raked stage of a city Opera House, while wearing the prosthetic head and long pink tail of the Rat, the dancer and her body are challenged. Not only is the dance of the Rat a solo, His dance is made more demanding by the small range of vision under the prosthetic head. If she lifts her own head to gage the remaining stage space, the Rat's character alters. With His head lifted, the audience sees an arrogant Rat, rather than the earnest character the scenario demands. She must keep her own head down and trust her body to sense where she is on the stage. Her internal ballet-body torques and pulls in counterbalances with the extra weight of the prosthetic head, the slope of the rake and the limit of her vision.

These, and many more experiences in a range of dance modalities are held in my body memory and they inform the approach I take in this thesis where I seek to understand the bodies that originally perform the radical new dance and movement aesthetics in the modernist period. Each of the identifications outlined above are bodily-archived experiences of performances and my thesis will show how they resonate in some way with the early twentieth-century

original bodies I explore, at the same time as I examine them for what they themselves might reveal about the contemporary meanings and intentions of their day.

This thesis explores the issues that arise from posing the question; how could the silent dance-body articulate cultural ideas in the early twentieth century, a period which witnessed a dramatic turn of expression in dance, literature and the arts that was retrospectively designated as modernist? In this thesis I read these bodies as they are traced in images and discourses around dance, movement and the body. I argue that interrogating specific examples of the radical, new dance aesthetics and examining the meanings produced by specific dance-bodies is key to understanding the new attitudes to dance, health and gender that emerged in the early twentieth century. There are numerous critical studies that feature the famous dance figures in my examples, Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950) and Isadora Duncan (1878-1927), as primary change makers, and the most usual approach in these studies gives primacy to Nijinsky and Duncan as they innovate.¹ This thesis will engage with the innovations of these famous dance figures through the body in their dance as it actions their innovations. In the current spirit of academic interdisciplinarity that considers modernist literature, art and dance as they intersect, this thesis offers the dance-body and its intelligent knowledge as the site through which these ideas might reconfigure as the modern.² The bodiliness in these various dance and movement modalities therefore presents, for my thesis, a key location through which to trace new attitudes to dance, culture, gender and health in this period. **This focus on the body also**

¹ See below in this Introduction for detailed consideration of these critical studies.

² See further in the Introduction for how I define and will use the idea of the intelligent body and its relationship in these contemporary social and cultural practices.

offers a unique contribution to the ongoing conversation that New Modernist Studies is having with the dance and the body in modernism; a conversation that has been developing since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

How the political and social context intersects with new ideas in dance, movement, health and gender presents the frame of periodisation for my thesis, which spans from 1909 to 1939. 1909 saw the arrival of traditional and experimental ballet from Russia, in Paris. Prior to this, the traditions and restrictions of the Tsarist regime³ forced the 'World of Art' group of Russian artists and intellectuals to abandon their vision for experimental art and ballet for Russia and to take it to Europe instead.⁴ Paris quickly named the troupe of Russian ballet dancers that opened their first season in Paris in 1909 as *Le Ballet Russe* (1909-1929).⁵ Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950) immediately gained fame as the star dancer of this troupe and was given the opportunity to create his choreographic experimental triptych of ballets for the Company: *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912), *Jeux* (1913) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913); this triptych is the subject of the first chapter in this thesis. This same period saw the American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) mounting her own challenge to the classical ballet form which the Mariinsky represented, as she

³ As the Mariinsky Theatre for Opera and Ballet was under the direct control of the Tsarist regime, any experimentation needed approval. See Serge Diaghilev's (1872-1927) attempt to mount the new ballet *Sylvia* (1902) for example in (Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 1998, 166-168).

⁴ For the numerous causes of the collapse of the 'World of Art' group's vision for new Russian art for Russia, originally voiced in the magazine *Mir iskusstva* (1894-1904), and the trajectory which saw this vision realised in the premier of the Ballets Russes in Paris in 1909, see (Scheijen, *Diaghilev A Life* 2009, 85-131) and (Haskell 1968, 27-52). See also further in my thesis, in the Prologue and chapter one.

⁵ Note the singular in *Le Ballet Russe*. At some stage during the twentieth century the troupe becomes known as *Les Ballets Russes* or Ballets Russes in academic scholarship, probably due to the fact that after the death of Diaghilev, various ballet companies call themselves variations on the theme of the Ballet Russe.

took to the European stage as a solo female artist of the new dance; the subject of my second chapter here.⁶ The First World War forced Duncan back to America and marked the end of the relationship between Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes.⁷ Duncan's dance encouraged new attitudes towards the female body that were strengthened in innovative new movement practices designed for the modern quotidian woman. **This thesis addresses in particular the new movement practices that arose in Britain after the War,⁸ which in the late 1920s and early 1930s become part of an international exhibition of healthy active womanhood.⁹** In the 1930s these practices also began to be associated with the physical culture programme of German National Socialism and, as this association intruded on the utopian impulses in the British female movement practices¹⁰ 1939 frames the end of

⁶ While Duncan was American, she danced mainly in Europe and Russia. For expert analysis of her new form of dancing and how it challenged the traditional form of ballet see Ann Daly in *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (1995) which, as the title suggests, gives the perspective of the American influences in her dance. See also Carrie Preston's chapter on Isadora Duncan in *Modernism's Mythic Pose* (2011), for an example of how modernist scholarship approaches the dance of Duncan. See also my analysis of her dance from the perspective of the body in her new dance, further down in chapter two of this thesis.

⁷ The reasons for the end of Nijinsky's choreographic experimentation with the Ballets Russes in Europe are addressed in the first chapter here and are informed by the same resources as cited in footnote 5 above.

⁸ See chapters two and three further down which address how Duncan, dressed in Greek style costumes and with bare feet, and dancing what seem to be Greek dance forms, sets a new trend in British dance. See the essays in *Dancing Naturally: Nature, Neo-Classicism and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Dance* (2011) for analysis of this trend as it is pioneered by British and The British Commonwealth and Dominions dance practitioners.

⁹ See scholarship which addresses the relationship between the development of new dance and movement forms, new attitudes towards female independence and the rise of new scientific understandings regarding health and disease in the modern body. This includes Jill Julius Matthews in 'They Had such a lot of Fun, The Women's League of Health and Beauty between the Wars' (1990), Charlotte Macdonald in 'Body and Self: Learning to be Modern in 1920s and 1930s Britain' (2013), Ana Carden-Coyne in 'Reconstructing the Body, Classicism, Modernism and the First World War' (2009) and Amanda Card in 'Tethering the Flow; Dialogues between Dance, Physical Culture and Antiquity in Interwar Australia' (2011).

¹⁰ The concept of utopian response to the dystopian effects of modernity on the human body, and the after effects on society of the experience of war, is of much concern to social, cultural and political reformers in this era. For an overview of these complexities in the history of this decade in Britain, see Juliet Gardner: *The Thirties, An Intimate History* (2011). From the perspective of National Socialism, fascism and eugenics see Roger Griffin: *Modernism and Fascism, the Sense of a Beginning in Mussolini and Hitler* (2007). With regard to the culture of degeneration and eugenics in modernist literature see Donald Childs; *Modernism and Eugenics, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration* (2001). These sources inform the

this thesis as the shadows of impending crisis between National Socialism and Britain were felt.

The scope of this thesis is both global and local, transnational and national, in line with the turn in New Modernist Studies which celebrates the vibrancy in modernism manifest in the performance arts of theatre and dance, the new media of cinema and radio, and new visions around the body and gender.¹¹ For examples of this celebration see the essays in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (2012), edited by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough, which includes essays that engage the new technology of cinema to demonstrate how modernism was not only centred in the tradition of high modernist literature in Europe and the U.S.A. As the contributions in the Global Cinema section track the cinema in the locales of India, South Africa and Japan, they demonstrate how this new technology was a global and transnational phenomenon in modernism. In *The Modernist World* (2015), the editors Stephen Ross and Allana C. Lindgren clarify how the famous dictum for Modernism to 'make it new' was predicated on the need to break with the past, thus New Modernists Studies 'makes Modernism (with a capital 'M') precisely the past with which we must break as we seek out not a singular global modernism, but a plurality of modernisms – a truly modernist world' (Ross and Lindgren 2015, 2). They also reflect on the interdisciplinary in New Modernist Studies which is particularly relevant to the interdisciplinary approach of my thesis:

background to my understanding of the utopian impulse in the British Movement Practices under investigation in chapter three of my thesis.

¹¹ For more on the Transnational and Global in New Modernist Studies see further down in this Chapter.

Though literature has long held sway as the focal point of modernist cultural production – at least in the published record – sharing the spotlight from time to time with the visual arts (though almost exclusively in the Anglo-Euro-American context) the interdisciplinary thrust of the last 20 years has seen committed efforts to understand modernism in the fullness of its varied expression across dance, film [...] theatre, drama [and] performance (Ross and Lindgren 2015, 2).

To a greater or lesser extent, all the above 'expressions of modernism' that New Modernist Studies celebrates and explores find their place in this thesis.

As I demonstrate in the Prologue below, dance in the form of ballet has crossed borders for hundreds of years, maintaining its local cultural heritage (local and national) as it takes it abroad (transnational) and embraces new cultural heritages of dance and movement genres (global). This movement from local origins to global encounters draws attention to how the modernist new ballet and dance created by Vaslav Nijinsky and Isadora Duncan were simultaneously a global phenomenon and a local experience. These transnational movements and exchanges also inform the focus I take, in the final chapters of this thesis, to highlight less-documented or relatively unknown modern movement practices of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' that arose in Britain during this period; in doing so I examine how these local practices engage the modern British quotidian women with the transnational physical culture movement in their dancing of modernism.¹²

¹² *Natural Movement* is the dance and movement practice devised by the British pioneer Madge Atkinson (1885-1970) and '*artistic body training*' describes the system of exercise and dance training devised by the British leader of *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* Molly Bagot Stack (1883-1935) which she called 'The Bagot Stack Stretch-and-Swing System'.

Nijinsky's modernist ballets, Duncan's new dance and the dance and movement practices that were associated with the physical culture movement are more usually approached from how they were experienced in France (The Ballets Russes), Germany (Expressionist dance and physical culture) and America (Isadora Duncan), which already demonstrates the transnational dynamics of the radical new dance and movement aesthetics in the modernist period.¹³ *Natural Movement* and 'artistic body training' in Britain do have transnational influences – Madge Atkinson demonstrates an interest in Duncan's philosophy while Molly Bagot Stack shares the utopian impulse in the German body culture movement which also responds to the dystopia of modernity, until the difficult association of National Socialism's relationship with body culture becomes apparent.¹⁴ Bringing the British experience, which has been somewhat overlooked, into existing accounts of transnational radical dance and movement aesthetics offers a new perspective on the radical turn taken in the body that dances in New Modernist Studies.

Between the 1910s and the 1960s, the transformations in the modalities of ballet, dance and movement during the modernist period were not subject to academic enquiry and indeed there seem to be no specialists who understood this transformation enough to offer unbiased analysis. Generalist newspaper journalists did however produce vast amounts of, often uninformed, comment wherever the Ballets Russes and Isadora Duncan were performing in the world. **Of the various treatises which Duncan spoke or wrote, there are**

¹³ For good examples of German modern dance scholarship: see Susan Manning in *Ecstasy and the Demon: The Dances of Mary Wigman* (2006), Kate Elswit in *Watching Weimar Dance* (2014) and Karina and Kant in *Hitler's Dancers* (2004).

¹⁴ See the influence of the propaganda film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (1925) in the development of 'artistic body training' in chapter three.

two which capture the philosophy in her new dance and how it is expressed through her dance-body. The first is her autobiography: *My Life* (Duncan 1928) and the second is a collection of her writings, interviews and speeches which cover the period of her professional life: *The Art of the Dance by Isadora Duncan* (Cheney (1928), 1969), edited by Sheldon Cheney, both of which were published posthumously in 1928. *My Life* is, in the main, a memoir of her personal life while also containing entries pertaining to the concept of her dance aesthetics. The main theme running through *The Art of the Dance* memorial collection of Duncan's essays is Duncan's response to her major influences, which range from ancient Greek sculpture and vase painting, to the American pioneer experience and contemporary modernist writers and composers. The essay entitled 'The Dance of the Future' (1903)¹⁵ captures how Duncan believed in the future of her dance for new generations; a concept which is challenged at the time and which I address in chapter two. Central to the philosophy which develops from these influences is the desire to recover what Duncan considers to be the ideal beauty of the human form and the movement which expresses this beauty. This ideal human form is the potentiality in the reproductive female epitomised in ancient sculpture, and this female movement is the expression of cyclical natural forms, especially in the line and form of the sea's waves and the gravitational force of earth's rhythms. Duncan sets the philosophy of her natural movement dance against that of the dance in ballet which is perceived as artificial, unnatural and decadent. Her dance is the modern in the neo-Hellenic, revived from the ancient, primitive movement while

¹⁵ See <https://archive.org> which has the digitalised version of Sheldon Cheney's original *The Art of the Dance by Isadora Duncan*, from which I cite, and the page numbers referred to above come from this digitalised source.

ballet is the artificial gestural movement of the medieval European Royal Court. I go on to analyse Duncan's new dance and philosophy at length, through images of her silent dance-body in chapter two.

Duncan's new dance did engender divided visceral responses from modernist artists, authors and poets who saw or read about her dance in performance. British experimental novelist Raynor Heppenstal (1911-1982) for instance, dismisses her dance for being too sexual, even though he did not see her dance, in *Apology for Dancing* (Heppenstal 1936). Literary and artistic modernists also commented on Duncan and the Ballets Russes in the modernist 'little magazines'. The term 'little' in this nomenclature describes their opposition to commercial considerations and because their contributors and readership were generally confined to the small colony of artists and writers who considered themselves to be modernist (Brooker and Thacker 2009, 11-13).¹⁶

In the mid twentieth-century, British balletomanes published memoirs on the Ballets Russes and its premier dancer Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950).¹⁷ Those with the most lasting legacy include the writings of the ballet critic of the *Observer* and *Sunday Times* newspapers, Richard Buckle (1916-2001) in *The Definitive Biography of Nijinsky* (1980), dance critic Arnold Haskell (1903-1980) in *Ballets Russes* (1968) and dance critic Cyril Beaumont (1891-1976) in *The Diaghilev Ballet in London* (1945). Importantly it should be noted that

¹⁶ The contribution of contemporary magazines and periodicals to modernism has been relatively under-researched until recently. The current 'materialist turn' in modernist studies has begun to redress this neglect and this is represented by the 'Modernist Journals Project' of digitised versions of many of these magazines, accessible here: <http://modjourn.org/>, and the extensive research into this area of modernists cultures in: Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume 1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955* (2013).

¹⁷ Nijinsky's choreography is the subject of my first case study in chapter one.

newspapers did not employ specialist dance journalists until long after the period which saw the ground-breaking work of Nijinsky, the Ballets Russes and Duncan. Richard Buckle creates a narrative of Nijinsky as a dancer and choreographer through the memories of those who knew and danced with him, and although it sensationalises his life, the details of Nijinsky's choreographic process that Buckle offers continue to provide important source material for research. In Beaumont's record of his personal experience of the ballet troupe's London Performances, his memories of Nijinsky's three choreographed works remain a useful source from the perspective of the spectator. Haskell's details of the background to the formation of Ballets Russes are also pertinent. They do both mention Duncan as well, often using her memoir *My Life* as a source, and this sole entry in Haskell does typify how her dance was generally received by their community who loved ballet.

It was not her technique – she had none – nor her conduct, which was outrageous, but her use of classical music and her freedom from the short lampshade *tutu* that entrance [...] She came upon the scene at exactly the right time to influence a school that she disapproved of profoundly (Haskell 1968, 40).¹⁸

While this does perpetuate the myth that her dance contained no technique, and denigrates Duncan personally, it does acknowledge, if somewhat reluctantly, Duncan's influence on the Ballets Russes and their reform of classical ballet; the 'school that she disapproved of profoundly'. These written accounts from the mid-century variously establish the mythologization of the revolution in the dance of the early twentieth-century and the status of the innovators, such as Nijinsky and Duncan, as the geniuses of their dance art

¹⁸ This quotation encapsulates the most common interpretation of Duncan and her new dance which began at the start of her career and lasted for most of the century. These understandings of Duncan's revolution in dance are tested in chapter two, as is the paradox which links 'her outrageous conduct' in with her dance aesthetic and presentation.

forms. This position remained unchallenged until the end of the twentieth century when scholars began to investigate those histories which had not previously been subject to serious academic analysis. From the late 1980s to the present-day scholarly research superseded the earlier mythologization of these early twentieth-century dance pioneers with critical responses to their work. Key examples of this scholarly revision of dance-movement history reflect how new thinking about ancient cultures at the beginning of the twentieth century influenced the makings and meanings of the new ballet, dance and movement practices.

Simon Goldhill's *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity – Art, Opera and Fiction and the Proclaiming of Modernity* (2011) introduces the importance of neo Hellenism in the arts of the period and argues for its lasting influence on twentieth-century artistic cultures:

Hellenism – a passionate love of the Greek past – has become part of the politics, as well as the aesthetics, not just of opera but also of twentieth-century culture (Goldhill 2011, 126).¹⁹

As the history of ballet is inextricably linked with the history of Grand Opera **(see further in the Prologue section for the importance of this relationship in the context of the pre-war years of the Ballets Russes, especially when they perform in Britain)**. Goldhill's analysis of the Hellenism in Opera contextualises Hellenism in the dramatic turn of expression in the new ballet and dance at this time.²⁰ While Goldhill's *Proclaiming of Modernity* is, in the title, centred on his analysis of the chorus in Opera which lies outside the remit of my thesis,²¹ my focus on the importance of Hellenism in the

¹⁹ The Greek past here is in the Classical period of the fourth and fifth centuries BC.

²⁰ See also this relationship of ballet and Opera in the Ballets Russes in the section in the Prologue which details the *World of Art* project.

²¹ I do, however, draw on Isadora Duncan's complex interpretation of the chorus in ancient Greek Drama as she envisions this chorus through her solo dancing body in chapter two.

making of the new dance and movement does reflect the following aspect in Goldhill's analysis of Hellenism in art: 'The re-invention of the Greeks is both a discovery and a forgetting – and the forgetting too needs its place [...]' (Goldhill 2011, 13). I understand this as the problematic in the re-construction of Hellenic ideals, which I take forward and argue characterises the Hellenic era in utopian terms and conveniently forgets those aspects in the culture which do not fit the utopian model, in the analyses of Nijinsky's radical ballets in chapter one, Duncan's new dance in chapter two, and in the movement practices in chapter three. **Olga Taxidou contributes to debates about the neo Hellenic in modernism in her study of *Modernism and Performance* (2007), in the interdependence between the 'word' in modernist literature and the 'performative' in the embodiment of experimental modernist drama and Theatre. Taxidou highlights the centrality of the complex relationship between the call for the new in Modernism and its relationship to the old of the primitive and Classical in ancient Greek culture in all her examples, which include the Ballets Russes and Isadora Duncan's dance. While I examine the neo Hellenic in Nijinsky's ballet-bodies and how they might ask questions about modern identities, Taxidou also notes the 'reevaluation of gender and sexuality on the stage' in the Ballets Russes (Taxidou 2007, 105). And as I test how the new dance-body of Isadora Duncan makes connections between modern identities through the primitive in the neo Hellenic Taxidou also points to how:**

Most of her pieces, in all their neo-primitive and neo-classical splendour, are concerned with woman as nature and/or mother, with parallels in the anthropological and classical projects of the Cambridge Ritualists (Taxidou 2007, 106).

Thus, both Goldhill and Taxidou draw out the inter-relationships, the interdependences and the transnational in the modalities of the arts of

opera, drama, dance and texts in modernist Theatre, and their complex relationships with the primitive, the natural and the Classical of the Ancient Greek era. In the above quotation, Taxidou also indicates how these artistic performance modes link with the Cambridge Ritualists.

These were classicists of the culture which defines the Classical period of five hundred years BC or thereabouts which, until the turn of the twentieth century was studied over the centuries through the written text. Taxidou argues that **'the influence of this group of scholars [the Cambridge Ritualists] cannot be overestimated' (Taxidou 2007, 150), and they were** stimulated by the idea of new Hellenism which highlights the relevance of primitive early history, before the invention of the written word. One of the most important members, Jane Harrison (1850-1928) 're-discovered', through nineteenth-century archaeological and anthropological research, the primitive culture of ancient Greece.

Harrison's influence on the early twentieth-century construction of neo-Hellenism in general, and on my case studies in particular, is an important element in the analysis of how these innovators of the modern in dance and movement draw on Harrison's ideas of the ancient in Hellenism. Julie Stone Peters in *Jane Harrison and the Savage Dionysus: Archaeological Voyages, Ritual Origins, Anthropology and the Modern Theatre* (2008), is one among many contemporary scholars, **including Taxidou**, who address Harrison's construct of the primitive as it relates to twentieth-century theatre performance.²² Peters relates how Harrison's own encounters with archaeological and anthropological discoveries convinced Harrison that the

²² See this relationship between Cambridge Ritualism, neo Hellenism and the performance of new dance also in (Daly 1995), (Garafola 1998), (Preston 2011) and (Jones 2013), further in this chapter.

origins of theatre lay in archaic ritual. Consequently, Harrison positions the artefact as the central actor which challenges the privileging of the written text as vehicle for performance knowledge (Peters 2008, 3). From this perspective, Harrison argues that rather than philosophers and poets, Greek makers of myths were practical, in that they organised formalised rituals (Peters 2008, 13,14). This interpretation of the primacy of ritual in ancient Hellenism by Harrison and her Cambridge colleagues was shared by other contemporary thinkers and scholars including the influential German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Nietzsche has had an enormous influence on much twenty-first century interdisciplinary scholarship that explores the revolutionary turn of expression in dance, literature, art and culture in the modernist era. However, in my interrogation of how Harrison's engagement with ancient artefacts and myth influences the work of Isadora Duncan and Madge Atkinson, another aspect of Harrison's argument, which Peters includes, is more pertinent. This is the early primitive worship of nature, before the invention of gods and goddesses. The early archaic, pre-Hellenic past is the key to understanding the origins of human life, for Harrison (Peters 2008, 15).

Two seminal examples in the genre of Nietzschean ritual, whose work includes analyses of how the notion of the ritual in primitive cultures relates to the innovations of Duncan and Nijinsky, are Carrie Preston's *Modernism's Mythic Pose, Gender, Genre, Solo Performance* (2011) and Susan Jones's, *Literature, Modernism & Dance* (2013). Preston, in 'The Motor in The Soul; Isadora Duncan's Solo Dance' (Preston 2011, 114-191), argues that Duncan's interest in Nietzsche and her claim that 'Nietzsche was the first dancing philosopher,' shows how 'her interest indicates that the moving body and dance more particularly are crucial and overlooked components of his philosophy' (Preston 2011, 165). Preston frames Duncan's dance in an anti-

modern/modernist binary designating Duncan's dance aesthetic as anti-modern as it is located in the pre-modern era of the primitive before language could be written as text, and modernist because her dance, as a soloist gesture 'could recover an authenticity words lacked' (Preston 2011, 6).²³ How these two understandings of the authentic in modernism relate in neo Hellenism, informs my examination of the meanings in the dance-bodies in this thesis as they are key to understanding the new attitudes to dance, health and gender that emerged in the early twentieth century.

Jones's analysis also gives an extensive account of how the oppositional forces of the Apollonian and the Dionysian that Nietzsche identifies in ancient ritual, relates to the modernist literature which engages with Nietzschean philosophy, and with the new works which Nijinsky and Duncan create in the image of ancient ritual and drama. For example, Jones shows how 'Nietzsche's reading of Greek drama in this work [*The Birth of Tragedy*] influenced choreographic modernisms and provided a model for modernist literary evocations of the body and its physical liberation' (Jones 2012, 44). In an earlier account in 'Modernism and Dance: Apolline or Dionysiac?' (2012), Jones demonstrates how she applies the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy in Nietzsche's philosophy as a means through which to understand the 1928 ballet *Apollon Musagète*, created by George Balanchine (1904-1983) for the Ballets Russes, as an example of dance modernism. Here, Jones analyses how 'Balanchine negotiates between the elegance of an Apolline aesthetics [...] with a tougher, more masculinist account of creative struggle associated

²³ This quotation comes from Preston's analysis of how the American modernist poet William Carlos Williams perceives Duncan's dance movements as an expression of this authenticity. I incorporate Preston's understanding of the pre-modern authentic in the example of William Carlos Williams response to Duncan's dance in chapter two, and explain the concept of the authentic as it is understood from the embodied dance perspective, further in this chapter.

with Nietzsche's Dionysiac' (Jones 2012, 314). These works represent current interdisciplinary scholarship that engages with Nietzschean ideas in their exploration of modernist dance, literature, art and culture.

Earlier scholarly research by two dance historians in particular have also become seminal sources for any study which addresses the Ballets Russes, Nijinsky's new ballets and Isadora Duncan's dance and the relationship of neo Hellenism to their dance aesthetics. Ann Daly, *Done into Dance, Isadora Duncan in America* (1995), constructs her analysis of Duncan's dance through the medium of the body as she conceptualises and divides Duncan's politics and attitudes towards the female gender in the chapters: 'The Body Politic' and 'The Female Body'. Using the same construct Daly analyses the neo-Hellenic in Duncan's dance which divides into 'the Dancing body', 'the Natural body' and 'the Expressive body'. These bodily divisions allow Daly to interrogate Duncan's philosophical, political and gendered approaches to her life and her dance through the body, in every sense, from this original perspective. Daly's approach to the dance of Duncan validates my own decision to foreground the dance-body in all my examples as I investigate how they might dance modernism, to which I add my own embodied knowledge of how the body dances dance.²⁴ **It is clear in Carrie Preston's more recent book: *Learning to Kneel: Noh, Modernism, and Journeys in Teaching* (2016), that she bases this work on her own embodied learning of the ancient Japanese art of Noh Theatre, which involves dance and speech and the total submission of her own dance agency to her teacher of Noh. Preston brings honest revelations of how learning the dance in Noh involves learning through failure and investigates how this corresponds with the**

²⁴ See my account of learning Duncan's dance forms in chapter two.

modernist authors' understanding of Noh: Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats.²⁵

Learning through failure is a truism in any dance and movement practice and this is particularly apparent in my analysis of the ballet dancers who have to learn Nijinsky's fractured modern style of ballet in chapter one.

Preston also emphasises the modernist transnational in the art of Noh, in its connections with Western literary modernists and its continued travel back to Japan and across the world through cinema, and various theatre entrepreneurs from different countries. How this transnationalism manifests, not only in the dance but in the body in the dance as it adapts to unfamiliar forms, is examined through the different examples of bodies in dance and movement in this thesis.

Mark Franco's *Dancing Modernism/Performing Text* (1995) offers a revisionist approach to the dominant canon in dance history which positions Duncan's dance in the modernist sense of progress. In this canon, Duncan is the modern dance master of expressionism which develops in a more formal way in Martha Graham's dance and which, in Merce Cunningham, is overtaken by movement without expression. I find Franco, as does dance historian Helen Thomas, 'extremely difficult for the reader to follow' and that 'the prose in the theoretical sections is so dense' (Thomas 1998, 35).²⁶ However, after reading the sections which deal with Duncan's choreographic approach many times, I am confident to critique Franco's analysis, as will be seen in chapter two. Lynn Garafola, in *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1998) and *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance* (2005) offers an extraordinarily rich analysis of twentieth-century dance and

²⁵ See also (Taxidou 2007) for the fascination Japanese Noh theatre holds for Pound and Yeats.

²⁶ Thomas also reviews A. Koritz, *Gendering Bodies/Performing Art; Dance and Literature in Early-Twentieth Century British Culture* (1995) and Ramsay Burt, *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* (1995) in this article.

marks out the primary contribution of the Ballets Russes to this century's revolutionary turn in dance. *Diaghilev's Ballet Russes* offers a challenge to the British school of the history of the Ballets Russes (represented above by Haskell and Buckle), which reads the Ballets Russes as the link which brings the British Royal Ballet Company into a direct line of succession from the Russian Mariinsky Ballet Company (Garafola 1998, xii-xiii). Garafola is the first to highlight the 'least appreciated ingredient of Diaghilev's recipe' –the choreography – as the component 'that gave his enterprise its unique identity' (Garafola 1998, x-xi). Her perspective on the three Nijinsky ballets under analysis in my thesis – *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912), *Jeux* (1913) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913)²⁷ – all of which engage with the primitive or the Classical in neo Hellenism, reflects a feminist framing of these ballets as Garafola interprets them as the choreographic realisation of a journey in personal and social sexual discovery.²⁸ This thesis reflects Garafola's perspective on the ballet-bodies in these three ballets, as I examine them in the still form of the photograph, for how they might articulate the meanings which are assigned to their choreographer and his intentions. Since 1989, when the dance world greeted the publication of Garafola's ground-breaking *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1989) with criticism, 'for sullyng ballet by subjecting it to the kind of intellectual analysis that is commonplace in other arts and disciplines', reflecting for Garafola 'a deep undercurrent of anti-intellectualism' (Garafola 2005, viii) , things have changed. In the first decade of the twenty first century, *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* reflects the quality of intellectual analyses of dance by this time, and of the Ballets Russes and its ballets in particular, published in the

²⁷ Hereafter known as *Faune*, *Jeux* and *Sacre*

²⁸ Garafola says her research for *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* led her 'to reaffirm the relevance [...] of the feminism of her youth' (Garafola 2005, xiii).

early years of the twenty-first century during the celebration period of the Ballets Russes' centenary. The range of authors also reflects the growing interdisciplinary interest in dance at this stage. Various recent publications support my analysis of the Nijinsky ballets in the context of the Ballets Russes, in particular the research by Hanna Järvinen; a foremost scholar on Nijinsky and his ballets. One central theme in Järvinen's approach is to caution the value of the reconstruction, whereby newly choreographed versions of the original Nijinsky ballets are based on scant evidence. For example:

Today when dance audiences (including many researchers) think of "Nijinsky's *Sacre*" they actually think of Millicent Hodson's choreography, and they see this choreography as (relatively) unchanging and stable. This means that even dance researchers disregard the huge potential for reimagining dance in 1913 – and in 2013 – still in the archive (Järvinen 2013, 70).

Although Järvinen is extremely critical of this form of methodology – the reconstruction of an earlier choreographic work which aims to demonstrate the original choreographic intentions, and assumes that researchers think of Hodson's reconstruction as the original Nijinsky ballet, I will argue for the place of the reconstruction when researching the Nijinsky ballets as I interrogate the ballets *Sacre* and *Jeux* and include **analysis** of Millicent Hodson's **reconstructions of these ballets through *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre du Printemps* (1996) and *Nijinsky's Bloomsbury Ballet: Reconstruction of the Dance and Design for Jeux* (1996)**. These books track Hodson's research journey for her reconstructions of the two ballets and offer a rich resource of original documentation which include original photographs, costume design, sketches of the movements made during

performances by Valentine Gross (1887-1968), interviews ²⁹ and, in particular the notated original ballet scores and how these notes informed her choreography. Taken together with film of performances of her reconstructions, *The Rite of Spring* by the Joffrey Ballet in 1987 ³⁰ and *Jeux* performed by the Verona Ballet in 2003, ³¹ they are important sources from the recognised authority on the reconstruction of the original Nijinsky ballets, which offer an embodied idea of how Nijinsky's original ballets may have been danced. The extent of research that highlights the new Nijinsky ballets and Duncan's new dance in the dramatic turn of expression which dance saw in the modernist period is reflected above. This focus contrasts with the lack of research into the new movement practices in this era from the perspective of modernist enquiry and New Modernist Studies. Indeed, there is no scholarly literature which addresses *Natural Movement* as a movement practice in the form of healthy exercise for the everyday woman, rather than a new form of dance for dancers, at all.³²

However the *Dancing Times*, established in 1894,³³ and still published monthly, is a valuable resource that published articles written by the pioneers of the various new movement practices, which include Madge Atkinson and

²⁹ See Stravinsky and Rambert giving interviews on the process and construction of the score and choreography for *Sacre* here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LotnD652exY>

³⁰ See the Joffrey Ballet performing Hodson's reconstruction: *The Rite of Spring* in 1987 here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo4sf2wT0wU>

³¹ See the Verona Ballet performing Hodson's reconstruction: *Jeux* in 2003 here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkZhDcB-OfA&t=21s> (part one)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=774MfmVqMmw> (part two)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1SU5ZTkiVA> (part three).

³² See (Johnstone and Atkinson 2011) for an example of the limited scholarship on *Natural Movement* as a dance practice.

³³ The *Dancing Times* was first published in 1894 as the house magazine of the Cavendish Rooms, London, a ballroom dancing establishment. It is the oldest monthly magazine devoted to dancing. It was bought in 1910 by P J S Richardson and T M Middleton and transformed into a national periodical, covering all forms of dancing, and reporting worldwide. It was formative in the founding of the Royal Academy of Dancing (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 128).

Molly Bagot Stack.³⁴ Some of the many articles written by these two women are interrogated and analysed in chapters two and three of my thesis, as they demonstrate the rationale of their new movement practices which combine new scientific and medical ideas about the modern female body with their constructions of ancient Greek, early dance. **Although Madge Atkinson intended to publish a work on her innovative *Natural Movement*, it did not happen whereas Bagot Stack published *Building the Body Beautiful: The Bagot Stack Stretch-and-Swing System* in 1931. In this, she identifies how to obtain her idea of the 'body beautiful' in 'a world where the women are so beautiful that they are an inspiration rather than a temptation' through a ten week exercise regime lasting some fifteen minutes a day for 'the everyday woman and girl' to work through (Stack, 1931, 1,4). Photographic images of these exercises, grouped into sections which address various areas in the body such as the spine and the abdomen, are introduced by brief texts. This inspirational female body 'beautiful' rests in the idea that 'Women are the natural Race Builders of the world' (Stack 1931, 3), and Bagot Stack's problematic construction of the modern everyday woman is addressed at length in chapter three.**

Current scholarship investigates Molly Bagot Stack's '*artistic body training*' in her 'stretch-and-swing' exercise regime in *The Women's League of Health and Beauty*³⁵ from the perspective of the modern trend for female exercise.

Historian Jill Julius Matthews in 'They Had Such a lot of Fun: The Women's

³⁴ *The Dancing Times*' main focus was to offer contemporary comment and criticism of all the new ballet and dance trends, and reviews of new ballets and modern dance as they premier in cities across the western world, especially in America, Europe and Britain. The other focus was the new trends in Ballroom dance as a professional and recreational practice.

³⁵ Hereafter described as *The League*.

League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars' (Matthews 1990), was one of the first to highlight the *League* as an example of 'the lives of women outside the standard formulations of respectability and responsibility, beyond victimhood, collusion and resistance', and she uses the example of *The League* to demonstrate how 'women took pleasure in themselves, when they had fun' (Matthews 1990, 23). Matthews's focus on the modern woman having fun through communal exercise as a previously under researched aspect of modernity, is fundamental to my thinking about how this focus could be cited in the moving body of the modern woman which might reveal more meanings about being modern in this era. Charlotte Macdonald's *Body and Self: Learning to be Modern in 1920's and 1930's Britain* (2013) contextualises the modern woman's body from a philosophical perspective and argues that the modern woman found 'the self' in the body through the physical activity of modern movement exercises. This resonates with the embodied perspective in dance whereby the moving body is conceived as the total union of the body and mind as a corporeal whole. Thus, from these specific perspectives – the modern woman taking pleasure in discovering the self through the holistic union of the body and mind as her body engages in movement exercise – I will argue that these moving bodies are key to understanding the new attitudes to health and gender that emerged in the early twentieth century.

Also, as already mentioned above, these movement practices link with the transnational physical culture movement particularly as it manifests in Germany. In *Body Ascendant* (1998), arguably one of the earliest works which addresses the body in the physical culture movement from the New Modernist Studies' perspective, Harold Segal highlights how preoccupied modernists were with the physicality of the body. Particularly pertinent to my thesis is his account of how modernism is

captivated by the silence – as opposed to its preoccupation with words – (Segel 1998, 1) engendered by artistic representations and the body as it moves. The dance and movement-bodies in my examples are all silent as they articulate cultural ideas. Segal's overview of the training and exercise regimes in the physical culture movement, and how they feed the cult of the body in the National Socialism era in Germany, offers context and background for chapter three, in particular.

The various classifications and concepts I identify in this thesis need explanation. The first is the domain of dance. Dance, as a general term, has thirty-nine examples of what people consider dance to be in the compilation *Dance Words* (1995) edited by Valerie Preston-Dunlop. Even though the very first entry says dance 'is impossible to define', the following thirty eight do offer definitions which include: dance is 'the art of expression', 'an expression of art', 'a means of transformation', 'of communication' and 'dance is entertainment' (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 2-6). I use 'dance' as the general domain term unless a specialist genre or style of dance is the subject of analysis. The dance genre in the first chapter is ballet, which I define as 'classical ballet' for clarity because this classification best describes how ballet re-affirms the first principles of the long ballet tradition, which I identify in my Prologue's history of ballet summary.³⁶

As I engage with the dance in these chapters through a focus on the body and how it might action modern meanings about the body, I therefore classify the

³⁶ Alternative terms for classical ballet include some of which may appear in the quotations of text used below, operatic dancing, *ballet d'action*, *ballet de court*, romantic ballet or traditional ballet. For the dance of Duncan, they may include concert dance, solo dance, bare foot dance, Greek dance and modern dance. Modern Dance is best left, because it has since become the defining term for the dance revolution which I would argue begins in the work of Martha Graham (1894-1991), rather than in the dance of Isadora Duncan.

bodies that danced the various genres under discussion by their specific genres. I do this through my own convention which identifies the body with the particular movement modality. Therefore, the body in classical ballet and Nijinsky's new ballet forms is the ballet-body; Duncan's dance, which I categorise as both new dance and free dance,³⁷ is analysed through her dance-body; and the body of the modern quotidian woman in the new movement practices is therefore categorised as the movement-body. The quotidian here is used to differentiate between the young woman who trains in *Natural Movement* as a future teacher of *Natural Movement* as a dance practice and those everyday (quotidian) women who indulge in the recreational aspect of *Natural Movement* for their own individual pleasure. When, in chapter three, I identify the individual quotidian woman as a member of the group collective of modern movement practices, which I name the rhythmic movement collective, I classify the individual body as the rhythmic movement-body. I am therefore rejecting the categorisation of these new movement practices as dance practices. Järvinen suggests there is a value judgement involved in taking this stance:

The limits of what is understood as dance and how dancing is defined vary; hence any definitions of what is or is not dance at a given time contain value judgements, often made in order to exclude certain movement practices from the definition of dance (Järvinen 2013, 71).

Järvinen implies here that excluding certain movement practices from the definition of 'dance', as I do, somehow diminishes their value. My critical decision however, to 'exclude the movement practices' in my thesis from the definition of dance, in favour of 'movement', or 'rhythmic movement' allows for

³⁷ See (Richardson 1924, 16) as he identifies the flow, the rhythm and the notion of the natural in the dance of Duncan as free movement.

more depth and reach in analysis. To name the *Natural Movement* and 'artistic body training' practices in my thesis as dance limits them to a pre-conceived idea of what dance is. Movement as a concept offers more nuance than dance when testing the new recreational collectives as they apply to quotidian women, even though they themselves may describe their movement practice as 'dancing'.³⁸ Also, Madge Atkinson names her own new movement system as *Natural Movement*, rather than Natural Dance, which suggests that *movement* was more than acceptable as a definition for the new movement practices at the time.

The rhythmic concept captures the quality of the holistic body being in union, and the quality of the movements as the body responds to its own bodily rhythms and the rhythms in the music, which often accompanies the exercises in these practices.³⁹ **The rhythmic involves the dynamic of energy and it is this aspect of the concept that is the focus of Dee Reynolds' *Rhythmic Subjects* (2007). Reynolds' analysis of the uses of rhythmic energy focuses on the modern dance of Mary Wigman (German), Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham (both American), all examples which are outside the limits of this Thesis, and her perspective on these modern dancers comes from the stalls rather than the stage. As she states:**

Since I am not a dance practitioner, my approach to dance through uses of energy is inspired primarily by my experience as a spectator [...] (Reynolds 2007, 227 ft. 16).

³⁸ Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* can be read to be an example whereby 'movement' better describes the steps forms which are taught in her Practice, even though, when the step forms are in action, Atkinson describes this as dancing.

³⁹ See also how the concept of the rhythmic body is identified by Hillel Schwartz in *Torque, the New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century* (1992) in this Prologue section.

Thus, Reynolds analyses the rhythmic energy in modern dance from her own experience of kinaesthetic empathy with the energy in the dance she is watching. This is an important concept in my own analysis of how and what the silent dance-body in my examples is articulating, throughout this thesis, but I bring, as does Carrie Preston in her recent work, my own experiences as a dance practitioner to my understanding of the rhythms of the (silent) moving body.

The dance of Duncan and the new movement practices is variously categorised by other authors as Greek dance, bare-foot dance, natural dance, solo dance, soul-dance and modern dance. While each of these categorisations identifies individual visual aspects and philosophical conceptualisations in the new dance and movement practices, and are each interrogated as this thesis moves through, they confuse rather than clarify. While these practices are modern and they involve dance, the categorisation of modern dance should be more accurately applied to the American Modern Dance revolution which came after Isadora Duncan.⁴⁰ Therefore, I categorise the dance and movement of this period as 'new', because they revolutionised how dance and movement could be perceived.

The Greek descriptor in the new dance mentioned above, is the neo-Hellenic in dance, already discussed, which contains critical concepts about how the body moved and danced in the primitive past and the notion that the modern body can move in the same way. These concepts identify the natural and the

⁴⁰ This is the American Modern Dance revolution of Martha Graham (1894-1991) and her Company dancer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), which involves the dramatic use of muscular techniques, bodily spacial planes and forms of bodily expression.

authentic in the dance of the ancient past.⁴¹ The new dance of Duncan, and the *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' systems, develop through close attention to these concepts as they make primitive movement, modern. The close attention to the idea of a naturally moving body in the new dance and movement of the early twentieth century can be identified as the development of a deep awareness of the internal body. Martha Eddy argues that the mid twentieth-century discourse of the somatic in some contemporary dance practices, can be applied retrospectively to the new dance and movement practices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Eddy 2009). This thesis will draw on this linkage as it explores somatic knowledge, not only as it manifests in the body of the dance but also as it incorporates in the body and actions of the quotidian woman, through specifically designed new movement practices.⁴²

The term quotidian can be interchangeable with the everyday and the average. On the other hand, it has a specific identity in the history of nineteenth and twentieth-century literature.⁴³ Here I use it within the context of the current turn in New Modernist Studies that focuses on the domestic of the home and brings new ideas about the interior life of the individual. While modernism is framed within the domestic space, and can assume that women in this space are somehow subject to it rather than agents of it (Olson 2009, 16-17), I will argue that this space becomes transformative for the quotidian woman as she

⁴¹ See the first mention in this thesis of the concept of the authentic, in (Preston 2011, 6) above, where Preston draws the link between the idea of the authentic in modernist literature and the authentic in the Hellenic of Duncan's dance.

⁴² See below for the definition of the somatic and the quotidian and how I will apply it in this thesis.

⁴³ See (Olson 2009, 12-27) for how literature interprets the theory of the ordinary, the everyday and the quotidian over time.

develops her own inner self through the practice of daily exercise in the home. This conception of the quotidian is therefore also applicable as the domestic woman performs exercise routines in the public arena.

I will investigate the development of a deep awareness of the internal body in *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' and how this awareness might inspire new meanings in how to be modern for the everyday woman. I will also examine the tensions in the assumption of the natural in the movement of these practices as they offer the route to a new utopia, led by women, in the dystopia of post-war anxiety. The search in neo Hellenism to retrieve what was the essential, the original, the most 'true' or authentic in the past will be traced through all the new ballet, dance and movement examples under investigation here. How the conception of the authentic, as being the natural in the movement and dance in the primitive past, affects the construction of Duncan's new dance and the new movement practices is tested in chapter two. In particular, I argue, the common understanding that 'the natural' in the new dance and movement is itself a construction. From a twenty-first century, post-structuralist perspective, the idea of a natural authenticity cannot exist; it is always a fabrication. I argue that the natural and the authentic in movement can exist in the body, when this body is allowed to move under its own intelligent agency, without the imposition of the will to make the movement. I particularly explore this apparent paradox as to whether the idea of the natural in movement can be both constructed and unconstructed, as I test Franco's proposition that the natural in the dance of Isadora Duncan is always constructed, in chapter two (M. Franco 1995, 5).

As I focus attention on the body in these radical new ballet, dance and movement practices, to examine how their action might serve their innovator and articulate the new cultural ideas which the pioneers under discussion here originate, I draw on the theoretical model proposed by Hillel Schwartz in 'Torque, the New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century'.⁴⁴ In this 1992 article Schwartz identifies the body in the new ballet, dance and movement innovations of this period and draws together the physical forces in the individual body as it moves with the forces which action in modern technology. Schwartz links the two forces via rhythm: the rhythms which manifest in the moving body as its physical components twist, stretch, spiral (and torque) in the body in movement and the rhythms of the moving components in the machine as they torque in the harmony of its working order. Schwartz posits that this relationship between the moving body and working machine is a relationship of the kinaesthetic. And this kinaesthetic begins in the centre of the modern movement-body; Schwartz identifies this as the torque in the moving body:

Dancers of the modern dance had come to insist upon a grounded human body moving nonetheless fluidly, rhythmically, naturally and, in the sense that any part of the body could be called upon, freely. Its chief pattern was the spiral; its deepest resource was torsion (from the Latin *torsio*, a wringing of the bowels). For Duncan, for the "Greek" dancers, barefoot dancers, natural dancers and "soul dancers" who followed in her wake [...] physical movement was a crucial means of human expression, a form of worship (Schwartz 1992, 77).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For an explanation of the kinaesthetic in the relationship of kinaesthetic sympathy of empathy, experienced between the performer and the spectator, see chapter one.

⁴⁵ Schwartz identifies this aesthetic in the construction of various modern technologies and everyday machines with which quotidian men and women engage in their work and leisure time. The escalator, the typewriter, the roller coaster and the aeroplane operate through the rhythm of their individual parts; rhythms which resonate in the individuals who use the modern technologies and machines (1992).

Schwartz is arguing that the 'modern dancers' more natural (as opposed to the artificial in ballet) movements allow the torso's flexibility through muscle spirals in the body centre. The physicality as these inner muscles rhythmically torque, releases expression which transforms the body. Therefore, movement transforms in the rhythmic inner/outer movements in the modern movement-body. Thus, the transformative in the modern dance and movement, is the rhythmic kinaesthetic in the modern body. When this kinaesthetic body meets with the rhythmic efficiency in modern technology, they torque in the new kinaesthetic of the twentieth-century (Schwartz 1992, 88-89).

Here, Schwartz identifies how the rhythmic body works in a kinaesthetic relationship of empathy with the rhythmic machine body, and kinaesthetic empathy is a fundamental notion in dance which conceptualises how the performing dance and movement-body and the body of the spectator relate. Kinaesthetic empathy is an elusive concept as its meanings have changed over time. For the purposes of this thesis, kinaesthetic empathy will be understood as an:

awareness empathetically of the kinaesthetic experience of another person (dancer); bridging the gap of awareness between one person's movement and another's perception of it as bodily experience (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 371).

In the early twentieth century the concept was described as kinaesthetic sympathy and became the cornerstone definition in the new modern dance revolution of the relationship between the dancer and the spectator (Reynolds and Reason 2012, 19). It is suggested that the twenty first century is experiencing a particular cultural and scientific moment in arts and humanities, described as 'the corporeal turn', in which there is a growing focus on embodied knowledge (Reynolds and Reason 2012, 17). While my thesis

reflects the focus on embodied knowledge in the current corporeal turn, the neuro-cognitive research within this corporeal turn lies outside the focus of my thesis.⁴⁶

From my own embodied experience of how dance actions in the body – an experience which I will explain in more detail further down – I recognise the body awareness which Schwartz theorizes in his analysis of how the inner physical muscle dynamics enable the torso to twist away from its centre (spiral) and engage with, rather than resist gravity (grounded) in the new dance of Duncan and the 'Greek' dancers (whom I describe as movement practitioners) who follow. In emphasising that this modern physicality allowed the body to find expression as a form of worship, I read the relationship between the new dance and movement and the primitive (natural) in movement, and the ancient worship of nature. Using Schwartz's theoretical model, I will argue for the synchronicity in the ideas of neo-Hellenism, which is realised in the primitive and the ancient of Greek cultures in the Nijinsky's ballets, in the natural movement of Duncan's new dance and in the modern movement practices as their movements are realised through the embodiment of ancient cultural practices.

While each case study in my thesis is treated in chronological order, they are also synchronically linked through conceptually based themes introduced

⁴⁶ For more on this area of research see essays, which include (Huxley and Burt, A Greater Fullness of Life, Wellbeing in Early Modern Dance 2017) in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Wellbeing* (2017). These essays explore various aspects in the relationship between the body, mind, brain and dance. See also Reynold and Reason (Eds.) *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (2012). And Mark Paterson 'Movement for Movement's Sake? On the Relationship Between Kinaesthesia and Aesthetics' in *Essays Philos* (2012). This traces the history of kinesthesia and aesthetics from Aristotle, through nineteenth-century understandings of muscle memory, early twentieth century kinaesthetic sympathy and twenty-first century links between neuro science and current dance modalities.

above. The overarching theme is neo-Hellenism, sometimes also known as the Greek Revival, the trend which reflected renewed interest in ancient Greek culture and drew traction across the arts. Neo-Hellenism's particular attention to the body forms as seen in ancient Greek sculpture and vase decoration is analysed in the new ballet forms and narratives in Nijinsky's choreography in chapter one and in the stylisation of Duncan's dance costumes and step formations in her free dance in chapter two. Neo-Hellenism also encapsulates notions of the primitive in Ancient Greek cultures whose peoples were understood to be more in touch than the modern age with the natural world and instinctive, uncontrived dancing as an expression of innate feelings. This construction is tested in Duncan's free dance as it reconstructs primitive dance movement as a new dance form for the modern era and opposes the classical ballet tradition which relies on the techniques of turn-out in the hips, long and high leg extensions and the formal positioning of the arms. The idea of the primitive in neo-Hellenism also sets up a narrative about how the modern human body had lost touch with the natural human body of the primitive, pre-industrial past. This idea of the natural constructs the pre-modern body living in the healthy union of the physical with the mind and the soul, which translates as what was described as the authentic body that had been lost in the modern age.

I interrogate the problematics in this constructed narrative through the new movement practices of Madge Atkinson and Molly Bagot Stack in chapters two and three as they combine modern medical ideas with the narrative of the neo-Hellenic natural body, to create the modern active female body. How the deep awareness of the internal body, which these movement systems encourage,

might manifest in the body images I investigate is central to my analysis.⁴⁷ I will take this body-centred perspective further and into the body of the new dance and movement practices, to investigate how the body might exhibit the modern physicality of the new primitive in movement and expression, which is the alignment of the modern movement in the neo Hellenic paradigm of the era.

I bring together a lifelong experience in dance with an academic background in the study of modern history in the approach of my thesis. My intimate connection with investigating dance through my own body allows me to foreground the body. This connection began as a child learning to dance in a natural movement form and continued in the experience of professional performance in ballet, contemporary dance and the occasional 'kick-line' in theatres and on film. It shifted in the experience of teaching ballet for the everyday child and young woman and further in the teaching of movement as everyday exercise for health and fitness. Now my intimate connection continues as I indulge in the ballet class for my own pleasure and health, and investigate how the inner dynamics in the bodily execution of ballet adapt as the body ages. My undergraduate and Masters study in the history of the rise of fascism, communism and Nazism, and the changing social attitudes towards women and health, revealed the concurrent revolutionary turn of expression in

⁴⁷ See Martha Eddy 'A brief history of somatic practices and dance: historical development of the field of somatic education and its relationship to dance', *The Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices*, Volume 1 Number 1, (2009). Eddy explains that the term 'somatic' is applied retrospectively in the 1970's to describe the movement practices of early new movement pioneers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century as they respond to "historical events and cultural trends" (Eddy 2009, 5). The 'somatic' in these early movement practices involved 'delving into bodily experiences, new meanings about being human and potentialities for health and life' (Eddy 2009, 7). I argue that Atkinson and Bagot Stack also delve into these same bodily experiences and meanings and therefore occasionally apply the term *somatic* as I analyse *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*', even though it was not in use at the time. My thanks to Sarah Whatley for drawing my attention to Martha Eddy and the somatic.

art, architecture and literature, but not in dance; a revolution I had heard about during my vocational training for a career in dance. Concurrently, German expressionist dance and the Physical Culture trend in the context of Nazism received attention while the female health and fitness trend within it, was dismissed with derision.⁴⁸ My thesis is the result of investigating this history. I aim, as I frame this history through the body in the dance and contextualise this body in **New Modernist Studies, which embraces modernist experimentation in such artistic cultures as the modality of the body in dance and movement**, to bring new readings and insights into what led to and sustained the revolution in dance. Dance as a performance art **and as an individual movement practice in the collective of the physical culture paradigm also** brings connected new visions of the human body and its role in cultural and social practices in the early twentieth-century.

Beginning with ballet-bodies in Vaslav Nijinsky's unique choreographic vision, my thesis examines how these bodies might ask questions about the modern identities they may trace through their new ballet forms. I interrogate the new dance of Isadora Duncan and query the validity of its challenge to traditional ballet. I ask how this new dance could make connections between the primitive in neo-Hellenism and the modern in the female self and investigate how this connection might demonstrate in her stilled, posed body. I address the active body of the quotidian New Woman as it engages with the new movement practices of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' and ask how these movement practices draw together ideas of ancient Greek dance with the authority of new advances in science and technology. My thesis proposes that

⁴⁸ One notable exception to this attitude can be seen in the work by Roger Griffin: *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (2007), especially in the context of the body as vehicle for renewal.

the intelligent knowledge in the body in these new ballet, dance and movement modalities offers a unique focus through which to examine the dramatic turn of expression in dance, also witnessed in literature and the arts, and how these bodies articulate the profundity of the cultural changes witnessed during this period.

The material remains should rightly inform all research into the new ballet, dance and movement of this period – such as posters, costumes, artistic representations and notated rehearsal scores – along with the recorded anecdotes, memories and conversations in the primary sources signalled above. And the secondary analysis with its theoretical positioning, also addressed above, should test and challenge any new research, as it does in this thesis. But there still remains the difficulty which I aim to redress; the void of the missing body which actually danced this revolution. The body-centred methodology I employ throughout centres these elusive bodies through the only materiality that remains in the ephemerality of the dance and movement in this modernist era. This is the materiality of the photographically-captured body that actually danced the new Nijinsky ballets, Isadora Duncan's new dance and the movement practices of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*'. I ask each stilled, movement-body how it might be actioning the choreographic intentions of its innovator, how it might exhibit meanings in the modern ideas of the self, how it might ask questions about modern identities, and test the paradoxes in these meanings and identities it might present. Each interrogation begins in my own embodied knowledge as it responds to the actively suspended movement moment in the body in the photograph. This necessarily subjective body-centred approach nevertheless has a distinct haptic authority, aiming for an empirical stance that will allow these silent and silenced dance-bodies to voice the depth of cultural changes envisioned by the

creators who transform dance, art and literature at this time. Accessing the traces of this elusive body in this era's modern movement modalities, which this thesis allows, is the contribution my analysis will make to understandings of the dance and body in the modernist era from both **Dance and New Modernist Studies'** perspectives. **Abbie Garrington's *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (2015)** is a recent example of the conversation that modernist scholars are having with the dance and movement-body through the somatic understanding of the moving body, whether in literature or dance. Garrington draws over fifty definitions together under the umbrella term of 'the haptic', to provoke more discussion of what is:

central to contemporary scholarship addressing touch and the tactile and/or the haptic [...] in the conversations they establish about the touch-point between language and somatic experience itself (Garrington 2015, 183).

She draws terms which are familiar in dance and embodied practice into the idea of the haptic such as **Contact (in Contemporary Dance) Gesture (in 19th Century ballet), Kinaesthesia (more usually encountered as the kinaesthetic in dance and movement), Proprioception (the awareness of where the body is in space), Somatic (literally of the body) and the Vestibular (balance).** In particular she holds the touch of the hand as 'the poster boy' regarding somatic experiences in modernist literature. In the spirit of further provocation, 'the foot' in the dance and movement of all the examples in my thesis could be considered as 'the poster boy' of the haptic in modernist dance and movement. As will be seen throughout my analyses that follow, the articulation of the foot and the way it changes in the various movement modalities under discussion, is the crucial element in the modernisation of movement in the early twentieth century.

The chapters begin in the pre-First World War period of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet troupe; the ground-breaking phenomenon in modernist theatre and dance practice known as the Ballets Russes. Chapter one presents the three choreographic works Nijinsky created for Diaghilev: *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912), *Jeux* (1913) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) as one experimental triptych through which to examine Nijinsky's rupture with customary ballet elements and narrative subjects. Prioritising the knowledge in the ballet-body as its dance is stilled in the photograph, I look for how the multiple details in Nijinsky's new forms might express the radical subtexts in these ballets' narratives which attest his challenge to traditional gender norms. This analysis, through the ballet-body and relevant discourses begins in the more familiar ballets: the primitivist-ritual ballet *Sacre* set in the culture of ancient Russia, followed by *Faune's* representation of the primitive-natural in the Hellenic era of ancient Greece. It then foregrounds *Jeux*, Nijinsky's least examined and less well-known work, for its choreographic mix of modern and classical-Hellenic forms and its possible setting in the Bloomsbury Group; England's modernist coterie of artists and writers. *Jeux* therefore offers apposite locations through which to scope British ideas about modern identities as all three ballets in Nijinsky's modern triptych experiment with traditions in ballet and understandings about identity.

In the dramatic challenge to the long tradition of how classical ballet should be presented, ushered in by the Ballets Russes, its primacy as the only form of dance to be considered high art was shattered forever by the new free dance of Isadora Duncan. Duncan's dance revolution foregrounds new ideas about how the body could express dance through apparently free, rather than formally prescribed movement. In chapter two I test how free from formality her dance was as it performs her act of resistance to ballet technique across the

West, from America where she was born, through Europe to Russia where she became enamoured with their revolutionary ideas. I examine the specifics in her dance modality as they exhibit in her photographed dance-body and in her documented texts, for how her new dance makes connections with the aesthetics in neo-Hellenist culture and the primitive in movement which also involves the idea that the mind, body and soul are one holistic union. To this examination I add my own experiential learning of how her dance might have happened in the body. I probe the paradox in her new dance which presents her female body as it reveals through the fabric of her Greek-style garments at the same time as her philosophy of movement suggests a re-definition of the Hellenic for the modern female self in her stilled, dancing body. I follow this with an introduction to the modern everyday woman in the 1920's as she participates in new movement practices which take their inspiration from Duncan's dance and philosophy. Through the example of Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* in Manchester I begin an analysis of how the relationship between Duncan's philosophy and *Natural Movement's* co-option of modern science and technology, manifest in the quotidian female body as it relates these movements derived through ideas of primitive dance with its own body rhythms.

Chapter three continues with the quotidian female constituency in *Natural Movement* and expands to include those who participate in Molly Bagot Stack's nationwide '*artistic body training*' system. I investigate how and why these rhythmic movement systems change their focus from movement as dance to movement as exercise for the modern woman in the 1920s and 1930s. I address the body in photographic representations of these practices for how it might exhibit the meanings of the primitive holistic which still bases these exercise practices as it also engages the modern methods of

strengthening and muscle tone. I evaluate how the individual in these examples of active health exercise practices might conceive themselves in the sense of community as they negotiate traditional gender constraints and absorb the utopian ideals which underpin these practices. I examine the paradoxes in such utopian responses to the dystopia of modernity as the women in this rhythmic movement community exercise daily in the home and perform new visions of the human body and its role in cultural and social practices in public arenas.

Prologue

The dramatic turn of expression in literature and art during the period known as modernism is already well documented; what happened in the radical new dance during this time is less familiar to New Modernist Studies scholarship. It is therefore useful to detail a brief history of the performance dance that was taken in such a new direction and was rebelled against, so as to provide the context for the new dance aesthetics in my chosen examples. This dance is ballet and what follows is a short summary of ballet's long history. Ballet, as with all the arts, has a relationship with prevailing social and cultural conditions and these conditions will be mentioned at relevant points during this brief run-through of ballet's history. The conditions which led to the creation of the Ballets Russes project and how they related to the new dance of Isadora Duncan then follows, in order to set the scene for Vaslav Nijinsky's unique choreographic experiment which is the subject of my first chapter.

In 1911, the Imperial Russian Ballet (the Ballets Russes) were invited as star guests in the Coronation Season at London's Royal Opera House, Covent

Garden, held in honour of the Coronation of the new British monarch, King George V.⁴⁹ The dancers appearing as the Imperial Russian Ballet in London were on their annual break from the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Tsar Nicholas II's Imperial Theatre. Ballet's history is integral to the Royal Court and the ballet historian Jennifer Homans in *Apollo's Angels, A History of Ballet* (2010), brings the birth of ballet to the celebrations at the marriage between the French King Henry II and his bride Catherine de Medici of Florence in 1533. (Homans 2010, 3). Both the French Court and Italian aristocracy had a tradition in graceful social dances, which the Italians called *balli* and the French *ballet* thus, the *balli* and *ballet* dances in celebration of the wedding became European, as the two countries are brought together in this Royal alliance (Homans 2010, 4). Homans is the first to admit there are few material traces to establish this event as the moment when ballet began, but she is determined to track whatever traces there are:

Ballet may not have a continuous record, but this does not mean it does not have a history, to the contrary: people have been practicing and performing it for at least four hundred years (Homans 2010, xxiv).

Homans begins, as does early dance historian Jennifer Nevile in her article: 'The early dance manual and the structure of ballet' (2009), in the dance of the Royal Courts of Europe in the fifteenth century, a period which does find notated texts of the French Court dances (Nevile 2007, 9-18). Nevile examines the birth of ballet in the fifteenth and sixteenth-century in terms of their social and intellectual contexts, wherein dance is not only a physical skill but also a literary and philosophical tradition. The manuscripts and dance essays left by the choreographers and dance masters of the European Courts

⁴⁹ These details are evidenced in the Programme for the 'Coronation Season, Covent Garden 1911, Royal Opera and Imperial Russian Ballet', which is in my possession.

record their creations of intricate floor patterns, steps, gestures and facial expression which carried intellectual meanings of morality and emotion, all of which were understood by an educated court at the time:

Dancers could move those who saw their performance to sorrow, anger, happiness or laughter, as the emotions of the dancers were made visible through the movements of their body. This gave them both a tremendous power and responsibility; a power to affect the emotions of those who watched, and the responsibility to represent only morally edifying emotions (Nevile 2007, 16).

Nevile's focus on how the power in the body in these early dances affects emotion in the spectator and how the dancers carry the responsibility of morality, establishes the relevance of the link between the dancing body and the morals of the day which continues down through the centuries in the history of ballet and, as I will demonstrate, is an important factor in the radical turn ballet makes with its history and tradition.

In the Royal Courts of the Renaissance, the ability in dance to perform affect, established the moral codes for elite society to follow, through the language of movement which was written in texts. The skilled elegance and deportment in these corporeal demonstrations of the powerful elite elevated dance to an art form which distinguished itself in a separate sphere from that of the unsophisticated dance of the common man, described by Nevile as peasant (Nevile 2007, 16). The formal qualities in the corporeal demonstration of respect and deference for the men and women in the dance of the Renaissance Courts, form the basis of the classical ballet techniques. These techniques include the lifted posture, the hold of the arms and the soft hands, the lift and lowering of the eyes, the stance with the feet turned out in five

carefully defined positions, the soft knee bends and lunges – incorporated from fencing techniques – and the small jumps taken from the formal court dance. These were all recorded in an early form of notation invented by the French King's dance master Pierre Beauchamp in the 1680s (Homans 2010, 18-21). These dances of etiquette and power – some three hundred records of notated steps and gestures – were learned by ballet masters well into the eighteenth-century, and these dances are still performed today (Homans 2010, 19-20). Louis XIV effected an internationalisation of what was now formal ballet, in the European Courts, (including the English Crown), as a means for the dissemination of political and social morals.⁵⁰ French cultures, including dance, language, architecture, painting, fencing and music, were centralised under Court control in individual Academies in the mid seventeenth century; an institutional system of arts and culture copied across European states (Homans 2010, 18-19). While Britain, a secular nation which also maintained the Crown, eventually institutionalised various arts in formal Academies in the nineteenth century, noticeably absent was any Academy in Dance, until this was finally rectified in 1920.⁵¹ This lack of formal recognition of ballet, which was called operatic ballet and was the only form of performance dance, probably reflects England's avid interest in Opera, skills for which were taught in The Royal Academy of Music founded in 1842, and while ballet was enjoyed as an aspect of Grand Opera, as the *divertissement*, the dancers were trained by independent dance masters unattached to the Opera House. This was not the case in other European nations, who developed a tradition of formal ballet training in schools attached to their Opera houses which produced an

⁵⁰ See (Homans 2010, 3-49) for a detailed analysis of this rich period in the history of ballet and (Hammond 2007) for a discussion of the early technique recorded by Louis XIV ballet masters for the training of dancers.

⁵¹ See chapter three for the context in which Dance is given formal recognition as an art form which maintained high standards in the teaching of codified forms in ballet and other dance forms.

identifiable national style. Thus, the ballet in France, Italy and Russia retained their own particular ballet tradition and identity, while British ballet had no such identity through which to establish a conformity of technique, style and aesthetic, until well into the twentieth-century.⁵²

By the end of the nineteenth-century, ballet's inheritance of aristocratic corporeality remained, to a certain extent, in the *divertissement* of Grand Opera, at the same time as it descended into little more than a spectacular demonstration of technical prowess. In Britain this decline was underlined by its turn towards popular entertainment in the British Music Hall:

A vast, commercially organised form of mass entertainment, attended by tens of thousands of people nightly [...] dancers performed sandwiched between comedians, singers and stunts men (Homans 2010, 407).⁵³

Ballet, now perceived as popular entertainment for the masses while still maintaining a place in the Opera House for the elite audiences in Britain, also suffered a similar decline In Russia as it lost touch with its historic past:

The balletomanes, carried away by their love of technique for its own sake, eyes glued to opera-glasses, eagerly counted the ballerina's *fouettés* [...] the music, except for Tchaikovsky's, was made to measure, with a waltz inserted every twenty minutes for safety. The ballerina often put in a piece of her own choice (Haskell 1968, 40).⁵⁴

⁵² *The Camargo Society* (1930-1933), was the first stage in the foundation of British Ballet. A subscription club which supported performances of ballet, the *Society* members included influential leading figures in British intellectual society (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 90).

⁵³ The Alhambra and Coliseum Music Halls in London each maintained a large company of dancers under contract. See A. Carter, 'Blond, Bewigged and Winged with Gold: Ballet Girls in the Music Halls of Late Victorian and Edwardian England' (1995) for this under researched area of British ballet history which demonstrates how these contracts offered permanent employment for working class women as an alternative to domestic work and how leading dancers in these companies began a British Ballet tradition in the 1930's.

⁵⁴ The 'balletomane' is an adoring fan of particular ballerinas. *Fouettés* are difficult and dramatic turns *en pointe* for the ballerina, whereby she must aim to stay on the same spot while executing as many as thirty-two turns. The audience tended to count the number of turns and the conductor would repeat the same phrase of music, until the ballerina came to a stop, followed by enthusiastic applause.

Haskell is describing how dancers were by now seducing audiences with their technical expertise without any artistic resonance with the original intentions of the particular ballet. In this case the ballet is probably *Swan Lake*, first created in 1876 and revised by the Mariinsky choreographer Marius Petipa (1818-1910).⁵⁵ Petipa's *Swan Lake*, still the version of *Swan Lake* most ballet companies mount, has a demanding solo for the ballerina during which she executes a series of pirouette turns (*fouettés*) which should remain on the same spot for the duration of thirty-two turns. The ballerina can only perform this feat without moving across the stage if she can counter-balance the whipping effect of the working leg – which actions its own circular motion while the body is also turning a circle on its own axis – through extreme core body strength. In the ballet narrative, these *fouettés* should perform an act of seduction but if the context is lost, they just become a feat of technicality. Haskell is also probably summarising the view of the poor state of Russian ballet held by Prince Serge Volkonsky (1860-1937) when he was appointed as the new Director of the Russian Imperial Theatres in 1899, and whom Haskell acknowledges as the author of a similar anecdote further in his memoir (Haskell 1968, 40).

This is the ballet which needs reform; the ballet that is linked to the ancient aristocracy and has lost its coherence with the art of the ballet; the ballet which needs to be made more relevant for the modern age. My first chapter will demonstrate how the Ballets Russes present this reform and I will establish how the new dance of Isadora Duncan performs as an act of resistance against this ballet, in chapter two. The next section in this Prologue introduces

⁵⁵ For an excellent biography of Petipa and his legacy see *Marius Petipa, The Emperor's Ballet Master* by Nadine Meisner (2019).

how the Ballets Russes comes into being which will provide the context which produces Nijinsky's revolution in ballet.

The idea for a new Russian ballet company began as a philosophical idea for a group of modern Russian artists and intellectuals who were keen to reform Russian artistic cultures, and their first idea was to launch their vision in a new journal *Mir iskusstva* (The World of Art) (1898-1904) with funding from wealthy aristocrats and the Tsar.⁵⁶ Various members of the group were also involved with the Imperial Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre at the same time. This group hoped the journal would bring about a total revolution in the world of Russian art (Scheijen 2009, 98).⁵⁷ Less than a year after the journal's launch, Diaghilev was appointed to the civil service post of assistant director at the Mariinsky in 1899 and was given a new ballet to mount; the project proved to be a disaster and this inadvertently led to the launch of the new Russian ballet project in Europe, rather than Russia.

Within two years of his appointment at the Mariinsky Diaghilev was dismissed under 'a harsh law that made it impossible for him to be employed again in any post in the civil service' (Haskell 1968, 38). This law, decreed by Tsar Nicholas II himself, effectively meant that Diaghilev would not be able to set up a new company of dancers in any Theatre in Russia (Garafola 1998, 165-167). This fact, together with the Tsar's withdrawal of funding for *Mir iskusstva* in 1904,

⁵⁶ There is an enormous amount of research in this area, often containing conflicting factual details regarding spelling, dates and events. This section is extensively informed therefore by only two scholarly accounts. The first is (Garafola 1998) and the second is in the biography of Diaghilev and recommended by Garafola, (Scheijen 2009).

⁵⁷ For extensive detail about the background content of the World of Art journal see (Scheijen 2009, 73-139) and (Garafola 1998), both of which inform the content of this section.

meant the World of Art group would have to find a foreign theatre in which to launch their new Russian Ballet, with dancers of the Imperial Ballet and singers from the Imperial Opera, who could obtain permission from the Tsar to travel to Europe. As was stated earlier, ballet began as the *divertissement* in Grand Opera and in the pre-war years of what became known as the Ballet Russes, the troupe presented Russian Opera and Ballet, with existing Grand Russian Opera featuring on alternate evenings with ballets from the Mariinsky repertoire, until the new ballets had been created.⁵⁸

Diaghilev's first resident ballet choreographer was Russian dancer/choreographer Michael Fokine (1880-1942).⁵⁹ He broke new ground by creating ballets for the troupe with more dramatic expression in the body so that narratives could be easily read through the dancing bodies without the need for mime; a format upon which more traditional ballet relied.⁶⁰ One example of the traditional ballet was *Giselle*, which Diaghilev first staged in 1910. *Giselle* is a narrative ballet, reliant on mime to tell the story, and is danced in the formal *solo*, *pas de deux*, *pas de trois*, *pas de six* and *corps de ballet* tradition. Each of these formal demonstrations of technical prowess

⁵⁸ For details of all the Opera and ballet presented by the Ballets Russes, the dates and where they performed see (Prichard 2009).

⁵⁹ Fokine wrote of his aims 'based on five principles' in a letter to the Times in 1914: '[1] Individual ballets should be choreographed in styles which were appropriate to their subjects [...], [2] dance and mime should have no place in a ballet unless they were dramatically expressive, [3] expressive mime should [...] involve the whole body rather than being restricted to conventional hand gestures [...], [4] Group ensembles should [further] dramatic atmosphere rather than be used for purely decorative purposes. [5] Dance music and design should be equal partners in ballet' (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 186-187).

⁶⁰ Mime in ballet is 'the art of telling a story or describing an emotion without the use of words'; ballet has 'a set vocabulary for familiar narrative components: the declaration of love, the desire to marry, the description of female beauty etc.' (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 326). Mime was used in ballet for centuries and in the 19th century it almost became more important than the dance in some cases. After Fokine gave this tradition more authenticity (see above), Nijinsky dispensed with it altogether. (In all my research, mime has not featured as an aspect of Nijinsky's aesthetic).

receive applause when finished, which is instantly acknowledged in gracious *reverence* by the dancers; formalities which interrupt the flow of the narrative each time. The *corps* however remain in character during any applause.⁶¹

Under Fokine's leadership, each movement, whether virtuosic or basic, could be justified only if it continued the authentic coherence of the piece; dramatic technical feats were now performed for expression, not their virtuosity.⁶²

Fokine also called for costume design which was consistent with the narrative and theme of the ballet, thus discarding the tradition whereby the ballerina would be dressed in a tutu regardless of whether she was representing a nymph, a dramatic heroine or a slave, for example.⁶³ Fokine's ballets demonstrate the ideal of the *World of Art* philosophy, that all aspects of the ballet production should bear equal weight in the production of a coherent work; costume design now became a relevant and cohesive aspect of the whole.

Under Fokine, the Russian Ballet in Europe was the realisation of the World of Art project which restored ballet's reputation as high art by modernising its traditional forms, settings and narratives as a cohesive whole art form.

Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), one of many contemporary and educated men and women who wrote about the Ballets Russes but who were not specialists in dance theatre, wrote of the arrival of Diaghilev and his troupe of Mariinsky ballet and Opera stars in the London of 1911 as the moment which proved to

⁶¹ Originally created in 1841, *Giselle* is still in many Ballet Company *repertoires* today. The Ballets Russes' version was probably very similar to that still performed which uses the choreography created by Marius Petipa (1818-1910), for the Mariinsky (known as the Imperial Ballet at this time) in the 1890's.

⁶² See Prologue for analysis of Fokine's modernising of the principles in the performance of ballet.

⁶³ See (Garafola 1998, 10) which further explains this theme.

be a watershed for English ballet. It raised ballet to a pitch of unsurpassed perfection (Ellis 1923).⁶⁴ Ellis is noting how Fokine's ballets were a demonstration of how ballet could be brought back from decline, and his remarks as to the quality of these ballets proved to be prophetic. They were the turning point moment for British ballet until Nijinsky's revolutionary ballets provided an even more dramatic watershed moment for ballet, not only in Britain but across the world.

Some forty-five years after the Ballets Russes first performed in London in 1911, Bloomsbury's Leonard Woolf published a memoir which reflected the extraordinary changes that had taken place in the sciences, arts and literature in the two decades which bracket the First World War. The following extract from this memoir locates the cultural space in which the Ballets Russes performed with such aplomb:

Profound changes were taking place [. . .] Freud and Rutherford and Einstein were at work beginning to revolutionise our knowledge of our own minds and of the universe. [. . .] In literature, one seemed to feel the lull before the storm which was to produce in a few years [. . .] *The Waste Land*, *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs Dalloway*. In painting, we were in the middle of the profound revolution of Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso [. . .] and to crown it all, night after night we flocked to Covent Garden, entranced by a new art, a revolution to us benighted British, the Russian Ballet in the greatest days of Diaghilev and Nijinsky (Woolf 1963, 37).⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See Ellis also in (Copeland 1983, 490). Havelock Ellis studied and wrote on human sexuality and was a philosopher, social reformist and, like many others of his time, a eugenicist. In *the Art of Dancing* section of his book *The Dance of Life* (1923), he links dance with love and ancient religions.

⁶⁵ This extract from Woolf's memoir is often used to explain the phenomenal revolution in dance which was the Ballets Russes. One such is (Garafola 1998, 314).

My thesis is concerned with many of the changes Woolf highlights: chapter three focuses the new science and technology as it relates to new ideas about how the body in movement might be made modern, and chapter one discusses how the modernist turn in literature forms a relationship with the modernism in the Nijinsky Ballets. Together with the synopsis of the history of ballet and the beginnings of the Ballets Russes project above, Woolf's words serve to introduce Nijinsky's radical experimental ballets.

Chapter One: Vaslav Nijinsky's choreographic triptych: choreographic modernism

This chapter offers my first readings of dance in the modernist period from the perspective of the body in the dance. The body under investigation is the ballet-body in the works created by Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950). These ballets, *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912), *Jeux* (1913) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913), constituted the high point for the ground-breaking phenomenon in modernist theatre and dance practice known as the Ballets Russes (1909-1929).⁶⁶ I present them as Nijinsky's one experimental triptych so as to explore his radical break with expected ballet norms as they manifest in the ballet-body of the photographic image. As I centre the knowledge in the ballet-body, I look for the many details in Nijinsky's new ballet forms that the dancer's body actions, and examine these bodies for how they might articulate the essential subtexts in Nijinsky's narratives, which test traditional gender norms. I begin this analysis of Nijinsky's ballets through relevant discourses and through the focus of the ballet-body, with his most famous ballet *Sacre*, set in the primitivist ritual of ancient Russian culture and follow with the primitivist-natural ballet *Faune*. I then foreground Nijinsky's least well-known and less examined work *Jeux*, for how it blends the classical Hellenic and the modern in its new ballet forms, and how it utilises the setting of the British group of modernist writers and artists known as Bloomsbury. In prioritising the intelligence of the ballet-body I interrogate Nijinsky's radical choreographic triptych as it challenges ballet's traditions and offers locations through which to scope modern ideas about identities.

⁶⁶ I use (Prichard 2009) as the definitive source for dates of the performances and premiers of all the ballets cited in this chapter.

The riotous response to the last ballet in Nijinsky's triptych *Le Sacre du Printemps* (the Rite of Spring), is the reason for presenting this ballet at the beginning of the chapter. The riot has been the most examined, yet least choreographically orientated, detail in scholarly enquiry which has addressed the Nijinsky era of the Ballets Russes over the decades; an enquiry which began as soon as the premiere was over. As *Sacre* reached its centenary in 2013 it encouraged new scholarship, and scholars with 'diverse historical, comparative, transnational and theoretical approaches' to modernism were invited to bring new impetus to the already existing conversation between New Modernist Studies and dance, through *Sacre* (Preston 2014, 4). In this invitation Preston highlights the central relevance of **interdisciplinarity and the transnational** in the artistic components which brought *Sacre* to the stage, as the point through which New Modernist Studies could reach this extraordinary moment in the modernist period.

The responses to Preston's call were collected in the special edition of the *Modernist Cultures* journal 'Modernism and Dance' and these articles demonstrate the global and transnational in modernist dance, including an examination of Anna Pavlova's dance in New Mexico (Reynoso 2014) (the ballerina who features in chapter two), the British inter-war modernist ballet *Job* (Zimring 2014), and the kinaesthetic in the stilled representation of the black-American cabaret dancer Josephine Baker (Townsend 2014) which I draw on in my interrogation of the kinaesthetic in the riotous response to the original *Sacre* in 1913 below. With an acknowledgement of the interdisciplinarity and transnational concerns of the 2014 'Modernism and Dance' special issue, this chapter offers *Sacre* as a familiar point of entry through which to examine the most elusive artistic

discipline in the production of *Sacre*, without which the ballet would not have been a ballet. It will re-orientate the choreographic presentation, not only as the primary factor which engendered *Sacre's* riot, but also as it manifests in the body of the dancer in all three of Nijinsky's ballets.

***Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913): rape, sacrifice and riot**

I begin in *Sacre* as a work of drama in the theatrical presentation of an imagined ancient Russian culture that practices primitivist ritual. In this drama, *Sacre* embodies this pre-language cult through the modern articulation of the dancing body and the following example grippingly illustrates how this body enacts the narrative:

Set in a prehistoric rural Russia, the ballet depicts the ritual sacrifice of a young woman to ensure the continuation of the tribe ... men and women are coupled together in a dance of abduction and rape; then, during the rite itself, the 'Chosen One' of the community is propelled into a dance of incessant repetition, a series of desperate, strained movements and leaps rising to a climax when she finally collapses and dies from the effort (Jones 2013, 111).⁶⁷

This description of one of the most disturbing ballet narratives of modernism draws attention to how the graphic shock of the ritual articulates through the body of the dancer (Jones 2013, 110-111). As I pay close attention to those who danced *Sacre* as they are represented in the contemporary photographic images in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, many of the qualities in the *Rite* which Jones highlights above are anticipated.⁶⁸ The Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947)

⁶⁷ Jones only refers to one specific dance movement, the 'leap', in her vibrant summary of the ballet. If Nijinsky made notes on the movements he created, they have never been found. He does not mention *Sacre* at all in his Diary. With so little evidence of the specific choreography in *Sacre*, Rambert's description of the dynamic in the jumps in the Chosen One's solo, see below, probably informs Jones description of the leaps here. Rambert's memory of working with Nijinsky and dancing in his ballets is one of the few authoritative sources on Nijinsky's choreography and is therefore the source most scholars' value for its authenticity.

⁶⁸ Jones shortens the English translation of *Le Sacre du Printemps: The Rite of Spring*, to *Rite. Rite* (1962), is also the title of the Kenneth Macmillan (1929-1992) ballet for the Royal Ballet.

costuming for both genders, is individualised yet cohesive. The colourful designs elide the eras of prehistory tribal and peasant communities. The costumes are based on authentic, early peasant dress; there is no adornment of the gilt, gold, rich brocade or silk of the dominant classes.⁶⁹ These costumes and setting are based on Roerich's extensive research into ancient Russian myth, as is the narrative (Jones 2013, 110-111). The two images present the idea of an ancient tribal community separated by gender. The individuality in the costumes also signifies how the gendered groups comprise individuals who become subsumed in the crowd, which becomes significant when the ballet is in action.⁷⁰ All the women gaze low, their heads angle into their hands while



Figure 1.1. The Rite of Spring, Costumes and Set by Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), (1913).
Photographer unknown.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The costumes are made as one piece, while the individual geometric patterns and bands represent the layers of the pinafore and chemise of traditional peasant dress. These costumes are minimalist in structure and stylised for ease of movement; the colours are bright (Davis 2010, 92-93).

⁷⁰ See further for how this is one of the unique choreographic effects through which *Sacre* subverts the traditional presentation of classical ballet.

⁷¹ <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RiteofSpringDancers.jpg>

each man is an individual expression of masculinity, chins lift and thrust. The women project submission, the men exude power. Most notable is the common stance which signifies the primitive, toes touching with heels apart. Together with the bent knees with turned in (and occasionally parallel) feet, this is the foundational position which anticipates the take-off and landing position of the repetitive jumps which Jones' identifies. The ballet-bodies in the photographs, which have had to adapt to this unfamiliar signature form, embody Nijinsky's unique choreographic motif in *Sacre*, as they perform the collective of the tribal rite. This motif is also maintained as the one among them who is chosen for sacrifice sustains this motif as she jumps, holds and lands in this position, in repeated pulses, time after time.⁷² The attention to the detail in



Figure 1.2. The Rite of Spring, Costumes by Nicholas Roerich (1913). Photographer unknown. The British Library, Subject to Copyright.⁷³

⁷² See below for more analysis of the solo.

⁷³ <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/the-riot-at-the-rite-the-premiere-of-the-rite-of-spring>

the forms the dancers hold in these photographs begins to define what might have been seen in *Sacre* as these poses anticipate the movements as they were danced in the ballet. The body of the dancer, even in the stilled pose, retains the essence of the preceding movement and the one that follows in the present action of movement and is held still, for the camera. My understanding of stilled action is also informed by Marie Rambert (1888-1982), who is the second dancer from the left in Figure 1.1. and who writes about the actual movements in *Sacre*. The following quotation from Rambert's memoir brings the stilled poses to action and allows them to dance in the absence of any actually filmed recording of the ballet. The dancers begin by embodying the signature body form of the ballet, which starts with the feet which are:

very turned in, knees slightly bent, arms held in reverse of the classical position, a primitive, prehistoric posture. The steps were very simple: walking smoothly or stamping, jumps mostly off both feet, landing heavily [...] it was mostly done in groups, and each group has its own precise rhythm to follow (Rambert 1972, 63-64).

Here Rambert is defining how Nijinsky envisages the primitive prehistoric past in a choreographic form which opposes classical ballet techniques. All turn-out is turned in beyond the parallel, and the body weight is lowered, so that the jumps land with sound as they hit the stage heavily. In classical ballet the jumps from two feet to two feet involve intricate fast beats of the legs and feet and land silently, whereas in *Sacre* the dancers jump up and land heavily in the same body form. In *Sacre* the *corps de ballet* becomes the crowd of stomping peasants and presents the idea of a grounded attachment to the earth of the primitive, rather than the ethereal defiance of gravity in the classical *corps de ballet* ballets, wherein the dancers embody the idea of the spiritual in the realm of the ghostly sylph. With the benefit of hindsight, *Sacre* gestures towards the grounded aesthetic of twentieth-century Contemporary

Dance, and is perhaps informed by Duncan's dance which embraces the ground as a primal element of her new dance form.⁷⁴ The *corps de ballet* usually form the backdrop for the star performer in classical ballets and in the ballets of the Ballets Russes up to this point, whereas *Sacre* did not use the famous dancers, not least Nijinsky himself, who watched from the wings.⁷⁵ *Sacre's* lengthy exposition of the primitive – the ballet is some forty-five minutes long, involving the whole company of dancers who stomp incessantly throughout, and its promotion of the unindividuated mass with no star performers – was unprecedented. Rambert remembers Nijinsky teaching the Chosen One's solo:

the dance of the sacrifice of the Chosen Virgin was powerful and deeply moving, I watched Nijinsky again and again teaching it to Maria Piltz. Her reproduction was very pale by comparison with his ecstatic performance (Rambert 1972, 64).

This demonstrates how difficult it was for the classically-trained young dancer Piltz who was not a soloist, to accommodate Nijinsky's vision in her ballet-body at the same time as it shows how easily Nijinsky was able to embody his vision in his own, classically-trained body. It exemplifies the extraordinary creativity in Nijinsky as the choreographer of a totally new form of ballet at the same time as he was performing the classical roles. **Hodson notes that this solo was the first choreography Nijinsky worked on for *Sacre* and that it:**

⁷⁴ See chapter two here, for an extended analysis of how the grounded-ness in Duncan's dance can be seen in her dance-body, how it relates to her philosophy of the primitive in early dance and how this embrace of gravity is one element in her staged resistance to the traditions in classical ballet.

⁷⁵ Nijinsky's shouting out the rhythms of Stravinsky's score from the wings because 'the riot' drowned out the music, has become part of the folklore of *Sacre's* opening night; I address the famous 'riot' further in this chapter.

established the stylistic principles of the whole work: compact jumps; inverted postures; head and arms held in contorted positions as the body moves beneath them to irregular rhythms; ordealistic repletion; and the demonstration of effort rather than concealment of it which is the characteristic of classical ballet (Hodson 1996, 167).

These are postures which can be seen in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Another choreographic motive in the role of the sacrificial female which Nijinsky embodied in his 'ecstatic performance' and which the ballerina was clearly able to identify by the time *Sacre* came to premier in 1913, was for the whole body to tremble:

That scene began with Maria Piltz, the Chosen Virgin, standing on the spot trembling for many bars, her folded hands under her right cheek, her feet turned in, a truly prehistoric and beautiful pose (Rambert 1972, 64).

With the benefit of witnessing the premier of *Sacre*, Rambert is able to describe how the dancer embodies the fearful anticipation of impending sacrifice through her trembling body, as it remains static in one place for many moments. As I interrogate the details of the static body which the choreographic form of the female body presents above, I argue that it anticipates the fear of impending sacrifice which will be the fate of any one of them, until one is chosen. In Figure 1.1, the female dancers all hold the body form which traces the action Rambert describes. All the ballet-bodies in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 offer the embodiment of the forms which serve its innovator Nijinsky, and demonstrate his intention, as I argue they trace the imminent action when their stilled bodies are released in movement. Their ballet-bodies anticipate their movements in performance which Rambert, one of the dancers in Figure 1.1, remembers **and which Hodson reconstructs in the Chosen One's solo in her choreographic re-interpretation *The Rite of***

***Spring* in 1987.⁷⁶ Here, her solo begins with the Chosen One standing motionless for a full five minutes as the tribal members encircle her, after which she finally begins to tremble in anticipation of dancing herself to death. This dance mainly consists of compact high leaps in the signature pose for the legs seen in Figure 1.1 with variations on the arms. The dance lasts some four minutes and the dancer is required to take these high leaps no less than 86 times, in five separate sections. In between these jumping sections the dancer is never still, she is either trembling on the spot, or frantically spinning, so that when the Chosen One collapses from exhaustion and dies at the end of this solo, the dancer herself is also physically exhausted from so many effortful jumps; this solo is a very demanding physical feat.⁷⁷**

The embodied ideas of primitive male power, exploitation and female sacrifice for the benefit of the community, are exhibited in Nijinsky's angular, sharp, choreographic body-forms as they reference Stravinsky's atonal score. The sudden changes in rhythm, the juxta-positioning of complex and unrelated phrasing builds in the music, and is actioned in the group rape scene and as the Chosen One's frenzied leaps move across the lines of timing and rhythm in the music. McCarren, who writes on 'how dance forms can absorb, and embody, particular medical modes of thinking across time', draws an intriguing link between Nijinsky's choreography in *Sacre* and the nineteenth-century classical ballet *Giselle* (1841); first performed by the Ballets Russes, with Nijinsky in the leading male role, in 1909 (McCarren 1998, 33). For McCarren,

⁷⁶ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8TQH-5Vrhk> for the performance of the Joffrey Ballet's production of Hodson's reconstructed choreography in *The Rite of Spring* (1987) of the Nijinsky original ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913).

⁷⁷ See (Hodson 1996, 166-191) for the extraordinarily detailed action of this section of the Chosen One's jumps and as actioned in Hodson's reconstruction on stage <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8TQH-5Vrhk>.

the 'turned-in feet and disjointed movements' in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, reference nineteenth-century 'cultural traditions of madness (McCarren 1998, 33), a trope of pathology in dance which is central in the ballet *Giselle*. In *Giselle*, the low-born heroine is driven to madness and death through shock and grief as her fiancé leaves her for a woman of higher status. In *Sacre*, the Chosen One is danced to death by the demands of the community for her sacrifice. This trope of pathology in the two contrasting choreographies of the classical nineteenth-century ballet danced by Nijinsky as *Giselle's* aristocratic fiancé, and the modernist choreographic interpretation of primitivist dance in Nijinsky's ballet *Sacre*, is the first example in my thesis of how the cultures in dance and the science of medicine relate through the moving body in this era. I am interested in exploring this relationship, introduced in this early example of the two ballets, in further chapters.

Sacre also presents the ancient in the modernism of the ballet, in the fractured choreographic representation of female sacrifice and male power as the tribal collective of individuals, supported by the graphic costumes and re-enforced through Stravinsky's modernist score.⁷⁸ The new modern movement system of Eurhythmics devised by Jaques Dalcroze (1865-1950) is often assumed to have contributed to the much-stylised, primitivist movement forms Nijinsky created in *Sacre*, although this is a point of constant debate which is addressed below. Garafola notes how Diaghilev and Nijinsky visited the Dalcroze institute at Hellerau twice in the winter of 1912 to learn more about

⁷⁸ I have seen and handled some of the original costumes for *Le Sacre du Printemps* and the dresses, trousers, shirts, hats and boots are made of wool; they would have felt very hot and heavy to dance in under the stage lights. I have direct somatic knowledge of dancing in weighty and warm costumes and how they impede movement. My thanks to Jane Pritchard, Curator for the Dance & Theatre Collections, *Victoria and Albert Museum*, for this rare opportunity to handle this precious costume archive.

Dalcroze's theory of movement (Garafola 1998, 60). Dalcroze created his new movement forms primarily to help music students learn complicated rhythms, by training their body to respond to music as they learn to allow distinct parts of their body to respond to the definitions of rhythm which the music describes. During his visit to Hellerau, Diaghilev invited Marie Rambert who had been training with Dalcroze for over three years (Rambert 1972, 46) to join the company, with a special duty towards the dancers:

[t]o acquaint them with Dalcroze's methods, to help Nijinsky in applying it in the production of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* and to dance in ballets for which I was suitable (Rambert 1972, 54).

The assumption about the Dalcrozian influence in *Sacre* is due, in part, to the way Rambert's words have been interpreted. Rambert's experience in eurhythmics – the ability to identify different rhythmic aspects in music with individual parts of the body, at the same time – was needed to help the dancers identify with the unique characteristics in the *Sacre* motif and the complex rhythms in the score.⁷⁹ Well used to accommodating the rhythms of classical music in their ballet-bodies, it was very difficult for those bodies to accommodate the radical new forms in all Nijinsky's ballets, particularly as they met with the extraordinarily complex rhythmic structures in Stravinsky's modernist score. The emphasis on the Dalcrozian in *Sacre* is therefore not that it influenced the choreographic forms, which Nijinsky was already trying to impose on the ballet-bodies of his dancers, it was in Rambert's understanding

⁷⁹ Because Rambert describes the reasons for her employment in this way, many assume that *Sacre* is choreographed through Dalcrozian principles. Rambert was to help the dancers with all the Nijinsky ballets, which they found difficult to understand, which include *Faune*. See (Järvinen 2013, 90-94).

of eurhythmics, having trained in the system for three and a half years (Rambert 1972, 46), as she rehearsed the dancers in *Sacre*.⁸⁰

While the original *Sacre* ballet's identity persists in Stravinsky's modernist score, the music stands alone as an art work. Nijinsky's equally radical choreography, as seen in the movement of the dancers in *Sacre*, does not. As mentioned above, the first point of entry that registers *Sacre* in artistic and modernist imaginations is often through the mythologization of the riot, which the music and choreography induced in the audience during the premier performance of *Sacre*:

The seminal importance of *Le sacre du printemps*, both for modernism's sense of itself as a movement, and for critical conceptions of the concerns and aesthetic qualities of modern art, has become part of the received wisdom of the humanities. The "riot" [...] sparked by, among other factors, Stravinsky's exceedingly dissonant score and Nijinsky's aggressively unballetic choreography – quickly entered the high culture folklore of its era; and it continues to serve, in lectures, textbooks and other concise introductions to the subject, as an emblem of modern art's discontinuity with the aesthetic expectations and values of the past (Heisler 2012, 695).

Here, Heisler identifies the continuing cultural significance and relevance of *Sacre* in the riot which, in the absence of the movement in the choreography, offers the first point of entry for scholars beyond those who study dance. My analysis of how the ballet-bodies in *Sacre* articulate Nijinsky's primitivist vision for the ballet in the modern of his choreographic forms, re-accommodates the missing body that danced the ballet *Sacre*; this body, I argue, also articulates the riot. Among the many factors which could have caused the unruly behaviour of the riotous audience at the premier of *Sacre*, is the kinaesthetic

⁸⁰ See Järvinen's excellent research into the unique challenges which Nijinsky presented in his choreographic forms for the dancers, and how this contests previous claims about his work in Järvinen, 'They Never Dance: The Choreography of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, 1913', (2013). See also Rambert's memories of working with dancers on *Sacre* (Rambert 1972, 54-63).

empathy the audience may have shared with the dancers.⁸¹ Järvinen offers this claim, from dance scholarship:

Some dance experts have even claimed that *Sacre* 'forced' the opening-night audience to riot because of the instinctive kinaesthetic sympathy with the dancers, and that through this kinaesthetic sympathy, we could still connect with the experience of the original spectators of 1913 (Järvinen 2006, 79).

Järvinen accepts the idea that the dance movements themselves could have powered the riot, as she acknowledges the many reviews of *Sacre* which describe the discomfort felt by the spectators during, and after the performance, particularly during the Chosen One's dance to her death (Järvinen 2006, 79). It is an interesting idea; that the power in the dancers' strange movements in *Sacre* literally, and kinaesthetically, moves the spectators to jump up from their seats and shout in protest. *Sacre's* riot, according to Lewis, is 'one of the most famous episodes in the public's hostile reaction to modern primitivism' (Lewis 2007, 75). And, in the context of primitivism as an expression of modernism which engages a wide range of modern artists in the period, Lewis argues that 'modern dance' in general, and *Sacre* in particular 'seemed a particularly appropriate arena for primitivism because it attempted to give full expression to the body' (Lewis 2007, 76). I would contend that it is the individuality of the body intelligence in this body that allows it to express the primitive in the neo-Hellenism of the 'modern dance' and *Sacre* which makes it 'the appropriate arena' as an expression of the primitive in modernism.

⁸¹ See Introduction which explains the concept of kinaesthetic empathy as the current description of what was described as kinaesthetic sympathy in the early part of the twentieth century. See also how kinaesthetic empathy relates in the dance of Duncan in chapter two.

The audience's kinaesthetic sympathy with the dancers' embodied expression of rape and sacrifice in *Sacre* may have been one factor which incited the riot, but I question the premise that it is only through the kinaesthetic knowledge of the dancer that a connection might be made across time with an imagined experience of being at *Sacre's* premier. Järvinen's privileging of the experienced dancer's awareness of the kinaesthetic as a spectator is made clear below, as Järvinen draws the following conclusion:

It is obvious that in comparison to an average spectator, experienced dancers are always far more attuned to expressing themselves through their bodies and through movement, and are thus more likely to interpret the movements of others as their self-expression than would those lay spectators who do not possess the same physical familiarity with the practice of the art form (Järvinen 2006, 76).

Thus, the elite, but lay, Parisian audience on the opening night were unlikely to have physically self-expressed their empathic response to *Sacre's* movements by jumping up from their seats, unless the notion of democracy, in the sense of a mixed group of individuals which makes up an audience, is introduced. Then the idea that '*Sacre* forced' the opening-night audience to riot' resonates with the notion that dance is a more egalitarian experience than some in the dance studies' community suppose. The following example demonstrates my position on the democracy of kinaesthetic empathy:

On college campuses, there are frequent Josephine Baker sightings: she most often appears banana-skirted via Paul Colin's sketch on a poster sold and bought to grace a dormitory wall. This image, like Baker herself, evokes a variety of responses. For me, the response is kinesthetic. That first forward step of the Charleston begins in the stomach, a slight rise and then fall into a forward step [...] bounce-back. That compelling lilt co-mingles with all of the admiration, the dismissal and the confusion around Baker – they all dance in my mind and body (Townsend 2014, 62).

Townsend cites a ubiquitous poster on college campus' dormitory walls. She describes her student experience of this poster in her personal kinaesthetic response to the imagined dance of Josephine Baker, who danced in the same era, and in many of the same cities as the Ballets Russes. Townsend's response to the Baker poster opens up the experience and analysis of dance across disciplines within the New Modernist Studies – whether in the cabaret dance of Baker or the ballet modernism in *Sacre*. As Townsend's analysis shows, academic enquiry into the dance of the early twentieth century can be enhanced and experienced as the spectating body engages in kinaesthetic empathy with the dance-body of this period, as seen in stilled images of the dance. *Sacre* (1913) and the mythology of the riot has continued to seduce new choreographers since Nijinsky's original creation; there have been over one hundred choreographic re-considerations of *Sacre* since the premiere.⁸² The repatriation of the Nijinsky choreographic intent for the moving body in his radical new ballet triptych, which closed with *Sacre*, has begun in modernist scholarship.

As my analysis of *Sacre* and the riot has demonstrated, privileging the body as the key site through which to interrogate the ballet, allows the body that has slipped out of consciousness to be relocated at the centre of inquiry. This methodology has enabled the body to reveal what *Sacre* was meaning and doing as a danced performance of primitivist modernism. I have shown why it is important to allow the ballet-body to demonstrate how it actions the atavistic

⁸²These include Nijinsky's original choreography; remembered by his sister Bronislava Nijinsky who taught and staged *Sacre* as *The Rite*, for the Royal Ballet in 1962. One of the most memorable of the contemporary dance versions is that created by *Tanztheatre Wuppertal Pina Bausch* (1940-2009): *Fruhlingsopfer* (The Rite of Spring) in 1975, and now (2017) in the repertoire of the English National Ballet.

intentions in the ballet. My interrogation of the ballet-bodies in the photographic images has demonstrated how the body anticipates the choreographic movements it will action in performance. In the stilled bodies of the gendered groups, the female ballet-body has been seen to trace the anxiety of impending sacrifice and the male ballet-body as it pugnaciously anticipates patriarchal power. Both groups embody Nijinsky's choreographic modernisation of the primitive movement forms, which they will action in performance. This analysis demonstrates how Nijinsky's modernist choreographic break with traditional ballet norms and his demonstration of the modern interest in the primitive of the neo Hellenic, was felt in the body of the spectators. As they viscerally respond to the danced movements which these bodies hold in stilled action, and the complex rhythms in the Stravinsky score they will dance, my examination allows all the bodies in the premier of *Sacre* in 1913 to articulate the profound mark this ballet makes in the modernisation of ballet and as a new high point in modernism. **In *Sacre* the turned-in from the turned-out ballet foot, is the articulated signature of the neo-Hellenic ritual and as these heavily weighted feet pound the stage, they draw the kinaesthetic in the audience. Thus, the *Sacre* foot can be considered as the haptic signature of the riot and the embodied neo-Hellenic in the dancers' physicality in *Sacre*.**⁸³ My body-centred analysis continues as I explore how Nijinsky liberates his own dance-body from the traditional confines of traditional ballet, and how the ballet dancers in his first choreographic ballet *Faune*, find this liberation so difficult in their own ballet bodies.

⁸³ See Introduction where (Garrington 2015) is first mentioned as she calls for the hand as 'the poster-boy' of the haptic in modernist writing. Here I am suggesting that the foot is the signature of the haptic in Nijinsky's modernist choreography and in the dancers' embodiment of the neo-Hellenic.

***L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912): 'Shock and Awe'**

On 29 May 1912, during the fourth *Ballets Russes'* Paris season at the *Theatre du Chatelet* Diaghilev presented a programme which included the first work by his new choreographer, Nijinsky. The premier of Nijinsky's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, hereafter referred to as *Faune*, was followed by three Fokine ballets: *L'Oiseau de Feu* (premiered on 25 June 1910), *Le Spectre de la Rose* (premiered on 19 April 1911) and *Thamar* (premiered on 20 May 2012). The audience reacted in uproar to *Faune*; 'half of the spectators broke into frantic applause, and the other into equally frantic protests' (Grigoriev 1953, 68). Grigoriev, *Regisseur* of 'the Diaghilev Ballet' and responsible for almost everything apart from the finances for the troop, reports:

On the following day half the press tore Diaghilev to pieces, accusing him of immorality and protesting at Nijinsky's final pose [...] though Nijinsky was warmly praised by the other half, both for his choreography and his performance (Grigoriev 1953, 68).

Clearly something controversial had taken place, to so divide the audience and the press.

While it is impossible to know whether Diaghilev or Nijinsky insisted on the final pose, it is interesting that the French press place Diaghilev in the role of immoral provocateur rather than Nijinsky, who choreographed the work and embodied the faun. As Parisian 'audiences went wild for his amazing virtuosity [...] his exceptional elevation, and his exotic stage presence' (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 345) in the Fokine ballets, it is possible that the half of the French Press who praised Nijinsky, were keen to dissociate him from the controversy on the first night of his first choreographic work. *Faune* was not the first ballet to present 'immorality' to Ballets Russes audiences. Fokine's ballet

Scheherazade, first performed in 1910, was on the same programme as *Faune* in Paris on 5 June 1912. This particular evening can be seen, in retrospect, to signify a shift in the staged sensuality of the pre-war Ballets Russes.

Scheherazade, a ballet based on one of the stories in *a Thousand and One Nights*, accentuates the erotic through the enactment of the story; the dancers adopt the characters of the story who narrate the exotic and the erotic through their dance. In contrast, Nijinsky's *Faune* locates the body as subject of the sensual; the 'locus of experience' (Hodson 2008, 10); Nijinsky's ballet-body presents the sensuality of both man and faun.⁸⁴

The French press was not the only journalist community to report on the 'immorality' in Nijinsky's first ballet *Faune*. It was not especially well known until recently, that the Russian press also carried reports on the premier of *Faune*. Anatolii Lunacharskii (1875-1933), the future Bolshevik Commissar for Education and exiled in Paris between 1911-1915, was also in the audience for *Faune* and contextualises the controversial final moment for the Russian public who, due to the restrictive policies of the Tsarist regime, were unable to travel to Paris to see the ballet (Rabinowitz 2009, 3):⁸⁵

In the afternoon swamp of nature a young faun plays on a reed pipe; suddenly a swarm of nymphs runs by and circle around the most beautiful of them. The faun approaches and begins to pursue the beauty. But she runs away from him, leaving behind only her light veil. The librettist adds: 'with which the faun satisfies his passion' [...] But Nijinskii does nothing of the kind. He merely presses the scarf to his heart, kisses it, and bends over it in a voluptuously sorrowful languor (Rabinowitz Summer 2009, 8).

⁸⁴ I investigate Nijinsky as the man/faun further, and to a much greater extent, in the body of this chapter.

⁸⁵ Lunacharskii, who eventually writes forty books and many articles and plays, writes on Parisian theatre for Russian newspapers and magazines. He becomes an important figure in the Bolshevik revolution and the 'Peoples Commissar for Enlightenment' until 1929. Stanley Rabinowitz has translated some of these original articles into English for the first time in (Rabinowitz 2009).

Lunacharskii's reference to the librettist in the above extract, is a note on the scenario which is 'a carefully written scheme of events for the ballet' (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 397). The librettist notes are often written up in the Programme for ballets as the intended scheme of events and Lunacharskii would have been one of many in the audience who had bought the Programme for the opening night of *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*. These responses from the Parisian and Russian press are interesting on many levels. Lunacharskii sees Nijinsky bend over the scarf 'in a voluptuously sorrowful languor', while the librettist records the intended scene in the programme written prior to the first performance. These intentions may have been those of Nijinsky, Diaghilev or the designer of the ballet Leon Bakst (1866-1924). That the last two in this list both lay claim to the choreography is recorded by most scholars of the Ballets Russes. However, as Garafola points out, 'neither Diaghilev nor Bakst, entered the family parlour where Nijinsky began to choreograph' (Garafola 1998, 56). It is a matter of speculation as to whether Lunacharskii only sees what he wants to see in the final moments of the premier performance in order to protect the reputation of Nijinsky the dancer from the sexuality of the role of the faun. Also, whether Nijinsky did in fact pare down the final action at the last moment, Diaghilev, upset by the audience reaction, demanded that the performance be repeated immediately (Grigoriev 1953, 68). Therefore, it has to be wondered as to which of the two performances each member of the press chose to write about. Further, Lunacharskii could have been among the small invited audience who were shown *Faune* the previous day (Buckle 1983, 4-5).

These possible confusions about what was actually seen, when and by whom, in the three performances which took place in rapid succession, serve to emphasise how Nijinsky's ballets are remembered in the mythologization which foregrounds the controversy and drama in response to what was seen, or

imagined at their premieres. The controversy over the final moment, which immediately spread through the press and commentators such as Lunacharskii, continues to serve in the imagination of *Faune*. The combination of factors – the protesting audience, the press tearing ‘Diaghilev to pieces’ in print and the actual content of the intended final pose – forms the touchstone of the ballet for future revivals, re-creations or re-imaginings of *Faune*, and for academic research on the premier of Nijinsky’s *L’Après-Midi d’un Faune*.⁸⁶ *Faune* is the only Nijinsky ballet which survives in entirety, as handed down, via Rambert⁸⁷ through to his sister Bronislava’s revival of *Faune* for the Ballets Russes in 1922 (Garafola 1998, 51). *Faune* was presented in London, but not until 1913, when all three Nijinsky ballets were performed in the London summer season of the Ballets Russes. I now investigate how Nijinsky’s first ballet presents a rupture in ballet traditions through the images of the bodies that danced *Faune*.

⁸⁶Reconstruction [is] the term used for remounting a ballet from the written score’, (Monica Parker in Preston-Dunlop, *Dance Words* 1995, 506), ‘Re-creating a dance work [is] the process of re-mounting a dance work for today’s audience, whether from the notated score or from dancer’s memories or the choreographer’s notes’ (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 511). It should be noted however, that while these views are authoritative, they are not uncontested and are in a line of constant debate in dance.

⁸⁷ See Rambert for her memories of working on *Faune*, further in this chapter.



Figure 1.3. 'Nijinsky couché sur le ventre visage appuyé contre le sol' in *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946), (de Meyer 2012).⁸⁸

Adolph de Meyer's (1868-1946) posed images of *Faune* offer a visual journal of the ballet through its original cast. The wealthy amateur photographer de Meyer took at least thirty-three photographs of the faun and nymphs on the set of *Faune* in Paris, just after the premier in 1912, although they were not finally published until 1914 (Buckle 1983, 7-9). He used the latest technology – a sharpened camera lens which focuses on the centre of the pose and places the rest of the subject in soft focus, and a stretched gauze across the lens to diffuse the light (Dunning 1983, 20). Buckle adds that de Meyer also touched up the negatives to prevent Bakst's scenery looking too like scenery (Buckle

⁸⁸https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nijinski_couch%C3%A9_sur_le_ventre,_visage_appuy%C3%A9_contre_le_sol_1914_album_l%C2%B4apr%C3%A8s-midi_d%C2%B4un_faune_%C3%A9dit%C3%A9_par_Irrib%C3%A9.jpg.

1983, 4). De Meyer's representation of the intended final pose (Figure 1.3) demonstrates all these modern techniques; they are modern works of art in their own right. De Meyer's thirty-three images of *Faune* can also be considered as one further aspect in Diaghilev's overall philosophy that his Ballets Russes presents the communion of all the arts as one artistic whole, in each ballet. Figures 1.3 and 1.4, could be mistaken for a painting from an earlier era, yet the subject matter is shockingly modern. This amalgamation of scientific modern technology with the art of dance and movement, and the rupture of the old by the new – visualised in the juxtaposition in this photograph which shows the sexuality in the pose through the gauzy image – is one example of the modernist fascination with technology which recurs throughout my thesis.

L'Après-Midi d'un Faune was not the first ballet to explore links between the ancient and modern worlds for the Ballets Russes. Fokine's *Narcisse* (1911), *Daphnis and Chloe* (1912), and Nijinsky's *Faune* (1912) can all be read together as one coherent trio of works which re-imagine the past for modern audiences, through the vision of their designer, Leon Bakst. Mary Davis argues that Bakst's physical experiences of ancient Greek culture and watching Isadora Duncan dance in Russia, re-enforced his philosophy that classical art forms the base for modernist art. Thus Bakst's modernising of the ancient past through his ballet designs for this trio of ballets is the key to the Ballets Russes re-invigoration of the art of ballet (Davis 2010, 153-156).⁸⁹ Both Diaghilev and Fokine were also with Bakst in the audience for Duncan's St. Petersburg recital

⁸⁹ In the early years of the century, Bakst designed classical plays in St. Petersburg, the ballet *Acis and Galatea* for Russian Imperial Ballet students and visited the Hermitage Museum. He also took a trip to the excavations of *Knossos* on Crete, and visited the *Louvre* in Paris (Davis 2010, 158).

in 1904; a performance of her new dance form which challenged the Imperial Ballet in its rejection of classical ballet norms (Davis 2010, 154). It was the expressive quality of Duncan's modernised, Classical movement forms and the simplicity of her Grecian style garments that Bakst added to his notion of the materiality of ancient Greek culture, which he made modern through his designs for the three ballets (Davis 2010, 153-156). While the influence of Isadora Duncan's dance on Diaghilev's enterprise was, and is, contested, and her own rupture with the art of classical ballet is the subject of the following chapter, it is relevant to bear in mind her contribution to the materiality of Bakst's influences when approaching Nijinsky's *Faune*.

Thus, the presence of the Russia which the Ballets Russes had left behind, where they were influenced by Duncan's dance of Ancient Greece in modern form, had already been felt in Europe and London via Fokine and Bakst's recreations of Greek myths. As they hear Debussy's melodic score and the curtain rises on *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, audiences are familiar with Fokine and Bakst's modern renderings of the Hellenic. They see their star dancer Nijinsky, already on stage as the faun, kneeling and alert on Bakst's lush stage representation of a secluded lakeside. It is when the nymphs enter – moving across the stage, dressed in gauzy, mid length robes and gilt wigs – that Nijinsky's revolution in movement is seen. They move in one line, across and back, at the apron (the very front) of the stage just behind the footlights. They appear as a moving image of a fifth century BC frieze. Their torsos face front, with their sharply angled arms in the same plane, while their heads, pelvis, legs and feet twist away from this axis, in the angle of some forty-five degrees to their upper body, in profile. Legs and feet are parallel to each other, and each smooth step of the walk has no rise and fall; heel, ball and arch form the

steps. Nijinsky has stripped back classical ballet movement and turned it inwards to present a parallel base form.



Figure 1.4. 'Prelude à l'Après-Midi d'un faune'. Marie Rambert is the second from the left. Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946), (1912), (de Meyer, Wikimedia Commons 2017).⁹⁰

This is the movement of the two-dimensional, utilising a narrow linear space of the stage.⁹¹ This is the grounded aesthetic which links the gravity of the body with the weight of the floor, rather than the gravity of the floor providing the uplift of the classical ballet aesthetic. The faun's movements contrast with the nymph's gliding action, his upper body maintains the lift of the ballet dancer, and 'his torso too called attention to itself, not only because, like Fokine's, it was the locus of physical expression, but because it displayed the openness traditionally associated with turnout' (Garafola 1998, 57). Much of this

⁹⁰ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:-Image_from_%22Prelude_%C3%A0_l%27Apr%C3%A8s-Midi_d%27un_faune%22-_MET_DP-14158-027.jpg.

⁹¹ See (Garafola 1998) and (Järvinen 2008) for more on the choreographic points of this ballet.

extraordinarily innovative modern movement can be seen in Figure 1.4. The audience sees Nijinsky's modern visualisation of ancient Greece push Fokine's representations out, and into the past. Grigoriev describes Nijinsky's intention:

Nijinsky's aim was, as it were, to set in motion an archaic Greek bas relief, and to produce this effect he made the dancers move with bent knees and feet placed flat on the ground heel first (thereby reversing the classical rule) (Grigoriev 1953, 66).⁹²

Grigoriev relates how Nijinsky reverses the academic classical ballet technical rule which requires that all motion steps, whether travelling forward, backward or sideways are taken with the toes touching the ground first. This allows the dancer's weight to move through the whole foot, with the heel touching last, which provides a sound base for the following movement. **Nijinsky's total reversal of the ballet technique, as he demands the use of the naked whole foot in parallel alignment as the means of motion, marks the foot as the motif of the modern, primitivist-natural in *Faune*. Stripped back to its naked simplicity, the parallel foot physically animates the nymphs' neo-Hellenic frieze. This articulated tactility, as it pushes through the stage and up through the body, generates a haptic modernity in the neo-Hellenic, primitivist natural of *Faune*.**

Many scholars draw attention to an idea of a progress in the journey of the dance modernism of the Ballet Russes, as seen through the various innovative styles and forms of the five choreographers who led the company styles in the

⁹² By this Grigoriev means that the academic classical ballet technique requires all movement steps are taken with the toes touching the ground first, then the dancer's weight moves through the whole foot, thus the heel is the last section of the foot to reach the ground.

Diaghilev years.⁹³ Whether the first modernist choreographer of the five was Fokine or Nijinsky is the subject of debate. In terms of the ballet-body, this progress is realised particularly in the releasing of the torso and the foot from the confines of classical technique. Fokine frees the female ballet dancer from the nineteenth-century supportive corsetry in the tutu, which leads to the strengthening of the muscles in the back and torso. This strength enables the soft, curving bends and uplift in the back and torso, and open, curving arms, lifting above and behind the head and back. This new ballet-body, strengthened through its own muscular system, can now move against the corseted tutu constraint to produce the upper back curves so emblematic of Fokine's choreography and, for some, this places him as the first modernist choreographer of the company.⁹⁴ In contrast, Rambert (1888-1982), who worked closely with Nijinsky and danced in his ballets, has Fokine as the last of the 'old guard', meaning his work was still associated with the classical style of the nineteenth century, whereas Nijinsky:

was fifty years ahead of his time. Fokine was a logical development of Petipa, but Nijinsky introduced completely new principles ... He established a basic position strictly adhered to all through the ballet. [In *Faune*] the body was facing front while the head and feet were always seen in profile. The deportment had to be classical, yet the head had independent movements not connected with deportment in the classical vocabulary and so had the arms. It was an orchestration of the body with each part playing a totally different melody (Rambert 1972, 60-61).⁹⁵

⁹³ These were Michael Fokine (1880-1942), Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950), Leonide Massine (1896-1979), Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) and George Balanchine (1904-1983).

⁹⁴ The short solo ballet *The Dying Swan* (1905), choreographed for Pavlova by Fokine when both were in the Mariinsky Ballet, epitomises Fokine's aesthetic described above. A film of Pavlova dancing the *Dying Swan* can still be seen on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkFSBkl9mmo>

⁹⁵ Marius Petipa (1818-1910) was with the Mariinsky ballet for more than thirty years and is one of the most important and influential choreographers in the history of ballet.

As much of dance is concerned with the use and aesthetic of the foot, Garafola draws attention to this in terms of the aesthetic progress in choreographic ideas from Fokine to Nijinsky:

Fokine had uncased the foot. It was Nijinsky, however, who put that liberated foot to work, pinioning it to the floor and weighting it, and using its component parts – heel, ball, arch – to reflexive purpose (Garafola 1998, 57).⁹⁶

Even when Nijinsky does use pointe-shoes in his work, as in his next ballet *Jeux*, he dispenses with full *en pointework* almost all of the time. The thirty-three staged photographs taken by Baron Adolf de Mayer in 1912, two of which are represented here in Figures 1.3 and 1.4, represent the journey of the ballet from the faun on the rock, his encounters with the nymphs and ending with the faun and the scarf. As such they are a historical document of the whole ballet. They offer us:

[t]he intuitive work of a man of the old world traditions, it looked to modernism's compression and distortion of an observable world and to its vision of the direct emotions and taming order of a primitive past (Dunning 1983, 13).⁹⁷

Thus, Nijinsky, the classical dancer 'of the old-world traditions', works 'compression' into the usually lifted, turned-out, ballet-bodies of the nymphs, to produce the two-dimensional distortion of the three-dimensional human body seen in ancient Greek frieze-figures. The period of sexual discovery in the half man, half faun is also compressed, by necessity, down to some ten minutes.

⁹⁶ This 'uncasing' refers to Fokine's discarding of the pointe-shoe in favour of sandals, boots or barefoot whenever the narrative of the ballet demanded a more naturalistic interpretation. In *Petrushka* for example, the only dancer in pointe-shoes is the animated ballerina-doll; and here Fokine is making a pastiche, with the ballerina-doll representing everything he wanted to leave behind from traditional ballet in his new works.

⁹⁷ These photographs were published in a 'lavishly produced, limited edition album [...] with texts by Rodin, Blanche and Cocteau', in 1914. (Dunning 1983, 34).

While the limitations of theatre production restrain the period of the faun's sexual journey, the constraint of time as a device to heighten emotional experience is a methodology which authors such as Virginia Woolf experiment with. Even though Woolf chooses to express Mrs. Dalloway's emotional and sexual experience of the modern world in the time frame of a single day, and Nijinsky's time constraint is given to him, both artists experiment with heights of human experience through devised time periods. Many who saw Nijinsky's short ballet *Faune* were critical, such as the conservative dance critic Andre Levinson 1887-1933. He disapproved of Nijinsky associating his weighted and angled aesthetic with the archaic of the Greek frieze, writing that 'the figures of living dancers simulating two-dimensional vase painting create an absurdly weighted down impression' (Grigoriev 1953, 61). This impression of a weighty contact with the ground is one major aspect of innovation in *Faune's* choreography, as it defies the lifted aesthetic of the ballerina *en pointe*, and challenges conservative dance critics such as Levinson. The grounded, weighty aesthetic is also a key signature of Isadora Duncan's new dance, whose influence on Bakst and Diaghilev probably filtered through to Nijinsky. Here in Nijinsky's *Faune*, the lowering of the dancers' centre of gravity, arguably marks the point of the break between the classical and the modern in ballet. Rambert describes the difficulties for the dancers:

There was nothing you could do automatically [...] He [Nijinsky] did not explain why he wanted them [the movements] thus, but he showed again and again the way they had to be done until he obtained a perfect copy of his own movement [...] not a single movement could be done spontaneously, each limb having to be studied separately. He required a perfect ballet technique and then broke it down consciously to his own purpose – and then it proved a masterpiece (Rambert 1972, 61).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Rambert's words also draw attention to the complete lack of input Nijinsky allowed from his dancers in his creative process. Not all choreographers like to work this way, which is a rather

Rambert is using her familiar movement language of eurhythmics here to describe Nijinsky's approach to teaching his first ballet to the classically-trained ballet dancers, who had never before been asked to move their body in this way. When the choreography was completed the forms became coherent – an orchestration of the body – but at the beginning his forms were too unfamiliar for their ballet-body to accommodate.⁹⁹ Rambert, from her Dalcrozian perspective, understood Nijinsky's intentions and was able to help the dancers slowly to learn how to accommodate his new forms, by breaking them down into the sections which applied to each body part.¹⁰⁰

Nijinsky's ten-minute ballet *Faune* needed one hundred and twenty rehearsals for the dancers to become proficient in the unfamiliar movement technique; and 'no wonder' remembers Rambert (Rambert 1972, 61). The nymphs not only move their bodies as a melody of different parts, Nijinsky contrasts their gliding forms with the faun's slower but sudden movements. They glide across the music, rather than in time with it, they are impersonal and remote, whereas the faun is energised, counterpointing the nymphs in his walk, which has short sudden movements while barely leaving the floor as the foot stays flat until the second comes quickly to join it (Rambert 1972, 61-63). Nijinsky's choreography harnesses and opposes the rhythms in emphasising the opposing aesthetics of the nymphs and the faun, so much

sterile experience for the dancers, some choreographers become inspired by a dancer's collaboration in the creative process.

⁹⁹ See (Preston 2016) for a fascinating account of how difficult it was for her body, trained in ballet and contemporary dance, to accommodate the completely new form of ancient Japanese dance know as Noh. Also, the difficulty in supressing her own authority over her dance-body to that of her Noh teacher.

¹⁰⁰ See further in the chapter for an explanation of Dalcroze's eurhythmic movement system.

so that Marie Rambert remembers 'Debussy's impressionistic music receded completely into the background before this epic evocation of Greek antiquity' (Rambert 1972, 63).¹⁰¹

Bakst's costumes were the visual motifs of Ancient Greece for the modern audience. The nymphs and the faun were an overt example of the modernist fascination with the Classical, and the primitivist modernism of the early Ballets Russes' ballets. Costumes carry equal weight with the music, set and choreography in the World of Art project of total unity considered above.

Bakst's design for the half-faun, half-man (see Figure 1.5) is a sleeveless, body-hugging leotard painted with dappled areas representing the coat of a faun with the addition of a belt hanging with grapes at groin level. At the time when male classical dancers were dressed in costumes which covered their masculinity, a close-fitting body stocking with grapes at the loins was a provocation of the daring, modernist-primitive aspect of the ballet. The grapes also represent a linking motif with the nymph's costumes representative of images seen on ancient Greek vase-ware. The costumes for the nymphs also recall the chiton of Hellenic Greece modernised through the use of fine, layered transparent gauze. Interestingly, the heavily kohled eye make-up and deep red lipstick the nymphs wore offers another example of the ancient made modern in this ballet as it evokes the movie star glamour of the new cinema phenomenon (Davis 2010, 165).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ George Balanchine (1904-1983), Diaghilev's final choreographer for the Ballets Russes, found Stravinsky's music gave him valuable choreographic structure. Balanchine began as a dancer and choreographer with the Ballets Russes during the last few years of the troupe's existence. He later made his name as the founder of modern ballet in America with his company, The New York City Ballet.

¹⁰² See (Davis 2010, 163-179) for an instructive analysis of the relationship between Bakst and his designs for *Faune*, cinema, *haute couture* and art, both classical and modern, mediated through the influential magazine *Comoedia illustre*.

Indeed, *Comoedia illustree* (15 June 1912) carried a review of *Faune*, which suggests the moving images in the ballet relate as much to the modern cinema as they do to Mallarmé's original nineteenth-century poem about a *Faune* (Davis 2010, 165-6). Davis suggests the magazine seems intent on drawing connections between *Faune* and cinema. *Comoedia illustree* borders Meyral's review – which also includes de Meyer photographs of *Faune* such as those in Figures 1.4 and 1.5 – with a frieze of small photographic images of the nymphs in various groupings, set against a dark background and edged in a white swirl pattern, which is reminiscent of a filmstrip (Davis 2010, 166-169). This draws attention to the modernity of the context which surrounds the Ballets Russes, with France's glossy, illustrated magazines such as *Comoedia illustree* leading the way. *Comoedia illustree* supported and promoted the Ballets Russes from its first performance in France to its last. It intersects the Diaghilev project with theatre, *haute couture*, street-wear, cinema, classical and modern art and breaks new ground by carrying in-depth articles such as Meyral's review in the glossy photographic format more usually found in women's fashion magazines.¹⁰³ The magazine therefore regularly keeps the *Ballets Russes* in the public eye as a fashionable, modern artistic enterprise that must be seen. Recent modernist scholarship has highlighted the contribution of periodicals – magazines, journals and the little magazines of the day – to our understanding of early twentieth-century modernism; a print culture which also reflected the extraordinary diversity in art and culture that engages with the modernist project, including the Ballets Russes.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ See (Davis 2010, 26-52) which has informed this paragraph, for in depth analysis of the relationship between *Comoedia illustree* and the Ballets Russes.

¹⁰⁴ See (Brooker and Thacker 2009) which offers seminal research in the 'History of Modernist Magazines'.

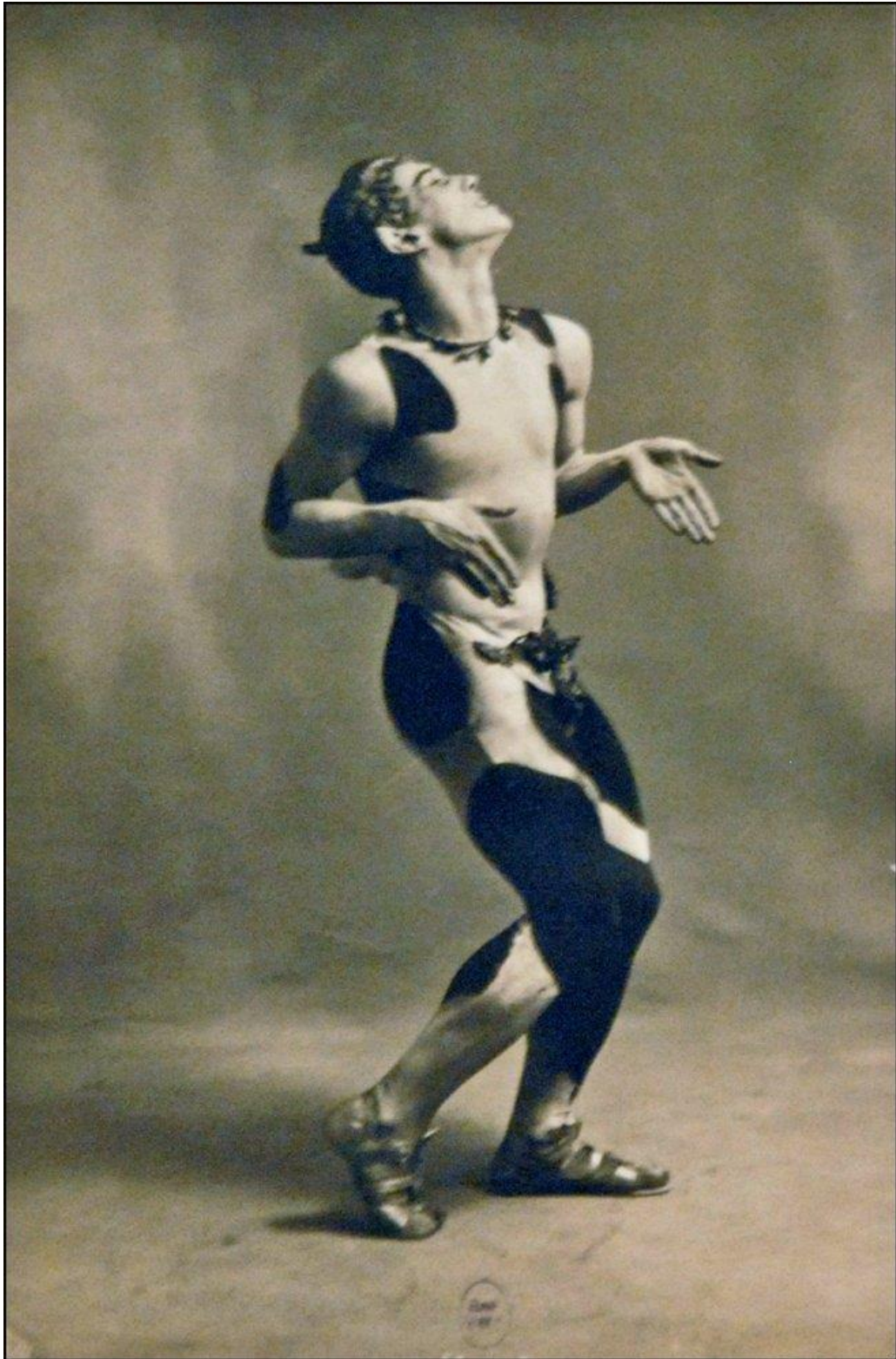


Figure 1.5. Nijinsky as the faune in *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946), (de Meyer 2012)¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dalbera/4561717830>

Bakst as designer also provides a link between London's artistic milieu and their interest in the Ballets Russes, as seen in modernist magazine culture. Anne Estelle Rice is one artist who offers critiques of the pre-war Ballets Russes in the little magazine *RHYTHM* (1911-13), published monthly and edited by John Middleton Murray (1889-1957). It is clear that Rice had already attended many performances of the Ballets Russes from the number of ballets she discusses in various volumes of the magazine. In one edition of *RHYTHM* in 1912 she compares the painter Whistler with Diaghilev's chief designer of the pre-war era, Bakst, who is:

the greatest innovator of the pictorial art of modern stagecraft [...] Bakst has given to the stage the tremendous fullness of expression in line and colour, which makes the Whistlerian idea hopelessly empty and inadequate [...] a painter in line, a painter in movement, a painter in forms, he knows the value of line to give energy and force [...] (Rice 1912, 107).¹⁰⁶

The 'line', 'movement', 'form' and the 'force' of 'energy' in Rice's dedication to Bakst are common components shared with the ballet-body and the idea of rhythm, a notion central for modernists as it signifies one of the formulations of what it is to be modern.¹⁰⁷ Rice's understanding of line comes from her own art form as a painter in the fauvist style, which emphasises vigour in line and movement and is influenced by the rhythmic exoticism and fused harmonies of the ballets she witnessed, wrote about and illustrated in *RHYTHM* (Brooker and Thacker 2009, 314-336).¹⁰⁸ In dance, line signifies balance and purity of

¹⁰⁶ See the *Modernist Journals Project* for all editions of *Rhythm Magazine*: <http://www.modjourn.org/>. For thorough analysis of all Modernist Magazines including all the British 'little magazines' (so named because they were not in production for long) see also (Brooker and Thacker 2009).

¹⁰⁷ The goal of the World of Art Group – a mix of artists, critics, musicians and writers – was to free Russian artistic culture from the dominating political mandates of realism and nationalism in operation since the 1860s. Their project was first realised in the journal *Mir iskusstva* (1894-1904) (Acocella 2006, ix).

¹⁰⁸ For further analysis of the relationship between dance and body in *RHYTHM* see (Brooker 2013).

body alignment, together with direction and coherence of movement in terms of space. In the context of the Ballets Russes, Nijinsky modernises the authenticated line which Fokine innovates; Nijinsky makes movement in space and the plasticity of the body new, original and modern in each of his ballets, as has been seen thus far in my analysis of *Sacre* and *Faune*.¹⁰⁹

RHYTHM's contributors' 'enthusiasm for music and dance gave a particular content to the idea of rhythm'; dance which 'took forms that were, by turns, wildly exotic and wholesome and athletic' (Brooker 2013, 330). The exotic here refers to the ballets which Bakst designed, whereas the 'wholesome and athletic' responds more to the dance of Isadora Duncan, and those who follow on with her dance style. Those who write on the Ballets Russes for *RHYTHM* as a modernist magazine, also share similar principles with the Russian modernist little magazine *Mir Isskustva* (The World of Art) created by Diaghilev in part, at the turn of the century. While *RHYTHM*, as its title suggests, is the essential element in new art, and the total unity of the arts is the foundation of *Mir Isskustva*, both magazines aim to modernise the idea of art. Taxidou however, places Diaghilev's *Mir Isskustva* 'very much in the tradition of the one-man periodical promoting the unification of the arts' (Taxidou 2013, 790). Yet, *Mir Isskustva* is co-founded by Benois, Bakst, Diaghilev and others and is much more a collaboration than a 'one-man periodical.' As *Mir Isskustva* is overtaken by the planning of the Ballets Russes project by the same collaborative group, it is important to challenge the imbalance that promotes

¹⁰⁹ One influence on Nijinsky's line in movement was the post-impressionist artist Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). Ballets Russes' Ballerina Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978) remembered Nijinsky responding to an exhibition of Gauguin's work with the words 'look at that strength', when in conversation with Richard Buckle many years later (Buckle 1980, 117). Bronislava Nijinska also remembered that Nijinsky, while in Monte Carlo, had a collection edition of Gauguin's reproductions which was 'well thumbed' (Nijinska 1992, 442).

Diaghilev the entrepreneur as *the* Ballets Russes.¹¹⁰ This privileging of Diaghilev was perpetuated through memoirs of the Ballets Russes for much of the twentieth century, and Arnold Haskell's *Ballet Russe* (1968) is one such example.¹¹¹ While Diaghilev's charismatic personality was undoubtedly vital for the promotion of the Ballets Russes, and for bringing in talented artists and composers to work with the original *Mir Isskustva* group on new ballets it also, arguably, affected the objectivity of these early, and later commentators. How it also undermined Nijinsky as a creative thinker becomes apparent as Nijinsky began to work on his next ballet *Jeux*.¹¹² By acknowledging how Rice recognised Bakst as the great innovator who elevated staging as an art form, and addressing the *Mir Isskustva* values wherein a Ballets Russes production offered the equality of all its elements as one total union of art, my discussion here is one in which Diaghilev's entrepreneurship is perceived with more objectivity.

As Nijinsky takes the lead role as famous dancer in his first radical choreographic piece and Bakst sets this piece in his innovative modern stagecraft, Debussy's score for the ballet: *Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1894) was already known in the concert halls. Debussy's own symphonic poem¹¹³ is the composer's response to the well-known poem *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1876) by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). While Debussy wrote the

¹¹⁰ See (Garafola 1998, ix,x) for more on the collaborative of *Mir isskustva* and Diaghilev's place within the founding group of artists.

¹¹¹ See Introduction for more on how the first British commentators on the Ballets Russes phenomenon tend to over privilege Diaghilev's position, especially in terms of the collaborative principles for the company to present total works of art. Haskell's use of the singular in the *Ballet Russe* of his title was common practice when referring to the troupe. This has since been replaced by the plural *Ballets Russes* as the accepted convention.

¹¹² See further in the section on '*Jeux*; the past the present the future and Bloomsbury'.

¹¹³ A symphonic poem is usually a continuous orchestral work which evokes a non-musical form, in this case Debussy's score relates with Stephan Mallarmé poem.

music to follow each verse in Mallarmé's poem, the ballet and score offer the prelude (as in the title of Debussy's score) to Mallarmé's poem and reflects its mood and theme, rather than an interpretation of the narrative; unsurprisingly as Nijinsky was not familiar with the poem (Dunning 1983, 21). Jones points out how Mallarmé 'credited dance with an economy of form akin to that of poetry and acknowledged the body's gestural potential' (Jones 2013, 13) in her extensive analysis of the symbolist relationship in modernist literature and dance (Jones 2013, 13-43).¹¹⁴ I would argue that my readings of the ballet-bodies in *Faune*, in Figures 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 above, reveal how they embody a modernist and symbolist aesthetic in Nijinsky's new choreographic forms. The female ballet-bodies articulate the remoulding of the body from the minute details in Nijinsky's modernisation of dance movement as they symbolise the classical frieze, and Nijinsky's ballet-body symbolises sensuality in his embodiment of the faun. The ballet-bodies express this aesthetic through form in the body, not through facial expression.

A further demonstration of the collaborative in the development of *Faune*, is how the aesthetic in one artistic form is energised by another. Debussy used silence as a means of expression in his music and during Nijinsky's creation of *Faune*, Fokine complimented Nijinsky on his courage to use stillness in movement, in this case when the dancers pause during busy musical phrases in Debussy's score (Dunning 1983, 31).¹¹⁵ If Nijinsky's three ballets are read as

¹¹⁴ Here, Mallarmé is crediting the dance of Loie Fuller (1862-1928), an early pioneer of modern dance who used innovative theatrical lighting and large expanses of silk attached to prosthetic arm extensions in the creation of swirling movement forms. Fuller is later credited as the 'incarnation of the symbolist figure' (Jones 2013, 18).

¹¹⁵ Dunning quotes from: 'Michael Fokine, *Memoirs of a Ballet Master*, translated by Vitale Fokine, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., (1961, pp. 208-209)'. For the correspondence between Fokine and Debussy, Dunning cites the quotation in: Lockspeiser, Edward. *Debussy: His Life and Mind*. Vol 11, 19-2-1918. New York: Macmillan, 1965.

the continuation of a process in method, rather than style, his process links closely with the aesthetics of Debussy and Mallarmé (Dunning 1983, 30-31).¹¹⁶ In Nijinsky's determination to strip back all unnecessary movement and gesture to reveal pure form, presenting his dancers as conduits of his exacting choreography, Nijinsky's forms correspond to Mallarmé's 'economy of form' and acknowledge the elegant potential of the body to offer alternative communication to the word on the page. Dunning reflects how, for Mallarmé, the ballerina does not dance but rather writes with her body and suggests things (Dunning 1983, 32).¹¹⁷ 'Suggestion' in this context is key in Mallarmé's philosophy and other writers of the *fin de siècle*, for Jones:

The economy of dance form allows the dancer to evoke, through bodily movement alone a particular mood or situation. She suggests with great immediacy, with a single gesture or turn of the head that which the writer may need several pages to complete (Jones 2013, 15).

Furthermore, 'suggestion', 'economy of action' and 'economy of form' are all aspects of the notion of incompleteness, something which attracted Mallarmé by its implied invitation for the audience to work at understanding the meaning:

To Mallarmé, poetry was the source of all beauty, and dance – poetry in motion [...] was poetry transposed to the stage [...] In dance, the dancer [...] became an emblem, a sign, its meaning to be determined by the spectator's imagination (Segel 1998, 115).

I would also argue that Nijinsky's innovative choreography asks the audience to work at understanding his radical new movement forms as ballet, and his sub textual themes as they exhibit through these choreographic forms. For Mallarmé, the embodied action of the written word leaves the writer as soon as

¹¹⁶ Indeed, Dunning's analysis of Nijinsky's innovations in *Faune* earns the support of Susan Jones, whose own ground-breaking study of modernism and dance references Dunning's ideas. (Jones 2013, 40-41).

¹¹⁷ Dunning takes the quotation from: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters*, translator Bradford Cook. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press 1956, p. 62.

the word is on the page, whereas the embodiment of the dance movement Nijinsky creates is less easy to read.¹¹⁸ The dancer holds the trace of the previous action and the following action in the movement actually being performed by her body, all at the same time. The present movement holds the after effect of the previous action and anticipates the next, at one and the same time. Extending this notion further here, the dancing body in Nijinsky's works can be read as a 'performance of text', in that the body holds a brief sequence of the before and after, as each movement is executed; a concept which might compare to the syntax of text on the page. Thus, the dance-body articulates both Nijinsky's choreographic forms and the sexual subtext which informs these forms in each movement moment.

It also articulates in this way through the extraordinarily unemotional physicality of the face. Nijinsky is bold in inviting the ballet-body to perform the text of sexuality through unique, animal, primitivist movements which also reference ancient classical forms. It asks audiences to confront sexualised, modernist primitivism in a dance-form never seen before. *Faune* was bold and challenging for the pre-war London audiences when they saw it performed for the first time in 1913 at the Royal Opera House, which also staged the tradition of Grand Opera, in the stylised, repetitive voicing of particular emotions accompanied by expansive gesture and static physicality. Garafola's research into the different allegiances of audiences between the pre-and post-war Ballets Russes era, summarises the pre-war London audience¹¹⁹

Diaghilev's public resembled nothing so much as an exclusive club where the British ruling class displayed its brilliant plumage. Even

¹¹⁸ See (Dunning 1983) and (Jones 2013, 13-43) for an extended analysis of the corresponding philosophies of Mallarme, Debussy and Nijinsky.

¹¹⁹ See (Garafola 1998, 300-329).

more so than in Paris, the core of Diaghilev's ballet audience in London came from the city's traditional opera-going public (Garafola 1998, 300).

This opera-loving 'club' includes royalty, the political class, high society, bankers, press barons and, towards the end of the pre-war era, literary artists who include some of the Bloomsbury group. Garafola suggests the opera elite enjoy the exotic, sensual, virtuosic and 'morally innocuous' of the early Fokine ballets whereas *Faune's* representation of sexuality receives a cool reception:

audiences clapped politely, clucked disparagingly, and went the next night to *Salome* or *Der Rosenkavalier*, where distant locale and grandiloquence of gesture safely consigned the erotic to the realm of theatrical fantasy (Garafola 1998, 308).¹²⁰

The London audience is therefore, typically more comfortable with the distance offered by the fantasy of a sexualised exotic story from a middle eastern Sultan's harem in Fokine's ballet *Scherezade* or the dramatization of the biblical figure *Salomé* in Opera.¹²¹ At this distance spectators could be voyeuristic without having to identify with the protagonists. *Faune's* challenging, modernist, unveiled sexuality was perhaps too authentic for some, while others were intrigued by the challenge. Sitting in the audience at London's first performance of *Faune* at the Royal Opera House on 17 February 1913 was the English balletomane Cyril Beaumont (1891-1976):

This ballet, or *tableau choreographique* as it was termed [...] created a sensation both for its novelty of presentation and for the questionable character of Nijinsky's poses immediately preceding the fall of the curtain [...] The dancers remained "attached" to the ground [...] The Faune's

¹²⁰ See (Garafola 1998) who has extensive research on the differences between pre- and post-war audiences for the Ballets Russes.

¹²¹ In the history of Ballet and Opera, see also this history in the Introduction to this thesis, short ballets were inserted into the opera to offer a visual depiction of a particular theme or emotion and, as noted above, traditional Grand Opera was a particularly static form of theatre.

movements were so simple, so unaffected, so seemingly oblivious of the audience, that you had a feeling of being caught up in a time-machine and whirled back to the Greece of legend, on which you were permitted a brief space to gaze in secret [...] (Beaumont 1945, 51-53).

He remembers 'rapturous enthusiasm mixed with some hisses' in the applause after which 'Diaghilev gave instructions for the ballet to be repeated, a rare occurrence on any night but unique at a *premier*' (Beaumont 1945, 54). In this, Diaghilev is underlining his faith in the ballet and offers it again in the hope that audiences will appreciate the innovations in Nijinsky's choreographic design, now they know how it ends.¹²² Arguably Beaumont is struggling to find a vocabulary for the language of the art form in which he is no expert at this stage. When Beaumont brings in the idea of a time-machine it is in the context of his period of modernity when artists were experimenting with ways of capturing how the mind can simultaneously rush backwards in time and imagine a future. H.G. Wells' (1866-1946) science fiction novel *The Time Machine* (1895) had been very popular, and Beaumont's sense of 'whirling back in time to the Greece of legend' reads as his attempt to describe his haptic experience of the ballet and its ability to transport his senses in this way.

Garafola is sceptical of such remembrances as Beaumont's, written years after the event. She argues that England mythologised the Ballets Russes more than any other country and that British memoirists of the early Ballets Russes are 'reconstructing the past through a prism of later perceptions and experiences' (Garafola 1998, 300). The mythologization of the Ballets Russes

¹²² Beaumont, dance writer and publisher, owned a bookshop at 75 Charing Cross Road, London. He was passionate and knowledgeable about ballet and his bookshop became internationally known for all things to do with dance. Dancers from all over the world would use the bookshop as a meeting place when in London.

is an intriguing concept which needs more analysis than there is space for here, nonetheless, primary sources such as Beaumont's do have great value. 'I shall not attempt to describe what I witnessed, I can only say how I felt' he writes, as he remembers his first visit to The Russian Ballet in 1911 (Beaumont 1945, 6). This statement captures the core of dance's ability to connect with its audience in a way that is so difficult to describe; the core which is so central to my thesis. Beaumont's 'feelings' were transported through the combined artistry of Mallarmé's poem, Debussy's *Prelude to L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, Bakst's scenery and costumes, Nijinsky's modernist choreography and the dancers' execution of it. Whether mythologised over time or not, his reminiscences are important for all scholars who come after him.

Garafola's analysis of the technique in Nijinsky's 'ballet-modernism' *Faune*, argues that it is the choreography, and its lack of a romantic and sentimental overlay, that 'narrows the definition of sex to pure instinct', and which therefore unsexes the protagonists (Garafola 1998, 58). For Hodson, 'the body was the fundamental subject of dance' for Nijinsky (Hodson 2008, 10). Nijinsky embodies the faun with sexual complications which may be those of an animalistic instinct or a modern twentieth-century young man, or an amalgamation of both. No doubt many saw the two elide in Nijinsky as half-animal and half-male.¹²³

By taking the main role in this and many earlier Fokine ballets for the Ballets Russes, Nijinsky demonstrates Diaghilev's intention, which remained

¹²³ Confusing the dancer as an individual with the dancer as a performer has been a common response. See further examples of this in the analysis of some of the critical responses to Isadora Duncan as individual and performer, in the following chapter.

throughout the Ballets Russes' era, to replace the star status of the female ballerina with the revitalised male dancer of the new era. In the age of the enlightenment, the foppish look of the eighteenth-century male dancer of the Court and his effeminate grace became unacceptable with clear implications for the ballet (Stoneley 2007, 10).¹²⁴ In this newly rational age the more muscular, strong, and 'natural' looking man took on the more functional role of displaying his strength in lifting and supplying balance for the (woman) heroine, made seemingly fragile and ethereal while *en pointe*.¹²⁵ Diaghilev's star male dancers were more than the traditional male consort of the nineteenth century as they supplanted the star status of the ballerina. In Nijinsky, Diaghilev found his ideal male dancer, who seemed to combine the desirable dance qualities of both genders of the nineteenth-century ballet; a strong, muscular, male physique and technique combined with the extraordinary grace in line and form of the female ballerina. Garafola invents a term which captures this male/female almost androgynous aesthetic of Nijinsky the dancer as the 'ballerino':

As a type, the "ballerino" had no historical precedent, so Diaghilev, with typical invention, manufactured him from the material at hand [...] he made them star dancers and fashioned them into star choreographers (Garafola 2005, 179).

¹²⁴ See (Stoneley 2007) for a queer perspective on the history of ballet, which focuses on the male ballet aesthetic of turn-out. Stoneley charts the changing social attitudes towards homosexuality, and ballet's ability 'of enabling some degree of expression and visibility for people who were otherwise declared illegal and obscene' (Stoneley 2007, Back cover)

¹²⁵ In the history of classical ballet, the early pointe-shoe was created in the 1830's for the ballet *La Sylphide* (The Sylph). As the romantic ballet featured ghostly sylphs, giving the female dancers the ability to rise onto their toes presented them as unearthly and weightless creatures to the spectators, even more so when it is remembered that the gas lighting for the stage would take away some clarity from the *corps de ballet* sylphs. The effect would have been more a ghostly haze and less a group of individual dancers. The primary role of the male dancer was to lift up and support the ballerina *en pointe* in various technical positions. The male dancer did perform strong movements such as high leaps and many spins on one leg, but he was in the main a porter for the ballerina and was subordinate to her.

Nijinsky was not only then the 'ballerino' of dance, but the 'ballerino' as choreographer, fashioned by Diaghilev. Haskell, writing in 1968, would probably not be comfortable with this view; from his memory, he says Diaghilev 'had no use at all for the pretty boy, he abhorred the effeminate dancer' (Haskell 1968, 62).¹²⁶ However, Garafola's 'ballerino' is not effeminate, he is an amalgamation of the grace and strength in the aesthetic of both the male and the female dancer. Diaghilev's profiling of Nijinsky as star of the male/female technique, and Nijinsky's embodiment of the man-goat faun in *Faune* offers the sense of gender fluidity, a concept that pre-occupied other writers and artists, not least members of the Bloomsbury group.¹²⁷

In this first choreographic work for Diaghilev, Nijinsky as choreographer and dancer embodied primitive sexuality in the faun of *Faune*. With the faun as man-goat, Nijinsky employed animalistic movement to animate the male dancing body, placing the sexual male body at the heart of the piece. In the nymphs as the focus of the man-faun's desire, Nijinsky transposed the naturalistic poses seen on friezes from classical antiquity into stylised, impersonal animations of idealised, Hellenic femininity in Bakst's pictorial stage design. In this, *Faune* echoed the modern, and modernist, trend for classical references and interest in primitivism in modernist literature. As noted, *Faune*

¹²⁶ In the intervening decades since Haskell knew and wrote about Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes in the mid twentieth-century, research has been rich with regard to ideas of sex and sexuality. Masculinity, femininity, androgyny, normative and non-normative sexualities can be understood to be more fluid and less fixed than was generally understood one hundred or even fifty years or so ago. These current understandings are reflected in particular in Garafola's analysis of Nijinsky's dance and choreographic ideas and in (Stoneley 2007)

¹²⁷ Experimentation with normative, non-normative and androgynous sexuality was popular in bohemian London including aristocrats and the Bloomsbury Group. See (Mackrell 2008) on the relationship between Ballets Russes' ballerina Lydia Lopokova and Bloomsbury's economist John Maynard Keynes. See also (Gathorne-Hardy 1963), on the life of Bloomsbury's hostess Ottoline Morrell and her involvement and support for the Ballets Russes.

provoked anxiety in its totally new expression of dance, and in this it contributed to a dialogue between literature and dance which 'at times constituted the very substance of discussion during the modernist period' (Jones 2013, 3). In *Faune*:

The perfect equilibrium of the dancer, represented by such famous moments as the profile poses of Nijinsky's choreography for the Diaghilev production of *l'Après-midi d'un faune* [...] represents the phenomenological experience most frequently invoked in literary expressions of a modernist sublime (Jones 2013, 3).

I propose that this perfect equilibrium exhibits in the ballet-bodies in *Faune* and is seen in Figures 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5, as these bodies hold the trace of the previous action and anticipate the following action in the active stillness of their posed forms. Consequently, these bodies articulate the phenomenological experience of a modernist sublime without the need for additional facial expression. Moreover, *Faune* offered the public their first sight of the sensuality which would feature in all the Nijinsky ballets and which is testament to the modernism in *Faune*.

***Jeux* (1913): the future, the past, the present and 'Bloomsbury'**¹²⁸

Contextually, *Jeux* moves in time and place from the ancient past in *Faune* to the modern future in Europe and, in this section, I investigate the means through which *Jeux* establishes this periodisation. In this least examined and less well-known ballet in Nijinsky's choreographic triptych, I examine the

¹²⁸ This section on *Jeux* began in a Paper given at a Conference at Bath Spa University after which I was invited to write it up as '*Jeux* (1913), Sometimes known as the 'Bloomsbury Ballet: Vaslav Nijinsky's Modernist Work' in *Bloomsbury Influences* (2014).

choreographic mix of the ancient and modern as it presents in the ballet-bodies of the dancers who danced *Jeux*. I interrogate these bodies, as they are stilled in the photographic image, for how they might action the meanings in Nijinsky's intentions in this revolutionary new choreographic experiment in the ballet *Jeux*. Finally, I test the notion that *Jeux* plays with ideas about modern identities in the context of Bloomsbury's modernist coterie of artists and writers.

Between 25 June and 7 July 1913 *Jeux* was performed four times at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. In each Programme, *Jeux* was placed between two Fokine ballets which had been seen previously in London, and on two of the four evenings, *Jeux* followed a performance of *Faune*. The departures Nijinsky makes from the classical and Fokine styles and forms of ballet in *Faune*, are taken even further in *Jeux*. One day during the planning stage for *Jeux*, Nijinsky invited the French artist and portrait painter Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861-1942) to hear his ideas for the ballet:¹²⁹

The 'cubist' ballet – which became 'Jeux' – was a game of tennis in a garden; but in no circumstances was it to have a romantic *décor* in the Bakst manner! There should be no *corps de ballet*, no ensembles, no variations, no *pas de deux*, only girls and boys in flannels and rhythmic movements. A group at a certain stage was to depict a fountain, and the game of tennis (with licentious *motives*) was to be interrupted by the crashing of an aeroplane. What a childish idea! (Blanche 1937, 257-258).

Blanche is identifying the aspects in *Jeux* which will propel the ballet straight into modernity: a plotless, scenic episode of flowing movement, an ambiguous

¹²⁹ Blanche is writing of the time when he was a guest at a lunch for Lady Rippon, given by Chaliapin at the Savoy Hotel in London in 1912. He responds to a note from Diaghilev inviting Blanche to join Bakst, Nijinsky and himself who are also at lunch in the grillroom of the same Hotel. This is when Nijinsky shares his ideas for *Jeux*.

modern play on *jeux*'s various meanings which include 'games' and licentious, or flirtatious behaviour. Flirtatious games, under the cover of tennis motifs, will be fractured as the modern aeroplane crashes in on their fun. Perhaps Blanche also brings in his own pun on *jeux* when he describes the plane crash as a childish idea. *Jeux* will dispense with the traditional, formal conventions of the ballets which Nijinsky danced at the Mariinskii and dances in Fokine's new Ballets Russes' works. The spectacular in these Mariinskii conventions will not feature in *Jeux*. No dramatic solos, *pas de deux* or wistful *corps de ballet* work – after which applause breaks the mood of the ballet as the audience show their appreciation of the solo dancers' technical prowess, or the ethereal vision the *corps de ballet* present. Blanche's categorisation of the intended floor patterns and forms the dancers in *Jeux* will make as cubist, is informed by his own experience as an artist. That the opinion of Blanche should be sought at the planning stage of *Jeux*, demonstrates the powerful influence fellow artists had as commentators on these early years in the Ballets Russes project.¹³⁰ How outside influences such as those of Blanche affect the final realisation of Nijinsky's vision for the ballet, and the ways through which the alternative meanings in the ballet's title *Jeux* incorporate in the choreographic body forms of the dancers, are interrogated at length further in this chapter.

Jeux's setting is the modern sport of tennis and predates the popular, post-war ballets with contemporary themes which the Ballets Russes produced. *Le Train Bleu* (1924) for example, choreographed by the sister of Nijinsky, Bronislava Nijinska (1890-1972) is a one act ballet that depicts wealthy modern Parisians at play in the Mediterranean, having travelled there on the famous over-night,

¹³⁰ The power of other artists over Nijinsky's vision for *Jeux*, and the battles between them for overall control, are discussed further in this chapter.

Blue train. Thus, *Jeux* and its contemporary setting in 1913 was the first of its kind and innovatory. Influential commentators who look back to this period, tend to understand all three of Nijinsky's choreographic works in terms of Nijinsky's interpretation of Diaghilev's experimental intentions.¹³¹ I suggest this understanding, as represented in the views expressed by Blanche in 1937, Haskell in 1968 and Buckle in 1971, is influenced by the power of Diaghilev's personality at the time, which overshadows their writing up of these events some years later. However, Buckle does mark out *Jeux* as the moment in Nijinsky's experimental works when he insists on his own ideas and leaves Diaghilev behind (Buckle 1980, 307). 'I composed that ballet [*Jeux*] by myself' writes Nijinsky:

I told Diaghilev my ideas. I know Diaghilev likes saying they are his, because he like praise [...] "*Jeux*" [was] composed by me under the influence of my life with Diaghilev (Acocella 2006, 206-207).

Thus, Nijinsky felt he had managed to overpower Diaghilev's ideas with his own in *Jeux*. How he also manages to subvert Diaghilev's desire that *Jeux* should represent their life together is analysed further on in this chapter. Nijinsky's plan for *Jeux* not to have Bakst's designs was overturned however, and Bakst did design the décor for the ballet.

¹³¹ See Introduction which demonstrates how the influential, eye witness memoirs of the Ballets Russes period, written for example by Buckle and Haskell and here in the memoirs of Blanche, read the preparation, production and reception of the ballets in the light of Diaghilev as impresario and visionary of the project. An approach which tends to underplay Nijinsky's own intentions as a radical choreographer.



Figure 1.6. Backdrop charcoal design for *Jeux* (1913) by Leon Bakst c.1912. (Subject to copyright).¹³²

This charcoal preparation for the backdrop design in Figure 1.6, presents a narrative of its own and strengthens the idea that this will be a ballet with a storyline; a factor which Nijinsky may have preferred to omit when he tried to resist having Bakst as the designer. This charcoal depiction of the final backdrop indicates the thick foliage of summer trees, overlaid with stylised pale patches to depict dusk, yet there is something slightly sinister about the house in the background.¹³³ The stylised large building in the design has many windows which are shuttered, apart from one on the top floor which shows the window open, offering a clear view over the trees into the garden, in which the

¹³²https://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&authuser=0&biw=1768&bih=945&tbm=isch&sxsrf=ACYBGNS8muJLPz2h6Hu0_tUpEN5JzFNWgA%3A1570287885284&sa=1&ei=DbGYXemBEfvYgweHkZOYDw&q=bakst+backdrop+design+for+jeux+ballet+nijinsky&og=bakst+backdrop+design+for+jeux+ballet+nijinsky&gs_l=img.12...15543.22644..27704...1.0..0.388.747.6j3-1.....0...1..gws-wiz-img.HUX2sl95keM&ved=0ahUKEwipvOOcsoXIAhV77OAKHYfIBPMQ4dUDCAc#imgrc=Ssi7uCohbee3tM:

¹³³ See (Hodson 2008, 63) which presents a copy of Bakst's charcoal design for *Jeux* (1912).

protagonists will play.¹³⁴ The open window has the effect of positioning the audience as secret voyeurs.¹³⁵

Bakst does pare down the final staging however. There are no scenic panels other than the backdrop and the representation of a lush garden is presented by four large painted circles on the green floor cloth, to symbolise flower beds. Buckle suggests that the scale of these large, representational flower beds would have had the effect of making the dancers appear smaller, even childlike (Buckle 1980, 340). The pastel drawings which Valentine Gross created during the performances of *Jeux* add another element to the material effects which remain of the ballet. The example of her pastels in Figure 1.7, describes the vivid warm colours in Bakst's design and the stark white of the figures who do appear reduced in scale by Bakst's oversized patches of greenery.¹³⁶ The stage lighting and the painted patches on the backdrop and stage imply dusk; an impression Nijinsky is keen to establish after having noticed the effect of artificial light shining in trees (a recent technical innovation). Buckle relates how Nijinsky, sitting on the terrace of a Parisian café with Rambert one evening, noticed the trees nearby, dressed with artificial green lights, and commented 'that is how I like them and how I want the trees to be in *Jeux*' (Buckle 1980, 331). Bakst also designed the costumes but Diaghilev rejected them in favour of the designs created by France's high-profile dress designer Jeanne Paquin (1869-1936).

¹³⁴ Hodson says this open window 'establishes the voyeuristic metaphor of the ballet' (Hodson 2008, 1).

¹³⁵ See Laura Mulvey's *Visual and other Pleasures* (1989) which conceptualised the idea of the voyeur in the male cinema spectator, and which theorized 'the male gaze' as that which places the female film stars in Hollywood films as objects of male desire.

¹³⁶ See the representation of the painted circles on the stage-cloth by Valentine Gross in Figure 1.10.



Figure 1.7. *Jeux* (1913) pastel by Valentine Gross (1887-1968) (Mullock 2011).¹³⁷

She produced contemporary, wearable clothes, rather than representative costumes. These costumes are an example of both the contemporaneity and the confusions in *Jeux*. These young people will wear clothes on stage that could be purchased by those in the audience who buy couture fashion, yet they are also sporty and casual.¹³⁸ The young women are in white, knee length dresses and Nijinsky wears Paquin's couture shirt but has replaced the designer's trousers with his own which he wears in the practice room.¹³⁹ Diaghilev has also over-ridden Paquin's design here; the red wig, red tie and

¹³⁷ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeux_-_The_Art_of_Nijinsky.jpg

¹³⁸ See the 'Lords, Ladies and Literati' who comprise the core of the London audience in the pre-war era of the Ballets Russes in (Garafola 1998, 300-329).

¹³⁹ Diaghilev 'exploded' at the sight of Nijinsky's costume however: 'red wig, rolled-up shirt sleeves, red tie and knee length trousers with a red border, held up by red braces, and his white stockings with red tops ... he looks ridiculous' (Buckle 1980, 341). Diaghilev replaced the trousers with Nijinsky's normal practice wear; giving a sense of the 'everyday' for a dancer at the time and a more relaxed impression of young male dress for the audience than the more formal 'whites' designated for tennis wear.

red braces holding up knee length, red bordered trousers and long socks with red tops, designed for the *Youth* in *Jeux*, all ridicule Diaghilev's star dancer Nijinsky (Buckle 1980, 341). This represents a further ambiguity, through costume, whereby the *Youth* could be Nijinsky as the young man, or the representation of the modern everyday young man. With Diaghilev dispensing with the red wig and the ultra-modern, designer trousers, and Nijinsky wearing his own soft, ankle length, practice trousers (see Figure 1.7), the everyday is brought onto the stage. For practice wear to be worn in the presentation of dance was an extraordinarily modern idea at this time, and whether by accident, a last-minute decision, or design, this gestures towards the neo classical ballets of George Balanchine in the 1940's and the Modern Dance works of Merce Cunningham in the 1950's.

Nijinsky as himself or the representative of modern youth, presents the mix of couture with dance practice (rather than performance), a combination also set to confuse spectators. Tennis is associated the upper classes who wear formal 'whites' when playing tennis in Paris and London and who will watch *Jeux* while dressed in couturier clothes. Yet tennis is also a serious competitive sport, one that reflects a growing contemporary interest in the transformative possibilities of sport as exercise for a healthy body (Järvinen 2009, 210.) Paquin's ultra-modern, unrestricting, short tennis dresses and Nijinsky's combination of designer and dance exercise clothing, will present fit young people ready to play. The clothes will question, as soon as the dancers come on stage, the section of society this tennis ballet, which will not have much to do with tennis, will dance. These costuming details highlight one of many paradoxes in *Jeux* that feed into how the ballet was received when it finally reached the stage.

As Nijinsky began work on his choreography, there were power struggles as Blanche and Diaghilev negotiated Nijinsky's ideas for the ballet with Debussy. *Jeux* would be the first ballet score for France's greatest living composer, if he accepted Diaghilev's commission (Garafola 1998, 58-59).¹⁴⁰ Debussy objected to the aeroplane device, Diaghilev gave way, doubled his fee and Debussy completed the score within a matter of weeks (Garafola 1998, 59). This episode, however, offers more interest than the facts relate. The already contemporary scenario foregrounds youth, young dancers who will move in a geometric, cubist style, and is set forward in time, to 1920 or 1925.¹⁴¹ If an image of a crashing aeroplane had remained in the scenario, this could have suggested a connection between the ballet and futurism. It would have presented all the basic elements of Italian Futurism: youth, speed and violence in the technology of the aeroplane, as it crashes. Nijinsky would have introduced the novel effect of technological modernity to the audience and more drama in the device of a crashing aeroplane to shock the protagonists out of their reverie on stage. However, as the ballet is set in a future wherein the sight of an aeroplane will no longer be novel, the protagonists would only worry about the possibility of being seen at their licentious games from the windows of the machine.¹⁴² The aeroplane device would also have built on the element of the voyeur, already present in the backdrop's un-shuttered window. In addition, it would introduce the omnipresent atmosphere of impending war, and cast an ominous shadow over this 1913 ballet through this modern technological invention which proved to be, in reality, a killing machine. Even

¹⁴⁰ The facts in this section are informed, in the main, by Garafola's interpretations of the texts written by Blanche and Diaghilev, cited above.

¹⁴¹ See (Järvinen 2009, 219, ft. 8) for sources which name different dates in the future for *Jeux's* setting.

¹⁴² These details about the inclusion and then the rejection of the aeroplane device come from a letter Diaghilev writes to Debussy, on 18th July 1912, while staying at the Savoy Hotel in London. This letter is often quoted by analysts of *Jeux*, which include (Nijinska 1992, 468) and (Garafola 1998, 59-60).

without the aeroplane device, the 1913 ballet unknowingly occupies the catastrophe of the first World War, as it dances an episode of risqué behaviour set in the future 1920's, under the shadow of anticipated war in 1913.

The sporty, contemporary theme for *Jeux*, the pared-down stage set, the setting of the ballet in a garden near a large house, and the forward periodisation of the 1920's, bring both modernism and popular modernity together in one artistic work. As the audience took their seats, on 25 June 1913 at the Drury Lane Theatre in London, they anticipated London's first offering of *Jeux*. As they browsed their Programme, they would note there will be three ballets; two by Fokine that had been presented during previous London seasons, with *Jeux* programmed between them.¹⁴³ Their programme records the cast for each ballet in the traditional manner; each dancer is named next to the title of the character they will dance, except *Jeux*, which names the dancers simply by gender; Tamara Karsavina and Ludmilla Schollar are the *Girls* and Nijinsky the *Youth* in Nijinsky's dance-poem *Jeux*.¹⁴⁴ This small detail introduces the modernity in *Jeux* as it represents how *Jeux* will not be in the traditional ballet-narrative form driven by characterisation, rather it will present an episode in the lives of the modern youth. For those in the audience who understood the French language, *Jeux* offers a tantalising ambiguity of word-play on the various interpretations of the French term: '*jeux de tennis* (tennis game) – *jeux d'amour* (flirtation) – *jeux d'esprit* (witticism)' (Järvinen

¹⁴³ See listings of all the programmes presented by the Ballets Russes in this London season in (Pritchard 2009).

¹⁴⁴ See facsimile of programme notes which state: '*JEUX*, Dance-Poem by Nijinsky, Music by Claude Debussy, Choreography by Nijinsky, Scenery and Costumes by L. Bakst, Costumes executed by Maison Paquin', in (Hodson 2008, xvii).

2009, 199). Thus, the ballet might present a witty poetic episode in sport, in flirtation or both; all interpretations translate as *jeux*.¹⁴⁵

With the décor, lighting, costumes, music and choreography now finalised, and any anxieties over the Paris *premier* in the past, the curtain rose on London's first view of *Jeux*. Into the dusky, lush setting of a summer garden, an oversized tennis ball, thrown from the wings bounces onto the stage. The *Youth*, tennis racquet held high, leaps across the stage in a high classical jeté and exits. The two *Girls*, dressed for tennis, enter upstage in front of the back-cloth representing trees in full foliage. They travel towards each on quarter-pointe, in the parallel, rather than turned-out alignment normally associated with dancers *en pointe*. They move in tiny steps. Their arms are lifted and curved to one side of the body, their hands face each other with bent wrists and clenched fingers (Nijinska 1992, 444-445). Whereas crossing the stage, facing front while moving sideways in turn-out *en pointe*, is a fast gliding motion in the *bourrée* of the classical ballet technique, this modernised *bourrée* in the tiny steps on quarter-point and in parallel, necessitates a slow, less smooth, more hesitant motion of travel.¹⁴⁶ These first entrances of the protagonists set the essential style *Jeux* will dance. The smooth travel of the *nymphs* in the two-dimensional signifier of *Faune*, arguably Nijinsky's first modernisation of the classical *bourrée*, is reformed again as the *Girls* pad, rather than glide across the stage on quarter *pointe* in *pointe*-shoes. This ballet radicalism is also emphasised by the dress. The soft, translucent, long white tutu of the *bourrée*-ing classical-ballet sylph of the nineteenth century is

¹⁴⁵ In fact, this phrase was in the original Drury Lane Programme in 1913: "*JEUX*, Dance-Poem by Nijinsky, Music by Claude Debussy, Choreography by Nijinsky, Scenery and Costumes by L. Bakst, Costumes executed by Maison Paquin" (Hodson 2008, xvii).

¹⁴⁶ This description is informed by Hodson's notes for her re-construction; notes based on those made on a copy of the original piano rehearsal score while *Jeux* was in rehearsal in 1912-1913 (Hodson 2008, 66-76). See further down for more analysis of the original choreographic forms as they present in the ballet-bodies of the original dancers.

replaced in the straight, twentieth-century couture lines of the tennis dress. These first entrances in *Jeux* present fit, sporty, modern young people ready to have fun gesturing towards the interest in sport and dance as healthy exercise that came to the fore in the 1920's and a turn in dance that I explore further in subsequent chapters. My examination of the choreographic entrances of the dancers above is informed, in the main, by Millicent Hodson as she records her research into the original *Jeux* in *Nijinsky's Bloomsbury Ballet: Reconstruction of the Dance and Design for Jeux* (2008). While purists might argue that the reconstruction of lost ballets presents an unreliable history of the ballet, **Hodson is the recognised authority on the reconstruction of Nijinsky's lost ballets and I argue for her relevance here, in the same way as her reconstruction of *Sacre*, addressed above.** Hodson brings an embodied understanding of how the lost choreographic forms in the original *Jeux* might have been danced, and together with my own understanding of the body in dance, these perspectives help bring the original ballet to life for readers who otherwise would have little idea as to how and why Nijinsky's *Jeux* was so revolutionary.¹⁴⁷ As *Jeux* progresses, the traditional solo, *pas de deux* and *pas de trois* are completely reformed in style. Also, as *Jeux* ends as it began, with the tennis ball motif of sport, *Jeux* also dances the other meanings in *jeux*: flirtation and witticism. The circularity of the ballet – beginning and ending with an anonymously thrown, oversized ball – suggests an episode in a self-contained continuum of flirtation, which the audience, ball thrower and viewer in the upper window of the house, have stumbled upon.¹⁴⁸ Even when the dancers have left the stage, their alter egos continue to search out another,

¹⁴⁷ See further down for my analysis of the original choreographic forms as they present in the ballet-bodies of the original dancers.

¹⁴⁸ See (Järvinen 2009, 206-207) who expands on the idea of an episode which begins before the curtain rises and continues after it falls.

secret space in the garden, in the minds of the spectators as they leave the theatre.

Reading the interior in the ballet-body of *Jeux*

As has been noted to some extent above, *Jeux* does not abandon the classical ballet technique entirely. The choreography still uses the classical ballet form (legs in turn-out, a little like the iconic Charlie Chaplin image but with straight rather than bent knees) alongside modern, parallel shapes for the dancers' legs, arms and alignment.¹⁴⁹ Again, as he does with *Faune*, Nijinsky associates the open torso and turnout with the parallel form as expression of the modern in *Jeux*. Triangular shapes are significant – made between the dancers when in a threesome or a couple, engaged through their individual arm movements during solo dance movements and described in the floor patterns as the dancers negotiate the imaginary flowerbeds.¹⁵⁰ In contrast to the modern of the parallel form – which in *Faune* signifies the primitive and Classical era but here anticipates the modern in Modern Dance – the triangular, linear spaces and groupings in *Jeux* still recall the Classical figuring. This choreographic device also signifies the triangular relationships which form the work's subtext.

The 'fountain' is one of Nijinsky's first ideas, as Blanche notes in the text which opens this section on *Jeux*. Physically, the tableau (Figure 1.8), epitomises Nijinsky's modernised references to the Classical form in *Jeux*. Nijinsky's unique innovations are in the accented breaks in the limbs: note how the curve

¹⁴⁹ Nijinsky did not leave notes of the dance steps; the choreography discussed here is the choreography from Hodson's re-construction.

¹⁵⁰ See (Hodson 2008) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkZhDcB-OfA&t=299s>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=774MfmVgMmw&t=65s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1SU5ZTkiVA&t=42s> for Hodson's reconstruction of Nijinsky's ballet *Jeux*. All of which inform this section of the chapter.



Figure 1.8. 'Fountain' in *Jeux* (1913) by Charles Gerschel. (Subject to copyright).¹⁵¹

in the lower arms breaks at the angle of the lifted wrists and closed fingers;
how the sharp angle the legs take with the floor is softened, in the slightly

¹⁵¹ https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/375346950189617539/?nic_v2=1a6QdOpRf

raised heels. Nijinsky's fountain references *The Three Graces* by Antonio Canova (1814-1817) in which the *Graces* exhibit the sensual as the loops in their carved, naked, female bodies curve around each other. The accented lines in the animate 'fountain' bodies, energise tension in the sensuality of their form. These ballet-bodies only link through the arms which pull the distanced bodies together. In their tightly wound necks and accented limbs, these bodies offer the disgrace of the subtext in *Jeux*, through their fountained-grouped gesture towards Canova's female *Graces*. Nijinsky's choreographed 'fountain' grouped bodies compose the tension in the *Youth's* entrapment of the *Girls* which invites the sensual *ménage à trois* they will dance.¹⁵²

In this second Gerschel photograph (Figure 1.9), there is sexual tension in the three ballet-bodies as they are caught, in a moment, of the social dance which Nijinsky incorporates in *Jeux*. In this pose, *First Girl* (Karsavina) is facing the camera and on her own while *Youth* and *Second Girl* (Schollar) are in a pairing facing each other, with their arms in the ballroom hold. The sporty clothes look relaxed and modern and the *Girls'* hair is unbound. They wear white ankle socks and pointe-shoes and their feet compose a natural form, with the heels slightly lifted from the floor (quarter-point), the motif which recurs throughout the ballet. The legs are in a natural parallel alignment and the weight is quite lifted from the hips, but not as much as would be necessary if this pose was held on full *pointe*. The *Youth* holds a soft standing position of open lines for

¹⁵² The idea that Nijinsky's 'fountain' tableau can be read in terms of grace and disgrace, as it references Canova's statue of *The Three Graces*, informs my close reading of this pose (Hodson 2008, 9-15).

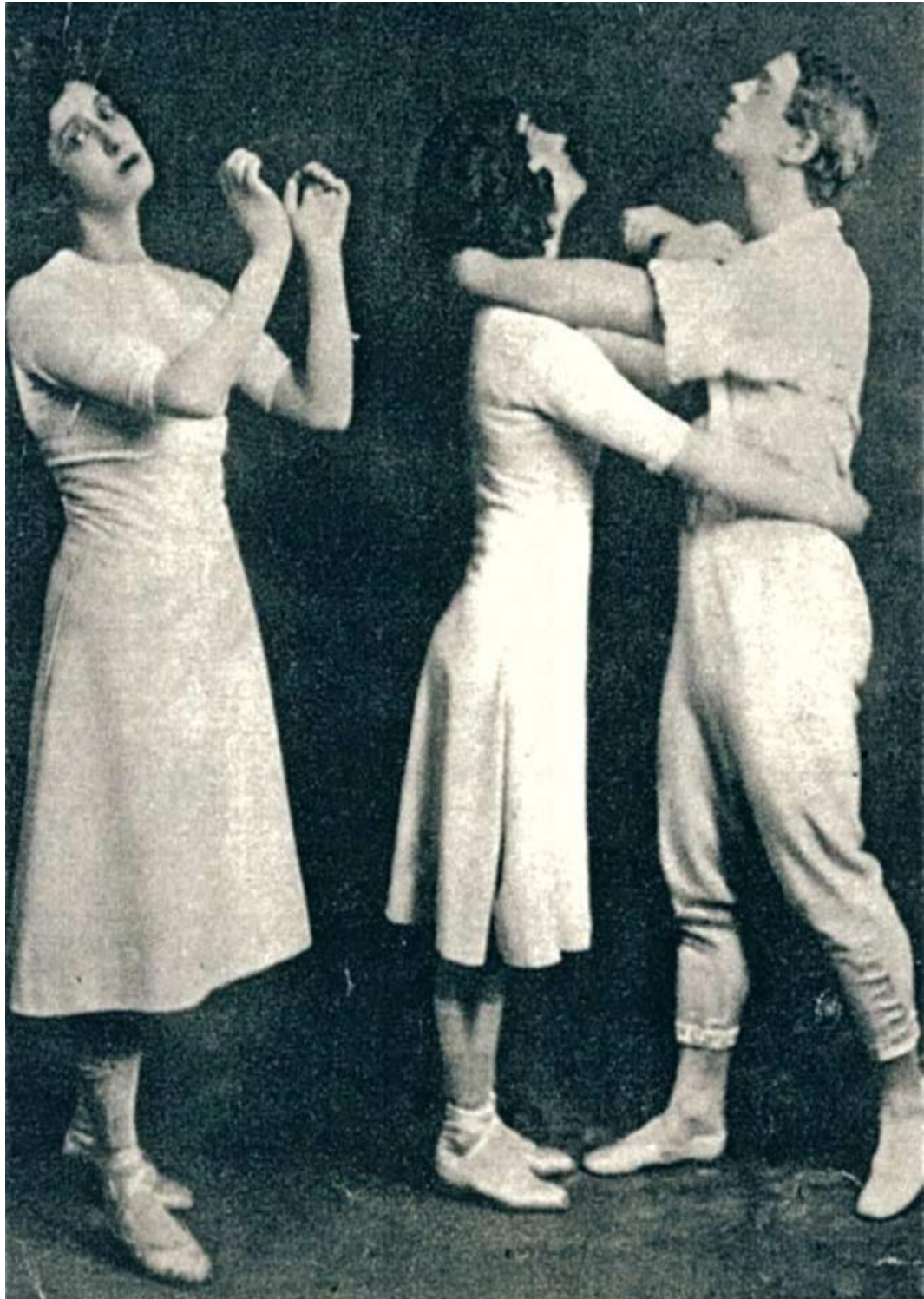


Figure 1.9. Ludmilla Schollar, Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky in *Jeux* (1913) by Charles Gerschel. Roger Dodge Collection, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. (Subject to copyright).¹⁵³

¹⁵³ <https://dancetabs.com/2013/07/games-people-play-jeux-young-at-100/> The citation here describes the image as the beginning of the Turkey Trot which was a fashionable social dance at the time. I think it is reminiscent of the hold in the modern Tango dance in ballroom at the time, and have analysed it as such.

the legs and feet, and he is in a ballroom-hold with *Second Girl*. Looking closely at this pairing reveals interesting choreographic details; there is something unusual in this ballroom hold. *Second Girl* appears ready to move forward, as the weight is over the toes, and *Youth* has the left leg already in a position to move backward, in response to the weight change, from centre to forward. This is odd for the beginning of a ballroom dance. The reason for the anomaly becomes clear; the traditional roles are reversed in this hold. *Second Girl* has taken the male ballroom hold – with the right arm around *Youth's* back – while *Youth's* left arm is tightly wound round *Second Girl's* neck, as is the case for the female in traditional ballroom *Tango*. *Second Girl* is preparing to lead *Youth* in the dance. The form of the free arms is also unusual. They are strongly intertwined at the wrist rather than the more usual palm to palm touch, and the fingers are curled. The *Tango* ballroom dance Nijinsky seems to be referencing here does have a more dramatic dynamic than other popular social dances at the time such as the *Quickstep*, and there are moments in the *Tango* when the male lead does move backwards.

Nowhere in Nijinsky's notated score is the style of this dance explained. I suggest it might reference the *Tango* because Nijinsky specifically mentions this dance as being representative of his modern day; *Jeux* will stage the beauty he sees in contemporary youth as they play sport and dance tango, just as the courtly dance in the *Minuet* represents the grace of the past.¹⁵⁴ Nijinsky reflects the craze for *Tango*, which reached its high point between 1912-1914

¹⁵⁴ See Nijinsky's interview with the Paris Press in 1913 in which he expresses these views about the beauty he sees in his modern age in (Garafola 1998, 59) in, (Hodson 2008, 37, f. 57) and (Nijinska 1992, 467). It should also be noted that these authors also draw doubt as to whether this interview records Nijinsky's actual words, because his grasp of the French language was poor. None the less, the choreographic forms and costumes do seem to identify sport, youth and the modern day.

in Europe and America, and *Tangomania* brings the Ballets Russes and its audience in this London season together, as the department store Selfridges stages the *Tango* Ball on the roof garden and the whole of the top floor of the store on July 1st, 1913 (Nava 1998, 14). Many of the two thousand guests would include Selfridge's customers, artists, and writers who themselves were likely to attend the Ballets Russes and be customers of the store, and wear orientalist pantaloons inspired by Bakst's designs for the more exotic ballets and the *Tango* dresses he designed for sale in the store as they danced *Tango* until dawn (Nava 1998, 15-27).¹⁵⁵ Although the *Tango* reference in the brief moments of the reverse-hold *Tango* analysed in the dance-bodies in Figure 1.9 may have passed unnoticed by the audience at this June performance of *Jeux*, my brief discussion of the *Tango* craze presents a relationship – between the *Tango*, the audience, Bakst's designs, modern dress, the modernism in *Jeux* and the modernity in the Selfridge store – which places *Jeux* within the culture of department store modernity; an area worthy of future research.

My close readings of Nijinsky's choreographic intentions as they exhibit in *Jeux*'s dance-bodies, caught in the photographic stilled pose, demonstrate how interior moods are expressed in the physicality of these bodies, without any emotion in the face. These bodies also describe the exteriority of modernity in minimalist movement and dance forms which action the social dance and sport themes; supported by costumes and setting but with the absence of facial expression. The themes flow, whether the bodies are stilled (as in Figures 1.8

¹⁵⁵ For more on the Tango Ball, the effect of the Ballets Russes productions on fashion and décor and the relationship between Tango and cosmopolitanism, see Mica Nava in 'The Cosmopolitanism of Commerce in the Lure of Difference: Selfridges, the Russian Ballet and Tango 1911-14' in *The International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1/2, Summer 1998 pp. 1-30.

and 1.9) or activated in coherent motion of the choreography on stage, in the way movement is held in the body. Each individual movement is informed by the previous and anticipates the following motions. The ballet-body therefore carries the cultural past and the modern future in the present action of each choreographic motif Nijinsky invents to carry his references to the past and the future in *Jeux*. The ability of these twentieth-century ballet-bodies to inhabit these complexities in Nijinsky's ballet of the modern age can also be conceived as the torque in early twentieth century dance which Schwartz has identified (Schwartz 1992).¹⁵⁶ From this perspective, the body pulls ideas of the cultural past and modern cultures together as the body reforms its classical ballet foundations in the spirals and contractions of Nijinsky's new ballet forms. As it reaches the completion of the new form, it articulates these cultures through the body. The facial positioning of the eyes is also an aspect of the choreographic form and in this, Nijinsky demands the dancer to integrate the face into the form, rather than allow any interior expression of emotion. Thus, the interior muscular tensions, releases and spirals in the ballet-body, activate and energise the motifs of rivalry, jealousy and fun. These bodily expressions and expressionless face are foundational in Nijinsky's modernist choreographic journey. In each tiny physical inflection, without extraneous spectacular dance forms and in spite of unemotional facial expression, something still happens.

The pointe-shoe in *Jeux's* minimalist sporty dance poem offers a fracture, rather than a sense of continuity with the classical ballet tradition. The female dancers (Figures 1.8 and 1.9) stand in the low, quarter-pointe balance, rather than the lifted *en pointe* aesthetic on which classical ballet relies. They present a more 'grounded' dynamic, as the weight lies over the hips and feet, rather

¹⁵⁶ See also Introduction for analysis of Schwartz's theory of torque.

than lifted up and forward from the centre of gravity, as a balance *en pointe* demands. Movement on quarter-*pointe* in hard *pointe*-shoes, as described earlier in the *Girls'* entrance, changes the weight of the dancer and presents a more stilted travelling movement than the glide on full *pointe*. **The change of the signature foot Nijinsky choreographs for *Jeux* is apparent from this first entrance of the girls. Their feet are clothed in socks and pointe-shoes which restrict rather than release movement because they pad in them on quarter-*pointe*. This signature foot overturns the idea of the graceful ballerina.** This *pointe*-shoe also defines gender; only women dance *en pointe* in the history of classical ballet up until this period. Diaghilev planned to change the gender bias of the *pointe*-shoe in *Jeux*; the *Youth* would also wear *pointe*-shoes. The *Youth* would therefore re-frame the traditional symbol of the ballerina. The *Youth* would be androgynous, a reputation Nijinsky has already earned in his role as *Les Sylphides'* poet, *Scheherazade's* golden slave and the rose in *Le Spectre de la Rose*. In the role Nijinsky choreographs for himself in *Faune* he performs the unambiguous male. He is not prepared to be ambiguous in this new ballet which explores the boundaries between the men and the women in *Jeux*. Nijinsky wanted to be clear in his rejection of Diaghilev's alternative plan for the ballet, which was to have *Jeux* danced by three men:

“*Jeux*” is the kind of life Diaghilev dreamed of. Diaghilev wanted to have two boys [...] but I showed him I was angry. The two boys are two young girls, and Diaghilev is the young man. I camouflaged these personalities on purpose (Acocella 2006, 207).

In this further example of how Nijinsky managed to overpower Diaghilev's ideas with his own in *Jeux*, Nijinsky keeps the homosexual theme but through the female, rather than the male orientation. This is made clear when the *Girls*

dance together at various points in the ballet as they embrace and kiss. Such pursuit of sexual flirtation and experimentation is acceptable in bohemian circles, not least among the friends in the group of artists and writers known as Bloomsbury.

The circularity between Bloomsbury and *Jeux* begins one afternoon at the London residence of Lady Ottoline Morrel (1873-1938). Buckle writes of how Ottoline recalled Bakst and Nijinsky were entranced with the view through the large trees to the houses behind Gordon Square Gardens as they watched Duncan Grant and other friends dart about playing tennis, seeing it as a beautiful *décor* (Buckle 1980, 305). This anecdote does gesture towards the final setting, backdrop and the tennis flirtations in *Jeux*. The friends in the garden that day are likely to have included others in their Bloomsbury set. Grant's friend Adrian Stephen for example with whom he had an affair, and Stephen's sisters Vanessa and Virginia, whose affairs with other women are well documented. It is more than possible that these alternative sexual lifestyles and Nijinsky's own, influenced the subtext under the guise of tennis in *Jeux*. The danced flirtations in *Jeux* reflect the modern trend for private non-normative sexual relationships, often lived under the normative protection of marriage. Therefore, *Jeux* can be read as a staged reflection and an across-the-stage projection of the unconventional bohemian lives lived by that 'circle of friends who lived in squares and loved in triangles', a phrase which also plays on Nijinsky's geometric choreographic style in *Jeux*.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Hodson characterises *Jeux*'s choreographic style as geometric as she introduces her reconstruction of the ballet under the heading 'Circles, Squares and Triangles' (Hodson 2008, 1).

Literary scholar Christopher Reed draws attention to the bond of trust which the Bloomsbury Group, for example, operated to protect their sexual experimentation from conservative society:

That no-one who knew these facts sought adjudication in the courts or vindication by public opinion is a measure of the trust that bound Bloomsbury's members powerfully together. That trust rested on the acceptance of sexual variety and self-determination [...] (Reed 2014, 77).

What is particularly relevant in Reed's analysis of Bloomsbury is how he argues for the freedoms this self-determination gave women then, as it does now. The emotional and aesthetic pleasure found in the company and culture of gay men and the exhilaration of breaking free from "conventions of femininity, heteronormativity and coupledness is part of the appeal now, as it was for Woolf a century ago" (Reed 2014, 85). Reed draws out the contemporaneous and current women's perspective on friendships with homosexual men and how they enrich women's lives 'for Woolf, her Bloomsbury colleagues, readers in their era, and discussions of Bloomsbury today' (Reed 2014, 71). Reed reflects that 'straight culture marks the way people should live by the line of marriage, gay or rather Queer culture better defines our understanding of Woolf and Bloomsbury', arguing that this is:

not simply as a social circle but as an ideology that combined aesthetic creativity with a profoundly inventive attitude towards relationships among children, parents, spouses; that refused to limit notions of family to those relationships; and that accepted the varieties of emotional and sensual intimacies characteristic of human experience (Reed 2014, 86).

To contextualise Bloomsbury's unconventional lives in terms of contemporary understandings, brings a more rounded and interesting perspective on this group of friends and the influence they may have had on the themes and

settings in *Jeux*. Drawing on such twenty first-century perspectives, which brings women's agency and a sense of the fluidity of sexuality to these famous Bloomsbury relationships in the past, I would argue that *Jeux* presents modernist sexuality in its danced flirtations and sensuous subtexts. The charcoal drawings by Valerie Gross of the variously posed relationships in *Jeux* in Figure 1.10 can be taken to represent the reflections which Nijinsky's wife Romola (1891-1978) makes on the modern *jeux d'amour* in the ballet's subtext:



Figure 1.10 Valerie Gross charcoal drawings of scenes from *Jeux* (1913). (Subject to copyright)¹⁵⁸

It was to be the essence of flirtation, the modern form of love. Half felt, half accomplished gestures, emotions playing physically at the game of tennis, emotionally at flirtation – a love affair between a young boy and two girls both separately and simultaneously – the eternal triangle under an utterly new aspect (Nijinsky (1933) 1960, 152).

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.pinterest.de/pin/41236152809060500/?lp=true>

On stage, *Jeux*'s triangular sex flirtations are progressive. The audience sees normative pairings as the *Youth* dances with each *Girl*, non-normative flirtations when both *Girls* dance together and kiss and the *ménage à trois* as the youth dances with each of them and as they all lie prone on the stage in a shared embrace, their bodies pressing together, according to notes on the piano rehearsal score (McGinness 2007, 584).¹⁵⁹ *Jeux* reflects modern attitudes in sexuality in a contemporaneous setting back to an audience which probably includes some who lived the lives *Jeux* presents to them. In 1913, *Jeux* publicly uncovered modernist attitudes to sexuality that were being protected by the privacy of trusted friends. It is suggested that Nijinsky models the protagonists in *Jeux*'s new ballet forms, on the many games of Bloomsbury flirtation; on Duncan Grant and the Steven's sisters Vanessa (Bell) and Virginia (Woolf) (Hodson 2008, 266). If Bloomsbury recognised their own, they did not respond; in fact, *Jeux*'s reception was surprisingly muted, given its subject matter. That *Jeux* does not feature in the mythologization of Nijinsky and his ballets is notable, but probably explainable.

The creation of *Jeux* was rushed. Nijinsky was training two sets of dancers in two completely different choreographic forms at the same time, for *Jeux* and *Sacre*. This was an extraordinary pressure which no modern choreographer would accept now. The company took longer to grasp the complexities in *Sacre* than Diaghilev had anticipated and rehearsals over-ran, at the expense of *Jeux*. Nijinsky recalls this pressure later, in his diary, 'the ballet was not a success [...] I began it well, but then they started hurrying me, and I never finished it' (Acocella 2006, 206). Macdonald includes an excerpt from one

¹⁵⁹ See Figure 1.10 for Gross's representation of this scene, at the bottom right of this image.

unnamed critic for the London *Times* in 1913 who expresses his sense of the incomplete, or the unfinished, in *Jeux*:

Some of the language in which ideas are expressed is beautiful and eloquent and is really expressive [...] but it is like a language in which the speaker is restricted to a portion of the alphabet [...] perhaps M Nijinsky will someday discover and learn the whole alphabet of which at present he has acquired only the partial use (Macdonald 1975, 94).

This suggests the critic struggles to appreciate Nijinsky's experimental language of form as the ballet-bodies in *Jeux* action his intentions in radically new forms without the help of facial expression. This *Times* critic focuses on the choreographic as the language of *Jeux* and it is conceivable that, had Nijinsky been able to have a more minimalist setting than Bakst provided, the dance would have been able to 'speak' more clearly.

The pointe-shoe also confuses in *Jeux*. These icons of classical ballet are not intended to present the classical aesthetic in *Jeux*; the dancers' pad rather than glide as their body weight drops down on quarter-*pointe*. Nijinsky's transformation of the aesthetic of the pointe-shoe does however emphasise the modernity of the piece as it rejects the classical ballet inheritance. The lack of this classical aesthetic forced audiences and commentators to concentrate on the mechanics in Nijinsky's angular choreographic motifs which dance the 'felt' action previously described.

Another reason for *Jeux*'s lack of success may lie in the grand narrative of the pre-war Ballets Russes. Allusions to sexual play are embraced as long as they are danced in the accepted aesthetic of classical ballet and set in the myth of

the past (*Scherezade*), or danced in the naturalist aesthetic of sandals or bare feet and set in the mythology of pre-Classical folklore (*Faune* and *Sacre*).¹⁶⁰ Without these aesthetics and settings, Nijinsky's *Jeux* focuses the eye on how the mechanics in the ballet-body alone feature the sexual nature of the ballet. It therefore becomes too difficult, too contemporary, too representative of the lives they may be living or wish they live, to celebrate. Sadly, Nijinsky did not have the opportunity to hone and develop the eloquent and beautiful language of dance the unnamed critic notices in *Jeux*. At the height of his success as the radically innovative choreographer and the first male ballet dancer to usurp the classical ballerina and to embody extraordinarily modernist new ballet aesthetics, Nijinsky's career ended suddenly. It is a matter of record that, as the Ballets Russes embarked on a South American tour, while Diaghilev remained in Europe, Nijinsky married. When news of this marriage reached Diaghilev, Nijinsky was promptly dismissed and the Nijinsky era with the Ballets Russes in Europe was over.¹⁶¹

Coda: on recapturing loss

Nijinsky's *Jeux* as a ballet did not become the lasting legacy Nijinsky had hoped for. Unlike other modernist art forms which become legacies of their art as they are made – in architecture, paintings, literary manuscripts and the music in the score – or, as in the other Nijinsky ballets which live on in the mythology of their dramatic premieres, *Jeux* only leaves traces. Scholars of

¹⁶⁰ See Järvinen who writes insightfully on differences between the erotic in *Jeux* and the exotic in the Fokine ballets, and how these differences may have led to the failure in *Jeux* (Järvinen 2009, 210-211).

¹⁶¹ All scholars cited in this chapter who write on the Nijinsky ballets and the Ballets Russes cite Nijinsky's marriage as the main factor which led to Diaghilev dismissing Nijinsky. However, Diaghilev brought him back for the USA tour in 1916. Nijinsky premiered his last choreographic work *Till Eulenspiegel* on 23 October 1916 in New York, but it was never performed by the Ballets Russes in Europe. Nijinsky was already suffering from mental illness by this time and he did not recover. He died at a London clinic on 8 April 1950.

Jeux therefore investigate these traces in the materiality of contemporary accounts, documents, letters, costumes and sets. As I have demonstrated, this materiality is valuable and records how the planning for how *Jeux* would eventually present as a performance, and accounts of this presentation after it had been performed. My close readings of the ballet-bodies in the photographs offer an appreciation of how, for one moment, these bodies action the dance in *Jeux, Faune and Sacre* and express modern meanings in sexual identities. There is another, existing methodology which, together with my own, can stand to represent an embodied legacy; the Reconstruction. The reconstruction of an earlier ballet should offer

[t]he ordered sequence of work which a reconstructor undertakes in order to achieve a 'good performance' of a dance reconstructed from the score; preparation from the score, familiarity with the music, casting the work, teaching the material, coaching the style, overseeing costuming, set and lighting, and bringing it up to performance level (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 506).

Millicent Hodson achieved this when she staged *Nijinsky's Bloomsbury Ballet* in 1996, and as she recorded her process of this reconstruction in her book *Nijinsky's Bloomsbury Ballet, Reconstruction of Dance and Design* (2006) and in the restaging of *Sacre* and the accompanying book *Nijinsky's Crime against Grace, Reconstructions of the Original Choreography for Le Sacre du Printemps* (1996).¹⁶² While Hodson's reconstructions of these ballets adds greatly to the body of research, and do go some way towards lessening the loss of the original ballets, there are caveats. It is important to be aware, when watching these reconstructions on film or on stage, that they are Hodson's *re-creation* of 'lost movement', rather

¹⁶² See <https://youtu.be/pwsKjPvg3yQ> for the documentary and recorded scenes from Hodson's reconstruction *Les Printemps du Sacre*, performed by the Geoffrey Ballet and recorded in 1993.

than the actual movements as they were danced in 1913 (Hodson 2008, xiii). These reconstructions are studies of and into Nijinsky's 'original' ballets as they *might* have danced.¹⁶³

Jeux in 1913, expressed trends that were also surfacing in the wider cultures of modernism. In its refusal to conform to traditional gender stereotypes *Jeux* anticipated the, sometimes uneasy, reworkings of gender identities that would emerge in post-war modernist literature and art. The move away from traditional story-ballets, usually 'told' in three acts, supported by the *corps de ballets*, and executed through the conventional exhibitions of technical prowess, is demonstrated in this one act ballet without a real plot, performed by dancers who embodied modern youth. *Jeux* centred on the expression of meaning through the ballet-body alone, which articulates, through the classical, modern and social dance motifs in Nijinsky's choreographic dance poem, the complexities of the triangular sexual flirtations they dance. Both traditional and radical gender identities are inscribed on these bodies and through their movements. *Jeux* can be read simultaneously as a modernist ballet in innovative style, in the context of Nijinsky's own preoccupation with gender norms, and as a ballet that engaged with the radical gender identities of Bloomsbury's central modernist figures. It presented the circularity in the gender identities that are played with on the stage and played out to audiences as the contemporary attitudes towards gender identity which some of them played with in their lives.

¹⁶³See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkZhDcB-OfA&t=299s>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=774MfmVgMmw&t=65s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1SU5ZTkiVA&t=42s> for Hodson's reconstruction of Nijinsky's ballet *Jeux*.

No-one who investigates Nijinsky's ballets knows exactly how the ballets were actually danced, or the exact nature of his choreographic inventions as they finally were staged. All interpretations and analyses are based on the scores, documents, posters, sets, costumes and photographs which remain. While my close readings of the ballet-bodies in these new ballets are informed by my own embodied knowledge, the bodies are posed in studios and are not stilled moments of action in any performance. I have consistently referred to Nijinsky's choreography as his intention, but no-one knows which aspects were actually realised in performance. **My analysis of Nijinsky's works has however benefited from Millicent Hodson's research, which was, and continues to be, realised on stage in her reconstructions of his ballets *Jeux* and *Sacre*, and in the books which demonstrate her detailed research of original materials that support her contemporary, reconstructed ballets.**

In all three Nijinsky ballets interrogated above, I have argued for how modernist trends were contextualised by Nijinsky's expression of both the primitive and the Hellenic in *Faune*, and the classical and modern dance techniques, together with his choreographic engagement with abstract forms in *Jeux*. As my examination of the ballets has demonstrated, Nijinsky's intentions were further enhanced by Bakst's lush naturalistic setting for *Faune* and still lush, but more minimalist, staging for *Jeux*, and the Roerich designs for *Sacre*. Debussy's lyrical interpretation of Mallarmé's *Faune* and harmonically discordant score for *Jeux*, and Stravinsky's atonal sounds in *Sacre*, all in their unique ways, foreground Nijinsky ballets as modern, exciting and controversial. They broke the mould of traditional ballet with the dancers' lack of tutus or drilled *corps de ballet* and their absence of mime-driven narrative. They wrote primitivism and futurism into the materiality of the ballet-body. *Jeux's* lack of

success only adds to the allure of this extraordinary moment in dance history. The radical choreography and avant-garde aesthetics of all three Nijinsky ballets mark the most modernist aspect of the pre-war Ballets Russes, which each year captivated the artistic milieu in London, **Paris and other European capitals. The foot emerges as the motif of the modernist haptic which Nijinsky develops in each of the ballets. In *Faune* the foot's naked articulation animates the parallel in the neo-Hellenic of the frieze, in *Sacre* the turned-in, heavily weighted foot draws the spectator's kinaesthetic response to riot and in *Jeux*, the pointe-shoe foot modernises the gendered ballerina as *Jeux's* modern young *Girls pad* around the stage, flirting with tennis.**

The transnational is inherent in the intention of the Ballets Russes and in the temporalities of Nijinsky's triptych. The troupe are originally trained in the classical ballet technique in Russia and they bring this technique to Europe while they dance ancient Russian (*Sacre*) and oriental (*Scherezade*) folklore and modern (*Jeux*) themes. The Ballets Russes seed the future ballet traditions in the oceanic, North and South America. Nijinsky's modernist ballets draw on ancient temporalities in Russia, primitivist and Hellenic Greece, as they dance the present in new, fractured neo-Hellenic forms and perform the future. Nijinsky's radical choreography and challenging themes have recently been evaluated for their extraordinary turn of expression in dance and Nijinsky is now considered as one of the forerunners of twentieth-century modernism (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 345-346)

Another dancing body, one that so influenced Diaghilev, Fokine and Nijinsky, moved performance dance away from traditional ballet and forged a radically new direction in dance for the professional stage. This was the body of Isadora Duncan, the American woman dancing whom Diaghilev and Nijinsky had seen in performance in Russia before they left for Europe with the Ballets Russes. Her innovative 'new dance' inspired many to re-think the nature of movement; one such was a young British woman Madge Atkinson, who devised her system of '*Natural Movement*' in Manchester. Both movement pioneers are the subject of the following chapter and I approach their new dance and movement to ask questions about how the body in their new dance and movement might make connections between the primitive in neo-Hellenism and the modern in the female self.

Chapter Two: The dance in the body of Isadora Duncan and the rhythms in the body of *Natural Movement*

At the same time as Nijinsky's radical new choreographic forms presented ballet as the embodiment of modernism, the new dance of Isadora Duncan set a challenge to ballet's occupation of the performance space as the only form of dance that should be considered high art. She danced a revolution which presented modern ideas about the ways the body could express the modern in dance through seemingly free, informal and rhythmic movements based in the idea of ancient primitive movement. In this chapter I explore the extent to which Duncan's dance was free from the formality of prescribed movement as it performed her act of resistance against the ballet technique in theatres and concert halls across the Western world. I examine Duncan's dance-body as it presents in her own documented texts and contemporary photographs, so as to see how the specifics in the new movement forms they offer, might express Duncan's intentions. In this examination I bring my own embodied experience of how her dance might have happened, as I look for how her new dance modality connects notions of the primitive in movement with cultural aesthetics in neo Hellenism, and as they come together in the idea of the holistic union of the body, mind and soul. I explore how her new dance presents a paradox, as her Greek-styled, translucent costumes reveal her female body as it is stilled in the movement which offers a redefinition of the Hellenic for the modern female self. **In 2007 Taxidou pondered on the original contribution Duncan's dance gives to modernist theatre:**

Perhaps the physical nature of dance and the absence of a play-text also helped to present a whole new emancipated image of the female body. And Duncan helps create this tradition (Taxidou 2007, 106-7).

This chapter probes the contribution Duncan's dance-body makes to modernism, not least in the modern/ancient female which Duncan's dance-body performs, but also as her body presents the emancipated woman in solo performances. She was one-woman dancing nature's womanhood on a bare stage in bare feet. I follow the analysis of Isadora Duncan's new dance with an introduction to the new movement practices which take their inspiration from her dance and philosophy. Through the example of Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* in Manchester, I begin an examination into how these practices co-opt modern science and technology as they develop Duncan's ideas, to form a relationship with the modern, everyday, young woman.

The dance in the body of Isadora Duncan

Just a few months before she was killed as her long silk scarf became entangled in the wheel of the car she was travelling in, Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) completed her biography *My Life: Isadora*, published in America in 1927 and London in 1928, 'with some posthumous editorial tampering' (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 153). However, the following extract from the first page of *My Life* is supported by other evidence (which will become clear) and I therefore quote Duncan to introduce the main concerns for investigation in this section of the chapter, which addresses the aspects she defines here, in and of her new dance:

I had a terror of writing this book.
It has taken me years of struggle, hard work and research to learn to make one simple gesture [...] How can we write the truth about ourselves? There is the vision our friends have of us; the vision we have of ourselves [...] also the vision our enemies have of us [...] I have good reason to know this, because I have served to me with my morning coffee, newspaper criticisms that declared I was as a goddess, and that I was a genius, and hardly had I finished smiling

contentedly over this, than I picked up the next paper and read that I was without any talent, badly shaped, and a perfect harpy (Duncan 1928, 7).

The extreme reactions Duncan describes – from the goddess and the genius of new dance to the talentless mythological beast (harpy) – followed her throughout her thirty-year career as pioneer of a totally new dance form. Her own intensely private, bodily investigations into the source of movement, to learn to make one simple gesture as she describes, was her primary research method. The following biographical summary contextualises Duncan's dance and its reception, after which my own investigation will begin.¹⁶⁴ Born in California, and the last of four children, Duncan and her family moved from America to Britain in 1897 and she toured her modality of free dance across Europe, from London to St. Petersburg and Moscow, with occasional series of performances in America, for the rest of her life. She danced in salons, concert halls and theatres, gave her first professional performance in 1903 in Paris and began to be receive serious appreciation there in 1909 when she was performing at the same time as the Ballets Russes. She toured America during the Great War and was popular in Russia in the early 1920's where she embraced Soviet principles.¹⁶⁵ She had various affairs, three children who all died young, and spent her last two years in France where she gave her last performance in Paris in 1927, a few months before she died. Ann Daly, one of the foremost experts on the body in the dance of Isadora Duncan, draws attention to the effect Duncan the dancer had on the wider artistic milieu of her time:

progressives and radicals, modernists and realists alike constructed the significance of her practice through the metaphorical projection of

¹⁶⁴ The following details of her life and career are informed by (Crane and Mackrell 2004, 152-153). For more detail see (Daly 1995) and (Preston 2011).

¹⁶⁵ See (Franco 1995), (Daly 1995), (Preston 2011) and (Mills 2017) who all address Isadora Duncan's dance in terms of the political in her dance and her philosophy.

force from her dancing to their own particular artistic, intellectual, social or political projects (Daly 1995, 8).

If the energy in Duncan's dance acts as a force for other contemporary artistic projects, her female body is the medium through which she danced health and vigour, in defiance of the patriarchal, Victorian characterisation of the female body as being physically weak and subject to fainting. From the beginning, Duncan mythologised herself as a force to be noticed and remembered and, while her dance may have invigorated other artistic practices, she received much critical comment from contemporaries (Daly 1995, vii-x). Responses to the 'Duncan phenomenon' written fairly soon after her death come from various authors, intellectuals and critics. One is the British experimental novelist Raynor Heppenstall (1911-1982), who expresses an extreme version of a view, not untypical with regard to female dancers before Duncan and since, in which Isadora the woman elides with Duncan the dancer as one, in her dance. Heppenstall establishes at the beginning of his chapter 'The Sexual Idiom' in *Apology for Dancing* (Heppenstall 1936) that, not having seen Duncan dance is his best qualification to comment on it:

For it seems that nobody who did see her was able to tell about her sanely [...] If I had seen Isadora Duncan dance there would have been no chance of critical sanity [...] I fancy I should have fallen in love. The art was the woman. It was the embellishment and justification of her extraordinary womanhood. With such a woman and therefore with the art of such a woman [...] It was all one. The art was the woman (Heppenstall 1936, 93-94).

Heppenstall was a balletomane of the Russian ballet style seen in England in the Fokine Ballets in the Ballets Russes performances. His critique above is informed by what he had heard and seen in the 1920's at the school of Russian ballet established in Kent by the former Mariinsky ballet school

teacher, Nicholas Legat (1869-1937). He recounts how he saw Legat 'frisk about with imaginary skirts, lift up swooning arms and speak the word 'pornographic' most expressively' (Heppenstall 1936, 93). Legat's caricature undermines the style in Duncan's new dance as being without substance; merely one of frisking skirts and swooning arms in an overtly sexual manner. The two oppositional critiques of Duncan and her dance represented here – that some modernists found significance in her dance for their own projects and others dismissed it as a shallow, sexualised performance – represent the central paradox in her dance under interrogation in this chapter.

This investigation begins in the materiality that remains in 'hundreds of photographs and drawings of her' that Heppenstall also cites as a factor which influenced his view (Heppenstall 1936, 93). The photographic studies of Duncan by Arnold Genthe (1869-1942) are a case in point. Taken some time during Duncan's 1915-1918 American tours, Genthe's photographs represent what might have been seen as Duncan danced and can be understood to be the signature moments in her new dance forms that Duncan wished to record, at that time. The Genthe photographs collected by Max Eastman in *Isadora Duncan, Twenty-four Studies* (1929), represent a series of Duncan's dance forms, which range from standing poses with one or both arms raised above her head to more languid forms on the floor, with body raised. I have chosen an example from each of these spatial planes in (Figures 2.1 and 2.4) so as to ask the dance-body in Duncan's dance what it might be doing and saying, as it remains captured in the stillness of the studio pose. To begin, evident in both images is the muscular control that enables the pose to appear as a fleeting, stilled moment in the fluidity of movement, is hidden. There is no sign of the

effort needed to hold the action still, even in the split-second shutter speeds of the modern camera which Genthe would have used.



Figure 2.1. Isadora Duncan by Arnold Genthe (1869-1942), c. 1916, New York Public Library.¹⁶⁶

Some of the fundamental aspects in Duncan's new dance are immediately apparent in Figure 2.1. The limbs hold soft lines, the head is inclined, the weight is over one leg while the other extends gently with the foot in a high

¹⁶⁶ <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/isadora-duncan-studies#/?tab=about>
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isadora_Duncan_studies_6.jpg

arched but easy, unforced alignment. This positioning of the legs and feet is a particular motif in ancient Greek representations of the body and I will discuss how it relates to the body of *Natural Movement* further in this chapter. **As with the foot in Nijinsky's modernist ballet forms, the bare foot in Duncan's dance body functions as the haptic motif of the neo-Hellenic of Duncan's new dance; the particularity of the highly articulated arch of the foot is referenced throughout this and the following chapters.**¹⁶⁷ The limbs are naked and the natural contours of the body are visible through the lightweight fabric of the costume, which is reminiscent of the ancient Greek chiton. Here, the stilled movement represents the free, expressive and barefoot aesthetics which were the popular descriptors for Duncan's dance at the time.¹⁶⁸ Paradoxically, however, even though the obvious technical attributes of classical ballet are not engaged in this image, and Duncan's dance challenges the style of classical ballet, she does use some foundational ballet positions in her dance, as will be seen towards the end of this section.

Duncan herself resisted the photographic studio and according to Max Eastman 'she fled from those who sought to capture the essence of her – which was motion –by making her stand still' (Eastman 1929).¹⁶⁹ She was content, however, to visit Genthe's studio because:

It is true he pointed his camera at people and took their photographs, but the pictures were never photographs of his sitters but his hypnotic

¹⁶⁷ See (Garrington 2015) for more on the idea of the haptic, particularly in modernist writing.

¹⁶⁸ See Introduction which details the various categorisations used to describe Duncan's dance. 'Free', because her dance did not rely on the ballet technique, 'expressive' because it was assumed to express emotion through dance form, and 'barefoot' because Duncan discarded the ballet-shoe, although in Figure 2.1, Duncan does seem to be wearing something on her feet.

¹⁶⁹ These words from Max Eastman, who wrote the Forward to Genthe's *Isadora Duncan, Twenty-Four Studies* (1929) are from the second page of this Forward, which has no page numbers, and it is his tribute to Duncan which he wrote on her death.

imagination of them. He has taken many pictures of me which are not representations of my physical being, but representations of conditions of my soul [...] (Duncan, *My Life* 1928, 234).

Knowing this, Figures 2.1 and 2.4 do catch a sense of interiority, or the condition of her soul as Duncan describes. There remains, however, a paradox in the lack of energy in these captured poses which is a constant problem when the posed body is photographed in an environment away from the context of the moving, dancing body. While Genthe's poses place a requirement on Duncan to hold the stilled movement, no such discipline was required of the anonymous woman dancing in Figure 2.2 as she is captured in a series of twelve stilled moments, while she dances. Eadweard J. Muybridge (1830-1904), most famous for his studies of animal locomotion in 1886 and 1887, deployed the new technology of the chronophotograph, which used multiple cameras to capture movement in a series of stop-motion photographs.¹⁷⁰



Figure 2.2. Dancing (Fancy) by Eadweard J. Muybridge, c. 1884-1887, George Eastman Museum.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ See (Narebout 2012, 45-47) for more on Muybridge.

¹⁷¹ This image formed part of the Royal Academy of Arts' exhibition: *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement* held in 2011. Bruce Boucher, Director of the University of Virginia Art Museum, wrote in his review of the exhibition that it 'contrived to mount two exhibitions at once: one on the artist's obsession with the ballet and ballerinas, the other about the

The Genthe images, taken in the 1910s, are stilled poses of Duncan, as if she is caught in the moment of dancing; Muybridge's dancer is actually stilled while dancing, in the 1870s. Both dancers are dressed in flowing light-weight fabrics and are barefoot. These photographs record the relationship which the moving body and the camera share since its inception, and capture contemporary understandings of a body in motion. Muybridge's studies represent the shift in understandings of the body in technological terms. Whereas Enlightenment science interpreted the body as a machine with separate moving parts, late nineteenth-century science configured the body as a motorised machine with energies and motions (Armstrong 2005, 78). Narebout argues that Muybridge's motion studies reflect the Greek revival (neo Hellenic) movement of the late nineteenth century (Narebout 2012, 45). *Dancing (Fancy)* in Figure 2.2 can therefore be read as the attempt to capture the idea of the unmediated actions in Greek-style, barefoot dancing, prior to the arrival of Isadora Duncan's dance. As the body is conceived through technological terms which recognise the energy in the motion of the moving being while Duncan is growing into a dancer, it is not so extraordinary that she should analyse her own dance-body from a similar perspective. I interrogate how modern science and technology might interact with the trend for neo-Hellenism in the dance-body as I analyse Duncan's dance from this perspective, in depth, as this chapter moves forward.

Many of the 'hundreds of drawings' of Duncan to which Heppenstall refers above, would include those worked by the modernist artist Abraham Walkowitz (1878-1965) who made more than five thousand stylised drawings and

nineteenth-century's obsession with depicting locomotion.' Boucher compares Degas's quest for 'movement in its exact truth' with Muybridge's photography and Paul Richel's sculptures 'which seem to be transcriptions of Muybridge's photography':
<http://newyorkarts.net/2011/10/degas-ballet-picturing-movement/>

paintings of Duncan. In Figure 2.3, Walkowitz captures the energy in dance and the foreshortened neck and thrown back head suggest a sense of abandon which Walkowitz sees in her dance. Arguably, this image represents Walkowitz's energised kinaesthetic response to Duncan's dance movements which courses through him, as he draws his physically empathic response to her movement. Her dance is the subject in his drawings into which he projects his own dancing forms of line and shape; they are not exact copies of her movements, they are his form of dancing, on paper, through the medium of Duncan.¹⁷² **This is one example of Segel's assertion in *Body Ascendant*, that the modern dance of Duncan (and others):**

attracted the attention of contemporary artists in other fields who were similarly striving to loosen the bonds of the traditional and conventional. For the first time in any significant way, dance itself became the subject of art (Segel 1998, 80).¹⁷³

The idea of the kinaesthetic response to her dance-body, which Walkowitz is able to demonstrate on paper, was important to Duncan. She herself expressed the notion of retrieving the ancient Greek ideal in theatre, which engaged the spectator through the experience of kinaesthetic empathy with the performer, in her neo-Hellenic ideal in her new dance:

The most beautiful dream is that of finding again the Greek that is ideal for both spectators and actors. To bring to life again the ancient ideal! [...] to breathe its life, to recreate it in one's self, with personal inspiration (Cheney (1928), 1969, 40).

¹⁷² See (Albright 2012, 63) for more on Duncan's art in Walkowitz and see the rest of her chapter which compares the corporeal practices of Isadora Duncan, Collette, Lois Fuller and Eva Palmer.

¹⁷³ **The other dancers of the modernist era who Segel address here are the American dance pioneers Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) and Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968).**

The huge number of Walkowitz's drawings capture the energy in the movement of Duncan's dance and represent his stylised record of her dance and as such; when all his drawings are collected together, they can suggest a notation record of her dance movements in action.¹⁷⁴ This collection represents a stylised notation resource for future generations of dancers and therefore challenges the critique that Duncan's dance is so expressive of herself that it would not last or be relevant to further generations of dancers.¹⁷⁵ These drawings embody the fluidity of Duncan when in motion, which Walkowitz emphasises through his curves of the female body. Without a film record, they capture the essence of Duncan dancing and his words on his art form, 'I am seeking to attune my art to what I feel to be the keynote of an experience', reflect Duncan's own ideas on her own form of art.¹⁷⁶ **Walkowitz's words also voice the haptic in his art form which seeks to 'feel' the 'keynote of the experience'; in this case the experience of capturing his kinaesthetic, empathic sense of Duncan's dance on paper. These drawings convey**

¹⁷⁴ This idea was discussed by Olga Taxidou in 'The Dancer and the Ubermarionette: Isadora Duncan, Edward Gordon Craig and Modernist Performance,' unpublished paper, Ioannou Centre, Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford (28.2.19).

¹⁷⁵ See further in this chapter for analysis of this critique.

¹⁷⁶ Abraham Walkowitz, 'Foreword,' 1913, reprinted in *A Demonstration of Objective, Abstract, and Non-Objective Art* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Walkowitz



Figure 2.3. Isadora Duncan by Abraham Walkowitz c.1915, Brooklyn Museum. 177

Walkowitz's kinaesthetic empathy with the energy and rhythmic proprioception of Duncan's dance as his own hand draws this somatic experience. His art is the result of the reciprocal relationship between dance and art, of the haptic modernism that Garrington delineates in the tactility and touch of modernist writing (Garrington 2015). Thus, if, as Garrington writes, 'every aspect of that quartet of somatic experiences

¹⁷⁷ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooklyn_Museum_-_Isadora_Duncan_29_-_Abraham_Walkowitz.jpg

[touch, kinaesthesia, proprioception and the vestibular sense] is troublesome to define, isolate and understand' (Garrington 2015, 16) in modernist literature, it is equally so in modernist dance.

In Genthe's photograph of Duncan in a reclining pose (Figure 2.4) her female curves are emphasised as the photographic studio lights fall on her lightly clad torso to reveal the nipples of her full, unsupported breasts. Her light-weight chiton is bunched up between her naked thighs which are fully exposed as she leans slightly back, with her extended arm ending with an open hand, as if in invitation. The soft folds in her flimsy costume emulate the carved drapery on the female statues on the East and West Pediments of the Parthenon, folds which seem to breathe with the air and reveal the female form as much as they conceal (Jenkins 2015, 134). This pose, together with Walkowitz's drawing (Figure 2.3), represent the ambiguous nature in Duncan's dance which is the female who dances free movement in unfettered clothing, the sexually liberated woman who poses scantily clad and the neo Hellenic version of idealised womanhood. Duncan's reclining pose here is an example of how she tried to match the carved, reclining female forms on the East Pediment of the Parthenon in her body; she had postcards of these images in her collection (Daly 1995, 96). Duncan also incorporates the energy in these reposing but massive and forceful reclining figures, in her dance. They offer the more dynamic and weighted compulsion in her dance-body which she translates in her idea of the original Greek dance. These stilled movements make connections with the aesthetics in Hellenist culture, the primitive in movement, and redefine the Hellenic as the modern female self.



Figure 2.4. Isadora Duncan by Arnold Genthe (1869-1942), c. 1916, New York Public Library.¹⁷⁸

In the modernising of forms in Duncan's new dance, this floor-based, reclining pose demonstrates how she involves the whole body, rather than simply the feet, in her dance relationship with the ground. She uses the floor as more than a support space from which the dance-body can project up and out from, in space. This elemental grounding of the whole dance-body in the energy of the floor becomes a fundamental component in the modern dance of Martha Graham (1894-1991) and Merce Cunningham (1919-2009). Arguably Duncan's dance-body, whether in recline or a more energised embrace with the floor,

¹⁷⁸https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Isadora%20Duncan&title=Special%3AASearch&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/media/File:Isadora_Duncan_studies_3.jpg

involves more than the gravitational force the body receives from its contact with the ground. The reclining pose in Figure 2.4 invokes a sexual energy, similar to that which Nijinsky brings in his modernist ballets whereby the controversial acts in these ballets involve the stage-floor: the *Faun*'s final climax as he lies prone; *Jeux*'s protagonists as they stretch out in the triple embrace; *Sacre*'s ritual procreation as the couples writhe on the symbolic earth. When both Genthe poses are viewed together (Figures 2.1 and 2.4), the ambiguities in Duncan's dance draw together in her dance-body: the primitive in the simplicity of the forms, the embodied references to the classical Greek statue and the visibility of the female body. They therefore perform an image of the era's neo Hellenism and, in the movement that Duncan's dance-body traces in these stilled moments, echo how Duncan might have danced the era's modernism.

The British Museum's collection of Greek Antiquity had provided inspiration for poets and artists over time and Duncan was guided through its rooms of Greek antiquity by Jane Harrison in 1900 (Smith 2012, 85).¹⁷⁹ Harrison (1850-1928), modernised traditional classical studies by foregrounding the influence of pre-classical primitivism on the Greek culture of Athens circa 500 BC. For Harrison and her colleagues, known as the Cambridge Ritualists, Greek tragedy originated in the primitive dance which worshipped gods and goddesses as a form of prayer (Mackintosh 2012, 192). This could be the primitive in Duncan's philosophy of movement, the period before language was written as text in a primitive culture which celebrates the gods and the rhythms of nature through

¹⁷⁹ Ann Daly however, finds no evidence that a visit to the British Museum by Duncan and Harrison ever took place (Daly 1995, 93).

the predominantly female dance.¹⁸⁰ In this sense, Duncan's innovative, elemental use of the floor is one construction through which her dance-body intersects the modern in dance with the culture of the female in the primitive of the neo Hellenic, the model of Hellenism posited by Harrison. Mary Beard suggests Harrison thought that the exterior of calm and female beauty in the iconography in the classical period, in for example the reclining figures on the Parthenon in the British museum, also revealed the more earthy, earlier primitive period of a culture. This reflects how Harrison became interested in giving more authority to the iconography, some of which represents ancient ritual, for what it might be saying and suggesting, rather than the texts of the Classical period. Harrison developed the 'view that ritual must always come first, that the *things done* have precedence over the *things said*' and this view revolutionised the study of Classics at Cambridge University at the time (Beard 2000, 7). Thus, Duncan's embrace of the elemental force in the ground can be interpreted as the foundation of the primitive in her movement forms and her aesthetic expression of the Classical in ancient Greek iconography. At the same time, it supports her modern dance-body as it reveals the modern, liberated woman. How Jane Harrison directly influences Duncan's philosophical ideas about the primitive in movement and philosophy, and how this underpins the pioneering movement practice of Madge Atkinson is addressed, at length, towards the end of this chapter.

¹⁸⁰ See further in this chapter for how I argue that the idea of the primitive in Duncan's dance could also be located in the earlier primitive cultures before the idea of gods and goddesses was conceived.

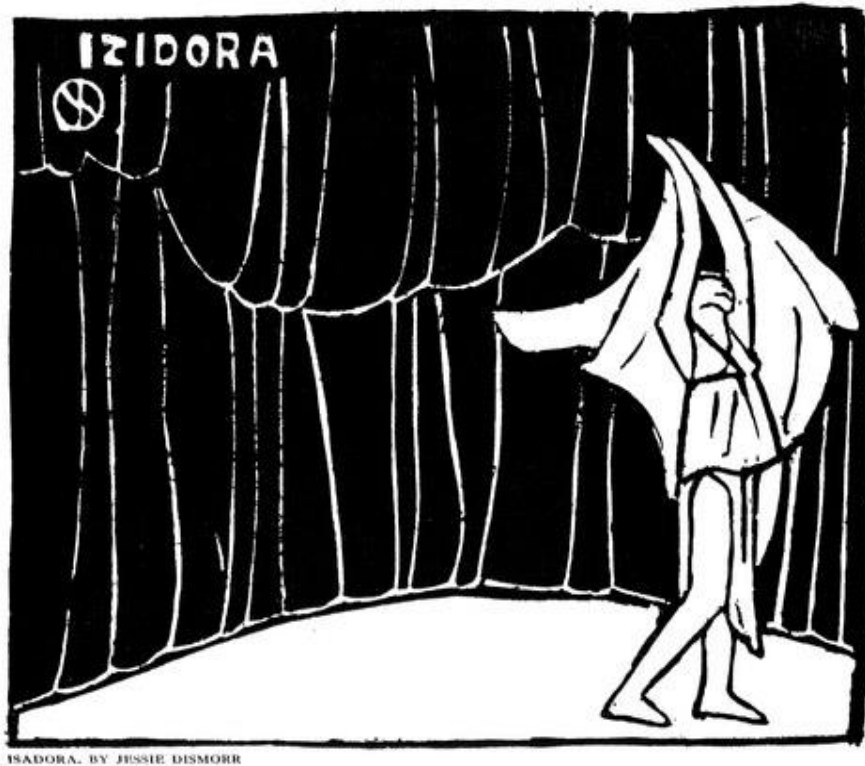


Figure 2.5. *Isadora* (Woodcut) by Jessie Dismorr, reproduced in *RHYTHM*, 1912.¹⁸¹

One British poet and artist, Jessica (Jessie) Dismorr (1885-1939), managed to capture some of the complexities already described in Duncan's new dance, in her woodcut entitled *Isadora*, (Figure 2.5). This was reproduced in the 1912 edition of the little magazine *Rhythm*. *Isadora* captures the essential line and form in a Duncan pose: the uplift in the head – tilted slightly to one side and behind the weight in the chest – the arms lifted in the same plane as the head, the total body weight on one leg with the other leg relaxed in parallel

¹⁸¹ Image subject to copyright and also found on google images in this blog: <https://news.fitzrovia.org.uk/2010/09/12/jessie-dissmorr/>.

alignment; the body seems grounded and weighty.¹⁸² The idea of movement in a Duncan performance is liberated in this image: the curves and lines in the backdrop drapes suggest the billowing motion of energy as if Duncan has just stopped dancing, in front of them. They connect with the upward flow of the scarves attached to the fingers, suggesting Duncan has just raised her arms in salutation. *Isadora* demonstrates the presentation of Duncan dancing on the stage, there is no distracting scenery or props, just the harmony of Duncan's flowing robes with the backdrop drapes:

With the free and natural as her guide, Duncan strove for a high degree of simplicity in all her dance. Scenery, costume, special effects, and story were reduced to a minimum. Attention was to remain fixed on the dancer and the universal truths being revealed in dance; anything that threatened to divert the spectator's concentration was regarded as intrusive and superficial and had no place in her art (Segel 1998, 82).

Segal captures the visual modernism in a Duncan dance performance as it allows her dance-body to speak universal truths through simple movement, without any on-stage distractions. Dismorr's *Isadora* represents the same in her art, as Walkowitz does in his drawings, and both recall the archetypal image of Duncan in celebration of the primitive, at the height of her career. While Dismorr's *Isadora* marks the naked legs and feet in Duncan's dance, the image is not overtly sexualised and reads more as a projection of liberated, inner emotion than of the outwardly liberated body.

Dismorr might have based her version of Duncan on an actual performance, as did other artists and poets, and these include the American modernist poet

¹⁸² The balance of weight which *Isadora* captures is reminiscent of many ancient Greek sculptures of the idealised, athletic, human form where-in the weight of the body rests on one leg, with the other resting in a relaxed, naturalised form.

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) (Preston 2011, 150). Dance was crucial for Williams as it exemplified American and modernist art and Duncan's dance in particular offered America to the global arena as the chaste and modern future, rather than the parochial and backward country which he feared was the global perception of America at the time.¹⁸³ With Williams characterising Duncan's dance as chaste, and Heppenstall's dismissal of it as too erotic, these examples demonstrate the paradox in her dance which divided opinion and which, I have argued, is revealed in the body of her dance.

Duncan herself envisioned her dance as the expression of America, as she told the American theatre impresario Augustin Daly (1838-1899) in the early days of her career:

I bring you the dance. I bring you the idea that is going to revolutionise our entire epoch. Where have I discovered it? By the Pacific Ocean, by the waving pine-forests of the Sierra Nevada. I have seen the ideal figure of youthful America dancing over the top of the Rockies [...] For the children of America I will create a new dance that will express America (Duncan 1928, 28-29).

This image of the ideal, young America also drew inspiration from her Irish grandparents' pioneering trek across America, the traditional Irish songs and dances they had brought with them, and her grandfather's experience in the Civil War:

It has often made me smile [...] when people have called my dancing Greek, for I myself count its origins in the stories which my Irish grandmother told us of crossing the plains with grandfather [...] I fancy that into these Irish Jigs had crept some of the heroic spirit of the pioneer [...] and I learned it from her, putting into it my own aspiration of Young America [...] (Duncan 1928, 243).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ My thanks to Eric White in the Department of English and Modern Languages at Oxford Brookes University, for our discussion regarding the influence of dance and Isadora Duncan on Williams' poetry.

¹⁸⁴ **See also: 'I see America Dancing' in (Cheney (1928), 1969, 5-8) which has more on the stories Duncan heard from her grandmother.**

On this 1908 American tour these multiple inspirational forces were presented in Duncan's dance as she embodied the spirit of the young America which she dressed in translucent fabrics reminiscent of the style of Ancient Greek robes. Preston argues that the intellectuals and artists in the audiences could see the modern American ideals of innovation and individualism in her solo dances (Preston 2011, 150). There is an irony in Duncan's juxtaposition of the old Greece, which is stated more in her costumes and dance forms, and the new America, that is confused by her costume references. At the same time, however, as seen in Figures 2.1 and 2.4 above, Duncan did choose transparent fabrics which revealed her body and, in this way, she could be seen to dance the modern, independent woman pioneering a new dance form freely, unconstrained and in command of her own stage space. Duncan may have enjoyed these confusions as she demonstrates above, when she responds to the description of her dance as Greek, with an ironic smile.

Spectators on Duncan's 1908 tour were also witnessing Duncan's danced rebellion against the dominant performance dance form of classical ballet, and the most famous practitioner of the art of classical ballet was her contemporary, the ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881-1931). However, when Duncan's dance-body in Figure 2.1 is compared with Pavlova's ballet-body in Figure 2.6, an analysis of these two bodies reveals interesting paradoxes in Duncan's danced rebellion.¹⁸⁵ Pavlova balances, *en pointe* with her limbs in the extensions of the arabesque line. She wears the tutu, pointe-shoes, pale

¹⁸⁵ See Introduction which identifies my rationale for reading the dance which is represented in the photographic images in this thesis from the perspective of the body which dances the dance. I do this through my own convention which identifies the body with the particular modality of dance and movement in question through the use of the hyphen. Therefore, I analyse Duncan's new dance through her dance-body, and the ballet in the body of the ballerina Anna Pavlova through her ballet-body.

tights and the crown of her nineteenth-century role as the Swan in the Swan Lake ballet. She inhabits the role of the bewitching Swan through her flirtatious smile as she poses her seduction of the Prince in their *pas de deux*. She epitomises the ideal woman of his imagination. Her expression flirts with her Prince and the spectator as her eyes are directed towards the camera lens.¹⁸⁶ So far, so mechanical and artificial in Duncan's terms. Duncan had developed her resistance to all the aspects of the ballet that Pavlova represents in this pose, and it began when she first heard where the strength to sustain the ballet technique is sited in the body:

The ballet school taught the pupils that this spring [of motor power] was found in the centre of the back at the base of the spine. From this axis says the ballet master, arms, legs and trunk must move freely, giving the result of an articulated puppet. This method produces artificial mechanical movement not worthy of the soul (Duncan 1928, 58).

Duncan is translating how the free movement of limbs and torso in the ballet technique felt artificial and puppet like in her body, because she sensed the body centre was wrong for her conception of how dance should feel in the body. She therefore associates this body centre with the proscribed set of movements which feel mechanical to her. Pavlova's ballet-body in Figure 2.6 does demonstrate the strength in the back which allows the limbs to extend away from the body without crunching the torso, which Duncan identifies as artificial, mechanical movement.

¹⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that the interiority of a character becomes a fundamental aspect of the new British ballet later in the century, particularly in the work of the choreographer Sir Kenneth Macmillan (1929-1992). His early choreographic works were for the Sadler's Wells Ballet from 1955 and his main contribution to British Ballet was in the ballets he created while Director of the Royal Ballet Company from 1972-1977 and then as Principle Choreographer from 1977 until his death from a heart attack while backstage during a performance of one his most iconic works *Mayerling* (1978).



Figure 2.6. Anna Pavlova and Nicolas Legat in *Swan Lake*, published by Herm. Leiser, mid 1920's.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ This is a typical image of Anna Pavlova as ballerina and was used to advertise the *Anna Pavlova Gala* at the London Coliseum, 4th March 2012. This Gala marked the one hundred years since Pavlova moved to her London home, Ivy House in 1912 when accessed in 2018. As @ 17 October 2019 it has been changed: <https://www.dancing-times.co.uk/gala-tribute-to-anna-pavlova/>.

Both bodies in Figures 2.1 and 2.6 do, however, share a very similar aesthetic in the lines of the upper body and arm lift. Each body holds a long neck and a lifted head which turns away from the axis of the spine. Though Pavlova's ballet-body takes a lifted stance, with the weight raised up and off the hips, and Duncan's dance-body demonstrates the more gravitational pull of the grounded aesthetic, both bodies are supported by turned-out, rather than parallel legs and feet. While Duncan achieves the appearance of a more sympathetically aligned body in a natural form and is dressed only in soft fabrics with no tutu-corset, both dancers hide the strength needed to give their effortless appearance of stilled movement. This brief reading of the two bodies in Figures 2.1 and 2.6 does demonstrate how Duncan's dance incorporates some aspects of her ballet training even while she formally rejects any such comparison. When Pavlova invited Duncan to watch her daily practice at the *barre*, Duncan was able to admire the strength and elasticity which the ballet technique demanded of Pavlova, while also feeling bewildered by the training's tendency to separate the mind from the movements which Pavlova's ballet-body was making (Duncan 1928, 121). Duncan does allow movement to inform movement without the intervention of her mind, which is addressed further in this chapter, but this differs from her perspective on the rigour and mind-body dissociation in the academic ballet technique which she watches Pavlova put her body through, while Pavlov's 'beautiful face took on the stern lines of the martyr' (Duncan 1928, 121). In other words, as she watches Pavlova drive her body through strenuous exercises at the *barre* Duncan is saddened that Pavlova is not striving to allow her body to dance without any idea of pushing it beyond its physical limitations, as she does. I have argued how both dancers hide the physical effort their bodies engage while they appear effortless in their photographic poses. In Pavlova's ability to mask the physically technical

challenges in her dancing, she became famous for the emotional gravitas she brought to her performances:

Pavlova always seemed to bring great pathos and poignancy to every gesture [...]. Her major achievement was in bringing dance and its image to an immense global audience, in showing that dance could move them with intensities of emotion [...] (Toepfer 1997, 157).

Duncan also sought to bring the intensities of emotion in her new dance to a global audience and in her challenge to the art of ballet, through which Pavlova was gaining a global audience, Duncan needed her new dance and claims for authentic movement through expression, to be accepted as high art in order to hold her place in arenas which Pavlova also inhabited.¹⁸⁸ Albright points out that Duncan only danced in upper class salons, concert halls and Opera Houses for this reason (Albright 2012, 59).

The axis of power in Duncan's dance-body

Duncan's efforts to usurp the old order of the ballet tradition, even though she incorporates some aspects of the tradition in her new dance, is centred in her dance-body. This body expresses the new gravitationally bound aesthetic of her dance movement, which she argues is enabled through the new centre for movement in the solar plexus.

For hours I would stand quite still, my two hands folded between my breasts, covering the solar plexus [...] I was seeking, and finally discovered, the central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power [...] (Duncan 1928, 58)

Here Duncan is experiencing the somatic lift in her body and mind, as she allows the solar plexus to become the centre of power, through the

¹⁸⁸ See the explanation of the authentic in Duncan's new dance above.

haptic touch of her hands as they fold in prayer and connect with this area of her inner body.¹⁸⁹ This was the place in the body Duncan had searched for to replace the axis of power in the lower back, which for her was artificially assigned to support the ballet technique.¹⁹⁰ Duncan explains her conceptualisation of a force which drives her physical movements above; she describes how she assigns the body area she identifies as her solar plexus to her philosophical soul. This allows her to link them together as one energising, or motorised system. Duncan suggests that by de-coupling her will from her movements, so that they are generated by her motorised soul, her mind is made free from thought about the actual movements and opens it out to the realm of the senses.

Having situated the area in her body which will action movement, Duncan is ready to allow her body to move in a progression of movements in the choreographic process; a process which Franco rightly describes as the choreographic challenge, which endeavours to enable one movement to follow the previous movement as a series of justified movements (Franco 1995, 5). He compares this process with the difficulty in the formation of a grammatical sentence, known as syntax (Franco 1995, 5). There is an issue however when he determines that 'the choreographic ramifications of Duncan's discovery of 'natural' movement are problematic' and he summarises these ramifications thus: 'Duncan sought not only natural movement, but syntactically natural

¹⁸⁹ See (Garrington 2015) for a rich interpretation of the many ways the idea of the haptic is found in modernist literature.

¹⁹⁰ Modern ballet training emphasises the development of core body strength in the abdomen to enable high leg and strong flexible back extensions. While Duncan's motor power around the solar plexus is in the same area of the body, she clearly understood this was not the area of inner strength when she was learning the ballet technique.

movement sequences developed from the unconscious' (Franco 1995, 5).¹⁹¹ In Franco's understanding, if Duncan's movement sequences were syntactical, each movement must follow through a logically created sequence order, therefore the sequence of movements in Duncan's dance is a consciously created sequence. In this, he suggests that the choreographic process lies only in the conscious construction of carefully crafted movement sequences.

There is however, an earlier stage in the choreographic process. I will argue, from the body-centred perspective, that Duncan allows the body rather than the mind to initiate the process:

I also then dreamed of finding a first movement from which would be born a series of movements without my volition, but as the unconscious reaction of the primary movement. I had developed this movement in a series of different variations on several themes (Duncan 1928, 59).

Duncan is describing the very early stage in the choreographic process which can indeed be characterised as the 'unconsciously natural' element in the progression to what Franco describes as the final syntax of movements. Duncan is relating the process of coherence in her intelligent dance-body which allows the first movement to inform the next in a series of movements. This freedom of information can only be released when Duncan allows her body to articulate the next movement without her interference in the process; without her will. In the absence of conscious input, Duncan's 'unconscious' enables the intelligence in the primary movement to lead into the following movement, and so on, as the body builds its own intelligent syntax of movements. It is through giving the body permission to action movement from

¹⁹¹ See (Franco 1995, 5,6) for his analysis of the authentic syntax of movement sequences in Duncan's practice.

the body centre – the motor in her soul, the solar plexus – without Duncan imposing an idea of the forms these movements might take, that the series is created by the body and is therefore a system of unconscious reactions to the previous and primary movement. These body-informed movements are therefore a natural progression of movements. Her choreographic process only becomes a construction when she consciously repeats the sequences. This is the second stage in the choreographic process, as Duncan rehearses the sequences again and again so that they then appear to be a series of unconstructed and natural movements in performance. Indeed, Duncan describes how she needs to action what I describe as her body intelligence as she prepares to perform. Before she goes on stage, she:

must place a motor in my soul. When that begins to work my legs and arms and my whole body will move independently of my will. But if I do not get time to put that motor in my soul, I cannot dance (Duncan 1928, 123).

While this statement denies those rehearsed sequences she otherwise admits too, as demonstrated above, it does demonstrate how Duncan's new dance is rooted in the idea of allowing her body to move under its own intelligent system.

The idea of the intelligent dance-body is sometimes described as the 'authentic' in movement which for Duncan, does not exist in the artificially ascribed ballet movements. As these movements articulate through an imposed regime of codified exercises, they produce for Duncan the 'articulated puppet' she so graphically describes above. This characterisation of the ballet dancer allows no sense of the coherence in the ballet-body which might justify the free movement of the limbs and trunk, but Duncan needs to validate her

resistance to the ballet art form in such characterisations. She is aiming for her new dance revolution to usurp the dominance of ballet in the high art space for dance. Daly constructs the oppositional forces Duncan's dance takes with ballet in terms of Duncan's dancing body which she argues Duncan creates through a dance practice which replaces the idea of control with one of release (Daly 1995, 74). Daly introduces here the concepts of control and release in dance techniques which have many meanings outside the limits of my thesis. However, I will take forward just one aspect of the oppositional forces which Daly highlights, as they relate in Duncan's rejection of ballet. The control in ballet which Duncan resists is in the fundamental support mechanism which establishes the lifted body centre in the ballet technique which enables extended lines and the appearance of the weightless and ethereal aesthetic. This controlled ballet-body is also emphasised by dressing the body in pale tights, the corseted tutu and the artificial pointe-shoe. Duncan's naked limbed dance-body, covered only by lightweight loose fabrics, releases her from these artificial controls at the same time as the breath in her solar plexus releases the movements in her new dance.¹⁹² This is the consistent paradox in Duncan's dance, as she performs the neo-Hellenic in form and inspiration in translucent fabrics which expose naked limbs. Her dance embodies the ancient past at the same time as she projects the modern, liberated woman in a dance-body clad in the translucent fabrics which reveal her female body, seen in Figures 2.1 and 2.4 above.

¹⁹² See Daly's chapter which focuses Duncan's dancing body, for an extensive analysis of the many meanings she finds in the control and release in Duncan's dance practice (Daly 1995, 22-87).

As I have noted, Duncan's new dance revolution engenders both positive and negative responses and the following example of a negative response from Katherine Everett Gilbert (1816-1952), written retrospectively in 1941, focuses on the challenge Duncan's new dance presented to the traditional form of ballet:

The first extreme reaction from the frigidity of the ballet is sufficiently represented by the views of Isadora Duncan [...] She put "soul" back into the dance [...] The free improvisations of Isadora Duncan [...] did not inaugurate a new era. The conception she advocated was too tightly bound to her own fascinating personality for transmission, and exhausted itself in lyrical effusion. She had insisted on the beginning of movement without providing sufficiently for the middle and end. She perhaps fertilized the Russian ballet but she had no lineal descendants in her own manner (Gilbert 1941, 107-110).

Gilbert is clearly opposed to the pre-Ballets Russes ballet tradition, as she recognises the revolution in dance that both Duncan and the Ballets Russes presented, even while she only gives Duncan faint praise for her own innovative new dance. By characterising Duncan's dance as an unfinished, improvisational conception, Gilbert denies Duncan the authorship as the creator of a unique dance form which was founded in what Franco describes as a coherent syntax of movements and which I have argued Duncan did indeed employ in her choreographic process. Gilbert does grant Duncan her influence on the Russian ballet which I demonstrated in the previous chapter, with regard to her influence on Bakst, Fokine and Diaghilev at the turn of the century in Russia. She does not however grant Duncan's dance as the influence which presented a challenge to the 'frigidity' of ballet before the Ballets Russes had even taken to the stage. Gilbert's rationale for dismissing Duncan from the inauguration of the modern dance revolution rests in Duncan's embodiment of the personal in emotion, 'her soul', which Gilbert and many others, including Heppenstall, find irrationally bound to her own

'fascinating personality'. This makes her dance autobiographical and without the potential to influence future generations or 'lineal descendants in her own manner'. In this, and the subliminal gendered reference, Gilbert undermines Duncan's unique new dance by contextualising it in terms of her gender. This Isadora Duncan is the emotional woman dancing rather than the innovator of a totally new dance form. Gilbert has clearly read 'the views of Isadora Duncan' as she puts 'soul' back into the dance, but has not granted this primary and complex construct, as it manifests in her dance-body, the authority it deserves. Gilbert does not appreciate that dance and movement need not be measurable in order to qualify as revolutionary and modern. In this dismissive account of Duncan's new dance revolution, Gilbert reflects the cultural move at this time which valued the scientific, measurable and impersonal in modernity and allows her to assign Duncan's new dance to the feminine, unscientific realm of the emotional and improvisational.

However, this acerbic critic should be contextualised by the lack of available evidence which establishes how incorrect many of these observations were. Layson's research in 'Isadora Duncan, A Preliminary Analysis of her Work' (Layson 1983) uncovers original source materials which reveal that Duncan gave many repeat performances of the same works and that her dances often contained sections and motifs taken from other dances she had previously composed, sometimes years earlier and which she inserted as solos into new dances (Layson 1983, 43-45). These repeated performances and the insertion of previously choreographed material into new works make the maintenance of improvisation, as the dances are repeated over many years, extremely unlikely. Thus, her free-dance was in fact technically skilled in such a way so as to appear as a dance of unpremeditated improvisation. Her dance reflected

her creative process which began in the unpremeditated series of movements initiated in her dance-body, and became a composed sequence of movements once Duncan had decided to fix it as a composition.¹⁹³

Current researchers into Duncan's dance have benefited from the details which Layson and others have uncovered and which enable an informed analysis of Duncan's actual dance practice. It allows a more thorough examination of how her coherent choreography did contain sequences which developed movement from the primary movement with natural efficiency to the middle the end of each sequence in her dance. They reveal Duncan's deliberate effect of improvisation which Gilbert does not notice and perhaps did not have the skills to understand. My analysis undermines the criticism, encapsulated in the quotation from Gilbert's analysis of Duncan's dance, which summarises the often-repeated assumption that her dance had no method or technique. Fortunately, Duncan's new dance and her modernist re-imagining of ancient ideals did not die with her, as Gilbert predicted. There have been three generations of Duncan dancers who maintain her ideals and dance practice in performances and workshops. The first generation danced with Duncan and studied in her schools in France, Germany, Russia and America.¹⁹⁴

I was able to enhance my research by gaining embodied experience of Duncan's dance, and how her theory of the motor in her soul manifested in her dance in one of these workshops.¹⁹⁵ In the heat of an Athens summer in 2015,

¹⁹³ See (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 409) for analysis of how improvisation in the creative process of dance making is explained by various dance makers.

¹⁹⁴ For information on the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation see: isadoraduncan.org/foundation

¹⁹⁵ See also Belilove in (Daly 1995, 75-79) and Preston's experience of learning Duncan's dance with Belilove in (Preston 2011, 168).

Lori Belilove – third generation Duncan dancer and Artistic Director of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation **in New York** – invites the mixed group of dancers and everyday conference delegates **who come from all over the world**, to a workshop in Isadora Duncan's dance. **Thus, we are a modern, global group of eager students, ready to experience an unfamiliar movement modality which was originally danced transnationally a century ago: Duncan's new dance which was rooted in the ancient past of primitive Greece.** Everyone finds a space in the studio to stand alone whilst Belilove slides between the temporalities of the present and the past, as she begins to share information about Duncan's dance-body.

We locate and touch our solar plexus as Belilove describes, through words and movement, how Duncan feels her solar plexus as meditation, a meditation which folds her body into low, medium or high planes, folds in the torso which energise the arms to fold around the solar plexus in the same plane. Belilove has us swaying, heavily weighted from leg to leg, while our arms are softly folding, lifting and dropping. She explains how sense-images of nature's wind and water initiate our sways through the solar plexus. We consciously breathe as we try to allow a sense of the wind, the waves, the bottom of the ocean into our solar plexus as we sway and fold. As she sways and folds her own body, Belilove constantly references nature's natural forces and we try to embody our own references as initiators in our own solar plexus, rather than copy her movements. We share with Belilove how we find this very difficult. Belilove then tells us how Duncan retains the first, second and fourth positions in the classical ballet technique, because Maurice

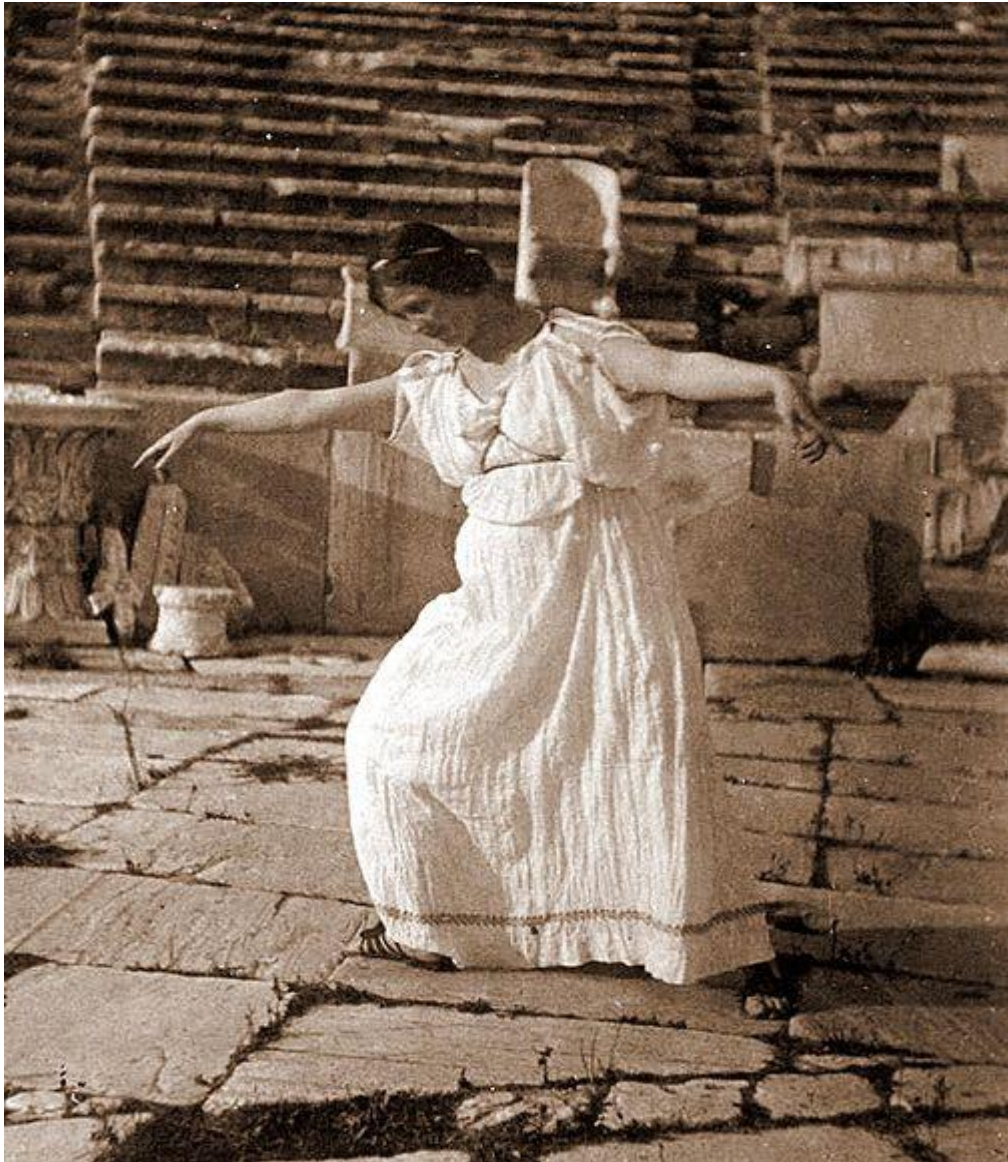


Figure 2.7. Isadora Duncan at Dionysus in Greece c. 1903.¹⁹⁶

Emmanuel in 'Greek Positions' asserts that all ballet positions are based on Greek forms.¹⁹⁷ We are now holding the pli  in second position; a deep knee bend over turned-out feet (where the legs are placed apart by a distance of some one-and-a-half lengths of the foot) which is supported from the turned-

¹⁹⁶https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Isadora%20Duncan&title=Special%3ASearch&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/media/File:Isadora_Duncan_1903.jpg

¹⁹⁷Maurice Emmanuel: *The Antique Greek Dance*, published in French in 1896 and translated into English for publication in 1916, was a popular work and extremely influential in the idea that Ancient Greek dance remained in the body of dancers. While Duncan did not admit to reading his work, clearly The Isadora Duncan Foundation, and many scholars, assume she did; because, as I clarify in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 above, she does incorporate some foundational positions from the ballet technique. I address the influence of Emmanuel's work in the development of Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement*, further in the chapter.

out hip position in the pelvis This requires strong muscular strength through the pelvis and thighs to hold the position without allowing our knees to twist in from the turned out, lower legs. Belilove describes how Duncan replaces the straight uplift in the torso of the ballet plié with the curved spine, which gives this turned-out position the dynamic of gravity, rather than uplift. We hear how the curving spinal movement is initiated through lowering the focus of the eyes which brings the weight of the head down at the same time as exhaling the breath, which accentuates the spinal curve. In 2015 we are in Athens learning, through our own bodies, the complexities involved in obtaining exactly the same position as Duncan poses when she is in Athens in 1903 (Figure 2.7).¹⁹⁸

Someone then asks 'isn't she famous for skipping'? Yes, says Belilove and has us padding our feet, from the foot flat on the ground right up through to a high arched extension each time, and rolling our spines up and down before we begin to skip, with heavily weighted thighs, which bring a weighted dynamic to the skipping. She explains how 'you look, then you move your body in that plane and the arms follow'. We hear how the eyes direct the line of travel and the plane of movement in space when we are skipping. We learn that raising the eyes to the ceiling lifts and opens the chest, while lowering them leads the torso to fold over. Music from the same repertoire that Duncan used is playing in the background and Belilove explains how the legs keep the beat, the body holds the line while the upper body holds the rhythm when we skip. We begin to try to skip like this across the room and some of us falter, fall over to the floor and laugh with frustration. It is very difficult to combine all the aspects we are learning; initiating the solar plexus with water images as we follow the gaze

¹⁹⁸ This photograph is given various dates in Library catalogues; see for example, The Bancroft Library in The University of California, which gives 1907 as the date in (Rosemont 1994, 54).

of our eyes while trying to skip through highly articulated feet across the room without losing our balance and falling over.¹⁹⁹ Finally, we learn Duncan's dance-walk, with some of us walking across, and others around, the room as Belilove gives us another image. We imagine we are holding an animated conversation with a friend, looking at them while gesticulating and walking forward fast 'in the New York fashion'. We walk with energy, talking and gesticulating as we try not to bump into each other, and while engaging our legs, torso and arms with the same beats and rhythms in the music as when we were skipping. It is time to go to the next conference panels; we all clap our thanks to Belilove and go our separate ways.

Lori Belilove's engaging workshop gave our mixed group of dancers, dance-makers, students, non-dancers and academics the opportunity to embody some aspects of Duncan's dance: the dynamic in her grounded ballet *pliés*, her complicated, counterpoint skipping actions through the various planes of our body, her energised walking steps, all the while trying to activate our body with the forces of nature through our solar plexus. Belilove holds all this detail in her body memory as she passes her embodied knowledge to us, through our own bodies. This is knowledge that she gained from working with the preceding generation of Duncan dancers, through the body, as did the generation who danced with Duncan herself. The haptic experience of Duncan's dance in Belilove's workshop gave me valuable insight into Duncan's philosophy and practice: how the eyes lead the body actions and how Duncan embraced

¹⁹⁹ See (Preston 2016, 1-22) for the difficulties, pain and pleasure of learning the ancient, but new to her, Noh movement practice, particularly in her body's difficulty in spending time in the Kneel. There is also a significant global and transnational element to Preston's haptic research into Noh; in Preston's experience of being an American, now immersed in the culture and movement of modern and ancient Japan, and in the global movement of Noh that enticed modernist authors such as Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats to learn more about it.

gravity through the foundational *plié* of the classical ballet technique, even while she consistently denied ballet of any authenticity. I discovered how her carefully devised syntax of movement phrases in the skipping and walking modes start in such moments as the gravitational *plié* and how Duncan authorised the seemingly natural actions of travelling skips and walks, through the complex interplay of nature's forces in the solar plexus with the release of the breath in the solar plexus. This practice-based experience has enhanced my understanding of Duncan's dance, as she expressed her ideas in texts, and as they manifest in her stilled-dance-body in the photographic image. These methodologies have enabled me to demonstrate how the grounded aesthetic in Duncan's movement forms is initiated in the intelligence of her dance-body as it informs the movement without her will; the primary movement which becomes a series of movements which begin in the natural of her unconscious. I argue that the 'motor in her soul' is activated by her dance-body's intelligence and have learned how this is experienced in the intake and release of the breath which energises her syntax of movements.

No matter whether this anecdote I heard in Athens, while attempting to embody Duncan's fast moving, syntactic walk sequences, was originally voiced by Duncan herself; the idea of the city walk in her new dance does bring the everyday body into her new dance. The image of Duncan's dance-walk as having the speed and energy of the modern New York City street, links modernity with the primitive in her dance movement. It also synchronises the modern woman, Isadora Duncan, doing everyday activities such as walking in the city, in her dance. This imaginary animated conversation in 'the New York fashion' between the woman Isadora Duncan and a friend offers a metaphor which introduces the everyday woman who will engage with movement

practices, inspired by the dance of Duncan. It also draws the modern woman, Duncan's dance and the modernity in technology together in the following ways. As the car horns drown out the voice and the fast-moving, city-body gestures animatedly to another body, they are also in rhythmic conversation with the city soundscape. As they weave independently, in and around the jostling pavement crowd, their individual body rhythms torque with those in the bodies in the crowd and the rhythms in the city soundscape. As the rhythmic movement in the walking steps in Duncan's dance connect with her everyday speed walking in the crowded city landscape, Duncan, the crowd and the city can be said to be in the rhythmic union which performs the new kinaesthetic of the period (Schwartz 1992). This metaphor also suggests how the walking-step sequences in Duncan's dance can be understood to locate in the rhythms of her everyday body as it negotiates the city streets, an understanding I keep in mind as I now carry forward Duncan's dance, her dance-body and her everyday body through this thesis to investigate how Duncan's multiple bodies relate in the body of the modern, quotidian woman. Schwartz introduces the elemental factors in these bodies that transform in new dance and movement practices that follow on from Duncan's dance:

As Duncan and a long line of more modest Epigone [...] returned to Greek models, they began to foster a new kinaesthetic. This kinaesthetic demanded sincerity, the loving accommodation of force of gravity, fluid movement flowing out of the body center, freedom of invention and natural transitions through many fully expressive positions (Richardson 1924, 73).

Schwartz' description of the long line of dance practices inspired by Duncan's dance is rather demeaning, in that he describes them as modest imitations (Epigone) of Duncan's original dance. I will argue, through the example of Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* dance and movement practice, that

rather than imitate, the intention was to take inspiration from the Hellenic ideals and the primitive in movement which informed Duncan's new dance, in pioneering new modern dance and movement forms. Schwartz does however identify the essentials in Duncan's dance which I argue are informed by Duncan's own body-intelligence system that authorises the body-centred flowing movement and rests in the idea of the authentic or the sincerity that he identifies. I intend to demonstrate how Atkinson takes these essentials in Duncan's dance forward and adapts them in the light of new scientific understandings about the body, and test how this combination in *Natural Movement* might represent the kinaesthetic in Schwartz's model.

Before I begin this interrogation, it is important to note the following: *Natural Movement* is primarily recognised as an innovative form of new dance by the dance community of teachers and practitioners now, and at the time. In 1924 *Natural Movement* dance was given formal recognition as it was incorporated into the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD), the Institution which already gave its authority to ballet and ballroom dancing.²⁰⁰ While *Natural Movement* deserves more attention for the contribution it made to the development of British dance as professional practice, my interest is to investigate how it might relate to the new ideas about health and gender for the everyday woman and her body that emerged in the early twentieth century: I am not aware of any other studies that take this perspective, to date.²⁰¹ I will begin my interrogation of how *Natural Movement* as a practice is designed with

²⁰⁰ See <https://www.istd.org/about-us/history/> for the history of *Natural Movement* as dance practice and as it is still enjoyed today.

²⁰¹ See Angela Carter, 'Constructing and Contesting the Natural in British Theatre Dance', pp. 16-30, in Angela Carter and Rachel Fensham (Eds.), *Dancing Naturally; Nature, Neo-Classicism and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Dance* (2011) for an account of the key movement principles of *Natural Movement*.

the body of the modern woman in mind and with a consideration of how this body might articulate the meanings and anxieties in the new cultures of the body in this period; an interrogation which continues in the following chapter. I continue to address Duncan's dance as I begin to consider the similarities and differences between Atkinson's *Natural Movement* system and the dance and ideas of Duncan, that inspired Atkinson. I interrogate how ideas of the natural and the primitive in neo Hellenism transform in a different way from Duncan's dance in Atkinson's movement system, and investigate how the neo Hellenic in *Natural Movement* is transformed into an investment in the health of female citizens in the modern city. This chapter closes with Atkinson's interpretation of Jane Harrison's model of the primitive society in Ancient Greece, and I investigate how this model relates to Atkinson's idea that primitive rhythms are available in the bodies of ancient and modern women.

The rhythms in the body of *Natural Movement*

The British city of Manchester is the location for *Natural Movement*, and the city, industrialisation and modernity provide the background context for the following investigation into *Natural Movement* and its pioneer innovator Madge Atkinson (1885-1970). As previously stated, I am interested in examining *Natural Movement* from the perspective of its civic and social domain in the everyday world, rather than as a new dance practice for dancers and teachers. In contrast to the fame of Isadora Duncan, little is known about Madge Atkinson and I begin this investigation with a brief biographical summary that will set Atkinson and her work in the context of the city of Manchester.²⁰²

²⁰² These biographical details are informed by (Carter, *Constructing and Contesting the Natural in British Theatre Dance* 2011).

Madge Atkinson (1885-1970) was born into a locally well-known theatrical family that closely associated with the *Gaiety Theatre* in Manchester and Atkinson began a career as a professional actress, until ill health and family circumstances forced her to rethink her career options. By 1918, when she opened her first school in *Natural Movement* in Manchester, Atkinson had developed a training system that took its inspiration from Isadora Duncan's dance and the new movement system of Jaques Dalcroze's Eurhythmics.²⁰³ In the late 1930's Atkinson open a new school in London and just prior to the outbreak of World War II she moved there to live (A. Carter 2011, 19-21). During this period Manchester had a vibrant and progressive theatrical community and Atkinson remained very involved with its epicentre, the *Gaiety Theatre*, which was under the directorship of the entrepreneurial Annie Horniman (1860-1937) and the collaborative collective of artists, designers, playwrights and authors who called themselves the *Unnamed Society*, which was attached to the *Gaiety* (Fensham 2015, 352).²⁰⁴ Because Atkinson's engagement with this vibrant theatrical and artistic community revolves around the many student dance productions she choreographed, productions which were designed by these artists and which she staged in Manchester's theatres, I do not include this aspect of *Natural Movement* for analysis.²⁰⁵ An awareness of Atkinson's relationship with Manchester's creative community does, however, provide the context in which she pioneered her innovative dance and movement system.

²⁰³ It is possible Atkinson personally experienced eurhythmics when the *London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics* opened in 1913. See also in chapter one here, how Rambert uses her experience of learning eurhythmics at the Dalcroze institute at Hellerau in Dresden from 1910, to help the Ballets Russes' dancers to accommodate the radical body forms in Nijinsky's choreography with the complex rhythms in the scores of his ballets, in their own body.

²⁰⁴ For more on the *Unnamed Society*, from the perspective of the modernist plays it presented, see the Introduction in Claire Warden's *Migrating Modernist Performance: British Theatrical Travels through Russia* (2016).

²⁰⁵ For more on Atkinson's ballet productions see (Johnstone and Atkinson 2011, 73-81).

My examination uses examples from primary source documents and it is very important to note that none of these documents are signed and are often undated. They are held in the Natural Movement (NM) archives at the National Resource Centre for Dance at the University of Surrey and these examples will be footnoted according to the archive referencing system thus: National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Ref: NM. As has been noted, Atkinson worked collaboratively and her most important collaborative relationship was with her pupil, friend and professional partner Anita Heyworth (1906-1991). Some of the documents are handwritten, others typed and some of the typed documents are also annotated, and because they are not signed or dated it is impossible to attribute authorship. With great respect to Heyworth I therefore ascribe Atkinson as author in the main, for ease and because she was the primary innovator.²⁰⁶ I consider these documents to be more than material evidence; they represent an embodiment of Atkinson's *Natural Movement* practice. They **are a haptic link with the past** as they have been handled and selected for archiving, chosen by Atkinson, and, in the case of the news items, she has gripped the scissors which cut out the article from the held newspaper glued it into the scrapbook which is now in the archives. Atkinson's physicality is imprinted on these materials and **as I touch and handle them, I sense her**. Therefore, they become embodied materialities in their own right and do not need tracking down where they otherwise originate. The following example from these archived materialities introduces *Natural Movement* and demonstrates how it is designed to be more than a dance practice.

²⁰⁶ In the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Natural Movement (NM) archive is a box of loose documents that variously advertise the *School of Natural Movement* Ref: NM/E/2/1/5. For more information on this vast archive, donated by Anita Heyworth in 1989, and which include over one thousand music scores, a collection of original costumes, two thousand photographs of dancers and performances, newspaper cuttings, posters and manuscripts see: <http://calmarchivecat.surrey.ac.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=NM&pos=14>.

NATURAL MOVEMENT AND ITS IDEALS

The old Hellenic civilisation knew well the basic fact that from derivatives of simple movement of daily action rose the higher forms of the Dance, giving definite powers of expression and joining a physical perfection to an innate appreciation of the sister arts.

The rhythmic sense is within us all, though often for the time stifled by the mechanical workings a modern age [...].

It is a system which, though in its outlines frankly owing much to Hellenic inspiration, yet has a highly scientific and modern form.

Natural Movement Dancing does not aim to produce Stage Dancers, except in the classical form. Its technique is not used in what is popularly described as "Stage Dancing." Its aim is to produce from its students a creative power, a knowledge and love of beautiful things, and a healthy body working to its highest efficiency [...].²⁰⁷

Natural Movement therefore is sourced from the same location as Duncan's dance, in the neo Hellenic which establishes as fact, that ancient Greek civilisations understood how the rhythms in simple movement enabled physical perfection. Yet unlike Duncan, it foregrounds the science in *Natural Movement* that will reconnect the modern body with this ancient physical perfection. Its aim goes beyond the creative power of dance; the *Natural Movement* body will be one of health and efficiency. Specifically, the body is figured as a modern machine of the mechanical modern age, which can be made highly efficient through the practice of *Natural Movement*. This efficiency will re-activate the rhythms in the machine-body, stilled by the modern age, bodily rhythms which have been innate since the original Hellenic civilisation. The dualities that are combined in the language of the leaflet – Hellenic/modern, rhythmic/mechanical, creative/efficient and natural/scientific – give clues as to the way Atkinson is thinking about the body in movement. She authorises the individual expression and love of beauty in the ancient Hellenic as the outcome of training up the body to optimum health and efficiency. The rationale of the

²⁰⁷The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/1/5.

aims in her *Natural Movement* practice, in this document, serves to reverse the process which Duncan sets out in the philosophy of her own dance. *Natural Movement* aims to produce a body that can access individual emotion, through efficient and healthy movement whereas Duncan cites mood (or emotion) as the activator which fires the motor for movement in her solar plexus. This reversal of process which Atkinson describes in the aims of *Natural Movement* has the initial effect of distancing Atkinson's practice from Duncan's dance. I will begin to test this distance as I examine how Atkinson developed *Natural Movement* and how it led to this statement of the aims and ideals in *Natural Movement* in the document cited above.²⁰⁸ On the back of this document is an address to apply for more information about how 'the carefully graded classes are held separately for children and adults in Manchester, and also in London', and this demonstrates how *Natural Movement* became a codified system of training, which started with the child.²⁰⁹ Therefore this document is probably designed for mothers of children as well as other young women and it is safe to assume that it is the later version of earlier advertising materials that would have been needed when Atkinson was planning her first school in Manchester in 1918. My thesis analysis now turns to the factors through which Atkinson developed her aims and ideals for a modern movement system, which would inspire and enable modern city children and young women to enjoy better health.

At the age of twenty-five, Atkinson began lessons in the dance of Isadora Duncan at Annea Spong's *School of Natural Movement* and she continued these lessons until the run up to the outbreak of War, in 1914 (Carter 2011,

²⁰⁸ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/1/5.

²⁰⁹ As the contact information is ascribed to an address in London, this dates the document to sometime towards the end of the 1930s when Atkinson moved from Manchester to London.

19).²¹⁰ This indicates that Spong had already identified the nature in Duncan's dance, that rested in the idea of the natural in her dance movements, and how Atkinson borrowed the naming of her new movement system from Spong. Spong was connected to Duncan's dance through Duncan's brother Raymond Duncan, who also taught Duncan's dance (Carter 2011, 19). Atkinson would also have been aware of Duncan's new interpretation of dance; she was gaining fame through her performances in London in 1900 and 1908.²¹¹ In addition, Atkinson was interested in Jaques Dalcroze's eurhythmic movement system that is so influential in the dance of this period, as already seen in the works of Vaslav Nijinsky in the first chapter. Atkinson's adoption of the relationship in eurhythmics between the expression of the rhythms in music through body movements, is evidenced in the concerts of dancing she presented during the War (Carter 2011, 19). These concerts were often staged to raise funds for various Red Cross hospitals and it is noteworthy that, between 1915 and 1917, she herself was a nurse in the Voluntary Medical Unit of the British Red Cross. I would suggest Atkinson's experience of the destructive effects of war on the human body and her commitment to staging *Natural Movement* to bring in funds for the War effort relate to the emphasis *Natural Movement* places on the health of the body and points to its particular relevance in the post and interwar period.

²¹⁰ The authoritative research undertaken by the dance historian Alexandra Carter into *Natural Movement*, was part of the *Pioneer Women: Early British Modern Dancers* project, 2008-2010 awarded to the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) in order to launch their archives, which included the *Natural Movement* donation, as available resources for future research. I therefore consult Carter's research frequently in this thesis.

²¹¹ While it is impossible to know whether Atkinson had attended any of these London performances; the two surviving theatre programmes of Isadora Duncan dancing at the *Prince of Wales Theatre* in London on 12 and 15 April 1921 in the NRCD archive do demonstrate Atkinson's continued interest in Isadora Duncan and her dance. The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/H/4/3/1,2.



Figure 2.8 Hand drawn, WW1 Programme cover for one of Madge Atkinson's concerts held in aid of the Disley Red Cross Hospital.²¹²

While Atkinson, during the War, was still developing *Natural Movement* as a system that will relate to all children and young women, she consulted research studies concerned with the idea of the Hellenic in dance movement, which were themselves contemporary revisions of the Greek ideal.²¹³ Two of the most influential works in the pre-war era were *The Antique Greek Dance: After Sculptured and Ancient Figures* (1896) by Maurice Emmanuel (the copy in the archives is the English translation published in 1916)²¹⁴ and *The Renaissance of the Greek Ideal* (1914) by Diana Watts.²¹⁵ Both works are still

²¹² Author's private collection.

²¹³ There are numerous reference works in the (NRCD) NM archives, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they were consulted by Atkinson during her development of *Natural Movement*.

²¹⁴ Maurice Emmanuel, *The Antique Greek Dance: After Sculptured and Ancient Figures* (1916), The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/B/875.

²¹⁵ Diana Watts: *The Renaissance of the Greek Ideal* (1914), The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/B/974.

considered by scholars to be of cultural significance as they are part of the material knowledge-base of ancient civilisation as it was understood at this time. This knowledge base was also informed by the model of primitive cultures developed by Jane Harrison during this period and I will explore the significance of Harrison's model in *Natural Movement* as Atkinson extends her understanding of Ancient Greece when she visits modern Greece in the 1920s.

The Antique Greek Dance is a large, scholarly output of Emmanuel's research into thousands of Greek paintings, sculptures, frescos and vase-art images and his methodology is to trace the ancient dance he sees in these ancient artefacts in the modern ballet dancer's dance. Her dance actions are captured by the photographic method of chrono-photography in the images that record each moment in a particular dance movement included in the book (Emmanuel 1916, Plates 11-V).²¹⁶ This methodology leads Emmanuel to conclude that so long as:

the anatomy of the body remains the same, the method of movements cannot alter, so that, fundamentally, the modern dance must obey the same laws as the antique dance (Emmanuel 1916, ix).

This is somewhat of a paradox when Duncan, Atkinson and all those who promote their own revived form of ancient Greek dance position them as more 'natural' practices of movement than ballet. Duncan for example purports her movements are based in empathy with the more innate alignments of the body, and rejects the artificially altered body in the ballet dancer. Emmanuel does however raise an interesting idea on ways to read the dancing images on the Greek vases. As the vase is turned, the separate movement forms can seem to cohere as a sequence of movements or dancing, which suggests the

²¹⁶ Also see the section on Muybridge and chrono-photography in this chapter, above.

antique vase painters may have been attempting to convey the motion in movement, as each image runs into the next as the vase turns. Narebout concludes that Emmanuel's research allows these vase painters to be read as the chronophotographers of movement in their own time and that they document 'dance in performative detail' (Narebout 2012, 45). I argue that this interpretation of the action which the early vase paintings record, which can then be animated as the vase turns, could also therefore be understood as a form of notation of early Greek dance.

For those modern dance and movement pioneers who embrace Emmanuel's theory, they are not recreating the lost dance of the ancients, they are inviting the modern body to recognise and revive the ancient which lies dormant. Atkinson conceptualises this latent, ancient movement as lying still in the body as 'the rhythmic sense is within us all' though 'stifled by the mechanical workings of a modern age'.²¹⁷ She is therefore identifying modernity as the stifling cause for these ancient rhythmical movements remaining still in all modern bodies. Atkinson's understanding that there is some connection in the body with early movement connects with the embodied methodology dancers engage as they learn dance originally created over one hundred years before. In this methodology, the current dance-body learns the dance from the previous generation and so on, back to the original dancer who worked with the choreographer. The idea here is that the trained body recognises the essentials in the dance forms and the mind learns the unique qualities in the historic dance. Similarly, Emmanuel can claim that first century BC dance movement can be seen in the modern ballet dancer, and Duncan and Atkinson can believe that ancient rhythmic movement lies embodied in the modern

²¹⁷ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/1/5.

body. The materiality of Atkinson's engagement with Emmanuel's ideas is suggested in the marginalia of her copy of *The Antique Greek Dance*.²¹⁸ One annotated paragraph in her copy of the book is an example of how the rationale of the modern scientific age, rationalises the ancient past in Emmanuel's theory:

The golden age of Greek sculpture, the fifth century BC, is the richest of all in really scientific representations of the dance; the figures attaining a splendid freedom of movement (Emmanuel 1916, xii).

In the Greek revival of the modern age, ancient sculpture is understood to present all Greeks inhabiting bodies that move with splendid freedom; movement which Emmanuel, Atkinson and others analyse as dance, scientifically represented. Emmanuel also 'meticulously cross-referenced gestures and positions of the body [...] with passages from poetry and drama' (Albright 2012, 69).²¹⁹ This aspect in *The Antique Greek Dance* was so influential in the forming of ideas about Hellenic movement that Ann Cooper Albright speculates whether Raymond Duncan (who taught Duncan's dance to Spong who then teaches it to Duncan), and his sister-in-law Eva Palmer-Sikelianos had access to it (Albright 2012, 69).²²⁰ Palmer-Sikelianos' epic reconstructions of Greek Tragedy in the open air, ancient theatre at Delphi in the late 1920's, the Margaret Morris Movement and the Revived Greek Dance

²¹⁸ As previously stated, there are no signatures alongside these marginalia. I therefore make the assumption that they are Atkinson's in the absence of any other evidence. I cite the annotated paragraph in Atkinson's copy in the archive here in The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: (NM/B/875 p. xii). I also have a copy of *Antique Greek Dance*, published in the same year as the book in the Archive and I have cited the same paragraph in the body of my thesis so that others can find it more easily.

²¹⁹ See (Albright 2012, 66-72) for more on Palmer-Sikelianos and the Greek Chorus.

²²⁰ The influence of *The Antique Greek Dance* continued well into the twentieth century in various dance *genres*; Fredrick Ashton, one the century's most influential choreographers, consulted this work while devising the choreography for his ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* in 1951, (Bannerman 2012, 274).

of Ruby Ginner, all start in the gesture motifs that Emmanuel identifies in ancient Greek artefacts. Whether interested to reproduce the gestures seen on ancient Greek vases as exemplar of ancient Greek drama, or to recognise the idea of the movement in these ancient artefacts in the modern of movement forms as does Atkinson, all found authenticity in *The Antique Greek Dance*.

While Atkinson's personal copy of Diana Watts': *The Renaissance of the Greek Ideal* does not bear any marginalia, the title defines the contemporary trend that modern scholars now describe as neo or new Hellenism. The idea that the modern era could re-birth the ideals of Ancient Greece through actions in the modern body, does capture the essence of what the new movement pioneers were creating. Duncan, Emmanuel, Atkinson and Watts were investigating the iconography in ancient Hellenism for explanations as to how they actioned movement, so as to give them re-birth in the modern body. Watts rationalises the movement forms in ancient Greek iconography through learning how her own body accommodates the forms she is copying. In so doing, she comes to the opposite conclusion from Emmanuel; the beautiful, athletic Ancient Greek body was modified and honed to perfection and this modification began in childhood:

We have no grounds for thinking that the Greek baby was different from any other baby, but every reason for thinking that the Greek mother was responsible for its eventual development, more especially for the way in which it stood and walked (Watts 1914, 9).

Describing 'One vase in the British Museum' which depicts a baby 'with a trainer behind it' crawling towards its mother whose hands are outstretched, Watts decides the baby is being trained to crawl in a straight line towards the

mother, and because 'the baby's eyes are fixed on the mother, the baby is learning to hold the heavy head on the correct axis with the spine' (Watts 1914, 10). She further suggests that the baby's innate crawling action is therefore remodelled so as to form the body in optimum alignment and balance, and when the baby learns to stand, the natural alignment of the foot is trained into the parallel alignment with the centre of gravity over the ball of the foot.

The form of the Greek foot is totally different from that of a modern foot [...] It has practically ceased to exist, but so great is the power of predestined form, that, in spite of years of distortion, Nature if given a chance, will repair to an incredible degree all human errors of this type (Watts 1914, 11).

Watts is concluding that the modern body has lost touch with the ancient 'learned', rather than the natural rhythmic body that Emmanuel sees in the modern ballet-body and Duncan searches for in her dance-body. These examples demonstrate the central theme in neo Hellenism which sees a loss of connection with ancient Greek ideals in the modern world and how the new movement and dance makers search, through their own body, for ways to reconnect with the perfection in Hellenic movement. Emmanuel theorises that ancient movement remains in the ballet-body and Watts argues that the modern body can relearn the learned ancient Greek strength and balance in movement. All agree that the 'form of the Greek foot' is exemplar of the natural alignment in the neo-Hellenic idea of natural dance and movement.

Watts argues that the training in the ancient Greek body developed the ideal equilibrium in the muscles which then maintained ' a condition that rendered the whole body master of itself on the instant' (Watts 1914, 21). Watts is conceiving the ancient body as having agency here and she sees the central

condition that enabled the body to maintain a perfect equilibrium as resting, seemingly paradoxically, in complete tension, which Watts defines as elasticity (Watts 1914, 21). Watts draws a connection between the stretch in muscle tensions and the stress (in the language of technology) as being comparable forces of energy; the stress of gas in a machine causes it to move forward and the stress in muscle tension causes action in the human body (Watts 1914, 21-23). Watts demonstrates how modern scientific understandings about the body and technical advances in the making of machines often elide as the early twentieth-century new dance and movement makers try to make sense of what they see in ancient movement and how they can apply it in the modern body. Atkinson's theory of *Natural Movement*, which I examined above (NM/E/2/1/5), does appear to combine certain aspects from each of these texts; Emmanuel's identification of movement in ancient vase painting and Watt's understanding of this ancient body in modern technological terms. I now investigate if, and how, Atkinson combines these ideas with those in Duncan's new dance and if she does, how it manifests in the fundamental techniques of *Natural Movement*. This begins in an explanation of the 'natural' in *Natural Movement*

In a sense it is quite sound to call the natural dance "Greek" for we are taking the ideals of a wonderful people, a people who truly expressed their thoughts through the dance, for they "spoke" in movement. We, who live in the twentieth century must gain what we can from these past glories, yet make our dance for to-day, the natural outcome of our feeling. So it is that I would call it "natural" rather than "Greek."²²¹

²²¹ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/1. The notion of movement and dance as a pre-textual vehicle for the expression of thought, is a profound idea not only for modern dance practitioners, but also for those modernist poets and classical scholars of the period, who were influenced by recent archaeological and anthropological discoveries. These revealed the primacy of the dance in Greek Tragedy and brought this into focus for modernist writers and dance practitioners of the period. The classics' scholar Jane Harrison caused a paradigm shift in the reception of Greek Tragedy and her work profoundly influenced Atkinson; see further in the section on her article *Delphi and the Dance*. See also my introduction to Harrison in the Introduction chapter above.

The natural in the name *Natural Movement* therefore identifies the system as differing from other so-called Greek dance practices of the period, dissociates it from Duncan's dance which, as has been noted, was often described as Greek dance and identifies that *Natural Movement* is made in the modern of today. At the same time, the 'natural outcome of feeling' of which the Ancient Greeks spoke or, in Duncan's (and Schwartz's) terms, released through dancing movement will be enabled through the modern in *Natural Movement*. The release of the natural outcome of feeling through the moving body does sound very similar to Duncan's theories. Duncan is the dancer who performs her own dance that can be learned by others, as Atkinson does through Spong. Atkinson's *Natural Movement* begins in a taught system of movement that can produce dancers but at the centre, it will enable all the bodies, whether dancer or quotidian, to express the 'natural outcome of feeling', through movement.

Students are instructed in rhythmic health exercises in such a way that the body becomes an instrument of beauty as well as power, moving with the grace which comes from the most effective and yet most economical effort.²²²

This statement reflects how Atkinson, possibly influenced by Watts, visualises the body as an instrument of efficient, economic power and establishes that the rhythmic health of the body is the central concern of *Natural Movement*. Having learned the theory and practice of Duncan's dance in the pre-war years, Atkinson likely adds aspects of the movement theories in *Antique Greek Dance* and *The Renaissance of the Antique Greek Dance* during the War years as she readies to launch her *School of Natural Movement* in Manchester in 1918. Although *Natural Movement* is described as dance, the tenor seems

²²² The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/1/5.

to be shifting from dance to exercise, exercise that conceives the grace, rhythm and beauty in the body as power. The body in *Natural Movement* is a powerful instrument working effectively. This body is individual and depersonalised, the modern city body. Atkinson's *Natural Movement* starts in the action of movement, not with the feeling or mood as the trigger for movement, as in Duncan's dance. Atkinson's process is grounded in instruction rather than intuitive action, so that the body is strengthened; Atkinson is inscribing a health consciousness into *Natural Movement*:

Though beauty of movement is no longer instinctive it can be attained by all ages through the scientific training provided by Natural Movement [...] From the point of view of 'physical culture', Natural Movement has been recommended by doctors. Every movement has been carefully thought out and severely tested.²²³

Here, Atkinson frames her practice in the paradigm of the Physical Culture movement which extended across America, Europe, Britain and the Colonies.

With the deep interest that the New Modernist Studies invests in the body in modernism, I argue that the body in *Natural Movement* offers a key, early-twentieth-century site through which to address the narrative of the body as it was formed for the British quotidian woman, within the paradigm of the global Physical Culture paradigm. The perceived crisis of modernity impacting on individual mental and physical health, the rise in poverty, and the slaughter of War and its aftermath drew modern sport, gymnastics, modern dance and movement practices into a relationship with the medical sciences in the anxious search for a cure to the crisis. The modern

²²³ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/1/5.

Physical Culture movement references the original physical culture in the Olympics in Ancient Greece, made modern through the logic of science and the medical profession. Atkinson's standardised movement technique could adapt to this need as it teaches children and young women how to build a healthy body through rhythmic movements which release the inner spirit.

Positioning Atkinson's *Natural Movement* within the physical culture frame, rather than simply as a system of new dance movement (which is its more usual position) allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex cultural background within which Atkinson developed her system. The crisis in modernity to which the physical culture paradigm responds contextualises contemporary conceptualisations of *Natural Movement* as an educational system of movement for schoolchildren. Atkinson had a collaborative colleague in Manchester's education system, Mary Anderson Johnstone (Carter 2011, 74). An educationalist influenced by the ideals of neo Hellenism, Johnstone researched various contemporary physical culture systems for one that was designed for the young modern girl, and in *The Physical Training of Girls* (1924) she recommends *Natural Movement* as the best movement system for young girls. Johnstone's recommendation led to the Manchester Education Authority's inclusion of *Natural Movement* in the school curriculum 'which filtered through Manchester schools until the late 1930s' (Carter 2011, 21). One of Johnstone's main concerns was the ill-shape of modern girls' feet that represented a more general fear of female degeneration. In the case of young girls' malformed feet, the degenerative effects of modernity were caused, argues Johnstone, by seductive modern shoe fashions.

In my opinion, Miss Atkinson's programme would deserve attention if it were for nothing but the supreme importance attached to the care of

feet. [...] Modern fashion at present maltreats no part of the body as scandalously as it does the foot. [...] It was a revelation to me to see in what a large proportion of girls of twelve years of age the feet are already deformed (Johnstone 1924, 66).

Further, she perceives the weakening effects of modern shoe fashions in social hygiene terms; weak feet lead to the slumping spine posture which risks the healthy development of internal organs. Johnstone may well have been inspired by the Bronze figure of a 'Spartan Girl Running' (c.6th century BC) in the British Museum. This figure (Figure 2.9) shows the strong thigh muscle where the tunic is lifted, firm arms and a well-developed foot as the Figure represents the girl as she pushes off from the ground on her right foot. Of course, the proportions are incorrect and the wonderful torque in the upper body as it faces front, while the pelvis and legs face to the side, is physically impossible, while the lower section of the left leg has been replaced and also looks odd. The aesthetic in the Figure is powerfully confident never the less. It stands as representative of Johnston's following sentiment, that the ideal in ancient Greek physical culture is found in the Spartan girl who was 'reared expressly to be the mother of soldiers' (Johnstone 1924, 5). By implication then, the modern girls in Manchester Central High School will be made healthy through *Natural Movement* – which strengthens their body, from their feet to the top of their spine – and will thus be fit enough to produce the next generation of Britain's soldiers.



Figure 2.9. Bronze figure of a Spartan running girl c. 6th century BC in the British Museum.²²⁴

Renowned for their forceful independence, neo Hellenism summoned the women of Sparta as the model for the New Woman of the early twentieth century (Macintosh 2011, 44).

²²⁴ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spartan_Woman_Runner.jpg.

This framing of the modern female body in terms of her biological destiny, that Johnstone identifies here through the invocation of the Spartan woman, becomes a central discourse in the rhythmic movement collective of the late 1920s and 1930s and is a key aspect in my interrogation of these female movement systems, which include *Natural Movement*, in the next chapter. Johnstone's *The Physical Training of Girls* contains a long section on 'The Physical Culture in Ancient Greece' (Johnstone 1924, 2-6) and 'The Principles of Greek Balances; Mrs. Diana Watts' (Johnstone 1924, 75-86). With Johnstone's concern about the health of the modern girl, Atkinson's system of movement designed for the modern woman and Watts' attention to the balance in the working body – all referenced through ideals in Ancient Greek culture and made modern for the twentieth century – the neo-Hellenist approach to the female body is clear, as is the depth of concern over modernity's capacity for damage in the modern body. Atkinson and Johnstone rationalise the irrational through optimistic new models of movement and they are both influential women in their locality and their lived experience in the city of Manchester.

The ideals in the *Natural Movement* body

The image below (Figure 2.10) suggests how the optimism in *Natural Movement's* neo-Hellenic response to the crisis in modernity might manifest in Manchester's young women, as these female students take a *Natural Movement* pose from *A Dance of Spring*. The tableau these young women form, is reminiscent of ancient Greek art. They seem naturally relaxed yet monumental, as if an embodied classical sculpture. They pose in the outside setting of a large garden or park against a backdrop composition of mature shrubs and trees, and they are standing on grass.²²⁵ They are stilled, for a

²²⁵ The descriptive 'young women' or 'dancers' are intentionally alternated in this analysis to depict the sense that their status is not that clear; in *The Dancing Times* it would be assumed

moment, in their *Dance of Spring*, a moment that carries the momentum of movement in the flow of their costumes. They have bare feet, legs and arms and are clothed in softly draped fabric styled on the Greek chiton. One is dressed in dark fabric, the other pale, as if they reflect two sides of the same form or idea of natural grace. The chiton is transparent enough for the viewer to understand that the women are wearing undergarments made of similar fabric; their bare legs reach the undergarment at the top of the thigh. The hair of the darkly-robed young woman, whose body is facing the camera, is unbound and cut in the short, bobbed, fashionable style of the period. Her partner in pale robes has her back to the camera; her bobbed hair is adorned by a soft headband worn close to the forehead in the front and tied round the base of the head at the back. Neither young woman is looking into the camera, nor are they looking at each other. Each has their weight on the standing leg with the other softly draped behind it, with just the toes touching the ground. They both lean slightly back with their upper body weight lifted up and behind the centre of their pelvis and turned at a slight angle to their hips. Their right arms are lifted to shoulder height and are extended to the side, with one young woman holding soft elbows and wrists; the other holds an overextended elbow form in her right arm. Their left arms are lifted towards their heads, with elbows more relaxed and the fingers almost touching those of their partner. The head of the young woman whose body faces the camera is lifted and poised toward her raised arm and partner. The head of the young woman in pale robes is lifted and poised towards her extended arm; she is looking away from her partner. They seem caught in a still moment during a dance with each other. While they are not actually touching each other, they

that they are dance students but when used in a newspaper it could be more ambiguous as to whether they are everyday young women who take *Natural Movement* classes or mature dance students who are at performance level.



Figure 2.10. A Dance of Spring c. 1924, Reproduced with kind permission from the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey.²²⁶

offer two parts of a whole, they have a body awareness of each other; a shared kinaesthetic. The facial expression of the young woman whose body faces the camera is open to the camera lens, but it is internalised, her expression is not for the benefit of the spectator, she is not looking or smiling for the lens. Even though her partner can only be seen from the back, she too seems in the same, internalised state, and there is no attempt in her body frame to stretch her head towards the camera. Their interiority expresses ‘the

²²⁶ Professional photographic study in *Natural Movement*, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/F/3/1/3/1a. This photograph was reproduced in the *Daily Sketch* newspaper on June 7th 1924, with the caption “CULTIVATING BEAUTY OF MOVEMENT in the Open Air – A Dance of Spring.” This newspaper cutting is in The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/M/5.

natural outcome of feeling' in *Natural Movement*. Thus, these young women embody the Hellenic inspiration in their healthy instruments of beauty and creative power of *Natural Movement*, and their pose achieves all the aims Atkinson describes in the literature for her exercise system. These young women have worked hard, physically and mentally, and such work involves bringing the body, mind and spirit into union. This union is the concept of the holistic body and *Natural Movement* could therefore be described as a holistic practice. My own body-centred reading of the bodies in this pose demonstrates how these young women reach the active stillness in their pose, which visually echoes the forms in the ancient Greek era, through a body which is sculpted through modern scientific understandings about how the internal body actions movement forms. My reading emphasises how they express 'the natural outcome of feeling' that is central in the ideals of *Natural Movement* and which, I would further argue, manifests the modernist concept of the Moment of Being, first addressed in the analysis of Nijinsky's *Faune* as it relates to Mallarmé's concept of the sublime.²²⁷ This analysis firmly locates the *Natural Movement* body in the neo-Hellenic paradigm of the early twentieth-century.

Atkinson's *Natural Movement* both links and breaks with Duncan's dance. Duncan danced the narrative of the continuum in natural expression over millennia and challenged the hierarchical binary which upheld the male as the cultural authority and assigned the female to the arena of the natural and biological. In this challenge, as Farfan argues, Duncan seized the essential corporeality of the female dancer to invert this usual hierarchy (Farfan 2004,

²²⁷ See (Jones 2013, 3) with regard to the notion of the inadequacy of language, when compared to dance movement, to capture the imagined sublime for such authors as T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. See also chapter three in this thesis for further analysis of this concept.

104).²²⁸ If Duncan's dance articulated her feminist project, her dance-body was consistently objectified in contemporary critique, and if her dance style paved the way for the presentation of *Natural Movement* in concerts of dance and movement on the Manchester stage, her personal reputation and the sexuality in her feminist project found no place in Atkinson's carefully crafted scientific, rhythmic movement system. The *Dance of Spring* pose in Figure 2.10 achieves the modern sculpted female body in the expression of the natural outcome of feeling in *Natural Movement's* aesthetic. There is a complete absence of the sexual energy that characterises Duncan's posed body. Duncan's dance began in the body of the woman and the bodies in *A Dance of Spring* do pose the weight of de-personalised, cultural authority in their highly trained, modern presentation of ideal womanhood. However, while Duncan conceives her dance and the expression of the modern woman, the sculpted bodies in *A Dance of Spring* exhibit the end result of a training process that begins in the body of the child. This may be the defining difference in the approach which Duncan and Atkinson take as they both embrace ancient Greek ideals in the modern of their dance and movement practices. The following extracts from the oral history of two former pupils who became teachers of *Natural Movement*, Jean Kelly (1928) and Helen Phroso Pfister (1922-2013), animate the texts of Atkinson's *Natural Movement* through their embodied experience. They tell how Atkinson liked to begin her training in the growing body and mind of the young child. From the first lesson, children learned the liberating sense of freedom through walking and running steps in any direction of their choice, whether outside in the open air or inside a large room. As the child (more usually a girl) grew older, Atkinson developed a sense in each individual of when the whole body was in natural alignment. She emphasised the

²²⁸ See also (Daly 1992) for this feminist reading of Isadora Duncan and her dance.

requirement to build up strength in the limbs and torso in her classes, particularly through the muscles in the feet. Jean Kelly remembered some of the technicalities:



Figure 2.11. Children performing Natural Movement c. 1924. Reproduced with kind permission from the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey.²²⁹

We have this action, we do stand on the ball of the foot but we do a tremendous amount of rising through the ball of the foot [...] then not only just rising through the ball of the foot but going up and then lowering the heel down, and not just on two feet but on one foot. So that is really quite difficult to do [...] takes not only strength but skill [...] and concentration. The thing is that we have a relaxed foot, if you look on Greek vases [...] you quite often will see that the foot isn't in what the ballet world would call a strong *dégagé* with the foot stretched out, but the arch is braced [while] the toes of the foot are in a relaxed position.²³⁰

²²⁹ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/F/3/1/1/3.

²³⁰ Oral History, Transcription of Interview by Professor Angela Carter with Jean Kelly, 21 October 2008, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref; PW/OH/1/1, p. 8.

Kelly here is explaining exactly what it was in *Natural Movement*'s attention to the health of the foot which so appealed to Johnstone, in Johnstone's own concern over the damaged feet she saw in young city girls. It is also interesting how the aesthetic of the 'braced arch' seen on 'Greek vases' is the foundational form which supports the body in *Natural Movement*'s technique. Belilove mentions this is a signature aesthetic in Duncan's travelling steps and posed balances, and it would be represented on some of the vase images in *Antique Greek Dance*. **Kelly's embodied description of the technique required to develop the 'relaxed foot if you look on Greek vases' demonstrates the training behind the natural appearance in the signature motif of the articulated foot in neo-Hellenic movement. As this training to develop the neo-Hellenic foot takes place as the foot makes contact with the earth (or grass or classroom floor) it does more than touch the earth, it grounds the body in the nature of the earth and in the temporalities as they shift, through the foot, between the ancient and the new in the Hellenic. Thus, this foot can also be read as the 'poster boy' of the haptic in *Natural Movement*, just as I argued for the ballet-foot in Nijinsky's modernist triptych to be considered as the haptic of ballet modernism in chapter one.**

Pfister draws attention to the exercises for the hands in *Natural Movement*:

You put the hands together and remove the top and bottom and leave the cushiony bits [...] and then these hand-waves in which the two lots of cushions on your hands went towards each other and away, and that takes a lot of teaching.²³¹

²³¹ Oral History, Transcription of Interview by Professor Angela Carter with Helen Phrosso Pfister, 21 October 2008, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: PW/OH/1/2, pp. 4-5.

As the cushions in the hands come together and move away from each other in this exercise, there is a slight pushing together of the fingers before the palms come away. The dynamic in this little push enables a lightness in the hands which Pfister describes as 'hand-waves'. As 'hand-waves' they become symbolic of the waves in nature, another strong connection with Duncan's philosophy:

If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature, we find that the dance of the future is the dance of the past [...] the movement of waves, of winds of the earth is ever in the same lasting harmony (Cheney (1928), 1969, 10).

It would be difficult for children to isolate the parts of the hand in this way but it is clearly essential that, through practice, children would need to learn how to relax the tensions in the hand in order to allow the hands to express meaning.

This discussion of the hand exercise linking to the expression of meaning in the nature and the movement of waves, is reminiscent of Garrington's interpretation of the somatic in the body through the poster-boy of the haptic, the hand:

The activity of self-touching, approximating to the gesture of prayer, results in [the] important observation [...] that the body's fleshiness [...] may be subject to [...] the spirit [...] be[ing] reinserted [...] in order for it to become the animate, active toucher (Garrington 2015, 28).

Kelly and Pfister recount the detail in *Natural Movement* that builds strong feet, legs, arms and hands as the body feels the ground, and connects in a physical and spiritual sense with the nature of the ground and the nature in the body, which further strengthens the body. Pfister further demonstrates how *Natural Movement* works strength without tension into the body:

A well poised, natural stance in which the body is carried without strain or tension [...] I think that the particular of gravity, I don't think anybody's ever said this before, is something I always noticed about Natural Movement. We did a lot of extended movements which gave it [the body] a kind of breathing quality, that I have never seen in other things in quite the same way.²³²

Pfister is remembering how the connection between the breath and uplift in the torso was, for her, a unique aspect of *Natural Movement* and this is demonstrated in the gravitational uplift in the upper back in the young women in a *Dance of Spring* (Figure 2.10). The sense of gravity in the ground and consciousness of the breath has been noted previously in Duncan's dance, another aspect which does link the two dance and movement practices:

The basic thing is [...] the poise of the head, the nice natural easy stance of the body, and the technique of simple movements of the spine, so that the body is an instrument to be used expressively, the sense of poise, the sense of balance, a sense of stillness as well, all came together in this form of dance.²³³

This last quotation from Kelly beautifully describes those aspects in *Natural Movement* which I have analysed from texts; how the *Natural Movement* body is in the balance of relaxed tension, which allows the body to be both in stilled and active movement and most notably, how the *Natural Movement* body is conceived as an instrument of expression. The students in *Natural Movement* in Figure 2.12 also demonstrate all the technical points that Kelly and Pfister describe. They are outside on the grass in bare feet and unrestricted clothing.

²³² Oral History, Transcription of Interview by Professor Angela Carter with Helen Phrosso Pfister, 21 October 2008, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: PW/OH/1/2, pp. 3-4.

²³³ Oral History, Transcription of Interview by Professor Angela Carter with Jean Kelly, 21 October 2008, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: PW/OH/1/1, pp.7-8.



Figure 2.12. Students in *Natural Movement* c. 1924. This group features Anita Heyworth. Reproduced with kind permission from the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey.²³⁴

They demonstrate the relaxed foot with the braced arch, the strong open hand, the extended movement through the whole body, the strong back, the balance between the outstretched limbs and the head and the overall poise. They embody relaxed effort. They also demonstrate the spiral and torsion in the torso so fundamentally recognised by Watts and central to Schwartz's theory. As they are holding props they are probably in rehearsal for a performance or

²³⁴ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/F/3/1/3/2.

demonstration. They represent the achievement of all that *Natural Movement* aspires to develop. These students also represent the more privileged constituency in Atkinson's idealistic and realist project which also looked beyond those students in her *School of Natural Movement* and the schoolgirls in Johnstone's High School, to the children and adults who lived in the poorer districts of the city and in particular those children living in Manchester's slum areas:

little slum children who have been pupils of one of my teachers for 6 or 7 years [...] many of these children have grown up and have gone into business and have joined the night schools. The growth of this branch has been a great joy to me, for those children have come from the slums and enjoy their dancing.²³⁵

Clearly Atkinson considers *Natural Movement* in terms of social mobility and education. Slum children are not only brought the joy of dance through healthy exercise, but the experience empowers some to educate themselves out of poverty as young adults, at night school. The shocking extent of the poverty in Manchester during the 1920's is made clear in the following article from the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper in 1926:

Two or three hundred little children of Ancoats go by special [tram] cars each morning to their holiday resort in West Didsbury [...] our fashionable Manchester suburb. [...] we have never known it as those children do [...] better class children often stand and stare at the gambols of the Ancoats picnickers lively as puppies in the ecstasy of green grass. At midday a hot two-course dinner is provided for the children [...] This year's holiday school has finished, but its bills are not all paid. We have told of some 250 happy children but there are nearly 20,000 elementary schoolchildren in Ancoats. When we have made our decision between seaside breezes and the splendour of mountain heights, these little ones pass their time in stifling kitchens or

²³⁵ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/3.

dirty entries. We want to increase our school next year. We want more help.²³⁶

This newspaper article graphically describes the class divide in the city and hopes to shame the privileged classes – who live in the suburbs and take gorgeous annual holidays – into providing support for Manchester’s Ancoats social initiative, rather than standing and staring at the poor. The gambolling children, boys and girls, are dancing *Natural Movement* on the grass, already noted as the best environment for strengthening the body, especially the feet, by Johnstone and Atkinson.²³⁷ This article makes the link between poor environment, poor health and poverty very clear. It offers a dystopian snapshot of an industrialised city environment together with a utopian solution in Atkinson’s scientific movement method. It has already been established above that *Natural Movement* was being adopted across the elementary school system at this time, and these holiday schools would have allowed the children from the slums to enjoy *Natural Movement* in the open air, rather than the classroom.

With *Natural Movement* well established in Manchester and serving the social spectrum of communities in the city, Atkinson and Johnstone took a visit to modern Greece to discover Delphi, the heart of the Ancient Greek world. They co-authored an article which records their visit published in the August and September issues of the *Dancing Times* in 1925, with the title 'Delphi and the

²³⁶ *A Holiday School – Making Children Happy* by H.C.B, Manchester Guardian, 14 August 1926, The National Resource centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/M/5. The date is hand-written above this news cutting. This and other newspaper cuttings in the NM archives describe how these holiday schools ran for three weeks during the school summer holidays. The children, the youngest aged two and the eldest fourteen, also had classes in arts and crafts; all boys and girls learned *Natural Movement*. All activities were held in the open air when possible. The first of the summer schools was in 1922.

²³⁷ For the other news cuttings that report on *Natural Movement* in the Ancoats Summer Schools, see The National Resource centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/M/5.

Dance' (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925). Above this title is a contemporary photograph, taken by one of the women, showing a barren landscape in which, the ruins of the original gymnasium can be seen. This would no doubt help readers to imagine the scene in a part of the world few would have had the means to visit, in 1925.²³⁸ The lengthy article begins in a text-picture of Delphi as the women first see it. They describe a small site, two thousand feet up in 'mountain-compassed, sky-domed isolation' (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925, 1151). Readers are then taken back to the early primitive world as the authors contextualise ancient Delphi as one small village among many:

The dwellers of old Pytho toiled as now. The dread of famine was often with them [...] When their autumn crops were harvested, when in spring the seeds were committed to the earth the little village gathering would find in movement relief for its emotions. Back and forth would pace the solemn little bands, faces raised in piteous entreaty, arms flung forth in instinctive gestures of longing or despair; they were dancing – the natural dance of primitive passionate movement [...] As yet man was calling on no god (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925, 1152).

The style of the text in this early section of the article seems to reflect Atkinson as seen in the documents quoted above, rather than Johnstone's style in *Physical Training*. This extract is full of emotional responses through instinctive primitive action described in a pre-religious era. 'Delphi and the Dance' describes the earliest primitive past, long before dancing was organised in ritual honour of created Gods and Goddesses. The gestures in their pre-ritualised dancing did not plead to prevent the necessary sacrifice for Spring's re-birth as demanded by these imagined deities of later primitive societies; the period which Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* evokes for modern audiences in 1913 for example. I suggest it is this period that the young women in *Natural*

²³⁸Jean Kelly remembers Atkinson talking inspiringly, about her visits to Greece: 'The sort of thought of us ever going to Greece on holiday was unheard of, so this was wonderful that there was this lady who had been to Greece and seen all these things.' Oral History, Transcription of Interview by Professor Angela Carter with Jean Kelly, 21 October 2008, The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: PW/OH/1/1, p. 12.

Movement's Dance of Spring tableau (Figure 2.10) are intended to recall and thus the tableau epitomises Atkinson's interpretation of the pre-ritual, primitive dance as it gives thanks to the arrival of spring, described above. Atkinson's understanding that these little village groups danced their feelings without any organisation seems particularly relevant as she relates to the idea of the instinctive in dancing in very early primitive societies in her theory of *Natural Movement*. In the remainder of the article, the authors trace the journey from pre-ritual primitivism through to the organised, cultured and ranked civilisation of 500 BC when Delphi, with a theatre, gymnasium and sacred temple, became the centre of culture. I would argue that while many of the forms in the artistic representation of the body and the aesthetic in the style in *Natural Movement* call on this cultural period in the Hellenic era, it is the instinctive in the early primitive dance movements which establishes the philosophy of the natural in Atkinson's taught practice. As the authors in 'Delphi and the Dance' start to describe the period from when 'man created gods for himself' through to 500BC in lengthy detail they acknowledge that 'the whole story has been wonderfully worked out by Miss J.E. Harrison in her *Themis*' (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925, 1152).²³⁹ It is noteworthy that Jane Harrison is credited in this article, and I contend that Atkinson profoundly connects with the primitive pre-religious cultures before Harrison's 'story' in *Themis* begins in 'Delphi and the Dance', as she and Johnstone walk in the ruins of ancient Delphi. It is, I argue, the connection with the community in the pre-religious cultures of the ancient past that Atkinson describes as 'the natural outcome of feeling' in *Natural Movement*.²⁴⁰ What is important to note here is that neither I nor the readers of this article in 1925 need a deep knowledge of *Themis* to read 'Delphi and the

²³⁹ See Introduction for the analysis of the Jane Harrison model of the primitive in ancient Greek society.

²⁴⁰ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD), Ref: NM/E/2/3/1.

Dance' and follow the story of how Ancient Greek cultures move towards ranked and organised societies, as Harrison interprets them. Rather we need to understand what Atkinson, in particular, was taking from this interpretation and why she might want to write about it. I would suggest the visit to Delphi reinforces Atkinson's existing commitment to offer *Natural Movement* to all social divisions in the city of Manchester, and *Natural Movement* can therefore be read as a movement in social process that offers physical and mental renewal to the city as a community. Atkinson authenticates her own theories about dance and movement for the modern day in 'Delphi and the Dance', by giving credit to Harrison's *Themis* for 'the whole story' of how, when and where 'dancing naturally' began, whether or not *Themis* covers pre-religious primitivism. Furthermore, Harrison brought an added academic authority to the foundations of Atkinson's *Natural Movement* in the article and, as Johnstone is the co-author, Johnstone also brings that authority. In the accreditations at the bottom of the second section of the article, the editor of the *Dancing Times*, Phillip Richardson (1875-1963) acknowledges Johnstone as the 'Head of the Central High School for Girls in Manchester' and 'the author of *Physical Training for Girls*' (1924) (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925, 1241). The existing respect for Atkinson's work is represented in the final editorial acknowledgement that simply states: 'Miss Madge Atkinson's name is too well known to our readers to need any comment' (Atkinson and Johnstone 1925, 1241).

Even though Atkinson's *Natural Movement* had received accreditation in the Association of Teachers of Dance in 1923, along with her contemporary Ruby Ginner's (1886-1978) *Revived Greek Dance*, Atkinson had not yet published a monograph about her work. In the absence of this, the inclusion of references to Harrison's academic work in the article and the fact that the co-author of

'Delphi and the Dance' was the Head of an academic school, can only have enhanced Atkinson's standing in the dance community. That they visit the ancient site of Delphi with Jane Harrison's *Themis* is also an example of how Harrison's ideas about the origins of dance link Duncan, Atkinson and Johnstone in neo Hellenic ideas about the origins of movement. As noted above, Harrison had accompanied Duncan through the rooms of Greek antiquity in the British Museum at the turn of the century.

My analysis of 'Delphi and the Dance' argues how Atkinson's idea that *Natural Movement* enabled 'the natural outcome of feeling' was framed in neo-Hellenic understandings of the pre-religious primitive in Ancient Greece. As Atkinson conceptualises primitive movement to be lying still in the modern body as a rhythmic sense – a concept which I frame in the notion of the body as the archive of movement – Atkinson, like Duncan, conceives the primitive in the modern body to action the release of 'natural feeling' for Atkinson, and 'the soul' for Duncan. By highlighting the pre-textual, pre-religious physical response to nature in primitive society as the point of reference for the release of inner expression in *Natural Movement*, I draw attention to the pre-religious primitivism which is less often represented in academic studies of the neo Hellenic in the new dance and movement in the early twentieth-century. The frenzied and passionate drama in the dance and chorus of ritualized primitive societies, especially as they reference Nietzsche, have received more attention in existing accounts of the revolutionary turn taken in new ballet, dance and movement in the early twentieth-century.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ For the most scholarly examples of studies which demonstrate the Nietzschean in ancient ritual and its relationship in the new and literature in the modernist period, see my reference to these works in the Introduction chapter.

While Isadora Duncan broke the mould in performance dance, as she danced freely in opposition to the ballet form, she paved the way for new dance and movement practices such as *Natural Movement*, **even though her dance-body articulated many paradoxes. Duncan's dance-body expressed the primitive in neo-Hellenism while making connections with the modern of the female self. Modernist authors and artists responded viscerally to her danced expression of the natural and the liberated modern woman dancing in lightweight flowing fabric. She mined her intelligent body to discover a new axis of power for her new dance movements which she felt was the rediscovery of primitive power. She allowed this intelligence to authenticate the first movement in a sequence of embodied forms, which then became her choreographed movement syntax. Her skill was for her new dance to seem improvised and drew the criticism that it would not become a lasting legacy. As she freed and grounded the body through the foot, her modern embodiment of the sculptured Hellenic was the body's neo-Hellenic haptic link with ancient and primitive cultures.**

Natural Movement energises a re-definition of the Hellenic through the rhythmic dynamics in the movement-body. These rhythmic dynamics begin in the body of the innocent child of the post-war era and move across the social spectrum in the industrial city of Manchester. It embraces the growing body as it reaches maturity and it seeks to influence the body forms of the young quotidian woman and release the natural outcome of her feeling. The female bodies in Madge Atkinson's new movement practice reference Isadora Duncan's free dance while creating a distance from her dance-body, which offered confused meanings about the sexual and the chaste. Madge Atkinson pioneers' new ways of thinking about the body in the modern age as it grows

from childhood to parenthood as she co-opts the ideas in science and technology that rationalise how the body creates movement. These new modalities referenced her re-definition of the Hellenic while ushering new movement forms for the quotidian female body that can be contextualised within the modern discourse of health and fitness. In the next chapter I take *Natural Movement* forward to develop and test the relationship between rhythmic movement and the idea of the modern female self.

Chapter Three: The modern Woman in construction: bodies and selves in the collective of Rhythmic movement

The historical time period moving out of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century was ripe for a quantum change in our relationships with our bodies. There was a need to break free of Victorian strictures and also to embody the optimism the Victorian era offered [...] These pioneering individuals, born near the turn of the 20th century, lived through much adversity and historical change. They discovered ways to cope with diverse stressors by being present and active in their unified body-mind experience (Eddy 2009, 6,15).²⁴²

Up to this point, my thesis has examined the revolutionary turn in the expression of the performance dance, created by Nijinsky and Duncan, as this turn expressed in the bodies that danced their **dramatic new forms. I have also explored how this radicalism in dance was framed in the neo-Hellenism which Atkinson took forward** in a new dance and movement form for the everyday dance and movement maker. Eddy above introduces the context through which I have thus far interrogated *Natural Movement* and through which I will examine Bagot Stack's '*artistic body training*'. I address the body in photographic representations of both of these practices for how it might exhibit the primitive holistic which is at the foundation of these movement practices, and as it engages the modern methods of muscle tone and strength. This chapter focuses on how these movement practices might embody the optimism Eddy notes at the end of the Victorian era and in what ways these practices might enable the modern woman to be present and active in a unified

²⁴² Among the pioneering individuals who develop a body-mind approach to the modern body during this period, Eddy mentions F.M. Alexander (1869-1955). See (Huxley, F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Ellsworth Todd: proximities, practices and physcho-physical 2011) who considers the work of Alexander from the 'psycho-physical' perspective, a term Alexander used himself 'to talk about the self in a new way' (Huxley, F. Matthias Alexander and Mabel Ellsworth Todd: proximities, practices and physcho-physical 2011, 25).

body-mind experience in Britain. As everyday women begin to indulge in *Natural Movement* and 'artistic body training' for their own pleasure, I evaluate how these individuals might perceive themselves as a community of women who negotiate the adversity and historical changes Eddy acknowledges.

Madge Atkinson and Molly Bagot Stack can be considered as among the 'pioneering individuals' (although Eddy does not include any British dance and movement pioneers in her article), and they represent the modernist investment in the somatic of the body, even though they might not have thought of themselves as modernists in the formal sense. I

investigate how the trend for personal exercise as health renewal becomes an international force when this trend is co-opted alongside modern dance, ballroom dance, gymnastics, eurhythmics and athletics, under the umbrella of the Physical Culture paradigm during the 1920s and 1930s.

One of the early New Modernist Studies scholars who reads the new dance within the physical culture movement, considers the emergent modern dance in Germany and America within it, as 'one of the most stunning artistic achievements of modernism' (Segel 1998, 9). Notable in Segel's account in *Body Ascendant: Modernism and Physical Imperative* (1998) is the imperative which links the American and European modernist pre-occupation with physicality, with the physical culture programme of German National Socialism. As I investigate what I describe as the utopian rhythmic movement practices of Atkinson and Bagot Stack, I examine the various paradoxes in this collective of movement modalities as it embraces the utopian responses to the dystopia of modernity under the umbrella of physical culture. **Atkinson's and Bagot Stack's movement practices can be considered as a form of British modernist physicality, within the transnational frame of the physical culture paradigm, and thus**

their utopian responses to modernity both link to and contrast with those emerging from the German physical culture movement. In examining these pioneering individuals in British movement practices, I investigate how the pioneers of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' engage with modern media technologies in their pursuit of health, strength and beauty for the quotidian woman as a means of transformation for the individual, the collective and the nation state.

Scholars who work in this area generally take an interdisciplinary approach and employ their own collective terms to capture the diverse dance and movement practices that engage with the idea of exercise for health. As Carden-Coyne, in '*Performing the New Civilisation*' (2009), investigates the diversity and internationalism of modern dancing and movement as a mode of female physical expression, she favours 'Classical revival dance' as the collective term for these practices (Carden-Coyne 2009, 266). Amanda Card in '*Tethering the Flow: Dialogues between Dance, Physical Culture and Antiquity in interwar Australia*' (2011), chooses 'Grecian dance' as she analyses the call for women to 'return' to the natural in dance via the association with the Ancient Greeks (Card 2011, 139). In '**Imported and Homegrown: Dancing modernists in Oceania**' (2017, 255-264) Card also demonstrates the **New Modernist Studies** interest in the transnational in her perspective on '**Grecian dance**' and ballet in the group of countries known as Oceania, of which Australia is the largest. In both chapters, Card reveals how the **Grecian dance and ballet of the modernist period in Oceania were imported practices, until they became home grown, in these islands which were outposts of the British Empire. Building on such accounts of dance and movement practices at the imperial periphery, my chapter**

frames an analysis of British modernist physicality in the training systems of Atkinson and Bagot Stack within the contexts of the British locale and the Empire, and thus reads British movement practices through national, international, and transnational frames.

My critical decision in this thesis is to deploy the term 'rhythmic movement collective' rather than a dance term, for Atkinson and Bagot Stack's systems, because this expresses the core commonalities that lie within the various movement practices under investigation; it signifies the actual dance and body-movement forms the women learn, and, in addition, the rhythmic movement collective which enjoins the analysis of the rhythmic 'push, pull and spiral' within which the body engages in the production of these dance and exercise movements. **As my title suggests, and as I have already established in this thesis, the rhythmic is an important concept in the production of modernism and in the new dance in particular. I have argued that the stilled dance and movement-body holds the before and after movement in the stilled pose; thus, the rhythmic is both present and absent in the stilled image.**²⁴³ I have argued throughout how rhythm is the energy in movement, as does Dee Reynold's in her *Rhythmic Subjects: Uses of Energy in the Dances of Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham* (2007). Reynolds emphasises the transformative in the rhythmic energy of the American modern dancers she chooses as her case subjects. In this chapter I pursue the transformative as it might present in the rhythmic movement collective as it focuses on the somatic body of the modern quotidian woman. Reynolds positions the

²⁴³ See chapter one as it references the little magazine *RHYTHM* and its commentators' response to the Ballets Russes, and chapter two for the rhythmic in the dance-body of Isadora Duncan.

transformative in the energy of the rhythmic as an available source for both the dancer and spectator which they experience through kinaesthetic imagination. I have addressed this shared experience as the process of kinaesthetic empathy, rather than imagination, and this concept continues to be apposite in the rhythmic movement collective, as I investigate their utopian responses to the dystopia of modernity in this chapter. The motif of the haptic foot is especially apt in this chapter as I will pay close attention to the value these British movement pioneers gave to strengthening the quotidian foot, inspired by the neo-Hellenic body which was understood to be the example of perfect somatic health.

I utilise the term movement, rather than the dance in the collective terms used by other scholars, as the concept of movement offers more depth and reach than dance and because, while dance is always movement even when stilled in a pose, movement is not necessarily dance.²⁴⁴ Movement as a concept offers more nuance than dance when testing the new recreational collectives as they apply to quotidian women, even though they may describe their movements as 'dancing'.²⁴⁵ Significantly I will argue that the practices in the collective of rhythmic movement can be read as parts of a whole, a national and **transnational** utopian whole in which the collective that

²⁴⁴ It is a controversial stance to favour the term movement, over dance as the descriptor. Whether movement is always dance, or whether dance is always movement, is a question which is constantly contested. Neither term is more right or authentic, but it is more than a matter of choice. It is a complex debate and outside the limits of this study. Suffice to say that those without embodied experience are probably more comfortable with the term dance as the descriptor of all movement forms, whereas I, as an embodied practitioner of dance, prefer to use movement as the descriptor of the new movement forms under discussion in this chapter.

²⁴⁵ Madge Atkinson's *Natural Movement* can be read as an example whereby 'movement' better describes the step forms which are taught in her Practice, even though, when the step forms are in action, Atkinson describes this as dancing.

celebrates the healthy woman and her body, plays a fundamental role. These practices engage with discourses that draw on female biological health and the ultimate responsibility of motherhood in their rhetoric and this is a binary worthy of investigation. In this chapter I will contextualise the '*artistic body training*' in Bagot Stack's '*stretch-and-swing*' exercise regime in *The Women's League of Health and Beauty*, in the discourse of female health renewal that emerged when the position of women in the national context of a country overshadowed by experiences of the First World War and its aftermath was identified.

My embodied understanding of how the female body actually makes the movements embraced in the rhythmic movement practices of this era and beyond, will continue to inform my examination of the dynamic of balance and torsion in the physical components of the body, as facilitator of rhythmic senses in the body.²⁴⁶ Schwartz's theory remains relevant in this chapter as it draws out how the various components in a moving body both harmonise and work in opposition to each other, through controlled spirals and tensions, and usefully accounts for how this 'inner bodiliness' connects with the outer expression as both come together in the rhythmic whole of the body:

I have been positing the emergence of a new kinaesthetic that insists upon rhythm, wholeness, full-ness, fluidity and a durable connection between the bodiliness of the inner core and the outer expressions of the physical self (Schwartz 1992, 104).

The keyword here is 'rhythm', which I have already identified as the signifier in Atkinson's *Natural Movement* and will now extend as the signifier in all the new

²⁴⁶ *Torsion* (noun) translates as a strain produced by twisting. *Torsibility* (noun) has the ability to be twisted or subjected to *torsion*; the degree to which twisting or *torsion* can be recovered from. *Torsive* (adj.) is twisted spirally (The Chambers Dictionary 1999, 1752).

female movement and exercise systems under analysis in this chapter. The rhythmic in rhythmic movement calls on the rhythms in the individual moving body, the harmony of rhythms when this body engages with new technologies as identified by Schwartz, the rhythms generated when individuals dance simultaneously in large groups, and the connective rhythms which move back and forth between ideas of the natural and the neo Hellenic. Therefore, rhythmic movement is the most apposite descriptor of this collective.²⁴⁷

The kinaesthetic between the inner and outer of the harmonious body that Schwartz identifies seems at odds with received wisdom of the time. As I have previously established, those engaged with trying to explain modern understandings of how the body moves, such as Emmanuel, Webb, Johnstone and Atkinson, engage with the language of science and technology. As such the modern bodies in this machine age are viewed almost as damaged machines themselves, faulty components in the bones and nerves which might be fixed through modern science. I will investigate how the idea of the body as machine might manifest in the examples from contemporary propaganda film, radio talks, photographic images, dance journal articles and written medical advice I consider in this chapter. While numerous other examples could have been chosen, each of my examples offer distinctive aspects of the rhythmic-movement collective, whilst also maintaining the commonality of the re-definition of the Hellenic and the co-option of modern science and technology at their base.²⁴⁸ The *Dancing Times* plays a particularly important role in this

²⁴⁷ Occasionally I employ the term 'dancing' rather than 'moving' in the analysis of particular images; this helps to draw attention to the fact that the young women in the images may be trained dancers, when seeming not to be.

²⁴⁸ Other case studies which could have been chosen include the influential Ruby Ginner (1886-1978) and Margaret Morris (1891-1980). Both women and their work are well represented in current scholarship and, when compared to their contemporary Madge

chapter as the vast majority of the examples under interrogation here were originally printed in the magazine. In addition, it covered all aspects of dance and movement and served as the conduit for contemporary discussions about dance and its relationship with music, art, health and cultural concerns about the modern body. The *Dancing Times* also carried a long debate over whether or not the various dance modalities in Britain, Europe and America were modernist. In the following analysis I demonstrate how creators of new movement practices, and influential figures in conventional dance forms, took advantage of the magazine's national reach to promote their ideas widely, and I test the contemporary assumption that these practices did not manifest modernist credentials.²⁴⁹

Molly Bagot Stack's construction of the modern woman

Mary (Molly) Bagot Stack (1883-1935), a doctor's daughter, developed a keen interest in health and healing, after suffering a bout of rheumatic fever in 1900, aged seventeen. She enrolled in the Conn Institute of Physical Training in London in 1907. Mrs Conn gave remedial tuition to patients sent to her by doctors with such conditions as poor posture, curvature of the spine and asthma (P. Stack 1988, 39). Between 1910 and 1911 Bagot Stack gave lecture demonstrations in the Conn Physical Training system to the middle classes

Atkinson, far better known outside the dance community. The main reason for this is because Atkinson did not publish, although she intended to; see The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) archives for her unpublished manuscripts, Ref: NM/E/2/3/1. In comparison, Ginner and Morris published widely; this is also the reason why I choose Atkinson's work for analysis in this thesis. For recent scholarship on Ginner and Morris see, Ramsay Burt, Amanda Card, Alexander Carter, Michael Huxley and Fiona Mackintosh in: (Carter and Fensham, *Dancing Naturally Nature, Neo-Classicism and Modernity in Early Twentieth Century Dance* 2011), and Fiona Mackintosh in (Macintosh, *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World: Responses to Greek and Roman Dance* 2012).

²⁴⁹ *The Dancing Times* is the oldest, monthly dance magazine still in current publication. It was founded in 1894. Phillip Richardson, as editor, made *The Dancing Times* a 'national periodical covering all forms of social and theatrical dance. It played an important role in the founding of the Royal Academy of Dancing.' For the full citation of *The Dancing Times* see (Craine and Mackrell 2004, 128)

and mill workers in Manchester in the areas 'where it was most needed; where poverty and malnutrition brought disease and where knowledge of hygiene and positive health were absent' (Stack 1988, 60). It is not known whether Bagot Stack met with Atkinson in Manchester during this period but it is interesting to note how both women felt the need to inform the poor in Manchester about positive health through exercise. In 1912 Bagot Stack married an army officer who was posted to India and was killed in the first year of the Great War in 1914. After returning to London with her infant daughter Prunella, Bagot Stack opened the Bagot Stack School of Health in 1925 which led to the establishment of *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* in 1930. She died in 1935 at the age of fifty-one.

Rather than refer to Bagot Stack's 'School of Health', I have taken the decision to describe her exercise system in terms Bagot Stack uses herself, as her system of 'scientific and artistic body training' (Bagot 1929, 778). I shorten this to '*artistic body training*' for the purposes of my thesis' focus on the body in the new dance and movement practices in this period. In addition, '*artistic body training*' best describes how Bagot Stack's 'School of Health' was based in a physical training system that referenced Greek ideals – the 'artistic' – that she originally learned in the Conn Institute of Physical Training:

[Conn] had learned her scientific system of health-building from Sir Fredrick McCoy, a distinguished doctor and professor at Melbourne University [...] who believe[d] that the physical poise and balance known to the ancient Greeks should be taught to every prospective mother (Stack 1988, 39).

This is an early example of medicine's engagement with the neo Hellenic as an aesthetic ideal for the modern woman and it establishes the medical in the scientific of Bagot Stack's scientific and '*artistic body training*' system. As I

begin to analyse the bodies in this training system, I examine how they might manifest these neo-Hellenic ideals and investigate the influence of medical science in Bagot Stack's training system through her own words. In 1929, *The Dancing Times* published 'Dancing and the Medical Profession' by Mrs Bagot Stack (Bagot 1929, 778-779). The tableau image, described as 'A Beautiful Group', is presented above the title of the article. As it takes its place alongside other articles covering all forms of professional and amateur dance in *The Dancing Times*, this photograph makes clear, to any reader who is not familiar with Mrs. Bagot Stack, that the dancing she will be discussing in relation to the Medical Profession takes a similar style to the new dance of Isadora Duncan and references the same ancient Greek iconography.

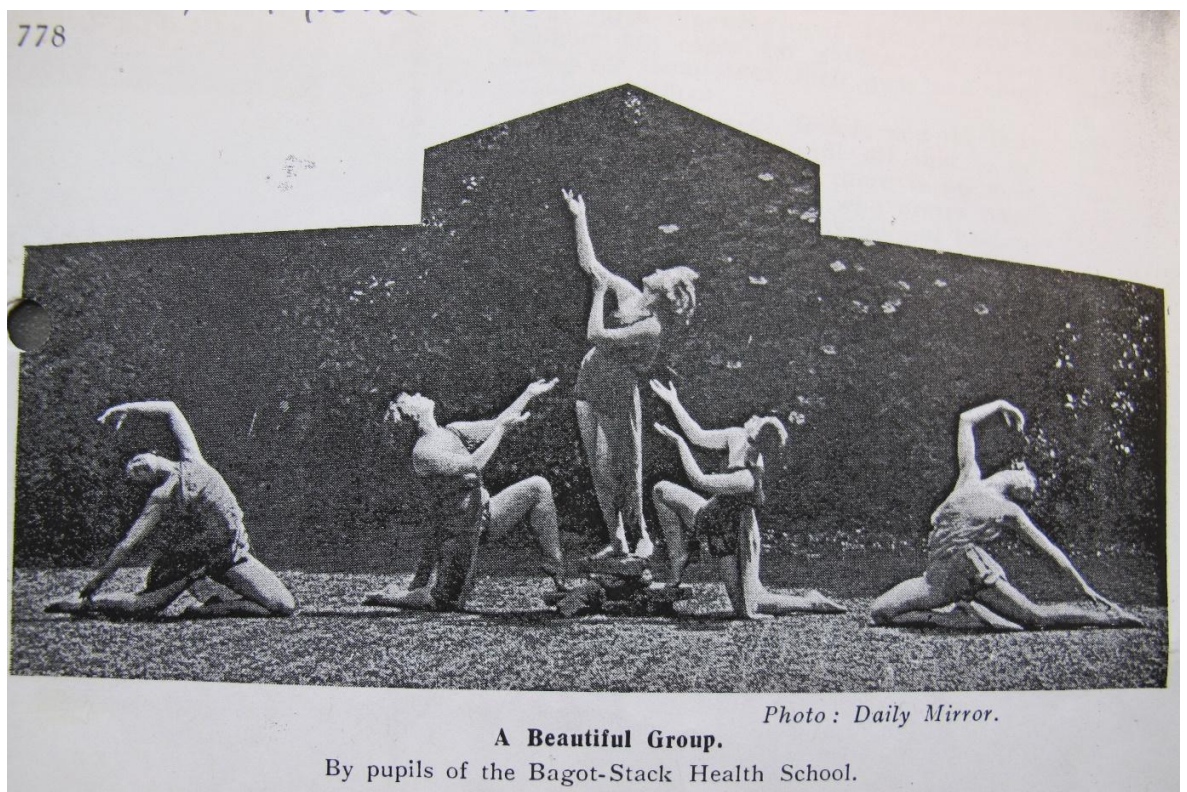


Figure 3.1 Scanned image from the *Dancing Times*, March 1929

The poses the students take in 'A Beautiful Group' (Figure 3.1) epitomise one of Bagot Stack's aims; to make modern the ideal, Hellenic woman in the production of a contemporary, twentieth-century woman. The 'beautiful' in the caption is a touchstone across the rhythmic movement collective and some of its many meanings are represented in the tableau: the beauty of the natural-world setting, the beauty of the statuesque Hellenic forms and the beauty of the softly draped bodies. The beauty of the inner self can also be interpreted in the aesthetic of their gaze; there is a sense of self-contained interiority. In the tableau, four of the students hold variations of a kneeling position wherein the weight of the pelvis is lifted well forward of the supporting knee, while the extended leg balances the upper torso and head. Each of them is holding the lifted, back-leaning form while the two who are leaning away from centre demonstrate extreme strength in their much extended, backward and side stretching arch.

The fifth young woman is posed in the middle of the group, standing upright on a plinth with her weight over one leg, while the other rests gently beside it.²⁵⁰ Her arms are softly raised and her head is lifted up and away from the line of her body which bends slightly forward and to the side; an angle known in dance as *epaulement*.²⁵¹ In this pose, and those of the two students nearest to her, the interiority of the inner self is demonstrated through the angle of their raised heads, with eyes focused upward and away from the camera lens. This same sensibility and form recall the stilled movements of Atkinson's students,

²⁵⁰ This young woman's pose represents the classical, relaxed-standing form seen in many sculptures and reliefs of Ancient Greek culture, and collected in Museums across the world.

²⁵¹ *Epaulement*: 'The positions of arms and shoulders which define and qualify positions of the legs [...] governed by the twin rules of opposition and complement, used especially in *croisé* [crossed] and *effacé* [facing the front] positions', (Preston-Dunlop, *Dance Words* 1995, 176).

photographed earlier in the decade, and interrogated in the previous chapter. The three central figures in the tableau share the same sensibility that is seen in the body of Isadora Duncan's 'supplication pose' in the photograph taken at least ten years prior to this tableau image, and analysed in the previous chapter (Figure 2.1). This particular aesthetic of 'uplift' or 'supplication' demonstrates the reach of Duncan's dance as the motifs in her dance are carried by those practitioners of new dance and movement who came after her.

The students in 'A Beautiful Group' appear as the female embodiment of classical statues and yet they are living women whose bodies are visible through their lightweight, Greek style chitons. Their limbs are naked from the point at which they meet the torso. They reference the purity and beauty of the ancient Greek, ideal woman sculpted in marble, at the same time as showing they are living and breathing young women. These students are caught in the active stillness of a pose and they position spiritual classicism while demonstrating their physical gender. What is strikingly different in these movement forms of the late 1920's exemplified above, compared with those movement forms in Isadora Duncan's dance of earlier decades, is the *evidence* of core body strength. Bagot Stack's students exhibit lithe, firm limbs and flat abdomen which result from their movement training, clearly visible through their short and revealing garments.²⁵² In 1929, these female students articulate the movement forms learned through Bagot Stack's *'artistic body training'*, especially when their body is in the stilled pose. Because the body

²⁵² This visible evidence of 'core body strength' exhibits the foundation on which Mrs. Bagot Stack's training system was based. A remedial approach – based on an insistence on correct pelvic alignment, training in the development of spinal and abdominal muscles and breathing exercises – forms 'the body of health' which leads on to the 'body of expression', with the addition of rhythmic movement exercises, based on deportment, 'figure training' and yoga *asanas*, and set to music (Stack 1988, 100). Bagot Stack learned the remedial 'scientific system of health building' at the Conn Institute in London (1907-1909), (Stack 1988, 39).

training involves strength, these bodies demonstrate a different physicality to that of Duncan when she poses her dance in 1915-1917, as seen in the photographs analysed in the previous chapter.

In 1915-1917 Duncan's dance-body demonstrates a softer musculature around the abdomen and more rounded limbs than Bagot Stack's pupils reveal in 'A Beautiful Group'. Arguably, these differences demonstrate the focus on specific muscle groups for the development of lean strength – as in Bagot Stack's training – as compared to the less focused, more organic movement forms of Duncan's dance. The physicality in the young women in 'A Beautiful Group' can be read as the embodiment of modernity's post-war, New Woman who has achieved her silhouette through training supported by 'new' scientific understandings of the physical body when in movement. **Indeed, in 1931, Bagot Stack published her book of instructions as to how the modern woman can have a new body in *Building the Body Beautiful*:**

This book gives a short ten week's training for the everyday woman and girl, and many of the exercises are also suitable for children. [...] in these days of rush, fifteen minutes a day is the utmost time most of us can spare. [...] The following exercises are designed to give the maximum result in the minimum of time. (Stack 1931, 4).

Therefore, the busy, quotidian, modern woman only needs to devote a short time each day to build a new body in ten weeks. Why she thinks this is an important goal, is addressed below. Duncan's curvaceous stage-body contrasts with the corseted, tutu-clad ballerina she so abhorred, and with the tightly-laced waist of the fashionable female silhouette of her day. Thus, the female bodies produced through these different modalities in dance and movement demonstrate two of the three culturally specific body types of this

period: the softly curved and the lithe. The third, the corseted, hourglass silhouette of the pre-war Edwardian era represents the female form that the rhythmic movement collective reject and reform.

The key motif of the release of the interior self through movement, interrogated previously in Duncan's dance and Atkinson's *Natural Movement* and continued above in 'A Beautiful Group', is of central significance in the restructuring of a healthy body in the rhythmic movement collective and in the creation of the modern woman. The contribution of the rhythmic movement collective in the making of the modern woman is therefore of cultural significance; a concept which Macdonald argues (Macdonald (2013) is rarely considered as she demonstrates how:

the body and self were more connected in contemporary discourse and popular movements of the inter-war period than has been recognised, and that the connection might be considered an historically specific way in which women found a way to "have" a self in the body (Macdonald 2013, 268).

The import in Macdonald's argument is how these two selves, the one emphasising the body, the other the interior mind, have been treated separately in the scholarship of the history of the body over time. However, in the long history of dance, and as shown in the analysis of Bagot Stack's women in 'A Beautiful Group' above and throughout this thesis, these two selves are always considered to be one self. These two selves are one self, at one and the same time, they are indivisible from the perspective of the body in movement. Bagot Stack, Atkinson, Duncan and Nijinsky (who was working through his understanding of his male self), all understood the essential union of the body and the self through movement. Arguably, it was one aspect of their mission to communicate this understanding to the quotidian populace of the early twentieth-century. Nijinsky remodelled the modern self of the future

1920's in *Jeux* in 1913, **Duncan wrote of her dance as the dance of the future**, Bagot Stack and Atkinson were creating the new female body of the age through strength and health, informed by their understandings of the values of the Hellenic era. This modern woman and her body deny the Victorian trope of the 'Angel in the House' and epitomise Macdonald's claim that:

[a] distinctive concept and language of "inner life", the production of individuality, gained popular currency: to be a modern girl or a modern woman denoted some consciousness of self, in time and place (Macdonald (2013), 268).

MacDonald is describing the agency in the consciousness of the self in the trend for health and fitness which I compare with the constraint of this agency in the patriarchally-defined, domestic arena of the home for the Victorian woman. In the contemporary literature and art of the period, artists and authors demonstrate the struggle to find a means of expression for the inner self and this becomes a central feature in modernism. Less understood, though an equally valid contributor to this central concern, is the journey of discovery for the release of the self, undertaken in the female, rhythmic movement collective. With as much attention being given to the development of the inner self as a constant constituency of the strengthening of the outer, physical self, the pioneer women of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*' were giving young women the means to 'have a self in the body' that Macdonald describes. Mrs. Dalloway was one of Virginia Woolf's characters who expressed the search for the self on the page, Picasso's cubist women were given inner expression to their outer self on the canvas, rhythmic movement practitioners expressed their inner and outer selves in the studio, the open air and in spectacular arenas.

In New Modernist Studies the analysis of the concept of the self has been coined 'the selfish turn', which follows on from those other new ways of exploring the past: the 'linguistic', the 'cultural' and the 'material' turns of recent scholarship.²⁵³ From cultural and political reformers and the new science of psychotherapy, through to artists and literary modernists, all were concerned and concerned themselves with the discourse of the self, and rhythmic movement took a significant role in this discourse. As Macdonald points out 'the interwar language of health and beauty was itself a language of the self' (Macdonald 2013, 275).

In Bagot Stack's text, entitled 'Dancing and the Medical Profession' and printed underneath the 'Beautiful Group' image of the strong, lithe, modern embodiment of the neo Hellenic, ideal self, readers find the rationale that supports Bagot Stack's practice is of particular relevance to future teachers, rather than student performers, such as those shown in Figure 3.1. She begins with 'science' and introduces two important concepts:

scientific and artistic body training is going to play a very important part in the medicine of the future – medicine in its preventive aspect, medicine which will include in its curriculum the study and practice of health, as well as the study and treatment of disease (Stack 1929, 778).

The first concept is that her system of movement trains the female body (that it is a female body is made clear in the rest of the article although not identified specifically in this extract), through an artistic and scientific foundation. There is no suggestion here that any of the movements she designs come 'naturally'.

²⁵³ Macdonald refers to the social historian Carolyn Steedman, who points out the prominence of these 'turns' in recent New Modernist scholarship (Macdonald (2013), 269).

The second concept is extraordinarily insightful; that the future of modern medicine will include the practice of health as a preventative, alongside the tradition of curing disease.

When dance movement is so aligned with medical and scientific terminology, Bagot Stack is moving the discourse away from the perception of dance as an elite studio and stage practice and out into the everyday world of recreational movement, for strength and health, for those who learn it and for those who will teach it. One outcome of this interchange is how the recreational in rhythmic movement inhabits a more democratic space for the collective of individual women who enjoy it as a practice. Consequently, the elite in performance of new dance and movement becomes more accessible when the same techniques are made available as recreation for the quotidian. The elite in dance becomes something close to the 'middlebrow' through recreational rhythmic movement. Definitions for what the middlebrow might have meant in the early twentieth century and how current research attempts to address the 'middlebrow' today demonstrate the complexity in the term.²⁵⁴ If the middlebrow straddles the space between the elite cultural highbrow and the lowbrow of music hall in terms of dance, then recreational movement might be considered to be in between the two, and therefore middlebrow.²⁵⁵ It is however a loaded term, associated as it is with the pseudo-science of phrenology which determined intelligence through the shape of the brow,²⁵⁶ and could evoke,

²⁵⁴ <https://www.middlebrow-network.com/DefiningtheMiddlebrow.aspx>.

²⁵⁵ See 'The Middlebrow – Within and Without Modernism', *Modernist Cultures* Special Issue (2011.) See also the pages on *The Middlebrow Network*, the interdisciplinary research hub that provides a focus for current research in the area of the 'middlebrow'

<https://www.middlebrow-network.com/Home.aspx>.

²⁵⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middlebrow>.

thereby, the potential connections between physical culture, eugenics and fascism that were so dangerous in the German context.

Bagot Stack sees an equal dignity for her future teachers as that held already by the medical profession, when the two practices work with each other. She closes her article with what amounts to a sterling feminist message of advice:²⁵⁷

I end by advising the dance teacher who wants to work with the doctors to – know her work, realise her responsibility and get good results and fear no man, for if the medical profession is one of tremendous dignity so is dancing; the one mends the body, the other trains it. The body perfect is the ideal of both (Bagot 1929, 779).

In this she is offering young women professionalization on a par with the mainly male constituency of the medical profession in this joint enterprise of the construction of the female 'body perfect'. By knowing her work, being responsible (professional) and getting 'good results', Bagot Stack's female teachers will be empowered to 'fear no man'. Bagot Stack's belief in the value of the medical/dance partnership she identifies in her 'Dancing and the Medical Profession' article, is one example of what Macdonald describes as the 'lively discourse on the body and how to look after it' and how 'confidence in medical science meant health was increasingly framed as an individual achievement rather than a consequence of fate' (Macdonald 2013, 270). This is perhaps an early signifier of the high-profile debate in 'preventative medicine through healthy exercise' apparent many years after this period, and a debate which involved other agendas, some of which are discussed later in this chapter.

²⁵⁷ This is not to designate Bagot Stack as a feminist per se, but more to suggest that the phrase 'fear no man' in her positioning of the equal dignity of dance and medicine can be interpreted as a feminist message from the perspective of current scholarship.

Also, as Bagot Stack regards the lectures given to her students by doctors on the 'scientific knowledge of the body' as an essential aspect of the curriculum in her Health School, these future teachers will then be prepared for the health issues (which may have previously been considered as consequence of fate) that some quotidian women may bring to their classes:

[As] the large majority of dancers who are training today are not going to be virtuosos but teachers [...] they will probably have to deal with numbers of persons by no means normal as regards health (Bagot 1929, 779).

The first part of this statement demonstrates Bagot Stack's own experience of training young students; the second is based on personal experience while studying at the Conn Institute in London (1907-1909), which her daughter Prunella relates:

Mrs Conn gave remedial tuition to patients sent to her by doctors for conditions such as curvature of the spine, asthma and poor posture. Mollie observed these lessons and realized that she, too, could heal and bring new life to such sufferers (Stack 1988, 39).

This illustrates (Molly) Bagot Stack's long held belief in the positive health benefits offered by a dance/medical partnership in the training of teachers for all female bodies, whether healthy or not. And, as the body is not only the physical but also the self in the body, Bagot Stack also brings the health of the emotional self to the attention of her readers:

anyone who has seen the marvellously soothing effect of rhythmic movement to music on overtaxed nerves – the standard civilised complaint – will realise that here again is an almost unexplored field for the dance teacher (Stack 1929, 779).

By framing 'overtaxed nerves' as 'the standard civilised complaint', she underlines the commonly held belief that modern ways of living and working have adverse effects on the human condition. The German sociologist Georg Simmel, for example, had raised awareness of the effects the modern city could have on the 'mental life' of its inhabitants, in his influential essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903). Here Simmel suggests the fast pace of city life has an overstimulating effect on the psyche; which Bagot Stack describes as 'overtaxed nerves.' As the early-twentieth-century historian of Europe Phillip Blom also notes:

[t]he wave of nervous illnesses and neurasthenia, the rise of psychiatry and the free discussion of sexual pathologies had all contributed to a feeling of destabilization [...] and behind it loomed a machine-powered dystopia, in which the masses [...] were lulled into artificial sleep by mass entertainments and industrial levelling of all distinctions, all merit and all values. Eugenics appeared to offer a solution to these fears (Blom 2008, 345, 346).

Blom raises an important nuance in the discourse of eugenics at the time, prior to the rise of National Socialism in Germany. As he states, eugenics offered hope and stability to nations in the dystopian, interwar period. In fact, eugenics was widely embraced by thinkers, artists and social reformers across Europe and America.²⁵⁸ Even though pioneers in the rhythmic movement collective such as Bagot Stack, are offering positive, accessible rhythmic bodily solutions to these same conditions highlighted by Simmel and Blom above, and these pioneers' solutions are holistic, life-enhancing and fun, the racial in their health message is eugenic. Remembering that eugenics had not been substantially discredited prior to 1933, race health is understood, whether subliminally or

²⁵⁸ See *The Wellcome Library* for its collection of papers and documents on Eugenics for the list of members of the Eugenics Society during this period, which includes many well-known and influential members of British Society: <https://wellcomelibrary.org/>

explicitly, to be the exclusive aim for the European race. Childs, in his study of *Modernism and Eugenics* (2001),²⁵⁹ draws attention to the many ways in which eugenics was understood in the early twentieth-century and offers a useful summary for how twenty-first century understandings of eugenics in this period can accommodate the idea of eugenics:

There were many ways, then, in which eugenics could be incorporated both into one's understanding of the past and present *and*, more interestingly and more controversially, into one's vision of the future – whether that vision was progressive or reactionary. Although it by no means earned everyone's trust and support, the science of eugenics and the social policy debates to which it gave rise interested everyone in the early years of the twentieth century. Neither the variety of writers interested in eugenics nor the variety of ends that their interest in eugenics served, therefore, should surprise us (Childs 2001, 9).

If pioneers in the rhythmic movement collective such as Bagot Stack are viewed from Child's perspective, then Bagot Stack's race health can be understood in the context of visionary and progressive eugenics, and that she was one of the 'nearly everyone' who was interested in the science of eugenics. I consider the paradox in Bagot Stack's claim for race health below.

Bagot Stack takes a utopian stance in a climate which more generally lays emphasis on the degenerative aspects of city life, a phenomenon at the centre of the work of various modernist authors such as Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence. One solution that Bagot Stack offers as a curative for 'overtaxed nerves' is the 'soothing effect' of 'moving rhythmically to music'. Interestingly, rather than the nineteenth-century classical music which so inspired Duncan, '[f]or her music, Mollie [Bagot Stack] chose contemporary

²⁵⁹ Donald J. Childs: *Modernism & Eugenics, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration*, (2001).

jazz tunes which could be played on the piano or gramophone and which would add zest to the classes' (Stack 1988, 100).²⁶⁰ In this, a change in the focus of music in the new movement practices of the 1920s and 1930s can be noticed.

For Duncan, the nineteenth-century concert music she danced *with* was a fundamental partner in the release of her inner self; emotions which informed her movements. In the movement practice of Eurhythmics, first considered in the opening chapter of this thesis as a system of movement which helped Nijinsky to define his unique choreographic approach, *specific body responses to changes in musical tempi* were key. This also reveals an important development in the way emotion can be released through movement. At the turn of the century, music acts as the essential spark in 'the motor in Duncan's soul' which initiates the release in movement.

By the late 1920's and 1930's some of those inspired by Duncan's dance teach young women how to access emotional release through the physiology of strong movements. This taught physiology, this technique, replaces Duncan's sense of music as the initiator of movement and release for the inner self. Bagot Stack urges her trainee teachers to recognise the potential in offering 'movement to music' to quotidian women as a salve to their mental stress, in a previously unexplored new strand in the classes teaching *'artistic body training'*. Alexandra Carter draws attention to the idea that music can act as an

²⁶⁰ Mollie Bagot Stack produced a complete set of five gramophone recordings of *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* exercises, on which she can be heard counting out the exercises and giving instructions, to the accompaniment of piano jazz rhythms. These recordings can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FskYxr57CB0&t=164s>. Accessed 22.1.19.

overstimulation which causes a block to the creativity of rhythmic movement practice (Carter 2011). Here, Carter cites an example whereby Madge Atkinson 'worked for many months, back in Manchester, without music' so that she could develop the technique in *Natural Movement* which enabled the *interpretation* of music through movement, rather than an *emotional response* to the music (Carter 2011, 24).²⁶¹ Thus the method of access to inner emotional release shifts from the emotional response to music, as in Duncan's dance, to the learned physical techniques in the body movements, as in *Natural Movement*. Bagot Stack, however, encourages rhythmic movement to music as what I would describe as an 'act of repair' for the 'soul' – the term used by Duncan and Atkinson – or the 'inner self', the term I identify in this chapter as key to understanding the role of the self in the rhythmic movement collective. This example of the change in the relationship of music to rhythmic movement since Duncan's dance, demonstrates another significant break with the past for new dance and movement. Carter explains:

[w]hat is significant is that as the century moved on, practitioners no longer cited their recourse to "inner inspiration" – the mood of the moment which moves them – but acknowledged their craft. This shift in approach was evident in pedagogical practice and in more systematic methods of training: as such, an imperative to organize and codify dance exercises evolved from a variety of cultural conditions. For example, progressive educators firmly believed in the relationship between physical health, personal health and the health of society (Carter 2011, 24, 18).

By valuing 'craft' over the 'instinctive' and embedding it in a codified system of exercises, the rhythmic movement collective is creating a distance from the contemporary critique of Duncan's dance as being improvisational, autobiographical and therefore short lived, an uninformed critique which held

²⁶¹ The italics are my own and I use them to emphasise the difference between the intent in a 'response to', rather than an 'interpretation of', music.

fast until the 1970's, as has been established in chapter two. The desire to record, list and organise the new ballet, dance and movement forms of this period, to codify them, is noted throughout this study. It begins in the need to record movement which slips away in the moment of execution; Nijinsky's lost notations reflect this. Codification gives dance and movement an authority, it allows rigorous testing, it acknowledges the craft and it provides a baseline. This baseline forms the foundation for a canon on which the various new dance and movement forms build. Carter acknowledges that the need to codify dance and movement arises from cultural conditions.

In a matter of months after 'Dancing and the Medical Profession' was published in the *Dancing Times* in 1929, Bagot Stack began to put all her ideas, expressed in the article, into practice. She began to transform the Bagot Stack 'School of Health' of 1929 into a national movement of mass appeal, under the banner *The Women's League of Health and Beauty*. Her system of training for the body and mind, grounded in her perception of a science-based technique, began to produce teachers who should consider themselves to be as professional and equal in standing as their medical partners, and who begin to set up classes to train quotidian, business and working women how to develop a strong, healthy and graceful body. This training also involved teaching everyday women that the health and strength of their body was a matter under their own agency, rather than a symptom of fate. Importantly, teachers and learners share joy in gaining their strong, healthy and graceful bodies through the energy and zest of moving to the rhythms of jazz. But these women are not totally free agents. Underpinning the whole rhythmic movement collective, and *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* in particular, is the

mission to obtain 'racial health', for themselves, their community and the nation:

The League's stated aim was "Racial Health", later changed in 1936 to the more explicit "Racial Health Leading to Peace". The term "racial", in the 1930's, was, of course, an ambiguous one and the League packed several meanings into its use. In its primary meaning, "racial" was a synonym for "maternal", with a connotation of "the human race": a non-specific concern with the health of future generations. It could, however, shrink back to "the British Race" or incorporate bits of Europe and the Empire. There was no suggestion of Aryan or white superiority in the League's use of the term (Matthews 1990, 25).

While Matthews is correct to assign the maternal in the racial health aim of the *League* to the non-specific, universal realm of caring for the human race, and the more specific caring for the Nation State, the maternal in racial health is also specifically individualised in the *League*. This *League* is *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* and the female is specifically identified as maternal after giving birth. Therefore, racial health does imply the individual responsibility in the collective of women in the *League* to follow her biological destiny as a duty to both the state and global humanity. Health represents peace and harmonious balance in the innermost tissues of mind. The pursuit of national racial-health, beauty and peace – in the individual development of health, strength, beauty and the realisation and release of the self through expression – is the mission of the collective *Women's League of Health and Beauty*. Bagot Stack enjoins countless quotidian women to silently embody the regeneration discourse through their rhythmic movements:

Scientific training of the body [...] has been carried out successfully by the Greeks, but then the standards were set by men. [...] Cannot we modern women do as well as the Greeks? We, who carry with us the responsibility for the world's children from their earliest years? Cannot we bestir ourselves, train our own bodies first and set to work with a well-organised will, to create a new world of Health and Beauty? I believe we can, and we will, and that a new civilisation is dawning, which will

materialise about the year A.D. 2000 as a result of the foundations which are beginning to be laid down by the enlightened women and men of to-day (Stack 1931, 3).

This lengthy quotation represents Bagot Stack's philosophy that demonstrates new understandings of the female body in the modernist period. The paradox of the feminist yet confirmative and quotidian female body, the different temporalities of this body which, while each historical period informs the next, also stretches the ancient past through to the unseen future. The view of the modern female as inherently reproductive and global as it embodies the birth of the new world civilisation, is made newly strong and healthy through the local of the British Bagot Stack's scientific and *'artistic body training'* system. Bagot Stack's everyday female bodies are part of the joyous rhythmic collective enjoined in the tension which ties their rhythmic bodies to expectations of their biological destiny; a dynamic shared across the whole transnational rhythmic movement collective. Amanda Card writes of the perspective of Empire and the transnational with particular reference to the British dominion of Australia during the interwar years, and she describes this tension between individual release and collective duty as a practice of 'freedom under constraint':

Dance practitioners and educators who advocated a return to 'natural' dancing through an association with the Ancient Greeks [...] offered a practice of freedom under constraint, a practice that could serve a predominantly female constituency; not only as performers, teachers and pupils of dance, but also in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers to their men and the nation (Card 2011, 139, 140).²⁶²

²⁶² Card is analysing the new movement practices in Australia. However, as those teachers of the practices in Australia learned them from British pioneer Margaret Morris, who was Madge Atkinson's contemporary, and as Australia was a colony of the British Empire, her analysis is pertinent in the context British fears over the state of the nation in Australia, Britain and the British Empire.

These movement practices taught quotidian mothers, wives and daughters how to enjoy their bodies and know their inner selves while nurturing the paradigm of regeneration. Thus, what I describe as the rhythmic movement collective, practises constrained freedoms. The women are constrained by expectations of their gender. The idea of constrained freedom suggests a tension, a paradox of meaning for the quotidian modern woman, a tension which, in Britain, Zweiniger-Bargielowska argues, is inherent in the particularly conservative brand of feminism within which the British movement practices operate:

Keep Fit, physical culture and sport provided techniques for the construction of a modern female body and the emergence of a more assertive and vigorous femininity [...] across the social spectrum. ... And yet, gender roles were not transformed fundamentally and this brand of feminism was ultimately conservative [...]. The modern woman of the 1930's was the race mother whose civic duty [was] to cultivate her body for the well-being of the nation (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2011, 312,313).

Zweiniger-Bargielowska draws attention to how the construction of a new female body type in the rhythmic movement collective can be read as a feminist project, that is still held back by the constraints of biological destiny. This she identifies as a conservative brand of feminism and from this perspective, Bagot Stack's zeal does fit this conservative, feminist model. Matthews' analysis also categorises Bagot Stack in a similar way. Bagot Stack was 'a conservative reformer and philanthropist with a missionary zeal to brighten the world with the light of maternal health education' (Matthews 1990, 25). Even so, Bagot Stack did hold modern views with regard to careers for women – she even describes marriage and childcare as a career – and accepted that motherhood was not the aim for all women (Matthews 1990, 28). Indeed, running a business, as Bagot Stack does with her daughter Prunella

as the *League* grows bigger, offers the ideal business model for women in the *League* (Matthews 1990, 34).

The most spectacular advertisement of the *League*'s ideal is in the rhythmically moving presentation of 'health and beauty' on a grand scale as entertainment in the 1930s. These amateur women demonstrate, *en masse* and in rhythmic union, a national, collective, racial health when they perform in various, high profile, London spaces such as Hyde Park, the Royal Albert Hall and Olympia. These performances, or demonstrations of scientific body training, involved sequences of learned and standardised sets of movements, which the young women members of the *League* executed in their hundreds, after travelling to London from towns and cities across the British Isles, in order to take part (Matthews 1990, 32):

Photographs of League displays show a remarkable resemblance to, for example, the simpler patterns produced by Busby Berkley in his Hollywood musicals, as well as those of the chorus spectacles of the 1930's music hall (Matthews 1990, 32).

The sequences may seem to reflect the synchronised, all-female, professional dance troupes, popular at the time. The all-female chorus line does influence the style that the *League* tries to replicate in their mass, public demonstrations and Matthews includes images of various female troupes throughout her article, which serve as a visual comparison with photographs of the *League*'s demonstrations in London, to make this point. Both groups of women, the professional troupes and the amateur *League*, do share some commonalities; they are all female, they perform in synchronised lines, they move in unison, and they reveal the length of their legs. There are also significant differences.

Matthews expresses the most traditional and highly patronising difference as she elides the women in the professional troupes with the status of their work. The *League* members 'were not chorus girls they were respectable business girls and young marrieds. They were on stage, showing off their bodies, but really, they were just having fun [...]' (Matthews 1990, 32). Here Matthews perpetuates the pervasive assumption amongst commentators, at the time and since, that deems professional female dancers in the chorus line unworthy of respect, because their work is assumed to be easy and something any one could do. Matthews also lowers their status by emphasising how the respectable business girls in the *League* show off their bodies for fun. In other words, they earn their money respectably elsewhere, while the chorus girls earn theirs dis-reputably; after all the chorus line gets paid to do what the *League* can do, for fun. The professional troupes do draw the male gaze with their high kick routines, which objectifies them as women, as they have little agency in the choreographed dance they perform. By extension, Matthews is suggesting that it is respectable to draw the male gaze if the *League* women were 'really just having fun'; it is not when women are paid to reveal their legs. Matthews is demonstrating the same attitude towards the female dancer that was first discussed in the analysis of Duncan's dance in the previous chapter. Even when the dancer is a world-famous solo star, as in the case of Duncan, commentators frequently merge the woman Isadora Duncan with her dance. Duncan's body is revealed through her lightweight chitons and her limbs are naked, the 'respectable business girls and young married' members of the *League* stretch, bend and kick their naked legs, in front of spectators.

Matthews, nevertheless, dismisses the spectacle of lightly clad flesh in the *League* performance and argues that 'the public at the *League*'s displays was not really an anonymous audience but largely made up of other members,

friends and families 'and thus this audience 'gaze' 'was enthusiastic and sympathetic, not critical or lascivious' (Matthews 1990, 32). This view denies the paradox of the gaze. While amateur female members of the *League* perform synchronised, revealing-limb extensions for fun, they draw a non-voyeuristic, sympathetic gaze in Matthews' view. Neither Matthews nor anyone else can determine whether the gaze drawn by the amateur *League* was more or less lascivious than that drawn by the professional kick line, or Isadora Duncan as she danced. The irony with the *League's* displays is that the women were aiming to emulate the professional chorus line of dancers, while also dissociating themselves from the kick-line as a profession. The further irony is that the kick-line dancers are also respectable business women, in that they are professionally employed, and are as likely to be married as are some members of the *League*. And not to be forgotten, many of the body forms the *League* also display are those first performed by Duncan as a professional, as is seen in the tableau which opened this chapter in Figure 3.1, and will be seen in further examples of the quotidian women in the *League*.

The Tiller Girl troupes have drawn comment and critiques, such as Matthews' above, since their early performances as the John Tiller Girls in Germany in 1895. **These transnational troupes** were often conceptualised during the early twentieth-century as synonymous with the mass production of the machine and representative of the impersonality of modernity, which paradoxically desexualises and deindividuates the female dancers in such troupes. There is a vast volume of critique on The Tiller Girls, much of which comes from German Dance scholarship; the most influential of the contemporary commentators are Siegfried Krakauer (*The Mass Ornament*

1927), and Andre Levinson (*The Girls* 1928).²⁶³ Current scholarship on the female chorus line in this period, and the Tiller Girls in particular, brings a more nuanced perspective, by drawing attention to the very personal complexity that is involved in the creation of the effect of a group moving as one entity:

Their dances were those of highly trained teams [...] derived not from static uniformity but, rather from the skilled dismantling of their individual reflexes in order to facilitate the reassembly of their bodies within a group (Elswit 2014, 54).

As the physiology of each body is unique, Elswit explains how each dancer must engage minute adaptations throughout her body as she performs the same movement at the same time as every other individual in the group. Each dancer's muscular, rhythmic reflex is individual. Each dancer therefore needs to 'dismantle their individual reflexes' and reassemble them, individually, in order to create the effect of a team moving as one entity. While these minute alterations oppose her instinctive reflexes, they allow the dancer to execute the movement in the same form and rhythm as the whole group dictates. There is therefore, unique individual torsion and spiral in the muscles, often in opposition to the instinctive reflex, which pulls the group together in a dynamic tension, a synchronic whole. Elswit plays with the terminology of machine production in explanation of the dancer's human, innate reflexes. She brings the impersonal of modernity and the impulse of human reflexes together in the model of the Tiller Girls. If the overall effect of these rhythmically synchronised movements symbolises the working machine in the spectator's eye, the machine-like troupe performs the idea of modern technology. The dancer and the troupe are in symbiosis with the idea of modernity in the performance of

²⁶³ Kate Elswit in *Watching Weimar Dance* (2014), offers a thorough, original and embodied analysis of 'The Tiller Girls' in the context of the Weimar period in Germany. My thanks to Sarah Whatley for bringing this work to my attention.

the kick-line. In the following example Schwartz reverses the model of analysis to demonstrate the same shared impulse that Elswit describes. Whereas Elswit relates the methods required in the individual rhythms of the body to produce a team of bodies working as one, Schwartz argues that the adjustments needed in the individual parts of the phonograph, to allow it to produce musical rhythms, directly relate to how the body mobilises:

Bodies could be made (or made to appear), whole and mobile if only one understood the principles of rhythm [...] to improve the phonograph, one had to adjust the prime movers, cams and gearing – so that nothing interfered with the spoken and musical rhythms already inscribed on the cylinders or discs (Schwartz 1992, 89).

Whether these bodies are human or mechanical, the primacy in their rhythmic efficiency in the production of the whole – the kick line moving as one or the phonograph's production of music or speech – is the essence.

What all these performances of rhythmic drills do have to contend with, whether in the kick-line, on film, or in the Albert Hall, is the revelation and disclosure of the female moving body through scant clothing. The relationship between the girl troop and the voyeuristic gaze that Matthews draws on, highlights the same risk for *The Women's League of Health and Beauty*, dressed in little shorts and sleeveless blouses. If they had any fear of exhibitionism, they were told, as Matthews describes, this was selfish and disloyal to the cause (Matthews 1990, 32). Thus, they are elevated to the higher realm of collective loyalty to the cause of racial health, away from their individual fears over appearing in public in revealing clothing. Not only does this elevate them above any fears about individual exposure, but 'for members, the shop assistants, secretaries, typists, telephonists, etc., the prospect of

health and beauty also carried the prospect of elevation to the most prominent public stage – if only for one or two days in the year' (Macdonald (2013), 274). The prominent public stage these spectacular presentations occupy is a space of performance which has not, thus far, acquired a definition in academic scholarship. It is neither the highbrow area of elite stage-performance on which Duncan performs her new dance, nor the lowbrow performance space of the Music-Hall stage which presents light entertainment acts and confusingly, solo and *pas de deux* extracts from well-known classical ballets.²⁶⁴ Amateur, earnest, joyous and well-drilled demonstrations of health and beauty exercise by the *League* do become stage-performance when hundreds of women move in rhythmical unison in front of spectators in the Albert Hall. Yet this is also the stage performance of non-political, racial health and beauty, not the dance of the spirit of Duncan, nor the Tiller-girl professional dancer nor, after 1933, the Hitler Youth spectacular demonstrations of political National Socialism in Germany. The stage space occupied by *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* spectacles, and which all other public demonstrations of the rhythmic movement collective inhabit, needs an identification. While the closest might be the concept of the middlebrow of stage-performance recently identified in modernist scholarship, this term is still insufficient and has problematic implications for any account of modernist physical culture.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ See Introduction on the position of classical ballet in Britain, prior to the arrival of the Ballets Russes. See also (Fitch 1995), (Pritchard 1995) and (Carter 1995) which bring attention to the rarely studied ballet troupes which were attached to the famous Music Halls in London and Manchester at the turn of the twentieth-century. The same period when the early Tiller Girls troupes were also dancing on Music Hall stages across Europe.

²⁶⁵ See above in this chapter where I first introduce the idea of the 'middlebrow' in the trend for exercise as recreation and for more information on the research in this area in the pages on <https://www.middlebrow-network.com/Home.aspx>.

German Body Culture in the British Rhythmic body

I began this chapter with the student bodies of the 'A Beautiful Group' tableau and the words of Mrs Bagot Stack's 1929 article 'Dancing and the Medical Profession'. On first quoting from this article above, the first few words were omitted, it is pertinent now to include them and I italicise them for emphasis:

It must have been clear to all those who saw that magnificent German film "The Way to Health and Beauty" – banned in this country, for some mysterious reason – that scientific and artistic body training is going to play a very important part in the medicine of the future – medicine in its preventive aspect, medicine which will include in its curriculum the study and practice of health, as well as the study and treatment of disease (Bagot 1929, 778).

That 'magnificent German film' is *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (1925, 1926) and the term *Kraft* is translated variously in rendering the title into English. Contemporary scholars translate *Kraft* the same way as Bagot Stack; 'Ways to Health and Beauty' (Huxley and Burt 2017, 305). Franco favours 'Paths to Strength and Beauty' (Franco 2012, 67). Clearly 'Strength and Beauty' was a less preferable descriptor for Bagot Stack to 'borrow' in the naming of her new *League*, for she emphasised 'Health' over 'Strength' in the title of her new 'Women's League of Health and Beauty' in 1930. As I have already explored, Bagot Stack invests the term 'health' with racial (i.e. maternal) meaning and responsibility (for the individual and the nation). 'Strength' does not have the same reach in terms of meaning. This discussion over the various English translations of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* and Bagot Stack's preference for 'Health' rather than 'Strength' in her English interpretation of the German term *Kraft*, adds further emphasises to the influence *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* has on the development of her *Women's League for Health and Beauty* project. By recommending *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* to readers of the

Dancing Times, Bagot Stack indicates the transnational dynamics of the physical culture movement whilst also offering the scenes of various forms of movement and dance in a German film as the embodiment of a British ideal that British women can attain through her '*artistic body training*'.

In the first section of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, images of healthy babies and young children are contrasted with scenes involving un-fit adults and all are intersected with images which represent modern science. For example, a dejected looking businessman holding a briefcase and a young woman sewing with a sewing machine are both shown naked to the waist with weak and bent-over backs. Quickly following is a graphic depicting a women's corset squeezing the waist and the internal organs, in and out, and a graphic representing the modern X-ray, detailing a spine suffering from scoliosis. Another scene shows a healthy baby with a man in a white coat (a doctor) who establishes, rather alarmingly, the natural flexibility in this young body, before it risks becoming stiff and immobile when adopting an urban lifestyle as an adult. Taken as a whole, this group of scenes relays concerns about the poor health of modern adults, their lost connection with their healthy way of life as children and how modern technology can show evidence of the structural damage in their unhealthy body.

The image of the hunched-over back of the female, bending close to her sewing machine, offers a visual reminder for Bagot Stack of the condition suffered by the young European women who came to Bagot Stack's teacher Mrs. Conn, for remedial treatment of the curvature in their spine and poor posture, when Bagot Stack was working with Mrs. Conn in Paris (Stack 1988, 39). The scene with the doctor and the baby resonates with Madge Atkinson's principles of *Natural Movement* addressed in the previous chapter where I

considered Atkinson's work with young children, including those from the slums of Manchester, who were encouraged to dance *Natural Movement* forms in bare feet in the open air.²⁶⁶ Here, in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, the baby's natural flexibility represents the innate 'naturalness' of the human form before modern, urban life intervenes. This is, of course, an idealised representation of the healthy young German child. Atkinson's slum children in Manchester suffered from physical ailments caused by poverty, not least the damage which ill-fitting, hand-me-down shoes caused to their feet. The image of the 'stressed business man' resonates with Bagot Stack's comment on 'over-taxed nerves – the standard civilised complaint' and reflects Georg Simmel's analysis of the effect of the metropolis on mental life. This image also serves as a reminder that, while this chapter focuses on the female rhythmic body, the poor state of male physical and mental health was of equal concern at this time.²⁶⁷ This first section in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* ends with an image of ideal, female beauty, caught in marble by the skills of an ancient Greek sculptor. This image establishes the film's main theme; the ill effects of modernity can be cured through re-adopting the physical culture which was established during the specific historical period of Ancient Greece.²⁶⁸

The rhetoric of social hygiene (racial health) underpinning the physical culture movement runs as a sub-theme throughout *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* which, as a physical culture film was 'one of the most popular of the period,

²⁶⁶ See chapter two for the Manchester Guardian account of the *Holiday School: Making Children Happy* by H.C.B, 14 August 1926. For the other news cuttings reporting on *Natural Movement* in the Ancoats Summer Schools see The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: (NM/M/5).

²⁶⁷ For an analysis of the question of male concern see Ana Carden-Coyne 'The Sexual Reconstruction of Men' in *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism and the First World War* (2009).

²⁶⁸ See *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* here:
<https://www.youtube.com/results?q=Wege+zu+Kraft+und+Sch%C3%B6nheit>

thanks to its domestic and international success' (Franco 2012, 67). Thus, racial health and the dance and movement practices which embody it in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, are mobilised across borders and continents via the film reel and are easily disseminated through the public cinema screen, nationally and **transnationally**. It is important to re-state that social hygiene as racial health, in the overarching discourse of eugenics, was widely understood in Britain and abroad as a positive theory of new science. No-one under consideration here was fully aware of the role that social hygiene and physical culture in the overarching paradigm of eugenics would play in German National Socialism after 1933.²⁶⁹ However there is an alternative view put forward by Segel:

The modernist preoccupation with physicality, in its broad ramifications from the aesthetic to the philosophical, led inevitably, I believe, to the chillingly perverse writings of Adolf Hitler [...] (Segel 1998, 12).

This claim is interesting but highly contestable. Many would argue that there was nothing inevitable in the 'modernist preoccupation with physicality' leading to Hitler's plans for the role of eugenics in National Socialism.

My interrogation of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* offers the opportunity for analysis in terms of a shared experience of ideas that promote modern solutions in the drive to improve individual, social and national health. This transnational sharing in the context of women's recreational practices offered a salve to the anxious, post-war discourse of degeneration. The internationalism

²⁶⁹ The 'cult of the body' in National Socialism's Arian *Volk* is a rich area of study but lies outside the confines of this study. Among the studies which address this area from the historical perspective see (Griffin 2007) and for more on the role of the 'filmed body' in the Weimar Republic, see (Elswit 2014).

of the female rhythmic-movement collective is the context in which Bagot Stack situates *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, and it is where my focus now turns.

Carden-Coyne offers an analysis of the rhythmic movement collective, through the framework of post-war regeneration, in the British Colony of Australia:

Dancers became important symbols in rebuilding society after mass mobilisation, industrial war, and the destruction of individualism (Carden-Coyne 2009, 293).²⁷⁰

During the late 1920s and 1930s across Britain and the British Empire's dominions such as Australia, groups of quotidian women were dancing, stretching, leaping and spinning in unison, both for pleasure and as symbols of individualism in their collective, as Carden-Coyne suggests. The individual in the collective of the **transnational**, rhythmic movement can be understood as an important symbol for national, post-war re-construction. When the individual engages the same movement at the same time as all the other individuals in the group of dancers, they become one organic, group force. They pull together as individuals. When the dancers in Australia share the same practice of building the modern female body as those in the British rhythmic movement collective, they all become 'important symbols in rebuilding' both societies. They can be read, at the same time, as symbolic rebuilders of Australian and British society, separately and collectively, as symbols for the regeneration of the British Empire. This reading of the individual at one in the group force of national and rhythmic movement regeneration, pulls the Australian and British experience into a symbiosis of national and imperial regeneration. Add to this symbiosis the German physical cultures shown in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, and the female rhythmic movement collective of health, strength

²⁷⁰ Carden-Coyne addresses the ubiquity of 'Classical Revival Dancing' (which I term as the 'rhythmic movement collective'), across Europe, America and Australia; with a particular focus on the decade of the 1930s.

and beauty is, I argue, a truly an international symbol of a racial health regeneration. In the context of Schwartz's theory of torque as the twentieth-century's new kinaesthetic, Carden-Coyne's analysis together with my interrogation, can be understood in terms of **Empire and the transnational**, as a female collective that curves and pulls the discourse of racial health within, and across national borders. **The female rhythmic movement collective can also be considered – within the paradigm of physical culture, which Segel characterises as modernist physicality – for its social and political impact:**

No less symptomatic of modernist physicality, and of far greater impact both socially and politically, were the physical culture and gymnastic organizations collectively representing a great international movement that reached the zenith of its popularity and influence in the period 1890-1939 (Segel 1998, 4-5).²⁷¹

This female curve **of global** regeneration is founded in the modern reconstruction of the body through ancient Greek ideals; the same ideals that support *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* a film that, as Huxley and Burt state, 'neatly captures attitudes to health and wellbeing that were widely held in Europe and North America in the early part of the twentieth century' (Huxley and Burt 2017, 205).²⁷² Franco lays out the general intent of *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*:

The general intent was to actualise the ideal of classical beauty and the harmony between body and spirit through a comparison of reenactments of Greco-Roman sports and leisure with modern training methods. [...] it followed the major cultural (and ideological) trends of the time [...] which aimed at counteracting industrialisation and the degeneration caused by modern lifestyles by reappraising physical education and encouraging a closer connection to nature (Franco 2012, 67,68).

²⁷¹ Here Segal is comparing the impact of these organisations to the power of the trend for male body building. Although some of these body-builders were internationally famous at the time, they are now hardly remembered (Segel 1998, 4).

²⁷² <https://www.youtube.com/results?q=Wege+zu+Kraft+und+Sch%C3%B6nheit>

These ideals and comparisons are actualised in 'six independent parts, each devoted to a precise historical moment of physical education, free body culture, life reform movement, sport, leisure and dance' (Franco 2012, 67). It is also interesting to note that the dance sections in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* include rare footage of the German modern dance pioneers Rudolph Laban and Mary Wigman, and their students.²⁷³

In another, long sequence, unconnected with Laban, female gymnasts meld the strength in their gymnastic technique with fluid and flowing rhythmic movement. At first one, and then two young women balance on a narrow jetty stretching out over a body of water; there is no sign of modern industry in view. They demonstrate strong, slow-moving and undulating movements while balancing high on the balls of their feet on this narrow jetty; they are extremely focused.²⁷⁴ When in the profile plane facing each other, they slowly ripple their torsos forward and back, in an oppositional plane to their partner, whilst keeping the same distance of space between them. The focus is on the strength and grace they make possible in their body; although they are female and naked, their movements are not sexualised. They move in a shared rhythm. They are performing in the natural environment of air and water in the natural state of their unclothed bodies.²⁷⁵ They are totally absorbed in the rhythms of their own and each other's body and they are connected through their shared, rhythmic dynamic. They do not face the camera lens; they are as

²⁷³ Laban and Wigman also feature prominently in (Segel 1998, 85-99).

²⁷⁴ This use of the high demi-pointe has already been noted in the work of the British *Natural Movement* system in the previous chapter. Not only does this form strengthen the muscles in the foot, ankle and lower leg, it is also a foundational aesthetic in the neo-Hellenic understanding of primitive movement.

²⁷⁵ These women represent the 'free body movement' (*Nacktkultur*) in German culture that promotes nudism as a way to bring the modern body closer to nature. It is a rich area of study that lies outside the confines of this thesis however, see (Toepfer 1997) for a comprehensive analysis of this culture.

one rhythmic force. In the physicality of their movement they engage a slow 'release and contraction' of the muscles deep in the lower torso and pelvis, creating a push/pull dynamic which undulates the spine and flows through to the upper torso and energises the arms to form around or away from the body. The centre of their corporeal push/pull dynamic holds the gravity of the body. Their centre of gravity is lower and deeper in the body than that in the body of Duncan's dance. Her 'motor in the soul' is centred around the solar plexus; the gymnasts' is deep down in the pelvis. These gymnastic bodies perform the modern rhythmic movement aesthetic of the period on camera. Interestingly, an inter-title in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* states how 'Rudolph Laban de Varalja ennobles gymnastic exercises to the dignity of rhythmic dance' in the film (Franco 2012, 68); the same can be read in the rhythmic aesthetic of these gymnasts. Although the gymnasts come from a different physical discipline and a different time, and their body centre is lower in the pelvis, they and Duncan share the quality of idealised physicality in grace and beauty as they embody the neo Hellenic archetypes at the heart of Duncan's dance, and a central intention of this film.

Filmed movement has a powerful immediacy that draws the passive spectator in to the action showing on the screen. The spectator feels this shift from passive to active, physically, as a visceral sensation, deep in the tissues of their body. The spectator's body is now in a **deeply personal haptic relationship** with the movements of the gymnasts. **This active connection in the kinesthetic empathy the spectator's body shares** with the rhythmic movements of the gymnasts on screen, also enables the spectator actively to connect with the intent of the film described by Franco above; scientifically modernised, ancient, female, gymnastic rhythms can reverse the degenerative effects of modern life styles on the body. This interrogation of how rhythmic

movement synchronises the body as seen on celluloid – and how the spectator becomes an active participant in synchrony with the rhythmic movements – offers one example of the way movement mediates ideas. This shared synchronicity of ideas through movements is also enabled when rhythmic movement is stilled in a photograph. A moment in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* captures the gymnasts in an image that reflects how they are framed to 'actualise the ideal of classical beauty [...] of Greco-Roman sports and leisure with modern training methods' (Franco 2012, 67,68) in their natural nudity in the natural environment. This context denies any objectification of them as young women performing naked on camera. However, without the context, this image is ambiguous when re-produced, as publicity material in the form of a postcard, for *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*. They are naked young women, in a natural environment, representing the film which is, as stated previously, a national and international success. What protects them from objectification is their own gaze; they are absorbed in their own movement and do not project through the camera lens. This also allows their physical rhythmic form to 'actualise' the modern in classical beauty. When the mechanics of the body that gives form to the modernised, classical ideal is compared with other images of rhythmic body forms of the classical ideal, interesting commonalities emerge.

When the rhythmic forms of the gymnasts in Figure 3.2 are compared with those of the *Natural Movement* forms in Figure 3.3, they reveal a commonality in body structure, even when caught at various stages of the completion of their movement. The gymnast on the right in Figure 3.2 is in the same dynamic of movement as two of the women in *Natural Movement* in Figure 3.3. If this gymnast was to lean her weight further back, she would be at the same extreme extension of her pose as the woman on the left in Figure 3.3 and the

one in the centre of the photograph; both of whom have reached the completion of their pose. The other women in Figure 3.3 are at various stages



Figure. 3.2 German gymnasts in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* 1925.²⁷⁶

of working through the body to reach the extreme extension of the final moment. Note how the whole body is in balance in these two particular dancers in Figure 3.3, the deep knee bend with lifted heel forms a centre line with the pelvis, while the extreme backward lean in the back and head is counterbalanced by the forward thrust of the raised, curved leg, and the oppositional arm. The same central line of balance – from the lifted heel through the pelvis – supports the gymnast's body on the left in Figure 3.2 which is in a deep contraction, and the body on the right, which is in contracted release so that it can lean behind the central line of balance. The gravity and

²⁷⁶ This image, and many others from *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, were reproduced as postcards to advertise the film. They can be seen on the film-star postcard BlogSpot website. (I do not include the link here because it carries format issues). My thanks to Alex Goody for bringing this website to my attention.

weight in each of these bodies is deep, while the lift, either over or behind the central line, is in the chest. Materially, the torsion in the body of the three bodies compared in Figures 3.2 and 3.3. enables these counterbalances



Figure 3.3. Students in Natural Movement c.1924. Reproduced with kind permission from the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey.²⁷⁷

and controls the release in the physical body, while at the same time preventing the bodies from falling. Corporeally, the torsion in the body is controlling all these counterbalances while for the *Natural Movement* dancers, this torsion also allows the release of the 'natural outcome of feeling', the release Atkinson so clearly points to as the important end-point for the total health of the modern body, a health that is achieved as they embody iconic Hellenic forms. In another example of Schwartz's theory of torque as the new

²⁷⁷ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/F/3/1/3/2.

kinaesthetic in this era, he identifies the Hellenic in the new movement practices, which I represent in the examples of *Natural Movement* and Bagot Stack's '*artistic body training*' above, as the mediator in the corporeality and emotional release which these bodies action and release to the wider community (Schwartz 1992).²⁷⁸ Conversely, the dynamic torsion remains corporeal in the bodies of the gymnasts in Figure 3.2; they do not invest emotion.

The six young women performing Bagot Stack's scientific system of body training in the next photograph (Figure 3.4), also share the same intense body torsion of counterbalance in their physicality and again they may also be at different stages of reaching the final form of the movement identified in the two women in *Natural Movement* in Figure 3.3. Conversely, while the young woman in the middle of the line of five in Figure 3.4 is markedly more upright than the others, this may be because she acts as a stabiliser in the centre of the line, while the others are in a counterbalance of gravity; the central body may not be progressing towards the same degree of counterbalance as are the others in the line. The leaping movement in the top group of young women in Figure 3.4 is an expression of strength, which comes from the muscles in the legs and feet, while their torsos are held through the strong torque in their core abdomen muscles, and the strong muscles around their spine. In all these expressions of movement, the aesthetic is one of relaxed effort; the torque in the abdomen releases the extensions of the limbs. If the abdomen is strong, the limbs are free to move to their limit without strain. Controlled breathing energises the body through relaxed effort which also conserves enough energy to prevent exhaustion. This dynamic is maintained through the off-centre

²⁷⁸ See also (Card 2011) which discusses Schwartz theory extensively.

balance they all engage through the strengthened core muscles. Even though the exact positional shapes of the head, arms, legs and torsos may differ in the rhythmic bodies highlighted in these examples, and, by extension between the various modalities of the particular movement schools, the central physical component in common to all is this core strength; a strength which enables the idea of the Hellenic.

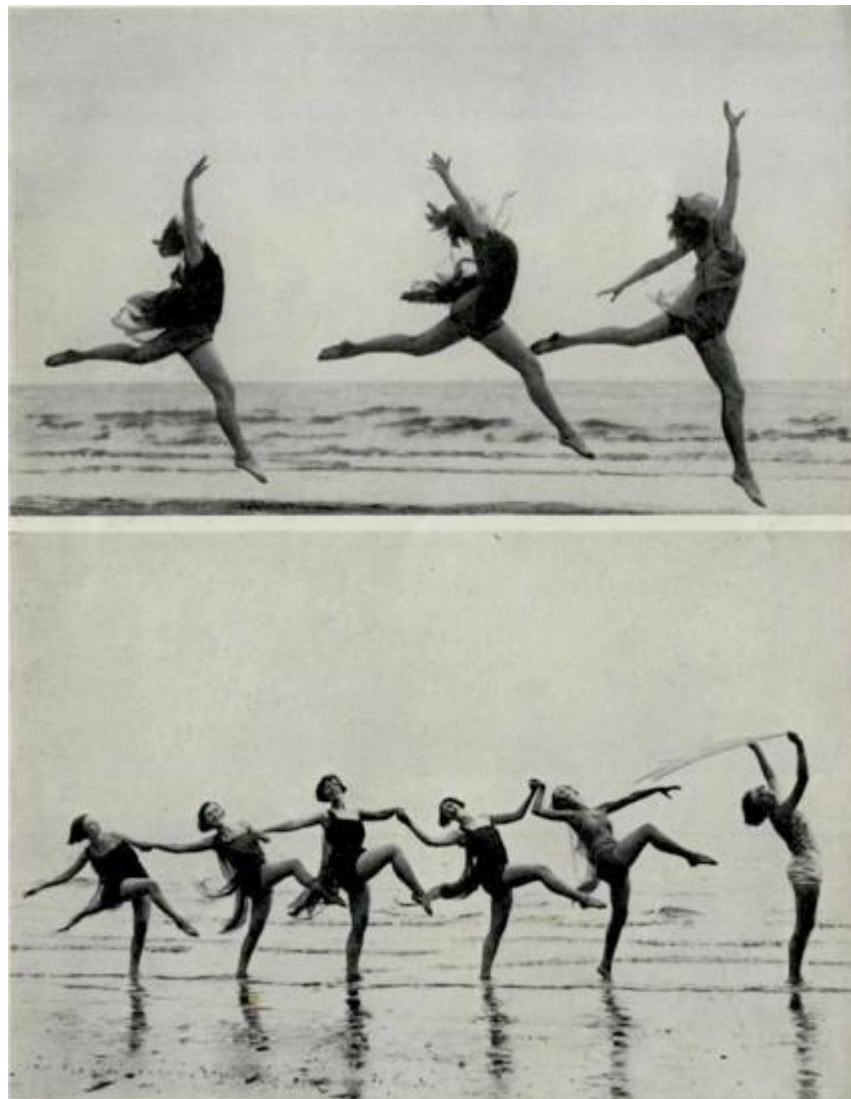


Figure. 3.4 Female students in Bagot Stack's School of Health c 1929.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ Photographs reproduced from the article 'The Meeting of Prunella Stack and Gertrude Scholtz-Klink at Claridges in 1939': <http://www.nickelinthemachine.com/2011/12/two-perfect-women-the-meeting-of-prunella-stack-and-and-gertrud-scholtz-klink-at-claridges-in-1939/>.

The aesthetic of grace and dynamism that this strength produces, signifies and embodies the grace and beauty of the inanimate marble etchings and vase paintings of the original ancient Greek period which so inspire the modern, neo-Hellenic of the rhythmic movement collective. This collective understands the ancient iconography to represent the real bodies of quotidian women in past times (Card 2011, 143) which they now embody as the modern twentieth-century new woman. The bodies in *Natural Movement* and the 'artistic body training' system in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, express a strong form, common in the rhythmic movement collective, which is sometimes described as the Nike motif when grounded, and as 'winged flight' when in the air. The 'winged flight' leap actions the ideals read into the non-quotidian Nike, the fifth-century marble representation of the Goddess of Victory 'perched on the grand staircase of the Louvre' in Paris (Carden-Coyne 2009, 282). As quotidian women action the Nike, winged-flight motif, such as those leaping on the shoreline in Figure 3.3, they celebrate the sensual body in the plan for post-war recovery:

Unencumbered by time, space, and gravity, the female body cutting through space symbolised new directions in society. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes of war, the classical dancer elevated society from despair (Carden-Coyne 2009, 266).

Carden-Coyne's classical dancer (classical in the sense of the Classical era in Ancient Greece rather than the 'classical' in the ballet dancer) is my everyday rhythmic-movement young woman and Carden-Coyne is highlighting how the rhythmic movement collective responds to the dystopia of war with their urgent drive in the direction of recovery. In their twentieth-century production of the neo Hellenic, strengthened through modern science, all three female practices under discussion here, invest in the ideological mission – through recreational, health improving movement and rhythm – of regeneration in the individual modern body for itself, and for the restructure of the nation, against the

degenerative effect of modern life styles and post-war dystopia. The mission in the rhythmic movement collective that these three practices represent through their photographic images, constantly needs new recruits. Kinaesthetic empathy with rhythmic movement, which works subliminally and powerfully, is one method of recruitment, alongside the more obvious routes of public demonstrations and advertising. The rhythmic movement collective shares an energised aesthetic of joyous rhythmic movement; a force that can transmit across the space between performer and spectator, even when viewing an image. **For Reynolds, central to dance in this period and her analysis of it, is 'the uses of energy in movement, and their transformation', and that 'this transformation comes about through kinaesthetic imagination'** (Reynolds 2007, 1). **For Garrington, 'kinaesthesia (the body's sense of its own movements)' and her analysis of touch as 'the active or passive experience of the human skin, subcutaneous flesh, viscera and related nerve endings' is the haptic in modernist writing** (Garrington 2015, 16). **In chapter one, I analysed Julie Townsend's description of the guttural response felt in her somatic body to the imagined physicality of Josephine Baker in motion; a trace of which is captured for her in a sketch of the dancer on a poster on a dormitory wall, as the force of kinaesthetic empathy that Baker experienced. All three examples energise the New Modernist Studies' fascination with the somatic, in particular in the transformative in the dynamics of rhythmic bodily movement as the visceral and guttural in the kinaesthetic of imagination or empathy, for both the performer and the spectator.**

The bodies in all the photographic representations in this chapter, have the same potential **to cross the space between the stilled image and the viewer**. The dynamic force in their stilled movements can transmit through the

viewer's body, viscerally in their organs and limbs. The young women's imagined movements move in the viewer's limbs. The viewer can sense the torque in their abdomen, as the viewer responds to the stretch in the stilled leaps, the off-centred leans, and the snaking, rippling torsos. Through this relationship of kinaesthetic empathy, the viewer can subliminally absorb the ideological inspiration that contributes to the aesthetic of the stilled movement forms to which their body relates.

Never the less, a paradox exists in the comparative analysis of the rhythmic bodies in the three images when they are placed in the extended interrogation of the international rhythmic movement collective. Which I argue can be understood in terms of an international female collective which curves and pulls the discourse of racial health within, and across national borders. The paradox is not in the commonalities of the structures that enable the movement forms, nor in the cultural ideology which stages the neo-Hellenic as the salvation of the modern body. It is in the nationalism within the transnational political ideology that the three images analysed above represent. The gymnasts symbolise the idea of everywoman in the new, post-war Germany, the country that was at war with Britain some ten years earlier. Bagot Stack sees the German film in which they appear as a transnational example of modern scientific physical culture that she can reproduce for British young women who train in her movement system. The bodies in *Natural Movement* and Bagot Stack's body training represent the strong, healthy, new quotidian woman of post-war Britain. The rhythmic movement practices in Australia see their own 're-building of the body beautiful' in terms of Australia's own degeneration in combination with Britain's post-war rebuilding enterprise, as an outpost of the British Empire. Each nation sees rising above mechanisation and war as essential to their own post war reconstruction. Although each

political ideology is national Bagot Stack, for example, shows how the rhythmic movement collective also moves beyond national borders when she states her aim of universal racial health for peace, that her *Women's League of Health and Beauty* represents. Thus, the paradox of national ideological regeneration within each separate nation manages to co-exist within the utopian, transnational ideological curve for female regeneration, focused through the practice of rhythmic movement in the collective. On this international level, all the bodies in the three images analysed above represent the individual in the collective of rhythmic movement which connects the new woman with the neo-Hellenic, nationally and transnationally.

In Carden-Coyne's analyses of the 'reconstruction of the female body', the mechanism through which the female body is reconstructed stands in opposition to my argument here. She writes that:

Dancers wondered: how could civilization be brought back from the abyss? What special role should women play in this endeavour? Symbiotically, ancient dances remodelled for modern women's bodies could reveal the secrets of healing to the world. (Carden-Coyne 2009, 265).

For Carden-Coyne the forms of movements understood to have been originally performed in the dance of Ancient Greece ('ancient dances') are 'remodelled for modern women's bodies.' Conversely, as I contend, this symbiosis occurs the other way around. It is in the very process of the movement forms the young women learn, forms achieved through the modern development of the strengthening techniques of torque and spiral in the abdomen, that the remodelling of 'modern young women's bodies' occurs. The 'ancient dances' are enabled through these remodelled, strong bodies. The 'ancient dances', do not re-model the body; the learned techniques, that strengthen the body and enable the body to perform those 'ancient dances', do.

It is also problematic to assume the thought processes of the modern women who take part in the rhythmic movement collective, which Carden-Coyne describes as 'Classical Revival Dance'. Nonetheless, by giving rhythmic dancers the voice to '[wonder]: how could civilization be brought back from the abyss [and] what special role should women play in this endeavour', Carden-Coyne does bring the female dancer and her body back into the conversation from which she is so often missing. Carden-Coyne empowers the dancer (or the quotidian woman dancing) with ownership of such powerful ideas. In this she also rebalances the rhetoric that emphasises the thoughts and ideas of those pioneers who create modern and modernist artistic practices over the silent voices of those who actually embody the movement forms. It is their moving body which mediates the cultures these pioneers project. Thus, the innovators of these new movement practices, together with the young women who perform them, collectively symbolise the culture of female re-generation, informed by ancient Greek cultures, and individually developed in their own body by their own effort.

Media technologies and rhythmic bodies in domestic space

While the nudity on show in *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* meant that British audiences were denied the opportunity to see the moving images of women dancing and moving rhythmically in the public cinema, as I go on to argue in this section, new technology brought the trend for recreational exercise directly into the home. Madge Atkinson is one new movement pioneer who takes advantage of new media technologies, namely the domestic radio, to disseminate the personal benefits of dancing for fun and health, to new audiences. The public service British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), originally the British Broadcasting Company, came into being on January 1,

1927, instituted under the leadership of Lord John Reith.²⁸⁰ On at least three occasions, November 22 and November 29, 1927 (the first year of the BBC) and August 30, 1935, Madge Atkinson talked about movement, dance and music on regional BBC radio.²⁸¹ In the last of these broadcasts, in 1935, Atkinson took part in the last edition of a regular programme that is described in the *BBC Radio Times Journal of British Broadcasting* as 'The Northern Know-Alls are back at the microphone and this evening at 7.30 they will give their idea on hobbies for the winter'.²⁸² The 'Northern Know-Alls' are five experts in their field who 'will tonight be speaking on 'Hobbies for Winter Evenings''. This composite programme of four episodes features the 'Gubbins family' as the listeners, and the following extract from the script not only sets the scene, in which Atkinson will talk about dance, but also characterises an 'everyday' family preparing to tune in to a programme given by experts in the fields of 'Writing, the Social Service, Embroidery, Dancing and Acting', cultural fields that are represented as hobby activities for the winter months. This reflects the monopoly of the BBC and how it 'remained largely in the hands of the country's cultural ruling classes until the 1950's' (Whittington 2014, 636).

²⁸⁰ In other English-speaking countries such as America and Canada, radio broadcasting was localised, commercial, and supported by advertising fees. In Britain, the Director General John Reith developed the model for a national broadcasting corporation (BBC) maintained by the payment of licence fees by the owners of the radio. For an account of the relationship between modernism and BBC Radio see Todd Avery: *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC 1922-1938*.

²⁸¹ See the BBC Genome Project: <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk> for listings of Atkinson's broadcasts: 'Miss Madge Atkinson: Why do We Dance?', *The Radio Times, The Journal of British Broadcasting*, Manchester, Issue 216, 22 November 1927 (at 7pm), p. 16; 'Miss Madge Atkinson: Movement and Music', *The Radio Times, The Journal of British Broadcasting*, Manchester, Issue 217, 29 November 1927 (at 7pm): p. 429 and 'The Northern Know-Alls', *The Radio Times, The Journal of British Broadcasting*, North, Issue 621, 30 August 1935 (at 7.30pm), p. 17. My thanks to Alex Goody for drawing my attention to this Project.

²⁸² The following analysis of each of Madge Atkinson's BBC Radio talks is based on the typed scripts for the broadcasts, not the actual recordings. These scripts are held in The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives and the references for each talk are given as each script is analysed.

The 'Northern Know-Alls' draws a picture of 'everyday' life in 1935 in which tuning in to the radio in the evening is characterised as a regular event:

Good evening to you. Caractacus Gubbins [played by G.H. Deyne] speaking. I'm afraid it's all over. Our holiday's finished; we got back to-day from the camping coach. I've had a lot of difficulty with the family. Henry wanted to tinker with the car; Sarah and Penelope were for unpacking and the boys for the pictures – but I managed to hold them here; and why? For the last batch of Northern Know-Alls are broadcasting to-night [...] Do you remember the family motto, listeners? "Enterprise and Efficiency" so it ought to be a good programme for us [...] Switch on the wireless, James, and do stop talking. Short wave, boy, short wave, and about 79 on the dial.²⁸³

Ian Whittington draws attention to how an increased interest in Radio Studies, within new literary modernist scholarship 'has secured its place in the constellation of media apparatuses that define technological modernity' (Whittington 2014, 634). This small extract from the radio script for 'The Northern know-Alls' and my following analysis of dance on the radio in this era, presents the radio's mediation of embodied practice. In doing so I add a particular focus on dance, movement and the body on radio to the cultural and materialist turn in current modernist research.

In Atkinson's contribution as a 'Northern Know All' she begins with a list of ballroom dances that will be popular for the winter. The 'ever popular Fox-trot will be decidedly the favourite', a 'new conception' of the Charleston, 'the Waltz will still hold its own place', 'a new Tango [...] has aroused great interest' and 'The Rumba is now being played by all the dance bands throughout the country, and is a dance that has obviously come to stay'.²⁸⁴ She mentions how

²⁸³ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, including the script for the preceding talks 'The Northern Know-Alls', in The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

²⁸⁴ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, *The Northern Know-Alls*', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

'Mr. Henry Hall will be broadcasting the music for all these dances every week, and gramophone records can also be obtained' and that 'you will see them danced in all the big dance halls in the towns and cities'.²⁸⁵ This demonstrates the mass popularity of ballroom dancing in large dance-halls and how new technology in the form of radio and the gramophone intensified the experience, through bringing the big band dance music, live, into the home. For Zimring, social dancers, who include the quotidian women here who hear which dances will be popular in the winter of 1935, encounter when they dance, in couples and *en masse*, the 'multiple connotations' of 'stringent social conventions, tradition, ritual, the pleasure of group formations, and mass forms of leisure and entertainment' (Zimring 2013, 6). Zimring highlights the tensions in the perception of this mass of dancing couples 'especially in the most crowded contexts such as packed, purpose-built dance halls, accommodating hundreds, even thousands of dancers' which characterises the dancers as a mass that is 'threatening abstract, patterned, geometric and indeed machine-like' (Zimring 2013, 7).²⁸⁶

I have noted a similar characterisation in critical accounts of the performance of the Tiller Girl's kick-line above, and, as I argue there, when this 'threatening, abstract' group of dancers is read differently, the individual dancer – through their adaptations of instinctive movement which rhythmically aligns them with their movement of their partner, or troupe – reveals an agency that brings the

²⁸⁵ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, *The Northern Know-Alls*', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

²⁸⁶ See (Zimring 2013) for more analysis on this phenomenon which she reads in the context of modernist literary figures and their work, including Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and William, Carlos Williams and the response to social dancing from modernists in other fields which include the Classics scholar Jane Harrison, the Cambridge ritualists and those connected with Bloomsbury Group.

group together in a pleasurable group aesthetic. The alienating and de-individualising effect of modernity, which 'stringent social convention' sees represented in this 'machine-like' mass of social dancers is, conversely, pleasurable inclusive, and Atkinson presents this pleasurable inclusivity as a positive, health enhancing form of exercise in her broadcast. Atkinson's intimate manner suggests her domestic audience 'may know quite a lot about it [stage dancing] from what you have seen on the films'.²⁸⁷ Atkinson is probably referring to the popular musical films from Hollywood cinema, that feature the social dancing of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and the Busby Berkeley chorus lines.²⁸⁸ The assumption that her audience has already learned about dance through 'the films', demonstrates how '[t]he radio public of the 20th century was, for the most part, also a reading public and a film-going public, and their responses to the other media conditioned, and were conditioned by, their responses to radio' (Whittington 2014, 635). Atkinson, though, would rather raise awareness of her own practice of *Natural Movement*, 'to talk a little more on dancing we can do for ourselves, both for amusement and health'.²⁸⁹ Throughout her broadcast, the radio allows the listener their personal agency and Atkinson to form a pro-active relationship with the idea of dancing for one's self:

Natural Movement dancing has developed a great deal during the last few years, both in schools for girls and boys and in day and evening classes for women and young girls. The enjoyment and enthusiasm at such classes is wonderful to watch. Pupils learn to use their bodies in a controlled health and natural manner, using exercises based on

²⁸⁷ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, *The Northern Know-Alls*', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

²⁸⁸ By 1935 Astaire and Rogers had danced together in various Hollywood musicals including *Flying down to Rio* (1933), *The Gay Divorcee* (1934) and *Roberta* and *Top Hat* (1935). They featured popular social dances such as the Quick Step and the Foxtrot and performed unique tap-dance sequences. Busby Berkeley had made many films by 1935, choreographing chorus girls in patterned sequences, which were often filmed from above; *42nd Street* (1933) has become famous for its many tap-dance sequences.

²⁸⁹ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, *The Northern Know-Alls*', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

actions of everyday life, like the Greeks in their great period of physical and artistic perfection.²⁹⁰

Here, Atkinson's attention to *Natural Movement* is working on various levels. Firstly, she is demonstrating how her movement practice is part of the school curriculum for young boys and girls, which gives her practice some authority for those quotidian female listeners who might come to her evening classes after work, and the mothers when the husband is home to look after the children. She is welcoming women to enjoy learning how to move their own body for their own health and pleasure and is democratising health and fitness through the home radio. In the two earlier broadcasts: *Why Do We Dance?* (22.11.1927) and *Music and Movement* (27.11.1927), Atkinson discusses dance and movement in the context of cultural history. In *Music and Movement*, she refers to 'all movement' as dance and defines the various styles as 'three definite forms of the dance, the Ritualistic, the Spectacular and the Social' emphasising that in 'each of these three forms music is the guiding, rhythmic spirit'.²⁹¹ It is notable that Atkinson mentions the 'Ritualistic' which Zimring lists as a complication in the trend for mass dancing at this time. Atkinson will explain the ritualistic in historical terms, but before that she pays attention to music, which 'is the guiding rhythmic spirit for movement'.²⁹² Music is the not emotional ruler of movement, an interpretation which is a reminder of the time Atkinson spent working this out, as recalled by Carter (2011, 24). Atkinson gives more attention to the three 'definite forms of dance' in her

²⁹⁰ 'Talk for the BBC, 30 August 1935, *The Northern Know-Alls*', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/9.

²⁹¹ 'Music and Movement by Miss Madge Atkinson, 29 November 1927, BBC', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/5/3 (pp. 1-5), p.1.

²⁹² 'Music and Movement by Miss Madge Atkinson, 29 November 1927 BBC', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/5/3 (pp. 1-5), p.1.

earlier *Why do we Dance?* broadcast, in which she answers the question 'why do we dance?' straight away:

Because we want to is the general answer. I cannot imagine anybody dancing unless they want to. There is something within us makes us dance, for amusement either for ourselves or for others, I think it is the magic word rhythm which runs through us when we move to the rhythm of music.²⁹³

Movement to the rhythm of music is a further example of the space rhythmic movement practices have created in their modernised forms of rhythmic movement from the dance of their inspiration, Isadora Duncan's dance. All the rhythmic movement practices analysed in this thesis have firmly placed music in an accompanying role to movement, rather than in the 'driving seat' of Duncan's 'motor in her soul'. This distance represents the urge to present the new rhythmic movement practices as researched, 'scientifically based' forms of movement, as opposed to the more instinctive, emotional movement forms in Duncan's dance.

Having suggested that to dance is a natural urge within everyone, Atkinson splits dancing into two groups in this broadcast. The first she describes as 'spectacular or stage dancing', for the 'amusement of others', and 'social or ballroom dancing' which is dancing for personal 'amusement'.²⁹⁴ Then comes the statement that firmly roots Atkinson's theory (first interrogated in chapter two.) It is her theory that the 'natural' in rhythmic movement is first experienced

²⁹³ 'Why do We Dance? BBC recording, 22 November 1927', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/5, p.1.

²⁹⁴ 'Why do We Dance? BBC recording, 22 November 1927', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/5, p.1.

as expression of nature, and later as an expression of primitive supplication to the Gods:

Few people realise that dancing at the beginning of the world was the principal form of expression. The beginning of movement was when Man imitated and danced to the rhythms of the waves [...] and imitating and feeling this rhythm he thought he was pleasing the Gods.²⁹⁵

It is interesting that Atkinson is keen to share her ideas about the primitive roots of dancing with a general audience, ideas which she assumes will be little known to them. It reflects her grounding in neo-Hellenic ideas about the origins of dance, in a culture which is held as the ideal representation of ancient society that can be replicated in the modern age. Only those listeners who had access to a private educational system would have an education in Classical history and these talks contextualise the origins of dance and ancient Greek culture in an easily accessible manner for the everyday listener.

Towards the end of this broadcast Atkinson connects two periods of history – the ancient Greek era 500BC and the European mediaeval period – with the notion that movement has acted as a curative for the body over millennia:

When Greeks were supreme in art and war during that wonderful period of 500 B.C. their perfect physical fitness was acquired through the dance. Boys and girls were compelled to dance (quite a nice compulsion I think) in order that they might become fit citizens of the empire and perfect mothers of the future generation. Medicine men and their dances are known among the natives of many countries and here are two interesting instances where dancing has been definitely used as a cure in Europe in Mediaeval times. One cure has given name to a dance and the other cure has given through the dance the name to a disease (notably the Tarantella and St. Vitus Dance).²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ 'Why do We Dance? BBC recording, 22 November 1927', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/5, p.1.

²⁹⁶ 'Why do We Dance? BBC recording, 22 November 1927', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/4/1/5, p.5.

Here Atkinson is bringing together examples from different cultures synchronically, over the course of millennia, to argue for the universality of dancing as a means to acquire individual health in the collective responsibility for healthy citizenship. As her *Natural Movement* is based on her neo-Hellenic understanding of Greek ideals, Atkinson's broadcast reaches out to modern women to embody Greek ideals by investing their individual bodies with health and citizenship in the collective of classes in *Natural Movement*, a modern movement practice with ancient roots.

Atkinson glosses over the curative dancing of 'native medicine men' in favour of the European mediaeval Tarantella and St. Vitus Dance in her broadcast; all three instances are as problematic as her beliefs about ancient Greek culture, but her understandings of these cultures are typical to her period. The origin of the Tarantella dance was, and is, popularly assumed to derive from the mediaeval period, in the region now known as southern Italy. It is a fast, couple dance accompanied by tambourines. One idea behind naming the dance the Tarantella is the poisonous bite of the tarantula spider, which induced near-manic dancing as a response to the tarantella venom. The fast pace of this dance was thought to 'sweat out' the venom, therefore, dancing performs the cure. This is the idea Atkinson draws on.

Another notion that links the Tarantella with the St. Vitus Dance is tarantism, a form of group hysteria that materialised as an extraordinary epidemic of manic dancing between the fifteenth and seventeenth century, in Europe.²⁹⁷ Lynne

²⁹⁷ See (The Chambers Dictionary 1999, 1693) for the derivative roots of tarantella and tarantism. See (Crane and Mackrell 2004, p 467) for the history of the Tarantella as a dance in ballet and opera.

Miller provides academic insight into the extraordinary phenomenon of 'dancing mania' in mediaeval Europe, which demonstrates how 'dancing mania', 'St. Vitus dance' and 'tarantism', connect with Early Modern, Christian ideas about women and mania (Miller 2017). Miller's account opens with 'a poem taken from contemporary chronicles [which] indicates the scope and the horror of the [dancing] plague': Many hundreds in Strassburg [sic] began

To dance and hop, women and men in the public market, in alleys and streets, day and night; and many of them ate nothing until at last the sickness left them. This affliction was called St. Vitus dance. (Miller 2017, 149,150).²⁹⁸

Interestingly Miller draws on medieval ideas which associate women, the dance and mania as a female pathology as does McCarren in her comparison of the late-nineteenth-century cultural traditions of madness represented in the ballet *Giselle* and Nijinsky's early twentieth-century ballet *Sacre*, which I addressed in chapter one. Atkinson interprets the Tarantella and St. Vitus Dance as the curative for ill health through manic energetic dance, Miller reads these dances as symptoms of female mania and sin and McCarren reads the dance in *Giselle* and *Sacre* as representative of the long cultural tradition that associates madness with the female. The common factor in these three interpretations of the long cultural tradition that associates women with dance and mania, is that the tradition is pathologized by the medical profession. Atkinson breaks this tradition by suggesting that manic dancing offers a cure, rather than further evidence of this pathologizing. It is confirmation of her optimism that natural movement, based in early primitive dance, offers health benefits for the everyday listener in the 1930s.

²⁹⁸ Miller quotes this poem from '*Chronicle*, MS. Argent 'now lost' and states that 'while several of the chronicles themselves do not survive, they were often recorded in other records that do survive' (Miller 2017, 161, footnote 1).

Those hearing Atkinson's BBC radio broadcasts are being introduced to a very modern way of thinking about dancing. Not only is dancing fun, it prevents disease and it creates a fit and perfect body in the image of ancient Greek art. Atkinson is offering this ancient, artistically healthy, dancing body in terms of the model for modern citizenship. This dancing body is not only grounded in the personal realm of his or her interior self, it performs in the political space of Empire. If any young men are listening, they learn that dancing regularly will make them fit enough for war in their duty to the nation (as was required in Ancient Greece). Young women hear their potentially healthy dancing bodies described in terms of a shared biological duty to the state. Thus, dancing as recreation can recreate the ancient Greek as the new model citizen. The personal body becomes the political body and *Natural Movement* is the ideal model of dancing which enables this citizenship.

Atkinson's talks demonstrate the essence of the radio medium that makes it different from other media forms. Atkinson is communicating the value of a personal commitment to active health management through the intimacy of her voice. As Whittington describes, the instantaneity, simultaneity and intimacy in radio gave the new medium extraordinary reach as a means of mass communication (Whittington 2014, 635). Yet Reith determined that wireless should be more than entertainment for the masses, it should elevate and enlighten the populace (Cohen 2010, 588). Secondly, as Atkinson frames her exercises in the 'perfection' of ancient Greece, she is offering accessible, ancient culture through movement in her classes and bringing cultural ideals into the home. The utopian in Atkinson's neo-Hellenic view of the cultural history of dance would fit Reith's ideals in that he saw radio as a means to convey the best in human endeavour and knowledge to the widest number of

homes (Cohen 2010, 588). All three of Atkinson's talks were cultural and informative, while the 'Northern Know All's' also offered entertainment value. Atkinson's intimate talks embody the radio's ability to communicate high ideals in a mass domestic environment instantly and simultaneously and, when taken together, their mix of culture and entertainment represent how the BBC becomes permanently associated with the 'middlebrow' (Cohen 2010, 588). Cohen points to how the magazine *Punch* gave the BBC the accolade of discovering a new type, the middlebrow, because its listeners hoped they would get used to enjoying what they ought to enjoy, one day (Cohen 2010, 588). In a sense, the concept of the 'middlebrow' brings together the new modern dance and movement in the German film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit*, which inspires Bagot Stack's British system of scientific body training, and Atkinson's radio broadcasts. German Cinema, British radio and mass fitness displays, disseminate neo-Hellenic ideals through the body's physicality or voice across cultural and national boundaries. It is noteworthy to add here, that Bagot Stack produced gramophone recordings of her own exercise system designed for women to practice in their own home, with her voice giving syncopated movement instructions over the jazz rhythms of the accompanying music.²⁹⁹

Bagot Stack and Atkinson demonstrate how the new media technology in this period mediates ideas through, and about, the moving body in both the public and the private arena, on a mass scale. Domestic radio brings 'cultural' and social dancing into the home through Atkinson's voice and the live

²⁹⁹ Mollie Bagot Stack produced a complete set of five gramophone recordings of *The Women's League of Health and Beauty* exercises, on which she teaches and counts out the exercises, to the accompaniment of piano jazz rhythms. These recordings can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsKYxr57CB0&t=164s>. Accessed 22.1.19.

transmission of the Big-Bands' sound, playing in the dance hall. Gramophone recordings of social dance music enable couples to practice the current ballroom dances they learn in classes in their home, classes which are recommended by Atkinson as a recreational hobby. At the same time, the domestic space is recognised by movement pioneers, and the medical profession, as the ideal environment in which to practice home-exercise, in the quest for female strength, health and beauty. Thus, I argue, the quotidian rhythmic body is the dynamic that torques the domestic and public space into a spiral with technology, through the input and output of their shared rhythmic energies. The input of the sounded voice brings the ancient and the modern in dance into the home, in which the embodied energies in the daily practice of home exercise torque through the syncopated accents in Bagot Stack's voice. As these domestic quotidian energies discharge in the mass exercise displays, they dynamically communicate female health, strength and beauty in what I would argue is the new 'middlebrow' kinaesthetic of the twentieth century. While the dynamic of pleasurable joy does not equate with the notion that the middlebrow contains a sense of duty to enjoy, the sense of duty to the state contained in the utopian ideal of health, strength and beauty, does.

Re-constructing the 'Angel in the House': the domestic construction of the rhythmic body

As has been noted, from the turn of the century when Isadora Duncan usurped the classical dance-body and pioneered her own public display of neo-Hellenic modern movement, movement creators who follow on from her develop their own versions of new dance, and teach it to quotidian young woman in Britain and abroad. These teachers are responsible for the safe development of bodily strength in their students. When the new rhythmic movement practices

recommend the home as an exercise space, the individual woman takes charge of her own body and its reconstruction. In this, she has agency over her body and health, whilst still being a member of the transformative female rhythmic project. Support for the domestic trend for home exercise comes through the radio, the gramophone record and newsprint. Madge Atkinson details 'home exercise' instructions – supported by images of a female body which demonstrates each stage of a particular group of movements – in an article in the daily regional newspaper the *Evening Chronicle* on Wednesday April 26th 1933, in the newspaper's *Home Supplement Number 13*.³⁰⁰ Under the heading 'HOME EXERCISES that lead to Health and Grace' (Figure 3.5), the reader is offered ten photographic images of a young woman who is bare legged and wearing a dark coloured, sleeveless bathing costume which extends to mid-thigh. In each photograph she is seen stretching and bending her body into one of ten different positions. Each position is identified by a number or letter, which itself corresponds to a short, written description of how than photographic form, represent 'Hip Mobility' and appear above a detailed to attain the particular stretch or bend. Two other images, in a graphic rather textual description of how to move the body to attain this mobility. The body in these images is carefully and correctly aligned. The kneeling forms, in particular, demonstrate the ideal position of support for the back when the torso is in a stretch, a lean, a twist, a bend, a spiral or a contraction. Each kneeling form demonstrates strongly engaged abdomen muscles, which allow the lift up and away of the pelvis from the thighs, and enable the spine to twist, bend and spiral safely. Only when the core muscles are engaged can flexibility

³⁰⁰ *Evening Chronicle*, Wednesday 2⁶ April 1933: 'HOME EXERCISES that lead to Health and Grace' in The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/M/3. The original Newspaper article is cut from a copy of the Newspaper and pasted into a scrapbook. The *Evening Chronicle* was founded in 1858 and serves the North East region of Britain.

and strength in the spine be developed safely and the graceful body aesthetic be obtained.

Figure 3.5 has been removed from this version of the thesis due to copyright restrictions

Figure. 3.5. Evening Chronicle, Wednesday April 26th 1933: 'Home Exercises that lead to Health and Grace'.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/M/3.

Of course, Madge Atkinson makes the need for a strong abdomen clear, when undertaking the kneeling exercises, as can be seen in her original typescript 'Health Exercises', written in preparation for the final press article:

Kneel on both knees in an upright position with arms extended in front, shoulder level. Keep the shoulders back. Do not lean back from the knees. Keep the abdominal muscles taut throughout.³⁰²

Interestingly, with careful reading of instruction A in Figure 3.5, the last crucial directive in Atkinson's typescript for the article, 'Keep the abdominal muscles taut throughout', is missing from the instructions in the *Evening Chronicle*.³⁰³

This is a serious omission in the group of exercises that Atkinson has so carefully designed:

a few simple exercises which we can all do each day in our homes for a few moments to keep us supple, slim and healthy. It is nice to go to a class and have the inspiration of a teacher when we are able to go, but there are many who are unable to do this and to those a few hints may be helpful.³⁰⁴

It is more than unfortunate that one of her most important safety 'hints' for keeping 'us supple' is not made available for 'the many who are unable to go to a class' and who read this edition of the *Evening Chronicle*. This omission represents a paradox inherent in the rhythmic movement collective when the freedoms realised through joyous health exercise depend on the torque and restraint in the abdominal core, a strength that can only develop through the regular practice of exercises such as those Atkinson advocates for the home.

³⁰² Madge Atkinson and Mollie Suffield: 'Health Exercises' typescript article; The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/5/1.

³⁰³ If this exercise is performed without taut abdominal muscles, the spiral and twist in the torso place a severe strain on the muscles in the spine.

³⁰⁴ Madge Atkinson and Mollie Suffield: 'Health Exercises' typescript article; The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/5/1).

In the paradigm of 'health and strength' movement, the idea of healthy exercise incorporates the notion of 'do no harm to the body' through these movements. When movements such as Atkinson's well thought through *Natural Movement* practice, are adapted to fit the trend for 'home exercise' and disseminated for the general public through a mass market newspaper, the quotidian woman is left more vulnerable in the home than she would be in a class.³⁰⁵ Even so, here Atkinson is presenting her *Natural Movement* practice as a form of recreational exercise for the quotidian woman to perform in the privacy of her own home. Also, because the young woman in the images is dressed in an everyday swimming costume, she could be understood to be an everyday woman. In reality this young woman is probably a student of long standing in *Natural Movement* and her beautifully strong, lithe and graceful body represents the ideal to which the quotidian woman might aspire, rather than one she can actually obtain in the domesticity of her home, unaided.

The apparently empowering agency in the democratisation of health, strength and beauty, when practiced as recreational exercise in the home, is, in effect, a paradox of compromise, as demonstrated in my analysis of this article. The missing element of abdominal strength in the text instructions, the embodiment of the female ideal in the photographic representation, the seemingly everyday context of the swimming costume and the presentation of the domestic space as a safe environment, all represent an ambivalence within the rhythmic movement collective that is rarely addressed in scholarly analysis of the Health

³⁰⁵ Other cuts, such as the Floor exercises, from the original typescript: Madge Atkinson and Mollie Suffield: 'Health Exercises', The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) Archives, Ref: NM/E/2/3/5/1, may well have appeared in a follow up article in the *Evening Chronical*; the reference to abdominal muscles is however, the only omission from the original typescript for the exercises which do appear in this edition of the *Evening Chronical*.

and Beauty trend. In the environment of the class and public performance, the rhythmic movement collective develops health, strength and beauty over time, slowly and carefully. In the domestic environment, when rhythmic movement becomes a private, recreational past-time, everyday young women expect to acquire the body they see presented in articles such as 'HOME EXERCISES that lead Health and Grace', through 'a few simple exercises which we can all do each day in our homes for a few moments'. It is not made clear, in the trend for exercise, health and beauty in the home, how a few moments of simple exercise each day, are very unlikely to produce the ideal female body, full of health, strength and beauty, that the quotidian woman sees in this newspaper.³⁰⁶

The move from the congenial atmosphere of a community of quotidian women who *learn* 'the way to health, strength and beauty' in their group class, to the *self-taught* 'way to health and beauty' in their own personal, domestic space, represents a transition in the way the woman in the home is perceived. To allow herself to put on a bathing costume and stretch and bend for her own pleasure, at a time she chooses, in her own home, would have been unthinkable for her mother when she was the same age. In the late Victorian and Edwardian era, the middle-class woman was still confined by her corset and restricted, by male expectations, to the domestic environment, in which she puts her needs last in the family dynamic. By 1933 the new woman has agency over her domestic space, the way her body looks and feels, and over her personal time. Every day, during the time she exercises at least, the modern young woman is free to put her needs first. However, her new agency

³⁰⁶ Because, this young woman in the newspaper is most likely to be a student who has been training in *Natural Movement* for a long time.

offers a freedom which is still bound by social expectations; her biological destiny continues to loom, even if the new woman has more choice, up to a point, as to when she meets that destiny. The British Surgeon General, Sir William Arbuthnot Lane (1856-1943) and President of *The New Health Society* was also very interested in the relationship between home exercise, the quotidian young woman, slim bodies and reproduction. Lane introduces the constituency he hopes to advise thus:

Day by day, a vast army of women and girls swarm to work – in factories, offices, shops and so on. Most of them are voters, most of them would be able if necessary to live quite independently on the wages they earn by their own exertions [...] in itself a silent social revolution (Lane 1936, 13).

Lane places his army of working girls and women in the first-wave feminist movement which has gained the female franchise and is able to live economically independently. This period in the feminist movement intersects with the promotion of the female body in the rhythmic movement collective profile, a contiguity which Zweiniger-Bargielowska points to in her analysis of the health and beauty trend (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2011, 301). Modern women, Lane is convinced 'will never return to the painful and absurd dependence on men and men's favours which characterised their mentality in the Victorian era' (Lane 1936, 12). Typically for the era, Lane patronises the Victorian woman, the 'Angel in the House' I describe above, for her emotional and economic dependence on men, rather than focusing on the patriarchy who perpetuated her situation. For the modern women in 1935, no longer excluded from the public sphere by Victorian constraints, Lane recommends her home and garden as the place to 'take ourselves in hand [...] do some exercises [and] let us not forget that this exercising is a health-promoting factor of paramount importance' (Lane 1936, 156):

Cultivate, therefore the daily habit of exercising [...] I see no reason why the daily exercise should not be performed in the garden – in a bathing costume and sandals [...] a warm bath [...] followed by a brisk rubbing down with a rough towel is strongly recommended (Lane 1936, 161).

Lane's directive was preceded by some ten years in the German film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (1925), the film that so influenced Bagot Stack as noted above. In the promotion of female health and beauty for German women in this film, there is a short scene that depicts a young woman entering the garden from her house, dressed in a bathing costume. She rubs a towel vigorously over her limbs, presumably to encourage good circulation prior to exercise, before she begins to stretch and bend. She is in bare feet, on grass, and after a few exercises she exits in great leaps across the lawn.

It is useful to pause here to consider the promotion of exercise in the collective of examples thus far highlighted. When all these examples of home-exercise are taken together – *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* in 1925 and its influence on Bagot Stack in 1929, Atkinson's promotion of home exercise in 1933 and Lane's directives in 1936 – with the modern woman exercising in a bathing costume in her domestic environment at the centre, it is clear how the female, domestic space intersects with the paradigm of physical culture and national regeneration in the modernity of the interwar years. It is important to note how these recommendations also concern the idea of routine, that women should practice these exercises as a daily activity. There is an intention within these recommendations that a woman's exercise should become as everyday as any other regular domestic routine which she carries out in the home. While I have argued that the quotidian woman maintains her agency in the transformative of her domestic exercise in the home, she carries this everyday domestic

transformative agency into the everyday of the public spaces in urban modernity, in public demonstrations by the *League* in Hyde Park, for example. In this sense, daily exercise becomes a practice of everyday transformation in the domestic and urban arena and can therefore be conceived to represent the everyday in the discourse of urban modernity. From this perspective, the daily nurture of the body through exercise is meaningful, useful and, in the sense that it is practiced daily, the everyday experience. Olsen argues that the meaningful and useful in everyday experiences are an example of 'modernism's commitment to the ordinary, to experiences that are *not* heightened' (Olsen 2009, 4). I contend that the trend for daily exercise in the home during the early twentieth-century is an example of both the heightened and the commonplace in the experiences of the quotidian woman. While the modern woman experiences the height of her agency as she practices transformative exercises each day, the routine in the regularity of this practice brings it into the realm of the ordinary and everyday that Olsen highlights. I would argue further that the trend for the practice of daily exercise in the home represents one example of what Olsen describes as the 'paradox of the ordinary' (Olsen 2009, 3-12). The ordinary in the regularity of a daily exercise regime and the transformative in the actual practice of the exercises, each day, can be understood as the paradox of the ordinary in the trend for health and beauty exercise in the home.

Lane contextualises the home exercise he recommends for the modern woman in the neo-Hellenist interpretation of ancient Greek cultures:

Since the very earliest times the value of exercise in some form has been appreciated as an adjunct to good health. Races of primitive culture attached a ritualistic significance to the cultivation of a fine physique, while the Spartans and classic Greeks brought the art of

physical culture to a level which has probably never been surpassed in the History of the world. (Lane 1936, 155).

This sounds remarkably similar to Johnstone's neo-Hellenic ideal for the modern young girl that she sees in the Spartan physical culture in the original Hellenic era, discussed in chapter two. Lane's account of ancient 'physical culture' demonstrates how he, Atkinson, Bagot Stack, Johnstone, Emmanuel, Watts and Duncan, all engage the neo Hellenic in their various constructions of Ancient Greek ideals. Lane continues his advice for the health of modern quotidian woman and her body from the perspective of her mental well-being.

The best exercises are those in which an active interest is aroused [...] It is all to the good then if an aesthetic and emotional side to exercising can be cultivated [...] In England, Margaret Morris has given a lead to this type of physical culture [...] she introduces the element of creative activity which is highly beneficial from the psychological point of view (Lane 1936, 160,161).

This is also an example of how the female body and self are conceived as one somatic, physical and psychological whole, by Lane and Morris. This underlines my own positioning of the rhythmic movement collective as a central contributor to the culturally significant construction of the modern female body; the somatic-physical-psychological unity in the body that is composed here, in Lane's *Every Woman's Book of Health and Beauty*, through the agency of female home-exercise. Lane's book of *Health and Beauty* is in fact a complex mix of progressive attitudes towards women's emancipation and the prevailing ideology of social hygiene and eugenics.³⁰⁷ It offers a

³⁰⁷ The concept of social hygiene conflates the medical with the social and supports eugenic thinking. Social hygiene relates to the hereditary health policies promoted by eugenicists. See (Richardson 2008, 99, Note 20).

utopian view of the future, with the modern woman leading the way, if his advice is followed, particularly when she marries:

In the case of ordinary people the question of sterilisation does not often arise. It is a subject of the first importance to the medical administrators who have to deal with the mentally defective among the poor, with their tendency to reproduce their kind in terrible profusion. (Lane 1936, 52).

Lane's 'ordinary', *Every Woman* is defined against the dystopian mass of the poor. She is 'ordinary', she exercises daily in her domestic garden and she is told to consider sterilisation against any hereditary 'taints' she, or her husband, may carry through to her children:

It may be, however, that in marriage among people of normal mentality the transmission of other hereditary taints justifies the use of some method of sterilisation [...]. The justification for voluntary sterilisation in such cases is a matter both of conscience and expediency (Lane 1936, 52-53).

Over ten years prior to the publication of his treatise on the health and beauty for every woman, Lane had founded *The New Health Society* in 1925 with the aim to move Britain from a community perceived to be in degenerative decline to a nation full of healthy and vigorous individuals (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2011, 304).³⁰⁸ Lane's *Every Woman's Book of Health and Beauty* (1936) is not only an example of this aim, it represents the inherent aim for the quotidian female body in the rhythmic movement practices of both Atkinson and Bagot Stack. It demonstrates how their promotion of the benefits of active healthy exercise for the everyday woman to the medical community, has strongly influenced the preventative as well as the curative thinking in medical practice. Lane's advice also represents a subliminal intrusion into the modern woman's

³⁰⁸ For more on Lane and *The New Health Society* see Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska 'Raising a Nation of 'Good Animals': New Health Society and health education campaigns in inter-war Britain', in *Social History of Medicine* (2007), pp. 73-89.

domestic space through advice that medicalises her daily, domestic pursuit of health, strength and beauty. He exhibits the eugenic elements in the discourse of the physical culture paradigm as he recommends an exercise and diet regime which will aid the health of her future offspring, or just for herself if she voluntarily sterilises herself against reproducing abnormal mentality which is her duty towards the state (Lane 1936, 51-55). The only difference in Lane's eugenic stance between British and German attitudes towards sterilisation and abnormality in 1936, is that it is voluntary in Britain and compulsory under German National Socialism, although Lane's modern British woman is made to feel it is her duty to volunteer if there is a history of 'abnormality' in both her husband's and her own family background.

As noted above, Lane does not give either Atkinson or Bagot Stack the accolade of leading on 'the element of creative activity' in his book. He cites their contemporary rhythmic movement pioneer Margaret Morris (1891-1980). And this is no surprise. Morris' contribution to the new dance and movement paradigm is important, although the limits of this thesis deny a thorough analysis of her work.³⁰⁹ Indeed, my interrogation of *Natural Movement* and Atkinson's social contribution to the lives of the quotidian in the city, demonstrates her lead 'on the element of creative activity' which has been overlooked, and the reason I focus on Atkinson over the more well-known Morris as a case study. Bagot Stack is rarely considered alongside either Atkinson or Morris, because her '*artistic body training*' system was not a dance practice with a codified syllabus and examination system. Another reason why

³⁰⁹ For more on Margaret Morris from this perspective, see in particular Fiona Mackintosh in 'Dancing Maenads in Early Twentieth-Century Britain' (2012) and Michael Huxley and Ramsay Burt in 'Ideas of Nature, The Natural and the Modern' (2011).

I highlight her practice in my thesis is that it is a system which focused on the health of the quotidian woman. What is relevant to note with regard to Morris, however, is how Morris intersects the pre-war Ballets Russes, ballet and new modern dance, the female rhythmic body, exercise for health, and modernist culture:

During the war, she ran the Margaret Morris Club in London to allow women to come and go freely and respectably, as men did from public bars [...] modern artists Jacob Epstein, Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, and writers Kathryn Mansfield, Ezra Pound and Middleton Murray [were members] [...] Morris appointed James Joyce's daughter Lucia as a teacher. Morris' life and work was closely bound to the vanguard and centre of British Modernism, which influenced her interpretation of classic dance (Carden-Coyne 2009, 275-276).

Thus, through her influential connections, Morris represents the interconnectedness of the dramatic turn of expression in dance with literature and the arts in the modernist period. These inter-connections are now being recognised in the revolutionary turn taken by Nijinsky in ballet and the unique new dance of Isadora Duncan, but I argue, they still need to be recognised in the new rhythmic movement practices in the physical culture paradigm. Morris represented and still represents the fluid interweaving between modernist artistic practices (which include the revolution in dance); I would argue, however, that it manifests more through her influential personal connections than it does through her *Revived Greek Dance* which also referenced ancient Greek ideals. The Margaret Morris Club not only provided the venue for the sharing of ideas between the modernist artists and writers whom Carden-Coyne mentions above. Morris was also in a long-term relationship with the Scottish artist J.D. Ferguson, and their circle included Anne Estelle Rice and John Middleton Murray, the editor of *RHYTHM* magazine (1911-1913), the same magazine for which Rice wrote articles on the artistry of the Ballets

Russes, and contributed sketches of the ballets. The extent to which Morris' place at the centre of British Modernism influenced the development of the 'Margaret Morris method of physical culture and dancing' – a dance and movement practice which also referenced neo-Hellenic ideals – is contestable and offers an area for further research. Scope exists, for example, for testing the influence her ideas (in the Margaret Morris method) had on the dynamics and innovations of British Modernism. Notwithstanding Margaret Morris's contribution to the British pioneering drive that promoted new dance and movement practices from the perspective of female health and renewal, this chapter has chosen to focus on the practices pioneered by Atkinson and Bagot Stack.

Natural Movement and '*artistic body training*' progressively centre the quotidian woman and her body in a collective of individuals that curved across international boundaries with utopian energies during the 1930s. New domestic technologies, cinema and daily newsprint serve to democratise and disseminate the notion that the new woman gains agency in the daily domestic reconstruction of her body, for her own satisfaction and the greater good of the community and the nation state. The somatic daily practise in the neo-Hellenic imagining of an unbroken continuation with the primitive in movement, relates to the notion of the body's own intelligence; first introduced in my analysis of Duncan's dance-body and supported by my own embodied understanding of the body in movement. Reading the quotidian woman in the 1920s and 1930s through her reconstructed somatic body, produces a new way of understanding this body as one that is culturally specific to this era. And the neo Hellenic in this culturally specific female reconstruction, energises the utopian mission in what I term the female rhythmic movement collective. This

utopian vision has also revealed paradoxes. The paradox of the ordinary in the domestic environment is transformed in the extraordinary of the spectacular in the public arena. And the paradox of constraint lies in the notion of the 'race mother' ideology that is at the base of the physical culture paradigm in which the rhythmic movement collective is embraced, as it negotiates traditional and conservative values. While *Natural Movement* and 'artistic body training' are based in ideas of the natural movement forms, this is not to say that the female ballet-body did not share in the contemporary concern for female bodily health. The analysis of the dance-body in this study began in the ballet-bodies that danced Nijinsky's choreographic triptych and I draw it to a close in the ballet-body that concerns Marie Rambert in 1920's London, **and finally** in the ballet-body that opened the thesis.

So closely connected to the ballet-bodies in the Nijinsky modernist triptych in 1912 and 1913, Marie Rambert started teaching the art of ballet to British girls and young women in 1919. By 1931 these students were performing as professional dancers in the *Ballet Club* (1931), later known as *Ballet Rambert*; Britain's first ballet company (Clarke 1962, 70). Like Margaret Morris, Rambert and her British playwright husband Ashley Dukes (1885-1959), also moved in the artistic and literary circles in London, many of whom provided financial support for the Ballet Club which, by 1932, had in excess of one thousand members (Clarke 1962, 75-76). However, Marie Rambert was worried about how the modern, British female ballet student is training in the *plié*. In March 1929 the *Dancing Times* published a letter of protest from Rambert to British ballet teachers and female dancers, as a warning to them against the risk to their health of their use of a particular Russian, male dance step (also described as the Cossack step), which begins in the deep *plié*:

The “Cobbler” step should not be used by Girls

Dear Sir – May I express very strongly a protest against the use of the Russian “squatting-step” (or “cobblers-step”) by women? It ought to be forbidden to them on two grounds: (a) on the ground of hygiene, as it cannot be healthy for girls to do a step which requires such extraordinary strength in the back and thighs which not even all male dancers possess. Also the step being very rough and brutal in its character it can result in permanent internal injury. (b) On the ground of aesthetics, as this step when done by a woman is ugly, and meaningless. It is meant to express strength, and a peasant’s strength at that. It requires a specially exaggerated manly build, and if any woman was capable of doing this step in its true character she would be too abominably built for any other dancing.

I am, dear Sir, yours truly, Marie Rambert ³¹⁰

The context in which Rambert writes her warning letter is the period when the Ballets Russes was still dancing across Europe and America and had gained fame for exhibitions of the highest technical ability in traditional classical ballets and the troupe's newly created, modern ballets. She is, of course, unaware that her letter precedes Diaghilev's untimely death in the August of 1929; the event which triggers the breakup of the Ballets Russes.³¹¹ The 'cobblers or sitting' step is a signature of male technical ability in which the male dancers in the Ballets Russes excelled, and it is based in traditional, Russian folk dance. The execution of the step is extremely physically demanding for the dancer. It involves holding a deep *plié* – in which the hips are turned out so that the knees and toes are in a sideways alignment as the pelvis lowers to be parallel with the ground, an action which causes the heels to lift – all while maintaining a rigidly straight back with arms folded across the chest. Still maintaining the deep *plié*, the dancer stretches out one leg as the pelvis lifts slightly so as to bounce and land as the first leg is returned to the *plié* and the second leg is

³¹⁰ When this letter was published, Marie Rambert was running her own ballet school and the *London Ballet Club* which later becomes the *Ballet Rambert Company* and is now the Contemporary Dance Company: *Rambert* (Clarke 1962).

³¹¹ On the breakup of the Ballets Russes, some of the dancers joined Rambert's ballet company.

stretched out and returned. This step is usually repeated many times in one sequence and the torso should not move forward or back to compensate the weight changes and actions in the lower body. The core muscles need to be extremely strong to hold the body weight, so that the thighs do not take too much strain. Traditionally, women were not thought to have the muscular potential to perform this step, as Rambert demonstrates, and indeed, without sufficient core body strength, both male and female dancers risk injury to their thigh, stomach and back muscles. Notably, this is the same core body strength that protects other muscles in the back and legs from strain that Atkinson recommends in her notes for the *Evening Chronicle* in 1933. It is the vital instruction that was omitted in the final, published text for the quotidian women readers who followed Atkinson's set of exercises in their own homes.

Rambert expresses concern, for the female body in the ballet dancer who dances this male step, in the language of social hygiene at the centre of the physical culture paradigm. Social hygiene concerns were fuelled by revelations about the poor health in those men recruited as soldiers for war; concerns which led to fears about Britain's capacity for national efficiency against economic competition from abroad and which also led to social reform (Jones 1986, 14-15). The concept of national efficiency also involved concern over the high rate of infant mortality and embraced the notion of efficiency in reproduction, and the discourse of social hygiene was as all-pervasive as that of eugenics in this period. This is not to say that Rambert was in favour of eugenics, nor that she was a social hygiene reformist, rather it explains the context that produces the language through which she protests against the physical danger to female dancers in this male step. As she calls on the risk of internal injury in the performance of the cobbler-step, Rambert is referencing

the future reproductive capacity in the body of the female ballet dancer. She also connects to the health and beauty trend in the physical culture paradigm as she describes the ugliness in a female physique capable of performing this male expression of strength. Rambert is expressing concerns that Armstrong contextualises in the physical culture paradigm wherein:

Women serve as the point of mediation between the natural and artificial, between the being of the body and its shaping – a shaping 'already there' rather than produced (in the case of the masculine body) by visible effort (Armstrong 1998, 110).

Rambert fears for the female ballet dancer that, if she undertakes the effort required in this male ballet step, she would produce the large thigh muscles which are seen in the male dancer. Whilst the exhibition of physical strength is admired in the male ballet dancer, such as Nijinsky demonstrated in his famously athletic leaps, it is required to be hidden in the aesthetic of the classical female ballet dancer, as I discussed in chapter two with reference to the ballerina Anna Pavlova. There I demonstrated how the female dancer must hide her strength so as to give the effect of effortless beauty in the line and form of classical ballet. Even when this effortless aesthetic in classical ballet is challenged in the new dance of Isadora Duncan, wherein her dance embraced gravity and lowered the body centre, the required effort in her dance movement was still not visible as an aesthetic in the form of her dance movements. Effort is not evident in the female dancer until the latter part of the twentieth-century when some modern dancers began to embrace the sound and physicality in the exhale of the breath in the effort of bodily movements interactive, non-choreographed way.³¹²

³¹² This necessarily limited description acknowledges the influential move towards 'Contact Improvisation' in some areas of contemporary dance in the 1970s, devised by Steve Paxman (born in 1939).

Finale

The ballet dancer that opened this thesis has now matured:

With her hand on the barre to steady her, she nervously allows her heels to lift as gravity pulls her down into a deep pli . Her anxiety is causing tension in her thigh and neck muscles and shortens her breath; she is already sweating. She is back in the ballet class after hip surgery. Her surgeon is delighted and her fellow classmates are amazed, but she is finding it difficult to allow her ballet-body to direct the movement. Her mind is telling this body that the pli  – so familiar for decades – will cause pain. She consciously slows her breathing as she allows the familiar rhythms in the music to connect with the rhythmic actions in the pli , and she is overtaken by the uplift these rhythms release in her senses. Her body is weak and the turn-out in the hips is limited, and this is fine. Her ballet-body is learning to adapt the body memory in this action of the pli , from the formative in the strength of the performative of the younger ballerina, to the re-forming of the body in the somatic health of the mature woman. Each time my ballet-body now actions the pli  – made possible by modern technology – the body's intelligence adapts the form so that it is empathic with my now mature, body.

Without bending the knee/s, basic movement is impossible and attention to the *pli * has been fundamental in the ballet, dance and movement modalities examined throughout this thesis, through bodies as they articulated early-twentieth-century cultural ideas. **The *pli * relies on the strength in the ankle and the lifted arch, in other words the articulated foot which I have argued received such radical attention in all of my examples of dancing modernisms. I have relocated Garrington's set of somatic practices from the poster boy of the hand in modernist texts to the poster boy of the**

foot in my examples of modernist ballet, dance and rhythmic movement:
this foot provides the foundation for many of the physical movements I
have examined, including the *plié*. The *plié* itself began in the soft jumps of the Court dance and supported Nijinsky's legendary leaps in the classical ballet form he executed as the male dancing genius of the Ballets Russes. Nijinsky turned the *plié* inwards to represent the primitive in the neo Hellenic of his modernist triptych. Isadora Duncan utilised the gravity in the *plié* as she softened and curved the torso in her neo-Hellenic vision of the modern female self. The *plié* enabled the joyous leaps in the utopian energy of the quotidian women's rhythmic movement collective, at the same time as it highlights the central contemporary concerns in the discourse of the body, as it relates to anxieties over the health and strength of the body in the modern age, such as those Rambert highlights. As such, Rambert brings the ballet-body into the rhythmic movement collective, the collective that drives towards a utopia, that envisions the health, beauty and strength in the modern female body as the force that will save the nation state and humanity. This is a collective in which individual bodies also gain agency as they are moulded with the help of technology in the privacy of the home. It is a collective that negotiates traditional gender constraints as the quotidian women publicly perform their exercised body for fun and through joy. It is also a collective that demonstrates individually honed rhythmic bodies through scientifically informed movements, as it performs the neo-Hellenic ideals in their model of ancient Greek cultures. The female rhythmic movement collective thus articulates the complexities and the paradoxes in the profound cultural changes in this era of modernity and offers a new perspective on the cultures of modernism.

Conclusion:

Many of the somatic aspects of the ballet, dance and movement-bodies interrogated in this thesis are captured in my Finale's description of how the movement-body encounters movement. This encounter happens in the awareness of the breath, in the tension of the muscles, in the allowance of the intelligent body to control and release these physicalities and in how this enacts the transformative release of the senses in the rhythmic of movement as it embraces gravity. What is also made apparent is how this movement in the finale-body was enabled through modern technology. As I have discussed, in the *plié* in all movement modalities the body relies on strength particularly in the ankle and the lifted arch of the foot. This is the same articulated foot that received such radical attention in the modernist expression in, and of, movement, and I have highlighted it in my account of the ballet, dance and movement-bodies of the early twentieth century I have presented here. In my thesis I have foregrounded the silent body, presented in photographic and other images, as it might have danced in all the radically new movement modalities I have interrogated; my analysis has been greatly enhanced by grounding the methodology of my thesis in my own embodied, experiential practice.

This original methodology and analysis allows Dance History and New Modernist Studies to converse with each other through the static but energised body and in particular, my account in this thesis gives vigour to the New Modernist Studies' fascination with the body which has more often been studied through a focus on the modernist written or theatrical

performance text. My thesis reveals how the various dance-bodies I have examined mobilised the radical in modernism through their new movement modalities, at the same time as they aroused a kinaesthetic energy in the modernist artists, and writers who encountered them.

One of the most important findings enabled by my methodology, and enhanced by the sources which have underpinned my research, is the neo Hellenic in the bodiliness of all the movement modalities I interrogated. This neo Hellenic occurs, not only in the fractured forms of Nijinsky's new ballet-bodies and Isadora Duncan's embodied, primitivized new dance forms, but also in the quotidian bodies of the rhythmic movement collective. My methodology of reading through embodied practice enabled the physicality in the stilled bodies of Nijinsky's and Duncan's work to articulate meanings in the neo Hellenic, through their stilled and silent images, in cultural modernist spaces. It also enabled me to uncover the neo-Hellenic articulation of the modern in attitudes to health and gender, in the body of the quotidian female body.

Chapter one, offered the first of my thesis' contributions to a new conversation between Dance History and New Modernist Studies, in the key signifier of the articulated foot in the modernist neo-Hellenic aesthetic in early twentieth-century movement. The significance of the articulated foot in modernist ballet, dance and rhythmic movement continues throughout the thesis, conceptualised as the 'haptic foot' when the somatic body becomes the focus of my argument.

In Nijinsky's ballets the remoulded ballet-foot went through three stages of alignment in his ballet triptych. When naked, in *Faune*, its full

extensions unfolded in the parallel as it produced the Classical frieze motion. In *Sacre* it maintained the flat and heavy turn-in as it articulated the primitive connection with the earth. In *Jeux* it was restrained in the classical pointe-shoe as it danced the modern of the social dance floor. The foot in these pre-war ballets inhabited the temporalities they crossed, from the naked foot in the primitive age, to the 500 B.C. Classical era, through to the nineteenth century and a future 1920's in the pointe-shoe. Nijinsky's radicalised ballet-foot in these three forms resonates with conceptions of the modernist haptic: my embodied methodology situated the body's own intelligence as the means through which Nijinsky's ballet dancers might have actioned his intentions, as they searched to accommodate his fractured new ballet forms and express his radical sexual subtexts, through the new physicality in their body. I argued how this bodily accommodation and expression, in all three of Nijinsky's ballets, relied on the engagement of the torque and spiral in the internal muscles of the ballet-body, in order to find the articulation of the neo Hellenic, the primitive and the modern. I established that this radical expression of modernism through the new ballet-body drew a kinaesthetic engagement in the body of the spectator as it witnessed the drama of rape and sacrifice, the man/faune in seduction and pleasure, and the play on modernist ideas of sexuality in a Bloomsbury setting. This kinaesthetic engagement between the spectator and the ballet-body embodied the questions about modern identities that the ballet-bodies articulated through their new ballet forms.

In chapter two I found that what was paramount for Duncan was the aim for her dance-body to bring the audience into a kinaesthetic empathy of

circularity, with her. As she mined her body for the authentic axis of power in movement, discovered as she allowed her body rather than her mind to direct movement through this axis, she challenged the authority of traditional ballet on the performance stage. The new dance-body of the modern woman who was Isadora Duncan was exemplar of a different way of dancing on the stage. Her dance-body presented the paradox of the sensual and chaste in Duncan's liberation of primitive, yet modern movement in dance. It presented a new vision of being female in the public arena. Her body made connections with the primitive in the neo-Hellenic idea of authentic, natural movement. This produced her naturally aligned, and gravity connected, movements and presented her primitive dance as ultra-modern. Exemplar of the primitive and neo-Hellenic forms in her new dance-body was the articulated foot, which was strong in the instep and ankle, but relaxed in the toes. The foot in Duncan's dance flowed in a more natural alignment with the body, rather than the imposed and forced forms in Nijinsky's ballets. As an essential element of her dance-body's expression of the neo Hellenic, the articulated foot had a haptic, grounded force. Through the plié, the foot connected to the gravitational pull of the earth's rhythmic flow in her idea of natural movement. The haptic foot, therefore, articulated Duncan's philosophy of nature in the primitive movements she developed, in the modern of her dance, as it reflected the articulated foot seen in ancient Greek artifacts and images.

Nijinsky's radical ballet-bodies and Duncan's primitive/modernist dance-body epitomise the vibrancy in modernist theatre and dance that is so celebrated in New Modernist Studies. They also embody the

transnational and global in modernist practices. Nijinsky's dancers held the transnational of their Russian training in their ballet-bodies as they performed ancient Russian culture across the world. Duncan's dance-body expressed the pioneering past in her vision of the future for America as she owned the global stage. Their extraordinarily original works negotiated the criticism and conservative attitudes in their reception, as they forged their revolutions globally. Having established these key ideas, my focus in chapter two moved away from the much researched and famous icons of modernist dance on the professional stage, and introduced the first example in my evaluation of the neo Hellenic in movement which was specifically designed for the community of individual and everyday women. Madge Atkinson's pioneering *Natural Movement* practice in Manchester was my initial case study of these new movement practices and, unlike previous analyses of Atkinson, my research and analysis of *Natural Movement* worked from the perspective of a physical health training programme for the everyday woman rather than as a training for future dancers.

In my analysis of Atkinson in chapter two I found the neo Hellenic in her philosophy of movement which was inspired by Duncan and informed through the library resources Atkinson held. These sources, and Atkinson's documents, journals and newspaper cuttings revealed how new science, medicine and technology underpinned her training system and gave it 'scientific authority'. At the same time, this rational approach to the improvement of the health of the somatic body of the modern woman and child, was adopted by Manchester's public education system and charitable organisations for children from the slums. Her

documented visit to modern Greece in *The Dancing Times* revealed the inspiration of Cambridge Ritualist and Classical scholar Jane Harrison, who also informed Duncan's idea of primitive movement. Chapter two grounded Duncan's new dance in ancient movement, made modern on the performance stage, as it drew her audience into a kinaesthetic relationship. Her dance-body made connections between the primitive in neo Hellenism and the modern in the female self as she danced the future of modern America. Atkinson's *Natural Movement* was introduced through the perspective of the everyday, city-body of Manchester's slum child, young girl and modern woman. Modern science and technology were discovered as the foundation on which neo-Hellenic ideals for movement as health and strength for the local, city body were assembled by Atkinson. Continuing the central threads of my thesis, I indicated how the local and global come together through the similar practices of Duncan and Atkinson, while the haptic foot in Duncan's dance was also crucial to the aesthetic in *Natural Movement*. The stilled images and, in particular, the reminiscences of learning and teaching *Natural Movement* I considered, clearly demonstrate how the strength in both the foot and hand was developed in children and adults. The intimate description of the detail in developing the arch in the articulated foot with relaxed toes and the cushiony waves as the palms of the hand, pushing and releasing against each other, are beautiful examples of the haptic in dance and movement. In such details I nuanced and expanded the existing New Modernist Studies interest in the haptic in modernism.

In chapter three I located Atkinson's *Natural Movement* and Bagot Stack's '*artistic body training*' within the framework of the global

modernist dance revolution in the early twentieth-century. This original approach allowed me to interrogate the body in stilled image of these practices as they intersected the discourses of profound cultural changes in this period. By locating the quotidian movement-body in this way I connected my analysis to the New Modernist Studies' interest in the transnational, as these examples of a British modernist physicality energised ideas of Empire and the global modernist pre-occupation with physicality. I identified the articulation of issues around health, gender and motherhood, the role of science, media and technology and utopian responses to the dystopia of modernity, as I interrogated these bodies. The rhythmic is key in the production of modernism and, as I have demonstrated, the stilled dance and movement-body in images is none the less rhythmic, as it holds the before and after movement, in the present of the stilled pose. In this third chapter I pursued the transformative as it presented the modernist British physicality in '*artistic body training*' and *Natural Movement*. I therefore designated this physicality and transformation as the rhythmic movement collective manifest in the body of the modern quotidian woman.

Further, I found that the extent of the influence of the German physical culture programme in my interrogation of the body in Bagot Stack's '*artistic body training*' revealed paradoxes in the utopian philosophy which underpinned her *Women's League of Health and Beauty* enterprise. This was particularly apparent in how the 'health' in the title meant racial maternal health for the healthy production of future generations. This neo-Hellenic, utopian vision of health and beauty was designated as the ideal of future global health; in practice it was really

only for Western societies and bodies. The neo Hellenic in German body culture encouraged the belief that the everyday women in the *League of Health and Beauty* were the vanguard of racial health and beauty.

As Duncan had sourced the essence of movement through the intelligence of the body, she felt it release her inner being: Atkinson re-imagined this release as the modern model of expression of the natural outcome of feeling. This allowed the quotidian women to discover 'the self' in the holistic body and mind relationship in rhythmic movement, based in the neo-Hellenic vision of the ideal in primitive movement. Movement which lay dormant in the rhythmic body would now be released in the actions of natural movement. As I have shown, Atkinson emphasised how new science and technology underpinned the release of the natural outcome of feeling. My embodied methodology resonated with the somatic in the neo-Hellenic foundations in these modern movement practices, specifically in the dynamic transformation of the body and the self in rhythmic movement. I identified, through this methodology, the haptic in the activation of the visceral in these rhythmic movement practices, and demonstrated how this works in the individual, the collective and the viewer, through the kinaesthetic of empathy, both internally in the body and externally as a means of communication of ideas and feelings.

In chapter three I also demonstrated how both Atkinson and Bagot Stack incorporated ideas in medical science to underpin their neo-Hellenic, modern movement practices. In addition, I explored how they harnessed

modern media technologies – newsprint, gramophone, radio and cinema – in communicating their ideas for improving the health of the body, mind and spirit in the modern female form. These original findings were demonstrated through the examples of the rhythmic body in silent early German cinema, the voice on the phonographs of Bagot Stack's exercise programme and the radio talks Atkinson gave about the history of dance and the modern trend for personal exercise on the BBC. As the quotidian bodies performed publicly in the *Women's League of Health and Beauty* spectacles, they hoped to inspire the audience through the kinaesthetic transmission of their ideals through movement. As Atkinson and Bagot Stack communicated the idea of private home exercise through radio and print media, the public and domestic arenas came together in the sole pursuit of remoulding the body and releasing the mind for the modern age. I argued that, as these exercise programmes did not inhabit the highbrow stage or the lowbrow music hall, they might be positioned in the area of the middlebrow. I expressed my reservations about this term in relation to movement practices and physical culture, however, and suggest it is an area worthy of further research. The connections with the sound voice on the radio and phonograph, and the attendant relationship with modernist radio and sound studies as it intersects with the body in dance and movement, also lends itself to further investigation. The exercised body also gestures towards twenty-first century interests, from medical and neuro scientific communities, in how regular exercise might be key to the improvement of health and prevention of disease in the body and mind.

In my third chapter I contested the traditional notion that the domestic space was one of female constraint under patriarchal control, through my interrogation of the recommendations for daily domestic exercise by Atkinson and Bagot Stack. The domestic space became, I argued, a place of agency and release of the self, when the body indulged in the personal through daily engagement with rhythmic bodily exercise. My unique analysis of the domestic body as one of agency rather than restraint, expands the current New Modernist Studies engagement with the 'selfish turn' and the domestic in modernism.

Even while the rhythmic movement collective of modern women danced their utopian vision, the traditional values of motherhood and reproduction, which were upheld in the visions of *Natural Movement* and '*artistic body training*', were transformed as the fundamental drive in their vision of utopian. Paradoxically, the *Women's' League of Health and Beauty* negotiated traditional gender constraints in their performance of the exercised body through fun and joy. The bodies in the female rhythmic movement collective therefore articulated the complexities and the paradoxes in the profound cultural changes in this era of modernity. I found how the quotidian rhythmic body provided the dynamic that torqued the private and public space into a spiral with modern technologies, through the input and output of their shared rhythmic energies.

In their dramatic turn of expression, these ballet, dance and movement-bodies interacted with modernist literary and artistic practices, and as

these practices intersected, they expressed new cultural ideas. These modernist ballet, dance and movement practices offered new ways of understanding how dance, literature and art could articulate the social and cultural context of their period. My foregrounding of the intelligent body that torques somatic rhythms in the expression of the self through movement has enabled the execution of these new ballet, dance and movement forms to be read in the stilled moment of action in the photographic and artistic image. My embodied reading has thus returned the moving and dancing body to the centre of the drama they danced in modernism. My thesis has revealed how the appreciation of the body in the new ballet and dance revolution, and in the creation of the modern quotidian woman, allowed these bodies to express the profundities of the revolutionary changes in their historical period. The original contribution my thesis makes to New Modernist Studies, Dance Studies and related fields interested in the body, lies in the understanding I have offered of the moving body in the early twentieth-century as it articulates meanings in the social and political fractures in modernity, and as it moves in the artistic and cultural revolution in modernism.

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APPENDIX

BLOOMSBURY INFLUENCES:

PAPERS FROM THE BLOOMSBURY ADAPTATIONS CONFERENCE, BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY 5-6 MAY 2011

EDITED BY

E.H. WRIGHT

CHAPTER TWELVE

***JEUX* (1913), SOMETIMES KNOWN AS “THE BLOOMSBURY BALLET”: VASLAV NIJINSKY’S MODERNIST WORK**

SUE ASH

Some fifty years after *Jeux* was first performed in London in 1913, Leonard Woolf published his memoirs. In them he highlights the revolutionary changes which were taking place in western science and culture during the early twentieth century.

Profound changes were taking place [...] Freud and Rutherford and Einstein were at work beginning to revolutionise our knowledge of our own minds and of the universe. [...] In literature one seemed to feel the ominous lull before the storm which was to produce in a few years [...] *The Waste Land*, *Jacob’s Room* and *Mrs Dalloway*. In painting we were in the middle of the profound revolution of Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso [...] and to crown all, night after night we flocked to Covent Garden, entranced by a new art, a revolution to us benighted British, the Russian Ballet in the greatest days of Diaghilev and Nijinsky. (Woolf 1963, 37 in Garafola 1998, 314)

The Ballets Russes (1909–1929, the “Russian Ballet” Woolf refers to) was Serge Diaghilev’s project, and Vaslav Nijinsky was his star dancer in the pre-war years. Diaghilev was a remarkable man, a musician and entrepreneur whose “creations coloured modernism with a riot of innovative showpieces in the space of twenty years” (Pritchard 2010, 9). He was founder and editor of the Russian *World of Art* (*Mir isk niki*) journal (1895–1904), and for the group of artists and intellectuals who contributed to the journal, a new and innovative form of ballet was held to be the most important manifestation of the journal’s artistic philosophy (Nouvel letter, 14 September 1897 in Scheijen 2009, 114). Ballet joined the sensual with the formal for the *World of Art* group and it could be argued that ballet for them “performed” the *World of Art* aesthetic. Alexandra Benois, a central figure in the *World of Art* Group, the Ballets Russes, and twentieth century Russia’s cultural giant described this aesthetic thus:

Ballet is perhaps the most eloquent of all spectacles [...] it allows two of the supreme conductors of thought—music and gesture [...] without imposing words on them; words which always put fetters on thought, bringing it down from heaven to earth. (Benois 1908 quoted in Sjeng 2009, 170)

In the Ballets Russes’ first London season in the summer of 1911 it was Nijinsky’s lyrical, athletic dancing which excited audiences, then it was his modernist choreography and the subtexts of his themes for *L’Après-*

Midi d'un Faune (1912), *Jeux* (1913) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) which amazed and scandalised them. This essay contextualises *Jeux* by addressing the contemporary modernist aspects of the ballet's staging, and by looking specifically at the choreographic subtext that played with gender norms and broke with orthodox patriarchal values. I explore the way *Jeux* interacted with the London literary and artistic scene examining the setting of the ballet and the inspiration for its theme; a game of tennis set in a garden overlooked by a town house. The ballet, it is often argued, was inspired by Nijinsky's memory of Grant, Bell and Woolf promiscuously playing around after a tennis game in Bedford Square Gardens, overlooked by Lady Ottoline Morrell's London residence.ⁱ Thus *Jeux* can be read simultaneously as a modernist ballet and as a ballet which engaged with the radical gender identities of Bloomsbury's central figures.

Nijinsky was Polish born, to parents who were talented dancers. He graduated from the Imperial School of Ballet in St. Petersburg in 1907 and immediately started with the Mariinsky Ballet in soloist roles. Diaghilev noticed his extraordinary dancing talent there and Nijinsky, alongside other Mariinsky stars, was fundamental in Diaghilev's mission to bring Russian ballet to Europe. Michel Fokine had been the chief choreographer for the Ballets Russes until Diaghilev invited Nijinsky to choreograph *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, which premiered in Paris in 1912. Between 25 June and 7 July 1913 Nijinsky's second new ballet *Jeux* was performed four times at the Drury Lane theatre in London. Each performance placed *Jeux* between two or three other ballets which had already been seen in London, and each of the four evenings billed a different group of ballets around *Jeux*. None of these ballets related to each other but each embodied the new Russian modernist aesthetic, and this was recognised by London's artistic milieu. One such was the artist Anne Estelle Rice who offered critiques of the Ballets Russes in the monthly 'little magazine' *Rhythm*. It is clear that Rice had already attended many performances, from the number of ballets she discusses in various volumes of the magazine. In one edition of *Rhythm* in 1912 she compares the painter Whistler with Leon Bakst, Diaghilev's chief designer of the pre-war era: [Bakst is] "the greatest innovator of the pictorial art of modern stagecraft [leaving] the Whistlerian ideal hopelessly empty and inadequate" (Rice 1912).ⁱⁱ Rice understands the fusion of all the elements—stage scenery, costume, lighting, music, choreography and "poet"—as a harmonising scheme, with "line" as the dominant idea. Dance for *Rhythm*'s visual artists, and many contemporary modernists, was the Ballets Russes and Rice's artistic style was influenced by the rhythmic exoticism and fused harmonies of the ballets she witnessed, wrote about and illustrated in *Rhythm* (Brooker and Thacker 2009, 329).ⁱⁱⁱ Dance, and by extension an interest in the moving body, gave *Rhythm* its particular style and ethos.

Rice's understanding of "line" comes from her own art form as a painter and from its central importance in the fauvist style, which emphasised vigour in line and movement and which dominated *Rhythm* magazine. In dance, "line" signifies balance and purity of body alignment, as well as direction and coherence of movement in terms of space. Nijinsky modernised the line of movement in space in all his ballets, in a different style for each one. In his first choreographic work, *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, he confined the space and line of the movement to the two dimensional by employing linear choreographed steps moving only from side to side in a narrow space confined to the front of the stage, with the dancers' upper body angled towards the audience and the head and legs in profile, reminiscent of classical antiquity's depictions of figures in painting, sculpture and ceramics.^{iv} Nijinsky's inspiration for some of the poses for the Nymphs and the Faune in this ballet came directly from ancient vases he had studied in the Louvre (Pritchard 2010, 81). Using the naturalistic poses shown on these vases, and those depicted in painting and sculpture, *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* echoed the modernist and modern trend for Classical references in art and literature.

As with *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, Nijinsky's ballet *Jeux* also marked a significant departure from the tradition of ballet that relied on familiar narrative forms and spectacular staging—epitomised by the nineteenth century "romantic" classics still so popular today such as *Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. *Jeux* had a subtext, rather than a narrative, which "spoke" of emotion and the subconscious, subjective elements more usually associated with the new German modern dance aesthetic of the period—in the work of Mary Wigman for example. One of the leading pioneers of New German Dance (also known as European modern dance and the forerunner of American Contemporary Dance) Wigman's dance form is known as expressionist (*ausdruckstanz*). Expressionist dance is usually performed without music, always without plot and is concerned with raw emotion—although Wigman preferred the term "new artistic dance", a more "natural" form of movement without the confines of ballet technique. The term *ausdruckstanz* was used in 1920's Germany to differentiate it from classical ballet.^v

The scenario for *Jeux* was simply a danced game of sporty flirtation set in a hyper-modern future. Ballets based on contemporary themes became popular in the post war era: see Bronislava Nijinska's 1924 ballet *Le Train Bleu* as an example. But in 1913 it was revolutionary. Leon Bakst's design for *Jeux* had no stage set, simply four painted circles on the green floor cloth, representing flower beds. His backdrop of summer trees, overlaid with stylised painted patches to depict dusk, included a large white building with many windows, one of which was open. The three dancers were dressed in modern tennis clothes, and the only props were a tennis racket and an oversized tennis ball (Buckle 1980, 340–341). Diaghilev toyed with various dates in the future on which to fix *Jeux*. In one letter dated 18 July 1912 to Debussy, Diaghilev states the date of 1920 and to

make more of its futuristic setting, he had plans to either interrupt the “games” with the crashing of an aeroplane on stage, or to have a panel move across upstage, painted with an aeroplane with black wings (Diaghilev quoted in Nijinska 1992, 468).^{vi} The inclusion of the plane would have been a visual demonstration of the sense of foreboding of impending war prevalent in the British and European Press at the time. However, by the time the ballet was staged Diaghilev had abandoned the idea: “As the action of the ballet takes place in the year 1920—the apparition of this machine will be of no interest whatsoever to the persons onstage” (ibid.).

The sporty, contemporary theme for *Jeux*, the pared-down stage set, and the setting of the ballet in a garden near a large house, bring both modernism and popular modernity together in one artistic work. The device of casting the three dancers as unnamed characters in the programme—“First Young Girl” (Madam Tamara Karsavina), “Second Young Girl” (Mademoiselle Ludmila Schollar) and “A Young Man” (Monsieur Nijinsky)—emphasised Nijinsky’s vision of *Jeux* as being the stage representation of contemporary youth enjoying the everyday past-time of sport. This broke with the tradition in ballet of giving the dancers specific characters to embody with specific character names, which would have appeared in the programme next to their own name. The lack of characterisation depicting contemporary youth in *Jeux* was a new approach and aligns with the modernist trope of “the everyday”. These dancers in *Jeux* represented ordinary, modern young people.

Jeux is sometimes known as the Bloomsbury Ballet in the dance history canon and the bohemian influence of those whom Nijinsky and Diaghilev met in London through Lady Ottoline Morrell is apparent in this ballet.^{vii} For many analysts of *Jeux*, Bakst’s set design, with the image of a large house in the background, bears a remarkable resemblance to the view of Lady Ottoline Morrell’s London Bedford Square residence, from the Bedford Square gardens. Lady Ottoline’s memoirs support this:

He [Nijinsky] and Bakst (who also went mad) came one afternoon when Duncan Grant and some others were playing tennis in Bedford Square Gardens—they were so entranced by the tall trees against the houses and the figures flitting about playing tennis that they exclaimed with delight: Quel décor! (Gathorne-Hardy 1963, 228)^{viii}

Jeux’s status as the Bloomsbury ballet is reiterated by Marino Pallese, who sets the ballet within the social and political context of the period and argues that the sexual subtext breaks with orthodox patriarchal values of Empire and Victorian England. The unconventional sexuality of some in the Bloomsbury group is, for Pallese, a key inspiration for *Jeux*:

Nijinsky and Bakst had seen the promiscuous behaviour of Woolf and Bell with post-impressionist painter Duncan Grant, also a member of the Bloomsbury group, while playing tennis at night in London.^{ix}

Nijinsky’s wife Romola wrote that the theme of *Jeux* was to be “the essence of flirtation, the modern form of love” and the gestures express:

emotions playing physically at the game of tennis, emotionally at flirtation—a love affair between a young boy and two girls both separately and simultaneously—the eternal triangle under an utterly new aspect. (Nijinsky 1960, 152)

The danced embodiment of this modern form of love on the public stage was progressive and challenging. These danced flirtations offered traditional and non-traditional pairings to the audience—the traditional pairing is shown through the choreographic partnering of the youth with one or other of the girls, while the non-traditional relationship between the two girls is gestured by a kiss, as is the triple relationship between the two girls and the youth. In what would have been a further extension of unconventional sexuality, Diaghilev had wished for all the dancers to be male, but Nijinsky rejected this idea (Nijinsky 1963, 147–148).

In their real lives, Bloomsbury and the wider artistic milieu also played with resistant ideas, breaking out of the Victorian confines of repressed sexuality by experimenting with free love and homosexuality. Nijinsky, who was Diaghilev’s lover, was to marry the dancer Romola de Pulszky in 1913, and the marriage of Bloomsbury’s economist John Maynard Keynes with the Ballet Russes’ ballerina Lydia Lopokova accommodated his homosexual affairs. The complex relationships in the marriages of Bloomsbury’s Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf are also well known and it is these unconventional lifestyles which led to the description of Bloomsbury as a “circle of people who lived in squares and loved in triangles” (Nicholson 2003, 176). In Bloomsbury’s social setting Nijinsky, Diaghilev and various other Ballets Russes’ dancers were frequently invited as star guest attractions by Lady Ottoline Morrell to her soirees during their London seasons (Seymour 1993, 229–231, 252). Attendance at these soirees by Diaghilev and Nijinsky was guaranteed to bring in influential guests to the benefit of each other and the Ballets Russes. Ottoline invited Diaghilev and other male dancers for the amusement of the gay artists in the London milieu, leaving Nijinsky for her great friend Lytton Strachey, who was fascinated by him, although this came to nothing as Diaghilev was always at Nijinsky’s side (Seymour 1993, 228).

Unfortunately there is no contemporary film of this “modern form of love” ballet because Diaghilev banned film recording of all the Ballets Russes’ works. We therefore have no visual historical record of *Jeux* as a danced ballet, unlike those original avant-garde paintings or modernist texts of the period which can be seen and read in their original form. However, for Millicent Hodson, who staged a reconstruction of *Jeux* in 1996,^x the contemporary photographs and drawings of the artists and writers who visited Lady Ottoline Morrell reveal the influences of the ballet.

Both reveal bodies poised for intellectual banter and the sport of human relationships [...] young people side-stepping passion then throwing caution to the wind. (Hodson 2008, 20-21)

Hodson suggests that to really experience *Jeux* we need to imagine Nijinsky at the height of his powers, embracing the modernity of the Bloomsbury group (Hodson 2008, 21).

The staging of the ballet shares with the modernist novel an emphasis on the everyday, the chance encounter. We see this in Woolf’s novel *Mrs Dalloway* beginning with Mrs Dalloway stepping out from her home and ending with the gathering at her party at the end of the novel. In *Jeux* the first we know of anything is an oversized tennis ball bouncing on to the stage from the wings. The youth, holding a tennis racquet then arrives on stage with a huge *jéte* (jump), followed by the two “girls” who arrive together and are unknowing of the youth who is already there. They are all dressed in tennis clothes. They dance in various couplings. Another tennis ball bounces across the stage from the wings, signifying someone unknown is about to arrive, and they all leave. Nothing in the ballet tells the audience anything else.^{xi} The stage lighting and painted patches on the backdrop do imply dusk; an effect Nijinsky was keen to have after having noticed the recent technical innovation of electrical street lighting shining on trees, and which was the realisation in part of what Diaghilev had in mind when he exclaimed “*quel décor!*” in Bedford Square Gardens (Buckle 1980, 340). Like modernist novels the ballet is embedded in the common place (of a certain class) and presents a kind of snapshot, a moment in time, or as Vera Krasovskaya remembers it, a “dance poem” where time stood still, giving the players space to look at their feelings (McGinness 2007, 570). John Neumier, Director of the Hamburg Ballet describes *Jeux*’s theme as “non-action” with a choreography which reflects “interior emotional states” (Hodson 2008, 5) a comment that supports the sense I am suggesting here of *Jeux* as a danced “interior monologue”.

An unnamed critic of *The Times* on 26 June 1913 had trouble with this “interior language” of the ballet, and wrote:

Some of the language in which ideas are expressed is beautiful and eloquent and is really expressive ... but it is like a language in which the speaker is restricted to a portion of the alphabet ... Perhaps M Nijinsky will some day discover and learn the whole alphabet of which at present he has acquired only the partial use. (quoted in Macdonald 1975, 94)

This interior language would form a circular unspoken conversation between the dancers and their audience through the transmission of kinaesthetic and kinetic empathy. The dancers would draw on their emotional response to their individual role and the shifting relationships of their character to each other. At the same time there would be an unspoken dialogue between the dancers and Debussy’s score and the modernist choreography. This forms a kinaesthetic, circular empathy which goes back and forth between the dancers, the audience and back again to the dancers.^{xii}

In dance terms the choreography for *Jeux* used classical technique (legs in turn-out, a little like the typical Charlie Chaplin image but with straight knees) and modern, parallel shapes for the dancers’ legs and arms.^{xiii} Triangular shapes are significant—when made between the dancers in a group or a couple; when demonstrated by their individual arm movements during solo dance moments; and when described by the floor pattern as the dancers negotiate the flowerbeds. This choreographic device both suggests the influence of Cubism on Nijinsky’s choreography and signifies the triangular relationships which form the work’s subtext.^{xiv} While Nijinsky was not able to hear the actual music for the ballet during the months he was working on the scenario, as Debussy was still composing the score, he needed to give Bronislava a flavour of what the style would be—for she was to dance in the ballet. He showed her the books of modern paintings he was looking at which were giving him inspiration, and he was especially inspired by those of Gauguin (Nijinska 1992, 442).^{xv} Paradoxically the triangular linear spaces and groupings in *Jeux* are also reminiscent of Classical (Etruscan and Roman) figuring, and a particular group position described as “The Fountain”, in which the three dancers stand in a line with Nijinsky in the middle, recalls the Three Graces (Buckle 1980 in Hodson 2008, 12).^{xvi}

The Press photograph of “The Fountain” group, by the photographer Charles Gerschel, was one of many used by Diaghilev to promote the new ballet before the opening night in Paris. Another of these Press photographs, subtitled “Thus do we dance” by Hodson, epitomises Nijinsky’s choreographic aesthetic in *Jeux* (Hodson 2008, 145). In this photograph Karsavina (the “first girl”) is facing the camera while Nijinsky (the “youth”) and Schollar (the “second girl”) are in a pairing facing each other; there is no scenery or backdrop, the sporty clothes look relaxed and modern and their hair is unbound.^{xvii} The two women are wearing ankle

socks and they are on quarter *pointe*—heels just lifted from the floor—with their feet in a relaxed everyday-looking position. Their legs are parallel and their bodies are not particularly lifted, as they would be if they were up on full *pointe*. “The youth” seems to be in a more “balletic” pose with his back leg extended, until we notice that he and the “second girl” are in a ballroom dancing hold. Then as we look carefully at the ballroom hold, we notice that the “second girl” has taken the male ballroom partnering hold with her right arm around his back, and he has his left arm on her shoulder. This reversal of the traditional male position in the ballroom hold is written on the score, above the bars of the music from which this posed grouping is taken; it is but one moment in the choreography of a group of steps for this set of musical notes. As we continue to look at this posed group we notice that the pair in ballroom hold have foreshortened necks with their heads lifted back and their free arms linked and twisted at shoulder height, with dropped wrists. The only detail which tells us they are ballet dancers is the girls’ *pointe* shoes. Meanwhile the “first girl”, on her own has a parallel arm position at rib height in front of her, with the wrists touching and the palms open. Each dancer’s inner emotion, their interiority, is written on their body position; the “first girl’s” dance-body says rejection while “the youth” and “second girl’s” dance-bodies voice defensive attraction to each other.^{xviii} This group pose represents the highly modern details of Nijinsky’s choreography in *Jeux*, and his use of the reverse ballroom hold (in which the two dancers then dance ballroom Tango in the ballet) demonstrates the fluid gender subtext of the piece.^{xix}

The analysis of this group pose also draws attention to just how far Nijinsky’s groundbreaking choreography was, in each of his three ballets, from the traditional classical ballet technique which audiences were used to seeing in the previous Ballet Russes’ ballets, and in which the dancers’ bodies were more comfortable. When Hodson interviewed Marie Rambert in 1979 (she had helped Nijinsky teach his new choreographic style to the dancers); she demonstrated with her body how the postures demanded by Nijinsky restricted the dancers’ movement. Rambert described how these difficult positions, or postures restricted the body as if with “one hand and foot tied” for the dancer (Hodson 1986, 66).

Jeux occasionally incorporates an über-modern style, using a few of the latest social dance moves from not only the Tango but also the Turkey Trot. Both of these social dances would have been danced to a syncopated rhythm at tea-dances, but which in *Jeux* fit as easily to the music as the more classical movements in Debussy’s “stunning, arcane, difficult to grasp and extraordinary piece of music, so pointillist, back and forth, give and take, like a tennis game”.^{xx} The female dancers were in *pointe* shoes but rarely rose on to full *pointe*—a radical break with classical choreography—thus giving a very different dynamic when moving on half *pointe*, than if they had been in bare feet (as in Nijinsky’s other major works *L’Après-Midi d’un Faune* or *Le Sacre de Printemps*) or soft shoes. To walk on half *pointe* in hard *pointe* shoes changes the weight of the dancer from what would be a very lifted and forward torso on *pointe*, to a more “grounded” relaxed form with the weight further back over the hips and feet. The audiences would not necessarily understand what it was in the postures which made these movements unexpected and probably ungainly to them, but is exemplary of Nijinsky’s modernist staging. These perhaps at times awkward postures could be compared to seeing the beginning of a sentence in a piece of modernist prose which begins with a lower-case letter rather than with the more traditional capital letter, such as in some of e e cummings’ poetry and in the way he wrote his name. Modernist *vers libre* would be another example where traditional punctuation is omitted at various moments in the piece as in the work of Djuna Barnes. In *Jeux*, Nijinsky had at one stage planned to feature all three protagonists in *pointe* shoes and the device of having the male dancer of the trio in *pointe* shoes would have given an extra nuance to the interchangeable sexual flirtations choreographically described on the stage. By the time *Jeux* came to the stage, however, Nijinsky was wearing traditional soft shoes. This “mixing up” of classical and modern choreography prefigures the modernist style of the neo-classical favourites of the Nijinska, and later the Balanchine, choreographic eras. Nijinska wrote in her memoirs that *Jeux* was the beginning of neo-classicism in ballet and was the source for all her works in this mode (Nijinska 1992, 445, 469).

After the 1913 London season Nijinsky’s *Jeux* was never performed again. It was not a success, perhaps because it was completely overshadowed in Paris by the sensational reaction to his next ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which premiered only two weeks later. A virtual riot broke out among the audience on the opening night of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, caused by Stravinsky’s modernist score of complex rhythms, which the dancers could not hear on account of the chaos in the auditorium, and the primitivist style of Nijinsky’s choreography. “Musically and choreographically *Sacre* bid adieu to the Belle Epoch. Few among the era’s fashionable public were ready to do the same.” (Garafola, Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes 1998, 64). Debussy’s music for *Jeux* was equally as challenging as Stravinsky’s score for *Le Sacre du Printemps* for the audience and dancers, but this is often forgotten and overshadowed by the reaction to *Le Sacre du Printemps*. The riot quickly became seminal in “modernism’s sense of itself as a movement” (Heisler 2012, 695) and inspired works by various artists and literary figures including Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes.^{xxi}

One consequence of Diaghilev’s dismissal of *Jeux* from the Ballets Russes’ repertoire was that there was no-one in the Ballets Russes interested enough to pass on the choreography and the exact nuances of the movements to the next generation of dancers, the accepted way the authenticity of ballets and ballet history is created.^{xxii} Dance notation is a tool which supports the choreographic intention but real value is derived from

the teaching of a role by the original ballerina or male lead to the next rising star, and so on over the decades. It is possible, however to view a filmed performance of Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of *Jeux*, performed by the Rome Opera Ballet in 2003, on YouTube.^{xxiii}

Hodson based her reconstruction on accounts of what was seen during the performances of *Jeux* in 1913, before she discovered Debussy's original piano rehearsal score on which Nijinsky had made detailed notes for the ballet. These notes do not generally detail the actual arm, body, head, leg and feet alignments usually noted in dance notation; rather they are notes of the scenario. If Nijinsky did make notation descriptions of the dance steps, they have not yet been found. The emphasis in Nijinsky's notes on the score is on the individual emotion which the movements, and therefore the dancers, will express, at minutely detailed moments in the musical score. This could again be described as the danced expression of the individual interiority of each protagonist. Whereas examples of the stage directions of the movements are noted: "preparing for the dancing jump", "she runs behind a bush", "they caress each other", there is one notable direction "he dances joyfully running on his toes to the girls". Could this be a reference to Nijinsky's idea that the male dancer would be dancing in *pointe* shoes? On the other hand there are many directions for the emotions which the dancers must portray "feeling of shame by the first one", "the desire to kiss", "the second girl becomes jealous", "madding passion" and intriguingly "sin his theme" (McGinness 2007, 575-584).^{xxiv} The dancers must show these emotions through the plastic movements of the body, not by facial expression. Barker tells us the audience found these neutral faces disturbing (Barker 1982, 57). In traditional ballet, facial expression is a fundamental aspect of the presentation of the ballet narrative; but in modern ballet and contemporary dance, the inward emotion is carried in the dancers' body movement and it is this aesthetic which "speaks" to the audience. A relatively neutral facial expression enhances this. *The Times* critic from 26 June 1913 found this as uncomfortable as the limited language of the ballet:

Their faces too were rigid, for it is part of the convention that they should express no emotion, and this made one want to have them covered by masks. (quoted in Macdonald 1975, 94)

This London season, which featured all three of Nijinsky's modernist choreographic works and in which he was dancing most evenings for over a month, marked the end of the Nijinsky era.^{xxv} But his radical approach in *Jeux* marked the beginning of ballet's experimentation with contemporary modern themes; it is still difficult to stage works with radical gender identities in this centenary year of *Jeux*.

In 1913 *Jeux* expressed trends which were surfacing in modernism. The move away from narrative style and characterisation is demonstrated in this ballet without a plot, performed by dancers who embodied modern youth. *Jeux* centred on interior emotion and can be viewed as a danced "interior monologue" of the individual dancers, whose plastic body movements "voice" the complexities of their triangular relationships. The ballet also voices the interior emotions of Nijinsky as choreographer, whose choreography "wrote" the emotions of the traditional and radical gender identities on the dancers' body movements. In its refusal to conform to traditional gender stereotypes *Jeux* anticipated the, sometimes uneasy, reworkings of gender identities that would emerge in post-war modernist literature by writers as diverse as Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf. Woolf, for example, plays with gender identity in *Orlando* (1928), her mock biography of her lover Vita Sackville West. On the surface *Orlando* and *Jeux* are playful romps while deeper down both visit the more dangerous subtext of lesbianism.

Modernist trends were contextualised by Nijinsky's mix of classical and modern dance techniques and his choreographic engagement with abstract art forms, by Bakst's minimalist set and by Debussy's harmonically discordant score. For *Rhythm*, the Ballets Russes was the magazine's touchstone and dance gave expression to the harmonious artistic unity, rhythmic vigour and renewed interest in the body which was the magazine's culture. Pre-war Bloomsbury gave discerning critical responses to Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (Jones 2009, 66) which captivated London's artistic milieu with its exotic productions and brought risqué glamour to Bloomsbury's social scene. As this examination of *Jeux* illustrates, the radical choreography and the modernist aesthetic of the Ballets Russes, linked so closely to Bloomsbury in this 1913 ballet, reflected back to the Bloomsbury group, an image of their own transgressive modern behaviour.

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Notes

ⁱ In the Emile Deflin interview with Nijinsky for *Gil Blas* on 20 May 1913 Nijinsky is quoted as saying that the idea for *Jeux* originated from his watching tennis in Deauville the previous summer, when he returned to France immediately after the London ballet season. As Nijinsky's grasp of French and English was poor he may have been told to say this. He may have been being diplomatic as it was an interview for the French press. Another story suggests the idea came from moths round a lamp in the Bois de Boulogne. Several origins for a work of art would not be unusual. See Buckle 1980, 305.

ⁱⁱ For further analysis of Rice and the Ballets Russes see Jones 2009, 72–73.

ⁱⁱⁱ For analysis of the relationship between dance and the body in *Rhythm* see Brooker and Thacker 2009, 314–336.

^{iv} See Järvinen 2009 for a comprehensive analysis of Nijinsky's choreography and use of space.

^v See Crane and Mackrell 2004, 32, 511 and Preston-Dunlop 1995, 18 for definitions of these dance terms.

^{vi} Also cited in Garafola 1998, 59, 60.

^{vii} Not all dance scholars accept the "Bloomsbury Ballet" tag. Hannah Järvinen argues it is a trope based on reminiscences rather than contemporary evidence (Järvinen 2009, 206).

^{viii} Richard Buckle had felt puzzled for many years by the house in Bakst's design for *Jeux*, which was not like a French hotel or country house. When he read Ottoline's memoirs, he realised that the architecture was a version of a Bloomsbury Square (Buckle 1980, 305).

^{ix} <http://www.balletto.net/giornale.php?articolo=1695>, accessed 11 July 2013.

^x The term "reconstruction" describes the process of remounting a ballet which is thought to be lost, using contemporary documentary evidence and the written score.

^{xi} This section is informed by Barker 1982, 54.

^{xii} Kinaesthetic empathy is an “empathic awareness of the kinaesthetic experience of another person (dancer): bridging the gap of awareness between one person’s movement and another’s perception of it as bodily experience.” (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 371). Kinetic responsiveness is “the brand of empathy that most directly unites the dancer and his or her audience” (Preston-Dunlop 1995, 553).

^{xiii} Nijinsky did not leave notes of the dance steps; the choreography discussed here is the choreography from Hodson’s re-construction.

^{xiv} See Hodson 2008 and Ballet, *Jeux* parte 1 2007, Ballet, *Jeux* parte 2 2007, Ballet, *Jeux* parte 3 2007 for this section of the essay.

^{xv} See also Hodson 2008, 38.

^{xvi} An image of the “fountain pose” photograph can be seen on Google images here: <http://www.elitearteydanza.com.ar/biografias-ludmila-schollar.htm> , accessed 11 July 2013.

^{xvii} Scholler took the place of Bronislava Nijinska, as she was pregnant by the time the ballet came to performance.

^{xviii} These emotions, “rejection” and “defensive attraction”, are written as the subtitle to the reproduced photograph in Hodson 2008, 145.

^{xix} An image of this photograph can be seen on Google images here: <http://mq.oxfordjournals.org>, accessed 11 July 2013.

^{xx} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2BKd8EOAR8>, accessed 11 July 2013. Lorin Maazel, speaking of the first time he played *Jeux* aged 19 in the 1st violin section of the Pittsburgh Symphony. Pointillism in music is a style of 20th century composition where different musical notes give a sound texture similar to pointillism in painting which uses small coloured dots to form an image.

^{xxi} See Heisler 2012 for a thorough discussion on this theme.

^{xxii} Marie Rambert, founder of *Rambert* Dance Company, could have passed on *Jeux*’s choreography and Nijinsky’s intentions to successive generations of dancers, but it did not happen.

^{xxiii} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkZhDcB-OfA> (Part 1), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=774MfmVqMmw> (Part 2), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1SU5ZTkiVA> (Part 3), accessed 11 July 2013.

^{xxiv} There are at least four scores in existence on which Nijinsky made annotated notes. Hodson’s research is based on two (Hodson, Nijinsky’s Bloomsbury Ballet, *Reconstruction of the Dance and Design for Jeux* 2008) while McGinness based his research on a third (McGinness 2007). Although there are slight variations in annotation, the particular emotions Nijinsky noted are consistent in all of the scores.

^{xxv} Diaghilev dismissed Nijinsky when he heard of his marriage, which took place soon after the 1913 London season. However Diaghilev brought him back for the USA tour in 1916. Nijinsky premiered his last choreographic work *Till Eulenspiegel* on 23 October 1916 in New York, but it was never performed by the Ballets Russes in Europe. Nijinsky was already suffering from mental illness by this time and he did not recover. He died at a London clinic on 8 April 1950.