# **Expression and symptom**

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This paper examines the correspondences and discontinuities between the physical symptoms of the conditions, which were historically recognised in the medical and scientific discourses as nervous and mental illnesses, and the embodied artistic expression developed in early modern dance, and reinvestigated through the staging of hysterical scenes in Bausch's choreography from 1975.

Nijinsky's 1913 Le Sacre du Printemps is a revolutionary work of dance modernism. "Recreated in more than sixty versions, the ballet has become synonymous with the very idea of modernity," writes Lynn Garafola (1989, 51). The subtext of my examination is Nijinsky's diagnosis of schizophrenia in 1919 (Oswald, "Playing the Role of a Madman"), and the immediate cause of his incarceration, that is, catatonia - one of the symptoms previously associated with the Parisian hysteria.<sup>1</sup> The discourses that intertwine the history of the choreographic process of Le Sacre du Printemps, and the descriptions of Nijinsky's mental state point to how the contemporary theories about emotion and expression, mental illness, race/ethnicity, and gender informed the reception of early dance modernism. In his seminal study of the relationship between mental illness and modern art, Madness and Modernity (1992), the professor of clinical psychology Louis A. Sass notes: "Modernist art has been said to manifest certain off-putting characteristics that are reminiscent of schizophrenia" (8). While Sass traces the correspondences between madness and modernism in the arts to a starting point in literature and visual arts, the historian Eugene Lunn (1982) points out that modernist culture grew out of the "weakening of liberal optimism," which was caused by "the addition of a pessimistic Darwinistnaturalist determinism to the Enlightenment tradition of critical rationality" (39). Lunn distinguishes four "major directions of aesthetic form and social perspective in modernism": (1) aesthetic self-consciousness or self-reflexiveness that served as a way for the modernist artists to avoid the prerogatives of naturalist aesthetics, which could "make of art a transparent mere 'reflection' or 'representation' of what is alleged to be 'outer' reality"; (2) simultaneity, juxtaposition or montage, by means of which the artists moved away from the traditional chronological presentation of time, progression, and causality; (3) paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty, which "suggest to the reader or audience

how they may resolve the contradictions outside the intentionally unfinished work (as Brecht attempted to do), or provisionally synthesize the multiple perspectives"; and (4) *"dehumanization" and the demise of the integrated individual subject or personality*, which examines human experience by dissolving a character into "a stream of atomised experience," separating him from psychological motivations so that he is "confined to a sequence of severely objective events" (34-37). In the visual arts, the human form is distorted, decomposed, and geometrically resynthesised, while the modern theatre creates collective or mass characters in place of unified persons.

To trace the modernist expression's association with the symptoms of mental illness, I return to the theatricalised arena of hysteria. The hysterical performance of the motoric symptoms such as dancing chorea render this illness especially relevant for a discussion of the politics of dance modernism. In order to address why intentionality historically played a critical role in distinguishing artistic expression from the spontaneous, psychosomatic excesses of affect and loss of coordination, I first give a brief outline of the influential ideas about distinguishing characteristics of an artwork.

## Expression theory and staged human emotions

An artwork appears distinct from all other forms of representation because it is perceived and experienced as an object or event separated from everyday reality by its originality and an aesthetic approach to experience. The ideal of autonomy (non-instrumentality) in the creation and reception of artistic works can be traced back to Immanuel Kant's ideal of the aesthetic sublime, and to Freud's concept of sublimation through creative or intellectual work.<sup>2</sup> According to Kant (1790), "the Beautiful prepares us to love disinterestedly something, even nature itself; the Sublime prepares us to esteem something highly even in opposition to our own (sensible) interest" (80). So Kant's sublime encompasses going beyond an immediate sensual experience. From a psychoanalytic point of view, Freud posits that instinctual drives can be replaced by the work involving higher mental faculties<sup>3</sup> by means of which an artist absorbs external experiences into his artistic vision.<sup>4</sup> Correspondingly, someone enjoying a work of art in a profound way would be able to take pleasure in it, and still preserve a distance from the conditions of its production.

The philosopher Vincent Tomas explains how to differentiate artistic expression from unintended emotional outbursts: "Unlike merely giving vent or betraying a feeling, artistic expression consists in the deliberate creation of something which 'embodies or 'objectifies the feeling''' (qtd. in Tormey 31). The professor of philosophy Alain Tormey expounds upon the above quote by Tomas. Tormey points out that "embodying" and "objectifying" feeling is "equivalent to (artistically) expressing it" (422). Artistic expression, then, would not be a perceptible eruption of an uncontrolled feeling. The latter, in its extreme form, is read as a symptom. According to the conceptualisations of Thomas and Tormey, in order for a sense-based expression to be artistic, it has to be endowed with an artistic intent and objectified, that is, seen from the outside by an artist. In my view, the theoretical propositions about artistic expression aim to define the ways in which the artists mediate the subjective experience, and so-called objective perception of the world.

Expressive theory, which originates in romanticism, engages the ways art is experienced by individuals. In The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition (1971), literary scholar M.H. Abrams explains that "the central tendency of the expressive theory may be summarised in this way: A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" (22). So, the artist reveals hidden feelings, but upon reflection, rather than as an unmediated outpouring. Abrams further explains that from the point of view of expressive theory poetry is not caused by "human actions and qualities imitated" (Aristotelian mimesis) or effect upon the audience (the neoclassical point of view) (22-23). Instead, there is "an efficient cause—the impulse within the poet of feelings and desires seeking expression, or the compulsion of the 'creative' imagination which, like God the creator, has its internal source in motion" (22). Both nineteenth-century romanticism and early modernism de-emphasise the eighteenth-century bourgeois theatre's ideal of rationally understandable human nature. Instead, they explore individual expression. The inner person is sensitised to relationships and atmospheric changes. The artists of the nineteenth century did not leave behind the idea of nature, but they no longer imagined that all that was going on in the social world equally participated in that idyllic state of "naturalness". The ideals of naturalness and authenticity were positioned inside the sensible self. As the theatre scholar Joseph Roach points out, the idea of inner spontaneity was informed by scientific discoveries. Roach explains that for both the poet William Wordsworth, and the author of *The Paradox of Acting* and editor of *Encyclopédie* Denis Diderot, "the mind in tranquility recollects the body's past feelings" (163). For them, expression originated in stored memories. From the inner memory, there appeared an illusion of spontaneity. As Roach notes, this is not Nature, but

second nature, that is, a spontaneous expression originating in one's memory (163). The philosopher Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) explains the feeling that accompanies externalisation of inner content. According to Schlegel, "the inner is pressed out as though by force alien to us" (Abrams 22-23). Schlegel's 1802 definition refers to expression through vocalisation. Abrams points to Schlegel's definition to affirm his theorisation of the physicality of expression, both "affect as stimulus" and "the experience of emotion" (Franko x). Today's sociologist Harvie Ferguson provides a context for this emphasis on the externalisation of emotional life. Ferguson explains that for the artists "the authenticity of the self in relation to the truth of the soul takes precedence over the dissimulation of social roles, in which the self plays a part in relation to the outside world" (93). This conceptualisation of "the truth of the soul" corresponds to Mark Franko's elucidation of expression as "an inherently Romantic concept" (x). The turn inward in search of the soul's interior truth, generates a new expressive force in performance. However, in distinction from romanticism in dance, modernism in dance often aspired to give an abstract form to expression.

The expression theory applied to dance points to the way modern choreographers and spectators can make the connection between emotion that arises in the subject and perception of movement. Mark Franko presents the example of the modern dance pioneer Loïe Fuller, who theorised the relationship between felt sensations and movement:

Expression theory makes emotion a stimulus of dance movement. In so doing, it divides emotions into discrete events impinging on the inner consciousness of the subject. ... Working backward from motion to emotion, Fuller called motion the expression of sensation and sensation the reverberation that the body receives when an impression strikes the mind. (75)

Emotion, seen as a series of events in the consciousness, causes expression through motion. Vaslav Nijinsky's early dance modernism takes this purification of expression even further. Modernism in dance focused inward but aspired to free itself from the sentimental reign of emotion: "Early twentieth-century primitivist choreography initiated claims to universal authenticity through purging subjectivism (emotion) and privileging the moving body's presence (expression). Thus, aesthetic modernism instituted a split between emotion and expression." (x) In this way, primitivist choreography focused on physicality by stripping the emotional overlay away from the body's perceptible expression. To 114

summarise, on the one hand expression is a romantic concept, since it brings attention to the reception of stimuli and interiority of a subject. On the other, in dance modernism, expression was freed from the romantics' reflection on the emotional life and therefore aimed towards an achievement of the immediate physical presence.

#### The Rite of Spring (1913) and expression in cultural discourse

Mark Franko refers to Jacques Rivière's analysis of Le Sacre du Printemps (1913), showing how the critic's reading of Nijinsky's choreography highlighted aesthetic modernism's division between emotion and expression. Rivière stated that Nijinsky "caused expression to return to the dance" (x). Rather than using movement to describe emotion, it centered on expressive movement itself. "[Rivière's] analysis contains the key motifs of dance modernism: a defamiliarization of bodily emotion through the primitive, mechanical, or futuristic sources of movement innovation and the return of expression, once emotion is expunged, as a depersonalised ('universal') embodiment of subjectivity" (xi). Rivière offers a conceptual reading of Nijinsky's innovative use of the body's expressivity in choreography. The internal rotation, shuddering, the weighted jumps, the angular gestures of the arms, and the collapse to the ground of the Chosen One challenged the contemporary ballet lexicon.<sup>5</sup> As Franko points out, Rivière saw in the physicality of Nijinsky's choreography a radical challenge to the sentimentality of the narrative approach in Michel Fokine's ballets, which depicted the characters' emotions. In her study of Nijinsky's performative charisma and the discourses the Nijinsky phenomenon engendered, Dancing Genius: The Stardom of Vaslav Nijinsky (2014), Hanna Järvinen notes: "Nijinsky's leap paralleled the spirit of the genius, who overcame the material restrictions imposed by his body and by the laws of physics" (111). Nijinsky's amazing suspensions in the air caused admiration and comparisons that were unfavorable towards the other classical dancers of the era. However, his choreography for The Rite of Spring at first left the audience in the state of shock. There was no otherworldly virtuosity in it. The dance he choreographed to Stravinsky's avantgarde score was abstracted from folk motives and appeared to lack the poetic beauty of the roles he embodied as a dancer for Fokine. After the London premier at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, the ballet historian Cyril Beaumont observed that the movement was "in complete opposition to the traditions of classical ballet" (177-178). Nijinsky's unique aesthetics, sense of parody when performing, abrupt judgments, and unconventional physical habits led to the clash with both dance authorities and the prevailing ideas about what constitutes psychological health.<sup>6</sup> The radical departure from both aesthetic and psychiatric standards of

his era brought about social judgement and later, recommendation for a medical treatment. Nijinsky's diagnosis in the aftermath of the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* is described in great detail by Peter Oswald (1991).<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of the public, his choreography together with his schizophrenia epitomised madness of a foreign genius.

The music theorist Daniel K. L. Chua relates that although the legend has it that it was the music that incited the scandal at the premiere of Le Sacre, in fact the audience's reaction was brought about by Nijinsky's choreography (59). Jean Cocteau commented on what he observed : "the Storm, and the dance of the Chosen One, a naive and crazy dance, the dance of an insect, of a doe fascinated by a boa, of a factory that explodes - in fact, the most disturbing spectacle in theater that I can remember"8 (66). Cocteau's vivid description indicates that Nijinsky's choreographic choices stirred the writer's poetic imagination and shook his aesthetic sensibilities. During the Parisian premiere, the evocative gesture in which the dancers tilt their heads to the side while supporting them with the fists of their right hands was severely mocked by the audience. The bluntest of the audience members yelled out that the dancers needed medical (dental) help<sup>9</sup> (64). This audience's association of choreography with a medical problem preceded a professional psychiatric interest in Nijinsky and his art. On a deeper level, the sacrificial dance opened up hidden social questions about gender identifications and racial physical traits that the classical dance kept closed by aesthetically confirming the romantic stereotypes about transcendent beauty, otherworldliness and physical perfection of the dancers. In choreography, the latent social fictions and transgressions of unwritten cultural laws resurface in a disconnected movement vocabulary and exaggerated gestures. The dancing did not recreate the conventional ideas on gender, since the dancing which was required from men and women, did not rely on qualities associated with the gender depictions within the classical lexicon.

In terms of the gender of the sacrificial virgin, the choreographer's identification with this role reveals a complex play of identity. The dance reviewers Richard Buckle and Lincoln Kirstein both thought that the role of the Chosen One asked for a male performer (Kopelson 190). The American literary critic Kevin Kopelson confirms the intuition of the dance reviewers through the testimony of the choreographer's sister: "Nijinska [Nijinsky's sister], who worked with Nijinsky on the role, recalled the Chosen One's death as Nijinsky's" (190). Lynn Garafola proposes that the Chosen One is similar to Petrouchka as in both cases the soloist "takes upon herself the sins of the artist, the wages of psychic difference" (1998, 71). In the period immediately preceding and following the premiere of *Le Sacre*, Nijinsky's private life could hardly be separated from his profession. The theme of sacrifice that motivated the choreography for the Chosen One is to be found in Nijinsky's diaries. Here Nijinsky himself connects the figure of the artist to the idea of sacrifice. "An artist sacrifices his whole life to the art," he writes in his diary ("On Death" 203).

The question of how Nijinsky's modernist choreography and the critical reception influenced subsequent diagnosis of mental illness is complicated by the testimonies about Nijinsky's social life and working habits.<sup>10</sup> In regards to the way that people reacted to him, Nijinsky wrote in his diary: "People like eccentrics and they will therefore leave me alone, saying that I am a 'mad clown'" ("On Life" 11). The subtext of this quote tells the readers that as a performing artist he felt he needed to meet people's expectations. Nijinsky read people's opinions and behaviors in a highly dramatic way, that is, he made spectacle out of idealisation and discrimination he had experienced as a young creative artist, a bisexual man, and an emigrant without control over his finances. An irrational, spiritual sacrifice that Nijinsky felt he needed to make as an artist explains the communal resistance to the methods and techniques he experimented with when employed as a choreographer for the Ballet Russes. What has been attributed by the professional psychiatry to a genetic predisposition towards mental illness<sup>11</sup> (his hyper-expressive gestures, unconventional writing style in the diaries, the lack of narrative motivation in choreography and androgynous bearing on stage), speaks about both the professional and cultural conditions of Nijinsky's art-making, and the racial and sexual prejudice that accompanied his charisma.

Once Nijinsky was recognised as mentally ill (c. 1917), his innovative modernist expression led to the more symptomatic readings by acquaintances, family members and the professional therapists in charge of his well-being. These rereadings of his artistic expression point to the unavoidable complexity that the practitioners of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and artistic modernism faced with the entrance of the language of pathology into the contemporary, lay discourses on the body and movement. The question of authority over the aesthetic and health questions implied the presence of political power in the discourses on what is normal, and what is pathological. Implicitly, this questioning generated uncertainty about how the modernist art participates in society's modes of both repressing and exposing innovation, foreignness, and remnants of its own past.

Both modernism and psychoanalysis sought to examine the felt reality obscured by the repression of the body and sexuality, and its concomitant rationalisations. While psychoanalysis gave language to bodily truth, dance modernism used physicality devoid of embellishments to articulate repressed somatic memories. This transformative purpose created a discordance between these two fields and psychiatric diagnosis, which sought to eradicate the pathologised phenomena. Nevertheless, in its initial stages, the very notion of hysterical, motoric, or expressive symptom was linked to the empirical objectivity of the psychiatric diagnosis within classical psychiatry. What psychoanalysis and artistic modernism (in this study mainly modernist dance and surrealism) have in common is that both disciplines approach the symptom as an idea from the unconscious, and upend the view of the psychosomatic symptom as a physical, health-related anomaly. In order to point out the complex history underlying the artistic staging of symptoms in the choreographic scenes, I consult the ways in which the critical theorists engage the concept and manifestations of symptoms.

## Symptoms of hysteria

The two notions of symptom, medical (psychiatric) and psychoanalytic (critical), are intertwined within the discourse on hysteria. The second, especially in the theoretical articulation, comments upon the first. In The Capitalist Unconscious, Samo Tomšič writes: "While the medical notion of the symptom does not presuppose any subject, its critical signification does" (186). Historically, psychiatry and neurology aspired to objective knowledge of disease through the observation of symptoms. In this, they excluded the subject's psychological life and focused on the abstract, scientific notion of disease, which presupposed a pathological condition characterised by a number of specific symptoms. Without an interest in a human subject who expresses the symptom, on its own, a symptom cannot become communicative. Consequently, if certain tendencies within the aesthetic of modernism were perceived by the doctors as symptomatic when happening in a psychiatric space (as a study by Louis A. Sass, 1992, shows), their politico-critical dimension remained hidden from the public's attention. However, when the symptoms proved existence of pathology, patients' purposeful simulation challenged medical verity.

In contrast to the psychoanalytic ones, the medical symptoms are not of a subject. Rather, they indicate a generalised conceptualisation of a composite condition disease. In the case of psychiatry, the disease is a mental one, and thus related to the thoughts and emotions, which cannot be seen if they are not expressed. In The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception, Michel Foucault defines symptom in relation to diagnosis within the field of professional medicine.

The symptom — hence its uniquely privileged position — is the form in which the disease is presented: of all that is visible, it is closest to the essential; it is the first transcription of the inaccessible nature of the disease. (90)

From Foucault's definition one learns that the classical medical knowledge of different diseases relied on determining the importance of perceptible alterations in body's rhythms and appearance. In the modern age, in the developing medical field, the symptom was privileged because it offered an empirical access to the problem of the disease; in the case of hysteria the disease was a mental disorder with somatic symptoms. Foucault showed that the professionalisation of psychiatry linked the ideal of objective observation to outwardly perceptible bodily symptoms. The symptoms were "performed" as evidence of pathology. L'Iconographie de la Salpêtrière (1878), a book authored by a younger colleague of Charcot, Désiré-Magloire Bourneville, and the visual artist Paul Regnard, consists of a chronological listing and descriptions, photographs, and sketches of the symptoms of hystero-epilepsy. From today's vantage point, rather than confirming the objective existence of the symptoms of mental illness, L'Iconographie testifies to their theatricality. This theatricality of the fin-de-siècle hysteria constitutes a starting point for an investigation of bodily meanings in a social context on two levels: first, in asking how patients' histories manifested through acting out traumatic memory, and second, as an inquiry into how medical witnessing and sexual dynamics in the hospital shaped a particular symptomatic occurrence. While the surfacing of trauma in the form of a somatic symptom or delirious state initiates an inquiry into family lives and employment of patients, the public exposure in the medical showings brings about attention to the role that gender domination played in hysteria. Following controversies within the neurological and psychiatric circles, the late nineteenth-century Viennese psychoanalysts relocated the investigation of the symptoms of hysteria to the privacy of a middle-class, psychoanalytic session. In contrast to La Salpêtrière's working class hysterics, the patients treated by Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud were relatively well-to-do women from the bourgeois backgrounds. These women often possessed the intellectual aspirations and imaginative capacities which were ill-suited to their position as materially and socially dependent subjects. When describing his cases, Freud underscored the

real-life situations in which his patients found themselves.<sup>12</sup> Samo Tomšič explains the critical importance of Freud's approach:

Freud never simply avoids political issues. Instead, he proposes a new form of addressing them, through distortions and displacements, a form that corresponds to the psychoanalytic method and to the nature of its object. (79)

Although in the late nineteenth century Freud remained focused on the psychosomatic, provable symptoms and the scientific theories on how to cure hysteria, he took into consideration the socio-economic circumstances and everyday events that shaped the lives of his patients. In the twentieth century, Jacques Lacan developed the theoretical aspect of 'symptom'. Lacan used the concept of symptom to speak about that which is repressed; that is, outside normal consciousness. Lacan theorises symptom as a metaphor "in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element" (158). The American interpreter of Lacan - Bruce Fink offers the cases "of a facial tic, a spider phobia, a limp" and explains that analysis works "not so much in the realm of meaning (s) as in that of nonmeaning-namely, by working with the nonsensical, nonmeaningful facet of the signifier (S)" (104-105). In "Reflections on the Formal Envelope of the Symptom," the Lacanian psychoanalyst Jacques-Alain Miller points out how symptom generates a new order. He takes as his starting point Lacan's work on the relationship between symptom and creation, and speaks of symptom's relationship to art. Miller points out the dilemma one encounters when the symptoms are dialectically related to artistic creation. He asks: "How are we to articulate the backtracking of the symptom and the effects of creation, the symptom, which seems to be a debased state of the subject, and creation, which seems to be a sublime state?" He points out that for psychoanalysis symptom is "basic, truly elementary." Psychoanalytic symptom is historically related to medicine, but psychoanalysts alter the medical perspective. The medical perspective tries to establish "the notion of harmony, of what fits right together, of what is consonant." In this context "the symptom appears as what troubles the said harmony, disturbs it, destroys it." Miller explains that the psychoanalytic consciousness modifies this view by relating the symptom and its medical connotation to a distinct order of disharmony.

The condition is that somewhere the subject knows that the Other does not exist. But why not admit that the symptom is also an act of creation, of creation of meaning? And this is what allows for its homology to the metaphor. The symptom operates in creation — hence the psychoanalysts have always been tempted to psychoanalyze creators.

This approach counters methods that aim to correct or eliminate dissonance from patients' discourse. A symptom, which is seen as generative of a new order of structuring the psychic material, allows for repressed psychic areas to be explored on their own terms. The Lacanian psychoanalyst and philosopher Slavoj Žižek examines the relationship between the hysterical subject, whose symptom is precluding the subject's self-recognition, the observing authority, and the big Other who represents the truth for the subject. In the case of dance, the example of the hysterical symptom is especially telling, since dance as a performative art is realised in front of the witness. Nijinsky's solo performance at a hotel in St. Moritz in 1919 clearly shows that witnessing and symptomatic interpretation participated in his dancing performance. After a period of illness, Nijinsky decided to perform "his latest ballet about lunacy and war" (Oswald, "Warnings" 176). On this occasion, his choreographic choices were read as symptoms by both his family and doctors ("Playing the Role of a Madman" 180-181). The contemporary descriptions relate that he appeared as if in a hypnotic trance (180). Nijinsky was changing what his performance based on the audience's reactions, but his references to God indicate that the big Other was necessary for the perpetuation of psychotic behavior. For Žižek, the symptom is a coded message (424). It needs to be deciphered by the other who possesses knowledge of its true nature. "In its very constitution, the symptom implies the field of the big Other as consistent, complete because its very formation is an appeal to the Other which contains its meaning" (424). Žižek's definition explains the symptom in relationship to the "big Other," who for the analysand presents an unambiguous truth behind the symptomatic occurrence.

In the psychoanalytic sense, the symptom allows the troubling moments to speak for themselves and to participate in the affirmation of alternative truths for the subjects. The transformation happens when the attention is brought to that which is out of the ordinary or difficult. The psychoanalytically based theories can be applied to both the symptoms of hysteria and expression in modernism. Through this lens, the abstraction, asymmetry, atonality, and randomness that characterise modernist aesthetics can contribute to a critical understanding of social repression. These qualities of modernism indicate that the unconscious can be an important source for social transformation. Bausch's 1975 re-making of *The Rite of Spring* elucidates that artistic expression can transcend hermetic aspects of modernism, and presents a response to the aesthetic, commercial anesthesia of the post-Second World War Western consumerist societies. Bausch's choreography allows for a critical focus on the constructed scene of sacrifice. The dancing body of a female victim is staged as exceedingly expressive, and capable of generating communal ecstasy. The choreography is structured to render the sacrifice open to the spectators' reflection. The mystery of a group's physiological obedience to a powerful, irrational ritual points to the twentieth century's fascination with mystified, symbolic laws, which propel a public display of sadomasochistic drives. I propose that Freud's hysteria, as an embodiment of the unconscious, should be taken as a source for understanding the choreography of *The Rite of Spring* in relation to the historical residues of the diagnosis of nervous illness.

#### Hystericisation

The behavior of a community of spectators present during a recreation of a charged death ritual can be positioned psychoanalytically as a metaphor for repressed sexual desire, and more specifically death drive. In The Rite of Spring (1975), the victim enters a trance state, and appears to be taken by an unconscious compulsion. Through ripples of kinetic impulses, her destabilised body responds to the musical and spatial (choreographic) structures. Symbolically, the female sensual desire is implicated when the dirt spread on the ground and the dancers' bare skin come in contact. The transparent slips and the organic texture of the earth create a stark contrast. At the same time, the seemingly erratic spatial changes disturb the symbolic disclosing of feminine desire. The choreographer avoids meaningful sequencing that would invite a translation of movements into a series of definite cultural symbols. The upper body gestures such as pushing one's abdomen with an elbow foretell the resolution of the communal conflict through sacrifice. Unlike in the classical theatre, the instances when the dancers pause or appear tentative do not lead to a narrative development. These are empty pauses, which invite the audience's reflection on the reproduction of automatisms and affect. The symptomatic gestures, in their intensity reminiscent of the early twentieth century Aby Warburg's concept of pathos formulas,<sup>13</sup> are frozen into momentarily stasis, and thus rendered accessible to spectators' reflection. These moments of terror and ecstasy escape rationalisations. The narrative used by Stravinsky, Roerich, and Nijinsky reappears only in a fragmented form. "In as much as the cause of the sacrifice is ambiguous the plot is hystericized," (3) writes Mark Franko. By staging a dream-like phantasm of a sacrifice from a mythical past, Bausch indicates an

entry point into the spectators' unconscious. This 1975 version speaks directly to the irrationality of visceral desire, and the relationship of desire to the symbolic realm of rules and dividing laws.

When Franko proposes to "consider processes of hystericization," (3) he replaces the idea of reading stage action through a series of symbols with a reading based on scenes. "[H]ystericization functions through setting of the scene such that the choreography's formal structure is apprehended as symptomatic," (3) writes Franko. The symptoms occur in the relationship between gendered bodies: the moments when the women gently touch each other, or hold on to the male partners tightly as the partners abruptly lift them off the ground. The sacrifice of the Chosen One is actualised "as the presentification (Darstellung) of the symptom" (6). Franko points out that the cause of the sacrifice is unclear. One is faced with the displacement of the tradition of victimisation of virgins during a transitional (liminal) phase in the life of a community. The choreographic approach of mixing what is supposed to be the most intimate with what is communally sharable allows the audience to act as "a collective witness" of the sacrifice. Initially, the sacrifice seems mysteriously predestined, that is, imposed by an unseen power. However, as the piece progresses, it reveals itself as entangled in sexual repression. In contrast to forceful, directional male behavior, the expression of female desire threatens unpronounced rules of social propriety. The female desire is choreographed in a way that positions it as antagonistic to the laws of patriarchy that have historically determined its meanings.

In the world outside the theatre, the fear of female desire can be traced back to the *fin-de-siècle* hysterical embodiment and the discourses it provoked. The hysterical scenes performed in the presence of medical witnesses led to the visible intensification of physical symptoms. In the *fin-de-siècle* medical milieus the hysterical scenes gained a secular, gendered undertone. They involved a female patient and a male doctor who had the license to use the hypnotic suggestion to stimulate the patient's childhood phantasies, and provoke somatic reactions. The feminist scholar Elisabeth Bronfen analyses the early psychoanalytic interpretations of hysterical scenes. Bronfen examines the embodiment of phantasy in light of the "side effects of a rationalist imperative" (149). She explains that Freud "believed he could ultimately uncover 'real' phantasy scenes (*Urszenen*), unconscious schemata that not only lie behind but also structure all belated articulations of traumatic impact" (148). For Freud, the scene of parental intercourse gives rise to the disturbing fictions, which are subsequently condensed into the primal phantasy. Based on Roland Barthes's poststructuralist

re-reading of the significance of the primal scene, Bronfen points out how the articulation of phantasy invites the excluded embodied subject back into the social discourse through a psychoanalytic formula that revolves around that phantasy. The subject was excluded by a rational tendency to structure the past as a coherent system of causes and effects and to remove his/her felt experience from the acceptable narrative organisation. "The notion of a primal phantasy, one might say, works with the same duplicity in articulation that leads Barthes to call history hysterical, arguing that narratives convert the certainty of the past, which excludes the subject, into a story fabricated according to conventional formulas" (148). In a similar fashion, by hystericizing the fragmented elements of the mythic plot of The Rite of Spring, Bausch's choreography evokes, and then defies the conventional formulas. Bausch invites back into the theatrical frame two embodied subjects facing each other: the dancer who is aware of the role she plays in a social ritual, and the thinking viewer who can rediscover his/her embodied subjectivity when faced with the expressivity of the dancers. Bronfen's open-ended question "What is the origin of my body's vulnerable and mutable anatomy?" (148) which early psychoanalysis answers with the formula of "original phantasy," alternatively calls for reflection on one's experience when enacting or witnessing a staged hysterical scene. In The Rite of Spring, the female sexual desire appears permeated with the fear of imaginary law. This unpronounced law evokes a repressed image of an archaic, patriarchal society governed by the repeated performance of a ritual sacrifice. Franko's analysis of the role of setting up scenes in choreography, and Bronfen's focus on the element of phantasy in hysterical embodiment show how the structure of a social ritual gives rise to an overflow of expression in a displaced female subject. This relationship is physicalised onstage by the presentation of the dispersed elements of an arcane myth. Amongst the female dancers competing for a red dress, only one woman is chosen. Then, a man (the priest figure) separates her from the others, and encourages her to kill herself in an unstoppable final dance. However, the choreography interrupts the viewer's continuous experience of the sacrifice by interpolating unexpected freezes of action. It is as if the dancer is frozen in a gestural expression under the spell of a traumatic memory. This is a powerful metaphor for deadly terror. When the freezing of action happens, the viewer is nearly forced to face the pain of the other. The poetic flow of a dancing body is purposefully broken. This sense of discontinuity and the psychosomatic dependence of the dancers on the drive of the choreographic structure, engender the effect of hystericisation, that is, an overt visibility of the excesses of affect. Thus, hystericisation presents a choreographic method for connecting symptom and expression in a way that communicates the socio-political problematics of repression. The issues of madness, violence, sexual desire and political power are implicated but not illustrated.

#### Conclusion

Nijinsky's life story - as a dancing star, choreographic innovator, bisexual man and an incarcerated mental patient, initiated re-investigation of the meanings that arise with the diminished distance between the artistic expression, symptoms of pathology in the early, modern psychiatry, and the consequent uncovering of the political implications of the newly invented diagnosis. In the 1970s Tanztheater, the hysterical symptom was staged through the scenes that invite a critical reflection on the topic of gender violence. Bausch's artistic exploration of the unconscious left behind the one-dimensional symbolism of the early psychoanalysis by presenting symptom as a metaphor. The re-emergence of the artistic expression out of an embodied performance of hysterical symptoms suggests an alternative to the rational decoding of unconscious desires and excessive drives, as it allows for a presence of the body that is not translatable into instrumental actions, but rather, condenses and expresses traumatic memories linked to sexuality. Bausch choreographs symptom as an artistic expression in a poetic, surrealist sense, and shows that historically, the hysterical symptom was constructed in the male/female encounters during hysterical scenes. Bausch's mode of relying choreographically on both personal and social memory, suggests a closeness (but not necessarily agreement) between her work and the psychoanalytic and feminist re-readings of the representations of psychiatric pathology and possession.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In "Hysteria, Labor and Dance Trauma", the second chapter of my dissertation *The Embodiment of the Unconscious: Hysteria Surrealism and Tanztheater* (2018, Temple University), I discuss the diagnosis and performance of symptoms at the Parisian hospital Salpêtrière in the time of the Third Republic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Philosopher Allen W. Wood explains that for Kant the main question revolves around "how it happens that we can take *pleasure* in the sublime, since its chief effect on us seems to frustrate our understanding (by exceeding its capacity to comprehend) or our will (by threatening to overpower us)." Wood concludes that "the sublime has a strange capacity to *move* us...." (163).

<sup>3</sup> In *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (first published in French in 1967) by J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, sublimation is described as the "process postulated by Freud to account for human activities which have no apparent connection with sexuality but which are assumed to be motivated by the force of sexual instinct. The main types of activity described by Freud as sublimated are artistic creation and intellectual inquiry" (431).

<sup>4</sup> It is relevant to note that in his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959), Jacques Lacan engaged the problematic of Kantian sublime. In Sophocles' tragedy, Antigone's choice of Good beyond mundane moral notions, renders the heroine into a paradigm of ethics. Here, a creative act appears in opposition to conformity.

<sup>5</sup> In my account, I am referring to both descriptions of the original choreography and a recording of the 1981 revival of Nijinsky's original piece by Robert Joffrey - director of the Joffrey Ballet, Millicent Hodson - an American dance historian; and Kenneth Archer - a British art historian. The reconstructed version allows for a more visceral response to the work, but because of its stable, unchanging appearance it can also present an obstacle to historical questioning and understanding of the choreographic process. As Hanna Järvinen, pointed out in "They Never Dance': The Choreography of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, 1913" (70), in the process of reconstructing the work, Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer "collected selected parts of the archive" and created out of it choreography that is "(relatively) unchanging and stable." This kind of stability engenders "a new original" and renders the work canonical. Video is available on YouTube: https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo4sf2wT0wU.

<sup>6</sup> The doctor who first examined Nijinsky's mental health — Dr. Albert Greiber was chosen by his wife Romola. Dr. Greiber specialised in sports medicine. Nevertheless, he tried to psychoanalyse Nijinsky based on what he had learned as a medical student in Zürich. Peter Oswald (1991) explains the situation: "Apparently he [Greiber] got caught up in a tremendously powerful transference, in which Nijinsky projected or acted out all kinds of unconscious fantasies and delusions. The countertransference was probably also highly charged, since Greiber apparently was in love with the patient's wife... Greiber was impressed with the 'sharp differences in education, intelligence, and culture' between Nijinsky and his wife. Romola, he wrote, 'stems from a culturally high-standing Hungarian family and regards her husband as a type of Russian peasant; brutal, violent fits of temper" ("Playing the role of a Madman" 184-185). In fact, Romola had a difficult youth, since her father, Karoly Pulszky—a member of Parliament, the director of the Hungarian National Gallery, and the founder of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, after several arrests for suspicious transactions, committed suicide. In addition, Nijinsky was ethnically Polish, not Russian, and his parents were dancers with the Setov opera company, not peasants. However, he was a highly suggestive actor even in his family life, which made it difficult to distinguish between what he really thought and knew, and what he imitated. For his part, Greiber did not have the tools of Lacanian psychoanalysis to deal with transference and countertransference. Thus, a psychiatric diagnosis appeared as a simple way out of a painful triangle. Nijinsky was sent to a specialist, Eugene Bleuler.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Oswald, "Playing the Role of a Madman," "Catatonia and Bellevue Sanatorium," and "The Leap into Madness," in *Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap into Madness.* 

<sup>8</sup> In original: "l'Orage, et cette danse de l'Élue, danse naïve et folle, danse d'insecte, de biche fascinée par un boa, d'usine qui saute, en fait, le plus bouleversant spectacle au théâtre dont je me puisse souvenir."

<sup>9</sup> In "Rioting with Stravinsky: A Particular Analysis of the Rite of Spring", Daniel K. L. Chua relates the anecdote connected to the gesture reminiscent of the ones associated with the tooth pain. The anecdote was written down by Marie Rambert in *Quicksilver: An Autobiography* (64).

<sup>10</sup> After several outbursts of violence towards his family, and the outrageous performance at Suvretta House on January 19, 1919 during which, prior to improvising a violent dance, Nijinsky addressed the audience with the following sentence: "Now I will dance you the war... the war which you did not prevent," Romola decided to confide in the physician Hans Curt Frenkel. Frenkel was familiar with Jungian theories of psychopathology, and took it upon himself to see Nijinsky every day. Nijinsky did not react well to Frenkel's visits, so Frenkel decided to contact his professor Eugen Bleuler, who recently invented the term schizophrenia (1911). When Bleuler saw Nijinsky, he diagnosed him as "a confused schizophrenic with mild manic excitement." When Nijinsky returned from the doctor, he uttered famous words: "Femmka [little wife], you are bringing me my death-warrant." This statement appears to express Nijinsky's aversion to the psychiatric confinement to which he was going to be condemned for the rest of his life (Acocella xix-xxi).

<sup>11</sup> Nijinsky's older brother was diagnosed with mental illness when Nijinsky was young.

<sup>12</sup> The social contexts of the case studies are often described in the 1893-1895 *Studies of Hysteria* by Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud.

<sup>13</sup> The relevance of Aby Warburg's pathos formulas for dance analysis is underscored in the work of dance scholar Gabriele Brandstetter. She offers a succinct elucidation: "According to Warburg, pathos formulas are visual inscriptions of collective cultural memory – dynamograms that still retain the imprint of cult ritual – at the origin of symbolic representation – and are constantly transformed anew in the receptive traditions of art" (26).