German Expressionist Dance at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Modifying dance forms and embodying the

National Socialist aesthetic

By

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the Nazi aesthetic and analyses its portrayal through German expressionist dance (*Ausdruckstanz)*. The development of the Nazi aesthetic is approached from a historical perspective, as the ideologies of National Socialism are articulated within a socio-political framework. The apprehension of the complex political ideologies of the regime accordingly enables a detailed understanding of the Nazi aesthetic, which is explored through its various manifestations. The aesthetic conclusions drawn after examining the various occurrences are then applied to dance sequences performed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, in order to debate on the portrayal and embodiment of the Nazi aesthetic.

__Introduction__

> In what historical and aesthetic circumstances does it become
> justifiable and necessary to speak of dance as political?
> (Franko, 2006, p.4)

The purpose of this dissertation is to trace the aesthetic values developed during the fascist era in Germany and debate on the way these values affected German expressionist dance (*Ausdruckstanz).* The time scope of the research unfolds from the rise to power of the National Socialist Party in 1933 to the hosting of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. The dances performed in the Olympic Games opening ceremony are used as case study example for tracking the elaborate relations between the fascist aesthetic and its embodiment.

In order to establish whether there is indeed a link between National Socialist aesthetics and *Ausdruckstanz,* the research divides in three chapters, each enquiring a different aspect of the relation between dance and National Socialism.

Chapter One answers the question of what constitutes the National Socialist ideology, by providing a historical contextualization of the era and reflecting upon the German manifestation of the movement. Issues relating to the origin of Nazism are interrogated, and examined in correlation to the rise of *Ausdruckstanz.* The ideologies structuring the policies of the National Socialist party are thoroughly analyzed and then used as cornerstones for articulating the Nazi aesthetic.

Based on the observations made in Chapter One, Chapter Two interprets and tracks the origin of aesthetic ideas by relating them to the Nazi policies. After establishing a connection between the political ideologies of National Socialism

and their portrayal through the arts, the National Socialist aesthetic is defined. The concept of aesthetics is then linked to dance practices and examples drawn from visual source material are laid out, in order to discuss the way Nazism influenced the aesthetic of German expressionist dance.

The findings of these two chapters are brought together in Chapter Three to answer the key query of the research, which regards the embodiment of the Nazi aesthetic and its portrayal through the dance sequences performed in the Olympic Games opening ceremony. The structure of the chapter follows a brief analysis of the political symbolism incorporated in the festival and then, the sequences presented in the Berlin Olympics are outlined. After a description of each dance piece is provided, the choreographies are thoroughly analyzed with reference to the aesthetics they portray and the ideologies they adapt to.

The mode of inquiry that underlies the research is historiography, viewed as a process of understanding and explaining the past (Hanstein, 1999). Accordingly, it also determines the method that has been applied for the gathering, analysis and interpretation of the data that support the research.

The source material for this dissertation is a combination of both primary and secondary sources. Newspaper articles and journals of the period in question[1], accessed from the Dance Archive in Leipzig Germany, have been examined and assessed as material informing the descriptions of the Olympic

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[1] The archival newspaper material that supports the dissertation has been accessed at the *Tanzarchiv Leipzig (TAL)* – Dance Archive Leipzig on the 22nd of July 2009.
The material includes articles from the following newspapers: *Neue Preussische Zeitung – Berlin August 1936 / Bayerische Ostmark – Bayereuth (18.Aug.09) / Beamtenzeitung – Berlin (2.Aug.1936) / DAZ – Berlin 1936 / DAZ – Pfingst Beilage Berlin / Dortmonder Zeitung.*
All newspaper excerpts belong to the Archive of Herbert Vogel: DI Nord.6951

ceremony in Chapter Three. Further primary sources that support the research are filmic material produced during the period of interest. Documentaries and pictures[2] from rehearsals of the ceremony have also been accessed in order to provide a firsthand impression on the festivities at the Olympic stadium. These visual sources proved to be the most helpful means of informing the research and the descriptive process of the opening ceremony.

It is worth mentioning that the most valuable visual source of this dissertation, has been the feature film of the Olympic Games: *Olympia,* directed by Leni Riefenstahl. This film has received many international prizes since the time of its first airing and is still nowadays considered amongst the masterpieces of interwar cinema, due to the pioneering filming techniques it employed(Mackenzie, 2003)[3]. Overall, the film focuses on the various athletic competitions and the awarding ceremonies, but the dissertation mainly employs the introductory sequences of the film, because they include *Ausdruckstanz* movement-phrases and are therefore highly informative on the Nazi aesthetic and its embodiment in dance practices.

Moving on from the visual material to the secondary sources, it has to be noted that the dissertation comprises of writings heralding from various disciplines. For instance, Chapter One, primarily concerned with the political construction of the Nazi ideology, draws its supporting material from political

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[2] The archival pictures were all accessed at *Tanzarchiv Leipzig (TAL):* Folder IIa granted permission by Ilse Loesch. As far as the documentaries are concerned, *"Tanz unter dem Hackenkreutz"* was viewed at Phoenix channel at the day of its airing (25.06.2009) and *"Olympia"* was purchased through Amazon, but several excerpts are also available at www.youtube.com

[3] The film consists of two parts,one titled *Fest der Völker* (Festival of the Peoples) and the other *Fest der Schönheit* (Festival of Beauty). Both parts are documentations of the 1936 Olympic Games and were released two years after the Olympics (1938).

science textbooks. The two most informative sources of Chapter One are Paxton's (2004) *Anatomy of Fascism* and Passmore's (2002) *Fascism – A very short introduction.* These up-to-date political textbooks serve as a guide for assessing the rest of the material used in Chapter One and provide a general framework for analyzing Nazi ideology. Valuable information for composing the socio-historical picture of the era and comprehending the reasons for the rise of National Socialism are found in Eleanor Turk's (1999) book *The History of Germany,* as well as Hildebrands's *The Third Reich,* which provides an insight into the social structure of Hitler's empire.

In Chapter Two, where the research question focuses on *Ausdruckstanz* and the exploration of aesthetic concepts, most readings derive from the fields of Dance Studies and Philosophy. The main source informing this chapter is Hedwig Müller's (1993) *Jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer[4];* a German textbook concerning the emergence and development of *Ausdruckstanz.* The core philosophical textbooks chosen to facilitate the process of defining 'aesthetics' are written by American professors Hospers (1969) and Cottingham (2008). Both books are anthologies of philosophical essays, accompanied by helpful commentary and analysis. At this point, it is important to clarify, that the excerpts quoted from these books are chosen with reference to the objective of this dissertation and should therefore not be perceived as a formal definition of aesthetics. In order to relate the aesthetic observations back to dance practices, Chapter Two also draws valuable

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[4] Müller H & Stöckemann P, 1993. *" ...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer." - Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945.* Giessen: Anabas Verlag

information from the studies of dance scholars Betty Redfern (1983) and Sondra Horton Fraleigh[5] (1999), who discuss the aesthetic portrayal in dance practices.

As far as Chapter Three is concerned, as it has been mentioned, most of it comprises of archival material, though some sources are secondary. Delbrouk's (2004)[6] writings on the Dionysian aspect of the Olympic Games as well as *The Nazi Olympics* by Mandel (1971) played a definitive role in appreciating the Olympic ideal and being able to read the symbolisms in the dance sequences.

Last but not least it is important to refer to Susan Manning[7] and Ramsey Burt (1998)[8] whose ideas on embodying modernity have been a source of inspiration and a paradigm for this dissertation.

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[5] Redfern, B, 1983. *Dance, Art and Aesthetics.* London: Burlington Press / Fraleigh, S, H , 1999. *Witnessing the Frog Pond .* essay in : Fraleigh, S, H & Hanstein ,P (eds), 1999. *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press

[6] Delbrouck ,M, 2004. *Verehrte Körper, verführte Körper – Die Olympischen Spiele der Neuzeitund die Tradition des Dionysischen.* Tuebingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

[7] (Manning in:) Foster S, L (ed.), 1995. Choreographing History. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press / (Manning in:) Carter A (ed.), 1998. Dance Studies Reader. London: Routldge / Manning, S., 1993. Ecstasy and the Demon – Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman. London: University of California Press, Ltd.

[8] Burt, R, 1998. Alien Bodies: representations of modernity, 'race' and nation in early modern dance. London and New York: Routledge.

Chapter 1
Understanding Fascism

The aim of this chapter is to provide a contextualization of fascism and highlight the core ideologies of the movement. By following the historical trail of events that preceded the rise of the National Socialism in Germany, Chapter One explores the incidents that contributed to the establishment of the regime. The main section of the chapter (1.3.) titled "Understanding the Nature of National Socialism" examines the characteristics and core ideologies of fascism and aims to illuminate how these were portrayed in the German manifestation of the regime. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to exploring aspects of propaganda which had been one of the strongest political mechanisms of Nazi Germany.

1.1.   The years prior to the rise of National Socialism

The National Socialist regime was established in Germany during the inter-war period[9] in 1933. As it becomes evident through historical texts, fascist regimes usually seized power arbitrarily. This mainly happened, because fascist ideologies have such a totalitarian character that people would almost certainly never vote voluntarily for such a regime to come to power. Strangely though, Nazism rose to power legally, after a regular electoral process. The reasons why people voted in favor of Nazism can be found in the instability following the years after the end of the First World War.

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[9] The period characterized as "interwar" are the years between the two World Wars (1919-1940)

In the First World War, the involved nations were not fighting against each other solely. On the contrary, each state was ranged with one of the two opposing alliances that were formed. These alliances were called the *Entente* and the *Great Powers* (Willmott, 2003). Germany was part of the Entente, which was the winning alliance of the war. However, the fact that *Entente* had overall won the war, did not presume that the separate states constituting the alliance would also be regarded amongst the victors (Turk, 1999).

The war ended with the signing of a peace treaty known as the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed by all nations involved in the war. The treaty aimed to settle territorial issues amongst the victors and bring closure to the war. Despite the fact that Germany was allied with the *Entente,* it was not considered amongst the victors. In the words of Eleanor Turk, the allies "had turned an honorable truce into a disastrous defeat for Germany" (Turk, 1999, p.101). Apart from the feeling of defeat though, the terms that the treaty applied, put a lot of pressure on the state:

> Finally there was punishment. Under article 231 of the Treaty, Germany had to accept the total responsibility for causing the war and monetary payment for the damages called '*reparations*'.
>
> (Turk, 1999, p.101)

The settlement of the *reparations* had to start immediately. However, the fact that the German government had agreed to these measures outraged the population. This rage was equally mirrored in the political parties, causing political conflicts. The National Socialist Party in particular, turned against socialists and democrats alike, accusing them both for "stabbing Germany in the back" (Passmore, 2002, p.65) because they had not objected to the applied measures. The communist party on the other hand was organizing revolts in

Berlin and Munich (Turk, 1999, p.102) as a sign of protest. During this period, the intense political turmoil, was gradually leading to anarchy and the state appointed a constitutional assembly to recreate the German constitution in hopes of re-establishing democracy in Germany (Frye, 1968).

The new constitution was named after the place where it was approved and became known since, as the "Weimar Constitution". Accordingly, the name given to the new German republic was "Weimar Republic" or "German Reich" (Gordon, 1980). With reference to the events stigmatizing the Weimar Republic, historians divide the Weimar period in three distinct phases. As Kolb (2004) articulates, the first phase of the Weimar republic directly preceded the years after the war and covered the period from 1919 to 1923. It became known as *The Years of the crisis,* given that it encompasses the turmoil that followed the signing of the peace treaty. At that time the republic was still in the midst of political conflicts from both right- and left-winged political parties. Despite the turmoil however, these years of instability served as a source of creativity and as chance for further development in the fields of Art and Science. As Graig Gordon claims, "Weimar Germany has often been described as a cradle of modernity" (1980, p.470). It is the era when Expressionism first emerged as a movement in art and literature, Einstein developed the theory of relativity and Freud structured his method of psycho-analysis (Gordon G, 1980). *Ausdruckstanz* (German Expressionist Dance) also emerged during the early 1920's as a dance form sharing common ties with the expressionist movement (Howe, 1996).

The second phase of the Weimar Republic known as *The Phase of Relative stabilization* covered the years from 1924 to 1929 and was a period of domestic and international rehabilitation. During that five-year period, "the

republic seemed to be functioning well" (Turk, 1999, p.103) as it was slowly recovering from the aftermath of the First World War and it also appeared to achieve a degree of stability (Passmore, 2002). However this sense of stability was interrupted in 1929, when Germany was affected by the international monetary crisis initiated in the American Stock Exchange Market (Wall Street) which affected all nations having financial ties with the United States. In the words of Eleanor Turk the Great Depression "wiped out the progress of the previous years" (1999, p.103).

Despite the relative stabilization, the German society was still fragile and therefore the impact of the American economic crash had been grave. Many businesses collapsed and the unemployment rates rose rapidly. The republic was starting to "lose legitimacy" (Passmore, 2002, p.66) and so the German Reich entered into the third phase, which signaled its upcoming decline. In the words of Kolb (2004) the last phase of the republic is known as *The disintegration and destruction of the Republic.* Starting in 1930 this phase resulted to the collapse of the Weimar republic in 1933, the year when the National Socialist party came to power.

The Weimar economic system was not equipped with methods to cope with the 1929 recession. In addition to this, the public was expressing dissatisfaction by claiming that the economic system of the republic was defending special interests. There was a general demand for a more 'national' policy instead of a policy based on favoritism. The public's dissatisfaction aroused internal political conflicts: "each interest group accused rival groups of refusing to put national interest first" (Passmore, 2002, p.66). All these conflicts and tumult in the political sphere during the early 1930's served as fertile ground for Hitler's strategic plan of rising to power.

1.2.   From Weimar to the Third Reich

Hitler's rise to power had not been an incident that occurred from one day to the other. On the contrary, the percentage of the voters in favor of the National Socialist party had been increasing since 1928. However, nothing indicated that the Nazi party would win the 1932 elections. The relative breadth of appeal of the Nazi party did not result in such a high percentage of votes, that would ensure the majority of seats in the parliament in order to govern (Passmore, 2002). Consequently the question arising regards the means by which Hitler managed to become chancellor.

The answer to this query can be found in the fact that the National Socialist party had formed an alliance with the conservative party, which had expressed distaste for the Weimar Republic. Hitler himself also opposed to the Weimar form of government and as Graig Gordon observes, he was planning to:

> [...] institute a policy of general denigration of the culture of the Weimar period [...] pretending that nothing that was created between the end of the war and 1933 was worth looking at, listening to, reading or thinking about.
>
> (Gordon G, 1980, p.469)

A further reason justifying how the Nazi party won the elections is found in the relations between the party and the army. After the end of the First world war, the army had constantly been intervening with politics. As Passmore (2002) observes, the military involvement resulted in the German democracy being moribund well before Hitler seized power. Therefore, after the

formation of the political alliance, the party won the elections and in January 1933 Hitler was appointed chancellor.

Short after seizing power, Hitler turned to terrorist tactics, which were "endorsed by the power of the state" (Hildebrand, 1984, p. 4). He exercised attacks against his political opponents and especially against communists and social democrats. The Nazi party's aim was to eliminate all opposition and political competition. The most decisive step towards gaining "unlimited power" (Hildebrand, 1984, p.5) was the *Reichstagsfire* (Fire at the Parliament) on February 1933. It is still not clear whether the fire was set by the National Socialist party or not, though fact is that the Nazis blamed the communists for setting it and took advantage of the incident, by promoting their party (Turk, 1999). This fire had been one more step towards achieving total control over the government. After this incident, Hitler succeeded in establishing a new measure that allowed him to enact laws without requiring the consent of the *Reichstag* (Parliament) or the *Reichsrat* (Senate). All authorities were gathered in the face of the *Führer* (Leader), who was presented as a messianic, almost "godlike figure" (Friedrich, cited in Passmore, 2002) above the law and the state.

The core policies Hitler employed while his party was in power can be summarized under three keywords: elimination, abolishment and termination (Turk, 1999). Elimination refers to the extinction of all opposition. One characteristic example of this tactic had been the *Reichstags*-fire incident. Another similar incident, was the so called "Night of the Long Knives", which actually refers to more than one nights lasting from the 30th of June to the 2nd of July 1934. During those nights, small groups of Nazi-party members

invaded the homes of opposite party members and killed them as an act of eliminating political competition.

Abolishment, as the second political tactic, refers to the rejection of the institutional frameworks and state mechanisms operating during the Weimar era and the creation of new ones. Finally, termination refers back to one of the key ideologies of Nazism, the so called "anti-Semitism" which will be further analyzed in section 1.3.

These measures were employed in order to prepare the state for "German world Dominion" (Hitler, cited in Turk, 1999, p. 117). Further to this point, Hitler wanted to make sure that under his rule Germany would never again be vulnerable, as it had been after the end of the First World War. He was envisioning a regenerated country that would slit any connection with the Weimar Republic.

In order to realize the party's aspirations, the Nazis based their appeal and influence on a manifold ideology consisting of a synthesis of various pre-existing concepts. The analysis and articulation of the complex ideologies of Nazism, as well as the political means that the regime used to exercise its authority will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

1.3. Understanding the nature of National Socialism

> There are enough similarities between fascism and Nazism
> to make it worthwhile applying the concept of Fascism to
> both.
> (Passmore K, 2002, p.62)

Fascist movements have been a phenomenon that occurred all over Europe after the end of the First World War. The roots of the movement can

be found in the social instability characterizing the years following the end of the war (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008). Political analyst Kevin Passmore views fascism as "an ideology that seeks to restore the nation after a period of supposed decline" (Passmore K, 2002, p.26). This claim righteously justifies the occurrence of fascist movements in Spain, France, Germany and Italy. Accordingly, most fascist leaders who came to power during the interwar period sought restoration and projected it as one of the primary goals of their regimes. The three most successful fascist movements were the manifestations in Germany, Italy and Spain. In these countries, fascism became the ruling regime of the state, whereas in the other parts of Europe, the movements did not succeed in seizing power. Each of the fascist manifestations in Europe had unique characteristics, which differed from the rest of the fascist occurrences. However, all movements were attributed the label of Fascism. It is therefore important to note, that this should not obscure each movement's distinctiveness and it does not imply that understanding one of the occurrences of fascism equals to an understanding of the whole number of occurrences. However, despite their distinctiveness, all manifestations had two points in common, which were located in the racial criteria of discrimination and the notion of the nation as the priority against any other value (Passmore, 2002).

1.3.1.Nation and Race

Nationhood along with racial supremacy have been the two core notions that formed the basis of National Socialist ideology. A political analyst of the interwar era commented on the ideas that were projected as the quintessence of the German manifestation of fascism:

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> They (*the ideas*) flow from 'Blut' und 'Boden', from nation
> and race, from individual genius and from the esoteric
> depths of the German soul.
>
> *(Schuman, 1934, p.211)*

"Boden" meaning earth, knits a connection to the previous points made concerning the importance of nation, defined in geographical and territorial terms. By using the word "Blut" however, which is the German term for "blood", Schuman introduces the concept of race being defined by biological traits. As he goes on to explain in his essay, the Nazi state was conceived as a *racial* state, whose first care should be "the biological fitness and racial purity" (Schuman, 1934, p.218) of its citizens. Hitler aimed at achieving racial purity by exterminating any 'elements' he believed would contaminate the German race. In order to realize his goal he was willing to adopt even the most extreme measures. As mentioned in the previous section, Hitler did not hesitate to eliminate political competition, by killing his rivals. Similarly, he did not hesitate over killing hundreds of Jews, based on his belief of Jewish racial inferiority.

The Nazi ideology of racial supremacy was based on two opposing poles. One pole was the so called "anti-Semitism" and the other was "pan-Germanism" (Schuman, 1934). "Anti Semitism" is a term that exceeds the boundaries of racial discrimination and refers to hatred and prejudice against Jewish immigrants:

> The term indicates a shift in thinking: from that of religious
> hatred to that of racist hatred. So even if Jews fully merged
> into the surrounding culture and played by the rules, they
> were still viewed as Jews biologically.
>
> (Harms & Ferry, 2008, p.48)

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler (cited in Passmore, 2002) articulates his belief of an existing hierarchy, which sorts the races. He positioned the German race on the top of the hierarchy scale and grounded his theory of German dominion in equaling the notion of racial supremacy to the Darwinian theory of evolution, which proclaims the survival of the strongest species. Furthermore, he argued that there was a will for purity within each race. In this trail of thought he managed to exalt the notion of purity and make it appear as a higher ideal where people would find fulfillment and even sacrifice themselves for the good of their race (Passmore, 2002).

Hitler's obsession with the obliteration of the Jewish race coincides with the medical developments in the field of eugenics (Paxton, 2004), which marked the beginnings of the twentieth century. Eugenics, often referred to as "pseudoscience" (Black, 2003), had been a field that aimed to "improve" the human race by "wiping away all human beings deemed 'unfit', preserving only those who conformed to a Nordic stereotype" (Black, 2003 in www.sfgate.com, 22.06.2009). The fixation on purity being evident in science as well, added to Hitler's eagerness of racial cleansing to such an extent that eventually led to the Holocaust (Paxton, 2004, p.13).

Returning to the concept of the opposing poles forming the structure of racial discrimination, the second element of "Pan- Germanism", is rooted in the German mythology and history. The German herd was said to have its origins in the Teutonic Race, also known as 'Aryan Race'. The white or Aryan race was believed to be the source of all culture, whereas the Jewish race was said to be the "source of corruption" (Schuman, 1934, p.218).

The dipole of *race* and *nation* served as groundwork, for the development of the National Socialist ideology in general. The stereotype of

being Aryan or non-Aryan explains many of the events that occurred under the National Socialist rule and eventually shaped history. Even in the arts, these two notions had been dominant in the aesthetics of the era. "National producers" (Paxton, 2004, p.56) were cherished and favored while artists who were unable to provide proof of being Aryan were expatriated. Unfortunately this discrimination impacted on the artist's creativity and discouraged them from projecting resistance. As it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, nation and race had a great impact on the dance forms and the aesthetics that preponderated over the Nazi period.

1.3.2. "A and not A"

It is typical of all manifestations of fascism, to comprise of conflicting ideologies. Therefore, Ortega y Gasset defines fascism as "A and not A" (Gasset, cited in Passmore, 2002, p.11). However, the fact that the ideologies are conflicting should not become a hindering factor for understanding the regime as an integrated set of ideas and practices. Every part of the fascist ideology, contradictory or not, contributes to the formation of the bigger picture.

One of the conflicting theories underlying the foundations of Nazism regards the social class division. As Passmore (2002) observes, the National Socialist party was favoring the elites, at the expense of lower social classes. This favoritism can be understood in terms of the Nazi Utopia Hitler was striving to create. The ideal state he was envisioning, was closer to the living standards of the elites. On the other hand however, the success of Nazism lay in the support it had from the "masses", which as Richard Saage (1977) claims, were formed by the middle classes. The massive appeal of Nazism directly

resulted from the fact that Hitler was primarily aiming at gaining the support of the middle classes. His pre-electoral campaign and the post-electoral propaganda consisted of political messages that would equally appeal to men and women of the middle classes (Paxton, 2004), because they were forming the majority of the population. Not only was the party appealing to the masses, but it was also using them as a keystone to enhance the Nazi "system of dominion" (*nationalsozialisitsches Herrschaftssystem* - Saage, 1977, p.91). In this context, "system of dominion" refers to the strategies according to which Hitler managed to preserve control over the populace in public mass meetings. According to Paxton:

> Hitler knew how to work a mass electorate. He played
> skillfully upon the resentments and fears of ordinary
> Germans, in incessant public meetings spiced up by
> uniformed strong-arm squads, the physical intimidation of
> enemies, the exhilaration of excited crowds and fevered
> harangues, and dramatic arrivals by airplane and fast, open
> Mercedeses.
>
> (Paxton, 2004, p. 65-66)

Paxton's argument highlights the role of advanced technology means (airplanes / open cars) employed by Hitler as status symbols to impress the population. However, the issue of technological advancements draws light to the second conflicting dualism of Nazi ideology. Fascism rejected the idea of progress. On the contrary it was in favor of a "circular pattern of rebirth or revival and envisaged a return to a lost golden age" (Clark, 1997, p.54). This became especially evident in architecture and the fascist aesthetic of art, which will be addressed and analyzed in depth in Chapter Two. Archaic images and a primitive way of life (back to nature / nudism trend) were prevailing, while at the same time the regime was supporting new technology to boost the German economy through industrialization:

> Fascist archaism conceals a contradictory attitude towards modernity. For, while regimes claimed to restore values that preceded modern decadence, they also instigated intensive industrialization to build up their economic and military bases.
>
> (Clark, 1997, p.58)

Further conflicting points in the Nazi ideology occur in the dipole of communal feeling and individuality, the "We" and the "I". The "We" were the Germans, defined as a group of individuals sharing the same nationality (Passmore, 2002), compared to the rest of the races who were portrayed as "They". "They" as a term, emphasized the otherness of non-German races and labeled them as an alien unity instead of acknowledging their individuality. However within the borders of the German nation "We" represented the German population as a whole, shaping their collective personality. As Toby Clark (1997) observes, during the mass meetings and speeches of Hitler, the physical conditions were deliberately created in such a way that they would break down the capacity for any individual thought or reflection, so that the result would be a large number of people behaving like a mass. This supposedly 'collective identity' of the German *Volk* was personified in the face of the Leader (*Führer*) and therefore "We" was viewed as a single unity and was equaled to the "I".

These contradicting ideologies did not only impact on the political and social sphere. On the contrary, they were respectively mirrored in the scientific and artistic fields. Detailed descriptions and analyses of the various ways the Nazi ideologies impacted and affected the artistic means of expression will form the core of Chapter Two.

1.3.3. Propaganda and Totalitarianism
(Two essential concepts for a further understanding of Nazism)

The term propaganda occurred in Europe during the 18th century. At first it was used to refer to the "dissemination of political beliefs" (Clark, 1997, p.7). After the end of the First World War however, the connotations of the term became negative, as it became linked to totalitarianism in the Western democracies and presumed an "orgy of lying" (Blanco White, 1939, p.44). The criteria discerning a regime as totalitarian are partly the same as the criteria mobilizing the propaganda mechanism. Therefore, both concepts will be analyzed side by side.

According to an American political scientist C.J. Friedrich (Friedrich, cited in Passmore, 2002, p.19), *totalitarianism* can be defined through six qualifying criteria. The first criterion explains totalitarianism as "a regime which is typically superior to or intertwined with the governmental bureaucracy" (Friedrich cited in Passmore, 2002, p.19) and is led by one man who forms the hardcore of the regime.

This criterion has already been partly analyzed in the previous sections regarding the rise to power of Hitler and the infused ideologies of his regime. The fact that the institutional framework and organization of the state underwent a complete change and that new institutions were founded, contributed to the government gaining absolute control over every aspect of the people's lives. There were various state mechanisms like the SS (*Schutzstaffeln),* the secret police *Gestapo* and the newly founded Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda which aimed to control as many areas of public life as possible. Amongst the tasks of the Ministry of Propaganda, was the control over the arts and the works that would reach the

audience. As mentioned previously, some artists voluntarily conformed to the norms of the regime whereas others chose to resist. Though, as it will be discussed in the course of the dissertation, there was not a lot of room left for the artists to decide freely. Since people were living in such a strictly framed community, and the fascist doctrines were infused upon them on a daily basis, they were subconsciously becoming "emotionally subjected" (White Blanco, 1939, p.11) to the ideologies projected by the ruling system. As the following criterion shows, the terroristic aspect of the regime also played a decisive role in forming the people's attitudes towards obedience or unruliness.

The second criterion, articulated by Friedrich (cited in Passmore, 2002), refers to the terroristic aspect of totalitarian regimes. He claims that fascist regimes based their rule on a system of terror exercised by the police or the secret police of the state. This 'system' was "directed against the real and imagined enemies of the regime" (Friedrich cited in Passmore, 2002, p.19). The term 'real enemies' involves any country that openly opposed to the regime. Though in the case of Nazism, it may not be audacious to say that the only "real enemy" was the truth. As mentioned, the regime was grounded on incongruent pairs of ideas that were not rooted in reason and had no reasonable explanation. The doctrines projected as part of the Nazi propaganda campaigns did not appeal to reason either. As Amber Blanco White (1939, p.25) observes: "Fascist and Nazi doctrines are not put forward as true or as defensible by reason". Hitler's view on the subject matter in fact confirms this claim. In his book titled *Mein Kampf,* he expresses his belief that the memory of the people is unbelievably short and lacks the power of rationalizing. Following this trail of thought, the hint that the Nazi propaganda was based on lies, now becomes a fact. The question immediately

arising is why people were so effectively tangled in this swirl of lies. Hannah Arendt argues that this is exactly the role played by a system of terror. Terror "makes an abstract ideological understanding of the world seem real" (Arendt, cited in Passmore, 2002, p.19). When people are ruled by fear they do not doubt or go against the established system of authority. On the contrary, they are vulnerable and therefore ready to conform to any ideal imposed to them from above, without necessarily questioning its rationale. In the case of National Socialism, fear was effectively used as part of propaganda, since it resulted in passive acceptance of the messages spread by the Leader.

According to Friedrich's definition, the system of terror analyzed above was directed against 'imagined enemies' as well, which were mirrored in the Jewish race. The viewing of the Jews as scapegoats fulfilled the nationalistic aggression of the regime. The Jews were seen as an opportunity to "display an effective brutality which served to frighten all enemies of the regime" (White Blanco A, 1939, p.49). Apart from discouraging the enemies, the killing of innocent people enhanced the existing system of terror and served as an inhibitory factor for anyone considering disobedience.

However, it must be argued, that fear did not rule out all human attempts for disobedience or resistance. It just lowered their frequency and acted as a means of control over the people's impulses. The role of 'control' was also partly held by the mass media as well, which form the core of the third criterion defining totalitarianism. All means of transferring information and communicating messages had to be first approved by the Propaganda Ministry and the appointed minister: Joseph Goebbels. Apart from the mass media however, this criterion also applied to other forms of expression as well.

'Personal opinions' were welcome only as long as they did not object to the Nazi culture and the standards defined by the party (Bytwerk, 2004).

Literature, press and scenarios for film and theatre were strictly censored (Kant M & Karina L, 2004). Any writer, who according to Goebbels' opinion, would distort the Nazi myth, was either sent to exile or to one of the concentration camps. The radio, which used to be a means of getting informed, became an instrument of rule and propaganda, as it only transmitted political messages (Hadamovski, cited in Bytwerk, 2004). The effectiveness of radio as a propagandistic tool was based on the fact that Nazi Germany had been a restricted community, where people were encouraged not to worry about what was going on in the world outside the German borders. As White (1939) observes, the dictators desired their subjects to be ignorant of what was being done and felt abroad, because this made the people more susceptible to accepting propagandistic messages without questioning their validity.

The arts were equally brought under the service of the regime. Painting and sculpture were employed in order to portray the Aryan aesthetics of beauty, whereas architecture was also exploited to portray the supposed durability of the Third Reich through grandeur buildings. Only in the case of dance, opera and music were the boundaries of what was considered Nazi-appropriate not easily discernible. Especially in the case of dance, the Nazi influence was mostly evident in the evolving dance forms and the aesthetics embodied by the dancers. However, this issue will further be discussed in Chapter Two, where the focus is centered on the Nazi aesthetic.

Moving on with the analysis of the criteria defining totalitarianism, the fourth criterion regards the complex ideologies of totalitarian regimes, which

in the words of Friedrich **"**contain a powerful chiliastic[10] moment" (Friedrich cited in Passmore, 2002, p.19). According to White Blanco (1939) it is typical of dictators to attribute to themselves godlike characteristics. Amongst these allegedly godly features are the Leader's exclusion from criticism and his incapability of error. In the case of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the name of the Leader had been incorporated in the daily grace and all prayers were alleged to them. These "demi-god" (White Blanco, 1939, p.42) qualities were further enhanced through propaganda and therefore became rooted in the population's way of thinking.

The two last criteria of totalitarianism are not directly related to propaganda, but the ideas on which these two criteria are based were overall incorporated into the political messages. The criteria refer to the monopoly of weapons and the control of the economy, which were also included amongst the authorities of the Leader. As far as the economy is concerned, the importance of recovering it in order to avoid fragility and prove the independence of the German state has already been discussed. Militarism on the other hand, was employed as a tool of reassuring the population of Germany's superiority in case of war. Its importance was repeatedly highlighted in propagandistic messages, because apart from being a political tool, the military also played a role in the social structure. The Germans regarded the period of their military service as the crown and climax of their education. Propaganda carried this message across, by exalting military docility to a higher ideal (Blanco White A, 1939). Men had to consider themselves as "the soldiers of the Führer during every waking hour. There are no private lives in Germany" (Blanco White A, 1939, p.44).

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[10] messianic or religious

Having discussed all six criteria, it has been made clear, that the totalitarian nature of the Nazi regime covered all the aspects of daily life in Germany. The people's freedom of expression was restrained and they were constantly experiencing fear because the Leader or one of his executive agencies were omnipresent. Taking these observations into account, the fact that there was very little projection of resistance, now becomes even more tangible.

Conclusion

Fascism and its German manifestation are movements sharing a common basis, but at the same time comprising of conflicting dualities. The instability prevalent in the aftermath of the First World War led to the establishment of Nazism in Germany. Nationhood, as a highly appreciated value, formed the core of National Socialist ideology and lay beneath each political decision of the *Führer*. As a system of rule, Nazism was based on the intimidation and terrorization of the populace, because this made it easier to manipulate the people as a mass. Propaganda, as a state employed mechanism, infused false beliefs in people's minds and encouraged them to passively accept and follow the Leader's will.

The concepts analyzed as part of this chapter and the dipoles structuring Nazi ideology will all serve as cornerstones towards understanding how fascist ideology was embodied in art aesthetics and dance forms of the period.

Chapter 2
The National Socialist Aesthetic and Expressionist Dance

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the movement of expressionist dance and discover how the National Socialist ideology was embodied by the dance form. After briefly introducing *Ausdruckstanz,* Chapter Two focuses on a definition of aesthetics, by exploring the term's philosophical coinage and relating it to dance practices. Then, moving from a general definition to a more detailed analysis of aesthetic aspects, section 2.3. explores various instances, where Nazi ideology was evidenced in dance practices. All the concepts and ideas discussed in this chapter, serve as foundations that enable a detailed reading of the Olympic Games opening ceremony which is the core subject of Chapter Three.

2.1.   Introducing *Ausdruckstanz*

The term "*Ausdruckstanz*" was established in 1928 to describe the new German dance form that emerged during the interwar period. Etymologically it consists of two German nouns: "*Ausdruck*" (expression) and "*Tanz*" (dance) and is therefore often referred to as "expressionist dance", "New Dance" or "Central European Dance" (Howe, 1996).

 Each one of the terms mentioned above highlights one of the primary attributes of the evolving dance form. For instance, the characterization as "Central European Dance" references the geographical roots of the dance. As Raynolds and McCormick (2003, p.77) state "the modern movement took root first in Germany, then elsewhere in Central Europe". Despite the fact that the

term *Ausdruckstanz* was first established in the late 1920's, the roots of the dance date back to the last decade of the 19th century. During the 1890's a new "body consciousness" (Cohen, 2004, p.203) emerged and *Ausdruckstanz* was born out of this "revolution against the artificiality of structure, movement and spectacle of the old court ballet" (Howe, 1996, p.1). *Ausdruckstanz* had been an innovative dance form aiming at the discovery of alternative forms of movement. Up to the point when it emerged, ballet was considered as a form that put restrains on the body and did not allow individual expression, due to the defined movement vocabulary it employed. In contrast to ballet, the evolving dance form, sought to find a form of movement that would best portray the dancer's feelings, without relying on a fixed vocabulary: "every movement should come from one's innermost soul, and should express one's feeling" (Bode, cited in Howe, 1996, p.12). This view of individual expression underlines the nature of *Ausdruckstanz* and explains why it was so closely related to the movement of Expressionism which emerged during the interwar period. Further to this point, the emphasis put on the separate characteristics that each dancer brought into the dance form, inevitably led to a valuing of selfhood and individuality. Therefore, as Müller claims, *Individualität* (individuality) became the "catchword of the 20's" (Müller, 1993, p.126).

However, looking at the evolution of *Ausdruckstanz* from a socio-historical point of view, the concept of individuality can also be seen as a natural aftermath of the Weimar era. As mentioned in Chapter One, the first years following the war were characterized by social and political instability. Furthermore, they were characterized by industrialization, which resulted in cities growing bigger and the population rising. These changes led to the urban life being characterized by anonymity, a sense of rootlessness,

alienation and disorientation (Howe, 1996). It is therefore justifiable that these concerns about a loss of identity, somehow contributed to the growth of the sense of individuality.

Overall, the valuing of selfhood, especially in the case of dance practices or other philosophical and scientific disciplines, led to a singling out of several individuals. These individuals were viewed as pioneers or key figures, who set the foundations for future developments in their disciplines. Rudolf von Laban had been the leading figure of *Ausdruckstanz*, whose dance philosophy evolved around the need to develop a new bodily awareness (Kant & Karina, 2004). Combining Laban's quest for a new bodily awareness to the growing concern about the fate of human kind, *Ausdruckstanz* evolved as a form primarily concerned with "dance as philosophical, metaphysical or even spiritual" (Jeschke & Vetterman, 2006, p.55). However the metaphysical and mystical notions evident in *Ausdruckstanz* will be analyzed in more detail in section 2.3.3. of Chapter Two. Apart from Laban, Mary Wigman is also considered amongst the pioneers of expressionist dance. Her contribution to the dance form is located in her effort to establish a connection between mankind and the universal energies through her dances. She thereby explored the mystical aspect of *Ausdruckstanz,* which strengthened the link between the dance form and the rest of the artistic practices of the expressionist movement.

Other renown figures of *Ausdruckstanz,* who inform the dissertation, are Gret Palucca and Harald Kreutzberg. Palucca, had been a student of Wigman and became known for her solo performances at several Nazi galas. Harald Kreutzberg was a well known expressionist dancer who had started as a ballet dancer. His work consisted of a combination of the "demanding

technique of ballet and the power of expression from the *Ausdruckstanz*" (Howe, 1996, p.182). His productions witnessed a heightened sense of nationalism which as Howe (1996) observes, was particularly evident during the period from the 1920's to the 1930's. This aspect of his work certainly proved to his advantage in the era of National Socialism, as it mirrored the core ideology of the regime.

Seeing how many different individuals played a role in the shaping of what has come to be known as *Ausdruckstanz,* it becomes clear, why *Ausdruckstanz* was a dance practice rooted in the capacity of each creator for personal expression. As Howe observes:

> The Ausdruckstanz aesthetic is followed as it was adopted
> and developed in the careers of nine outstanding dancers, of
> whom some were also influential teachers and writers. The
> distinctive individualism of the dance figures highlights the
> very aesthetic of individualism which they shared.
>
> (Howe, 1996, p.1)

An explanation of the so called "aesthetic of individualism" that Howe mentions can be found in a remark of Cohen (2004) regarding the nature of *Ausdruckstanz.* He claims that the *Ausdruckstanz* works were so closely related to the person who created them, that they could not be learned and performed by others. However, the fact that it was difficult to adopt or recreate an *Ausdruckstanz* work, should not lead to the confusing conclusion that the aesthetics of *Ausdruckstanz* were constantly being redefined according to the creator. There definitely were common identifiable elements latent in the majority of expressionist dance works.

These common elements are what defined the aesthetic of expressionist dance, which forms the core of this chapter. It is therefore essential to provide a definition of the term, in order to proceed with an in depth analysis of the

way Nazi ideology was embodied by *Ausdruckstanz* and the way this embodiment affected the body politics of the period.

2.2.   Defining Aesthetic

"Aesthetic" is a term with philosophical coinage that has its roots in the 18th century. Etymologically the term derives from the Greek infinitive *aesthanesthai* (*αισθάνεσθαι*) which has two possible meanings. It either carries the connotation of "direct awareness of feeling an emotion" (Redfern, 1983, p.12) or it is used to describe the act of perceiving the world through the five senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste). The ancient Greek philosopher Plato, was the first to coin the term *aesthanesthai* to the mind's cognition (Annas, 1987). He was also the first to relate the concept of *aesthesis* (perception – feeling) to art and the process of appreciating it. Sixteen centuries after Plato, in the late 1780's "aesthetics" emerged as a branch of philosophy, concerned with:

> […]the perception of beauty whether in art or in nature and more specifically with the nature of art and the human response to it.
>
> (Cottingham, 2008, p.694)

An attempt to provide one single definition of what 'aesthetics' is, would be fruitless. This is due to the nature of the aesthetic discourse, which covers a wide range of different philosophical approaches to the concept of 'art'. Therefore, the definition given as part of this section of the dissertation is based on selected writings by John Hospers (1969), former director of the School of Philosophy in California. In order to relate the concept of aesthetics back to dance, the definition given also relies on excerpts from Betty Redfern's

(1983) book *Dance, Art and Aesthetics,* and Sondra Horton Fraleigh's selected essays on aesthetics and dance.

However, before reaching the point of defining the discipline, it is worthwhile familiarizing with some of the key concepts of aesthetics that are helpful for gaining a better understanding of the term. First of all, it is important to refer to the difference between 'aesthetic' and 'aesthetics'. In the words of Betty Redfern, 'aesthetics' "usually denotes a type of theoretical enquiry" whereas 'aesthetic' refers to the "aesthetic mode of awareness itself" (Redfern, 1983, p.13). The former term, denoting theoretical enquiry, can in other words be explained as the variety of methods that the scholars use in order to approach and analyze the aesthetic discourse, whereas the latter term, involves more complex terms that will be analyzed shortly.

In order to gain an insight into what the 'aesthetic mode of awareness' implies, this section of the dissertation will employ three criteria articulated by John Hospers (1969). These criteria define the key characteristics that enable an aesthetic evaluation of any object. The first of these criteria is titled "non-practical" (Hospers, 1969, p.3) and it highlights the importance of appreciating an object based on its appearance rather than its functional properties. According to this criterion, aesthetic awareness is directly concerned with viewing something only for its own sake and savouring it as an experience.

The second criterion, is termed "non cognitive" (Hospers, 1969, p.3) and it underlines the importance of focusing on the perceptual details of the observed object, instead of using it as a source to broaden a person's knowledge. The object should thereupon be viewed with reference to its external characteristics rather than its history or practicality. Finally, the last

criterion defining aesthetic attitude according to Hospers is the so called "non personal" (Hospers, 1969, p.4). This criterion implies that the 'subject' (person) should avoid linking the object of observation to any kind of personal experience or memory.

Consequently, based on the explanations of all three criteria, it might be safe to argue that 'aesthetic awareness' lies in the viewing of the object for its own sake avoiding any links between the object and the subject's personal experience.

Through the above process of discussing aesthetic awareness, the dipole of 'subject' and 'object' occurred repeatedly. This duality highlights the importance of these concepts as part of aesthetics. Without an object to be observed and a subject to act as the observer a discussion on aesthetics would not be possible in the first place.

Proceeding to a further exploration of aesthetic aspects, it is essential to refer to the links that exist between subject and object. The connection between subject and object is found in the notions of aesthetic *qualities* and aesthetic *values*. Basically both terms refer to attributes of the observed object. What sets them apart however is the viewpoint. As dance scholar Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1999) claims, aesthetic *qualities* are the characteristics of an object and they arise as "a matter of attention in relation to that object" (Fraleigh, 1999, p.189). They are therefore closely tied with the object of attention. The same characteristics that define the observed object are perceived by the subject as "aesthetic *values*" (Fraleigh, 1999, p.189). In order to be more concrete and relate these observations to a dance example, these concepts will be applied to an *Ausdruckstanz* sequence.

Picture 1 Frame taken from *Olympia-Fest der Völker* runtime 10:17

Picture 2 Frame taken from *Olympia-Fest der Völker* runtime 10: 23

Picture 3 Frame taken from *Olympia-Fest der Völker* runtime 10:29

The following pictures are taken from a short dance sequence presented in the introduction of Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia – Fest der Völker*. The whole sequence lasts almost twenty seconds and is performed by three nude female dancers. The movement-phrase begins with an arch-like back bend, followed by an upright recovery of the torso. The motif is repeated twice. The dancer's arms are stretched to the sides and their heads lay back gazing upwards (pic.1). When they recover from the arch–like position, they form a small circle by touching palms (pic.2). The imaginary circle closes in as the dancers slowly kneel on one leg and simultaneously bring their hands in the middle of the circle (pic.3).

In this simple example, the 'object' of observation is the dance sequence. The details characterizing it are the three nude female dancers dancing outdoors under the bright sun (see pic.1). As it is evident in the video, the dancers move at a slow pace and their smooth movements, along with the physical attribute of nudity can be perceived as the object's *qualities*.

From the viewpoint of the subject though, the smooth quality of the movement may be interpreted as elegance and the fact that the movement phrases are repetitive and slow paced, may take on a ritualistic connotation.

Similarly, nudity may be perceived as purity and as a need to get in touch with nature, because the dancing takes place outdoors.

This brief example highlighting the variety of interpretations responds to the post-structuralist approach that an object cannot have a fixed meaning (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008). However, for the purpose of this dissertation, the interpretations of the dance sequences will all be approached with reference to some standards that enable the recognition of the Nazi aesthetic. In other words, historicisation, as a method of identifying the "concepts, moralities and ways of living" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008, p.158) will be employed as a means of reading the aesthetics of the Nazi period. To apply this observation to the above-mentioned dance example, it does not matter whether nakedness is being perceived as a sign of purity or as a means of coming closer to nature. What matters is that when the era of production is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that nudity had been part of a general movement, called *Nacktkultur* (Culture of Nakedness –Toepfer, 2003). The Culture of Nakedness occurred in Germany in the early years of the twentieth century and it was adapted by fascism because it was perceived as a means of praising the classical standards of beauty central to the Nazi ideology. (see section 2.3.2.)

Having outlined several of the basic concepts of aesthetic awareness, that enable a deeper understanding of the ideas presented in this dissertation, it is now worthwhile familiarizing with two further concepts that are also focal points of the dissertation. The first concept regards aesthetics and refers to the process of appreciating art, whereas the second one is an introduction to the notion of body politics.

As part of the general process of art appreciation, 19th century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche drew a distinction between the aesthetic of individuation and that of collective union. In his book *The birth of Tragedy,* he developed his ideas on art as being of two distinct kinds, both linked to the ancient Greek past and to the Greek gods *Dionysus* and *Apollo*. According to Nietzsche, the Dionysian state of art was one of ecstasy, whereas the Apollonian state was based on the principle of individuation (Cottingham, 2008, p.728). The emphasis put on individualism as an attribute of *Ausdruckstanz,* already discussed in section 2.1., can be paralleled to the Apollonian state of art, while the aesthetic of the masses that was adopted by *Ausdruckstanz* after the rise of Nazism can be read as a mirroring of the Dionysian state. However, a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's distinction of art is found in section 3.2. of Chapter Three.

The second concept worth referring to before moving to more specific examples of the portrayal of the Nazi aesthetic is *body politics*. Generally, the term refers to the way a body is being viewed within culture (Wolff, 2006) and to the sort of connotations it carries on a social, political, phyllogenetic and, in the case of fascism, even racial level. In the case of dance, body politics take on a central role, since the human bodies and their movements are the agents of the art form. Accordingly, the way a body is presented through a dance form defines the way it is being perceived aesthetically. For instance, the dancing bodies of ballerinas in classical ballet productions stand as a representation of what came to be known as the "classical body". In the words of Janet Wolff (2006), the classical body is defined as a body having no orifices and engaging in no base bodily functions. In order to effectively embody the characters of the classical ballet productions, the movement vocabulary that the dancers

rely on, comprises of small virtuoso jumps, and technical poses executed while balancing on the point of the shoe. These *qualities* incorporated in the balletic movement vocabulary, are subsequently read as ethereal *values,* depicting the fragility and elegance of the mythic creatures. This description perfectly matches the characters of the leading roles in ballet, who are usually not humans, but fairies or other mythical creatures instead.

On the other hand, modern dance and *Ausdruckstanz* in particular, were concerned with depicting reality and the human role in a changing universe. The fact that modern dance was tied to reality implies that the qualities embodied by the modern dancers were different than those projected through ballet. Their corporeality was characterized by attributes opposing those of the classical body, hence being closer to the ideal of the so called "grotesque body" (Wolff, 2006). A grotesque body, defined as the direct opposite of a classical body, has orifices and engages in the base bodily functions. Furthermore, it is often disproportionate and inharmonious or appears in a disturbing setting.

Picture 4 Mary Wigman's "Witch dance" a typical portrayal of a grotesque disfigured body (source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp-Z07Yc5oQ, accessed 15.07.2009)

Apart from situating the bodies in a dance context, it is interesting to see how the bodies were viewed as parts of the community. Especially in the case of Nazism, that was a totalitarian regime, body politics took on various connotations. As Patricia Veroli states, in the case of fascism "body politics are closely related to the control of one's expression and freedom" (cited in the video: *Tanz unter dem Hackenkreuz)*. Accordingly, the despotic nature of the regime can be paralleled to docile bodies, complying with the policies of the Nazi party as well as resistant bodies, refusing to conform to the National Socialist system of dictatorship.

2.3. Uncovering the layers of the Nazi aesthetic

As it has been made clear in the previous section, the term 'aesthetic' refers to the viewing and appreciating of art. The ensuing question respectively regards the nature of art during fascism. As mentioned in Chapter One, fascism rejected the idea of progress and adopted retrospective patterns pointing to a lost golden age. No new art movements occurred during the Nazi period and the ones that were developed before Hitler rose to power, were suppressed and reformed to conform to the norms of the regime (Clark, 1997). However there had been a tendency during the Nazi period to recycle past movements, such as archaism and classicism which best portrayed the fascist ideology.

2.3.1. Archaic Standards of Beauty

Archaism was revisited to depict fascism's contradictory attitude towards modernity. As Clark (1997) states, archaism, sought to evoke the

"eternal values" that formed the cornerstone of Nazi ideology. In Hitler's point of view, these values were to be found in images of rural life. Another aspect of archaism that matched the Nazi ideology is located in the classical prototypes of form. In the aesthetic context:

> Form has to do with the way an object is put together – the elements in the medium considered in relation to one another.
>
> (Hospers, 1969, p.5)

Accordingly, since the medium of dance is the dancing body, it is safe to argue that in the case of dance, 'form' refers to the spatial patterns of the choreographies, the placing of the bodies in space and the use of different directions and levels.

During fascism, archaic forms were particularly present in architecture, in which case the buildings were reminiscent of Greek and Roman antiquity constructions. The aesthetic criteria of Greek and Roman times were subsequently adopted to define the Aryan aesthetic:

> Greek sculpture, with its stone-carved, white bodies, seemed best to reveal this Aryan aesthetic, and nude or scantily clad youths came to symbolize the strength and vigor of the 3rd Reich.
>
> (Toepfer et al, cited in Linke, 1999, p.47)

Hence, the conclusion drawn is that the Aryan aesthetic was formed according to the standards of beauty prevalent in the era of classical antiquity (Mosse, 1996). Apart from the standards of beauty however, the treasuring of antiquity was also reflected in the tendency of Nazism to mythologize history by veiling the present and projecting a heroic destiny into the future (Clark, 1997).

Nazism did not merely adapt archaic ideas, it also warped them to make them appear as genuine German heritage. With reference to what has been mentioned in Chapter One, concerning the roots of the Aryan race, the assumed ideal of Greek beauty was adopted and "promoted on a racial basis, fashioning an image of the German people as the master race of the world" (Linke, 1999, p.48). The concept of 'whiteness' along with 'nakedness' had been the fundamental elements structuring the classical standards of beauty, which eventually led to the mythification of Aryan bodies.

The development of the Aryan aesthetic was closely associated with the classical standards of beauty. The Aryan man, according to Nazi ideology, should aspire to a classical standard of beauty and "as he built his body, his mind would come to encompass the manly virtues which fascism prized so highly" (Mosse, 1996, p.248). Physical exercise and a healthy looking body were the cornerstones of the Aryan bodily aesthetic. At the same time though, a healthy mind was equally important to the Aryan man. There is a clear link between the Aryan ideal and the archaic aphorism "sound mind in a sound body" (*Sit mens sana in corpore sano*) which was projected as the quintessence of the healthy man in antiquity (Annas, 1987).

An ideal opportunity to insinuate these Aryan ideals on an international level and project the acclaimed superiority of the German race were the Olympic games of 1936. The tools for the infusion of the Nazi ideals to sport culture lay in aggrandizing the "pseudo-Hellenic ethos of the Olympic tradition" (Clark, 1997, p.68) and in finding ways to trace it back to German practices through propagandistic methods. A characteristic example of the attempt to link the Hellenic traditions to Nazi practices is found in the opening sequences of *Olympia*. A series of still frames projecting Hellenic

sculptures and ancient constructions is followed by a German athlete taking the place of a Myron's discobolous and disrupting stillness by setting off in motion (pic. 5).

Picture 5 Clips from *Olympia* showing the succession of images and how the still frame of the sculpture changes into the moving frame of a German athlete – the frames are accordingly taken at 07:00 / 07:09 / 07:21 runtime

The succession of images shown above, suggests a direct link between the sport culture of ancient Greece and that of Nazi Germany. The German athlete taking the place of the sculpture is a statement in favor of the archaic aesthetics of beauty implying that the Aryan aesthetic successfully mirrors the ancient prototypes and that the Aryan race is viewed as the only worthy successor of the ancient heritage.

2.3.2. *Naktkultur* and the bodies as national sites

The adaption of the archaic aesthetic discussed above, led to the occurrence of nudism as a means of approaching the archaic standards of beauty. Apart from the imaginary link to the past however, the totalitarian context in which nudism emerged, explains the trend as an aftermath of the suppressed feelings of the people and their need for liberation (Kant & Karina, 2004).

The so called *Naktkultur* (Nudism Culture) dates back to the 1890's and was first viewed as "a way to restore life in harmony with nature" (Linke, 1999, p.47). Especially in the years succeeding the First World War, the relationship between man and nature was further enhanced through nudism because it seemed to be a vanishing virtue in the era of industrialization. Further to this point, the link between the nature trend and Nazi culture can be perceived as the human response to the Nazi line of thought of rejecting modernity. However, the relation of man with nature is a concept that will be analyzed thoroughly in section 2.3.3.

As far as Nudism is concerned, by the time the First World War was over, it had already become a signifier for a new nationalist consciousness in Germany. The way nudism was linked to nationalism can be understood within the frame of Benedict Anderson's argument on what elements contribute to the formation of a national consciousness. According to Anderson (1991), a common language and a sense of community are enough to give birth to national consciousness. The nudism trend was territorially initiated in Germany and did indeed serve as a means of connecting people during the interwar period. Therefore, it was viewed as a German attribute strengthening the German sense of nationality.

However, it is important to bear in mind that nationalism took on a new meaning after the rise of Nazism. So did the statements made through nudity. Naked male bodies carried metaphors of the German state and became symbolic sites of nationalist ideals (Linke, 1999). The acclaimed "immutable, purged and regenerated" (Linke, 1999, p.46) German state could be read through strong, well-built (according to the classical analogies) white German

bodies. Juxtaposed to these ideally build Aryan bodies, the fatigued and exhausted Jews, exemplified the alleged racial threat (Linke, 1999).

As far as the female bodies are concerned, they were viewed as sites of "domestic and political resonance" (Gordon, 2002, p.166). The role of women in Nazi society was to serve the nation by being beautiful wives and mothers to future Aryan soldiers:

> The mission of woman is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world. [...] The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches the eggs for him. In exchange, the mate takes care of gathering the food, and stands guard and wards of the enemy.
> (Goebbels, cited in Mosse, 1966)

Goebbels makes the distinction between male and female rather obvious. Though strangely enough, Nazism did not prevent women from pursuing a career (Mosse, 1996). Especially in the field of dance, many women were able to have successful careers and they were thereby embraced by the regime. A typical example is Mary Wigman, who was supported financially by the regime (Karina & Kant, 2004). However it is important to clarify the fact that the regime did not provide financial support only for art's sake. There were other profits at stake too. In sponsoring selected artists, the regime ensured a prolongation of its ideals, which were effectively projected through the artist's work.

In a like manner, it is no wonder that the regime employed the leading figures of *Ausdruckstanz* and assigned them the duty of representing Germany on an international level in the Olympic Games ceremony. This can be seen as a typical case, where the body is used as a site for political influence. The same observation refers to the bodies of all the people who participated in the opening ceremony and were used as sites mapped with the

political ideas of Nazism (Gordon, 2002). For instance, looking at the spatial patterns of the choreographies made for the opening ceremony, the "geometric ordering of space" (Gordon, 2002, p.173) and the disciplined synchronization amongst the thousands of dancers can be read as docility and militarism, both strong concepts of Nazi ideology. From another viewpoint though, these patterns may be seen as an analog of the Nazi spectacle, which will be analyzed in more detail in section 2.3.5.

2.3.3. Nature, Mysticism and Ritual in *Ausdruckstanz*

So far the concepts of Archaism and Nudity have been explored as two of the core patterns laying the fascist aesthetic. As Linke (1999) observes, the element of nature had been the link between nudity and the obsession with racial purity. Through the common Nazi process of mythification, whiteness (racial purity) was suddenly presented as a result of natural order:

> The German integration of white skin with nature (and natural signifiers) moves the body out of history, denying the possibility of history as process. The aestheticization of nudity likewise transforms racialized bodies into natural entities, whereby the dehistorization of whiteness is rendered uncontested.
>
> (Linke, 1999, p.30)

The process of mythification worked exactly like propaganda, as described in Chapter One, leaving no room for criticism or procrastination. The projection of whiteness as a natural aftermath alongside the denial of history, were attempts to create an Aryan myth and make it appealing by presenting it as a natural process. According to this trail of thought, the return to nature could be equaled to a return to the Aryan roots.

The sudden tendency to return to nature was not only viewed as a recursion to the Aryan racial roots. As Gordon (2002) claims, there had been a firm belief that the bodies belonged to the earth and that humans would lead healthier lives if they were in touch and tune with nature. These beliefs were slowly transformed into a trend as more people were seeking "intimacy with nature, by hiking and camping under open skies, in an attempt to break out of metropolitan culture" (Mueller & Servos, 1982, p.11). During Nazism, this trend was embraced by the regime as well, because it was perceived as an act of resistance against industrialization and it was therefore perfectly aligned with the Nazi ideology.

Looking at the development of the trend from a socio-historical point of view, it is safe to argue, that the reasons for the development of the nature trend partly lie in the First World War. The people who survived the war and lived through all its gruesome imagery started to develop a deep concern about the fate of humankind (Howe, 1996). They expressed their worries through art, either by rejecting reality (Dadaism) (Raabe, 1974) or by facing it and expressing their concerns for the future (Expressionism) (Howe, 1996). The war was equally present in the themes of *Ausdruckstanz,* in which case it was mirrored in the dance themes.

Expressionist dance drew its inspiration from nature and also made it part of the creative process. As Howe (1996) observes, the choreographers relied on improvisation as their choreographic method and thought of it as a means of succumbing to a higher power while creating. The higher power, they believed to be surrendering to, had been nature. Therefore instead of

meeting in studios and improvising behind closed doors, many seminars and workshops were conducted outdoors.

As a direct result of this intimacy with nature, 'mysticism' emerged as a central concept of *Ausdruckstanz.* Mysticism lay in the artist's need to "reach beyond their individual egos and beyond their art to establish contact with mankind, life and even God" (Miesel, in Howe,1987, p.19). These attempts of the artists to come to touch with "symbolic cosmic powers" (Wigman, in Howe, 1987, p.20) is what led the *Ausdruckstanz* practices to be characterized by ritualistic approaches.

As Ramsey Burt (1998) claims, the concept of ritual had been evident in many modern dance practices. Ritual was directly connected to the notion of alienation between people in the interwar period. As Burt (1998) observes, the alienating effects of modernity caused a rise of interest towards the 'primitive' dance forms. The dancers drew inspiration from such practices, hence attributing a religious ritualistic character. This approach towards the creative process was initiated in America and was later mirrored in *Ausdruckstanz* in Germany. Mary Wigman's *Whirl Dance,* which derived from the "Sufi whirling rituals of the Mevlevi Dervishes" (Burt, 1998, p.179) is a typical example of such a religiously inspired choreography.

At that time, dancers saw themselves as "the medium, the 'channeler' of the meaning of the dance" (Howe, 1996, p.7). This view, expressed by Howe, further justifies the notion of rituality evident in the dances. Due to viewing themselves as 'mediums' of the dance, the dancers paralleled the improvisational choreographic process to the act of meditating, which carries a tense religious connotation. Accordingly, this led to an internal focus during performances, which was also perceived as a ritualistic aspect. This mystical

character of *Ausdruckstanz* was evident in several parts of the Olympic ceremony as well. Therefore it is important to keep these aspects in mind, in order to facilitate their recognition in the dance sequences discussed in Chapter Three.

2.3.4. *Volksgemeinschaft* and Nazi Spectacle

Moving on from the aspect of ritual, to one of the core ideologies underlying Nazism it is interesting to observe how ritual was indirectly incorporated in the Nazi ideology of communal feeling and how it affected the dance practices resulting in the establishment of a mass aesthetic.

Volksgemeinschaft is the German term describing the communal feeling. As mentioned in Chapter One, this feeling along with the sense of a common national identity had been central concerns of the Nazi ideology. Both notions were enhanced through the Nazi mass meetings, organized by Hitler to give public speeches. These meetings were usually organized as festivals (Clark, 1997) and were also known as 'Nazi spectacles'.

The spatial setting of mass meetings was organized according to geometrical militaristic patterns. People stood in columns consisting of separate rows equally distanced and distributed through space (pic. 6). The spatial distribution of the people, reminiscent of a military parade setting, echoed the militaristic aesthetic, evident in all totalitarian regimes. According to Schulte Sasse, the function of a Nazi spectacle, was that of "renewing communal sensations and of incessantly reinforcing an imaginary collective identity via rituals sustaining the illusion of social harmony" (Sasse, in Gordon, 2002, p.173). Nazi mass meetings were suffused with grandeur and were full of political symbols. The participating people were "assembled and

disciplined masses once more symbolizing *order* and *progress*" (Mosse, 1996, p.251). As Mosse further notes, political symbolism had been "an instrument
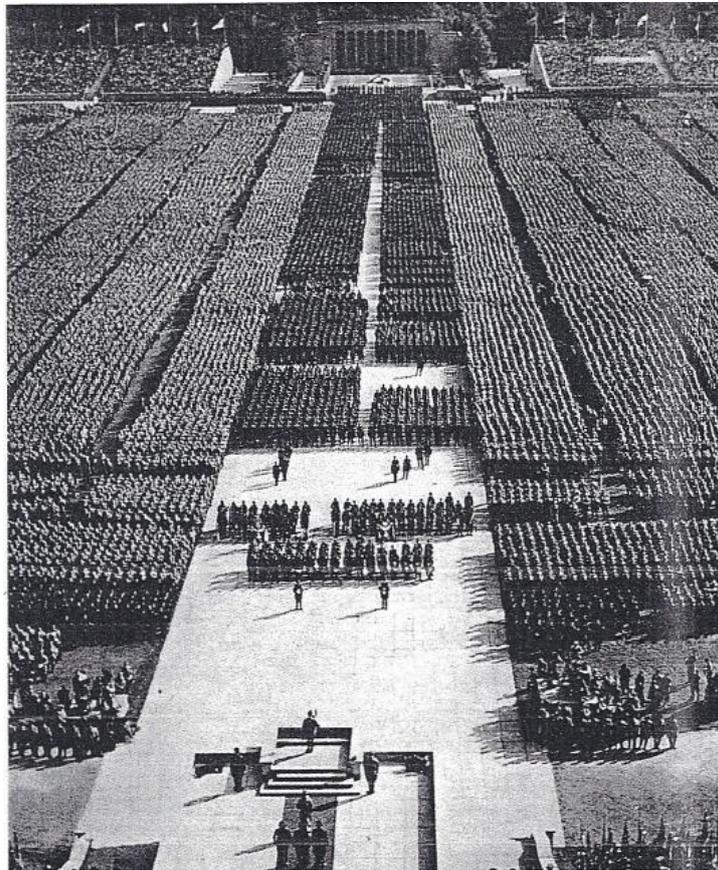
Picture 6 The militaristic setting of a Nazi mass meeting : frame from one of Riefenstahl's propagandistic films Triumph des Willens (Triumph of the Will) directed in 1934 (scanned from Clark, 1997, p.50)

of mass politics" (Mosse, 1996, p. 247), which in the end proved more effective than any didactic speeches.

Conclusively, the Nazi spectacle served as a "visible projection of force" (Gordon, 2002, p.185), in which case the power lay in the object's 'ability' to draw the spectator into its field of influence. In other words, the aesthetic appeal of the mass meetings was the very element that convinced people about the power of National Socialism. At the same time though, it evoked the subconscious need of humans to be part of a community and have a unifying sense of common identity (Santos, 2002).

2.3.5.1. Nazi redirection of *Ausdruckstanz*

The mass aesthetic of the Nazi spectacles along with the projection of the communal identity clashed with the individualistic aesthetic initially projected through *Ausdruckstanz*. Therefore, during the era of Nazi dominion, a change was noted in the dance form. Many artists abandoned the initial individualistic aesthetic of *Ausdruckstanz* and started performing group dances, which were closer to the Nazi standards and ideals. The result of this adaptation to the Nazi norms was termed "movement choir" (Santos, 2002, p.29). The movement choirs were large groups of dancers characterized by such synchronization, that they seemed as if they were one element. As Santos observes, the movement choirs were connected to images of "regimented military drill teams" (Santos, 2002, p.30). This characterization once more highlights the militaristic effect Nazism had on society.

Susan Manning sees this turn in form, as a reasonable aftereffect and points out that the proponents of *Ausdruckstanz* had no other choice except to "compliantly conform to the Nazi ideology of blood and soil" (Manning, 1995, p.168). With reference to Chapter One, the term 'blood' may be inkling to the Nazi policies of racial cleansing which were applied against the non-Aryan dancers.

Many of the standards defining dance prior to the rise of Hitler, were reformed according to the norms set by National Socialism. For instance, after 1933, the seminars and workshops of *Ausdruckstanz* were being organized according to the criteria of the mass meetings. The relationship between dance teacher and student was newly defined as the role of the *Führer* was paralleled

to that of the dance teacher who demanded utmost respect and discipline on behalf of the students.

Before drawing the final conclusion on the mass aesthetic however, it is worthwhile commenting on a dance sequence of a female movement choir shown in the second film of *Olympia: Fest der Schönheit*. The frame begins with showing one woman dancing, but then as it widens it becomes obvious that the same movement is performed by thousands of other female dancers who are perfectly aligned and coordinated. The phrase they present consists of simple gestural movements of the arms and light bends on the knees. The dancers are seen either standing or kneeling on the ground and the emphasis is strained on movements of the torso and the arms, which swing in the air holding tenpins. The female grace is evident in the way the sequence is executed and every now and then it is stressed out even more, as the camera focuses on the face of one single dancer who smiles charmingly (pic.7), expressing her joy through dance. It is also interesting to underline that when the frames are focusing on groups of women rather than on one individual, the expression on their faces gives out the sense of internal focus discussed earlier. Connecting these observations to the views presented above, it is interesting to focus on the connection this sequence suggests between

Picture 7 The smiling female dancer, contrasted to the group of dancers (frames taken from *Olympia – Fest der Schönheit – runtime* 32:54 &33:05)

54

individual and collective identity. As Burt (1998) points out commenting on the relationship between the smiling woman and the rest of the dancers, the sequence manages to merge the sense of individuality into the mass:

> Her individuality thus appears merged within this mass with whom her momentum and breadth are in perfect synchronization. One suspects that although she cannot see the visual effect to which she is contributing, she must nevertheless feel it. Her smile thus not only signifies her enjoyment of harmonious motion but also her pleasure at belonging and being incorporated within the massive group.
> (Burt, 1998, p.103)

It is interesting how Riefenstahl chose to preserve individuality and project it through a mass of disciplined perfectly aligned bodies (pic.8).

Picture 8 The overall visual effect of the female movement choir (frame taken from *Olympia – Fest der Schönheit – runtime 33:20*)

Apart from this however, the filmic links between the smile and the disciplined mass suggest a feeling of satisfaction for the system of governance.

Overall it is safe to argue that the above example justifies the changes noted in the form of *Ausdruckstanz* and successfully portrays the ways dance adapted to some of the Nazi norms. The internal focus witnessed in the majority of the dancers, can be read as a sign of devotion to the performance, while simultaneously it touches upon the ritualistic aspect of *Ausdruckstanz*.

Conclusion

The ideology of National Socialism was strongly enforced in the social sphere of life and was also evident in the majority of the artistic works produced during that period. Of course this statement does not rule out the possibility of artists resisting to conform to the Nazi ideals, though such an act of opposition was rare, because it could cost the artist's life. People who chose not to enroll in the Nazi system of dominion either fled abroad or were eventually forced to conformity.

In the course of the chapter, it becomes evident that the manifestations of the fascist aesthetic were varying and spread across different spheres and disciplines. However the sphere of interest analyzed in this chapter, had been the artistic one, with particular references and examples drawn from the dance practices.

All examples analyzed in this chapter, were deliberately chosen with respect to the cases that will be worthy of analysis in Chapter Three. The same is applied to all theoretical concepts concerning aesthetics, which were developed in this chapter in order to provide the tools for a critical reading of the Nazi aesthetic through the bodies of the participants at the Olympic Games opening ceremony.

Chapter 3
Witnessing the Fascist Aesthetic

This chapter focuses on the portrayal of the fascist aesthetic in the opening ceremony of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Since the visual material concerning the opening festival is limited, the Chapter also relies on archival newspaper sources to achieve a detailed description of the festivities.

The tools that will be employed in order to enable in depth analysis of the Nazi aesthetic are the concepts that have already been examined in the two previous chapters. The ideologies presented in Chapter One will serve as foundations for developing an argument on the Nazi aesthetic, while the aesthetic framework provided in Chapter Two, will be employed for witnessing and analyzing the aesthetic occurrences in the opening ceremony.

Chapter Three begins with an introductory section, referring to some historical facts about the Olympic Games, and the symbols that played a key role in the Nazi Olympics. It also briefly provides an insight in the proceedings followed in order to decide on the artists who were going to represent Germany in the opening ceremony. A dance example drawn from *Olympia* is also used as supportive material enriching the understanding of the Olympic symbols.

Particular attention is also paid to an idea first presented in Chapter Two, concerning the Dionysian and the Apollonian state of art. The two varying approaches to the creation and appreciation of art are analyzed in more depth, as they influenced *Ausdruckstanz* choreographers and played a creative role in conceiving and structuring the opening ceremony of the Olympic festival.

3.1. Historical facts on the planning of the Olympic ceremony

After the rise of National Socialism, many artists were faced with the dilemma of conforming to the regime, or actively resisting it, in which case they would have to accept the repercussions. Laban, the leading figure of *Ausdruckstanz*, chose to be in line with the regime, for the sake of realizing his vision. This proved to be to his advantage as he managed to rise high in the dance hierarchy. His crowning achievement was his appointment as director of the dance contributions of the Olympic showcase (Kant & Karina, 2004). In other words, he was the one person responsible for conceiving and organizing the choreographies that would be presented in the opening ceremony of the Berlin Olympics.

Initially, Laban's plan for the opening ceremony was that it would consist of works of the most famous artists of the era (Müller, 1993). In order to make the festival even more internationally appealing, he had also invited Martha Graham, as a special guest to perform in the opening ceremony (Kant & Karina, 2004). However, Graham declined the invitation because she recognized the implications of the Nazi racial policy and considered it morally unjust and contradicting to the Olympic spirit. It is worth taking a look at the writings of Graham herself, when she expressed the reasons for not wanting to attend the competition in her reply to the invitation:

> It is impossible for me at the present moment to dance in Germany. So many artists whom I respect and admire have been persecuted and have been banned out of work for no reason that can be explained legally. I am therefore not in a

position to become identified with the regime that enables such acts, by accepting this invitation. Furthermore, some members of my ensemble would not be welcome in Germany. They are Jews.

(Graham, cited in Müller, 1993, p. 168)

Since Graham refused, the Olympic ceremony would no longer have the desired appeal. Therefore, Laban changed his plans by turning to German artists only. Amongst the ones who were eventually chosen to present their works in the opening ceremony, were Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca and Haralad Kreutzberg. As Müller (1983) states, the reasons underlying their choice were situated in the party's need to increase the German appeal by employing internationally renowned dance-celebrities.

All dances presented were created according to Laban's movement principles and the community based ideal of his dance philosophy, which happened to coincide with the Nazi aesthetic of communal spirit (Müller, 1993). Apart from being responsible for the organization of the event, Laban also choreographed a piece for the Olympic opening, called *Vom Tauwind und der neuen Freude* (Of the warm wind and the new joy). His work was assembled by large movement choir, mostly consisting of amateurs, all originating from various cities across Germany. The choice of German dancers in particular, had not been a coincidence, but a statement in favor of the 'aryanization' (Kant & Karina, 2004) of dance instead.

Laban's choir had been training for a whole year, when they were called to perform the piece for Goebbels, the propaganda minister. His role was to view the performance critically and decide upon inclusion of it in the Olympic festival. The showcase took place on the 21st of June 1936, which had been

roughly five weeks before the actual opening of the Olympics. After viewing the performance, Goebbels noted the following in his diary:

> Rehearsal of dance piece – free adaptation of Nietzsche,
> badly done and artificial work. I prevent a lot. That is all too
> intellectual. I don't like it. Goes around in our costume, but
> is not really one of our own.
> (Goebbels, cited in Karina & Kant, 2004, p.119)

At first Goebbels demanded for several parts to be excluded, but eventually he decided to reject the whole piece. This decision of his was based on one of Hitler's orders, that the Olympic Games were "too important to include anything intellectual" (Kant & Karina, 2004, p.121). This highly subjective criterion of choice implied even further restrains to the freedom of expression of the dancing bodies of the era.

The rejection of Laban's piece resulted to the opening ceremony consisting of the choreographies of the rest of the participants. Since Laban was not participating, the highlights were the solo danced by Gret Palucca, Harald Kreuzberg's sword dance and Wigman's *Totenklage* (Death Lament). All dances were presented under the unifying label *Olympic Youth*, which had been designed to "bind dance and athletic achievement into the new Nazi body culture" (Kant & Karina, 2004, p.118). In order to successfully reference Nazi culture, in the Olympic dances, political symbols were incorporated in the whole spectacle. Propaganda played a vital role as well, in the sense that it affected the frame of perception of the viewers by directing their thoughts towards perceiving the messages the regime desired.

3.1.1. Political Symbols and Meanings of the Olympics

Baring in mind the exceeding emphasis Nazism placed on nationalism, it becomes evident how antithetical the internationalism of the Olympic Games was to the racially prejudiced fascist ideology. However, nationalism is just one example out of many that highlights the contraposition between Nazism and the Olympic ideal. As Hofman and Kruger claim:

> Equality, democracy, peace and internationalism were not to be united with militarism, chauvinism, racism and anti-Semitism of the National Socialists.
> (Hofman & Kruger, 2004, p.106)

With reference to the values of democracy and peace, German author Friedrich Bohlen (1979) notes that the German people were ordered to fake unprejudiced behaviors and treat the visitors for the Olympics well, regardless of nationality. The Nazi party was seemingly hoping that a demonstration of love and peace in an Olympic setting would consciously cover the real warlike goals of the regime.

In order to understand the mechanism of incorporating symbols in the Nazi Olympic productions, it is essential to refer back to Chapter One. As discussed there, Nazism relied on visual stimuli to bring its messages across. A typical example is the Mercedes Hitler used to travel in, which served as a means of establishing his elitist status. The same approach was used when staging the Olympic Games. Everything, from the architecture of the stadium, to the opening ceremony had been full of symbolisms referencing the regime's nature and the acclaimed German grandiosity.

A typical example of an object that carried political meaning is the Olympic bell that was especially designed for the 1936 Olympics and had the

inscription: "*Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt*" (I summon the youth of the world) (Mandel, 1971, p.124). This bell became a symbol, because its sketch (pic. 9) was used in every press release concerning the Berlin Olympics. Moreover, the actual bell heralded the beginning of the opening ceremony.

Another example of an act carrying political meaning was the torch-carrying, which passed from the capitals of Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia. This event had particular significance for Hitler, because as Mandel (1971) states it represented a classical revival and created an indirect link between ancestry and the third Reich. Furthermore it is important to note that it was the first time that such an international fire event was organized and this certainly called forth positive impressions.

The torch carrying and the concept of the Olympic flame also play an important role in the first *Olympia* film: *Fest der Völker*. In the film, the torch carrier is seen running amongst ancient ruins, before he reaches the Berlin stadium. A graphic representation of the European capitals depicts the trail of the flame until it finally reaches Germany. Apart from following the trail of the torch-carrier through a series of frames, however, Riefenstahl references the concept of the Olympic flame in a short dance sequence, by linking it to the aspect of female grace. The sequence begins as the camera focuses on a group of females lined up behind each other raising their hands to the sky (pic.10).

Picture 9 The Olympic Bell
source:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Olympic_logo_1936.jpg

Picture 10 The women imitating the Olympic flame (frames taken from Olympia – Fest der Völker runtime 10:39 –10:42 - 10:55)

The opening of the dancer's arms seems to be imitating the movement of the flames. The focus of the dancer's gaze is internal, hence attributing a ritualistic quality to the sequence. The dancers raise their hands in succession. At first their tempo is slow, further enhancing the ritualistic aspect and then it becomes quicker, as flames start to fill in the frame. In the words of Gordon:

> The sacred ritual comes to an imminent, ecstatic climax as the female forms dissolve into fire, a fire that envelops the entire screen. It is this flame that serves to kindle the Olympic torch.
>
> (Gordon, 2002, p.195)

This sequence of the film evidently connects the Aryan female aesthetic to the Olympic Games, by linking the flame to female images proportionate of classical beauty. Conclusively it becomes evident that the efforts to mythify the German past, were not only present in the organizing of the Games, but they were also mirrored in other practices and events, such as film making.

Overall, the Olympiad was seen as a project of major cultural importance and all communication means of the era (press, film, radio) were appointed to echo its significance. The press releases of the era were all under the total control of the Propaganda Ministry and played a major part in linking the German undertaking of the Olympics to its archaic origins. As it has already been observed in Chapter Two, these attempts can be interpreted

as examples of the Nazi tendency to mythologize history in order to increase the German appeal.

A characteristic example of the mythologizing tendency is evident in the newspaper titles shown below:

Picture 11 Newspaper clips from DAZ (*Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*) 31.05.1936 - the titles accordingly read: "The Unity of Greek manhood" and " The Uniqueness of Greek Gymnastic"

Simply by looking at the titles of the publications, it becomes evident, how the press attempted to link the Nazi ideal of communal spirit to antiquity through propaganda and make it appear as a shared value. Apart from projecting shared values however, the Nazis openly confessed that they were basing their spectacles on ancient traditions (Schiller, 1936).

Another goal that National Socialism was hoping to accomplish through the Olympics, was to project itself as an effective regime that was based on the loyalty of the people (Hofman & Kruger, 2004) and not on their terrorization. The regime envisioned the realization of this aspiration in the successful organization of the Olympics which required the collaboration of the people as well.

More political symbolisms will be discussed in the course of Chapter Three, as they will come into light during the process of analyzing the opening ceremony. However, before delving into details concerning the festival it is worth recalling the Dionysian state of art, articulated by Nietzsche, because it played an important role in conceiving and staging the Olympic ceremony.

3.1.2. Nietzsche's Dionysian state of art

Chapter Two, outlined the juxtaposing concepts of Apollonian and Dionysian art, as two domains corresponding to contrasting values. The Apollonian state refers to the value of individuation and to "the inner world of fantasy" (Nietzsche, 2008, p.730), whereas the Dionysian state stands for the primordial unity between "man and man" and "man and nature" (Cottingham, 2008, p.728) accordingly. Dionysus was the Greek deity typifying the "wilder forces" (Cottingham, 2008, p.729) of man and therefore he was mostly celebrated with orgiastic, frenzied festivals.

However, at this point it is important to mention that the Dionysian values evident in the Olympic festival are not located in frenzied or orgiastic behaviors, but in the sense of unity between men and in the ritualistic character of some of the dances performed. According to Mischa Delbrouck (2004), the Dionysian principle is found in the sense of unity that is achieved whenever a group of people become a mass and their individuality (the Apollonian value) is annihilated. Nietzsche saw this kind of unification in the Greek drama choruses. He envisioned a symbolic embodiment of the Dionysian excited masses mirrored in the Greek drama choruses[11] (Delbrouck, 2004). These choruses can respectively be paralleled to the movement choirs

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[11] *Im griechischen Chor sieht Nietzsche eine symbolische Verkörperung der "dionysisch erregten Masse". (Delbrouck, 2004, p.61)*

adopted by *Ausdruckstanz* past the rise of National Socialism, as outlined in Chapter Two (section 2.3).

Another aspect of the Dionysian state that is evidenced in the Olympic opening regards the perception of art. According to Nietzsche, people are encouraged not merely to observe the festivities, but also to bodily or spiritually engage in them as well (Delbrouck, 2004). In other words there is an effort to bridge the gap between the *subject* and the *object* as aesthetic concepts, mentioned in Chapter Two. This may be one of the reasons why Hitler ordered for nothing too intellectual to be presented in the opening ceremony. In Hitler's view, intellectual pieces implied pieces that had a philosophical orientation, like the rejected piece of Laban for instance. Such works would require interpretation and the act of interpreting is exactly what causes the gap between the observer and the object of observation (Fraleigh, 1999).

The ideal of an art work that has the capacity to touch people merely with its presence, without involving any act of critical engagement, is closely related to the Wagneric ideal of a total art work (*Gesamtkunstwerk),* which is more or less what each artist of the era was trying to achieve. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* stands for a monumental art work that in Adorno's words "fuses all the arts in one work" (Adorno, cited in Michelson, 1991, p.42). The Olympic Games opening ceremony, had indeed been a fusion of elements and can therefore be righteously considered as a bold endeavor to reach the standards of a total art work. It is also interesting to note how the ideal of a 'total art work' can be paralleled to the totalitarian character of the Nazi regime. Through the voicing of shared concerns, people eventually acquired a sense of unity, which respectively brought them closer in a Dionysian sense.

3.2. The Olympic Games opening ceremony

The name given to the Olympic ceremony opening was *"Olympische Jugend"* (Olympic Youth) and it was divided in four main parts (Mellin, 1936) which were presented in succession. The description of the ceremony that will be provided as part of this chapter is based on archival material and a few secondary sources. Due to the fact that there is limited visual material on the ceremony and that the descriptions are composed according to a combination of sources, it is unfortunately possible that some minor details concerning the setting of the dances are omitted.

3.2.1. Children at Play – Reigen der Kinder

The opening section of the Olympics is referred to as *"Kindliches Spiel"* – Children at Play (Manning, 1993, p.196). Its beginning was heralded by the ring of the Olympic bell which had been tied to the idea of "summoning the youth of the world" (Mandel, 1971, p.124). As a literal interpretation of the bell's symbolic call, 1600 boys and girls aged from 10 to 12 entered the stadium through the marathon-gate. The girls were white clad (pic. 12) while the boys were dressed according to the colors of the Olympic rings. Apart from the colours of their clothes however, the boys were set apart from the girls, as they moved to the centre of the sport arena forming five lines while the girls surrounded them in circular formations (pic. 13). At the same time an additional 1500 dancers entered the arena and formed the outer rectangular shape also evident in picture 13.

Picture 12 The white clad girls from the opening "Children at play" (source: Müller, 1993, p.179)

The young girls forming the circles (pic.12), were holding skipping ropes and aligned themselves playfully in the shapes, while the boys seemed to have abandoned their playful nature and formed more complicated shapes with military discipline. The girls were moving to the centre of the circles and then out, making the circles appear as if they were closing in and spreading out again, which as a newspaper of the era reads, was an imitation of the "opening and closing of fresh flower-buds" (Dortmund Newspaper 03.08.1936). Yet each of the movement patterns they formed quickly dissolved into a new formation (pic. 14) until they all came together in the shape of what Prillipp (1936) calls a "choral picture of the Olympic Flag".
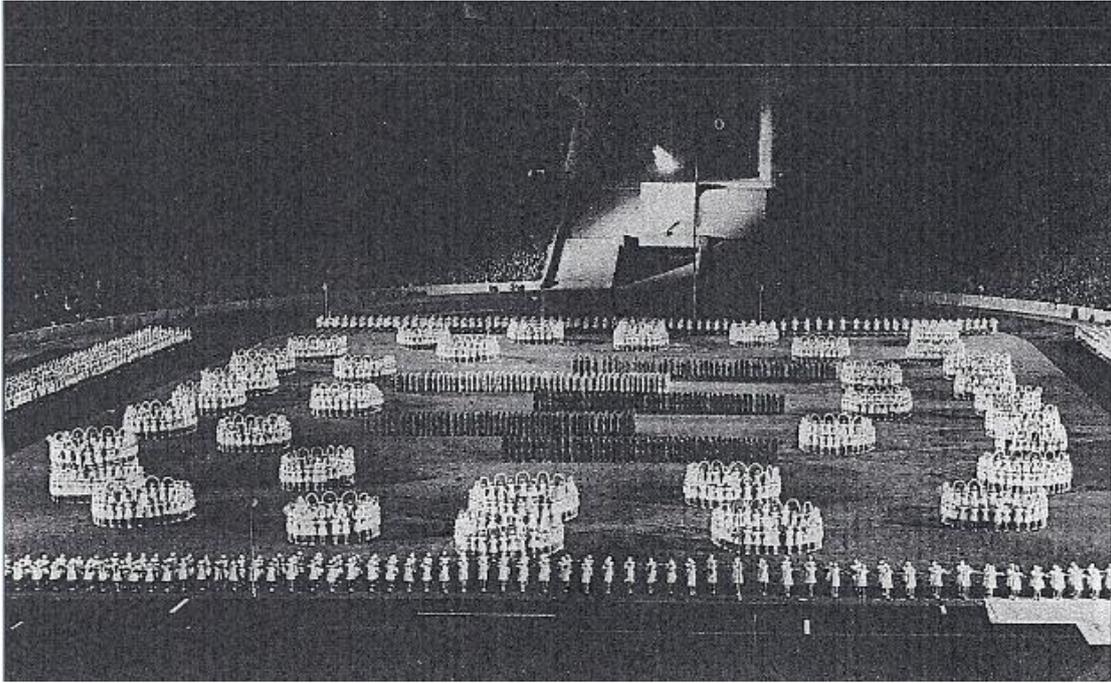
Picture 13 Performing Kinderreigen the second choral piece (source: Müller, 1993, p.179)

Picture 14 another example of the rapidly changing formations of the 1600 children standing in the middle of the stadium (source: www.orff.de)

In order to form the flag, the boys moved to the middle of the stadium and according to the colour of their shirt, they formed the five mingling

Olympic Rings. At the same time, the girls framed them by shaping a huge white rectangle around them (pic.15).
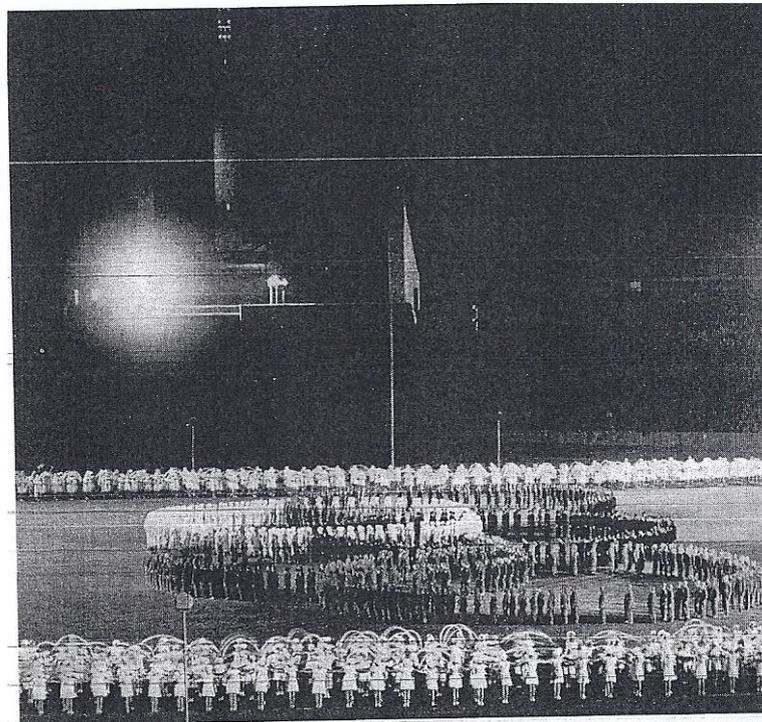
Picture 15 The choral image of the Olympic flag as seen from the side (source: Manning, 1993, p.196)

As it is evident in the video *"Tanz unter dem Hakenkreuz"* (Dance under the Swastika) the girls stood really close to each other jumping on the spot, while the boys moved either clockwise or counterclockwise making the Olympic circles appear as if they were whirling. The whole setting generated the image of a weaving Olympic flag, which was the closing scene of the first part of the ceremony. However, before proceeding to any further descriptive writing concerning the second part of the ceremony, it is important to first discuss the symbolisms and aesthetics of this first sequence.

Looking at the described performance from an aesthetic point of view, the first thing that calls for attention is the grandiosity of the patterns and the shapes formed by the thousands of dancers. The movements, executed in perfect synchronization, speak of docility and discipline, which were both

distinct characteristics of the National Socialist regime. The docility read out of the perfectly aligned bodies, accordingly calls forth a militaristic value evident in other undertakings of the regime as well, such as the Nazi spectacles. Furthermore, the employment of a movement choir transpires a sense of unity between the participants, in the sense that they are not performing individually, but in close collaboration with each other, appearing as a unified entity. This Dionysian sense of unity between men respectively conveys a sense of conformity and trust between the participants. The disciplined mass of the dancers rely on each other, in order to execute the sequence in perfect coordination, being aware of how one slight mistake could ruin the collective picture. In a similar manner, trust and reliance are read out of the Nazi ideal of communal spirit, where the people share a common identity and are all part of a greater community. In the case of dance, this unity is implied, when all participants of the movement choir strive towards the realization of the Olympic ideal.

The large dimensions of the ornamental patterns also aimed at making a statement. Apart from being considered as a direct result of Hitler's megalomania, they also intended to reference the acclaimed German grandiosity and superiority. As Henschel (1996) claims, the creators were aiming to relinquish the sense of individuality and project the ideal of people as mass. This point is another direct reference to the communal ideal, but at the same time it is also an image originating from the Nazi spectacle.

Attempting a political reading of the projection of people as a mass, it can be claimed that this was a deliberate choice to indirectly support the nature of the regime. With reference to the ideologies presented in Chapter One, and the fact that people were called to see their leader as the

"retroflexion of their collective identity" the triptych of "*Ein Volk – Ein Führer
– Ein Reich"* (One Folk – One Leader – One Empire) (Clark, 1997, p.51) is
perfectly mirrored in the portrayal of people as a large entitiy.

However, apart from uniting people under a shared cause, Nazism also
divided them and categorized them according to gender. This is particularly
evident in the above sequence, where the boys become the centre of attention
by standing in the middle of the field forming the Olympic circles. The girls
are playfully framing them, thereby highlighting the role of women in Nazi
society, which was to be supportive of their men. The valuable role of the male
in Nazi Germany is further supported by the way the boys occupied the space.
While commenting on this exact formation of the Olympic flag, Susan
Manning observes:

> Explicitly celebrating Olympic symbolism, the image
> implicitly differentiates the boy's and girl's gendered tasks.
> While the girls rely on hoops to properly space themselves,
> the boys line up in a more complicated pattern without the
> aid of props. In subsequent sections the boys abandon
> "round dances" altogether, as if growing up means leaving
> such games behind.
>
> (Manning, 1993, p.196)

It thereby becomes clear that the male role implied severity of character and
military discipline, whereas women had a secondary supportive role that was
not considered of equal social importance to that of men. Playfulness was not
encouraged amongst the Aryan men because it was perceived as a sign of
immaturity. Though, as it is witnessed in this part of the ceremony, in the case
of women playfulness was not judged negatively. Taking the age group of the
female performers into account (10 to 12 years old), playfulness may even
have been considered as a means of expressing grace.

A last point worth commenting on, is the brief reference to nature, achieved through the opening and closing of the girls' circles imitating the flower-buds. This choral image can either be perceived as part of the general Nature trend mentioned in Chapter Two, or as part of the tendency of *Ausdruckstanz* practitioners to draw their inspiration from nature.

3.2.2. Palucca's Waltz

The image of the Olympic Flag slowly decomposed, as the children left the arena and the lights turned to the 2300 young girls who entered the stadium dressed in salmon pink dresses (Müller, 1993). They were aged 14 to 18 and entered the field in a spiraling line (pic.16). The line of the dancers widened and narrowed as the girls headed to the centre of the field. Their pacing was slow and followed a fixed steady tempo, which attributed a ritualistic value to the spectacle, reminiscent of religious rituals. After each girl had settled on the field, they separated in groups and formed three rings, one into the other, in the centre of the arena.
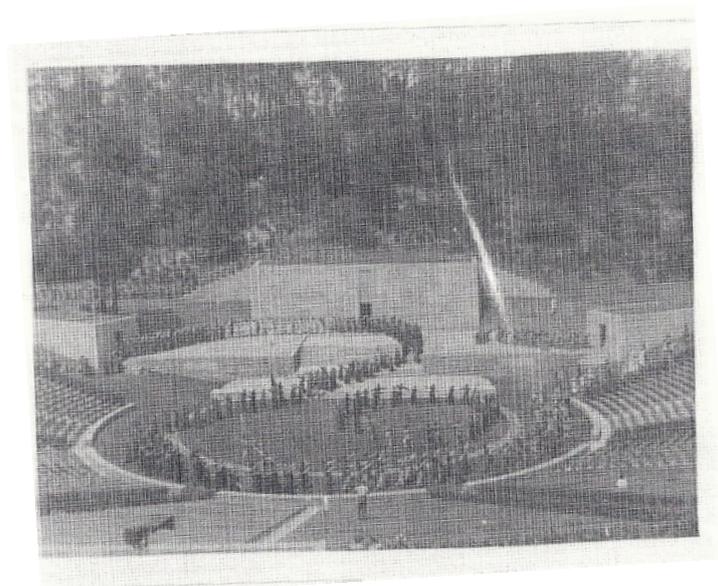
Picture 16 The entry of the 2300 young girls in the spiral formation (picture scanned from the original accessed at the Dance Archive Leipzig – Folder IIa granted by: Ilse Loesch)

As seen in *"Tanz unter dem Hackenkreuz"*, the circles were turning in opposite directions creating a whirling picture. After the revolving was over, all dancers sat down (pic.17) cross-legged and Gret Palucca rose from the
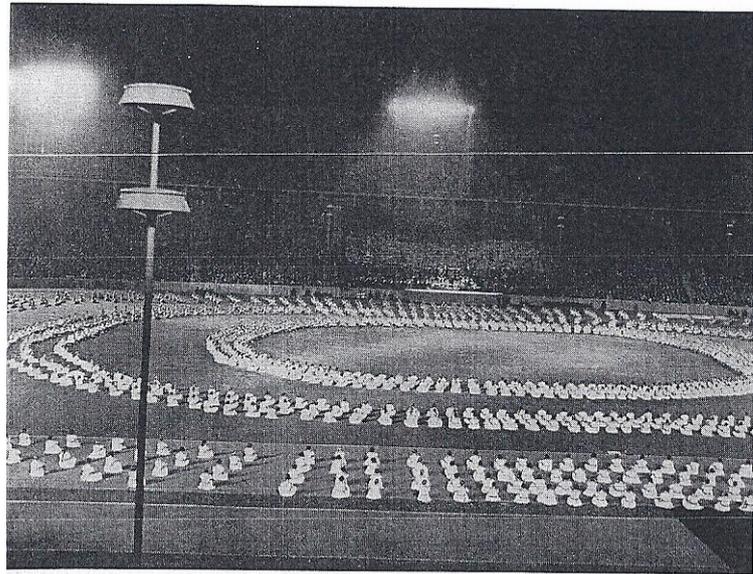
Picture 17 The three circles after the dancers sat down
(source: Manning, 1993, p.197)

centre. She was wearing a long airy red dress and performed a solo to the tunes of Joseph Lanner. The performance was a Waltz and as Palucca herself wrote in a newspaper of the time, she had choreographed the piece, merely relying on her intuition and her personal instincts:

> "Dance is a matter of intuition. Today more than ever. The free dancer does not rely on a long-existing tradition, on a piece of music that has been composed for him, or even on an existing secret that is beyond him. On the contrary, a dancer can only rely on himself."
>
> (Palucca, 1936)

The reason that this particular quote of Palucca has been chosen, is in order to highlight the contrast between her way of thinking as an individual and the collective thinking that the Nazi's promoted as ideal. The Apollonian individuality of her creative approach can be paralleled to the original nature of *Ausdruckstanz* but at the same time, it can be read as a portrayal of the *Führerprinzip* (Leadership Principle). The three circular patterns formed by the 2300 seated female dancers produced a stark contrast to the image of Palucca performing solo. From an interpretive point of view this image can be

perceived as a reference to the German people being treated as a mass by one single leader. Enhancing the effect of this image, was the fact that the movement choir was seated while Palucca was dancing, which can be read as a sign of obedience to the one carrying the leading role.
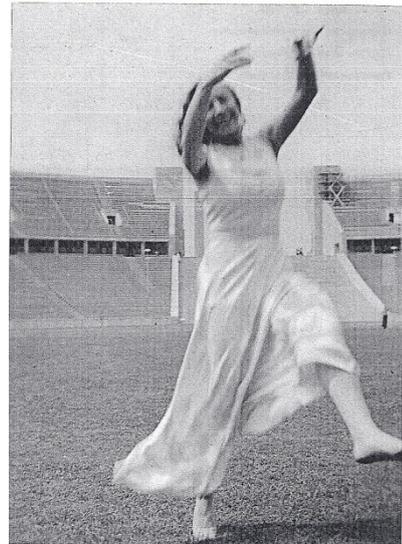
Picture 18 Palucca rehearsing her Waltz (source: Müller, 1993, p.180)

As discussed in Chapter Two, the "leadership principle" had been a common motif in *Ausdruckstanz* choreographies after individual performances were replaced by movement choirs. Hans Fischer observes, that the concept of the *Führerprinzip* implied the role of the soloist "as leader, as center, or as opposition to the moving mass of the dancers" (Fischer, cited in Manning, 1993, p.147) and it had been a recurring theme in the choreographies created after 1933. However, Howe (1996) claims, that Palucca generally preserved the aspect of individuality in her dances, compared to other contemporary artists who adapted to the mass aesthetic of Nazism. Looking back at the example drawn from *Olympia* presented in Chapter Two (where the camera focuses on one smiling female) it is interesting to observe how Palucca's individuality is merged into the mass in the sequence described above. A newspaper of the era highlights the contrast of the soloist to the seated movement choir and comments on the way Palucca marks the space as an individual who stands out of the mass but at the same time is an integral part of it.

Though as other newspapers of the era note, the image of Palucca rising out on her own from the centre of the circles was meant to carry a different

symbolism than that of the *Führerprinzip*. Her emerging from the middle of the movement choir intended to be a tribute to the Hellenic goddess *Hera* (New Prussian Newspaper, 1936). Hera, the Goddess of women, used to be celebrated in a similar manner, in festivals organized in ancient Olympia (the birthplace of the Olympic Games) to honour her. Based on this observation, it can safely be argued that the tribute to Hera had been another attempt to create a link between Germany of the 20th century and the archaic traditions.

Proceeding with the analysis, the focus shifts to the movement choir which comprised of female dancers only. As Müller (1993) states, this part of the ceremony aimed to display the Nazi standards of female grace and discipline. The discipline was to be implied through the slow synchronized pacing of the women, while the grace was evident in the women's gestures and the way they danced through space. The employment of a female movement choir to express the ideal of feminine grace is further related to the Nazi definition of the roles of the genders, as outlined in the former section. Women were expected to be beautiful and graceful comrades to their men: "we want women in whose life and work the characteristically feminine is preserved" (from an account of a mass meeting of the Berlin National Socialist women organization: Mosse, 1966, p.42).

Since the role of women in Nazi society has already been addressed, it is now worth focusing on the ritualistic character of the movement choir. In the sequence described above, the aspect of ritual is easier to locate, because it is acknowledged that the piece drew inspiration from the ancient Greek rites organized to honour Hera. The qualities attributing the ritualistic value to the piece were mostly evidenced in the women's walking. The spiral formation of the long line and the dancer's rhythmic pace were both typical aspects of

ancient Greek ceremonies organized in archaic altars (Stefanidis, 1990). On the other hand, bearing in mind the observations concerning *Ausdruckstanz* made in Chapter Two, the ritualistic element of the choreography may just as well have derived from the religious orientation of the new choreographic trend.

However, apart from *Ausdruckstanz* and the ancestral references, Clark (1997) suggests an alternative understanding of the ritualistic element and its role in Nazi society. He claims, that "fascism's public manifestations took a theatrical and ritualistic form, typified by the numerous parades, ceremonies and mass rallies" (Clark, 1997, p.49). Either way, it has to be noted that the ritualistic element can also be seen as an aspect of the Dionysian state of art, especially in this sequence where a large movement choir is involved.

3.2.3. Sword Dance – *Heldenkampf*

After Palucca's solo was over, the female choir that accompanied her emptied the centre of the field and formed straight lines framing the outer circle of the sport field (pic.19). At the same time a male choir, consisting of 2500 young boys marched into the field. It was a colourful parade as some of the boys were holding the flags of the participating nations. The flag bearers were marching from side to side, while a young boy from Sweden tossed the Olympic flag in the air, in the middle of the field, so that it unfolded while swinging. Parallel to the marching, some other boys set tents and lit fires in the middle of the sport field.

When the parades were over, the boys slowly gathered in circles around the fires, evoking the typical imagery of military campfires. Seated by the fire, they sang hymns from various countries until the loudspeakers quoted the

Feuerhymn (Fire Hymn) which had been an amalgamation of campfire songs and citations praising the Olympic ideal.
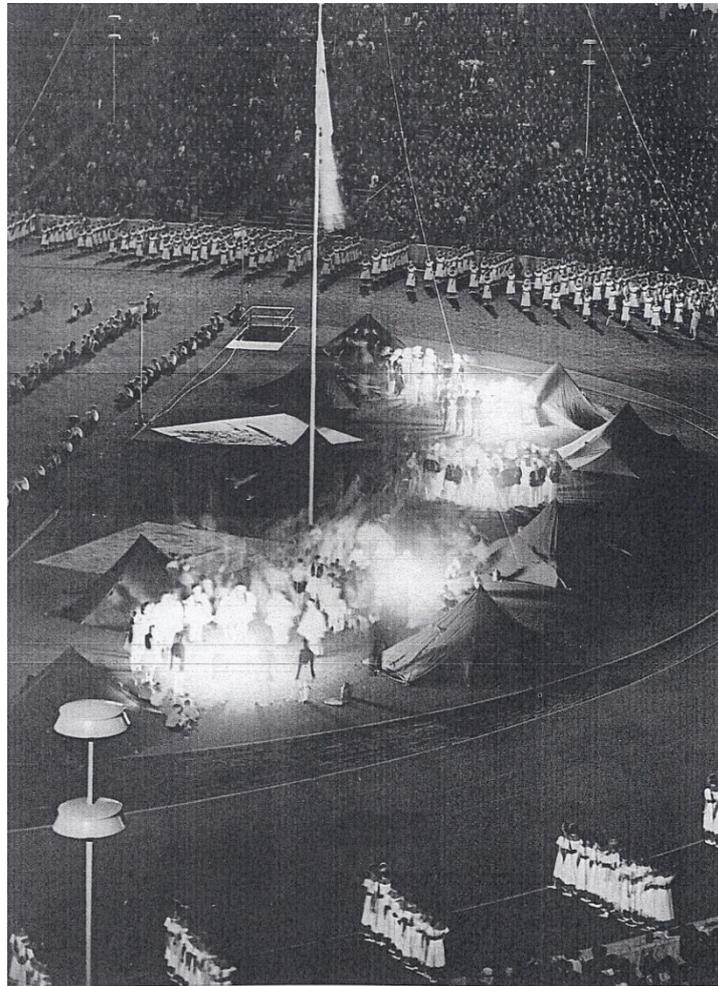
Picture 19 The setting of a campfire scene in the middle of the stadium, with the Olympic Flag in the centre (source: Müller, 1993, p.181)

The cheerful atmosphere of the singing changed abruptly, when the participants of Kreutzberg's piece came into the field. The 60 young male dancers entered the stadium from the sides like a "wild horde" (New Prussian Newspaper, 1936) shouting polemical cries. They represented two opposing phalanxes ready for encounter. A theatrical fight preceded and it resulted in a fallen phalanx, while the other celebrated its triumph. Despite the fact that the piece is referred to as "choreography" it is important to clarify that it was not a

pure dance piece. It did employ movement as a means of expression, but it was more of a theatrical representation of a fight (pic.20) as the dancers were also carrying weapons.
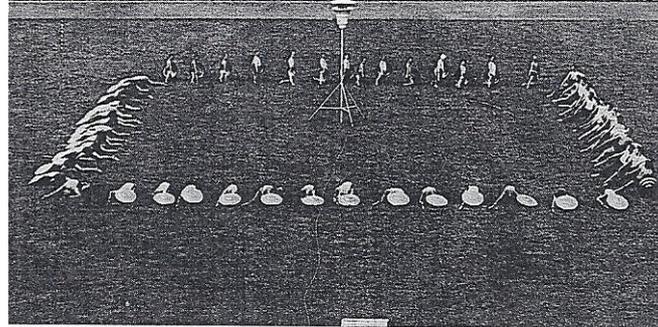
Picture 20 The 'Phalanxes' in Kreutzberg's piece – The dancers are equipped with swords and shields (source: Müller, 1993)

As mentioned previously, this part of the ceremony ended with the loss of one Phalanx in the simulated war. However, as far as the first half of this part of the ceremony is concerned, it is interesting to take a closer look at the indirect political statements that shine through the flag-parade. The Olympic flag, which unfolded swinging high in the air, was framed by the marching troops carrying the flags of the participating nations. This image can be read as a fake statement on the internationalism of the Nazis. The Olympic flag deliberately situated in the centre of the choral picture acted as the unifying agent between all the nations. I dare call the statement 'fake', because as repeatedly mentioned, internationalism stood in ultimate opposition to the National Socialist ideology. Furthermore, as articulated in Chapter One, German people had been motivated by propaganda in order to adopt a positive attitude towards the visiting nations during the period of the Olympics. It would accordingly be naïve to believe that a rooted ideology would shift from one day to the next only for the sake of hosting an international event.

The second symbolism underlying the marching scene is of social nature. It regards the setting of the tents and the campfires, which call forth memories of the Nazi mass meetings. The setting of those meetings, as mentioned in Chapter One, aimed to strengthen the communal feeling and the sense of unity between men. At the same time though, the reasoning ability of men was wearied out (Clark, 1997) due to the exhausting conditions at the camps. Apart from referencing the mass meetings, this scene also called forth the military ideal, which was considered as the core of the Aryan man's life (Mosse, 1966). Overall, the campfire as part of the opening ceremony can be considered as a glimpse into the daily life of German people under the rule of National Socialism.

The national hymns sung around the fire were another statement to the necessarily international setting of the Olympics. Since the rhymes sung came from different countries, the audience, regardless of nationality, had the chance to take part in the singing as well. Their participation momentarily turned the spectacle into a collective experience, thereby approaching the Dionysian ideal of art appreciation (Delbrouck, 2004).

Shifting the focus to the military references it has to be noted, that the role of the army in a man's life is further outlined in Kreutzberg's piece titled *Swerttanz* or *Waffentanz* (Sword Dance or Weapon Dance accordingly). The entry of the two opponent phalanxes accompanied by polemical cries can be read as the only genuine reference to the Nazi culture and the bellicose nature of the regime. On the other hand though, from a historical point of view, the same sequence could be seen as a metaphor relating to the First World War.

Zooming in on the aesthetic of the war scene, it is interesting to observe, that it is the first scene so far that does not consist of a large

movement choir. The absence of a movement choir had been an evident rejection of the mass aesthetic of Nazism, hence creating an invisible link between the piece and the genuine nature of *Ausdruckstanz* that did not rely on ornamental patterns. Furthermore, paying attention to detail, it becomes evident that the dressing of the dancers as well as their equipment (pic.20) directly referenced the classical archaic aesthetic mentioned in Chapter Two. The choice of ancient armour in the era of industrialization and technological process can hardly be considered a coincidence. It almost certainly was one more attempt to mythologize the German race by creating direct links to ancestry.

Conclusively it is worth noting the discrimination of the gendered roles as it is evidenced in this sequence. The males are once more situated in the centre of attention as the choral picture consists exclusively of male participants. The common element that unites all men is the military, since all pictures relate to that concept (parade, campfire, phalanxes at war). The role of the women on the other hand, is secondary, as they were not allowed to get involved in military activities (Mosse, 1966). Therefore in this part of the ceremony, the females are seen standing on the outer circle of the stadium in disciplined lines, merely observing and framing the happenings, but not actively participating.

3.2.4. Wigman's *Totenklage* and the closing of the ceremony

The fallen phalanx of Kreutzberg's piece remained in the field as the winners left celebrating their victory. Then, a female group consisting of 80 dancers entered the field to grieve the fallen soldiers. The entry of Wigman's group signifies the beginning of the final part of the ceremony, titled

Totenklage (Death Lament). The piece had been an adaptation of a former work of Wigman, first presented in 1930. In the initial staging of the piece, the theme had been a grieving for the fallen soldiers of the First World War. Therefore, in the Olympic adaption it was presented as a piece grieving and honouring the fallen phalanx of *Waffentanz.*

In a similar manner to Kreutzberg's piece, *Totenklage* did not comply to the mass aesthetic and was not based on large geometrical formations or ornamental patterns. On the contrary, it was more closely related to the actual nature of *Ausdruckstanz*, employing movement as a means of expressing sorrow and grief. As Müller (1986) observes, Wigman never stopped supporting the *Ausdruckstanz* ideal of individuality. Even in *Totenklage,* which had been a group dance, she still managed to convey a sense of individuality. Her choreography had not been based on precise synchronization. Instead, the dancers were free to express themselves on a more personal basis. The element that attributed a sense of harmony to the choreography was the common movement vocabulary of the dancers, based on arm gestures.

The piece began with the dancers entering the arena in two disciplined lines (pic.21). They headed to the centre and then separated to the sides to form a circle. Since the theme of the dance had been a grieving, the choreography was static and mostly based on arm movements and gestures (pic.22 & 23). However, the alternation of levels was evident. The dancers were either standing, kneeling or lying down.

The closing scene of the piece witnessed all the dancers lying down as a sign of exhaustion from the grieving. Wigman herself also noted that her piece brought a sudden change to the former festive character of the ceremony and

she claimed that she deliberately chose to do so in order to support the dramatic course of events. At the same time though, she explains that *Totenklage* was not intended to be a piece about grieving. On the contrary she conceived of it as a piece honoring the fallen soldiers and expressing gratitude for their sacrifice (Müller, 1993, p.175).
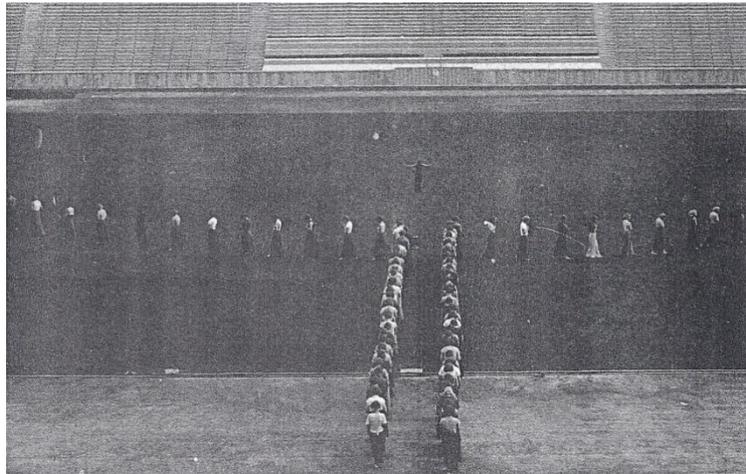
Picture 21 Entry of the dancers in the stadium for Totenklage – Wigman can be seen in the centre (source: Müller, 1986, p.230)
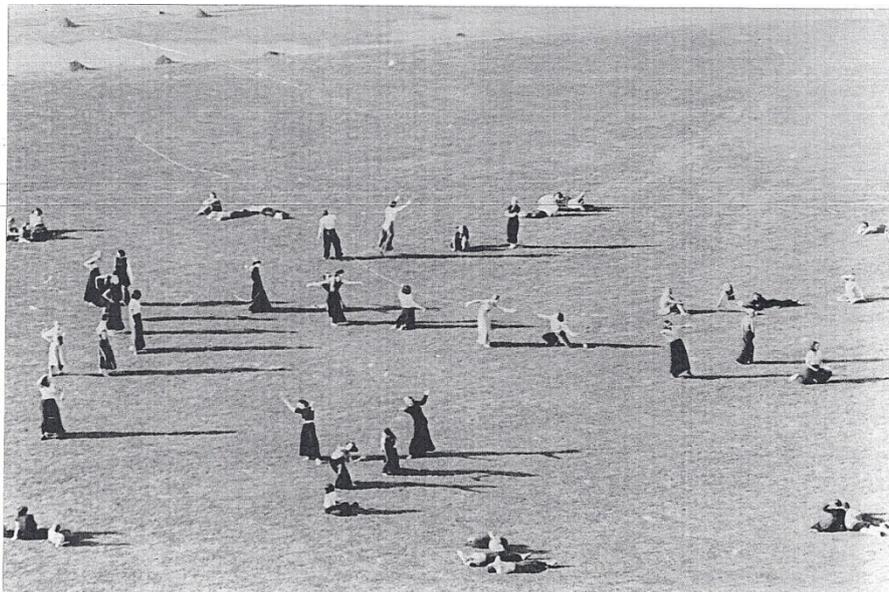
Picture 22 Rehearsals for Totenklage (Müller, 1993, p. 182)
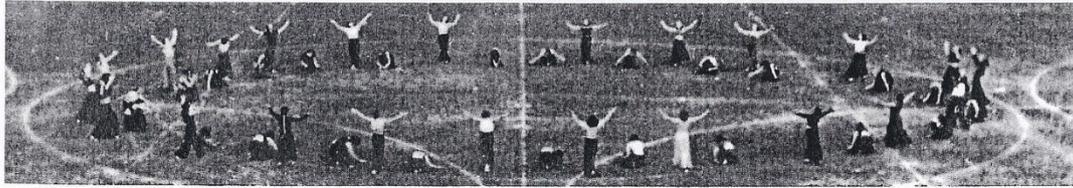
Proben zur Totenklage, Olympische Spiele 1936

Picture 23 Rehearsals for Totenklage (source: Weltenfriede – Jugendglueck)

Moving away from issues concerning the theme of the work, it is important to focus on its aesthetic aspects. As mentioned previously, Wigman managed to imply the individualism of *Ausdruckstanz* through her group choreography. After her dancers formed a circle, they all adopted a common movement vocabulary, based on gestures expressing grief. This implied that each dancer executed the movement on an individual basis and not in precise synchronization to the other members of the group (pic.23). Further to this point it is important to note that even the fact that she chose to work with a small group per se can be seen as a statement in favour of individuality. Being part of a small group does not abolish individuality with the same intensity that it happens when people are part of a large mass.

The individualistic aesthetic however is further enhanced through Wigman's role as leader of her group, which can be paralleled to the 'Leadership Principle' discussed in Palucca's solo. The difference in Wigman's case however, is that she is not performing a solo and thereby standing out of the group, as Palucca did, but she is leading the group instead.

As Susan Manning (1993) states, the *Führerprinzip* had been evident in many of Wigman's late productions. In the case of the Olympics however, the leadership principle was further intensified because the actual *Führer* was placed in the middle of the happenings. According to Manning's description Hitler was "watching from his special box in the stands, where the spectators

watched him spectating" (Manning, 1993, p. 199). This had been a strong image of Hitler becoming the centre of the spectacle and thereby indirectly projecting himself as the ultimate authoritative figure.

The parallelism of the actual *Führer* to the leading role of Wigman adds intensity to the interpretation of the Nazi aesthetic and the body politics underlying the opening ceremony. The docility and discipline evident in all pieces presented at the Olympic opening, take on a different meaning, when the presence of Hitler is taken into consideration. The watchful eye of the Leader and his placement in the middle of the spectacle precisely mirrored the daily life in German interwar society and referenced the system of terror mentioned in Chapter One.

In order to restore the cheerful atmosphere of the ceremony, Wigman's piece was succeeded by the 9th symphony of Beethoven. When the symphony was heard from the loudspeakers, all the participants re-entered the field. They amounted to a total of almost 10.000 performers and spread across the entire surface of the sport field. Standing in measured distances from each-other, they opened their hands wide to the sides, gazing at the sky, their posture similar to that of the women who burst into flames in the opening frames of *Olympia*. Eventually, Beethoven's tune was followed by the Olympic Hymn which signaled the closure of the ceremony and the spectators were finally allowed to leave the stadium.

The gesture of the dancers towards the sky were reminiscent of the act of prayer. Their posture can be perceived as praise to the universal energies, which had been a recurring theme of *Ausdruckstanz*. However apart from being a possible reference to mysticism, the perfect alignment of the dancers

and their synchronization in raising their arms certainly owed to the militaristic nature of the regime as well. The fact that the closure of the ceremony found all performers in the middle of the sport field aligned in carefully distanced queues can be perceived as a closing statement in favour of the grandiosity and megalomania of Nazi Germany and the rituality evident in the mass meetings that set out the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.

3.3. Concluding remarks on the ceremony

The opening ceremony consisted of four main parts, each focusing on a different aspect of Nazi society. It is interesting how the ceremony began with a mixed group of young boys and girls and then as the themes of the ceremony changed, so did the age group of the performers. From one piece to the next the age group kept rising. Likewise it is also interesting to note that only in the first part, where the participants are children, do the choral pictures comprise of both genders. In all other parts, the ornamental patterns are shaped by one gender only.

The effect of this discrimination has already been discussed. However it is worth paying more attention to the overall structure of the festival. If the ceremony was to tell a story, what would it be? It seems like the setting of the dances and the age groups chosen were deliberately aiming to convey the cycle of a lifetime. In the first part the children hold on to their playful nature, but the roles of the genders are starting to differentiate. The second scene references the qualities of grace and discipline which were looked for in women in Nazi Germany. The age group of the second part is 14-18, depicting the transition from teenage life into adult life. The third piece, performed by

boys of the same age group, strongly referenced the importance of military in Nazi Germany. In real life, this was approximately the age when the boys were sent to the army.

The two final dance pieces more or less narrate the eventual course of events for both genders. The soldiers get involved in a war, which was amongst the real future plans of the regime. Kreutzberg's piece depicts the possible outcomes of that war and then, as would the normal course of events be, the women grieve the fallen soldiers. The fact that the grieving is interrupted by Beethoven's symphony may be interpreted as a signifier of a new beginning, because these women will eventually have to move on.

The whole narrative is constructed by smaller pictures highlighting different aspects of Nazi society. All these aspects are indirectly conveyed through the adaption of a certain type of aesthetic. For instance, the mass aesthetic evident in most choral pictures conveys the ideal of communal spirit which outlined the Nazi ideology. Likewise, the adaption of archaic traditions highlights the Nazi preoccupation with archaism and the leading roles taken on by the two female *Ausdruckstanz* pioneers mirror the totalitarian nature of the regime.

Finally, taking a closer look at the details that comprise the opening ceremony, it becomes evident that manifestations of the Nazi aesthetic discussed in Chapter Two are present throughout the whole ceremony. Some aesthetic occurrences, like the mass ornament and the Leadership principle are discernible through most parts of the ceremony, while the nature trend or nudity are less evident in the Olympic ceremony, but certainly persist in the opening frames of *Olympia.*

Unfortunately however, there was no room in this dissertation to delve into more detail in the sequences of *Olympia*. Therefore, only parts of the film have been carefully chosen and referenced, whenever an additional insight into an aesthetic occurrence was required.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The focus of this research is the Nazi aesthetic and its portrayal through the prevalent dance form of the period, *Ausdruckstanz.* Due to the wide scope of the research subject, the dissertation concentrates on the period after 1933 until 1936 and uses the Olympic Games opening ceremony as a case study that enables a detailed analysis of the aesthetic embodiment of totalitarian ideas in an international setting.

The objective of the research is to first identify the Nazi aesthetic as articulated through the National Socialist ideology and then use these findings to establish how Nazi ideology was realized at a corporeal level. This task is achieved by applying the observations made in relation to the ideologies and the aesthetics to dance sequences taken from *Olympia* or the actual opening ceremony of the 1936 Olympics.

Nazism had been an extreme manifestation of fascism that put many restrains on the German community and resulted in radical conformism. The emphasis on nationalism and the alleged racial supremacy led to the occurrence of one of the cruelest events in the 20th century history; the holocaust. I used to often question, why did the people not object to these extremities, but taking a closer look at the roots of the Nazi ideology and the means by which it was infused into the populace, it becomes clear that there is indeed not much room for resistance in a system of terror.

Looking closely at the findings in Chapter One, it becomes evident that the rise of National Socialism owes its success to the social instability that supervened the years after the First World War. The ideologies developed as

part of the new ruling system were inflicted on the people through propaganda, which is still considered amongst the most powerful political mechanisms for controlling and manipulating the population. Through propaganda, the cornerstones of Nazi ideology (nation – racial supremacy – communal feeling), became central to the life of the Germans affecting their way of thinking and living.

Since the Nazi ideology was infused in every area of life, it seemed inevitable not to affect the artistic sphere. Chapter Two discusses how Nazism imposed its aesthetic on the arts in order to convey the Leader's megalomania and preoccupation with archaism. The concept of aesthetics is first defined and then divided in separate categories in order to enable in depth analysis of each aesthetic occurrence relating to Nazism. The most interesting finding is how the mass aesthetic of the regime affected *Ausdruckstanz* and abolished the individuality principle that characterized the dance form prior to the rise of National Socialism.

After discussing the various aesthetic manifestations, Chapter Three finally applies all the observations on the Olympic Games opening ceremony. Almost every aspect of Nazism, analyzed in Chapters One and Two, can be read through the dance pieces performed at the Olympics. However, what makes the ceremony particularly interesting is the contrast between the internationalism of the Olympics and the totalitarian ideologies of Nazism projected through the festival. To begin with, most parts of the ceremony comply with the form of the mass ornament, which indirectly references the German *Volksgemeinschaft* (communal feeling). Furthermore, the two highlights of the ceremony are portrayals of the *Führerprinzip*, drawing on the totalitarian character of the ruling system. Even the war-like orientation of

the regime is evident in the ceremony. Though, regardless of the contradictions between totalitarianism and the Olympic ideal, the way the whole spectacle was placed together, seemed fascinating and appealing. It managed to leave the audiences with positive impressions and eradicate any second thoughts they had on the regime's nature (Mandel, 1971).

The embodiment of docility and the militaristic element evident in the ceremony were not perceived as a reference to the militaristic and war-friendly nature of Nazism. On the contrary, these elements were viewed as a well structured spectacle that based its success on the collaboration and the will of its participants. The successful organization of the Olympics added to the feeling of superiority in interwar Germany and it also operated as a tool for political influence, since it temporarily made National Socialism more appealing and less threatening, on an international level.

Overall, the objective of this research has effectively been realized, since the changes in the form of *Ausdruckstanz*, have been established and the embodiment of Nazi ideals in the Olympic Games has been analyzed. It is important though to highlight, that the established relation between dance and politics has been made in accordance to the example explored, which is German expressionist dance and Nazism. Therefore it should not be assumed that all kinds of regimes impact on contemporary dance forms in the same way.

As far as the nature of *Ausdruckstanz* is concerned, the two last chapters effectively analyze how dance adapted to Nazi norms. On the other hand though, it has also been stated, that it still preserved some of its roots. For instance, for the purpose of the present research, the solo danced by

Palucca while she was framed by thousands of girls, has been interpreted as an occurrence of the *Führerprinzip* aesthetic. However since the intentions of Palucca while creating this solo are not known, it is only safe to state that this is part of my interpretation of the dance, because my goal was to trace the references to the Nazi ideology. For the creator of the dance, this solo may have just been a reference to the individuality aesthetic characterizing *Ausdruckstanz* prior to the rise of National Socialism.

In relevance to this example, many questions arise that would be interesting subjects for further research. For instance, was *Ausdruckstanz* indeed modified during the Nazi era, or could it just be a matter of interpretation? On the one hand it did move on from solo productions to group productions and this in fact coincided with the rise of National Socialism, but on the other hand it might have been just a change in the form of the dance as part of the general quest for new forms of expression.

However, I believe that it is overall safe to argue that most of the changes noted in the form of *Ausdruckstanz* do indeed correlate with the establishment of totalitarian ideologies. The shift in the aesthetics, which occurred in the works of so many artists during the period of Nazi dominion, can hardly be considered a coincidence. Equally, the interpretations of the pieces of the Olympic ceremony that witness the incorporation and embodiment of the Nazi aesthetic cannot be considered a coincidence either. Given the extreme social circumstances during the Nazi rule, it is inevitable that dance would be affected by totalitarianism and partly or wholly adjust to the preponderant trends.

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