explored the autonomies of the female body and, by extension, the emancipatory potential of Navanritya/New Dance. She encouraged both performer and spectator to develop a heightened awareness of the gendered implications of traditional dance vocabularies and developed a new idiom capable of enacting a critique of what she viewed as the patriarchal conditioning of female bodies. Sircar "travelled between learned and discovered movement," as she recast the lexicon of classical dance and martial arts to produce works that explicitly proposed a politics of Indian feminist resistance (155).

Although the literature on "Indian modern dance" is sparse, it is rich in its demonstrations of how significant the appearance and intercessions of the category are in an ideological and material milieu where the constitutive terms otherwise appear to be uncomfortably adjacent, inexorably in friction with each other. Purkayastha's book unveils the hidden history of the Indian in the modern and the modern in the Indian, two lacunae in the existing scholarship that have now been critically addressed and remedied through the author's compelling arguments and analyses concerning an important but peripheralized aesthetic movement. At moments one wishes for a more in-depth commentary on specific dance pieces (especially of Chaki Sircar and Ranjabati Sircar's oeuvre) or a fuller engagement with the feminist strand of analysis throughout the book. But these are small quibbles. The originality of the arguments and the impressive archival materials make for a compelling book. This is a commendable and much-needed addition to the scholarship on South Asian performance, dance history, and theories of modernity, and it is certain to be of interest to a wide range of practitioners and scholars.

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Dancing Genius: The Stardom of Vaslav Nijinsky

by Hanna Järvinen, 2014. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 325 pp., notes, bibliography, index. $95.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S0149767716000140

Legend has become history in the life of Ballets Russes star Vaslav Nijinsky, writes Hanna Järvinen in her book *Dancing Genius: The Stardom of Vaslav Nijinsky*. Gazing out at us from sepia-toned photographs of his iconic roles in *Schéhérazade* (1910), *Petrouchka* (1911), or *Le Spectre de la Rose* (1911), Nijinsky seems inseparable from the personas he donned: "He was a golden slave, a harlequin, a specter, a blue god, the embodiment of the violence and beauty of nature itself" (Coe 1985, 22). His later institutionalization for schizophrenia only perpetuated the Romantic image of him as a wild, preternatural talent, driven by his genius to aesthetic extremes. As Järvinen writes, this image of Nijinsky persists through "nijinskymania"—those sometimes kitschy, sometimes gorgeous cultural products familiar to us from Nijinsky-themed exhibition catalogues, picture books, paper dolls, and movies. *Dancing Genius* deconstructs the enduring depiction of Nijinsky as a mad, mute, seemingly natural prodigy, whose famous (and visually undocumented) leap offstage in *Le Spectre de la Rose* catapulted him into superstar territory. By analyzing the cultural formations framing Western and Russian

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000140 Published online by Cambridge University Press

critics' reception of the company and its male star in the prewar period, roughly from 1909 to 1912, Järvinen updates the literature on the Ballets Russes. Applying the Foucauldian premise that power operations undergird the process of canonization, Järvinen offers not so much an alternate history of the Ballets Russes as a corrective to its received myths.

Citing Foucault, Järvinen states that her approach is both "meta-historical" and "genealogical" (2): she tracks the discursive construction of the Nijinsky legend in order to "move, destabilize, and disturb contemporary discourses" that have uncritically absorbed and reflected this legend (4). The work of Lincoln Kirstein, Richard Buckle, and Millicent Hodson come under examination in this regard. Järvinen argues that these authors relied on questionable sources, including Nijinsky's diary, as well as the memoir/histories by Nijinsky's wife Romola Nijinsky and those by his contemporaries Michel Fokine, Serge Grigoriev, Alexandre Benois, Mikhail Larionov, Cyril W. Beaumont, Jean Cocteau, and Igor Stravinsky, among others. However, her book is not intended as a detailed deconstruction of the truth claims of these sources. Rather, Järvinen's method is to read contemporary reviews and commentary on the early years of the Ballets Russes alongside her analysis of framings of corporeality, gender, and race—the underpinnings of "historically and culturally specific representations and assumptions about what dance should be" (17). The book thus is intended to accomplish a "critical ontology" of dance, with Järvinen consciously positioning her work in line with that of scholars such as Ramsay Burt, Mark Franko, and Susan Foster (8).

Järvinen begins by introducing the cultural expectations of Nijinsky's Western (non-Russian, primarily French and English) audience, and then analyzes how notions of race in the contemporary discourse perpetuated an Orientalist view of the Ballets Russes and its star dancer. Diaghilev cultivated the image of his company as a high-art enterprise, separate from the ballet of the French variety shows, by building an audience he flattered as artistic connoisseurs. In this he also took advantage of nostalgia for fin-de-siècle symbolism, which is how Järvinen characterizes the style of the prewar Fokine-dominated period. Here she makes the point that the early Ballets Russes (before Nijinsky's choreographies) was not nearly as modernist or avant-garde as we have been led to believe. It's an interesting point, but in making it she passes over the heterogeneity of Fokine's work in this period, stating that these ballets had a "relatively uniform aesthetic style" (64). This claim is hard to accept—consider *Les Sylphides* (1909) next to *Firebird* (1910) next to *Petrouchka* (1911), all with very different movement vocabularies and themes. With such a strong focus on critical reception and publicity campaigns in these chapters, particularly when reviews of the time rarely discussed choreography, we miss out on the discussions of the ballets themselves that would counterbalance and complicate her conclusions regarding their aesthetic(s).

Her chapter "Orientalism" argues that while the Russians involved in the Ballets Russes had their own version of Orientalism—representing colonies of the empire or bordering nations as exotic and cruel—Western critics read the Orientalism of the Fokine ballets as evidence of the *Russians*' underlying Eastern-tinged barbarism. In this view, the Russians' superiority in ballet stemmed not from their rigorous training, but from characteristics of their race. Their performances stood outside of analysis because they were viewed as occurring naturally; one English critic wrote in 1913: "The real truth about the Russians is that they are expressing themselves" (74). Such attitudes set the stage for Nijinsky's muteness and Otherness. By placing contemporary reviews alongside formulations of class, race, and corporeality, Järvinen here compellingly shows how the Ballets Russes functioned as a cipher for cultural work of various kinds.

Less persuasive is her claim that an Orientalist view of the Ballets Russes has "influenced the way in which the Ballets Russes have ever since been presented as ahistorical, as a group of aesthetic trendsetters existing wholly apart from contemporary changes in culture, politics, or ideology" (65). This statement needs to be qualified. Both Tim Scholl's *From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the Modernization of Ballet* (1994) and Lynn Garafola's *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1989) examine in detail such historical and cultural factors. Even Kirstein in his 1935 *Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing* traced out the cultural backgrounds of four types of Fokine ballets from this time: Greek, "oriental,"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000140 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Russian, and "a hybrid style of Franco-Viennese from 1750 to 1830" (275). While Kirstein's work clearly does not reflect an understanding of Orientalist frameworks as defined by theorist Edward Said in 1979, it can hardly be considered ungrounded in an awareness of changing cultural and political circumstances (Said 1979?, 1–9). Here Järvinen misses an opportunity to provide the detailed analyses of Orientalist frameworks in specific subsequent histories, or in the lingering kitschy products of "nijinskymania," that would reveal more concretely the mechanisms of canon formation she proposes to discuss.

In the second section the author tackles the rhetoric of "genius" that began to be applied to the troupe's male star. In spite of the femininity of many of Nijinsky's roles (*Spectre*, for example), Western critics declared him a genius by claiming that he subordinated the feminine matter of the body to his spiritual masculine will. In this move, the physical labor of the dancer had to be downplayed so that Nijinsky's dancing could appear natural and spontaneous. (I would add that Anna Pavlova, Nijinsky's female counterpart in the superstar department, provides an excellent point of contrast that supports Järvinen's argument; the word "genius" was not typically applied to her, and her emphasis on the labor of dance remained an important part of her public relations strategy.) Drawing on the cultural capital of the genius, the Ballets Russes could assert its artistic superiority over dance forms associated with the feminine, such as free-form dance and the variety show stage. Järvinen also gives us a fresh take on Nijinsky's mental illness, which caused him to enter a sanatorium in 1919 and intensified the problem of others speaking for him. Järvinen posits that Nijinsky's ascribed inarticulateness aligned him with the idea that "true genius cannot be articulated" (174) and reduced him to his body (and, later, through psychoanalysis, to his sexuality). Järvinen thus destabilizes the legend of Nijinsky by revealing how this legend was structured through a variety of contemporary discourses including psychoanalysis, eugenics, and aesthetics. Her inclusion of material found in the archives that didn't "fit" with the hegemonic Nijinsky narrative, such as women's erotic drawings of Nijinsky, further demonstrates the fruitfulness of a Foucauldian approach that highlights rather than assimilates discontinuities.

The author also questions the label "revolutionary" assigned to the Ballets Russes by shifting contexts to Russia itself. She examines how debates over nationalism, modernism, and aesthetics among various factions (such as the *miriskusstniki*) in Russia complicate the Western narrative that the Ballets Russes brought about a complete break with the Imperial tradition. From a Russian perspective, the Ballets Russes grew out of artistic developments already taking place in Russia, with Diaghilev, the purveyor of novelty, taking full advantage of the relative naiveté of Western ballet audiences. Her lengthy quotations of Russian ballet critics (in Russian, translations provided in notes) integrate rich primary source material here, although I hoped to see a more detailed analysis of André Levinson and Valerian Svetlov's writing in the *Yearbook of the Imperial Theaters,* which Järvinen described as "a heterodox and little-known field of Russian dance criticism" (192). Järvinen emphasizes some of the blind spots occasioned by the revolutionary narrative, such as the downplaying of choreographer Alexandr Gorsky's influence on the "new ballet" (typically attributed to Fokine), and the way in which the "Giselle incident" or Nijinsky's dismissal from the Imperial theaters for refusing to wear regulation costume allowed Diaghilev to claim his company was modernizing outworn Imperial conventions. Stylistically, this section could benefit from more organizational clarity (for example, the digression on artistic patronage at the Imperial theaters is not clearly tied to Järvinen's argument). The Foucauldian nonlinearity of her presentation, perhaps intentional, interferes at times with its clear articulation.

Dancing Genius thoroughly deconstructs the Nijinsky myth by uncovering what was at stake in its formation in the early years of the twentieth century. At the same time, it leaves us to fill in the blanks for how, precisely, the myth was canonized as history—a process that the author states extends to the present day. It seems equally plausible to me that the fact that Nijinsky was male, that he was a choreographer, and that his ballets *were* revolutionary in their aesthetic (which Järvinen concedes, although she states that his choreography remains outside the scope of the book) had at least as much to do with the development of the Nijinsky legend as enduring Orientalist frameworks. Without a sustained analysis of how the ideas of contemporary reviews made their way into later dance histories, nagging

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000140 Published online by Cambridge University Press

questions arise. How are we to understand the impact of Orientalist frameworks on canonization through the stylistic diversity of Diaghilev's twenty-year stewardship of the company—that, in addition to Fokine, also encompassed the choreography of Nijinsky, Massine, Nijinska, and Balanchine? How did these later artistic developments also contribute to (and possibly complicate) the development of the revolutionary narrative? As Järvinen states, the historian's basic method is still source criticism. In some places the book could do with a little more of this, using quotations from specific works that perpetuate the myths she critiques so we understand specifically which author and which version of the hegemonic narrative she is addressing. Doing so would create a fascinating case study in the mechanisms of discourse uptake.

Overall, *Dancing Genius* succeeds in its mission of understanding how famous figures like Nijinsky "direct us to question how our pre-existing modes of thought influence how we evaluate the past, what we select from it, and where our attention is focused" (4). In addition to the material it provides for specialists, I could see this book used in undergraduate or graduate courses prompting discussions on historiography. Read alongside the texts she identifies in the introduction as perpetuators of the hegemonic narrative, *Dancing Genius* poses vital questions concerning why and for whom history is written.

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Multiplicity, Embodiment and the Contemporary Dancer: Moving Identities

by Jennifer Roche. 2015. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 164 pp., 10 illustrations, preface, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. $90.00 hardocover.
doi:10.1017/S0149767715000583

In this book, Jennifer Roche interrogates her experiences as a dancer within the context of four choreographic projects created by Rosemary Butcher (UK), John Jasperse (USA), Jodi Melnick (USA), and Liz Roche (IE). In each case, Roche commissioned works to be made for her, with the book documenting her insider reflections on these projects in her role as co-creator and performer.

As an articulation of an extended Practice as Research (PaR) project, the book foregrounds the act of performing in a way that to date has been little seen. Most PaR has focused upon the maker as researcher and thereby maintained the hegemony of the choreographer as authorial and authoritative voice. So while the nature of embodied and tacit knowledge has been much debated in PaR, there has been little attention paid to the creative labor and knowledge of performers. Roche expands this discourse, using first person accounts to ground her writing and to stress the significance of an embodied approach, positioning herself as "a source of knowledge and as capable of self-representation" (ix). This is significant, for as Roche points out: "The elision of the dancer's perspective from mainstream discourse deprives the art form of a rich source of insight into the incorporating practices of dance" (ix).

The book is arranged around the four choreographic projects, which become springboards for Roche's wider thinking about a dancer's identity. In her first case study, "Descending into Stillness: Rosemary Butcher," Roche describes the intersecting labor of the dancer and choreographer in Butcher's work. Butcher asks her dancers to respond to complex, abstract, and image-based instructions; improvise on themes emerging from her research; and operate within scored structures. Roche describes how Butcher brought visual sources into the studio and asked the dancers to draw on their emotional states

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767716000140 Published online by Cambridge University Press