

**Marie Taglioni, Ballerina Extraordinaire: In the Company of Women**

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<1>The nineteenth-century quest for novelty during the 1830s and 40s was nowhere better satisfied than from the stages of the large theatres in London and Paris, which on a tri-weekly basis showcased ballet celebrities and celebrity ballets as top fare entertainment.(1) While few devotees had the means to actually attend ballet performances, the interested majority could read the plots and reviews of the ballets published in print media—emanating from and traversing both sides of the channel—and *know* the dancers, their personalities and lifestyles, as well as the dangers they routinely faced as stage performers. During a benefit performance in Paris for Marie Taglioni, for example, two sylphs got entangled in their flying harnesses and audiences watched in horror as a stagehand lowered himself from a rope attached to the ceiling to free them. Théophile Gautier writes in his review of the performance that when Paris Opera director Dr. Veron did nothing to calm the crowds, Taglioni herself came to the footlights and spoke directly to the audience, saying “Gentlemen, no one is hurt.”(2) On another occasion a cloud curtain came crashing down unexpectedly and almost crushed Taglioni as she lay on a tombstone in a cloisture scene of *Robert le Diable*.(3) Reporters wrote that what saved her were her “highly-trained muscles,” which, in Indiana Jones fashion, she used to bound off the tomb just in time. Carlotta Grisi choreographed a ballet that required her to leap into the arms of her partner Lucien Petipa, a fairly routine move in a pas de deux today but a novelty in 1843. During a performance at Drury Lane in London she mistimed her jump and fell, and when audiences realized she was going to attempt it again (which she did successfully), one fan shouted out from the galleries, “Better give Petipa a glass of grog; he’s shaky on his pins.”(4) Several principal dancers were killed when their gossamer costumes accidentally touched the gas lanterns lining the stage, with audiences experiencing the real terror of screaming dancers running across the stage literally in flames.(5)

<2>The excitement and drama surrounding the romantic ballet contributed to its rise in popularity during the 1830s and 40s, but interestingly, it is exactly this rise in status, followed by its meteoric “fall” during the 1850s, that dance historians have found problematic in their efforts to legitimize dance as a respectable field of study. Fans shouting out to the dancers about grog and stagehands lowering themselves to free entangled fairies aligns the ballet too closely with the circus and music hall, the very entertainment venues that balletomanes today want to distance themselves from to maintain ballet’s sanctity as a premiere art form. Yet while the romantic ballet’s alignment with popular, mechanical and short-lived certainly adds to its stepchild status in dance studies, I would like to suggest that gender too plays a part in its demotion and

devaluation in the collective memory. For one thing, it was during the 1830s and 40s that the ballet shifted from a male to a female-centered spectacle, an occurrence that historians often blame for its subsequent “fall” as a legitimate form of artistic expression. Former dancer and creative director of the Paris Opera, Serge Lifar, for example, laments the passing of the romantic ballet in his 1953 preface to Ivor Guest’s *The Ballet of the Second Empire*:

From 1848, Romanticism closes its accounts and draws its balances—debit balances in places, as the eclipse of the male dancer bears witness—before fading away and vanishing to the profit of another age, in order that the phoenix of the dance might die and be reborn.

Lifar blames the “debit in the balances of the ballet” on the “eclipse of the male dancer,” which he indirectly links to the ballet’s fading away and vanishing. For Lifar the romantic ballet is more interesting anecdotally than aesthetically because of its location in the chronology of ballet history: it precedes the *real* ballet of the modern century, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, which celebrates the more definitive, qualitative, and yes, male, emphasis on form over matter and aesthetics over artistry. Early dance historian Andre Levinson considers the “sterile virtuosity” of the 1850s a “grave thing” and blames it on the triumph during the preceding decade of the “eternal feminine” (110). Dame Marie Rambert writes in her retrospective of the romantic ballet that

The betrayal of the male dancer is the one shameful feature of the Romantic ballet, for it gave the art an imbalance and led *inevitably* [my emphasis] to the abysmal decadence that set in at the end of the nineteenth century...[when] it degenerated into a girl show, providing vicarious enjoyment for men about town. (12)

Rambert blames the ballet’s decline on a gender imbalance caused by the “shameful” “betrayal” of the male dancer; but because she does not identify the betrayer, we are left with a vague, invisible force that the girl show inclusion links subliminally with femininity and its cousin, sexuality. Feminine codes typically emphasize the body rather than mind, which contributed to the overpowering of the male dancer and the “abysmal decadence and degeneration” of the ballet into a soft-porn, chorus girl act. While Rambert, Lifar and Levinson iterate the 1950s gender ideology of their own worlds, John V. Chapman concludes in his recent work on the French critic Jules Janin that the “seeds of the ballet’s decline as an art form were partly sown” by the “rejection of the male dancer, and the “feminization” of ballet ideology and personnel” (204). All four of these dancers/dance historians ground their claims obliquely on the patriarchal “truth” that men belong at the top of the social hierarchy—without men in the lead, culture is inevitably doomed to fall into decadence or what Lifar later refers to as acrobatic “flitting.” These dance historians reinforce, whether consciously or not, the paradigm that feminists have spent decades attempting to correct: what men do count as cultural capital, while women’s entry or men’s eclipse inevitably lowers its value.

<3>My purposes are not to take a stand in the debates about gender or about what constitutes “real” art, but to revisit the ballet world of the 1830s and 1840s to better understand the cultural and discursive forces that contributed to the romantic ballet’s phenomenal rise in popularity and just as phenomenal decline in the 1850s and 60s. What historians have overlooked in their

attempts to understand this moment in dance history is that the feminization of the ballet blamed for its decline was also the force that contributed to its rise in notoriety and popular appeal. This was in large part due to the superstar status of Marie Taglioni, whose technique was so novel that the ballet and femininity conflated; Taglioni *was* the ballet, but she also *was* femininity; according to the laws of logic, the ballet then *was* femininity.(6) A closer look at a phase of ballet's history often recorded as "meteoric" and "golden," hence fleeting and now tarnished, will bring into focus a new community of professional women whose popularity derived from their talent, strength, and independence, characteristics understood as part and parcel of the "eternal feminine."

### **The Triumph of the Eternal Feminine**

<4>Before Taglioni's phenomenal rise in popularity, ballet was more closely aligned with masculinity, and it was male dancers rather than female who were trained in pirouettes, entrechats, and the grand écart. While women were members of the companies, their roles were more peripheral to the story than men's and their dance technique was, in more cases than not, a poor imitation of the masculine form. The emphasis on narrative linearity and the celebration of the heroic changes, however, with the advent of romanticism; the new objective was to heighten the emotions of audiences as a form of revolt against the emphasis on rationality and courtly order that underscored the ballets of centuries past. As French ballet critic Jules Janin writes, "Logic is a fine thing, but too much logic is intolerable...Why deprive ballet of its most wonderful privileges: disorder, dream, and the absence of common sense."(7) Marie Taglioni's premiere in London on June 3, 1830 couldn't have been better timed for her presence and technique were revolutionary and embodied the "disorder, dream, absence of common sense" desired by celebrants of romanticism. After her performance in Didelot's *Flore et Zephyre*, the reviewer in the *Morning Herald* describes Taglioni as differing "from all other artists by the classic simplicity of her style. It has none of the warmth and voluptuousness which do so much discredit to the profession...She is all grace. The most rapid execution is accompanied with an inconceivable softness; and assertions which in others are marked by violence, seem to spring from her nature with perfect ease."(8) An *Athenaeum* reviewer described Taglioni as "this perfect —this preter-perfect—this preterpluperfect creature" the expletives reinforcing Taglioni's elusiveness—she, like the sylph she performs, not only transcends the material world, but also language—she can not be pinned down to a set meaning.(9) In other words, the feminization of the romantic ballet complicates our understanding of the construction of gender codes and separate spheres ideology of the mid-nineteenth century because female dancers, in abundance to the conventions of the ballet and the ballet review, transcended the material and linguistic fields.

<5>European audiences loved Taglioni immediately and when Londoners received notice of her last appearance during her debut season, crowds of ticketless fans forced their way into the theatre and "pressed upon the stage from the side scenes" and pulled down flowery couches from the stage to sit on "in order to obtain a last glimpse of her" (Guest, *Romantic* 56). She received 42 curtain calls in Vienna in 1842, and the next year was showered with so many bouquets in Paris that she had to stop her dancing to thank people and when she resumed, every step, every gesture was accompanied by clapping and vocalized ardour.(10) Théophile Gautier uses hyperbole to describe the conflation of flowers with Taglioni-mania, writing that a "hurricane of

bouquets and a floral cloudburst” hit the stage resulting in so many piles of flowers that the curtain couldn’t shut.(11) On another occasion, when the French management announced they were not including *La Sylphide* on the program the fans graffitied “La Sylphide or Death!” on the walls of the Paris Opera House with black paint (Hill 91). Margot Fonteyn writes in her memoirs that after Taglioni’s final performance in Russia, audiences got a hold of her toe shoes and boiled and ate them.(12) If one of the objectives of romanticism was to *move* audiences, then Taglioni, we might say, was not only the embodiment of romanticism but its master engineer.

<6>The ardor of fans toward Taglioni was heightened by the dance reviews, which more than anything else helped to feminize a profession that had been previously understood as male-driven and determined. The most influential ballet enthusiast of the 1830s and 40s was the before-mentioned French critic Jules Janin, whose Monday reviews in the *Journal des Debats* were translated into English for inclusion in the *London Times*. Earlier in the century the tone that critics adopted in their reviews of the neoclassical ballet was aloof, formal, prosaic; Janin’s, on the other hand was personal, his goal, much like Wordsworth’s, to involve the spectator/reader fully in the appreciation of the ballet by disclosing his own rapture as a model for experiencing and responding to ballet. While the less-poetically inclined critics praise Taglioni’s mental and mechanical control along with her beauty and skillfulness in “seeming” to glide, the poetic Janin represents Taglioni as a love object who, like the elusive sylph she performs, drives him mad with desire. Janin writes out fully his experience of entering the auditorium “to compose my own little drama...to base my own little poem on the dances, gambols, and light steps in the kingdom of illusion...to amuse myself as my fancy takes me.”(13) Janin admits that his pleasures derive from “seeing Mlle Taglioni dance, ...hurrying after her, ...following her in spirit through the imaginary spaces where she is transported without even willing it.”(14) By casting Taglioni as the beloved, the object of desire, Janin along with fellow ballet enthusiast, Théophile Gautier, reinforced the feminization of the dance profession, making it increasingly embarrassing to see a costumed male danseur exhibiting his physicality, not to mention his sexual anatomy, on stage. This analysis of Janin and Gautier as masculine romantics(15) helps to explain Janin’s uncompromising stance about male dancers. “Under no circumstances do I recognize a man’s right to dance in public,” he wrote in 1832, shortly after Taglioni’s premiere. (16) If we follow this formulation, male dancers disrupt the gender opposition Janin needs to escape into fantasy and achieve viewing pleasure. Note the strident tone he takes in the following review that gives clue to how threatening male dancers were to his sexual/professional identity and viewing pleasure:

But a man, a hideous man, as ugly as you and I, a miserable animal, who bobs about without knowing why or wherefore, a creature made on purpose to carry a musket, sabre, and uniform—that such a being should dance like a woman,impossible!.....Thanks to a revolution, woman is now queen of the ballet.(17)

His need for opposition between the sexes is so absolute that it nears absurdity. Ballet is femininity incarnate, and femininity *is* beauty; but to uphold the logic, men must be ugly—including his readers, who he presumes to be male--and a dancing man “hideous, miserable, impossible.” Rather than the battlefield serving as his natural turf, a danseur is on a stage and is

so out of place that he is completely confused and doesn't know why he is there or where he should go.

<7>While these review excerpts suggest that Janin and Gautier played a significant role in male dancers exiting the profession, dance historian Lynn Garafola places the blame on the ballerina (however indirectly and possibly unknowingly) who “unmanned” the danseur, “reducing him to comic character and occasional “lifter” (36). Despite the ridicule they received in the popular press, men did continue to dance and choreograph ballets, Jules Perrot, Lucien Petipa, Arthur Saint-Leon, Louis Bretin, to name just a few. However, by the end of the 1840s, most of the male roles in the corps, as well as many of the principal roles, were performed by women *en travesti*, a form of cross-dressing that is associated in the theatre with parody. Garafola writes, “Men on the ballet stage were fine, it seemed, so long as they left its youthful, beardless heroes to the ladies and so long as they were elderly and, presumably, unattractive” (35). Taglioni, apparently, disagreed; in an interview she claimed that men were necessary in lead roles, not only to exhibit the male form, but also to emphasize through contrast the delicacy and feminine grace of the ballerina (Hill 122). However, she was furious after the last performance of *The Revolt of the Harem* when her partner Jules Perrot received greater acclaim than she. “Isn't it frightful that a mere male dancer [my emphasis] should get more applause than me! It's treason! It's infamy! It's hardly worth the while to make so many sacrifices for such a result.”(18) Considering that the plot of the *Revolt of the Harem* involves wives of the harem joining together, toting guns and wearing uniforms, to overpower the patriarch and gain their freedom, Taglioni's anger is justified. Not only are the wives in the harem changing the order of things, but also the profession itself has been taken over by female dancers. Perrot should not be getting more applause than the woman at the head of both revolutions, Taglioni!

<8>I mentioned Russian fans eating Taglioni's toe shoes, which is interesting for its weirdness, but also for the reminder of how the foot—especially when taut, hardened and en pointe—operates as a fetish object in the imaginations of ballet audiences. Recognition of the strength involved in dancing en pointe to create that in-between moment of groundedness and flight fascinated audiences in the 1830s and 40s just as it continues to fascinate us today. Early biographer Lorna Hill describes Taglioni moving “across the stage in great noiseless bounds, seem[ing] to stay suspended in air...and spr[ing] again, impelled aloft by her muscles” (69). Hill directs attention to the musculature of Taglioni's calves that enables her suspension in the air to create the illusion of flying. Gautier likens Fanny Elssler's agility to “the sudden speed and *steely muscles* of a young athlete” [my emphasis].(19) An image of Taglioni's foot emerging from the clouds circulated alongside the poem about her in the 1830s and early 40s,(20) suggesting that what thrilled audiences about the legs of dancers were not only the sexual signs attached to them, but also the muscles, hence the strength required to create the illusion of weightlessness. The toe in this illustration touches the cloud so lightly that it doesn't move, but the calf muscle serves as a reminder of the physical strength required to create what is in actuality, an illusion. Susan Leigh Foster argues that classical ballet reinforces the fragmentation of the female body—the illustration of Taglioni's leg one case in point—to enable the primacy of the male heterosexual viewer. While the male dancer remains upstage, enabling her performance, the ballerina is “like a divining rod, trembling, erect, responsive...Her body flames with the charged wantings of so many eyes, yet like a flame it has no substance. She is, in a word, the phallus, and he embodies the forces that pursue, guide, and manipulate it” (Foster 2 –

3). In the 1840s, however, with the increasing use of female travesty dancers in male lead roles — Fanny Elssler’s primary partners were her sister Theresa and Fanny Cerrito, the celebrity dancer and choreographer—it was *women* who enabled the performance of ballerinas and channeled eyes toward them; the female, in this case, operates as both the guiding force, the manipulator *and* the object of the gaze...the phallus. From the stages of the large theatres and the pens of French reviewers, femininity was being constructed as light, ethereal, with the muscles a titillating reminder of the strength involved in performing femininity; indeed the illusion, the performative, was part of the novelty of the romantic pathos.

<9>Before discussing Taglioni’s popularity with women, we must pause and consider the corps dancers and their position in this professional community of women. According to Cyrus Beaumont, as men began to exit the profession after the premiere of *La Sylphide*, young women entered it, filling the gaps in the corps and moving into lead roles formerly held by the danseur (Levinson 110). In other words, that which is often remembered as a shameful event—the exodus of the danseur from the profession—turned out to be an opportunity for female ballet aspirants. In dance studies, corps dancers of the romantic ballet are often understood as provocateurs of sexual titillation for male viewers, referred to by Garafola as “the hussy of the boulevards on theatrical parade” (37). Occupying the lowest rung of the star system established during the 1840s, these dancers are remembered as being working class, prostitutes on the side, and dependent on male patrons who visited the Green Room at His Majesty’s to study the bared breasts, exposed legs and choose a variety of ballet girl for their own private entertainment. Garafola refers to the Paris Opera as a private seraglio for wealthy libertines that the stripping of the male role of its power and dominance accommodated; with the exit of men on the stage, men in the audience could indulge more freely in sexual fantasies and subsequent license (38). Yet while the ballet dancer and everything associated with her was fetishized in the popular imagination, corps dancers were, to some degree, unified by their love for dance, their aspirations, and their willingness to discipline their bodies into the mold expected by audiences and required by dance masters. In his 1847 *Natural History of the Ballet Girl*, Albert Smith praises the ballet girl for her hard work, her neatness and self-discipline; she wears gloves during rehearsal and drinks lemonade when she seeks recreation at the Portland Rooms or Weippert’s, not gin, he emphasizes. Smith was a good friend of a Miss Lonsdale of the Drury Lane corps de ballet and he most likely received his knowledge first hand from her as well as from his own experience *inside* the theatre. Likewise, in his memoir as director of the Paris Opera, Dr. Louis Veron describes the female ballet community as dignified and harmonious. He writes that “in spite of the differences of wealth and position, a true spirit of camaraderie reign[ed] in this little world of its own. The lowers are not despised; the highest are not proud” (Levinson 63). The scene he describes of the danseuses during break is near utopic, a departure from the purveying male/sexualized female binary structuring stories of the Green Room before and after performances. One woman, “wise and modest,” sits embroidering a tapestry under the watchful eye of her mother, while a group of corps dancers talk and laugh together, some eating sweets and cakes. Some women are sitting off by themselves reading novels, some lie about the floor relaxing or stretching, and a group of children are making fun of a performance they have just been rehearsing.(21) While the exploitation of child labor in England led to the Education Act in 1876, historians have noted the positive side of the ballet as an occupation for children—they were taught to breathe properly, exercise regularly, and they earned from seven to 15 shillings a

week,(22) the latter amount more than Jane Eyre made as a governess, and twice what Kate Nickleby made at the Mantalini's dress shop in Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*.

<10>Gaining entry into this professional community was challenging, however, and required either exceptional talent—which in most cases necessitated enough money to live in Paris or Milan long enough to receive proper training—a lucky break, and/ or an insider connection.(23) Taglioni was an insider by birth as both her father and grandfather were ballet dancers and her mother and grandfather were musicians. The father of English principal dancer Clara Webster was a dancing master in Bath and passed his training with the ballet greats Gaetan Vestris, Louis Dupré, Pierre Beauchamp, Giovanni Gallini along to his daughter and arranged her debut at the Theatre Royal where she was partnered by her brother Alfred (Guest 15 – 16). The Viennese Fanny and Theresa Elssler's father was the composer Haydn's copyist, who in turn was their godfather. Even the backstage workers—the carpenters, gasmen, scene shifters—took advantage of their insider position by being the first in line to sign their daughters up for small roles in fairy pantomimes.(24) While the ballet in London was primarily a foreign importation, the corps dancers were English and oftentimes changed their names to fit the “fashionable vogue for the foreign ballerina” (Guest, Romantic 133). Dance training was more accessible in Paris because the schools were officially attached to the Paris Opera and subsidized by the government. While London too had a ballet school connected to Her Majesty's Theatre and supervised by Jules Perrot during the golden era, the school was small—only admitting 30 to 40 pupils at a time—and only open for six months in the year.(25) Dickens parodies the haphazard way in which English girls gained entrance into the ballet profession in his novel *Little Dorrit* when Fanny Dorrit fortuitously meets a ballet master in the Marshalsea Prison, who recognizes a natural talent and with nothing else to do, gives her lessons; when the dance master gets out of prison, Fanny has her ticket into the ballet inner-circle.(26) In other words, despite the opportunities the exodus of male dancers created for young women, gaining entrance into and advancement within the tiers of the ballet world was much easier when you had relations with someone already positioned in the inside. The ballet profession, like Hollywood today, was for the most part endogenous.

### **Marie Taglioni, a Woman's Dancer(27)**

<11>Despite the small number of English women who actually danced, images of the ballerina and the ballet extended into the consciousness of non-professional women, who were huge fans of Taglioni and bought books about her, sheet music adorned with her costumed image, and read about her in the dailies. Edward Binney counts over 130 representations of Taglioni—illustrations, paintings, sculptures—produced from the 1830s on into the early twentieth century, images that Catherine Golden argues increased Taglioni's popularity by circulating in the “virtual parlor of the gift book, the world of proper Victorian femininity” (79). Women copied her hairstyle—a la Sylphide—and added frills to their dresses and bodices to give them a more rustling, billowy, seraphic look (Levinson 50). Janin writes that “[m]any a young lady, arriving with a fresh bouquet that was precious to her...could not resist the pleasure of throwing it at the feet of Mlle Taglioni, the danseuse of virtuous young women”(28) According to a first hand account, Taglioni was very close to her mother, with whom she always lived, and felt most at “home” when she danced in Sweden, her mother's place of origin (Levinson 119). Taglioni

loved her grandmother and at the end of every performance in Stockholm she would kneel before the 94-year-old lady and kiss her hand, to the delight of the audience (Hill 122). The effect of such celebration of the matrilineal and the inclusion of it in her performance was powerful enough to disrupt convention; during one of her performances in Russia, ladies broke into applause, which historians say was an unprecedented license.(29) While corps dancers were often cordoned off from the principals to maintain the rank system within the ballet hierarchy, (30) the corps dancers of the Paris Opera during the 1830s loved Taglioni and decorated her dressing room with flowers to celebrate her superior performances. After the mishap in Paris mentioned in the introduction, the two entangled sylphs who had to be rescued by a stagehand received gifts from Taglioni the next day.(31) In one of the few letters we have written by Taglioni, she asks the management to turn the pit of the Paris Opera into stalls to ensure that ladies are able to purchase suitable seats—the tickets for this 1838 performance were in such demand that rather than the usual 3 francs they were 25 francs.(32) Interestingly, the “pit” is often associated with gents and beaux, who hang out close to the stage during performance to catch a peek up the dancers’ skirts. In this anecdote we see instead Taglioni using her position of authority and popularity to disrupt the male subject/female object binary by changing the pit, a male-authorized viewing space, into a seating area suitable for her female fans.

<12>The court circular section of the *London Times* published accounts of the lifestyles of celebrity dancers--the jewels, the carriages, the villas, the liaisons with aristocratic men, the salaries—which of course heightened their position in the social imagination. Dancers attended Society balls and were courted by powerful men in politics and the literati, who offered their hands in marriage.(33) Celebrity dancers were known for their independence and stories circulating about them emphasized their resistance to marriage and male control in any form. Pauline Duvernay’s name was in the news regularly during the 1830s for her dancing abilities but also because of the stir she created in her personal life. Men flocked around Duvernay and she received scores of marriage offers by men of rank. Thackeray adored Duvernay and describes her as “a vision of loveliness such as mortal eyes can’t see nowadays” and he remembers the “thumping of [his] heart” when she entered the stage.(34) Lord Ranelagh, the Lords Allen and Tullamore and the Duke of Devonshire competed for her favors and even the manager of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Alfred Bunn, was reported in the news to have “attempted a declaration of his attachment, but was indignantly refused” (Guest, *Romantic* 73). Duvernay finally accepted the landed Lyne Stephens’s proposal of marriage (after eight years of refusing him) and while she retired from professional life, she continued to pay regular visits to Paris to see her friends, visits which, of course, were published in the newspapers. Taglioni’s personal life was likewise included in the court circular, but unlike Duvernay she was more careful in maintaining an aura of middle-class respectability. At the height of her career she married the feckless Albert, Comte Gilbert de Voisins and had two children with him but kept both of her pregnancies secret by disappearing from the stage temporarily for “knee problems,” what Levinson claims was a class euphemism for pregnancy “in the parlance of the green room” (95). Although they separated after only two years of marriage, Taglioni kept de Voisins name and continued to pay his gambling debts until he died, although her stage name was always Taglioni.

<13>Along with stories about their suitors and feckless husbands, newspapers reported the salaries of the dancers, which served as a gauge for determining a dancer’s position in the

popular hierarchy. The manager of His Majesty's paid Taglioni 2000 pounds for 18 performances in the early 1830s, almost twice what Dickens made several decades later for his readings in London, and this was before the premiere of *La Sylphide*.<sup>(35)</sup> Taglioni had a five-year contract at the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg for which she was paid forty thousand rubles (5000 pounds), in addition to a guarantee of six thousand rubles (130 pounds) for two benefits she would be expected to attend (Hill 99 – 101). The Emperor of Russia attended nearly all of Taglioni's 200 performances and gave her a plaque of diamonds worth 25 thousand rubles (550 pounds).<sup>(36)</sup> The manager of the Paris Opera, Dr. Veron, contracted Fanny Elssler and her sister Therese at a salary of 40,000 francs per annum (5000 pounds), and, for sensation appeal, leaked the story to the press of taking these two rising stars to dinner and serving them a plate of jewels for dessert (Hill 88). These stories of fame, talent, wealth, beauty, desirability, fed the imaginations of a greedy, desirous public and offered powerful material for castlebuilding outside the legitimate domain of domesticity.

<14>Ellen Rosenman includes C.W. M. Reynold's popular novel *The Mysteries of London* in her study of Victorian "unauthorized pleasures" because it diverges so dramatically from the expected literary treatment of female sexual experience. Rather than sexuality resulting in death, or what Sally Mitchell refers to as "a field littered with broken bodies...the survivors...on their knees to God," the protagonist Ellen Monroe finds pleasure while working as a model, an actress, and a dancer within prevailing codes of gender norms and ultimately creates her own sexual subjectivity. While the plot does not hold back on the salacious details readers sought and expected from a penny serial—a desperate act of prostitute, an illegitimate baby, captivity as a sex slave—Reynolds, Rosenman argues, does not paint Ellen as a victim but as a resourceful woman who ultimately learns to love her body and the pleasures it provides her outside heterosexuality. Interestingly for our purposes, Reynold's protagonist was inspired by Marie Taglioni and Fanny Elssler, the two most popular ballerinas during the 1840s when the book circulated, suggesting that Reynolds recognized the appeal that the fictionalized private lives and thoughts of the ballerinas would have on his readers. His idea apparently worked considering that it sold forty thousand copies a week in penny installments and over a million copies before it was issued in bound volumes. Rosenman makes a strong case for Reynold's book serving as erotica for women readers, as well as men. She claims that the spectacle of Ellen's body may have originated for heterosexual consumption, but it "ultimately produces a female sexuality that resists heterosexual imperatives—indeed, that rejects heterosexuality as a sexual practice altogether" (104). Ellen Monroe helped to "educate the bodies of female readers to the possibilities of autonomous sensual pleasure" (114). Which gets us back to female spectatorship and the phallus: rather than desiring the dancer, who as the phallus has no identity, female spectators and readers desired her life, her strength, her relationship with her own body and its pleasures. Female sexual subjectivity was attainable, in other words, through readings and spectacles of the "eternal feminine."

<15>Rosenman's celebration of female pleasure by and for women resonates with Sharon Marcus's claim in *Between Women* that female bonds in Victorian England were not counter to patriarchy and/or heterosexuality as they are often understood in feminist and lesbian studies but rather positioned "at the heart of normative institutions and discourses" (13). Marcus's research shows that Victorians did not "suppress bonds between women but actively promoted them."<sup>(37)</sup> Through friendships women learned how to feel and express affection and be

companions as well as competitors, skills that helped them in marriage, but even more importantly, that structured the new more egalitarian conception of marriage. Considering that women went to ballets on par with men, took dance classes from ballet dancers, and learned how to feel sexual pleasure vicariously through erotica based on dancers' lives, it is reasonable to assume that Taglioni and other ballerinas like her modeled for their female fans a new form of femininity, one based on physicality, sexuality, and independence.

<16>That professional women and their female audiences were interrelated rather than oppositional calls into question our assumptions about the heterosexual practices of patronage in which aspiring ballet dancers depended on desirous, wealthy men for support. Louise Robin-Challan describes the hardships faced by the young "rats" of the Paris Opera, whose ascendancy in the profession depended on a 'sugar daddy' type visiting dance class and selecting a young dancer to help support and take out for "business" dinners. The said patron would then pay a hundred francs a month to the ballet director for lessons, thus speculating on his protégé's future. Robin-Challan claims that young dancers participated in this system because it was the only avenue to a successful artistic career and, for many, the only way out of a miserable life. In Bronte's *Jane Eyre* Mr. Rochester invests in Celine Varens' career as does Edmund Sparkler with Fanny Dorrit's in Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, but as Bronte and Dickens both have it, neither men are capable of holding onto their investments. However, this assumption that patronage was an exclusively male practice is shortsighted because, in actuality, many patrons were women, who not only supplemented dancers' incomes but also introduced them to Society and helped them to plan their careers and negotiate contracts. Robin-Challan mentions a retired actress, Mrs. De Rudder, who educated and paid for the training of orphan girls at the Paris Opera, while Fanny Elssler's patron for a long time was the fashionable and formidable Mrs. Harriet Grote, the wife of a member of parliament and the female centre of the Radical party, who later in the century presided over the London Society for Women's Suffrage.(38) In fact, Elssler had her illegitimate baby in the Grote's home and Grote and her husband took care of it so that Elssler could continue her dancing career. After Elssler, Grote took Jenny Lind under her wing so completely that managers could only approach the singer through her demanding patroness.(39) Taglioni too encouraged new dancers like Elssler and was a patron herself of several, including the sixteen-year old Emma Livry, whose dancing style was being compared to hers in the 1850s, a time when ballet's popularity was on the wane. Taglioni choreographed a new ballet pantomime in two acts for her protégée that she called "le Papillon," which was set to the musical score of Offenbach. Audiences apparently loved the performance, and when Taglioni took the curtain call together with Livry, "radiantly happy and almost in each other's arms," the house responded with even more gusto to that display of affection than during the ballet (Guest, *Second Empire* 144).

<17>This passing of the baton to a younger ballet generation ended abruptly when Livry died later that year after refusing to exchange her gossamer for the newer and safer flame retardant costume and catching on fire during performance. In the words of Ivor Guest, Livry "resembled the passing of a shooting star. She appeared suddenly, almost without warning, so bewildering those who saw her that, when she was gone, she seemed some ideal once seen in a dream" (*Second Empire* 123).

## Manufactured rivalries, fallen ballet girls, and a forgotten heritage

<18>The image of Taglioni and her protégée Emma Livry “in each other’s arms” as the house goes crazy with adoration is not the usual one recorded in dance histories. Rather than an art form involving women on stage and in charge—sexualized, yes, but also respectable enough to be worthy of emulation by other women—histories emphasize the jealousies between the ballerinas and the immoral lifestyles of corps dancers, who rarely escape a tragic end. So what happened? How did an entertainment venue that packed theatres to near suffocation and saw riotous outbreaks when management failed to deliver the goods become by the middle of the 1850s a boor? George Eliot expresses contemporary sentiment in one of her journal entries in which she describes the “stupid ballet girls” that she had to endure at the opera who gave her a headache (Harris and Johnston 41).

<19>Dance historians have various theories as to why the romantic ballet fell out of favor with the English public as dramatically as it did. Guest blames its demise on Jules Perrot’s departure as ballet-master, which coincided with a public increasingly bored with large scale pantomime ballets (Romantic 138 – 142). Her Majesty’s manager Benjamin Lumley blames the fall on the public’s mania for the Swedish singer Jenny Lind, who replaced the celebrity dancers as the “town talk” and filled the opera houses to a “state of impossibility.” As Lumley puts it, “One star shone with too powerful a light in the operatic sphere to allow any other star, however radiant, to sparkle with in its legitimate luster” (225). Marie Rambert attributes the decline of the romantic ballet to the shaky economic foundation of Her Majesty’s Theatre, which required Lumley, and Laporte before him, to rely on their own marketing ingenuity and resourcefulness to find talent to satisfy the whim of a fickle audience. As a result, English audiences didn’t develop the aesthetic sensibility necessary to sustain loyalty and were instead a “fashionable public, and a fickle public who looked for sensations, demanded novelties and had no real interest in ballet as an art” (Rambert 24). Lumley writes in his memoirs that “[f]rom the noble Patron and Patroness down to the subscribing Bookseller; from the wealthy Citizen down to the Modiste—all frequenters, or would-be frequenters of the opera, entertain a common sentiment of hostility towards ‘the manager’. Most of them grudge giving their money” (25). While this attitude of feeling underappreciated might be particular to the English Lumley, it does seem that the manager/audience relationship was vexed across the board. Audiences wanted to be *stirred* by a personality or a novelty, and if they weren’t, they wanted their money back. They had high expectations and high standards, both of which put incredible weight upon the shoulders of the providers. This expectation demanded marketing ingenuity to stay in business and, as I will show, contributed indirectly to the ballet’s demotion during the 1850s.

<20>One highly successful marketing strategy used by Lumley, as well as the Paris Opera director Louis Veron, was to manufacture rivalries between the celebrity dancers in order to heighten the excitement for the performance. When Taglioni began to miss rehearsals and cancel performances for a “knee injury” that mysteriously disappeared nine months later, Veron contacted the before-mentioned Mrs. Grote to negotiate an exclusive contract with Fanny Elssler for a season with the Paris Opera.(40) Veron marketed Elssler as the opposite of Taglioni: Taglioni was graceful and innocent and unworldly, Elssler was vivacious, earthly and sensual. Taglioni was a woman’s dancer, Elssler a man’s dancer. Taglioni was Christian, Elssler pagan.

And so on. As a result of this marketing strategy, ballet fans were either Taglionists or Elsslerists, a rivalry which lasted ten years and is referred to in dance history as “the great quarrel that cast a shadow over [these dancers’] lives” (Levinson 56). Critics’ loyalties would shift and that would be part of the news: Théophile Gautier, for one, divorces Taglioni for Elssler, who he calls elegant, beautiful, with a “bold and petulant vigour, a sparkling smile, and above all, an air of Spanish vivacity tempered by her German artlessness (Levinson 66). Veron publicized the amount of money he was paying Elssler—perhaps to validate the high ticket prices—and distributed semi-official bulletins to the theatre journals claiming that the corps de ballet plumed themselves Elsslerists, after having before been enthusiastic Taglionists.

<21>While identification with celebrities can be a positive thing by heightening the emotional affect experienced from dance spectacle, this rivalry got out of hand and in some cases was downright mean. The length of Taglioni’s arms gave rise to a hundred unkind gesticulations. A writer in the *Courier des Theatres* jokes that “while dancing yesterday before the public...La Taglioni put her garter on again without bending down, while a chronicler of *Nouvelliste* describes Taglioni as a pair of compasses composed of little flesh and much bone” (Levinson 66). Because Taglioni WAS the sylph, no dancer dared to perform the part knowing that she would be compared unfavorably. However, Veron made Elssler dance the part on one occasion and she was hissed by Taglionists who subsequently stood up and shouted when the hired applauders (called claquers) clapped their support for Elssler. A mini-riot broke out in the audience with stamping and yelling and arms flailing. A number of stories were spread to the press about Taglioni’s “immeasurable vanity and jealousy of her precedence,” her caprice and avariceness “by which she drove her managers to distraction” (Levinson 93). Gautier writes that Elssler possesses what Taglioni lacks—“a profound sense of drama...besides which she is prettier and younger” (Levinson 67). Rather than celebrating the talents and skill level of both dancers and broadening the aesthetic semiotics of the genre, these reviewers and ballet fans chose sides, dividing the dancers into complementary parts—one of the heavens, the other of the earth, one modest and graceful, the other flirtatious and sensual, one for women, one for men. As Andre Levinson puts it in his biography of Taglioni, Fanny “elevated herself by crossing swords with that seraphic genius...The opposite of Taglioni, she filled a void. Neither of them can compass the whole gamut of their profession” (61). Lumley further exploited the rivalry tactic by staging one of the biggest media hypes in ballet history: he arranged for the four most popular ballerinas to dance together in a movement he called the Pas de Quatre. While Ballet historians often refer to this performance as the greatest of all divertissements, every account I’ve come across pays tribute to Lumley’s genius in manipulating the egos of the rival dancers—in fact, his genius and the diva rivalries are what dominate as historical significance in the archives of dance history.(41)

<22>My research suggests, however, that Taglioni and Elssler were not arch rivals as they are remembered being, but colleagues and possibly even friends. When Elssler made her debut at the Paris Opera, Veron strategically placed Taglioni in a box so that audiences could watch her watching her rival dance; while Veron used this tactic to lure audiences into the rivalry drama, what spectators actually saw was Taglioni smiling and applauding throughout the performance (Levinson 63). In a letter to a friend about the debut, Elssler describes how Veron “enflamed [curiosity] to the highest pitch of longing” by having her wear a full length veil out to the center of the stage; upon throwing back the veil, she shrunk “under the intensity of the gaze, so fixed and piercing.” But Elssler also spends time in the letter praising Taglioni’s execution in *La*

*Sylphide* as “superb and faultless. Graceful as a swan, she glided majestically across the scene leaving in her wake much wonder and delight. No one comprehended her perfection more fully, no one enjoyed it more heartily, than I did.”(42) An article in the *London Times* appearing during the height of the rivalry reported that Mlle Taglioni had invited Elssler and her sister Theresa, along with Carlotta Grisi, Fanny Cerrito, and Lucile Grahn to her home on the borders of Lake Como in Italy for the summer. (43) When Taglioni arranged a benefit in honor of the illustrious Auguste Vestri, she invited Elssler and her sister Theresa to dance a new pas de deux she created especially for the affair. Even after Taglioni retired for the first time in 1845, she held parties for her ballet friends at her home and they would dance for each other--her children would participate too--and partner in marzurkas and polkas until late at night, or early morning (Guest, *Second Empire* 163).

<23>But this history of women choreographing ballets for women, spending the summer together, supporting each other’s dancing, and enjoying each others company has been forgotten, overshadowed by the stories of rivalries, and the “shameful” exodus of male dancers from the profession. While stories of ballet girls circulated in journals and newspapers throughout the century, the attitude toward dancers changes considerably during the more conservative 1850s, which saw a tightening of separate spheres ideology and a celebration of that notorious Victorian icon, the “angel in the house.”(44) Patmore’s poem, first published in 1852, was accompanied by a spate of sermons and conduct books directed at young women to naturalize the home-as-haven rhetoric and denigrate public women who opted for exhibition and pleasure over domestic duty. (45) Conversely, the results of the 1851 census provoked considerable debate over the problem of surplus unmarried women that challenged the separate spheres ideology—how can a woman’s life purpose be met in a home void of husband or children? While W. R Greg’s answer to the problem was to export unmarried women to the colonies, feminists took up the pen to encourage women to enter the workplace. As Barbara Bodichon writes in the introduction of her 1857 “Women and Work”:

Cries are heard on every hand that women are conspiring, that women are discontented, that women are idle, that women are overworked, and that women are out of their sphere...[W]e hear cries that the world is going wrong for want of women, that moral progress cannot be made without their help. (37)

Bodichon’s answer to this concern about women and their social, domestic duties is to “let them work!” While she includes in her list of professional possibilities watchmaking, medicine, teaching, accounting, not surprisingly, there is no mention of a stage life. The association of actresses and ballet dancers with prostitution became more tenuous during the 1850s, not only because of the tightening of the angel/whore dichotomy, but also because feminists relied on the moral superiority of women to buttress their argument that women would *serve* society by entering the workplace. Ballet dancers compromised the natural purity of women ideology that served both feminists and separate spheres advocates because of their ambivalent position in society: as celebrities and entertainers they were partially affiliated with the middle-class while simultaneously understood as central figures of the demi-monde.

<24>One result of the discursive flurry surrounding “the woman question”—is she a domestic angel or a potential moral force in the public sector?— was a backlash toward public women most visible in the popular media’s representation of the ballet girl. Rather than fascination with the ballet girl and speculations as to her future successes, the theme of narrative accounts in the 1840s, writers during the 1850s look negatively at her ambition, which, coupled with naivety and a reckless sensibility, spiral her down into the mire of the demi-monde where she gets stuck and usually dies. For example, an 1844 article published in *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* emphasizes the hard work required of the dancer to discipline her body into the correct form:

The primary object is to bring, by sheer exercise, the joints of the limbs and feet to a state of extreme agility, as well as strength: even in the education of the two great toes, so as to make them capable of standing and pirouetting upon these extremities, as vast amount of labour and care is expended. (31)

But while the “vast amount of labour and care” involved for a young dancer to build the strength and stamina necessary to move gracefully is emphasized at the beginning of the article, the writer concludes with the payoff: “A danseuse who reaches the first rank in her profession—a Taglioni, for example—will clear hundreds of pounds by a single exhibition, and gain more money, perhaps, in a season, than men of science will obtain for a lifetime spent in the most valuable services to mankind.”

<25>We see a marked change toward the ballet girl in an 1859 article published in the *London Society* entitled “The Ballet-Girls of Paris”: the professional opportunities offered by the ballet are exchanged for salacious details of its corruptive power. The writer invokes a French friend from whom he has received insider information about the ballet-girls, their mode of life, character and training. He contests the notion that ballet girls are “types” and claims that they are “as various as all the rest of labouring and ambitious mankind...[V]irtue and good motives are not wanting, though they are vastly overweighed by their opposites” (25). He proceeds to tell a story about the sixteen-year-old Mdlle Rose R, whose poor music-master father dies, followed by her brother, leaving her alone in the world. A friend of the family, who was also her childhood dance instructor, takes her in and she rises to the top of her profession, but falls “as most of them do” (26). Fulfilling the fantasies of his readers, the writer describes the lavish lifestyle of a celebrity dancer—the “sumptuous carriage and span of horses”, the “dashing young men of family” assembled at Rose’s midnight soirees, the card-playing, recitations of poetry, readings from plays, and “free conversation” (27). True to the conventions of what becomes a common plot line, Rose becomes slothful and careless in her profession and has to run away from her debts in Paris to settle instead in Italy. She takes a lover—“for they all have lovers”—and “their generous salaries melt as fast as they come” (27).

<26>While the story of the ballet girl’s fall is familiar to us today—more familiar indeed than the ballet as a respectable profession-- it wasn’t until the 1850s that it saw wide circulation. Interestingly, the writer of this *London Society* account invokes Marie Taglioni by adding signs readers would have associated with her lifestyle that had been published during the thirties and forties: her carriage and span of horses, the Lake Como home where she entertained her supposed “rivals” in the 1840s that in this article is cast as the scene of “scandalous orgies.” He

writes that on their nights off, these dancers may be seen “in all the glory of satin and peach and rouge, in the stage boxes of other theatres, smiling graciously on their sister performers on the stage” (27), again reminiscent of the highly publicized account of Taglioni strategically placed in a box so that audiences would receive the double pleasure of Elssler’s performance and the reaction of her arch rival Taglioni. Toward the end of the article the writer warns his reader that “the average life among this class of women is, of course, short, and few of them long survive the zenith of their theatrical fame and fortune” (28). Those ballet girls who do not reach stardom can be found

in hospitals, in streets begging, or worse, in asylums, in goals, at the solemn little Morgue by the banks of the Seine—very rarely that we do not hear of them in places of misery, in the somber realms of wretchedness. Their lives are frail and brittle, and break often under their burdens. (28)

Rather than a track for daughters with the necessary attributes and where-with-all to succeed in a professional life, the ballet and its dancing figures have become a trope. The fantasy of success can not compete with the alterative scenario of broken, brittle ballet girls locked away or perhaps even worse, begging in the streets of London. The best thing to do, which Victorians did, is to bury this chapter in its history along with the sexual stigma and shame attached to it.

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<27>Ivor Guest is one of the first historians to write about the dancers and the dance during the golden age of the romantic ballet, which has been invaluable to dance studies. Nonetheless, Guest’s revival of this moment in dance history has influenced the way it is remembered as anecdotal to the history of the English ballet rather than an important aesthetic link. He despairs that Jules Perrot’s work during his tenure as creative director of Her Majesty’s did not “found a great tradition, as it might have done, but has passed into legend as manifestations of a Golden Age.” In his conclusion to *The Romantic Ballet in England* (1954), he writes that when the sylph vanished from the stages of Her Majesty’s “the tradition thus was lost and the vital chain snapped” so that it was to the Russian Ballet and Marius Petipa that Britain turned when forming a National Ballet and not to its own history. The ballet in London, according to Guest, did not die out but migrated from the grand theatre to the music hall, contributing to the need to erase this era from the lineage of dance history. The romantic ballet years are legend rather than history—the sylphs have vanished and what was once golden is now tarnished. Rather than adding an important link to the chain of history, the romantic ballet lies suspended in time, “the vital chain snapped” when Perrot departs for Russia. As if tarnishing, disappearing, snapping isn’t enough to push the anecdotal point, Guest compares the decline of the romantic ballet to a meteoric fall—the ballet, as this metaphor suggests, was an astral flash of light that vanished after a moment, leaving no trace of its existence.

<28>Obviously, the romantic ballet did not disappear, nor is it dangling, severed from the tradition of the English ballet. As Guest himself admits, Jules Perrot worked in Russia during the 1850s and no doubt influenced the Imperial Russian Ballet, which in turn influenced the Ballets Russes. And Marie Taglioni did not vanish or go out like a flash of light—her foot and

arm technique, among other things, had a tremendous influence on ballet technique and continues to be taught in dance classes today, particularly for new productions of the romantic ballets. While she tried to retire several times, Taglioni was continuously drawn back into the professional world—in her fifties she returned to the Paris Opera to help advance Emma Livry's career—and she operated a dance school in London while she was in her seventies. Biographers often include this data of Taglioni “having to work” as tragic, with one contemporary claiming that it was “a sad sight to see her, white haired....teaching society dances and deportment to the stuck-up daughters of the gentry.” However, other accounts suggest that Taglioni chose to work rather than being forced into it and that her pupils adored her and invited her to luncheons, dinner parties, fetes, and gave her presents—she was that ballet dame character that we see in documentaries and films such as *The Turning Point* whose age merely adds to her preeminence and authority. Considering that one of her pupils was the future Queen Mary, it is safe to assume that as a woman in her 70s, Taglioni was still molding femininity into an ideal, even royal form. (46)

<29>In an interesting account of Taglioni's life spent in semi-retirement, written by Gabrielle Anne-Cisterne de Courtiras in 1859 under the pseudonym of Jacques Reynaud, we see the author attempting to preserve Taglioni's reputation by domesticating her:

Marie Taglioni is a woman of even temper, unruffled, whatever the circumstances, full of kindness, gentle and calm, giving way to no tantrums or fits of “temperament.” Intrigue is unknown to her. She speaks no ill of anyone, is just and impartial, even to those who have sought to be her rivals....She lives just like an ordinary person....Her house is like that of an ordinary person, and anything less like the abode of an artiste than her quiet home, where everything is done at a certain time and in the same way, would be hard to find.(47)

Rather than looking back to Taglioni's glory days of fame, de Courtiras focuses on Taglioni's present life, which is quiet and hardly deserving of attention. Taglioni lacks a sparkling intelligence, her conversation is unremarkable, her nature tender; she is not extravagant, she wears simple clothes—maybe even makes them!—her home is neat and she adores children. In this reiteration of a newer, more insipid form of femininity, we see the preter-pluperfect erased from the memory of Taglioni, who is now merely stamped ordinary. This assignment of “ordinary” to a woman whose extraordinary powers modeled a femininity that included strength, genius, innovation, and independence suggests just how threatening the ballet profession was for a society increasingly vexed over the proper position of women in social/domestic space. It might be thought that de Courtiras is doing just what a loyal female fan should do: preserving her favored ballerina's respectability so that she doesn't vanish, but continues to pass her technique on to the next generation of dancers. In conclusion, this recovery of a female community with ballet at its center reinforces Elizabeth Abel's argument that female collectives provide “a vehicle of self-definition for women [both professionals and fans], clarifying identity through relation to an other who embodies and reflects an essential aspect of self” (Abel 416). Rather than embracing the fragmenting tactics of marketers and existing as a complementary part of a male constructed idea, Taglioni—creator, choreographer, ballerina, and friend—unified women through the shared experience of a professional stage life.

## Endnotes

(1) Obviously ballet was tremendously popular throughout Europe, in particular, Russia and Italy as well as the Scandinavian countries. However, Paris had served as the choreographic center of professional ballet since the days of Louis XIV, with London supplanting Paris during the 1840s due to its importation of tremendous foreign talent, Jules Perrot for one, to work exclusively for its large opera houses. Perrot made his dance debut in London rather than Paris, as did ballerina notables Carlotta Grisi, Fanny Cerrito, Fanny Elssler. Ivor Guest writes that Perrot's six years as creative director of Her Majesty's Theatre produced a flood of great works, raising "the ballet in England to a position of eminence where it stood unrivalled even by the ballet at the Paris Opera" (Romantic 88). Nonetheless, it was the collaboration—competitive, yet friendly—between Paris and London theatres that inspired the balletomania of the 1830s and 40s.(^)

(2) Théophile Gautier, *La Presse*, 24 September 1838 (quoted in Ivor Guest's *Gautier on Dance* 55). According to Lorna Hill, this was quite the sensation and as a result the ballet, beginning at 7pm, didn't end until "the early hours of the morning" (Hill 95). When the sylphs did not lower after their aerial flight as planned and remained dangling by their invisible wires, the audience laughed not realizing the danger. They became anxious, however, when the sylphs began to show signs of distress. Apparently Taglioni, breaking the fourth wall and talking to her fans, added to the excitement, hence she was showered with flowers.(^)

(3) According to Lorna Hill, one cause of the mishap were the newly introduced "stage effects" which had not been tried out properly. See Hill (81).(^)

(4) Marie Rambert includes this anecdote in her introductory remarks for a gallery book of lithographs from the Romantic ballet. She refers to Grisi's famous leap in her ballet *La Peri* as a "feat of breath-taking daring." This feat was recorded in popular memory via illustrations circulating in visual culture. See Rambert's foreword in Ivor Guest's *A Gallery of Romantic Ballet* (20–21).(^)

(5) Fires were a big problem because the stages were then lit by gas lanterns placed on the floor—one touch of the highly flammable costume material to the lantern would immediately ignite the costume. The English principal dancer Clara Webster died during performance when her costume caught on fire and Emma Livry died of burn complications a decade later. For a thorough study of Webster's life and career as an English principal dancer see Ivor Guest's *Victorian Ballet Girl: The Tragic Story of Clara Webster*.(^)

(6) Théophile Gautier writes in *La Presse*, 13 October 1836 that Taglioni "is not just a dancer, but the dance itself," a conflation of dancer and dance promulgated in subsequent dance reviews (quoted in Guest's *Gautier on Dance* 2).(^)

(7) Jules Janin, "La Tentation," *Le Journal des Debats*, 27 June 1832 (quoted in Chapman's article, "Jules Janin: Romantic Critic" 199).<sup>(^)</sup>

(8) *Morning Herald*, 4 June 1830.<sup>(^)</sup>

(9) *Athenaeum*, 28 July 1832. A critic for the *Times* proclaims that dancing had become "an art worthy to rank with poetry and painting," 27 July 1832. Both of these reviews are included in Ivor Guest's *Romantic Ballet in England* (57).<sup>(^)</sup>

(10) In 1837 Taglioni accepted a five-year exclusive contract with Russia, which made her all the more popular with France and England—the young Queen Victorian tried to compete with St. Petersburg but as Andre Levinson puts it, "the prestige of the ruble... asserts its power." At the end of her last performance she was recalled 30 times; after the performance the crowd followed Taglioni to her home where she was obliged to come out on the balcony and throw flowers to her fans to keep as mementos. See Levinson's *Marie Taglioni* (78 – 85).<sup>(^)</sup>

(11) *La Press*, 3 June 1844 (quoted in Guest's *Gautier on Dance* 133).<sup>(^)</sup>

(12) Susan Leigh Foster includes this account of Taglioni's last performance in St. Petersburg in 1842 in a footnote of *Corporealities* and writes that Margot Fonteyne included the same in her video series "The Magic of Dance." Whether we look at it as urban legend or history, Taglioni's fans were clearly tantalized by her feet! See Foster's "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe" (1 – 24).<sup>(^)</sup>

(13) Jules Janin, "Return of Mlle Taglioni," *Le Journal des Debats*, 22 Aug. 1836.<sup>(^)</sup>

(14) *Ibid.*<sup>(^)</sup>

(15) Anne Mellor argues that for years romanticism in academic circles was aligned with the six male poets, who appropriated "whatever of the feminine they deemed valuable." The poet, or in this case, the critic, claims to cherish his beloved, but the love he feels is but self-love. The poet "ignores [his love's] human otherness in order to impose his own metaphors, his own identity, upon her, to render her but a clone (or soul mate) of himself." Janin aligns with Mellor's definition of masculine romanticism. See *Gender and Romanticism* (27).<sup>(^)</sup>

(16) "La Tentation," p. 3, 1832 (quoted in Chapman 204).<sup>(^)</sup>

(17) *The Times*, 4 March 1840. The full article that this excerpt for the *Times* was taken from appeared in *Le Journal des Debats*, 2 Mar. 1840 and was entitled "Theatre de la Renaissance. Zingaro."<sup>(^)</sup>

(18) *Le Menestrat*, 2 February 1834 (quoted in Hill 89).<sup>(^)</sup>

(19) *La Messager* 4 May 1838 (quoted in Guest's *Gautier on Dance* 32).<sup>(^)</sup>

(20)See image 21B in Edwin Binney's *Glories of the Romantic Ballet*. London: Dance Books LTD, 1985.(^)

(21)Veron, *Memoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*. See Hill (63).(^)

(22)Carolyn Steedman's *Strange Dislocations* (135).(^)

(23)Judith Hatcher writes that parents apprenticed their children to "training schools," which were under contract to theatres to supply children for pantomimes and dancers for ballets. Once a child was too old for pantomimes, more specialized ballet training was necessary, which was difficult to obtain in London without a patron or interest by one of the principal dancers who would instruct them on the side. See Hatcher's "Trials, Troubles and Temptations" (84 – 88).(^)

(24)Dutton Cook claims that members of the English corps de ballet who excelled began their instruction as children and did little more than add to the pantomime spectacle as fairies, elves, gnomes. If they had potential, they were articed to a ballet-master for seven years, for which he received a premium and a percentage upon any future earnings of his apprentice. Workmen attached to the theatre got their daughters early on "to earn something towards their own support." See Cook (699 – 707).(^)

(25)See Guest's short section on the ballet school in London in *The Romantic Ballet in England* (85 – 86). Guest writes that few English dancers "emerged from the anonymity of the corps de ballet," and when they did, it was only momentarily as when they appeared out of season at one of the lesser theatres.(^)

(26)Dickens no doubt is parodying the financial woes of Her Majesty's during the 1850s considering that Pierre Laporte, the manager preceding Benjamin Lumley, served time in Fleet Prison for bankruptcy. See Guest's *Romantic Ballet in England* (83).(^)

(27)Theophile Gautier always preferred Fanny Elssler to Marie Taglioni. In his 1838 review of Elssler's only performance as *La Sylphide* he writes that Elssler "is a man's dancer, just as Mlle Taglioni was a woman's dancer," a comparative that other reviewers pick up on and use throughout the 30s and 40s (quoted in Guest's *Gautier on Dance* 53).(^)

(28)Jules Janin. "Return of Mlle Taglioni," *Le Journal des Debats* 22 Aug. 22 1836.(^)

(29)Such a breach in etiquette was accompanied by "young men, who had not attained officer's rank, dar[ing] to shout and stamp." See Levinson (75).(^)

(30)Alexandra Carter discusses the ways in which principal dancers working for the large music halls in London later in the century were literally cordoned off by management from the lower-ranking corps and coryphée dancers to maintain the rigid hierarchy of the rank system. One principal dancer, La Belle Leonora, insisted that a "corridor of curtains from her dressing room to the stage [be installed] and that all stage hands [who happened to cross her path] should

immediately turn their backs.” See Carter’s *Dance and Dancers in the Victorian and Edwardian Music Hall Ballet* (120).(^)

(31)Theophile Gautier mentions this in his review of *La Sylphide*’s revival in *La Presse*, 24 September 1838 and he obviously recognizes Taglioni’s disregard for dance hierarchy: “The next day the two *minor* sylphides received a gift from the *real* Sylphide” [my italics] (quoted in Guest’s *Theophile on Dance* 55).(^)

(32)Most of Taglioni’s letters were written in French; this one, along with two others, was translated by Lillian Moore. See her “The Sylphide and Her Letters” (30 – 32).(^)

(33)For a closer study of the interaction between the ballerinas and London Society see Molly Engelhardt’s chapter “Sylphs in the Parlor” in *Dancing out of Line: Ballrooms, Ballets and Mobility in Victorian Fiction and Culture* (81 – 112). Queen Victoria’s cousin married a ballet dancer and notable ballerinas were often invited to galas to perform or to just add flair to the event.(^)

(34)W. M Thackeray, *Roundabout Papers* (quoted in Guest’s *Romantic Ballet In England* 71). Duvernay had no children and was liberal in dispersing her large fortune to charities: she paid for the building of the Catholic Church of our Lady and the English Martyrs at Cambridge; she donated 20K pounds to Middlesex Hospital and in her will left 24K pounds to other charities. See Guest’s chapter on Duvernay (70 – 74).(^)

(35)*London Times*, 16 June 1830, p. 2 and June 18, 1830, p. 5.(^)

(36)For more about Taglioni’s years in Russia and the emperor’s devotion toward her see Hill (97 – 99) and Levinson’s chapter “Taglioni in Russia” (71 – 77).(^)

(37)Marcus writes that in order “to see that sexual relationships between women have been part of the history of the family and marriage since at least the nineteenth century, we need to abandon continuum and minority theories that define kinship as exclusively heterosexual and frame female couples in terms of their rejection of marriage or their failed appropriation of it (12). While she speaks here of “female marriage,” her book is expansive and includes friendships between women as well as women’s erotic fantasies about women.(^)

(38)Fanny Kemble remembers meeting Grote for the first time in 1841 and her wearing a “forest of white feathers” in a white satin hat and standing “with her feet wide apart and her arms akimbo.... and challenging me upon some political question” (Wilson 256). When Sydney Smith first met Mrs. Grote he exclaimed to Kemble, “Now I know the meaning of the word “grotesque,” a common euphemism for lesbian.(^)

(39)For more information about Harriet Grote see Wilson’s *Jane Austen and Some Contemporaries*, 264 and Ivor Guest’s “Fanny Elssler and Her Friends” (38 – 43).(^)

(40)According to Levinson, the euphemism, “knee trouble” was a “classic phrase in the parlance of the green room” (95). At the height of her career, Taglioni married Albert, Comte Gilbert de Voisins and had two children with him but kept both of her pregnancies secret. Although she separated from her husband after only two years of marriage, Taglioni kept his name, and continued to pay him a pension and pay his gambling debts until he died, which might be one explanation for her poverty in old age.(^)

(41)In his memoirs, Lumley describes Perrot pulling his hair and in near hysterics on the morning of the event because the dancers refused to participate if not given the place of highest rank in the procession, last in such cases. Lumley calms Perrot and designs what he calls a “ruse” in which Taglioni would appear last—she was obviously the oldest-- and the others would follow dependent on their age. The ballerinas “tittered, laughed, drew back and all was resolved, because none wanted to admit to their age. See Lumley (116 – 117).(^)

(42)Elssler, Letter II. Paris, December 1839. Elssler is writing to her German friend Mina. British Library.(^)

(43)*The Times*, 13 Feb. 1846.(^)

(44)Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall compare the lives of Ann Taylor and Anne Knight with their daughters and granddaughters who, in the 1850s and 60s, “found a world more rigidly divided into separate spheres for men and women. The tensions were deeper, the opportunities less.” See *Family Fortunes* (453).(^)

(45)A sampling of some of the texts in circulation during the 1850s that helped to reify the “woman as keeper of the hearth” theme are Sara Stickney Ellis’s ninth edition of *Women of England* (1849), Frederick Chalmer’s *Seven Sermons on Domestic Duties* (1849), Rev. F. B. Ashley’s *The Domestic Circle* (1851), H. G. Clark’s *The English Maiden: Her Moral and Domestic Duties* (1849), Rev. Thomas Garniers’s *Domestic Duties: A Series of Sermons Preached in Trinity church*. In addition to conduct books and sermons, of which there were many, etiquette books circulated widely during the 1850s authorizing women as protectorates of domestic space and social ritual.(^)

(46)See Carol Lee (151). Taglioni was also Princess Victoria’s ballet teacher during the early 1830s.(^)

(47)Lorna Hill includes a long passage—three pages worth—from *Portraits Contemporains* in his conclusion titled “eclipse.” However, my research shows that the Jacques Reynaud attributed to the text by Hill was actually de Courtira’s pen name. For the quote I borrow see Hill (117 – 119).(^)

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