

# Fans, Fawns and Fauns: Ballet Stardom, Dancing Genius and the Queer Afterlife of Vaslav Nijinsky

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In this paper I address the relationship perceived to exist between the leading male dancer of the Ballets Russes, Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950), and the undesirable qualities of stardom. I discuss some of these qualities and why they were considered undesirable, and then say a few words about how all this relates to Nijinsky's 'afterlife' as a gay icon. My argument is that Nijinsky's stardom has been problematic for the 'legitimate' hegemonic interpretation of dance history, and that the qualities seen as problematic relate to his stardom, celebrated by his fans in the 'illegitimate' discourse.

Upon the arrival of the Imperial Russian Ballet to Paris in 1909, Nijinsky was immediately spoken of as a special phenomenon. Although he only had one leading role in the ballets of the season, Nijinsky was the only male dancer of whom biographical stories appeared in theatrical papers (e.g. in *Comoedia* 11.5.1909), and these before he had danced a single step in front of the audiences. Although he was already spoken of as a prodigy in Russia (e.g. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 16./29.4.1906), Nijinsky's 1909 success was primarily due to the extensive publicity lavished on him by his lover, the impresario of the company, Sergei Diaghilev. Nijinsky and Diaghilev lived together for about five years, until September 1913, when the dancer suddenly got married to a Hungarian dilettante, Romola de Pulzsky, and was promptly fired from the Ballets Russes. Less than six years later, Nijinsky was diagnosed as mentally ill and institutionalised for the rest of his life. This, of course, affects how he has been represented ever since.

Nijinsky was, from the first, the self-evident star of Diaghilev's private ballet company, the Ballets Russes, founded late in 1910. To this effect, Nijinsky got himself spectacularly dismissed from the Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg "for insubordination and disrespect towards the Imperial Stage" (Krasovskaya 1971, i:403, my translation). The scandal was reported all over Europe (e.g. *Comoedia* and *Le Figaro* 14.2.1911; NYPLDC Nijinsky Clippings unidentified English article of "March 25, 1911" quotes from *Berliner Tageblatt*; Wiley 1979/1980). Already in 1910, Nijinsky had received more prominent roles than in 1909, but 1911 was the year that really made his name. His image in the title role of *Le Spectre de la Rose*, drawn by the young Jean Cocteau, graced one of the posters of the season, his partner in this ballet, Tamara Karsavina, figuring in the other (see the images in Stanciu-Reiss & Pourvoyeur 1992, 261 and Kodicek 1996, 64). Having a man dance in a costume of pink rose petals might not correspond to our ideas of male stardom, but the audiences of 1911 absolutely adored it – to the extent that Nijinsky himself used it as an example of works that made him "feel sea-sick" (interview in *The Daily Mail* 14.7.1913).

Nijinsky's stardom was possible because the audiences of the Ballets Russes were hardly the typical ballet audiences of the day. The Ballets Russes offered a rare opportunity for women to drool after a young man appearing in very skimpy costumes: Valentine Gross drew Nijinsky in *Narcisse* (1911) as showing pubic hair, which in reality would have been covered by the dancer's jockstrap, even if footlights had shone through his tunic (see image in Macdonald 1975, 71). And of course, although male desire for the male body was not spoken of in public, some of the men in the audience would have been excited to see this body thus revealed.

Whereas in his roles of 1909 and 1910, Nijinsky had often played slaves of powerful women – and always most willing slaves, as in *Schéhérazade* (1910) – in both *Narcisse* and *Spectre*, the roles of the principal women (Echo and

the girl dreaming of the rose-spirit) were the subordinate ones, leaving Nijinsky the room (quite literally) to show off his masculine strength in elaborate step sequences and huge leaps across the stage. Indeed, in a famous drawing by Cocteau of Nijinsky in the wings after his performance of this ten-minute ballet, the dancer is groomed by his valet like a boxer between the rounds, whilst Diaghilev, Misa Natanson and Léon Bakst, the designer of the work, fret over the scene as if the situation were life-threatening. (See e.g. Kahane 2000, 32 for the image.)

However, later, another one of Nijinsky's 1911 roles, that of the heart-broken puppet Petrouchka in the ballet of the same name, has become identified with Nijinsky for reasons that have little to do with Nijinsky's dancing, and everything to do with his celebrity. It was used as his life story in the so-called 'intimate' biography of Nijinsky published in the name of his wife, Romola Nijinsky, in 1933, when the dancer had been insane for fourteen years. Romola (aided by two aspiring authorities of dance, Arnold Haskell and Lincoln Kirstein) twisted the plot of the ballet into herself saving the captive genius Nijinsky from the clutches of the evil magician Diaghilev – saving the genius, that is, from the dangers of homosexuality.<sup>1</sup>

In the press of 1911, however, Petrouchka was identified with Nijinsky's genius as an actor who would risk his fame as a beautiful male idol to portray an ugly doll. *Petrouchka* thus revealed Nijinsky's sincere commitment to art over and above the fleeting fame to be achieved with virtuosic display in the manner of the Spectre. Quoting *Le Figaro* (20.5.1912), *Les Annales du théâtre* 1913, 332 wrote that in this role, "Nijinsky égale en intensité dramatique les plus grands acteurs tragiques." The English critics agreed (see e.g. *Pall Mall Gazette* 10.2.1913).

At a time when ballet was trying to assert its status as a serious 'high' art form, the popularity of Nijinsky was undesirable because popularity was associated with femininity, sexual desire, and 'lower forms' of theatre and entertainment – the world of the music hall, of the cinema, and, as in **image 1** (*L'Excelsior* 17.5.1912), the circus – rather than that of high art like concert music or opera. Indeed, cartoons of Nijinsky prove his celebrity, since a cartoon requires that even people who had not seen him dance would recognise who he was. Although ballet researchers have generally not bothered with 'lowbrow' sources, it could be argued that Nijinsky's presence in papers like *Je Sais Tout* (November 1912), *The Illustrated London News* (e.g. 24.5.1913), or *The [New York] World* (e.g. 17.5.1913) is what really made him famous and guaranteed his fame would last.

However, Nijinsky's celebrity was also a problem for the emerging expert discourse of dance, because genius – which is what the serious dance critics wanted Nijinsky to be – could not be recognised by just about everybody. Consequently, the experts proclaimed their expertise by rhetorically setting apart Nijinsky's apparent stardom from his true genius:

Car le danseur Nijinski est son [i.e. le snob] idole; il transporte sur lui le culte qu'en d'autre temps il eût voué à la première danseuse de l'Opéra [- mais -] il n'a pas encore compris que le jeune danseur valait par sa grâce virile, sans équivoque, sans fadeur, qu'il apportait dans le ballet un élément nettement masculin. Il l'applaudit comme une femme; son applaudissement l'effémine, (H.[enri] G.[héon] in *La Nouvelle revue française*, August 1911.)

claimed Henri Ghéon in 1911. Through constructing a difference between the connoisseur who came to the ballet for its transcendental values from the snob or the philistine, Ghéon



attested that the audience was responsible for any signs of effeminacy in the male dancer dancing a pink rose. In effect, anyone who would see anything wrong with or anything sexual in Nijinsky's dance is, according to Ghéon, either a philistine or a pervert without the ability to perceive true genius.

Moreover, most of the negative arguments regarding audience members behaving like fans are made about female behaviour (e.g. Alfred Capus in *Le Figaro* 10.6.1912; or Ina Garvey's "Blanche's Letters" series about a society lady adoring "M. Twirlinski" in *The Punch* 26.3.1913), although male members of the audience certainly behaved equally badly – and, I might add, regardless of their sexual orientation. For example, the painter Oscar Kokoschka (in a letter to Romola Nijinsky 30.11.1973 quoted in Nectoux 1990, 44) reminisced of accidentally dropping his napkin at a dinner party to be able to touch Nijinsky's thigh; whilst the music critic Michel Calvo-coressi (1978, 210) wrote of Nijinsky trying on bathing trunks in exquisite detail.

However, in order to construe this interest in Nijinsky's body as expertise, the body of the dancing genius had to be framed as free of the taint of sexual desire. Nijinsky's mental acuity and intellectual abilities were stressed, and his body raised above the base instincts that tarnished the gaze when one looked at the dancing woman:

Aucune femme n'approche de Nijinski.

Nijinski a toute l'intelligence de son instinct. [- -] il a de grâce dans la force [- -] Sa beauté est pure de toute séduction sexuelle. Je parle pour moi, qui suis homme. [- -] Dans la plus belle femme, on ne peut pourtant pas oublier la femme. Et plus on est sensible au charme féminin, plus le désir s'intrigue à l'admiration. Avec Nijinski, l'admiration est sans mélange. [- -] Peu de sentiments nous porteraient plus haut dans la découverte de la perfection morale. (André Suarès in *La Nouvelle revue française*, August 1912.)

In this perfect example of rhetorical exclusion of women from the sphere of art, Suarès elevates Nijinsky into an asexual and transcendental ideal and rescues the male spectator from the stigma of homosexual desire by opposing sensitivity to feminine charms with asexual admiration of the intelligent and instinctive male genius.<sup>2</sup> Also many female authors conformed to this model to justify their interest in Nijinsky (e.g. Ellen Terry quoted in *Current Opinion* September 1913; Elizabeth Dryden in *The Trend* in NYPLDC Nijinsky Clippings).

These are just some examples of the ways in which Nijinsky's dancing, his being-on-display on stage, was fitted into the rhetoric of genius. Publicity shots of Nijinsky further emphasised this by representing Nijinsky in ways highly uncommon for male dancers. For example, there are several images of Nijinsky where he is represented kneeling or lying on the ground, that is: in poses that do not suggest active movement (see Kahane 2000, 29 (in *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*), 27 and 123 (in *Schéhérazade*), and 143 (in *Les Orientales*).) Moreover, in some of these (such as in images of Nijinsky as Albrecht in *Giselle* (1841, in the 1910 Ballets Russes version), Nijinsky is also posed as a genius dreaming of transcendental reality – his eyes are not directed at Tamara Karsavina's *Giselle* but past her, upwards, into some other sphere of truth. (See *op.cit.*, 129.)

However, there is a marked change in both rhetoric and iconography when the dancing genius began his career as a choreographer. Nijinsky's first work, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (1912) shocked his Western audiences because of what was seen as explicit portrayal of a perverse sexual act – masturbation. Since the contemporary Orientalist reading of the Ballets Russes still prevails in research literature, it should be noted that Russian critics thought Nijinsky's representation of sex on stage in *Faune* was far more appropriate than the reversal of gender roles in his dancing roles adored by the Western public. Nikolai Minsky, the acmeist poet whose work had heralded Russian symbolism in the 1890s, wrote to *Utro Rossii*, that:

Образъ, несомнѣнно, смѣлый, можетъ быть, отвѣчающіи понятію о древнемъ фавнѣ, но столь же, несомнѣнно, порнографическій, созданный исключительно сладострастнымъ воображеніемъ, въ сравненіи съ наивнымъ, правдивымъ образомъ Нижинскаго, въ которомъ узнаютъ себя 99 изъ ста юношей.<sup>3</sup>

Even if Russians, too, were shocked by Nijinsky's *Faun*, this shock was aesthetic, not moral – they did not see the last action of the *Faun* as perverse, i.e. abnormal or sick, behaviour. Indeed, the Russian discourse, which has been effectively excluded from Western research on the Ballets Russes, offers an interesting alternative interpretation on the Ballets Russes, particularly regarding the construction of this company into 'high art'.

The crucial issue for the Russian critics was what kind of Russia was actually being exported with the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev's strategy to posit his company as the artistic revolutionaries exiled by a conservative autocracy (NYPLDC Astruc Papers; *Comœdia* 14.2.1911; *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* 11.6.1911; Flitch 1912, esp. 129, also 123-130, 154) did not make him friends in his home country. Russians saw Diaghilev as a charlatan perverting the true art of the Imperial Theatres into stereotypical entertainment for Western audiences who



did not know anything about ballet as an art form. In **image 2**, a cartoon from *Peterburgskaya gazeta* (Christmas special, 25.12.1912/7.1.1913), Diaghilev is seen hatching ballerinas in an incubator fuelled by the gas flame of advertisements. Aside of inflating the reputation of ballerinas, the Russian critics accused Diaghilev of catering to his Western audiences a stereotypical idea of Russia and Russians as an Oriental people stuck in the Middle Ages (see e.g. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 17./30.5.1909; or *Utro Rossii* 1./14.8.1910).

Also the Western manner of speaking of Nijinsky as a genius was ridiculed in Russian papers (e.g. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 31.5./13.6.1909), although when the dancer was dismissed by the Imperial Theatres, critics immediately took his side and demanded he should be re-engaged (see e.g. *Rech* 29.1./11.2.1911; Wiley 1979/1980 for further discussion). Furthermore, Nijinsky's modernist choreographies, and the Western outrage that continued to accompany his works in 1913 – *Jeux* to the music of Debussy, and particularly *Le Sacre du Printemps* to the music of Stravinsky – simply proved to Russian critics that Russian art was now truly in advance of the West. Indeed, what is truly remarkable about these reviews is, that the Russians across the political spectrum praise precisely the qualities their Western colleagues abhorred in these works.<sup>4</sup>

This is to point out that Nijinsky's reputation as an embodiment of heady sensuality, his "afterlife" in the West, is an Orientalistic discourse. Following Richard Dyer's (1991, 17-27) discussion on 'male-identified' and 'male-in-betweenist' homosexual imagery, speculations as to who Nijinsky "really" was fall into two principal types, both of which conflate Nijinsky with one of his on-stage roles. On one hand, there is the androgynous rose-coloured spirit of *Spectre*, which, indeed, was the image the reputedly lesbian Romola Nijinsky emphasised (Nijinsky 1980, 112-115, 200, 218). On the other hand, there is the hypersexual Faun, whose body-stocking focused attention on the crotch, and who nevertheless did not get (or want) the girl.

In a way, the undesirable qualities of Nijinsky's stardom guaranteed he could only be desired by those themselves seen as undesirable by the dominant discourse – the ballet fans, regardless of their sexual orientation. As stated, since genius could not be recognised by all, Nijinsky's continuing popularity amongst the lay public of dance in the 1920s and 1930s practically forced dance experts to refute him. Nijinsky's fame was turned into proof that Nijinsky had not been a genius but merely a virtuoso, whose art decayed and died with the body of the dancer, despite what the lay public believed. Simultaneously, Nijinsky's choreographic work was stamped as artistic failures presaging his insanity, as attested by the quick disappearance of his four works from the dance repertory – that is, by exactly the opposite logic of argumentation. By the 1930s, it became a sign of connoisseurship not to like Nijinsky. The *Dance Encyclopaedia*, first published in 1949, went as far as to claim that there existed a 'Nijinsky conspiracy' keeping the fame of this dancer alive:

so few people, comparatively speaking, ever saw Nijinsky dance, that if his fame were based on his actual appearances before the public, he would now have been completely forgotten. [- -] Nijinsky's lasting fame is due mostly to the legend that has been created around him. This legend has been continually fed by the writings of people connected with (or disconnected from) the Diaghilev Ballets Russes, who considered it vital or profitable to delve into the most minute details of Nijinsky's dancing and, more often, Nijinsky's personal relations with Serge Diaghilev. Also, there is a group of people on the fringe of ballet which has made Nijinsky its demigod and continues to worship at his shrine. [- -] But his role in the history of ballet and his influence on the art of ballet are extremely modest. (Chujoy & Manchester 1967, 670.)

The illicit discourse thus focuses on making money on the scandalous relationship between Nijinsky and Diaghilev, of whom there is a long eulogy in the same book, focusing, of course, on his professional achievements. The



authors are obviously alluding to Romola Nijinsky's scandal-mongering and bestselling "intimate" biography of Nijinsky (Nijinsky 1980). For the self-proclaimed connoisseurs, this book was an abomination both because it appraised Nijinsky's role in the Ballet and because its melodramatic plot derived directly from popular culture – the book was written as a movie script and was actually made into film, *Nijinsky*, directed by Herbert Ross in 1980.

At a time when homosexuality was criminal or a form of insanity in most European countries, it was difficult to resolve the facts that on one hand, Diaghilev had, in effect, created an audience for dance and yet, on the other, that this audience included a large portion of men identifying themselves as homosexuals. In popular culture, male ballet dancers were often mocked as queers and sissies – still a prominent stereotype. Early biographies of Diaghilev pleaded forgiveness for his one vice because of the wonderful things he did, because in reality he was really very modestly homosexual, very monogamous, and could even have been completely normal if not for some unfortunate events in early adolescence – as Arnold Haskell (1955, 68-73 cf. 254) assured his readers in 1935.

*The Red Shoes* (1948), was widely assumed to be about Diaghilev and Nijinsky, even with Moira Shearer dancing the lead. In the wake of the various 'liberation movements' of the 1960s, Nijinsky and Diaghilev suddenly became another Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, pioneers fighting for gay rights. Today, almost any popular volume on the history of homosexuality includes Diaghilev and Nijinsky. Unfortunately, this discourse has tended to centre on speculation as to who was 'on top' in the relationship, with the preferences of the writer colouring the statements at the expense of historical facts, of which there are few (and which lack of evidence, of course, encourages speculation in a culture seeing sexuality as important in telling the 'truth' about an individual).<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, since there is little in terms of historical sources on the private life of Nijinsky, psychoanalytical accounts of the dancer still regularly turn his dancing roles into narratives of his life outside of the stage, reproducing stereotypical notions about what artists should be like and what the Russians so obviously were (e.g. Ostwald 1991, esp. 57-76). Simplistic accounts of Nijinsky's choreographies as evidence of his psychological growth out of infantile homosexuality and towards the right and proper heterosexual genius can be found in some of the most often quoted academic research today:

*Jeux*, the second instalment of Nijinsky's erotic autobiography, reveals, no less urgently than *Faune*, the power of desire, the ambiguity of sexual identity, and his aversion to intercourse itself. (Garafola 1992, 63, my emphasis)

Once again, Nijinsky's 'real self' is to be found in works of art the expert author has actually never seen.<sup>6</sup> As Linda Nochlin (1995, 149) has pointed out, this kind of psychological reduction of the work of art into the artist's secret (sexual) self rest on a misconception of art as a sob-story or confidential whisper rather than as a culturally and temporally specific but self-consistent social practice relying on institutionalised forms of training and professional practices of display, criticism, canonisation, etc.

But in the hegemonic discourse, there also exists an aesthetic reason for downplaying the desirability of Nijinsky and the desire of the gay spectator in particular. Nijinsky's choreographic work introduced a new aesthetic where signs of emotionality, corporeality and excess were excluded from the serious purity of dance as a modern art. Although Nijinsky himself was one of the first advocates of dance as a stylised means for illustrating contemporary life (see e.g. Nijinsky according to Hector Cahusac in *Le Figaro* 14.5.1913), in the inter-war years, this new aesthetic, together with the rise of formalism, contributed to how Nijinsky's image as a dancer began to seem dated, and the representations of his roles nothing but overindulgent kitsch. The Orientalist works so favoured by both modern dancers and ballet troupes well into the 1930s fell out of favour even with lay audiences a decade or so later. Although in the West, dancing did return to narrative forms in the wake of the shock of the war, soon, the hegemonic discourse identified abstract dance with the non-narrative, and sought to eliminate décor and fanciful costuming as well from the black box of stage space.

This meant that Nijinsky's over-sexual dancer-image could no longer be looked at with a straight face. As both Gaylyn Studlar, Michael Moon, and Paul B. Franklin have argued, the Orientalist spectacles of the Ballets Russes lived on in the popular culture of cinema and in the homosexual underground.<sup>7</sup> A famous example of the latter is Jean Genet's (1964, 60, 162) use of Nijinsky as a sex symbol in *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943). Although not all of Nijinsky's 'afterlife' was this explicitly queer, like performing in drag, performing Nijinsky identifies the performer with the queer subculture. Freddie Mercury shaved his moustache to impersonate Nijinsky as the Faun in the Queen video *I Want to Break Free* (1984, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hMrY8jysdg>, c. 2:07-3:07), famous for the sections where the members of the band do housework in drag. Instead of the Greek nymphs of Nijinsky's *Faune*, however, in the video, the supporting dancers of both sexes wear faunish body-stockings.

In the academic queering of Nijinsky, however, his life is edited to fit not the narrative of genius but that of queer imperfection and tragedy. In writing of Nijinsky, authors from Richard Buckle (1993, esp. 173-174) to Kevin Kopelson (1997, 48, 90, 144-145) have chosen to believe hearsay about hearsay to “confirm” that, for example, Nijinsky’s dance technique was never “pure”, that his dancing was, itself, awkwardly queer, and that he was never good at partnering women on stage or off. His marriage and his choreographic work, particularly his last ballet, *Till Eulenspiegel* (of 1916), are repeatedly represented as indicating his madness, his perverse desire to leave Diaghilev and get married to a woman, whom he would not be able to partner as he had partnered Diaghilev. In this way, Nijinsky’s insanity is in his heterosexuality, but his self is still identified with the roles he danced.

Thus, paradoxically, at a time when Nijinsky’s reputation as a choreographer of genius has been resurrected in the ‘straight’ hegemonic discourse, the queer academic discourse perpetuates the old backlash against Nijinsky’s popularity and against Nijinsky as a popular icon. Is this, I wonder, because defining human beings through their sexual behaviour is so very nineteenth-century that it automatically produces nostalgic fantasies? Or is it because the queer afterlife of Nijinsky is slightly too popular and too camp to support the status of aspiring academic experts? Perhaps we ought to take the faun by the horns and demolish the artificial cultural division into ‘high’ and ‘low’, ‘art’ and ‘entertainment’, construed through notions like ‘genius’. By discussing the similarities of the reception of different kinds of stars we might actually explain something of their allure and of ourselves as their audiences.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Nijinsky’s and Diaghilev’s relationship was not stated out loud in contemporary sources, since (male) homosexuality was criminal in most European countries, including Russia. However, the Russian law was never enforced very strictly, thanks to cultural reasons having to do with the rule of aristocracy and the association of ‘sexuality’ (i.e. the idea that sexual acts fundamentally constituted the identity of an individual) with Western political liberalism and cultural decadence. See Healey 2001; Engelstein 1992, *passim*. esp. 56-95, 99, 132, 223-229; also Spector 1969, 205-206; and Karlinsky 1989, 347-351.
- <sup>2</sup> E.g. Laloy in *La Grande revue* 10.6.1909: “il est virginal. Ici c’est une beauté sans attirance; c’est la beauté de l’homme, dont les femmes ne sont, pour l’ordinaire, ni capables, ni ambitieuses. L’art s’accorde avec la morale pour l’estimer la plus élevée.” Similarly, Henri Ghéon wrote of Isadora Duncan in *La Nouvelle revue française*, March 1911 as a natural spectacle that did not merit being called art.
- <sup>3</sup> “No doubt the image is daring, perhaps answering [our] understanding of the fauns of Antiquity, but no doubt it is pornographic only to the lustful imagination, in contrast to Nijinsky’s naive, honest depiction of something that 99 out of a hundred young men has got himself acquainted with.” Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 24.5./6.6.1912. Similarly, Anatoly Lunacharsky in *Teatr i iskusstvo* 15.6./28.6.1912.
- <sup>4</sup> E.g. Lunacharsky *Teatr i iskusstvo* 9./22.6.1913; Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913; Volkonsky in *Apollon* 6/1913; Levinson in *Rech* 3./16.6.1913; Karatygin in *Rech* 16.2./1.3.1914.
- <sup>5</sup> See e.g. Miller 1995, 208-213; Karlinsky 1989. The Wilde-Douglas analogy is common, found e.g. in Kopelson 1997, 4-5, and has led people to think of Diaghilev as the creative genius and Nijinsky as his tormentor (itself a stereotype unjust to both Wilde and Douglas). For more lurid speculation about the sex-lives of Nijinsky and Diaghilev, see e.g. Batson 1997, 187-188; Kopelson 1997, *passim*., e.g. 9,17.
- <sup>6</sup> The discussion on the aesthetics of the Ballets Russes, particularly the section on Nijinsky’s modernism (Garafola 1992, 50-75) is definitely the weak point in Garafola’s book. Similarly, Hanna 1988, 184-185 conflates Nijinsky with the Western interpretation of his choreographies; both are probably following Kirstein 1971, 199 in claiming Nijinsky’s choreographies his erotic autobiography. As noted, the Russians interpreted these works very differently, and Nijinsky himself seems to have been somewhat baffled by the Western reviews as well: see his interviews in *L’Intransigeant* 13.6.1912; *Je Sais Tout*, November 1912; and *Pall Mall Gazette* 15.2.1913. He even returned to the matter in his so-called *Diary*, written in 1919 (Nijinsky 1999, 203, also 204, 207). Although authorial intention is always a little suspect, Nijinsky’s persistence indicates he thought it important to correct the public’s misconception of his work.
- <sup>7</sup> Studlar 1995 sees Nijinsky’s ghost in Douglas Fairbanks’s role for *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924); Moon 1995 in Jack Smith’s film *Flaming Creatures* (1963); and Franklin 2001 discusses how Charlie Chaplin may have imitated Nijinsky.

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