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Review Of "La Querelle Des Pantomimes: Danse, Culture, Et Société Dans L'Europe Des Lumières" By A. Fabbricatore

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American except for sexual preference. Farfan does acknowledge the role of gender transgression in conceptions and performances of queer, but by foregrounding homosexuality, she recapitulates a key shortfall in later twentieth-century queer theory of eclipsing transgender subjectivity, while using nonnormative gender expression as an enabling notion.

The problem with Farfan's conception of queer arises to a certain extent from her analytical method of reading historical commentary and other primary source material through contemporary theory. Late twentieth-century conceptions of queerness inherit the midcentury separation of gender and sexuality that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century nonnormative identities predate. The pitfall of centralizing "sexual preference" to the exclusion of other axes in the conception of queer extends to Farfan's treatment of racial and cultural difference, something she also begins to repair in her discussion of Nijinsky. Talking about the reliance of *Afternoon of a Faun* upon Orientalism, Farfan tempts the reader into thinking she will address how these ideas underpinned late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century notions of queerness. Furthermore, discussing how Russia, where Nijinsky's ballet came from, was represented as quasi-Oriental and how Nijinsky's features and sexuality caused commentators to view him as an example of Oriental debauchery, Farfan connects the emergence of alternate sexual identities to colonial ideology and complicates prevailing understandings of Orientalism. Yet, she neglects to make the same connections in her discussion of the Decadent movement, and thus, cultural or ethnic differences seem only to arise with Nijinsky's dance. This was simply not the case, which Farfan could have easily established by contextualizing Wilde's play and Fuller's dance in relation to "Salomania," a late nineteenth-century European and American fascination with Salomé that was rife with Orientalism.

Had the book addressed the centrality of colonial ideology to the whole notion of debauchery, queerness, and cultural change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Farfan could be forgiven for choosing all white (and all but one Anglophone) examples for her argument. With substantial critical discussion of Orientalism's role, for example, Farfan could have deconstructed the whiteness of the queer modernist performance that she holds up, but

as it is, she appears to believe that the interface of cultures and races precipitated by colonialism had scant influence upon, or role within, queer and modernist performance. In this sense Farfan reconstructs a canon that she might otherwise be attempting to critique.

Notwithstanding the problems in the limits of Farfan's subjects of analysis as well as in her methodology, by drawing connections between a handful of queer modernist performances and contemporary queer theory, the author imagines an important historical space. Artists from the late nineteenth century onward are envisaged as critiquing or "queering" dominant cultural values and practices. Furthermore, Farfan chronicles social circles and cultural movements dedicated to such critique, establishing that while the works often occupied contentious positions in dominant culture, the ideas staged were integral to a broader development of modernist conceptions of gender and sexuality, both marginal and central.

Doran George*

*Sadly, we note Doran George's untimely passing prior to the publication of this review. A vibrant dance, performance, and LGBTQ scholar, George earned their Ph.D. from UCLA with a dissertation entitled, *A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training*. George's publications appeared in *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (Oxford, 2017) and *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (2014). Known for their intellectual rigor, invested physical practice, and generous spirit, George will be missed.

—Ariel Osterweis
Book Reviews Editor

La Querelle des Pantomimes: Danse, culture, et société dans l'Europe des Lumières

by Arianna Fabbriatore. 2017. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes. 471 pp., b/w illustrations, index, appendices. €24.00. ISBN: 978-2-7535-5206-7. doi:10.1017/S0149767718000086

Arianna Fabbriatore's project in *The Quarrel of the Pantomimes: Dance, Culture, and Society in*

Enlightenment Europe (*La Querelle des Pantomimes: Danse, culture, et société dans l'Europe des Lumières*) is an ambitious one: to examine and contextualize the aesthetic and semiotic issues brought up by the famous quarrel between Jean-Georges Noverre and Gasparo Angiolini. As they competed for recognition in the tightly linked theatrical cities of Vienna and Milan, the two ballet masters engaged in a heated polemical argument around the new pantomime ballet's poetics and the identification of the form's true creator. In conversation with literary studies, cultural history, and musicology, Fabbriatore's book derives its strength from the fact that it approaches the quarrel—tied up, among other issues, in questions of national cultural supremacy—not with the goal of determining the true creator of the genre but rather by examining how the stakes on both sides of the debate reflected similar issues, most especially each ballet master's attempt to legitimize their common art form in ways recognized by their nations' respective institutions of taste.

Fabbriatore begins by situating eighteenth-century ballet-pantomime within a cultural milieu dominated by interest in antiquity on the one hand and mimesis on the other. Using Greek and Roman models, she explains, ballet masters sought to reform dance by grounding it in the pantomime of the ancients. While antiquity provided legitimacy in the form of models, mimesis did the same through its links to the arts of poetry and painting. Here, the author argues that Noverre modeled his pantomime ballet on painting, whereas Angiolini modeled his on poetry. Noverre, she continues, used the analogy of dance to painting in order to link dance to poetry via painting, through what she terms an “*ut saltatio poesis-pictura-theatrum*” (43). Angiolini, on the other hand, endeavored to create a performance analogous to the *dramma per musica*, simply replacing words with gesture. In both cases, Fabbriatore asserts, the ballet masters used these analogies to justify ballet's legitimacy, “mobiliz[ing] precisely the literary patrimony traditionally belonging to the Republic of Letters” (25).

Delving into the links between pantomime ballet and Enlightenment debates on rhetoric and gesture, Fabbriatore situates Noverre's and Angiolini's works within the greater cultural matrix, demonstrating that bodily comportment based on dance training was not limited to

“high” genres; what Franz Lang called the *crux scenica* (an open stance built on external rotation of the hips) appears frequently in engravings of *commedia dell'arte* scenes. Likewise, manuals, such as the Abbé Dinouart's *L'Éloquence du corps dans le Ministère de la Chaire*, described gestural vocabulary used in oration, building on seventeenth-century treatises including John Bulwer's *Chironomia; or, The Art of Manual Rhetorique and Chirolgia: The Natural Language of the Hand*. Certain gestures, these manuals explained, were excluded from the orator's vocabulary on the basis of their low register. Out of place in the orator's pulpit, gestures built on “excess” and “deformation” formed the basis for the *commedia dell'arte*, creating a type of *verlan* (French slang built on syllable reversal), that “reverse[d] the institutional language of the body” (76). Italian performers, Fabbriatore continues, succeeded in making these gestures legible to their audiences, replacing words with specific signs and developing a “gestural semiotic system,” which may well have served as the model for tragic pantomime (95–96).

Despite sharing the goal of elaborating a form of pantomime ballet, differences in national culture shaped Noverre's and Angiolini's projects and affected the ways in which the two ballet masters laid out their respective rules for the genre. In France, the Academies created under Louis XIV endeavored to centralize and regulate a national culture ready for export that differentiated itself from both that of the Ancients and the Italians (99). In Italy, the Academy of Arcadia promoted theatrical reforms based on rules and order, with the goal of restoring the nation's “ancient classical splendor” (100). These differences in national aims, Fabbriatore argues, show themselves in the ways that Noverre and Angiolini approach their subject matter, Noverre relying on genius and enthusiasm and Angiolini on a strict reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Furthermore, she continues, they reveal a divergent idea of the role of the spectator, very much tied to social class and power.

Between 1767, when Noverre replaced Angiolini at the Viennese court, and 1776, when the quarrel concluded with the publication of the *Memorie per servire alla storia degli spettacoli del teatro di Milano, 1774–1775*, the two ballet masters competed for plaudits, exchanging letters defending their dramaturgical practices and finally mobilizing and

polarizing Milanese society. From the beginning, the debate took place in public, Noverre being singled out in an anonymous *Mémoire* on the basis of his high salary and massive expenditures. In 1772, the two ballet masters began a direct exchange, Noverre sharing the *livrets* for his ballets *Agamemnon vengé*, *Iphigénie*, and *Les Grâces*, and Angiolini responding in the form of two letters addressed to Noverre. In his *Lettere*, Angiolini pushed back against Noverre's claim to have invented the genre of pantomime ballet, citing his teacher Franz Hilverding as its true creator. At the core of Angiolini's argument, however, was his assertion that pantomime ballet must follow the rules of classical tragedy, which he used to discredit Noverre on the basis of his ignorance. Following Noverre's subsequent response, anonymous "Oracles" of Angiolini came to the Italian ballet master's defense; when Noverre and Angiolini exchanged their posts of Vienna and Milan, the quarrel escalated further.

Here, Fabbriatore introduces two previously unknown texts, both anonymous: one entitled "Agli amatori dei balli pantomimi" [To amateurs of ballet pantomime] and the other, "Le pacificateur Lombard" [The Lombard peacemaker] (included in an appendix).¹ The first is particularly important in terms of its reception. The writer, a proponent of Angiolini, is repeatedly lampooned in the *Memorie* on the basis of his authorial legitimacy. "The author of the *Memorie*," Fabbriatore specifies, "pronounces his exclusion from literary polemics and from the circle of participants with the right to speak" (305). *Le pacificateur Lombard*, on the other hand, trivializes the quarrel, presenting a fictionalized dialogue between Angiolini and Noverre that juxtaposes dance and philosophy. Through the analysis of these texts and the others involved in the quarrel, Fabbriatore argues that the debate ultimately came to consider the question of taste. Was taste innately tied to social class or national origin? Could taste be taught? This consideration was tightly linked to the evolving public sphere, characterized by pantomime ballet's "heterogeneous reception" (339). Proponents of Angiolini, steeped in the rule system promoted by the Academy of Arcadia, found Noverre's arrogance and lack of attention toward the Milanese public—accustomed to these rules—to be problematic. Supporters of Noverre, on the other hand, blamed the ballet master's poor

reception on the audience's lack of education. Ultimately, the exchange became a question not of whose ballets were superior but of whose work better responded to the demands of the public, a public both multiform and modern.

La Querelle des Pantomimes makes several important contributions to dance scholarship through a detailed analysis of primary and secondary sources in French, Italian, English, and German. It presents a long overdue analysis of this important moment in the history of dance from a point of view that does not place France and Noverre at its center.² Through its contextualization of both sides of the argument, it demonstrates how the nationalistic stakes of the quarrel of the pantomimes went deeper than simply pitting ballet masters symbolic of French and Italian culture against each other (although Noverre's insensitivity in Milan seems not to have helped). Rather, the poetic systems underscored by Angiolini and Noverre were deeply rooted in their respective traditions and thus not only concerned with the aesthetics of pantomime ballet but deeply tied to questions of taste. Through the introduction of newly discovered texts at the heart of the quarrel, *La Querelle des Pantomimes* underscores this important point, providing a first in-depth study of the polemic but also stressing its current relevance not only to dance scholars but also to historians of culture, music, and literature.

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Notes

1. See Anonymous, *Agli amatori dei balli pantomimi nel 1774*, ed. Arianna Fabbriatore, "Un nuovo testo sulla polemica coreutica del Settecento: Agli amatori dei balli pantomimi, 1774," in José Sasportes, ed. *La Danza Italiana in Europa dell'Ottocento*, Quaderni, vol. 3 (2013), pp. 211–26. In the appendix of *La Querelle des pantomimes*, Fabbriatore provides the following texts for reference: *Le pacificateur Lombard* (pp. 419–430), a French translation of the *Lettere di Gasparo Angiolini sopra i balli pantomimi* (pp. 345–99), Noverre's *Introduction au Ballet des Horaces* (pp. 401–07), and the anonymous *Lettre d'un des petits oracles de Monsieur Angiolini au grand Noverre* (pp. 409–17).

2. Several scholars have recently questioned the France-centric approach taken especially in considering the historical relationship between French and Italian ballet, one of cultural exchange. Debra H. Sowell calls for a similar approach in her study of Italian ballet Romanticism (2005, 37), and Emmanuelle Destemberg, Marie Glon, and Vannina Olivesi acknowledge the longstanding and problematic tradition of considering placing France at the center of historical studies of ballet (2014, 104–13).

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