

BALLET'S LEGACIES: BEYOND THE PHALLIC POINTE

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines how an embodied aesthetic of classical ballet comes into being through modernities' discourses and material realities of nation, state, colonialism, heterosexuality and their constitutive logics. Accordingly, ballet bodies are produced within a Marxist mode of production and circulate through a movement linguistic system that is phallogocentric. To consider how to move beyond such a system, an evaluation and expansion upon Susan Leigh Foster's oft-cited work "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe" examines the holds modernities' take over ballet bodies through their production and highlights potentialities for alternative futures. The thesis turns to autobiographical and biographical works of professional ballerinas to express the affected material realities of ballet's mode of productions' acts on material bodies.

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List of Abbreviations

Ballet BC – Ballet British Columbia

DTH – Dance Theatre of Harlem

ABT – American Ballet Theatre

RWB – Royal Winnipeg Ballet

Introduction

Suppose I wake up someday and decide that I hate ballet? Will I regret the sacrifices that I have made? As hard as I try to imagine such a day, I couldn't. I felt that ballet was in my bones and in my blood. It was all wound up with who I was. I would give up breathing air before I would give up ballet.

Michaela DePrince, 202

'Madame say when you sleep, sleep like ballerina. Even on the street, waiting for bus, stand like ballerina.' So we didn't concentrate only for an hour and a half a day on what was being taught. We lived it...

Maria Tallchief 280

Ballet had defined me for so long that I didn't know who I was when I wasn't dancing.

Misty Copeland 1435

As the curtain falls and the audience applauds, the dancers scurry behind the closed curtain to take their positions for their final bow. This single performance takes its place in the history of dance by retelling the content of the balletic stories while simultaneously reproducing the aesthetics of classical ballet. The curtain opens and the ballet bodies line the stage, breaking with the characters they have portrayed. The roles reverse as the audience performs its own ritual to express pleasure and gratitude for the performance. This moment makes meaning reaching far beyond this singular event. The dancers, while taking their final bows run through their list of mistakes, corrections and issues that they will attempt to rectify for the next performance, while thinking about the rehearsal day ahead of them. The audience classifies the performance they have witnessed within their own personal repertoires of dance experience.

Each spectator in the audience performs her own interpretation where she "links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other

kinds of place” (*Emancipated* 13). These interpretations take their place in the aesthetic of classical ballet with the performance at hand serving either as an inspiring example or one of lesser quality. In making such judgments, the spectators’ critiques and thoughts constitute their own relationship to classical ballet and its aesthetic whether it be observer, student, critic, balletomane, ballet master, or choreographer. The dancers, exhausted from the physical effort, long to take their place in the participation of the aesthetic at the next performance and begin their training and embodied rituals to ensure they can dance another day. The cycle repeats.

While the dancers seen onstage represent only a minute fraction of those who participate in classical ballet, their art, the performances seen on stages, produce, sustain and perpetuate the aesthetic of classical ballet both onstage and off. This aesthetic, the ways it marks and is marked by bodies, belies politics and modernities.¹ Put differently, classical ballet remains inextricable from the bodies which dance it and both the aesthetic and bodies dancing it are politicized – replete with the logics of modernities. These bodies, when dancing, produce the aesthetic of classical ballet, while not dancing, they still carry within them the corporeality of a ballet dancer and the significations carried therein. The politics of aesthetics found in classical ballet, thus manifests through bodies training in and performing classical ballets. Ballet, then, acts as a mode of production for bodies where dancers strive to (re)make their bodies to satisfy the demands and rigor of classical ballet. Ballet imprints and is imprinted upon them. In so doing, ballet etches colonial legacies, heterosexism, classism and gender into the musculature of the bodies performing it. These classificatory logics, brought about through modernities’ processes, continue to regulate daily material life both inside the

art form and outside it. Dancing bodies confirm these discourses' meanings one performance after the next.

What we currently refer to as classical ballet evolved from court dancing. Drawing on traditions from the Renaissance, the first dance masters came into being in Italy. Dance masters devoted themselves full-time to the creation of dance works, a methodology, and creating a lexicon of dance steps (Lee 29). This style of court dance travelled to France where, in 1581, a presentation of the first ballet occurred (44). Dance historian Carol Lee describes it as “an original and unique mixture of French taste and Italian theories on classical dramas” (44). While this is generally considered to be the first ballet, it does not resemble what we would recognize as classical ballet today. It was not until the court of Louis XIV where the Sun King “understood its [ballet’s] ideological potential and used the dance as an instrument to help stabilize and centralize his restless country” (66). Not only did Louis XIV see this potentially domestically, but he also realized that “ballet could be an auspicious means for reducing factional, domestic strife and building national prestige” (66). Accordingly, he nationalized ballet, institutionalized it and used it for political aims.

We would not recognize the art form at this point in time through ballet’s contemporary aesthetic. What we currently recognize as classical ballet – the pointework, the ballerinas, the male danseurs – emanated from the Romantic ballets, in particular *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*. Here, as early as 1822 pointe work began to enter the stage. Soon thereafter, “[p]ointe work became mandatory for all principal female dancers since it provided the ultimate suggestion of weightlessness proper to the nature of the creatures that she portrayed” (141). The most iconic Romantic ballerina was

Marie Taglioni who, “was the first ballerina to meaningfully incorporate the feat [pointework] into her performances as the ultimate artistic expression of the unworldly aspects of Romantic ballets” (148). Her father, Filippo Taglioni created *La Sylphide* (1832) and was considered a “visionary” and “gifted pedagogue” exemplifying the “concept of an outstanding artist-teacher” (149). Taglioni’s artistic intervention in classical ballet (with the help of her father’s vision) transformed the earth-bound ballerinas to the ethereal, captivating figures we know today. In the role of the Sylphide, Taglioni was described by a ballet critic in 1837: “it is impossible to describe the suggestion she conveyed of aerial flight, the fluttering of wings, the soaring in the air, alighting on flowers, and gliding over the mirror-like surface of a river” (Banes & Carroll 91). Thus, Taglioni was propelled to international stardom as a ballerina through this and other roles. *La Sylphide* proved pivotal for classical ballet not only through its inclusion of pointework, but also, it’s revolution in costuming. Here, “[i]t is said that Eugène Lami created the first tutu” for *La Sylphide*, although this set of drawings has gone missing (Bennahum 129). Thus, ballet first resembled its current iteration, pointe shoes, an international star and white tutus in *La Sylphide* which continued to narrate political concerns of domesticity and community (Banes & Carroll).

Considering ballet’s history as ideological tool in state-building and where Louis XIV was the first head of state to conceive of using ballet for political aims, he was, by no means, the last. Some, like Chairman Mao, utilize ballet to promote cultural and ideological messages. Reflecting on these processes, Li Cunxin, author of *Mao’s Last Dancer* writes of his training as a dancer in the Beijing Academy that following their warm up classes

we joined some of the soldiers' training activities for the rest of the day. We learned how to walk, turn, stop and run the military way. We even learnt how to fall and crawl under imaginary tanks and enemy gunfire. Many of us had bruises all over after those first few days. We learned how to hold guns too – important for our political ballets, we were told. We spent days at target practice and my eyes became so tired (1413).

Not only were the ballets staged to deemphasize individualism and promote collectivity, but the cultural revolution's ballets – or at least its political ones – relied on accurate movement depictions of soldiers and militarization. Ballet again functions as a tool of nation building.

Not all forms of nation building look alike. From the 1940s-1980s, some nations like China or Russia for example, focused on developing nation-specific ballets, while others in the Western world (in particular in the United States and Canada) promoted their ideologies of liberalism and democracy not only by the ballets they stage, but also through securing the defection of great Russian and Chinese dancers through promises of artistic freedom and individual self-realization under a Western (neo)liberal framework. Accordingly, dancers such as Georges Balanchine, Rudolf Nureyev, Natalia Makarova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Alexander Godunov, Leonid Kozlov, Valentina Kozlava, Li Cunxin, and John Wey Ling sought asylum in Western Countries to further their individual artistic development. Many of these names are recognizable as dancers who heavily influenced the artistic trajectory of classical ballet in the United States, Canada and Australia. These political defectors became influential in state supported initiatives and companies in all three countries.

Currently, while countries have national ballet companies (Canada has The National Ballet and The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the United States has The American

Ballet Theatre, the United Kingdom has The Royal Ballet, etc.), a plethora of other companies have sprung up in these countries to tell different narratives and foci – some which receive state support and others which do not. In Canada, we have Ballet BC, Alberta Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, and Ballet Jörgen. These companies, through their new works speak choreographically to different aspects of Canadian National Identity. One of the most notable examples is Ballet Jörgen’s version of *The Nutcracker: A Canadian Tradition* which takes spectators on Klara’s “familiar, magical dream journey as she arrives in Canada and experiences winter landscapes filled with snowflakes, lumberjacks, Mounties, and creatures of the woods” (*Ballet Jörgen*).

In the United States, not only are there regional ballet and contemporary ballet (modern) companies, but there are also companies such as *Dance Theatre Harlem*, *Alvin Ailey* and *The Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo* which use dance to tell different stories of nation building and citizenship.² *Dance Theatre Harlem* was founded by the late Arthur Mitchell in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, as a means “to start a school that would offer children – especially those in Harlem, the community in which he was born – the opportunity to learn about dance and the allied arts” (*Dance Theatre Harlem*). Alvin Ailey, now in its 60th year, “became one of the groundbreaking greats in modern dance history, while the work of his company grew beyond the limits of the stage to encompass education at all levels, community outreach, and cultural diplomacy” (*Alvin Ailey*). Finally, the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo are a comedic all-male ballet company, whose members, dressed in drag, “deliver[ed] a kick from a steel toe-cap in a silky pointe shoe” (*Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo*). All 3 companies formed in response to activist movements and have a mission aimed at promoting social change.

Dance Theatre Harlem and *Alvin Ailey* tell tales of African American life in response to systematic oppression. *Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo* speaks back to the queer histories of ballet³ and results from the post-stonewall activism in New York City. Thus, while not “official” companies of the state, their works narrate various lived realities of American life.

In her book *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange*, Clare Croft describes how the United States government used state-sponsored tours to depict the universalism of the American condition through dance. Croft situates these state-sponsored tours within ballet’s modernist phase which “meant framing bodies as forms in motion, not necessarily as people, and even more so, not as people who came to the stage to share movements from specific histories, cultural or geographic contexts” (66). In other words, under ballet modernism, dancers should be able to appear as if they were from anywhere and everywhere at the same time. “As dance historian Rebekah Karl has shown, the pairing then of universalist abstraction within the American cultural diplomacy was a paradox, even contradiction” (66). Yet, in spite of this paradoxical combination, if the universalism were to be particularly situated within American ballet companies “that would help establish that indeed what was American was possible for – even good for – the rest of the world” (66). Differently put, within the period of ballet modernism, dancers were cultivated to look no different from one another regardless of where they practiced their art. Ballet thus, solidified its claim as a universal art form as movement staged in Russia (and the bodies dancing it) greatly resembled those dancing in the United States and Canada. Accordingly, the United States’ state department sponsored tours of dance companies to showcase America’s

universalizing presence and effects on dance pieces and companies in an attempt to glorify American cultural production and liberal democratic values.

Where ballet bodies dance in the ballet aesthetic and work to re-present and perpetuate ballet (however it appears at any time) for another generation of audiences and dancers, some of the elements represented by and through the ballet bodies are rendered intelligible. The ways that ballets are organized and their universalizing aesthetics belie politics, as do the bodies that create and perpetuate those aesthetics. In other words, it is not only the choreography that is seen onstage that speaks to the audience, but also the ways that bodies are arranged and perform that communicates prevailing historically contingent moments. Croft provides an example by discussing Allegra Kent and Arthur Mitchell's pas de deux in *Agon* on the 1962 United States' state-sponsored Soviet tour. Here, Balanchine's "most radical choreographic choice was creating a pas de deux that required black and white dancers to share energy" (79). Situating Balanchine's choreography within American modernism, concerning itself solely with formalist expression eclipses Balanchine's expression of racial politics through dance at a time when "interracial couples remained an absolute taboo. *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme court ruling that struck down anti-miscegenation laws across the US did not happen until 1967" (80). Balanchine's bold choreographic choices under the auspices of modernist formalism challenged social anxieties and politics inherent to the United States.

While challenges to political and material realities play out onstage, the ballet bodies that enact those movements retain their intense sculpting when removed from the stage. Put differently, for ballet bodies, the ballet aesthetic governs not only their

performances, but also, their daily lives. Thus, modernities' logics that shape the aesthetics they perform also shape their bodies. When seen and danced in context, the ballet bodies' and their aesthetics provide the tools for powerful social critique as in the case of *Dance Theatre Harlem*, *Alvin Ailey*, *Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo* and even the Balanchine example mentioned above. A more troubling variation of this scenario enters the stage where ballet bodies retain their aesthetic replete with modernities' conceptual logics while becoming decontextualized from their artistic foray. One example of this occurs when ballet-as-activity becomes seemingly disarticulated from ballet-as-performance-art where it is increasingly being seen as a physical activity for children (especially girls) in discourses promoting exercise as part of healthy living.

The connections between nation and dance, noted above, can be read alongside the gendered underpinnings of ballet. A striking example of this situation plays out through the Canadian Tire Jumpstart image and publicity campaigns that decorate Canadian Tire stores and promote Jumpstart Funding programs.⁴ Jumpstart provides funding for low-income households to enroll their children in physical activities. The large banner on the Canadian Tire store depicted a number of boys with different sports equipment such as a hockey stick and soccer ball. The image displays one girl dressed in a pink tutu. In that image, ballet is recoded as a sport for girls, but that visual placement and signification is not the sole instance. Increasingly, as children's physical activity is moved from free-structured outdoor play to indoor organized activities, dance – and ballet in particular – becomes a 'sport for girls'. My issue here is not with providing sport opportunities for children, nor is it with classifying ballet as sport or a form of physical activity. Rather, as a former practitioner and current dance educator, I

am concerned with the ways young bodies are entering ballet on the one hand as a physical activity, but on the other hand, these same young bodies are taking their place in an institution which functions as a mode of production for bodies carrying within it modernities' logics and a harsh reproduction of an aesthetics of sameness as the only means for belonging. Put differently, ballet not only provides physical education for bodies, but also, it takes its place within the aesthetic of classical ballet which emphasizes uniformity, conformity, heterosexualized femininity, and grace.

This is not to say that children or adults should not engage in classical ballet, as the scientific community continues to bring us knowledge about the benefits that ballet and dance have for human bodies at all stages of development. Ballet is powerful, in fact, I tell my dance students: "Ballet makes you a superhero." For more than twenty years, I have been involved in teaching young children and adults the art form of ballet. I too, once danced. When I say: "Ballet makes you a superhero," it means all kind of things. Ballet makes you strong. Ballet makes you aware of yourself and your surroundings. Ballet gives you a key to interpreting things that happen in your body. Ballet teaches you discipline, ballet allows you to express emotion, ballet encourages friendships, ballet creates community. For all the positives that I see in this artistic form and practice, I remain fixated on how it irreparably changes bodies that learn within its paradigms. This can alter lives. When I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, the ways in which I knew how to move through social space, my understanding of anatomy and my ability to think differently through my body made my existence livable. I know others, for whom their embodied knowledge has made their lives liveable through Multiple

Sclerosis, Lupis, Fibromyalgia, and many different life- and embodied-altering diseases. Ballet makes you a superhero not only today, but one for your body's tomorrow.

Ballet leads us to imagine community.⁵ Every day we step up to the barre and practice the rituals of warming up, pliés, tendus and so on. Here, we enact our community, we embody an art form that spans geographic and temporal locations. Lauded as a universal language, dance in general, and ballet in particular, communicates with its audiences and tells stories and reverberates musical inclinations through bodies; through ballet bodies. The daily rituals and practices of the ballet dancer lead s/t(he)m to re-make their bodies, day in and day out. Ballet makes you a superhero because you literally can craft your body through its practices. I have often wondered what my body would have looked like had I not danced as I watch the bodies of my young students literally transform through ballet's practices as they grow into young adults.

With all these positives, what then, does it mean when ballet carries within it modernities' logics? By this, I mean, what is at stake when we know that ballet stems from and incorporates the traditions of its imperial forefathers. To make the body, then, within ballet, relies on understandings of anatomy, physics, traditions of comportment, reverence, discipline brought into being through Western colonial and imperial forces. The ballet body, then, is a stylized Western body, one replete with modernities' logics. Ballet thus operates as a mode of production for its bodies – for modernities' bodies.

This project then, unpacks how ballet – a particularized form of ethnic dance as Joann Kealiinohomoku reminds us (1993) – etches within bodies the logics inherent to modernities' achievements in terms of nation, state, gender and race. When stepping up

to the barre to take my place through the practices of ballet, what aspects of modernities' logics am I making into my body? As I devote my spare time as a practitioner of classical ballet to teach youth, what are they making within their bodies? Where ballet is increasingly "prescribed" as a therapy to overcome or lessen physical challenges or work with psychological aptitudes, how are modernities' logics being re-perpetuated if not injected into the fascia, muscle and bone of ballet bodies.⁶

Accordingly, I argue that ballet works as a mode of production for modernities' bodies. In Chapter 1, I present a literature review that examines how ballet evolves through modernities' processes and also how it is an example par excellence of modernities' aims. This provides the background for the ways that ballet works to produce modernities' bodies. In this chapter, I draw together theorists on modernities, nationalisms undergirded by dance studies scholars' research. These dance studies scholars include but are not limited to: Roland John Wiley, Selma Jean Cohen, Jennifer Fisher, Francesca Castaldi, Sally Ness, Clare Croft, Yatin Lin, Helen Thomas, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Anna Alten, Alexandra Carter, Wendy Oliver, Vida Midgelow, Adam Benjamin, Deborah Jowitt, John Bryce Jordan, Stavros Stavrou Kayrayanni, Anthony Shay, Allana Lindgren, Jane Desmond, Ann Daly and Susan Leigh Foster. Chapter 2 considers ballet from a psychoanalytic perspective looking at the pointe shoe and ballerina-as-phallus as the central organizing signifier in the language that is ballet and providing the gateway to ballerina subjectivity drawing on Susan Leigh Foster's oft-cited essay, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe." Where pointe shoes functions to limit certain kinds of movement and facilitate the production of a specific aesthetic and bodily strength to accompany it, the ways in which modernities act on ballet bodies through

pointe shoes affect their production. In this project, I use explanatory notes to outline key ideas in social theory, dance studies, and current dance education practices that are relevant yet tangential to my central thesis.

At stake in this analysis is a more robust understanding of what is being etched into ballet bodies plié by plié, tendu by tendu. In this moment in time, where ballet is increasingly thought of as a “physical activity” primarily for girls, what legacies are we crafting within the very flesh and bone of our bodies through the very name of “healthy living”? This project provides a preliminary step into thinking about these broad questions concerning wellness and sociality.

Chapter I

Modern Ballet's Classical Bodies?

Balanchine trained us the way a gardener will espalier a tree to gain the most sunlight. He realigned our limbs, pruned and replaced, crossbred and experimented, demonstrated and patiently corrected, scolded, teased – and occasionally made fun of us.

Barbara Fisher 16

We have a different bodily structure than most humans. Our spirits, our souls, our love reside totally in our bodies, in our toes and knees and hips and vertebrae and necks and elbows and fingertips.

Toni Bentley 317-318

A dancer's life onstage is short. Teaching extends my dance life. I am the beneficiary of every dancer who came before me and I am grateful. I am happy being a conduit to, through and beyond each dancer I work with. I have learned so much and have exciting ideas for the future.

Suzanne Farrell 108

Ballet, often seen as a performing art or afterschool activity, carries over into the daily lived embodied realities of its dancers. The classical ballet aesthetic and its bodies are co-constitutive. Teachers and artistic directors train ballet bodies to satisfy aesthetic expectations and those bodies, those ballet dancers, carry that aesthetic into their embodied daily lives. Ballet is not something one simply does, rather, ballet is something one lives. Every waking moment (and some sleeping ones) crafts the bodies in question. The expectations are, in part, shaped by cautionary advice such as: “Don’t wear flimsy shoes, it will damage your feet”; “Don’t stand with one leg straight and one leg bent, it will ruin your alignment”; “Don’t wear high heels all the time, it will shorten your Achilles tendons”; “Don’t wear your knapsack on only one shoulder, you will end up with overdeveloped muscles on one side and not on the other.” The lists of dos and

don'ts (where the don'ts certainly outnumber the dos) and their role in crafting one's body to meet the guidelines of the aesthetic are passed from one generation to the next. Ballet is lived on bodies, by bodies and through bodies. Accordingly, classical ballet works to (re)inscribe its aesthetic on and through individual bodies and carries that aesthetic into daily life. Classical ballet's origins and evolutions, as a particular Western art form masquerading as a universal, thus portrays modernities' logics on, through and in material bodies. Put otherwise, the demands on the ballet body emerge from western corporeal aesthetic codes and standards, and these conventions—passed down, taught, learned, lived—are embodied representations of modernities.

This chapter is a literature review that explores modernities and their underlying logics alongside selected themes from political studies and dance studies scholarship. Before turning to a more sustained discussion of these fields of study and their relationship to ballet and ballet bodies, it is important to clarify that I refer to “modernities” in the plural (rather than modernity) in recognition of the multiplicity of ways that the concepts of modernity have impacted differing geographical and social locations. I use “modernities” throughout, and signal multiplicities, because this captures the western Eurocentric mode of modernity, that emerged out of Enlightenment thinking (positivism, rationality, imperialism) *as it also* encompasses those communities that navigated and navigate this overarching system (as seen across both non-western and non-white communities) and are part of, and produce, modernities that are yoked to, yet distinct from, westernized knowledge systems. This allows me to theorize that a dominant westernized system defined and normalized ballet, but did not and does not totally foreclose alternative ballet bodies and performances.

In what follows I show that classical ballet functions to produce modernities' bodies. Put simply, the body is situated at the heart of Eurocentric modernity (Fanon; Butler; Foucault) with the ballet body signifying normativity writ large. Importantly, at the same time, simply regarding ballet as an abstract art form or signifier neglects the materiality and lived experiences of its medium – living breathing individuals. As such, I present three theoretical and methodological foundations that, together, illuminate the ways in which ballet bodies carry within them modernities' logics. First, I examine how a Marxist mode of production functions and specifically how ballet exemplifies a mode of production. This analysis foregrounds the material relations inherent to the conceptual productions of the body. Second, I examine how modernities' logics produce and are produced by bodies within the classical ballet paradigm. Here, I explicitly consider modernities' relationship to class, racialization, gender, and how they intersect with the formation of ballet's bodies. Finally, I explore the ways that ballet cooperates with modernities' imperial and colonial projects to produce an aesthetic of sameness within and among bodies. In so doing, I lay the foundations for theorizing ways of reading the human body *as* ballet body. Here, ballet produces a framework through which corporeal subjectivity is achieved in and through movement. Bodies that step into these ways of knowing and moving thus, become legible as not only ballet bodies, but also bodies that carry within them expectations and stereotypes surrounding ballet bodies – that they are disciplined, productive, healthy, athletic, graceful embodiments of heteronormative femininity or macho, athletic virtuoso heteronormative masculinity. The reading and recognition of ballet bodies as such, demonstrates how modernities translate their logics and concerns onto material bodies,

which, continue to perpetuate those aesthetics as they dance, walk, and move about both onstage and off. Considering ballet as a mode of production examines the collisions of these discourses as they take material forms through the body.

Ballet as a Mode of Production Nested in Modernities

Karl Marx describes a mode of production as not simply the way that material goods are produced in any particular conjuncture, but rather the relationship between material production and the ways in which human life is reproduced. On this view, Marx writes: “By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life” (177). The relationship between man’s mode of production of his material life and the mode of production of commodities are thus interrelated because “[t]he way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce” (177). Put differently, Marx understands the nature of subsistence (read: what one has to do to continue living) to differ through time and geographic locations. Moreover, the nature of subsistence relates inextricably to the technologies of production (at any specific time) and allows for self-expression of the individual within the frameworks of those technologies.

Here, Marx writes that the ways in which we reproduce subsistence allows “a definite form of expressing...life, a definite mode of life on [man’s] part” (177). This form of self-expression presupposes an individual’s place within the modes of production where “[w]hat they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and *how* they produce” (177, emphasis in original). In other

words, a mode of production considers not only how we produce things, but also how we produce ourselves as individuals, which depends entirely on how we are set up as producers of things. A mode of production, then, consists of two interrelated phenomena: 1. The technologies (or material conditions) of production and 2. Self-expression of the individual as s/(t)he(y) reproduces his/her/their daily life.

How then, might we think ballet as a mode of production for bodies in general and for modernities' bodies in particular? As noted in my brief history of ballet in the introduction, there was a shift in how dance and performance were produced and consumed. The move towards more public performances aided nation building strategies, demanding increased audiences, aggrandized production and staging, resulting in the professionalization of dancers. With the professionalization of ballet dancers also comes the commodification of their bodies and personalities. Increasingly professionalized ballet dancers were required to maintain their bodies so as to execute increasingly difficult choreographies for their audiences. This too, changes in relation to the technologies of the time surrounding anatomy, physiology and physics.⁷

Take for example, the famous 32 fouetté turn section in *Swan Lake*.⁸ In the 3rd act of *Swan Lake*, the character Odile – “the dangerous but seductive antiheroine” (Macaulay) – performs 32 fouettés.⁹ Dance historian Carol Lee writes of the emergence of the fouetté turns in the history of classical ballet:

Pierina Legnani...achieved immortality when Petipa utilized her special aptitude for thirty-two *fouettés en pointe* by inserting them into her variations in *Cinderella* (1893) and the third act of *Swan Lake* two years later. From visiting Italian dancers the Russians learned the technique of ‘spotting’ to avoid dizziness in order to achieve multiple turns, although the foot strength to do so on pointe presented a major problem for them. Legnani, however, had brought with her the secret of her virtuosity, which was

significant for the development of ballet everywhere. The Italian shoemaker, Nicolini, custom-created all the ballerina's slippers. They had strong leather soles and box-like forms encasing the tips, which consisted of hardened layers of molded fabric. It was immediately apparent that Legnani's specially constructed dancing shoes were what assisted her natural strength in accomplishing her extraordinary feats *en pointe*. From this time onward, the Imperial Ballet began to craft its own version of the slippers in its theatrical ateliers (208-209, emphasis in original).

Lee's discussion of the emergence of 32 fouettés in classical repertoire emerges alongside fashion construction and understandings of human bodies (spotting). I will not go into detail about the construction of pointe shoes here, as this is carried out in more detail in Chapter two. However, spotting is an important technology for ballet. Briefly, spotting (or to spot) is where the body begins to turn and the head is delayed an instant, then, the head accelerates its speed and arrives prior to the completed revolution of the body.¹⁰ While dance is a largely lived art form and written accounts of technological inventions are not always present, spotting likely evolved as Lee suggests as a means to combat dizziness in turning and to keep one's balance. As one of the most important aspects of turning, YouTube and the internet is littered with tutorials about how to help dancers or dance students spot better.

Potential effects of spotting, however, are currently being studied by medical science as a BBC news report (2013) explains that it was once thought that a dancer's ability to achieve multiple revolutions through spotting was purely as a result of their training, however, research carried out by Imperial College London "suggests that a dancer's perception of spinning lasted a shorter time than a group of athletes" (0:27-0:32). Further, through Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan, neurologists such as Dr. Barry Seemungal discovered that "In dancers, we found that this area [the one

responsible for the sense of dizziness] in blue, the gray matter in the cerebellum is actually smaller. This was related to the amount of practice they did, as we found the more experienced the dancer, the smaller the area” (0:40-0:52). The news report goes on to suggest that dance may be able to be prescribed as therapy where one in four Britains are affected by chronic dizziness. Within the context of the news story, a contraption that looks like a turntable on the floor is demonstrated where a male dancer stands atop of it, someone spins him and he continually practices spotting so that it becomes etched into his muscle memory as second nature.¹¹ While the technology and technique of spotting existed in Legnani’s time, she was one of a very select few who were able to execute the 32 fouetté turns with consistency and precision. Now, with contraptions such as turning plates and boards, dancers are perfecting their spotting techniques earlier and earlier and multiple revolutions are no longer such a novelty.¹²

Additionally, techniques such as spotting and the ways that dance was passed down from one generation to the next reflected a vertical power structure.¹³ Where knowledge about the human body and physics were previously limited only to those who had illustrious professional careers, the advancement of knowledge about anatomy and physics and its accessibility to more people allowed for increasing numbers of bodies to enter into dance and learn how to perform difficult and complex actions. For example, a 2016 Ted-Ed talk reveals the theoretical underpinnings of fouetté turns from a physics perspective. This four-minute sixteen second video describes fouettés as turning the dancers into “a human top in perpetual motion” (0:28-0:30) and claims to “unravel its [the fouetté’s] physics” (0:43-0:44). The video then continues to break

down the fouetté in terms of torque generation and use of angular momentum in a slow-motion consideration of all aspects of the fouetté turn (0:45 – 2:48). It goes on to break down angular momentum and its relationship to rotational inertia and how that relates to the different portions of the fouetté turns (3:07 – 3:39). The video concludes by stating: “In Tchaikovsky’s ballet, the Black Swan is a sorceress and her 32 captivating fouettés do seem almost supernatural. But it’s not magic that makes them possible, it’s physics!” (3:46-3:58).¹⁴ Here, the fouetté turns are broken down through scientific concepts and made to seem achievable through angular momentum and inertia by following the exact steps outlined in the video. While a plethora of other factors that go into considering if a body is physically capable of attempting to manage the physical forces described, the knowledge about the fouetté turn is now easily accessed by individuals through discourses of physics.

Regardless of the accessibility of knowledge about the technique of performing fouetté turns, they remain difficult to execute, particularly 32 in a row. Inclusion of fouetté turns in *Swan Lake* continues to be one of its consistent elements.¹⁵ Whatever the point of attraction by audiences to these turns, emotional investments of spectators and dance critics alike in the 32 fouetté turn sequence in *Swan Lake* surged in March 2018 where Misty Copeland, principal dancer of the American Ballet Theatre, shortened her fouetté sequence following a poor preparation and initial turn in one of her Singapore performances. A dance critic posted harsh criticism about this action on twitter not only about this single performance, but also on Copeland’s suitability to be a professional dancer for the American Ballet Theatre (ABT). Characterizing Copeland’s employment as an embarrassment to the overall national project of ballet in the United

States, this critic tagged not only Copeland in her tweet, but also, used the hashtag for ABT. The tweets went viral. In an unprecedented manner, Copeland issued an amazing reply, embedding the video that showed the performance in question and stated:

I'm happy to share this because I will forever be a work in progress and will never stop learning. I learn from seeing myself on film and rarely get to. So thank you.

I will reiterate that I am by no means the best in ballet. I understand my position and what I represent. I know that I'm in a very unique position and have been given a rare platform. All I've ever wanted is to bring ballet to more people and to help diversify it.

I've worked extremely hard to be where I am and I believe that what I bring to the table is authentic artistry with a unique point of view through my life experiences, and my unusual path and upbringing. Also as a black woman and black ballerina. I would love to see all of the incredible deserving black dancers get the opportunities that I have.

I will forever be humbled and extremely grateful for the fact that I get to do what I love for a living, that I get to do all of the incredible roles that I do, in particular Swan Queen.

There are so many ballerinas that never get to experience dancing the most iconic and demanding role in a ballerina's repertoire. I have so so so much respect for what I do and for the ballerinas I stand on the shoulders of. I'm in awe everyday that I am part of such an incredible art form that has changed and enriched my life in so many ways and that I get to do it all with ABT.

I don't decide who's promoted or what roles I dance. I never envisioned myself as the Swan Queen after being in the company for almost 15 years before I was given the opportunity. I have such deep and conflicting feelings connected to Swan Lake. As a black woman and as a ballerina given the chance to take on this role. I often question if I deserve to perform this role. My conclusion, I do. Some of the most memorable Swan Queens in history have brought so much to this role without having to present the incredible and evolved technique of today but doing insane tricks that bring some to see Swan Lake. For the anticipated 32 fouettés. But

it is so much more than that. People come to see ballet for the escape. For the experience of being moved through our movement and artistry, not to score us on the technicality of what we do. This is why ballet is not a sport.

A ballerina's career is not, nor should be defined by how many fouettés she executes. They are a part of the choreography to tell a story of pulling off the entrancement she upholds over prince Sigfried. The point is to finish the 3rd act with a whirlwind movement that sucks him in just one last time before it's revealed that Odile is not Odette. This is the incredible beauty of ballet. To move people.

I'm happy to have this dialogue because it's something I believe in whole heartedly. The history of ballet and its (sic) origin of pure freedom and expression is what we need to hold onto. Not to come into the theatre as a critic armed with judgement.

I do appreciate the changes in the ballet technique, focused on evolving our technical abilities, but the point is to move people and for them to understand the stories we tell through dance. And that is an incredible responsibility and opportunity I will never take for granted (Facebook 28 March 2018).

Again, the internet exploded, with support of the initial tweet by haters and then support and admiration of Copeland and her response. Aside from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram reactions, magazines and news media outlets published stories discussing the controversy, bloggers published reactions, and YouTube and vloggers created special content to discuss the performance.¹⁶ The themes of discussion include the production of the “professional dancer” and what that means for audiences –whether that can be expected to involve 32 fouettés or not and what the idea of a professional dancer can even mean. Pointe magazine writes: “Thanks, Misty, for the reminder that there’s more to ballet than technique – and that even the pros have an off day (and that’s okay, too)” (DeSantis).

The oscillation between the “it’s ok Misty” and the “we expect more from professionals” speak to the unique positions that ballet dancers occupy. The product of the labour that they sell is their own bodies’ performances; they embody their own commodity. Here, people express disappointment with the commodity of the principal ballerina, while on the other hand, recognize that the ballerina is a figure that is embodied by a fallible human being. Thus, ballet functions as a mode of production for ballet bodies. Ballet dancers’ labour, therefore, reproduces their bodies both in the sense of as a commodity – the ballet dancer, but also in the sense of social reproduction.

Marx writes: “While the labourer is at work, his labour constantly undergoes a transformation: from being motion, it becomes an object without motion, from being the labourer working, it becomes the thing produced” (123). Here, individual bodies hired as ballet dancers work their bodies in the pursuit of producing ballet dancers. At work, ballet dancers attend classes which train and refine their bodies, they attend rehearsals so that they can learn new choreography for ballets, they go to the gym to strengthen different muscle groups, they see physio and massage therapists to ensure that their bodies are healthy and in good shape to perform. Dancers also often dance through injuries to their bodies. Regardless of the physical state of the human body, the ballerina manages to achieve her ethereal and magical effect. This is the expectation of male and female ballet dancers alike. This exemplifies the labour practices behind the commodity of the ballet dancer.

Not all ballet dancer commodities are alike; dancers are hired based on their ability to perform at a certain technical and skill level. Corp de ballet members are

expected to perform movements in unison with one another, but will not likely be expected to perform more difficult movements (like 32 fouettés) onstage. Soloist dancers perform with more artistry and technical proficiency and principal dancers even more so. The hierarchy is based on physical capacity and artistic performance. Some dancers spend their entire lives in the corps de ballet, only a few rise to the stardom of the principal ballet dancers.

To produce ballet dancers, however, relies on social reproduction. Marx again writes: “[w]hen viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction” (317). Put differently, every mode of production relies upon the sustenance and reproduction of its labour forces. Considering that labour emanates from human beings who have both biological and social needs, reproduction of the production process therefore accounts for the food, clothing and well-being of the human labourers in the mode of production. Considering the ballerina/ballet danseur, the body is both socially reproduced so that it can transform itself into the figure. Here, ballet dancers need to follow proper nutrition, take care of their bodies and their minds so as to continue to perform another day. Thus, the social reproduction of the ballerina/ballet danseur are integral to the production of these artistic forms.

Ballet thus exemplifies a mode of production for bodies, but why modernities’ bodies? Where ballet relies on the bodies of its dancers and their (re)production through the figure of the ballerina/male danseur, the systems of power in which those material bodies are embedded – their material realities – necessarily affect their ability to (re)produce themselves as such. Put differently, where ballet bodies require a high

level of professionalized training from a very early age and ballet lessons are expensive, only those individuals who have the physical and material resources to train their bodies accordingly find their way onstage in a professional capacity. Modernities, nationalisms and their logics of in/exclusion along with their resource distribution shape the aesthetic of classical ballet. Modernities' aesthetics thus shape ballet dancers' bodies. Ballet thus acts as a mode of production for modernities' bodies.

Modernities and Nationalisms

Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies modernity – regardless of geographic location – as “involving certain categories and concepts” whose genealogies “go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe” (*Provincializing* 4). Chakrabarty identifies the state, citizen, subject, and relationships to the body and rationality of the self as conceptual categories inherent to modernity.¹⁷ Calling into question universalist categories of these concepts as elaborated by Eurocentric thinkers, Chakrabarty demonstrates how a single version of modernity fails to capture the complexities of Indian articulations of the citizen (*Habitations* 12-13), state (65-79), relationships to the body (56) and discourses on rationality and the self (26). In so doing, Chakrabarty problematizes the logics of inclusion operating through modernities' categories deployed by many Western theorists.

These logics of inclusion complement exclusionary logics operating through modernities' conceptual landscape. Here, Paul Gilroy argues that the conceptual work of modernity relies on logics of exclusion that operate to preclude black agency. Using the metaphor of the middle passage to interrogate how the Atlantic became a living site of transport, where industrialization and modernization played out through the passage of slave ships from one continent to another, Gilroy urges that the middle passage be

used to think about how the Black Atlantic serves as an integral (yet often disavowed) component to modernity. Accordingly, Gilroy asks us to think about how that space, that passage, influences, underscores and is embedded in and through the systems of meaning making that continually (re)makes our world – including our material realities. Gilroy thus demonstrates how modernities' categories depend upon the relegation and half-remembrances of ships and slavery.

Gilroy further examines material ramifications of conceptual logics of exclusion in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. He calls into question the forms of nationalism which “tend toward a morbid celebration of England and Englishness from which blacks are systemically excluded” (12). Gilroy's analysis explicitly foregrounds the relationships between nation-state, race, and class. Using Britain as his example, Gilroy problematizes the work of writers who “have resisted the idea that race and class belong to separate spheres of experience with different epistemological ontologies” (15). Significant to this analysis is Gilroy's position, which demands that the historical condition of the modes of production (including their processes of racialization and exploitation) be considered alongside any analysis of race and class. Thus, engagement in economic activity remains engagement in a system which is produced by, produces and sustains not only class hierarchies, but racial hierarchies as well.

Gilroy's critique centres around the state, which he identifies as “modernity's most impressive achievement,” and its exclusionary practices of its black citizens (219). Through a study of several political and social movements in the United Kingdom, Gilroy demonstrates how Britishness achieves its empire, respectability and lawfulness in the wake of ascribing criminality, marginalization and poverty to its black residents.

Through a language analysis of several anti-racist campaigns from the 1980s, Gilroy shows that the ways in which British identity challenges anti-racist campaigns seeks to reinscribe the ways in which they are not part of the British cultural imaginary, however “those representations are, like the ‘racial’ essences on which they rely, precarious constructions, discursive figures which obscure and mystify deeper relationships” (153). Part of the mystifications of the deeper relationships is the inextricable link forged between race and class. Here, Gilroy maintains that abstracting race from class fails to account for how capitalism thrives on exploitation and marginalization.

In a similar vein, Sunera Thobani demonstrates that the Canadian national subject is produced through the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples. Situating her project within the theoretical framings of Frantz Fanon, Thobani critiques Michel Foucault’s analysis of biopower by stating that he does not specifically “address the establishment of western sovereign power as law in the colonial circumstance” (37). Instead, drawing on Fanon, Thobani states: “[c]olonialism created an order based on absolute violence...an order that relied on the transformation of the ‘native’ into a ‘thing,’ an object of exploitation” (37). Thobani’s analysis simultaneously addresses the political as well as the economic. Here, she unpacks Canadian nation building as a colonial project, which sought to disavow Indigenous peoples as well as members of other races of both their political and human rights through citizenship in addition to dispossessing them of their means to engage as economic actors.

Through the idea of exaltation, Thobani explains how special characteristics are endowed to particular subjects as human qualities which “concea[!] the social relations within which these subjects are enmeshed, fetishizing them instead as the naturalistic

originators of these particularly laudable human qualities” (9). Put differently, exaltation positions humans within a hierarchy where certain powers are naturalized and accorded to any particular individual as a power she possesses rather than as a result of inhabiting a privileged set of social relations. In particular, settlers become endowed with characteristics of modernity, order, civility and productivity as essential to their very beings when in fact, these very conceptions emanate from the sets of social relations through which settler subjects seize power over the Canadian nation-state. The Canadian national subject, as Thobani argues, remains a white settler subject. Thus, where demarcations of modernities’ concepts produce new conceptions of state, nation, citizen, subject and self, they also operate with conceptual logics of exclusion which regulate access of individuals to their daily material realities.

The body of scholarship constituting modernities’ analyses continue to grow. On the one hand, it prompts particular considerations of specific nation-states such as: India (*Provincializing, Habitations*), Russia (Shepley, Bianchini, David-Fox, Wachtel), Cuba (Pérez, Sippial), Japan (Heinrich), and China (Mayfair, Ya-pei), to name only a few examples. On the other hand, foci on Indigenous (Povinelli, Pateman and Mills) and diasporic communities (Gilroy, Hanchard) challenge scholars to recognize how modernities, replete with logics of exclusion, threaten many modes of existence by relegating them to the status of pre-modern and less than human. The multiplicity of such analyses illustrates the many particular iterations of modernity, disallowing it to be considered a universal category – modernities are always plural. Further, within these particular case studies of modernities’ applications, mechanisms and social relations of exclusion remain a central focus. Accordingly, to shift an understanding of modernities

to the impacts of its particular iterations disrupts modernities' claim to universality and renders visible and prioritizes the very logics upon which modernities function. As Ganokar emphasizes, "everywhere, at every nation/cultural site, modernity is not one but many; modernity is not new but old and familiar; modernity is incomplete and necessarily so" (23, emphasis removed).

Modernities also foreground class as a mode of understanding social stratification and relationships. Here, "[w]e are witnessing not so much the death of class as a restructuring of class relations and their supplementation by new sources of social division and social identity" (Scott 23). Put differently, through modernities, with their logics of inclusion and exclusion and shifts through capitalist phases, class continues to carry import on the ways in which social locations are circumscribed and occupied. While social identities provide some information as to how interlocking oppressions affect individuals in their daily lives, class remains a necessary category to think through modernities and late capitalism.

Modernities produce an aesthetic of daily life regulated by social institutions and organizations that work to privilege and include some while relegating and excluding others. Such an aesthetic can also be explained by what Jacques Rancière terms the distribution of the sensible. For Rancière, the distribution of the sensible expresses what can be recognized, codified, understood and valued at any particular point in time (and therefore what cannot). This system of codes and values—as sites of recognition—forms an aesthetic. The distribution of the sensible affects who will be classed as desirable or undesirable in any particular regime, what sounds will be classified as harmonious and others dismissed as noise. From this point of departure,

Rancière explains the relationship between politics and aesthetics as one which shapes the distribution of the sensible and plays a crucial role in the elaboration of any community. He writes: “Politics consists in reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible which defines the common of a community, to introduce into it new subjects and objects, to render visible what had not been and to make heard as speakers those who had been perceived as noisy animals” (25). The distribution of the sensible thus allows us to think about how it is that we might speak, recognize and belong together.

In addition, aesthetics, according to Rancière, “can be understood...as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” (13). In other words, an aesthetic comes into being because of underlying assumptions and logics which allow any particular object, performance or thought to be perceived and classified in any or multiple ways. Rancière demonstrates how this distribution of the sensible provides us with an aesthetic that depends on political interactions to achieve the very intelligibility of that aesthetic form. For Rancière, the highly politicized mode of organizing social space allows who can speak and be heard and what can be seen and understood.¹⁸ Rancière’s insights, understood alongside the above discussion of modernities, draws attention to the ways in which aesthetics are tied to, and in fact make legible, practices of exclusion.

Here, classical ballet takes the stage. As outlined in the introduction and earlier in this chapter, while the usage of ballet as a political tool is tied to the inception of the art form, the ways in which ballet bodies are formed and recognized as emblematic of their art change within modernities’ paradigms. Part of classical dance training requires that the corporeality of the ballet aesthetic carry over into daily life (as is evidenced through

the dancers' voices in the epigraph). Ballet, then, no longer represents an activity that people simply 'do.' Instead, the physical training of ballet bodies requires constant and meticulous attention. No longer do ordinary people dance in ballets, but instead, highly skilled and specialized professionals perform increasingly complex works. Ballet bodies constitute the classical ballet aesthetic, whereas other bodies do not. The category of ballet dancer, as we know it, comes into being alongside modernities as simultaneously a product and also a mode of reproduction of social life. Here, the finely tuned bodies that are ballet bodies are also individuals' bodies. Whether onstage or off, trained ballet bodies carry within their very musculature the traces of the classical ballet aesthetic.

The deployment of the classical ballet aesthetic, when working in the service of modernities, inscribes those logics of inclusion and exclusion in, on and through classical ballet bodies. This implies, of course, that ballet functions as a political tool. Ballet works both intra-nationally and internationally to achieve projects of nation building. Within one's own nation-state, ballet can be a means of: asserting a national identity, retelling history, or envisioning a political future with hope of some kind.¹⁹ One specific example can be seen with Canada's *Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company* (RWB), where, following the Canadian government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (tra.ca), it mounted an original ballet in 2016 entitled *Going Home Star – Truth and Reconciliation*. This newly choreographed ballet aims to convey that “without truth, there is no reconciliation” (rwb.org). This is nation building, the aestheticization of daily life, and a narrative that calls up colonial and Indigenous histories.

Internationally, classical ballet becomes adopted as a means to incorporate Western logics in a nation, and yet, it continues to tell traditional stories of other

particular geographic locations through performance art.²⁰ Here, classical ballet manifests as a site of struggle and contradictions. On the one hand, ballet is a Eurocentric art form whose practices take as its point of departure Western ideas of the body, gender, race and sexualities. On the other hand, many nations have used the methods of classical ballet and its training to re-conceptualize and rearticulate their own national identities without reference to the classical ballet canon. In so doing, however, these re-conceptualizations still rely on classical ballet bodies meticulously crafted by modernities' logics. Indeed, ballet, as performance art, serves to aestheticize daily life, including "the development and maintenance of communities, the social life and the force of memory" (Hamera 100). Retelling the imagined collective realities of daily life through dance thus presents an aestheticized version of very specific nation building projects—some which may not be straightforwardly European. Even so, as those stories are conveyed the aesthetic formed through Eurocentric practice persists. Accordingly, nation building stories and future reimaginings rest upon modernities' social interventions while visibly playing them out through and by dancers' bodies both onstage and off. The category of the ballet dancer accordingly comes into being alongside modernities.

Thus far, I have made the case for ballet as a mode of production for modernities' bodies. I have demonstrated how a mode of production incorporates both technologies of production as well as facets of social reproduction. The classical ballet aesthetic and its ballet bodies experience the interrelationship of these two. As outlined in the introduction, with the professionalization of ballet dancers, increases in scientific knowledge about anatomy, nutrition and the body, alongside technology capable of

building better pointe shoes: ballet bodies are produced as objects. However, ballet bodies also are socially reproduced as the embodiment of an individual. Ballet works as a mode of production for modernities' bodies and through that mode of production a myriad of other logics manifest. From this point of departure, I now turn my attention to class, gender and racialization as those specific logics, through modernities' wake, intersect and inform the classical ballet aesthetic and the production of its bodies.

Classical Ballet's Modern State(s)

To begin, the material realities of daily life influence and are influenced by the classical ballet aesthetic. Specifically, class status and economics greatly influence classical ballet. In countries which use a domestic capitalist structure, only those people who can afford the amount of training required for professionalization succeed to become visible representatives of the aesthetics' paradigm. While sometimes there are exceptions of individuals who make it to the professional echelon without financial backing from their parents, these examples are few and far between.²¹ Accordingly, the bodies we see gracing the stage largely come from upper to middle class families who place their children in classical ballet lessons and are able to afford to send those students to professional training programs if they are accepted.²² Ballet is clearly not a neutral artistic form; it is underpinned by privilege and access. Dancers seen on stage performing professionally reflect only those students whose families are able to afford the training processes leading to professionalization. The lived material realities of individuals in their states, therefore, affects who is seen as emblematic of classical ballet and which bodies constitute the aesthetic.

As the state governs the lived material realities of its citizens, critiques of the state for its organization of material and bureaucratic life remain relevant to the classical ballet aesthetic.²³ Here, hierarchies are established and power relations structure modes of social organization and affect relationships between gendered and racialized subjects. Considering the inherently gendered structure of the state, political theorist Carole Pateman writes “[t]he most famous and influential political story of modern times is found in the writings of the social contract theorists” (Pateman in Pateman & Mills 1).²⁴ By providing a feminist reading of the social contract theorists, Pateman argues that these contracts constitute “relationships of subordination” based on gender inherent to the state (2). Building on this point, Wendy Brown shows that logics of exclusion operate to privilege masculinity over femininity within the state. She writes: “this means elements of the state identifiable as masculinist correspond not to some property contained within men, but to the conventions of power and privilege *constitutive* of gender within an order of male dominance” (167, emphasis in original). Put differently, the very ways in which the state operates, as argued by Pateman and Brown, serves to privilege masculinity and subordinate femininity within the mechanisms and technologies for regulating daily life. These logics extend to classical ballet and its aesthetics where gender relations mirror those that Pateman and Brown discuss. Similarly, Charles Mills writes of the racial contract that “white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today” (101). As such, Mills sees the social contract not as one that articulates a “we the people” inclusive of everybody, but rather, as one “between just the people who count, the people who really are people (‘we the white people’). So it is a racial contract” (133). The racial contract thus works

to systematically racialize bodies and spaces within modern social orders and the state. Its work remains normalized and invisibilized to its white beneficiaries and operates in the background of what I consider to be the aesthetics of daily life.

I have demonstrated that modernities are incomplete and multiple, as well as deploying logics of inclusion and exclusion that produce norms and social processes based on class, privilege, gender, and race. I have pointed to how one of the key features of modernities is the state and its preoccupation with and regulation of the life of its citizens. These processes necessarily include conforming to the ideals of the national subject and exclude or marginalize those upon whom the ideal national subject's intelligibility rests. Of particular concern are those excluded from the benefits of material life – or those institutions which operate to privilege some and relegate others to social positions of subordination and domination. The work of these logics in and through nation building projects remains central to my argument of ballet as a mode of production for modernities' bodies precisely because these logics manifest not only in specific geographic states, but also across space and time. Put differently, modernities' logics work beyond the scope of any individual state's regulatory framework through the classical ballet aesthetic. Where ballet bodies produced within any particular nation state will carry within them and serve the logics of inclusion and exclusion deployed by that particular system, ballet bodies also forge an "imagined community" across nations and states in the global classical ballet aesthetic.

The term "imagined community" directly references Benedict Anderson's text which examines how that national consciousness may be formed in ways that exist within, but are not limited to a state's territorial boundaries. Anderson defines the

nation as “an imagined political community” which is both “limited and sovereign” (6). He stresses the imagined character of any political community because “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Anderson argues that the articulation of a common language and the “convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created a new possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (46). In other words, individuals were able to imagine their participation in a community through communication and its technologies.

Anderson’s work aims to consider the possibility for nationalism that does not remain chained via a hyphen to the state. Indeed, he exposes the constructed nature of nationalisms emanating from “the imagination but that the most important of these imaginings, territorial, nationalism, was first elaborated not, as was always assumed in Europe, but in the creole communities of the Caribbean and South America” (Mitchell 4). Thinking alongside diasporic communities, Anderson demonstrates how national consciousness and identity manifest through collective rituals and traditions. Specifically, he discusses how the singing of anthems on national holidays plays a role in allowing members of any one political community to imagine themselves as part of that community (145). Anderson writes: “No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody” (145). This ritual of national anthem singing, shared among individuals in

geographically diverse locations allows each individual to imagine herself as a participant in a celebration of the nation at that particular moment in time.

Anderson's analyses in nationalism proves fruitful when thinking through the classical ballet aesthetic. For the classic "canon" of balletic texts are those continually replicated across space and time. Such ballets, like *Swan Lake* or *The Nutcracker*, are canonical because even those with virtually no association with ballet would recognize them as a ballet. Further, dancers of all nation-states see themselves as part of this global classical ballet aesthetic – they dance the language of ballet, their bodies have been meticulously trained to perform this language and they view belonging to ballet as their primary allegiance. Evidence for this can be found within the political defectors, whose bodies had been trained in their own nation-states and who sought political asylum in other countries based on their affinity and prowess within classical ballet.²⁵ These relationships rely on the rituals and traditions inherent to ballet's imagined community.²⁶

As such, parallels with dance and its reach across space and time (in the ways modernities wish us to think) surface. Ballet and its methods are passed from teacher to student. One of the ways that students are encouraged to learn is through observation of aesthetic and forms. In the current moment and time, dance students have an entire repertoire at their virtual fingertips with YouTube and various video sharing websites. However, prior to the Internet's usage for this purpose, students watched videos of other great dancers or attended their performances, regardless of their national or geographic origin.²⁷ Great dancers performing were seen simply as that – great dancers performing. Indeed, dance training methods in different countries differ

in limited ways. The bodies of dancers onstage and off resemble one another across geographic space. These resemblances and the practices that produce and sustain them, not only deploy logics of modernities and nation building, but also, serve to create the very aesthetic that governs them.

Ballet as a state-of-being

Classical ballet, its aesthetic and its bodies, remain enmeshed within the technologies, systems and processes tied to nation and nationalism. While research within dance studies disciplines tends to focus either on the ways in which dance bodies are produced or the significations embedded in various ballets and their cultural implications, few analyses focus on the interrelationships between the two.²⁸ This project, accordingly, conceptualizes ballet as mode of production for modernities' bodies whereby the interrelationship between the aesthetic and its bodies remain central to my analysis.

To explore these themes, I evaluate and augment the theoretical vocabulary of Susan Leigh Foster as she articulates the Ballerina's phallic pointe. Alongside the Lacanian theory of language, Foster argues that subjectivity is achieved through ballet in relation to pointe shoes. Here, the ballerina or male danseur step into their subjective being in relation to classical ballet according to whether they possess or desire she who possesses the pointe shoes. Through Foster's model, she considers not only how ballet bodies are trained (with specific mention of the strength and types of steps accompanying pointework), but also the ways in which those ballet bodies are used for signifiatory processes through classical ballet works. In the following chapter, I evaluate

Foster's model and, using developments in psychoanalytic theories, I consider areas which remain undertheorized through Foster's initial assertions. Foster's main theory opens up the Lacanian psychoanalytic field to think movement and specifically ballet as a language organized around the ballerina-as-phallus central signifier. As an intervention originally staged in 1996, Foster aimed to reconceptualise both masculine and feminine desire, staking a claim for the capacity for female desire in and through the classical ballet aesthetic. In order to evaluate and expand upon Foster's framework, I perform a discourse analysis to demonstrate how the pointe shoe does indeed provide access to dance subjectivity in the classical ballet aesthetic and, accordingly, structures and is structured by the language of classical ballet. As a precursor to this analysis, I offer a brief overview of semiotics below.

Semiotic analyses in dance studies provide a valuable means to examine meaning made through and by classical ballet structures.²⁹ Semiotic analyses take their point of departure from structural linguistic studies by Ferdinand de Saussure.³⁰ Saussure identifies language as a system of signs expressing ideas (402). Building on the current studies of linguistics during his time, which identified signs as unifying a concept with an *image acoustique* (1317), Saussure critiques the demarcation of *image acoustique* and concept while proposing “de conserver le mot signe pour désigner le total, et de remplacer concept et image acoustique respectivement par signifié et signifiant” (1341). (“to keep the term *sign* to designate the whole, but to replace the *concept* and *sound pattern* respectively by *signification* [signified] and *signal* [signifier]” (1608))³¹ Indeed, for Saussure, *signifié* (signified) and *signifiant* (signifier) are “comme les deux faces d'une seule et même feuille” (*Grammatologie* 23) (“are the two faces of one and the same

production” (1208)). The signifier acts as the thing which triggers the signified.

Saussure contends that this association is arbitrary and constructed in the sense that there is no “natural” link between the sign (tree) and its signified (the conceptual markers and classifications of tree as they are understood). From this point of departure, Saussure situates language and the signification processes within the social: “[l]e langage a un côté individuel et un côté social, et l’on ne peut concevoir l’un sans l’autre” (Saussure 272) (“[l]anguage has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the other” (524)). Put differently, language contains both individual and social aspects and one cannot be extricated from the other.

Jacques Lacan critiques Saussure’s arbitrariness of signs. Here, Lacan takes Saussure’s sign “inverts it and opens it up” (Cobley, 9). In doing so, Lacan demonstrates that the signifier is not simply free-floating when it is attached to its signified, but rather the signified is constructed through difference from other real-life contextual events. Paralleling Saussure’s tree example in the process of signification, Lacan shows an image of two doors that are exactly the same. Above the doors, the signifier is written “Hommes” and “Dames” (Lacan 496) (“Gentlemen” and “Ladies” (416)). Here, the differences between the signifiers construct the conceptual meanings for the doors where it becomes about the “lois de la ségrégation urinaire” (497) (“to the laws of urinary segregation” (417)). Thus, meaning becomes a site of struggle where everyday events engender conceptual significations. It is here that critiques of language as a site of power that systematically marginalizes, racializes and genders subjects enter into play.³² Put differently, Lacan posits that difference constructs meaning. In his example of two doors with “Hommes” and “Dames” (“Gentlemen” and “Ladies”) written above them,

the subject is seeing the two signs and constructing meaning from their difference (within certain cultures). From this point of departure, an array of conceptual significations take place: the subject expects there to be washroom facilities behind those doors, the doors are more than just doors, they are modes of classifying bodies based on some methods of demarcation and cultural practices. These significations come into being because of the differences of the sign, and, as such, cannot be thought of being arbitrarily attached to any one signifier.

Thus, the field opens for semiotic analyses where material referents construct meaning both through sameness and through difference. These processes become naturalized through continuous repetition and the ways in which languages and cultures are passed from one generation to the next. As such, these meanings' associations should be thought of as *necessary*, rather than arbitrary (Benveniste in Cobly 63-69). This is to say that the associations of signifiers and signifieds are necessary for language to function as meaning is made through the shared usage of systems of classification. However, inherent to these shared meanings are clearly defined messages about taxonomy, value, conduct, corporeality, race, gender, class, sexuality, and... the list continues endlessly. These inherent code systems constitute part of what Roland Barthes understands as mythologies.

Barthes pushes the boundaries of Saussure and Lacan's accounts of signs and language to posit his own understanding. Barthes sees mythologies as "un système particulier en ceci qu'il s'édifie à partir d'une chaîne sémiologique qui existe avant lui : c'est un système sémiologique second" (*Mythologies* 187) ("a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order

semiological system” (114, emphasis in translation)). Put differently, for Barthes, myth represents the meanings associated with any particular sign that pass beyond its original signification. Here, the myth lies in the semiological second order. In his analysis, Barthes uses the example of an image on a magazine cover at a hair salon. He invites his readers to imagine a photo of a young black man in a French military uniform with his eyes fixed upon a tri-coloured French flag. Barthes reminds us that the description mentioned above is the first order meaning of the image. However, the second semiological sense – the myth – describes that “la France est un grand Empire, que tous ses fils, sans distinction de couleur, servent fidèlement sous son drapeau, et qu’il n’est de meilleure réponse aux détracteurs d’un colonialisme prétendue, que le zèle de ce noir à server ses prétendus oppresseurs” (*Mythologies* 189) (“that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors” (116)). In other words, the meanings stretch beyond the simple soldier in the photograph and invoke the powers of the French empire and its colonial project replete with its power inequalities through the image on the cover of *Paris-Match*. Barthes’ methods of analyzing texts with these mythologies can be seen, as in the case of his work *S/Z*, as expanding beyond the simple sign and its meaning – by bringing into view other systems of signification established through evoking mythologies of daily life and cultural codes. A current example of these processes can be easily made of Lacan’s washroom example, where invoking sex segregation of washrooms evokes histories of struggle and oppression of transpeoples,

especially in public spaces. A semiotic analysis would engage with mythologies of sex segregation as brought forth through that pair of signs.

Semiology, sometimes referred to as social semiotics, thus has been employed in examining texts of visual culture, and, as Gillian Rose states “it offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning” (2428). Put in different words, semiotics lay “bare the prejudices beneath the smooth surface of the beautiful” (Iversen in Rose 2455). Indeed, examining dance through semiology proves fruitful, especially where classical ballet, presents not only a story as an embodied translation of simple words, “but rather expresse[s] all that words never could” (*Choreography* 332). Classical ballet, thus, plays a role in its social differentiation of bodies and taxonimization in a particularly Western and modern manner.

As fruitful as semiotics proves for an analysis of classical ballet, Stephanie Jordan and Helen Thomas caution, simply using semiotics as a measure of extracting meaning from ballets leaves out other richnesses that intertextuality could offer (12). Indeed, while these classical ballet texts in their multiplicitous versions invoke different chains of meanings which relate to and result from modernities’ logics, an analysis of the meanings made through the actual ballet variations would eschew the bodies undergoing production by these meaning-making performances. In other words, semiology alone risks effacing the institutions producing and produced by the dancers. To this effect, the final section of chapter two offers what Rose terms a discourse analysis of institutions and ways of seeing.

Rose emphasizes that this form of discourse analysis “is much more concerned with [its] production by, and [its] reiteration of, particular institutions, their practices, and their production of particular human subjects” (4722). However, this form of discourse analysis concerns itself not only with words that are uttered, but also with the material realities and repercussions of discourse. Michel Foucault held similar concerns in his theorization of how discourse operates. In *L'Ordre du Discours*, he argues the production of discourse in a society “est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée, organisée et redistribuée” through procedures which serve the purpose “d’en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers, d’en maîtriser l’événement aléatoire, d’en esquiver la lourde, la redoutable matérialité” (11) (“I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome, materiality” (216)). Put differently, for Foucault, discourse regulates material life and it achieves this regulation by way of deploying systematic logics of inclusion and exclusion. Foucault describes at great length how taboos and that which remains unsaid function to this aim. The methods through which discourse operates demonstrate the necessity for an interrogation of any particular schema of knowledge. Indeed, this concern is found within Foucault’s other works, where he maintains that “[d]ans une culture et à un moment donné, il n’y a jamais qu’une épistémè, qui définit les conditions de possibilité de tout savoir” (*Les mots* 179, emphasis in original) (“In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice” (168,

emphasis in translation)). In other words, at any given moment, there is never just one conceptual framework for making meaning in operation. We can see this in action if we return to Barthes' example.

Barthes praises the magazine cover because of the zeal with which the Black soldier on the front looks at the French flag in his military salute. Barthes uses this expression to instill pride of Frenchness and of militarism and declares that to be the image's signifier. The levels at which these discourses operate to produce Barthes' understanding of the text, however, disavow the logics highlighted through Mills' racial contract, yet remain predicated upon its existence. Barthes uses this pictorial example as one proclaiming the successes of colonialism and empire where *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* are personified. A slight alteration of the discursive frame, however, would show as the second semiological order: the myth of colourlessness and the subsequent repercussions embedded within the socio-legal construction of the French citizen and the ways in which Frenchness installs itself within colonized subjects and precludes them from explorations of their life experience in anyway but French.³³ Therefore, semiological analyses of images, movements and elements of visual culture rest upon the point of view and discursive frames surrounding the images.

Such concerns about how discourse and knowledge produces and is produced by societies emphasizes the necessity for an understanding of a history of the present. Here, Foucault writes "Il nous faut connaître les conditions historiques qui motivent tel ou tel type de conceptualisation. Il nous faut avoir une conscience historique de la situation dans laquelle nous vivons" (*Le sujet* 1043) ("We have to know the historical conditions that motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our

present circumstance” (327)). He examines how, under different historical conditions, discourse and power operate to produce situated knowledges and subjects. Again, returning to Barthes’ image, once the colonial histories underlying the image in question come into view, and the voices of individuals actively experiencing colonization and its repercussions add to these discourses, the ways in which Barthes’ image’s semiological analysis is performed are called into question. However, if read alongside the socio-historical and socio-cultural contexts, the voices of scholars such as Fanon and Derrida, then the semiological analysis of Barthes’ image conveys not only what Barthes says it does, but also the disavowal of white privilege in the construction of the French national subject. This is power in operation. Foucault argues that power is productive, this is to say, power produces its subjects, objects and even its own resistance (*Le sujet* 1044). These processes function to render visible certain subjects and classifications at the expense and exclusion of others.

Again, we return to the regulation of daily life underpinned by modernities’ logics. Discourse also plays a role in the regulation of life as social locations and subject positions are discursively produced through conceptual understandings and intersections of race, class, gender and sexualities. Discourses function through institutions, which operate in two main ways: through their apparatuses and technologies. An institutional apparatus has been defined by Stuart Hall as “the forms of power/knowledge that constitute the institutions: for example, architecture, regulations, scientific treatises, philosophical statements, laws, morals and so on.” (Hall in Rose 4773). While apparatuses constitute the institution, institutional technologies are the “practical techniques used to practice that power/knowledge” (Rose 4773). Accordingly, the

themes identified by semiological analyses are situated with the voices of classical ballet dancers. These voices emanate from biographical texts, autobiographical texts, dance history and criticism to establish the powers and technologies of the institution of classical ballet to demonstrate how dancers not only make meaning onstage, but rather, sculpt their bodies with the very discourses of modernities. Revisiting the quotes in the epigraph of this chapter permits the framing of analysis in the sculpting of dance bodies because we see that not only are the aesthetics of ballet bodies carried beyond the stage and performances of classical ballets, but dancers live, breathe, transform and are transformed by the aesthetics governing them.

Chapter 2

The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe Revisited

The second woman is someone I had never met, yet she helped me get through my most terrible days in Sierra Leone and inspired me to be a ballerina. She is the ballerina on the cover of my magazine.

Michaela DePrince 244

George's statement 'Ballet is woman' has been so widely quoted that it's lost some of its meaning, but he believed it and lived it...I was his wife but I was also his ballerina. He was my husband, but he was also my choreographer. He was a poet and I was his muse.

Maria Tallchief 964-966

It is not often that a dancer, as a crafts-master, has won over two languages, steps and words.

Toni Bentley 164

The ballerina – an almost surreal figure whose representations surround us on everything from t-shirts to music boxes; she dances her way through movies and appears in our homes as stuffed animals or dolls. Ballerinas proliferate onstage and off, from mentions in literary works to implicit and explicit representations in movies and popular television shows.³⁴ While male danseurs find some representation outside the realm of classical ballets, their repertoire pales in comparison to the ballerina. The ballerina animates our cultural imaginary, standing in for many things be it a childhood dream, romanticized ideals of stardom and fame, a quest for poise and grace, tenacity or the ever-elusive “American Dream.” With such widespread currency, the ballerina takes on additional meanings. Encountering the ever-multiplicitous ballerina represents not only a single image, body, or figure, instead it stands in for a representation of the institutions, practices, texts, and bodies of classical ballet.

In Michaela DePrince's epigraph quote, we see this occur. DePrince did not know the name of the ballerina on the tattered magazine page she found thinking it was trash stuck to the gates of her Sierra Leone orphanage, and yet, she held onto hope for a fantastical, successful future evoked by an image of an art form she knew nothing about. DePrince writes of finding the tattered magazine cover and saying to her best friend: "Someday I will dance on my toes like this lady. I will be happy too!" (44). Right away, the image of the ballerina enters into DePrince's imagination and the magazine cover becomes her most prized possession.

The ballerina on DePrince's magazine cover, not unlike the countless other images of ballerinas today, differ greatly from ballerinas past. Which bodies are recognizable today as a ballerina, would scarcely merit a second glance by artistic directors or balletomanes of days gone by. Degas' voluptuous ballerinas, forever immortalized in his paintings and statues, are long gone. His ballerinas would scarcely be recognized as *ballerinas* if placed next to their contemporaries' ballerina bodies. The image of the ballerina thus disavows its historicity, pretending that its dancing bodies reach across space and time, remaining unchanged and as such, representing the figure *as if* its bodies are naturalized.

Pausing a moment in the repertoire of the ballerina to think about this supposed naturalness calls into question the regime of visibility governing the aesthetic producing and produced by the ballerina. Inherent to the naturalized ballerina figure, we find assumptions about the repertoire of classical ballet texts that she performs.³⁵ The long ago and faraway lands and characters come to life through the ballerina, and in so doing, the ballerina conducts her most precarious balancing act, standing in for ballet as a

whole. With the histories and bodies are long forgotten, they remain in traces of the musculature of contemporary ballerinas.³⁶

Where bodies of ballerinas change with time, so too do the ways that ballet are choreographed and staged. Narrative structure and abstraction mirror shifts in storytelling and artistic production in contemporary culture. Along with advances in technology and altered audience tastes, the ballerina takes centre stage and relegates her male partner to the background. Such intense focus on the ballerina and her ability to stand in for ballet as a whole, then reflects a particular conjuncture and aesthetic rather than an indicator of a universal, timeless, coherent ballet aesthetic. This particular articulation of the ballerina belies an aesthetic and its underlying politics produced by, sustaining and continuing the logics inherent to modernities as outlined in Chapter I.

To think the ballerina as a historically contingent figure provides an entry point for analysis. Moreover, to think the ballerina as a historically contingent figure provides a framework for a praxis of reading ballet and understanding how it acts as a mode of production for modernities bodies. Accordingly, I argue that the ballerina with her fetishized pointe shoes function as the central signifier which structures meaning within and beyond classical ballet. Further, that bodies stepping into this linguistic movement structure achieve a form of ballet subjectivity that not only functions within the realm of classical ballet but, by the very fact that they circulate offstage as well, are shaped and read through modernities' logics. Thus, the classical ballet bodies reinvest in regimes of visibility inherent to modernities and their logics. I make these claims in four main sections. First, I explain why psychoanalysis provides a tool set for thinking the ballerina

as a central signifier. Second, I examine Susan Leigh Foster's argument of the ballerina-as-phallus in relation to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Third, I push the boundaries of Foster's ballerina-as-phallus to examine how it takes its place in a regime of visibility for which whiteness serves as a significant signifier. Finally, where the ballerina-as-phallus depends on her pointe shoes, I examine how the fetishization of pointe shoes allows them to stand in for the logics of modernities operating in, through, and by ballet bodies which manifest through their circulation.

Psychoanalysis: Modernities & The Production of the Self

Why might a psychoanalytic tool set speak to the ways in which modernities impact bodies through the aesthetics of classical ballet? To begin, psychoanalysis as a mode of inquiry stems from modernities. On this view, Slavoj Žižek writes: "A century ago, in order to situate his discovery of the unconscious in the history of modern Europe, Freud developed the idea of three successive humiliations of man, the three 'narcissistic illnesses,' as he called them" (45). Žižek further illustrates that Freud's analyses represent scientific knowledge, the increasing medicalization of the body and mind as well as repressions of social behaviours (read: regulation of social life), all of which are inherent to modernities discussed in detail in Chapter I. Psychoanalysis, thus, seeks to analyze and understand the very constructions of self, brought into being through modernities' processes.

While Freud remains one of the most influential psychoanalytic theorists and his conception of the unconscious, during its time, was thought to be groundbreaking, my analysis takes its point of departure from the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan.

Differing from Freud, Lacan famously proclaims that the unconscious is structured like a language. His work “is not a theory and technique of treating psychic disturbances, but a theory and practice that confronts individuals with the most radical dimensions of human experience” (Zizek 78). Lacan’s theories, then, aim not at revealing what is contained within an individual’s unconscious mind as a governing force for her or his actions (as in Freud), but rather, “it explains how something like ‘reality’ constitutes itself in the first place” (78). Put differently, for Lacan, what we understand and perceive as reality is, in fact, an articulation where the symbolic, imaginary and Real interact in ways that produce the conditions of possibility for subject constitution.³⁷ Writing about Lacan, Zizek describes the functions of the symbolic, imaginary and Real through the metaphor of a chess game. The symbolic level represents the rules which permit each piece to move in certain directions; the imaginary assigns names to the pieces based on their shape; the Real “is the entire complex set of contingent circumstances that affect the course of the game: the intelligence of the players, the unpredictable intrusions that may disconnect one player or directly cut the game short” (161). For Lacan, subjectivity necessarily involves those three levels and takes its form when we use language. Indeed, “language is a gift as dangerous to humanity as the horse was to the Trojans: it offers itself to our use free of charge, but once we accept it, it colonizes us” (207). Consequently, for Lacan, language is of paramount importance as we only come into being as subjects through language and language affects the very ways in which we conceptualize and understand our own subjectivities both in relation to the self and also Others. Psychoanalysis concerns itself primarily with the reading of texts (93). Language then requires further interrogation.

In Chapter I, I examined how Lacan pushes Saussure's linguistic theory to demonstrate how signs are not simply arbitrary associations; rather, signifiers presuppose signification and social modes of organization allow for intelligible articulations of meanings. Put differently, links between signifiers and signifieds depend on intersubjective agreement as sets of rules govern how signifiers associate with signifieds. For Lacan, language organizes around a central signifier. This central signifier structures how signification operates. For Lacan, the central signifier is the phallus.

Lacan sees the phallus as the central signifier because “[i]n the traditional rituals of investiture, the objects that symbolize power also put the subject who acquires them into the position of emphasizing power” (Zizek 529). In other words, Lacan looked at objects that, when possessed by an individual, transformed him into someone who could exercise power over others. Whoever possesses the symbol of power, then holds the symbolic title and can act in the capacity accorded to that title. Zizek explains: “if a king holds the scepter in his hands, and wears the crown, his words will be taken as royal. Such insignia are eternal, not part of my nature: I don them; I wear them to exercise power” (532). Symbols of power, then transform any particular person into a king. This provides a concrete example for thinking about Lacan's phallus as a symbol of power. It structures intersubjective relations and provides a position for someone to step into. Those who do not hold the symbols of power, recognize the authority of the person who holds them and, accordingly, we see that two subject positions are established, he who holds the symbols of power and rules and those who recognize the symbols of power and are ruled. These symbols of power (or Lacan's phallus) structure intersubjective relations.

On this view, Lacan writes: “Car le phallus est un signifiant, un signifiant dont la fonction, dans l'économie intrasubjective de l'analyse soulève peut-être le voile de celle qu'il tenait dans les mystères” (*la signification* 168) (“For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of analysis, may lift the veil from the function it served in the mysteries” (579)). Put differently, Lacan identifies the phallus as the key to unlocking certain mysteries of subjectivity. He maintains that the phallus “c'est le signifiant destiné à désigner dans leur ensemble les effets de signifié en tant que le signifiant les conditionne par sa présence de signifiant” (168) (“For it is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole, insofar as the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier” (579)). Remembering that Lacan's difference from Saussure's linguistic theory lay in the fact that Lacan believed the associations between signifier and signified were not arbitrary, the phallus, then structures the ways in which signification operates as it provides the central category for thinking through signifiatory processes.

Returning to Žižek's king example, the scepter, then structures the ways that interactions occur with the person holding it – the king. Subjects of the king know how they must pay proper obedience to the king (and they know exactly how they show such obedience and respect), other heads of state know how they should interact with the king, in short the scepter and the power it wields (arrived at through intersubjective recognition) delimit the conditions of possibility for the actions and repercussions of the man who holds the scepter as king. The phallus, thus performs this function not only for figures like kings, but for all subjects through language itself. Put differently, where language necessitates and presupposes intersubjectivity (for Lacan, one only achieves

subjectivity through language), the phallus organizes the effects and associations of signifiers (read: signification). The phallic signifier, then, provides a necessary precondition for subjectivity.

Subjectivity then, for Lacan, requires that one either possesses or desires to possess the phallus. Žižek encourages us to think of the phallus as “a mask that I put on in the same way a king or judge puts on his insignia – [the] phallus is a kind of organ without a body which I put on, which gets attached to my body, but never becomes an organic part, forever sticking out as its incoherent, excessive prosthesis” (532). Put differently, in order for subjects to come into being through language, they must enter the symbolic order (the one containing the rules about the directions that chess pieces can move in the chess example), this permits subjects’ recognition and provides the conditions of possibility for both subjectivity and intersubjectivity. On this view, Žižek writes of Lacan, that the signifier is more than a material representation of the sign, but rather, it is “a feature, a mark, which represents the subject” (623). Lacan further explains, “I am what I am through signifiers that represent me, signifiers constitute my symbolic identity” (Lacan in Žižek 623). Put differently, the way in which I have my subjectivity known and recognized results in donning certain signifiers to signal my subject position within and through language and the symbolic order.³⁸

The field of signification for the signifiers are, however, structured by the phallus. Here, the phallus stands in for power and functions as an organizing force in and through language. It also represents sexual differentiation. Accordingly, the phallus’ relationship to sexual differentiation also permeates language. Language then, becomes phallogocentric. This is to say that language and the ways that signifiers and signifieds

associate revolve around sexual differentiation. Recalling Lacan's bathroom example in Chapter I, we see that sexual differentiation affects how even public space is structured through associations of signifieds with signifiers where at the end, the toilets in each of the bathrooms are the same, but the thing that makes them different is the apparatus of signification that segregates urinary functions revolving around a binary conception of sexual differentiation. This stance proves problematic for feminists, as in Lacan's framework, subjects can either possess the phallus or desire it.³⁹

An organizing structure that values sexual differentiation also promotes certain visibilities to recognize signs of such differentiation. As such, the very way that seeing occurs remains conditioned by the linguistic structures that constitute subjectivity. As such, Lacan "argues that certain moments of seeing, and particular visualities, are central to how subjectivities and sexualities are formed" (Rose 3228). Put differently, what we see plays a crucial role in how we produce and understand ourselves as subjects and participate in intersubjectivity. We learn to recognize and read for structures and symbols of power, and, based on our intersubjective knowledge, we know how to act and regulate our own desires accordingly. Recalling the king, we know that what he pronounces has legal bearing on our daily lives as he is recognizable as the king by virtue of the symbols that he wears. However, Lacan cautions that in matters of the visible "everything is a trap" (Lacan in Rose 3332). The subject is continually conditioned to see in particular ways. Subjectivity is not a *fait accompli*, rather it always already remains in process. Continual information about what and how things are seen persist in our understandings of ourselves and our subjectivities. Thus, what and how we see

structures our relationships to ourselves and others. This proves particularly relevant for the study of classical ballet and the figure of the ballerina.

The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe

One of the identifying features of a ballerina, regardless of her historical iteration, is her ballet shoes. While it is almost impossible to imagine an archetypical ballerina without her pointe shoes, the pointe shoe is a relatively modern invention. Where the roots of classical ballet reside in the 16th century, Marie Taglioni generally receives credit for being the first ballerina to incorporate pointework as an integral part of her style (Lee 148). Taglioni “presented the world with an effortless quality in her dancing” (148). Prior to her engagement with pointework, ballerinas who rose en pointe did so only briefly and with great effort. Otherwise, systems of harnesses and wires were used to create the illusion of dancers rising on their toes. The first pointe shoes, however, “were heel-less, square-tipped, satin slippers that were part of the fashion of the times” (141). With the aim to appear ethereal and weightless, ballerinas “constantly tried to improve their pointe work by contriving a variety of aids” (141). These took the form of adding ribbons around the toes of the shoes, or making other alterations to ballet slippers. “Silk shoes for stage use were reinforced around the leather sole and toe with extra stitching. Starched muslin, felt, or cardboard wrapped around the foot, added to the shoe’s strength while long ribbons tightly wound around the ankle gave extra foot support” (141). Commercially produced pointe shoes were not available until the 1880s.

At the same time as ballerinas developed strategies and technologies to remain en pointe longer, ballet's choreographic codes underwent revision to embrace these new technological inventions and capabilities of ballet bodies.⁴⁰ Here, the pas de deux emerges as a signature element of classical ballets, with its repertoire of movements rooted in 19th century Romantic constructions of Medieval chivalry. Lee writes: "the pas de deux succeeded in reflecting the twelfth-century phenomenon of chivalry" (141). The ways male and female dancers interact not only reflect ideas of chivalry, but also, with newly emerging pointe work, embraced practicality as balancing became more precarious. Put differently, as technology evolved, dancers were able to perform increasingly complex movements en pointe, this allowed for more spectacular choreographic phrases. However, it was more difficult for ballerinas to balance alone for long periods of time, this prompted the introduction of partnering work, which has evolved to what we currently recognize today in the pas de deux. Accordingly, ballerinas were thought of as requiring more partnering attention and here, "the ballerina became supreme, while the male was relegated to the demeaning role of her partner" (148).⁴¹

The aesthetic functions of pointe shoes coupled with representational aspects of classical ballet intersect with the material realities of pointe shoes, thereby producing them as, what Susan Leigh Foster terms "the phallic pointe."⁴² Here, playing off Lacan's field of signification as being structured by the phallus, as outlined above, Foster provides insight into how the language of ballet remains structured around the pointe shoe and the bodies that wear it. The pointe shoe limits what movements can be performed specific to the genre of ballet. These constraints bear on the aesthetic. One

example can be seen clearly through the pas de deux. Here, Foster explains that through this interplay found within the pas de deux, the ballerina, while becoming supremely visible, also becomes the object and her partner exercises his desire through her:

He fades away behind or beneath her in their duets, becoming an indispensable assistant, the necessary backdrop against which she sparkles...She, like a divining rod, trembling, erect, responsive, which he handles, also channels the energy of all the eyes focused upon her, yet even as she commends the audience's gaze, she achieves no tangible or enduring identity. Her personhood is eclipsed by the attention she receives...[j]ust as he conveys her, she conveys desire. She exists as a demonstration of that which is desired but is not real. 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, emphasis in original 435).

With Foster, I recognize the centrality of the pas de deux (and the implications of pointe shoes in its choreographic codes) as integral to the contemporary ballet aesthetic. Indeed, in the contemporary iterations of pas de deux, the ballerina is always the focus of attention and she appears to be manipulated by her male partner to make a variety of different poses, often obscuring her male partner from view.⁴³ The focus of ballet, thus, remains on the ballerina. Foster moves to establish the ballerina as the phallus – the central figure of organizing desire and subjectivity in the classical ballet aesthetic.

Thinking through Foster's understanding of the ballerina-as-phallus requires that we examine the ways that classical ballet functions as a language and how, in this instance, the ballerina-as-phallus becomes the central signifier that structures signficatory processes.⁴⁴ To begin, “[d]ance communicates ideas, stories, emotions, and

modes, much like prose and poetry” (*The language of dance* 40). Further, there are conventions and grammars that govern how movement can be assembled to make meaning. Particularly within classical ballet, certain movements and configurations render nonsense and become classified as modern or contemporary dance as they no longer conform to the grammar of classical ballet. One of the ways that this is achieved is through sexual differentiation in choreography. Specific movement patterns and roles are expected to be performed by women and others by men.⁴⁵ The key defining feature of this gendered differentiation of movement lies within the pointe shoe, which becomes associated with femininity, etherealness, and magic.

While a handful of roles in classical ballet exist where men can dance en pointe, these roles pertain to characters who are fantastical (Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), animals (Bottom in *The Dream* or Pigling Bland in *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*), or in drag and comical (The Ugly Stepsisters in *Cinderella* or Mother Gignone in *The Nutcracker*).⁴⁶ Nowhere do male dancers dance en pointe in a way that is choreographically masculine.⁴⁷ Pointe shoes and the bodies that wear or do not wear them structure signification. Pointe shoes gender movement in the classical ballet context. Pointe shoes foreground and foreclose possibilities for movement opportunities in classical ballet. Accordingly, if we think through the figure of the ballerina-as-phallus and its relationship to language, we see that while the ballerina-as-phallus structures the field of signification, her pointe shoes transform human dancing bodies into ballerinas.⁴⁸

Here we can draw more insights from Lacan, where subjects assume positions in the symbolic order through their entry into language. Put differently, Žižek reading

Lacan uses the metaphor of masks to speak of the ways in which subjects step into a capacity to act, speak and be. Subjectivity remains tethered to the ways that various subject positions are determined by other signifiers in the symbolic order. Likewise, pointe shoes are the transformative “foot masks” of classical ballet that permit entry into ballet’s symbolic order. Bodies step into classical ballet through their relationship with pointe shoes, they either wear them, or support those who wear them. Any ballet bodies’ subjectivity depends on its recognition and relationship to pointe shoes. This is not simply an intellectual exercise or recognition, but also a kinesthetic one, where bodies know and feel the impacts of their symbolic order.

Dancers possess kinesthetic intelligence, where problem-solving skills develop through bodily knowledges (*Choreographing* 40). Foster’s recent work focuses on kinesthesia, where patterns of movement are looked at not only as being complements to rituals or languages, but rather, “these patterns constitute a way of knowing in a given cultural context, a form or embodied knowledge in which ‘are stored intertwined, corporeal, emotional and conceptual memories’” (7). Put differently, the body knows in its own way. For example, if I forget a dance sequence, I start to repeat the parts that I know and most times, my body will continue the phrase and complete it, even if my mind cannot remember what comes next. Dance students, too, develop this ability. In the earlier phases of their training, their bodies do not quite understand the grammar of classical ballet, but in the later stages of their training, they are encouraged to, in moments of non-memory, let go and let their bodies remember it for them. Usually the body in question completes the movement and the young dancer is surprised at the outcome as they did not think they mentally knew the steps that followed, but their

body did. Bodies know. Bodies learn. Accordingly, bodies move in accordance with the grammatical structures that govern their particular disciplines and existences. As such, ballerinas and male dancers take their places as embodied subjects within the classical ballet discipline structured by the phallic pointe. While pointe shoes and their ballerinas serve to structure the field of classical ballet signification, other signifiers inherited from modernities' logics impact the visualities of the classical ballet aesthetic.

Moving Beyond the Ballerina's Phallic Pointe

Where Foster's mapping of the phallic pointe functions as a gendered critique of psychoanalysis and the ballerina-as-phallus as foreclosing possibilities for women's desire through ballet, she does little to critique the regime of visibility enabling this central signifier. Certainly, she mentions "both *her* and *his* bodies mention the marks of colonization and colonial contact" (*Phallic* 435, emphasis in original), however, she neglects to think through how the regime of visibility governing ballet depends upon exclusionary practices such that the agential female desire of her concern may not be the only form of desire foreclosed by her invocation of the psychoanalytic frame. In other words, Foster abstracts her analysis and neglects how the visible aesthetic of ballet interacts with other visual elements, for instance, how ballet – in the current conjuncture – mobilizes whiteness, femininity, masculinity, heterosexuality and ablebodiedness to name just a few of modernities' logics at play in this aesthetic realm. In this section, I am primarily concerned with the racializing logics persisting through classical ballet's aesthetics. Whether it be through the very aesthetic underlying the grammatical codes of classical ballet and its phallic pointes, or the material bodies

performing classical ballet, racializing logics operate as significant signifiers in the classical ballet aesthetic.⁴⁹ Further, this operation is not unique to ballet, as such critiques emanate from scholars engaging with psychoanalysis.

As mentioned in Chapter I, Frantz Fanon critiques subjectivity from the standpoint of blackness in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*). Fanon's analysis proceeds from a colonial point of departure and how colonizers take account of the French Antilles. Through a variety of literary and personal examples, Fanon demonstrates how the cultural imposition of regulatory language and practices structure the lives of black people originally from Martinique and Antilles. In so doing, he invokes psychoanalysis to demonstrate how the production of blackness relies upon its Other. Fanon writes: "Tout peuple colonisé – c'est-à-dire tout peuple au sein duquel a pris naissance un complexe d'infériorité, du fait de la mise au tombeau de l'originalité culturelle locale se situe vis-à-vis du langage de la nation civilisatrice, c'est-à-dire de la culture métropolitaine" (143) ("All colonized people – in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave – position themselves in relation to the civilizing language. i.e., the metropolitan culture" (2)). Put differently, Fanon highlights how language operates to produce an inferiority complex in colonized peoples as it denies their pre-existing cultural milieu and installs a new "civilized" culture through the use of colonial language.

Through a series of examples, Fanon demonstrates how mastery of the colonial language generates perceptions associated with whiteness. "En France, on dit: *parler comme un livre*. En Martinique: *parler comme un Blanc*" (177, emphasis in original) ("In France they say 'to speak like book.' In Martinique they say 'to speak like a white man'"

(4-5)). While colonized peoples learn to speak French in schools and it becomes their first language, Fanon emphasizes that Europeans – and the French in particular – have specific ideas about “native” French-speakers. “Ce que nous affirmons, c’est que l’Européen a une idée définie du Noir, et il n’y a rien de plus exaspérant que de s’entendre dire : ‘Depuis quand êtes-vous en France ? Vous parlez bien le français’” (372) (“The fact is that the European has a set idea of the black man, and there is nothing more exasperating than to hear: ‘How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French.’” (18)). Thus, even French speakers since childhood raised elsewhere are made to feel alienated from the language they understand as theirs.⁵⁰ Language functions as a cultural instrument, whereby to assume it places the speaker clearly within the realm of the colonizer’s culture. Fanon retells an anecdote where:

Je me souviens, il y a un peu plus d’un an, à Lyon, après une conférence où j’avais tracé un parallèle entre la poésie noire et la poésie européenne, de ce camarade métropolitain me disait chaleureusement : ‘Au fond, tu es un Blanc.’ Le fait pour moi d’avoir étudié à travers la langue du Blanc un problème aussi intéressant me donnait droit de cité (416)

I can remember just over a year ago in Lyon, following a lecture where I had drawn a parallel between black and European poetry, a French comrade telling me enthusiastically: ‘Basically, you’re a white man.’ The fact that I had studied such an interesting question in the white man’s language gave me my credentials (21)

Fanon demonstrates how colonial language and the ways in which colonized subjects use it serves to reinforce the colonial imaginary of subjects. Where subjects speak in patois incorporating their own maternal languages within the framework of French, these subjects are positioned as not quite gaining entry as ‘legitimized’ speaking subjects of French. Further, colonized subjects who speak French in a way that makes Other

Europeans question how long they have lived in France or commend their efforts, approach acceptance and result in whiteness being conferred upon them as in the case of Fanon who was told, “au fond, tu es un Blanc” (416) (“Basically, you’re a white man” (21)). These moves work to privilege whiteness and particularize, relegate and subordinate blackness in the colonial imaginary. Moreover, Fanon’s example serves to demonstrate how stepping into language and subjectivity depends not only on Lacan’s central signifier of the phallus, which organizes the field of signification, but also, on other important signifiers that influence how, in any particular conjecture, human beings are taxonomized based on the significations that surround any given subject position.

Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks critically examines racialization in the context of psychoanalysis. Her project seeks neither to dismiss psychoanalysis nor to establish race as a logic of equivalence for sexual difference. Instead, Seshadri-Crooks engages with psychoanalysis to “focus on race as a practice of visibility rather than scientific, anthropological or cultural theory” (2). Moreover, she writes: “My premise is that the regime of visibility secures the investment that we make in ‘race,’ and there are good reasons why such an investment cannot be easily surrendered”(2). In other words, Seshadri-Crooks wants us to think about how processes of racialization rely on visibility – ways in which bodies are looked at – and how such taxonomizing practices, in turn, in different historical conjunctures influence and shape positions within the symbolic order.

Seshadri-Crooks emphasizes that, within the Lacanian model of language, where the phallus is the structuring signifier that anchors all three realms: the symbolic, the imaginary and the Real, race functions as a master signifier, not as an equivalent to sexual difference. Seshadri-Crooks carefully situates her analysis within visibility as she

explains: “Racial visibility should be understood as that which secures the much deeper investment we have made in the racial categorization of human beings” (8). Using the metaphor of a lock and key, Seshadri-Crooks asks us not to throw away the “key of visibility” simply to make the lock inoperable, but instead, interrogating visibility allows us to “ask what the lock is preserving and why” (8). Accordingly, Seshadri-Crooks embarks on deciphering racializing practice and elucidates that it is “ultimately an aesthetic practice, and must be understood above all as a regime of looking” (19). She wants us to think not simply about the fact that racialization takes place and has material implications for all involved, but rather, how the underlying phenomenon contained within visibility prompts the taxonomization of human beings rooted in racialization. In other words, what kinds of investments do we have in supporting and preserving such an order? On racialization, Seshadri-Crooks writes: “While the visible references of race can realign visibility according to historical need, the fact of visibility itself remains constant” (19).

Working from within the paradigm of visibility, Seshadri-Crooks posits:

the structure of racial difference is founded on a master signifier – Whiteness – that produces a logic of differential relations...The system of race as differences among black, brown, red, yellow and white makes sense only in its unconscious reference to Whiteness, which subtends the binary opposition between ‘people of color’ and ‘white.’ This inherently asymmetrical and hierarchical opposition remains unacknowledged due to the effect of difference engendered by this master signifier, which itself remains outside the play of signification even as it enables the system (20).

Here, following Lacan’s theory of language structure, language and difference are produced through a series of structuring signifiers. For Lacan, the signifier that explains how language functions is sexual difference. The phallus structures the way meaning is

made between subjects and how positions that subjects must occupy are shaped. Seshadri-Crooks accepts this premise; however, she points out that in any system of meaning-making there are other significant signifiers which delimit the scope of signification. Master signifiers for Seshadri-Crooks, thus, function as underlying logics governing what can be thought, how and when. Accordingly, Seshadri-Crooks establishes the master signifier which governs racialization as whiteness. Whiteness functions as the signifier against which relational meanings are made that are then ascribed onto bodies through practices of looking and taxonomization. Subject positions then become shaped according to the other significations ascribed to any particular material body's subjectivity. Seshadri-Crooks reminds us that "[w]hat we introject as race is a signifier, a certain structure of signification, a way of slicing the world, of making meaning and representing difference, that has its own logic or law that invests us as subjects with a semblance of coherence" (24). Seshadri-Crook's point is that whiteness as a master signifier structures the ways subjects relate to one another – and are related to themselves. Here, she mentions how "the signifier of Whiteness installs a system of racial difference that is unconsciously assimilated by all raced subjects as a factor of language, and thus, as 'natural'" (25). Her description of the effects of signification alongside Fanon's insights, illustrates how subjectivities form always already in some relation to whiteness. The symbolic masks' work, as Fanon's title indicates, is one relationally positioned to whiteness in the colonial imaginary which holds real material daily implications for all subjects.

Where psychoanalysis crafts the subject's position in language, in such a way that sexual difference is the signifier that anchors the three realms of the imaginary, symbolic

and Real, Seshadri-Crooks demonstrates that, in modernities' wake, whiteness functions as a master signifier that also affects subjectivity. Thus, bodies stepping into subjectivity through language, whether it be by speaking or by dancing, find their subjectivity shaped by these forces. Therefore, to bring it back to Foster's phallic pointe, not only do her and his bodies bear the marks of colonization and contact, but through a myriad of ways, her and his bodies visibly re-present the very colonial and modernities' frameworks as well as perpetuating their legacy through their very aesthetic beings. Bodies donning pointe shoes (or those which do not), not only hold the potential for desiring forces as Foster wants us to think, but also, hold the capacity for kinesthetic knowledges shaped by modernities' aesthetics. Put differently, pointe shoes, function not only to establish dance subjectivity, but also, to illustrate the ways that modernities' logics function in, through, and by ballets' bodies. The pointe shoe, when worn by the ballerina animates this field of signification through the phallic pointe, but when detached from a living, breathing dancing body, it functions altogether differently, as a fetish object. However, as illustrated in chapter 1, Sunera Thobani considers how fetishization functions centrally in exaltation, where special characteristics are endowed to particular subjects, which in fact, "concea[l] the social relations within which these subjects are enmeshed" (9) and those qualities emerge naturalized and as part of the humans that they are attributed to – according to Thobani – the Canadian national subject. As I will demonstrate in the next section, the fetishization of pointe shoes, through its many forms – the historical fetish, commodity fetish and psychoanalytic fetish – works to conceal the social relations that animate the classical ballet aesthetic and naturalize the

inscription of modernities' logics onto ballet bodies, thereby furthering ballet as a mode of production for modernities' bodies.

Pointe Shoe Fetishes

Since the first moment that Marie Taglioni rose up on to her toes, spectators and dancers alike have been mesmerized by pointe shoes as magical, mysterious objects. They aid dancers in seemingly defying gravity as they balance on the tips of their toes. Modern day iterations of pointe shoes work to conceal the tremendous effort that ballerinas exert while achieving this aesthetic.⁵¹ It is perhaps this seemingly mystical beginning coupled with the origins and elaborations of the fetish that render the pointe shoe such a fetish object within the classical ballet paradigm. Stemming from Portuguese imperialist trade practices, Williem Pietz traces the genealogy of the term Fetish. He writes: "The idea of the fetish originated in a mercantile intercultural space created by the ongoing trade relations between cultures so radically different so as to be mutually incomprehensible" (24). In imperialist trade practices, Portuguese and Dutch merchants encountered a variety of cultural beliefs and practices in their dealings with West African nations. Through their non-recognition of other forms of spirituality, the European Christians critiqued African practices of worship and termed their objects of worship as fetishes. Accordingly, Pietz writes: "Neither fully personal gods, nor fully impersonal charms or amulets, Fetissos were, simultaneously, quasi-personal powers and material objects that were capable of being influenced both through acts of worship, such as making food offerings, and through manipulations of material substances" (40).

Thus, the term *fétichisme* enters the lexicon in 1757 by Charles de Brosses in contrast to polytheism.

Endowing magical properties to an object as an aspect of fetishism continues as Marx elaborates his concept of the commodity fetish. On this view, Marx explains that commodities have both use-value and exchange-value. These two aspects of value allow for the commodity's circulation through any particular economy. Under capitalism, commodities come into being only through the labour of workers and the social value ascribed to the workers' labour and their own reproduction. Here, Marx writes: "[w]hile the labourer is at work, his labour constantly undergoes a transformation: from being motion, it becomes an object without motion; from being the labourer working, it becomes the thing produced" (123). This objectification of labour serves as Marx's point of departure for commodity fetishism. Indeed, as soon as commodities step forth transformed from objects in the world via human labour, they are "changed into something transcendent" (42). Marx situates the "enigmatical character" of commodities within the social character of man's labour "that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (43). Put differently, the worker's labour transforms silk into satin material and then into a pointe shoe. This pointe shoe, then, contains labour within it – the labour is objectified into the commodity of the pointe shoe. Purchasing pointe shoes, thus, trades money (earned through the production of something else through labour) for the shoe, and in that moment, the commodities stand in a social relation to one another, a relation which takes the appearance of a material relation between things. Accordingly, Marx describes how the commodity

fetish consists of “material relations between persons and social relations between things” (44).

Where commodity fetishism occurs when products of labour are brought into relationship with one another as values, Marx maintains that value “converts every product into a social hieroglyphic” (45). Hieroglyphics, unlike most forms of language, overtly reveal, rather than conceal conceptual structures producing them. On the function of the hieroglyphic, Orly Goldwasser asserts that hieroglyphs express meaning in a way that reflects “the collective conceptual organization of a culture transmitted through an objective medium” (98-99). Put differently, the very ways that meaning is made through a hieroglyph is demonstrated visually where the relations between conceptual categories permits meaning to be made. In describing the system of hieroglyphics, Derrida writes that it “does not surround knowledge like a detachable form of a container or signifier. It structures the content of knowledge” (*Scribble* 126). Accordingly, for a value to stamp a commodity as a social hieroglyphic it demonstrates the relations of production and conceptual logics therein. The fetish however, conceals these relations and the commodity appears unattached and fantastical.

This mystical character, where the conceptual work of valuation is concealed by the commodity fetish reminds us that “to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language” (45). Valuation, thus relies on intersubjective agreement. However, the myriad of actors, workers and capitalists that contribute to the product are all removed from view when the price tag reads \$50, £50, or 50€. This price tag and the money to be exchanged for it are also commodities because \$50, £50, and 50€ are not of equal value. The commodity fetish, then, conceals the social

relations of labour between individuals as they manifest through the products as things. Pointe shoes appear fantastical and have values of their own as they circulate as commodities prior to the ballerina even setting foot in them.

Pointe shoes take on additional “magical” properties as they circulate both within and detached from the ballerina-as-phallus’ psychoanalytic frame. Currently, under late-capitalism, where automation increasingly governs the production of commodities, pointe shoes are unique where human labour remains central to their production. The pointe shoe consists of a platform and box which are, in most brands, fabricated by one human individual with a heavy fabric and paste, much like paper mâché. This structure, along with the shank of the shoe are all encased in a shiny satin. Unlike many commodities which are mass produced on an assembly line, pointe shoes still require a great deal of human attention. The amount of human involvement varies among the shoe brands where Freed has one single maker with a shoe from start to finish and he stamps the shoe with a mark that identifies that particular shoe maker, to Gaynor Minden shoes which are built on more of an assembly line model but still receive human attention at each step.⁵²

While pointe shoes are a necessary requirement to think alongside Foster and the ballerina-as-phallus, the commodity fetishism of the pointe shoe conceals the ways in which labour relations and capitalism in the modern era interact with the ballerina, for it is not simply one pair of pointe shoes that she wears, but many. Pointe shoes can last up to 30 hours of dancing under ideal conditions. These ideal conditions allow for them to dry for at least 24 hours prior to being worn again. This is not a reality for many pre-professional and professional students as well as professional dancers. One

professional dancer may, in fact, go through one or several pairs of pointe shoes even within a single performance of one ballet. The economy of pointe shoes is significant. For example, in 2014 the Royal Ballet of London released a video to publicize a contest/fundraising initiative asking the public to guess how many pair of pointe shoes the dancers went through in a week. At the beginning of the video, the text reads that the Royal Ballet spends £250,000 per year (currently the equivalent of \$427,212 Canadian dollars) on shoes for their dancers.⁵³ The video shows an empty glass tube being put up in the lobby of the Royal Opera House and each time dancers wear out shoes during the week, they place them in the cylinder. By the end of the week, the tube is completely full. While they never do tell us how many pairs of pointe shoes were used during the week, the visual is stunning. As ballet requires these commodities to produce and effect its aesthetic, the economies of pointe shoes continue to thrive as they are constantly used up, discarded with new ones purchased in their place. As a fundraising initiative, the Royal Ballet's video promotes the pointe shoe as a commodity fetish as we see only the discarded objects and the price tag associated with fifty-two times that amount. The labour of the pointe shoe makers are obscured, as is the labour of the female dancers who take those pointe shoes, sew on ribbons, darn the platforms, score or cut the shanks, and participate in a variety of modification practices so as to prepare the pointe shoes to be worn onstage.⁵⁴ These social processes are all nicely encased in shiny satin, worn for an instant and then discarded to begin the flow of processes anew.

If we understand the pointe shoe as central to the ballet aesthetic and as such, integral to sexual differentiation articulated by the ballerina-as-phallus, then a reading of

the pointe shoe as a Freudian fetish object proves useful as the pointe shoes both literally (as in the case of the ballerina-as-phallus) and figuratively (as a shoe) threatens castration and subjectivities while enacting a concealment of loss. For Freud, the fetish imbues an object with a property so as to prevent its feeling of loss. Studying this loss within his understanding of the castration complex, Freud writes: “the fetish is a substitutive for a woman’s (mother’s) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forgo – we know why” (162). The story goes that a little boy is playing at the feet of his mother and looks up her skirt and discovers that his mother lacks a penis. Here, Freud maintains that “the child ascribed to the original castration of the woman to the father” (164). Put differently, the child perceives the law of the father as that which castrates his mother, and accordingly, holds the potential for his own castration as well.

Within this context, the fetish object emerges as “the vehicle of denying and asservating the fact of castration”(165). The fear of castration is thus concealed and displaced onto the fetish object. The fetish object, then simultaneously works as a “‘triumph over’ and ‘protection’ against the law of the father” (Kellogg & Swiffen 7). This triumphant object is not something sensational, rather the fetishist displaces his fear of castration onto an ordinary object. With this sleight of hand, the “banality of the fetish makes it appear at first to be an object of irrational reverence, but its ingenious aspect lies in the way that it makes available a form of pleasure” (2). Here, the fear against lack (of maternal phallus through castration) and pleasure in its concealment displace onto the fetish object. Once the fetish object takes on such importance, this may lead us to think that the fetish object may be revered – as it prevents the feeling of

loss. However, Freud cautions: “It is not the whole story to say that he worships it, very often he treats it in a way which is plainly equivalent to castrating it” (165). The fetish object thus may be treated either tenderly, with hostility or with a mixture of the two sentiments.

Where the fetish object stands in to prevent the fear of castration and women are always already castrated according to Freud’s analysis, fetishism, thus becomes “the male perversion par excellence” (Schor 303, emphasis removed). Here, the subjectivity of the fetishist and its objects are clearly framed from within a desiring male paradigm. The fetish comforts the masculine subject as his fear of castration displaces onto it. Fetishism “can simply be seen as a problem and a perversion – a pathology that needs to be cured” (Böhm & Batta 350). The comfort the fetish object brings also conceals the threat of loss of masculine subjectivity. Thus, the fetish object conceals the fear against sexual differentiation, through castration. If we think about the fetish object as being one which secures the anxieties surrounding sexual differentiation, then this too holds true for the ballerina-as-phallus as within the aesthetic of classical ballet, pointe shoes achieve sexual differentiation.⁵⁵ Thus, the pointe shoe operates as a fetish object both within and outside of the classical ballet aesthetic affecting bodies both onstage and off.

Keren Carter maps the pointe shoe onto Freud’s concept of the fetish. Carter takes her point of departure from the concealment property of the fetish. She cites Freud who states that the fetish article covered “up genitals entirely and concealed the distinction between them” (Freud in Carter 83). Accordingly, Carter explains that one key aspect of the fetish requires it “to stand in the fetishist’s imagination for both the ‘know’ and ‘unknown,’ the visible and the ‘invisible,’ disavowing the differences between

these states” (83). The fetish object, then, stands in for the maternal phallus, the “fantasy-organ of the powerful and potentially castrating (rather than castrated) woman” (83, emphasis in original). Drawing on Barbara Creed, Carter takes her argument one step further, positioning the pointe shoe as the *vagina dentata*, “the castrating female organ that the male wishes to disavow” (Creed in Carter 83). Here, Carter delves into an analysis of how pointe shoes are meticulously crafted and violently prepared. She writes: “they may be ‘scrunched in a door, stamped on, or {have} their backs ‘broken’ or bent for more flexibility” (83).⁵⁶ These practices of preparation all work to enable the pointe shoe to conceal the effort exerted by a ballerina’s feet so as to perpetuate the illusion of ethereal femininity in the classical ballet aesthetic.⁵⁷ Accordingly, Carter concludes that “[a]s fetishistic objects, these hard shoes evoke not simply the presence of the phallus which they resemble, but the fantasy of the *maternal* phallus which, for Freud, all fetishes replace” (85).

Carter’s mapping of the pointe shoe as phallus relies on evidence which considers the male spectator (and as such) arts consumer as the fetishist. Amidst a myriad of fetishistic behaviour, Carter describes one extreme case where “A Russian balletomane bought a pair of Taglioni’s ballet slippers for 200 rubles to take a farewell dinner celebrating the dancer’s departure for France in March 1842” (Sorrell in Carter 81). At first glance, it seems that the shoes would serve as some kind of decoration or central theme for the event. However, that was not the case. Instead, “[t]his gala dinner featured as the main dish Taglioni’s slippers, which, expertly cooked, were served with a special sauce” (81). While in 1842, pointe shoes would have looked very little like the pointe shoes of today and would have been made more with satin and less with stiff

fabric and paste, the feat of consuming a shoe, regardless of special sauce, would have been remarkable. The fetish object, thus, is treated both with hostility, as it is decomposed to be cooked, and revered, as consumed in the feature dish at the gala event.

Where mapping the pointe shoe as a male fetish object provides potential readings for audience perspectives, reading the pointe shoe as a female fetish object too contributes to the aesthetic of classical ballet in modernities' wake. Naomi Schor discusses the absence in psychoanalysis of conceptions of female fetishists. In so doing, Schor highlights Sarah Koffman as “the leading – not to say the only – theoretician of female fetishism” (306). Accordingly, Schor demonstrates, how, through Koffman’s Derridean reading of Freud, female fetishism is not a perversion, but rather “a *strategy* designed to turn the so-called ‘riddle of femininity’ to women’s account” (307). Put differently, for Schor and for Koffman, the female fetishist functions through oscillation, which permits her to somehow accommodate “her vision so as to see both the rabbit and the duck at the same time” (307).⁵⁸ The fetishist here can read multiple perspectives and positions within her fetish object, it tells multiple stories relating to sexual differentiation. Thus, if we think through the ballerina-as phallus and its pointe shoe, we can see the stories of pleasure and pain simultaneously presenting a precondition of ballerina subjectivity, one of movement, oscillation and strategies in perception.

Pointed Narratives

Returning to Frantz Fanon's discussion of subjectivity earlier on in this chapter, occupying subjective spaces produces discursive responses to the subject position. In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon discusses the ways in which colonial subjectivity and citizenry is ascribed alongside ideas of whiteness when he recounts how he is told that "au fond, tu es blanc" (408) ("Basically, you're a white man" (21)). Fanon is not alone in his narration of colonial subjectivity where Jacques Derrida, born and lived in Algeria (mentioned in Chapter One), discusses what it is like to be raised as the subject of one culture and yet, to be denied access to that very culture as a colonized subject. Derrida writes: "Imagine-le, figure-toi quelqu'un qui cultiverait le français. Ce qui s'appelle le français. Et que le français cultiverait. Et qui, citoyen français de surcroît, Serait donc un sujet, comme on dit, de culture française. Or un jour, ce sujet de culture française viendrait te dire, par exemple, en bon français : 'Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne'" (13) ("Picture this, imagine someone who would cultivate the French Language. What is called the French language. Someone whom the French language would cultivate. And who, as a French citizen, would be, moreover, a subject of French culture, as we say. Now suppose, for example, that one day this subject of French culture were to tell you in good French: 'I have only one language; it is not mine'" (1)). Put differently, both Derrida and Fanon speak to the ways that the subjectivity of French colonialism prescribes a particular set of social relations that are influenced by master signifiers and racializing logics. Their accounts demonstrate discursive ways those subjectivities and social relations can be traced through the auto-biographical reflections on subjectivity in the colonial environment. Accordingly, I will turn to auto-biographical

accounts of pointe shoes as a means to demonstrate the effects and significance of the pointe shoe as fetish and its requirement for the ballerina-as-phallus.

The attaining of pointe shoes signals a young dancer's capacity to take their place in the classical ballet aesthetic. I remember waiting impatiently for my own 11th year and how incredibly excited I was when I was given the list of preparatory exercises I had to do every night to ensure that my feet would be ready for pointe shoes; exercises to strengthen my feet, soaking them in rubbing alcohol at night and then putting lotion on them in the morning, etc. Currently, I see this same excitement on young dancers' faces and in their bodies when they receive the news of their first pointe shoes. This excitement for a pair of shoes that marks a passage into the aesthetic and conceals the pain accompanying their usage.

I felt little pitter-patters in my heart the day I tried on my first pointe shoes. The satin felt exactly as I had thought it would when I found the photo of the ballerina on the magazine. As I held the barre in the pointe-shoe store, I rolled up onto the tips of my toes, as my teacher had taught us. Suddenly I felt taller and more elegant. I removed my hand from the barre and balanced *en pointe* for the first time in my life. I felt so happy that I almost cried! I couldn't believe that, the very next day, I would dance in class *en pointe*. That night I rubbed the stain of my new pointe shoes with my fingers as I fell asleep, dreaming of becoming a real ballerina (DePrince 101)

Like most girls, I was glad to begin pointe – my image of a real ballet dancer was always up on her toes. Despite my other physical shortcomings, I had strong ankles and arches that weren't overly pronounced, as well as the courage it takes to get up on pointe. Being on pointe seemed to me almost natural (Goh & Fagan 502)

When I was eleven, Ms. Shields determined that my class was ready to go *en pointe*. We would be wearing real pointe shoes and dancing on our toes! We were beside ourselves with excitement. My first experience *en pointe* was not exactly

what I imagined. It felt weird, as if my toes were inside bricks, and standing on my toes, though thrilling at first, was decidedly uncomfortable by the end of class. Ms. Shields had taught us how to put lamb's wool around our toes to cushion them, but during the class the lamb's wool had shifted around and holes had formed that left my tender skin unprotected. I got blisters. Later, I learned that dancers actually taped their toes with masking tape to prevent blisters. But for now, I was a ballerina with blisters on her feet! From her pointe shoes! How wonderfully thrilling (Ringer 13-14).

Pointe shoes thus become a rite of passage, a means through which young dancers recognize that they are stepping into the subjectivity of the illusive and illustrious ballerina. While the shiny satin shoes hold the promise of taking one's place on the ballet stage as a ballerina, these young women are not naïve to the pain that results from dancing *en pointe*.

After two years of study, she [Marian La Cour] allowed us to go on pointe, rather earlier than is now considered wise, but for many mothers and daughters a pair of toe shoes was the reward, the point of all that training. I got my shoes, complete with suede tips for longevity, and up I went. It was a revelation. I loved it up there. I felt so important. I don't recall any pain, any bloody blisters, though no doubt there were some; I was fearless...To this day I think there is nothing more beautiful than the look and smell of a new pair of toe shoes, and I thought of that every time I sewed ribbons on a new pair (Farrell 472-486).

Before long, Mrs. Sabin had me dancing on pointe and giving recitals. But I don't look back on her with gratitude. She was a wretched instructor who never taught the basics, and it's a miracle I wasn't permanently harmed. And my frugal mother was no help. She always bought my toe shoes a size too big so she wouldn't have to buy them too often. Then she'd stuff them cloth pads so they'd fit and I'd be able to perform the double and triple turns on pointe that seemed to thrill everybody. Of course, Mother didn't really understand the finer points of ballet technique, and I simply did what she asked. I showed an aptitude for dancing and wanted to please. It never occurred to me to say, 'It hurts to do that' (Tall Chief 89)

Another [girl in our dressing room] is taking off her pointe shoes: 'First I rub the aspirin ointment on my foot – I guess it's absorbed through the skin. Then I put Saran Wrap around it, then an Ace bandage, then a sock and a heating pad – all night. Otherwise I can't plié when I wake up.'. Our first thought on waking up is, can I plié? Imagine a mathematician who could not think in formulas when he awoke unless he had a cigar and four ounces of green grapes the night before! We have certain recipes for working. They are physical because unfortunately our poor old muscles are not as reliable as our poor old minds. They must be treated like babies – rests, Jacuzzi baths, ice packs, bandages, Epsom salts, creams and God knows what else! (Bentley 320)

Thus, in the oscillation to achieve the aesthetic of the ballerina, any particular body dancing likely endures an extreme amount of pain. The shoes are at once desired and painful and seen in such an oscillating fashion by the ballerinas that revere them. Further, as Bentley illustrates, a commitment to dancing en pointe requires careful preparation and certain life choices that stretch beyond the excitable moments where each day, ballerinas awake to wonder if they will plié another day, if they will dance en pointe and how much exacting those bodily performances will hurt them. As bodies age, Bentley's narrative alerts us, the preparations and ritual become more important to ensure the body's capacity to function the next day as a ballerina. Thus, the dance subject always already prepares her body to re-produce the dancing ballerina.

Dancing bodies, like non-dancing bodies, are susceptible to age and the ageism inherent to classical ballet remains. Dancers not yet ready to retire from the profession they love are forced out because of their bodies' inability to replicate its presence in the classical ballet aesthetic. Suzanne Farrell tells her story of this time in her life:

After Saratoga the company had the usual August layoff before embarking on a tour of the West Coast in October. I

had now been dancing for three years with my bad hip, and I decided to take a few weeks off while I was on Cedar Islands. By September I was back in class trying to get in shape for Paul's production of *La Gioconda*, which I was scheduled to perform in Chicago, when disaster struck. I could hardly move. My hip was rigid. After my initial alarm, I decided it would simply need more time and coaxing than I had expected.

I was wrong. For the first time messages my brain sent to my foot and knee were blocked at my hip. I realized I had hit another level of degeneration, and this was one I could not overcome. With enormous emotional pain I cancelled the Chicago engagement. I was scheduled for only a single performance of *Tzigane* with the New York City Ballet in Orange County, California. I could not rally even for that. It was the first time I had canceled a performance because of my hip, and it was a great blow to my physical pride.

I could find no relief. I could hear clicking and grinding inside my hip where the cartilage was completely gone. Bone was gnawing bone, and I was visibly limping. Although I was still unable to consider the obvious – an operation – I knew this was the beginning of the end and decided it was time to retire (278).

Farrell is not alone in her expressions of the challenges facing her in thinking about retirement. Her predecessor, Maria Tallchief writes:

As I was teaching I looked over at Suzanne Farrell. She was in front of the room doing the exercise, holding her leg out to her waist, but she was slightly unsteady. I decided to give a correction.

'You know, Suzanne, I think if you lifted your leg just a little higher you'd have a better balance.'

She nodded. Then without making an adjustment, without even blinking an eye or twitching a finger, she lifted her leg up, up, up, so high that she was almost holding it over her head.

It took my breath away. 'Yesss...,' I said. I was astonished. Oh, my goodness, I thought at the time. Now I see. This is the material George [Balanchine] wants to work with.

Suzanne had an exceptional, innate talent. I had learned so much from George and wanted to learn still more. I knew I still had a way to go, but George wanted to teach someone younger, more malleable. And who could blame him? This was the way of the world. I'd had my turn. Now it was Suzanne's. In the future, who knew? It would be somebody else's.

Alone with my thoughts on the plane, I understood once and for all that my dancing days with George were done. They had been for some time. Our relationship as choreographer and muse ended eight years before with *Gounod Symphony*. It seemed like a lifetime. Once I grasped Suzanne's potential I could accept the situation.

The feelings I had for George would never change. The love we shared was as strong as ever. I revered him, looked to him for wisdom and advice, respected him as no one else on earth. I was forty-one years old, and for thirty-five years I'd been a performer. It was all I had known, really, and now it was past. Other priorities ruled my life.

The realization was liberating. Escaping from Venezuela in one piece also added to my high spirits. But my euphoria was short-lived. Looking out the window of the plane, I felt a sudden pang of fear. The future, spread out before me like that limitless expanse of clouds, was a world I was about to enter as a dancer no more. A ballerina retired" (5187- 5205)

The cycle repeats again and again, as the new, young eager dancers take their place in the symbolic order of the ballerina-as-phallus, dance and learn, developing their artistry and then, as their bodies increasingly fail due to age and physical injuries, must circulate in the world no longer as ballet bodies – cast off for their failure to continually achieve the classical ballet aesthetic which, as has been previously demonstrated, changes throughout time in concert with the scientific knowledge of bodies and physics. In an instant, the inability to wear pointe shoes and perform within the confines of the

aesthetic that Foster articulates removes dancing bodies from the category of ballerina, they are, in Tallchief's words, "A ballerina retired" (5205).

Pointes throwing shade and aesthetics

The classical ballet aesthetic holds rigorous pre- and proscriptions for bodies that inhabit it. These requirements relate to modernities' ideas of productivity, progress and beauty. Accordingly, when thinking through the classical ballet aesthetic, the impact that modernities has on the fields of signification are also at play. In particular, taking into account Seshadri-Crook's assertions mentioned above, pointe shoes work to solidify whiteness within the ballet aesthetic's imaginary. While times are changing and ballet claims to make strides into embracing diversity, the representations of what we see onstage is still subtended by whiteness. Put differently, while much progress has been made from the racist practices of Freed when the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) dancers called to get shoes and they were laughed at, Michaela DePrince tells a different story:

I had learned from a former teacher that wearing pink tights is supposed to give the body the illusion of greater length and extension. But pink tights don't have the same effect on a black dancer as they do on a white dancer. When I wore pink tights, I was cut in half—shortened—and I was already short enough. I was at a disadvantage when dancing in a room full of white ballerinas. They looked long and slim. I looked short and squat. At the DTH [Dance Theatre Harlem] we were required to wear dance shoes and tights to match our skin. In the case of most of the girls, including me, that meant brown. My particular shade of brown was Fashion Brown, and it came in a spray can. I sprayed all of my pointe shoes that color and dyed my tights the identical shade of brown. It was uplifting to be able to wear brown pointe shoes and brown tights. I had never felt so long, lean and elegant before." (159-160).

Here, the visual practices of taxonomization replete with its colourism persist. This, dance has inherited in modernities' wake. Dancers must look exactly the same, the classical ballet aesthetic replicates an aesthetic of sameness. What's more is that the dancers feel the aesthetic as they both know and embody it. Sierra Noelle Jones of Dallas Black Dance Theatre says:

I do love a fresh pair of shoes out of the box, I really do, but once I break the shoes in, my next step is always to pancake them so that I can feel more comfortable in my brown shoes...I feel more comfortable and more secure in my lines when I know that it matches, because then it finishes the line on my feet, those look like my feet (Jones in Forbes).

In order to achieve this aesthetic, however, ballerinas of colour add to their already time-consuming pointe shoe and costume preparatory rituals. The dance documentary *First Position* which follows several classical dancers-in-training through their competition at the Young American Grand Prix (YGAP) features Michaela DePrince's mother, Elaine, talking about the different techniques they used to ensure that Michaela's costuming matched her skin tones.

I spent my night dying elastic for the straps. These little undergarments they wear under their tutus, they don't come in dark brown. I dye all these things for our brown girl, because they're all what we call flesh colour, well white flesh colour. See this is dark brown...here? [Elaine gestures to a tutu that has a brown "v" in the centre of the bodice so that it will visually disappear when worn by her daughter and brown elastic straps] This has to become dark brown...[the camera then cuts to Elaine using what appears to be a sharpie pen to colour the centre "v" on another tutu] (10:33-11:03)

Pointe shoes used to be the same, only coming in a light pink/peach satin and dancers of colour needed to apply several layers of foundation to their shoes to make them match

their skin and tights colour to achieve the classical ballet aesthetic of lengthened ballet lines. This not only proved costly to purchase foundation, but also, diminishes the already short lifespan of pointe shoes. As mentioned earlier, where the preparation of a pair of pointe shoes for a beginner can take up to four hours and then a professional as little as ten or twenty minutes, applying foundation to colour pointe shoes for a beginner can take up to 45 minutes, whereas professionals might be able to achieve the same result within about ten to twenty minutes again. The product then must be left to dry for several hours so as to not transfer onto the floor, or other costume elements. Not only are foundation and other products designed to colour pointe shoes costly, but also, the amount of time required to prepare these shoes provides additional demands on ballerinas of colour to achieve their aesthetic.

Throughout the writing of this project, two major pointe shoe companies released lines of pointe shoes in a variety of shades to reflect the diversity of ballerinas in companies and also lessen barriers to ballerinas of colour in their time and preparation of pointe shoes. In 2017, Gaynor Minden an American pointe shoe company released shoes, tights, elastics and ribbons in the following colours: “Pink, Cappuccino, Mocha, and Espresso satins” (*Satin Colors*). Heralded as the pointe shoe company that “Just Changed the World” (Loeffler-Gladstone) “[b]ecause there’s more than one shade of nude” (McKenna), Dancers had the following responses:

Gaynor Minden has been there for me as an artist and as a person; they have made me feel included with their vision and brand. The pointe shoes are designed to be forgotten, while at the same time showcasing my technical ability. I love seeing how they celebrate the next generation of dancers socially while supporting and encouraging dancers of all shades to feel included in the ballet world (Lee in *Satin Colors*).

I could not ask for a better celebration of being a dancer of color than to be surprised by Gaynor Minden with a pointe shoe shade that is perfect for me! (Lall in *Satin Colors*)

Gaynor Minden is reaching dancers where it counts. Now – because the color of my Gaynors compliments my skin tone – I no longer have to dye my shoes. This leaves me with a cheerful smile each time I wear them, and it allows me to spend more time focused on my work, which is ultimately to dance with ease, comfort, elegance, and grace. I truly admire the fact that Gaynor Minden is appealing to the diverse world of dancers! (Munroe in *Satin Colors*).

Throughout these three testimonials, Lee, Lall, and Munroe all highlight how they feel included in the world of dance and in particular Munroe emphasizes how much time being able to buy Gaynors in a colour that complements her skin tone saves her.⁵⁹ Further, Gaynor Minden made the decision that it would not charge extra for any dancer ordering or purchasing shoes in its new satin colours.⁶⁰

In 2018, Freed of London, the very same company, that in August 1957 did not make pointe shoes for the New York Negro Ballet had a one month rehearsal and tour in London, announced that it would make pointe shoes in different colours. In 1957, The New York Negro Ballet, about to go on tour, had, as many companies during that period did, sent the specifications of their dancers' feet ahead of their arrival so that shoes could be made for their dancers and would be available when they arrived. However, “[t]hey never made the first pair of shoes...because they did not believe that black girls were dancing on pointe. [To them] that was just on the photograph but it did not exist” (Horwitz 3136). As Britain’s oldest and most prestigious pointe shoe manufacturer, Freed garnered more attention than Gaynor Minden did in the previous year with its release of multiple nude pointe shoe shades. In fact, many of the articles

released completely neglected to attribute credit to the production of pointe shoes of colour in the first instance to Gaynor Minden. Instead, media outlets like people magazine proclaim: “For the first time in their career, black and Asian ballet dancers can get pointe shoes that match their skin tone” (Kratofil). Balletblack UK, while it does not credit Gaynor Minden, proclaims Freed as the “first UK company to create pointe shoes for black, Asian and mixed race dancers” (balletblack). The list of celebratory reviews and articles proliferate.⁶¹

Regardless of who produced different colours of pointe shoes commercially first (as Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) was briefly supplied with different colours of pointe shoes in the 70s (Marshall)), the focus on the commodification of the pointe shoe and its existence in different colours to allow for the continuation of the body’s line brings us back to Seshadri-Crooks’ question about what lock the key of visibility desires to preserve in the psychoanalytic frame of subjectivity. Here, pointe shoes echo the aesthetics of modernities’ taxonomization of bodies through visibility and affects the subjectivity of its dancers. While it is great to see that pointe shoes now reflect a more visual representation of human skin tones, the times where dancers of colour still wear pink tights and shoes (in corps de ballets) to preserve a classical ballet’s aesthetic of sameness speaks to the ways in which classical ballet and its bodies re-perpetuate modernities’ logics both visually and in embodied forms.

Concluding Pointes

In this chapter, I have argued that the ballerina with her fetishized pointe shoes function as the central signifier structuring meaning within and beyond classical ballet.

Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Foster's influential essay, I have demonstrated that classical ballet relies on and deploys the taxonomizing practices of modernities' visualities. Further, through the foregrounding of ballet dancers' voices, I demonstrate how pointe shoes do indeed function as a necessary precondition to ballerina subjectivity. Through pointe shoes' fetishization and circulation as a commodity fetish, I have shown that these processes materially reproduce modernities' commitment to visual taxonomization based on racializing logics. Accordingly, the ballerina and her pointe shoe function as a central signifier for structuring meaning both within and beyond classical ballet, one extension of which is the larger view that ballet functions as a mode of production for modernities' bodies.

Conclusion

Dance Like Everybody's Watching?

As I watched Elena pirouette out of her proud wide fourth position I saw for myself, for the first time, what Balanchine had, perhaps seen in me. Having a small head, long neck, and long limbs was not enough. Being feminine and beautiful was not enough. Being technically masterful and musical was not enough. It was when I saw Elena dancing Balanchine for the first time – when I witnessed her willingness to take a chance – that I finally understood

Suzanne Farrell 305

Over the many years of my life, I have loved, I have lost, I have survived, I have danced through the darkness of the shadow of Mao, and I've endured the heavy-handed tactics of communism. but in the end, I have found the light and I have embraced what I consider to be the most important virtues in life: the universal law of truthfulness, compassion, forbearance, as taught to me by my Shi Fu, Master Li. It is those three words that have given me what I had always searched to find: peace, fulfillment and happiness

Tia Zhang in Bristow 517

And so my life as a dancer continues. In the morning when I awake, my body resists getting out of bed because of the inevitable pain. It might be a sore neck, or pain in my hips or feet, but something almost always hurts. I think of that first cup of coffee and the pleasures and challenges of the day to come, and I make myself get up. Walking down the long stairway in our house, I feel like I'm a seventy-five-year-old lady

Chan Goh Han 1634-1639

Every time a dancer steps into class, takes her place at the barre, she simultaneously takes her place in the history of ballet dancers who came before and those who will come after her. Ballet evolves alongside modernities to regulate the production and sculpting of ballet bodies for a specific aesthetic that tells specific stories of nation, place, and humanity. As such, Ballet acts as a mode of production for modernities' bodies. It conditions dancers to desire the aesthetic and to live and love

dance through and in their bodies. The professional dancer's voices choreographed through this project attest to the passion and ways in which ballet has captivated their imaginary and sustained them through hardships in their plight to take their place in always already becoming ballet dancers. Ballet produces its' bodies, the classical ballet aesthetic demands its bodies to perform and conform to certain ideals of sameness that are always already out of reach and yet, dancers feel they might be attainable lest they continue their ritualized habits of bodily transformation.

Susan Foster's ballerina and her phallic pointe helps us to think through the ways in which ballet produces a movement language and capacity for physical movement subjectivity not previously theorized. It neglects, however, to consider how this subjectivity remains nestled in – nay reproduces – modernities' aesthetics and the ways of seeing that modernities' logics encourage. Ballet functions as a mode of production for modernities' bodies.

The voices of professional dancers choreographed through the epigraphs of this thesis reveal that “[w]e have a different bodily structure than most humans” (Bentley 317) where “ballet was in my bones and in my blood” (DePrince 202). Acts of ballet *must* permeate our daily lives where we must “sleep like ballerina. Even on the street, waiting for the bus, stand like ballerina. So ... we liv[e] it...” (Tallchief 280). Ballet dancers have a bodily structure that is “trained [...] the way a gardener will espalier a tree to gain the most sunlight” (Fisher 16), so as to win over two languages “steps and words” (Bentley 164). As we move through these stages of bodily conditioning, we replicate an aesthetic that is recognizable in a multiplicity of locations which inspires and helps to “get through my most terrible days in Sierra Leone” (DePrince 244) or to

“dance through the darkness of the shadow of Mao” (Zhang in Bristow 517). And yet, these inspirations, while fixed inside the minds of young dancers-to-be are ever fleeting as the ballet body is a transformation of a material body. One which ages, where “[a] dancer’s life onstage is short” (Farrell 108), as the continual demands on the body to conform to the rigid aesthetic result in bodies where “[i]n the morning when I awake, my body resists getting out of bed because of the inevitable pain...I feel like I’m a seventy-five-year-old lady” (Han 1634-1639). And yet, this mode of production persists as one generation sees in the next the potential, the possibility to achieve that which could not be previously achieved. “Teaching extends my dance life. I am the beneficiary of every dancer who came before me and I am grateful. I am happy being a conduit to, through and beyond each dancer I work with” (Farrell 108). And so, dance masters (to use Cecchetti’s words) and teachers work with students and in doing so not only take their place within the classical ballet aesthetic, but also work to perpetuate it to the next generation, with new knowledge and understanding – yet, retaining the same visualities inherent to the aesthetic. “I saw for myself, for the first time, what Balanchine had, perhaps seen in me...It was when I saw Elena dancing Balanchine for the first time – when I witnessed her willingness to take a chance – that I finally understood” (Farrell 305). As modernities logics increase their hold on aspects of daily life, as more knowledge about the body emerges, greater techniques and theatricality is expected. The aesthetic shifts, but retains its rigid ties to modernities’ logics. These professional voices all emphasize the primacy of the hold that the classical ballet aesthetic has on their subjectivity, on their material and daily lives: “Ballet had defined me for so long that I didn’t know who I was when I wasn’t dancing” (Copeland 1435).

These are the stakes. Classical ballet moulds bodies and minds into modernities' bodies through a vocational art form which infiltrates every waking moment. For every professional whose voice features here, thousands upon thousands of other dancers enacted the rituals, tried their best and were denied by the gatekeepers of the profession. These bodies too are formed by modernities' mode of production that is classical ballet. Where ballet makes you a superhero, it does so in ways that speak to modernities' logics. As classical ballet increasingly widens its scope from its artistic focus to the realm of physical education and fitness, these logics and their perpetuation into the aesthetics of daily life require further scrutiny. Perhaps, then, the next generation of balletic superheroes might be social justice warriors who fight against the logics of taxonomization who seek to always already install imbalances of power in, through and by dancing human bodies.

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¹On this view, in his essay "Two Theories of Modernity," Charles Taylor speaks not only of a single unified modernity, but instead, cautions that we ought to speak of "alternative modernities" (182). Additionally, Dilip Gaonkar, in "On Alternative Modernities" highlights thinkers who seek to problematize singular conception of modernity such that thinking with difference "will destabilize the universalist idioms, historicize the contexts, and pluralize the experiences of modernity" (15). Alongside these projects, I recognize the multiplicity and plurality inherent to the ways that modernities' concepts are articulated.

² Where the histories of ballet companies and modern companies differ greatly, the new works mounted by ballet companies in the genre of contemporary ballet greatly resemble the work of many modern companies who also strive to narrate national identity. As such, in the USA, I would include Alvin Ailey, while technically a "modern" company, within the list of "ballet" companies as it functions similarly and differs only in the way that it never performs classical repertoire. The institutions associated with the company, the training school, apprenticeships, etc, function bureaucratically and materially (for example performances and state-sponsored tours) and with a similar amount of prestige as some regional classical companies; Thus, I consider Ailey to function analogously to many classical companies.

³ For a fuller account of queer histories of ballet, see Stonley, Peter. (2007). *A Queer History of the Ballet*. [Kindle edition] Retrieved from Amazon.ca.

⁴ While a giant poster adorned Kingston's Canadian Tire for years around 2012, the only visual representation I could find now is in the red ball campaign materials. A copy of the graphics seen as part

of this jumpstart publicity campaign can be seen in the 2015 July newsletter from Recreation Culture Calls available here:

<http://www.rmwb.ca/Assets/Departments/Community+Services/Recreation/Recreation+Calls+Archive/2015/07-July/Recreation+Calls+-+July+29.pdf>

⁵ Benedict Anderson develops the idea of “an imagined political community” where individuals take part in rituals across distances and times that allow them to see themselves as participants in said community (6).

⁶ In November 2018, *Dance Magazine* published an article stating that Doctors in the United Kingdom may soon be able to prescribe dance lessons for their patients as part of the National Healthcare Program. Lauren Winnegrove from *Dance Magazine* states that this sort of prescription is “intended to take full effect by 2023” (Winnegrove 30 Nov 2018). While dance is not something officially prescribed by physicians in many other countries, I have had countless kids and adults enter my dance classes at the suggestion of physicians and physios and make significant changes in their lives as a result of the ways in which ballet crafts bodies.

⁷ For an excellent commentary and demonstration of how ballet dancers and ballet bodies are trained within different historical contexts, please see the Royal Ballet’s Lecture entitled “Ballet Evolved: How ballet class has changed over the centuries.” Here the ways that dancers train are influenced by the technologies of production (clothing, anatomical understanding, physiotherapy, etc) and knowledge available to them at that time. In this lecture, Ursula Hageli (ballet mistress at the Royal Ballet), guides six dancers through three historical periods of barre work. The entire video can be found on youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EjfGgvslDM>.

⁸ *Swan Lake* is perhaps the most iconic ballet. Dance historian Roland John Wiley maintains that “*Swan Lake* has become the balletic counterpart of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*” (218). However, that was not always its status. Carol Lee reminds us that: “In the eyes of Russian (and Soviet) writers assessing his [Reisinger’s] production of *Swan Lake*” (217). The *Swan Lake* that we now know contains traces from its revival for an 1894 memorial of Tchaikovsky’s death where Lev Ivanov revived and reinterpreted Act II. Our current day adaptations stem from this revitalization a collaborative effort between Maurius Petipa and Lev Ivanov.

The story of *Swan Lake* opens at the birthday of Prince Siegfried where he is at a celebration and many young women are vying for his attention. As part of his coming of age, he is given a crossbow. Realizing how he will soon be married and the future responsibilities that will ensue, he slips away from his party with his friends and goes hunting in the woods. On the way to the hunt, Prince Siegfried arrives first and gazes upon a lake where there are floating swans, there is one in particular, who has a crown on her head.

When Siegfried's friends arrive, he commands them to leave him alone so that he may watch the swans on the lake. As darkness falls, the swan with a crown turns into a beautiful young woman named Odette. Puzzled by this transformation, Odette explains that her and her friends have been transformed into swans by an evil sorcerer, Rothbart. The tears of Odette and her friends' parents lament from the lake. Odette tells Siegfried that the spell can only be broken if a man, pure in heart, pledges his love to her. Siegfried is about to profess his love for Odette, however, he is interrupted by Rothbart who commands the swan maidens to dance so that the prince cannot chase them.

Shortly thereafter, there is a formal celebration of the Prince and he is told he must choose a bride to marry. He dances with several princesses, but cannot decide as his thoughts remain on Odette. Rothbart appears with his daughter Odile and has cast a spell upon her as well so that she appears to be Odette. Enamored with her and subject to Rothbart's spell, Siegfried asks Odile to marry him. Odette, who has watched the whole affair from nearby, is heartbroken and flees. As she flees, Siegfried notices that Odette has been watching all along and realizes that he has made a mistake. Here, Rothbart reveals his trickery, that the woman he had professed his love to is, in fact, his daughter Odile. Siegfried leaves the party in pursuit of Odette.

Siegfried finds Odette and her friends consoling one another at Swan Lake. He explains his knowledge of Odile and Rothbart's spells. Odette forgives Siegfried. Shortly thereafter, Odile and Rothbart appear and Rothbart tells Siegfried he must keep his word and marry Odile. Siegfried tells Rothbart he would rather die with Odette than marry Odile. Accordingly, Siegfried and Odette jump into the lake. This confession of love breaks the spell and the rest of the swans turn back into humans. The now-humans push Rothbart and Odile into the lake where they also drown. The girls watch as the spirits of Siegfried and Odette go into the heavens above Swan Lake.

⁹ For a visual of the coda scene from Act III of *Swan Lake*, please see: Royal Opera House. "Swan Lake – Coda from the Black Swan pas de deux in Act III (The Royal Ballet)". Royal Opera House. 27 July 2018. YouTube. Accessed 02 December 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfmSv0z205s>

¹⁰ For a video representation of spotting, please see the Royal Opera House's ballet glossary video on spotting, which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88bsYB9i6Mc>

¹¹ For the full news story, please see: BBC America 108. "Do ballerinas get dizzy performing pirouettes" 28 September 2013. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3xgvo6X1xA> Accessed 02 December 2018.

¹² The list of commodities sold to dancers in order to help them better their turning is practically endless: “The Original Spot on Spin Board” boasts: “The Original Spot On Spinner Will Help Your Dancer Gain Confidence While Completing More and More Turns! Your Dancer Will Quickly Be Completing 8, 10, 12 or more turns cleanly and quickly. This board is fun for dancers of all ages! This board is specifically designed to reduce friction, which allows your dancer to feel more confident doing pirouettes. The Spot On Spin Board will have your dancer getting NOTICED! Get your child out of the back of the pack and into the front of the class!” (*Amazon.co.uk*). TurnBoard claims “The *Ballet is Fun* TurnBoard® is the preferred training tool for dancers who want to improve the key elements of turning. Find your center. Improve your spotting. Increase your confidence.” (*BalletisFun.com*). These are just two examples of turning boards and their claims, but there are many more similar products making these and even more bold claims.

¹³ In his manual of instruction on his method of classical ballet training, Enrico Cecchetti writes that students should study only with one ballet master so as to fully immerse themselves in the method of any particular teacher. To move from one teacher to the next was, according to Cecchetti, to not fully comprehend the way ballet was to be passed down from one generation to the next. Cecchetti writes: “Having definitely made your choice of a master, give him your whole confidence. Strive diligently to follow his instructions and ponder deeply on the reasons given for the execution of such and such a movement. A knowledge of the *why* and *wherefore* produces confidence and reliability. If you feel that you are not making progress do not hastily leave your teacher. There is a trite epigram which states that one mediocre master is worth more than three good ones” (Beaumont 18-19, emphasis in original).

¹⁴ To watch the full Ted-Ed video, please see: TED-Ed. “The physics of the ‘hardest move’ in ballet – Arleen Sugano.” TED-Ed. 22 March 2016. YouTube. Accessed: 02 December 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5VgOdgptRg>

¹⁵ While there is a general storyline of *Swan Lake* which remains recognizable (as outlined in note 7), dance historian Selma Jean Cohen reminds us that the production of is a complicated one as several original scores of choreography exist. Its initial performance was a flop and its most celebrated revival continued to evolve and change to suit the context in which it was performed (179). Cohen lists a myriad of plot alterations which include; Fyodor Lopukhov’s ending where Siegfried and Odette do not die, there is hand-to-hand combat with Rothbart; Erik Bruhn’s production where the prince died in a manner reminiscent to Orpheus by the corpus of swan maidens (and where Rothbart cast as a woman evoking Freudian psychology, which was non-existent at the time of mounting the original production); Rudolf Nureyev created a version where the prince failed to woo Odette and in the end, was killed by Rothbart; John Cranko had Odette survive Siegfried and was left waiting for the next prince to break the spell and

so many more versions have been created (192-193). Cohen's list enumerates a number of well-known professional classical recreations, however, in recent years many other interpretations have called into question more than interpretation of plot scenarios, but ideas and choreographic convention surrounding gender, sexuality and able-bodiedness. Four noteworthy productions of *Swan Lake* presenting multiple interpretations are: Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* (all the swans are male dancers), The Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo's *Swan Lake* (all the swans are male dancers, some of whom dance in drag), Raimund Hoghe's *Swan Lake, 4 acts* (plays with ideas of (dis)ability and time), and Frederik Rydman's *Swan Lake Reloaded* (a street dance/ballet/hip hop mix that plays off the original story of *Swan Lake*).

¹⁶ The discussions surrounding Copeland's fouettés include Maria Kouppari and Ibrahim Perez's 45-minute-long segment under the ballet popular channel dedicated to the fouetté discussion where they raise the question about proper audience etiquette that would have produced the video in the first place and suggest that this may have been something done on purpose as a publicity stunt in advance of the release of her book. They then released a 34-minute update on 25 April 2018, which rehashes the controversy and also states that Misty contacted them via email and explained her side of the story. Copeland's email shared by Kouppari states: "When I wrote the post it was like 6am and I was jet-lagged and it came from my heart. I saw the hateful post because it came up in my Twitter feed which had a link to the YouTube video attached. I was embarrassed and hurt ...but I felt it was a perfect opportunity for me to show especially the youth who are so affected by cyber bullying in this day and age that you can learn from the negativity to not take positive or negative words about you personally or too seriously and believe that it's one person's opinion in a subjective art form. I felt like that was a perfect time to show the public what we as dancers experience in terms of criticism that most may not know about and to educate those who don't know ballet well" (5:50 – 6:59). The conversation evolved to reflect the rigidity of the aesthetic of classical ballet and why Copeland experiences bullying to such an extent. On this view, Kouppari and Perez state: "No matter what she will do, she will never win. She will be judged because she represents change and ballet doesn't want to change." (8:57-9:12). The original video can be found here: Kouppari, Maria and Ibrahim Perez. "Misty Copeland fail – 32 Fouettes, Controversy." *YouTube*, uploaded by Ballet Popular, 4 April 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=V97X6yoFshk. Accessed 02 December 2018. The followup segment can be viewed here: "Misty Copeland fail – 32 Fouettes, Controversy. Update." *YouTube*, uploaded by Ballet Popular, 24 April 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=CovroIlg_Sho. Accessed 02 December 2018.

¹⁷ While Chakrabarty identifies the state as one of the central categories of modernities, other scholars have identified nationalism, the means of demarcating a people (either conforming to a particular state-bound territory or spanning across state boundaries), as the concept central to modernities' logics.

These scholars include: Liah Greenfeld (*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*), Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*), Eric Hobsbawm (*Inventing Traditions*).

Where Chakrabarty identifies the citizen (with its implied relationship to the state) as a category of modernities' logics, other theorists have focused on how modernities' operate to exclude individuals from states and to disallow them full participation in public life as citizens. As inclusionary logics demarcate the citizen and their relationship to the state, exclusionary logics operate to preclude others from conceptions of the national subject. Scholars considering these operations and processes include: Sunera Thobani (*Exalted Subjects*) and Paul Gilroy (*The Black Atlantic Modernity and Double Consciousness, There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*). Additionally, scholars that use statelessness as a point of departure for understanding the impact that states have on individuals include: Judith Butler & Gayatri Spivak (*Who Sings the Nation State? Language, Politics, Belonging*), Hana Arendt (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*), Giorgio Agamben (*Sovereign Power and Bare Life, The Signature of All Things On Method*), Seyla Benhabib ("Political geographies in a global world: Arendtian reflections").

Considering the subject, Michel Foucault considers the ways in which states exercise biopower over their citizens or those individuals who find themselves within any particular state's geographical boundaries who wish (or perhaps do not wish) to be called its citizens. For Foucault, biopower is a series of disciplinary technologies which regulate life by the state, rather than instilling the fear of death through the symbolic power of the sword held by a sovereign as was the case in histories' past (*Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie* 181). Biopower and its regulatory technologies work to produce the citizen as subject within the context of the state. Also inherent to the conceptualization of the subject, in Foucault's eyes, is economics. Here, Foucault understands capitalism to be an integral part of modernities where modern man differs from pre-modern man in his requirement to produce on the economic market. Foucault terms this modern economic man, *homo economicus*. Foucault explains that *homo economicus* exists embedded in "une dialectique de la multiplication spontanée" (*Naissance* 296) ("a dialectic of spontaneous multiplication" (my translation)). Put differently, *homo economicus* does not exist in a relationship where he must constantly cede his power over himself for law's protection; instead, *homo economicus* expands his power over himself through engaging in production and consumption in economic markets. Foucault thus argues that in order for the sovereign to continue exercising its power over its subjects, who are self-producing *homo economici*, it needed to change its power deployment strategies. The subject of the state comes into crisis then, because he is no longer simply a political actor, but an economic actor as well. His political action situates him as the subject of the state where he remains governable by law. His economic actions, however, do not allow the state to exercise its power over his subject position in the same way. Here, he is not governable, but regulateable. The individual, thus, becomes a member not only of the state, but also, a consumer and member of civil society. Foucault identifies civil society not as a philosophical idea,

but rather, as a technology of governmentality which seeks to establish relations between the sovereign power of the state and the apparatuses of production and exchange (300). For Foucault, this is an important shift in the history of governance because it shifts the way that power operates from concentrating on permitting life or inducing death to the production and classification of its members into categories. This move and these technologies exemplify the bureaucratic life-regulating and taxonomizing processes raised by other scholars of modernities.

Anthony Giddens discusses the rationality of the self in relation to personal experience and self-identity in *Modernity and Self-Identity Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*.

¹⁸The similarities within approaches put forth by Derrida, Rancière and Foucault are interesting in that they concern the stakes in power (Foucault) and politics (Derrida and Rancière) involved in establishing how discourses, languages and aesthetics operate at the expense of Others. Pal Ahuwalia has pointed out theorists such as Foucault and Derrida are marked in their intellectual thought by the time they spent in the French colonies. While Ahuwalia does not speak specifically of Rancière, he too was Algerian-born and followed a similar trajectory to those he does discuss, namely: Sartre, Camus, Fanon, Derrida, Cixous, Althusser, Bourdieu, Foucault and Lyotard.

¹⁹ For readings about the construction of national identity through dance, either through classical ballet or forms which take their roots in classical ballet, please see: Fisher, Jennifer. *"Nutcracker" Nation: How Old World Ballet Became a Christmas Tradition in the New World*. [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.ca; Castaldi, Francesca. *Choreographies of African Identities: Négritude, Dance, and the National Ballet of Senegal*. University of Illinois Press, 2006. Print; Ness, Sally A. "Originality in the Postcolony: Choreographing the Neoethnic Body of Philippine ballet." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1997, pp. 64-108; Croft, Clare. "Ballet Nations: The New York City Ballet's 1962 US State Department–Sponsored Tour of the Soviet Union." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2009, pp. 421-442; Lin, Yatin. "Choreographing a Flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan's Changing Identity." (2010). In *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* 2nd ed., edited by Alexandra Carter and Janet O'Shea, pp. 250-261. [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.ca.

²⁰ On this view in 1993, Joann Kealiinohomoku argues that it is "good anthropology" to examine classical ballet as a form of ethnic dance where it tells tales of specific nations incorporating Eurocentric flora and fauna, which are far from universal (533). Kealiinohomoku's text is important to dance studies because of the ways it calls into question how ballet masquerades as a universal and accordingly reframes it providing the potential for future scholarly engagements.

²¹ In particular Misty Copeland's story is considered to be an exception to the rule, which in turn, further perpetuates the American dream ideology that if one works hard enough and is good enough, success will prevail. Copeland came from a large poor family and was recognized for her talent by a teacher giving lessons at her local the Boys and Girls club. That teacher then gave Copeland a scholarship in her own private ballet school. Moreover, at different points in time, Copeland even lived with that teacher's family so that she could fully concentrate and devote herself to her studies of ballet. While Copeland's story is uplifting, it is also highly dependent upon chance and circumstance. Copeland was always capable of becoming a prima ballerina, but it was her good fortune that she was given the opportunity to do so. There are undoubtedly numerous other individuals out there who have incredible talent but who never have the opportunity to set foot in a dance class. On this view, Dawn Heinecken writes about the documentary *A Ballerina's Tale* concerning Misty's life and career that, "[b]y drawing attention of white viewers to the historical exclusion of black dancers from classical ballet, the film urges them to understand how dominant ideologies reproduce themselves through apparently 'neutral' artistic forms such as dance as well as the ways that aesthetic judgments about black female bodies are tied to larger histories of racism and domination" (606).

²² According to the National Ballet School of Canada's (NBS) website, the fees for a full-time professional training student range from \$16,550 - \$16,800 for grades 6 – 12 for students whose families live in Toronto and need only attend the day program. For students in grades 6-12 who reside in the residence, then the full tuition ranges from \$33,850- \$35,300. This does not include dancewear, outings, trips to and from home, etc. While NBS maintains that they are committed to "providing families with the highest level of financial support" so that "every effort is made to ensure no Canadian student is deprived access because of financial circumstances," (*nbs-enb.ca*) for the majority of families spending \$33,850 on one child's education is cost prohibitive when the average salary for Canadians (according to statistics Canada data) is just over \$51,000 (Workopolis). NBS tuition is therefore more than half of an average Canadian salary. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Professional Division does not have their fees accessible on the website. Anecdotally, from parents of my dance students who have been accepted to both programs, I know the RWB fees to be slightly less expensive.

²³ Feminist critiques of gender power relations and the state are numerous and include: MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Harvard University Press, 1989. Print; Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton University Press, 1995. Print; Rhode, Deborah L. "Feminism and the State." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 107, no. 6, 1994, pp. 1181-1208.; Raczak, Sherene, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George." *Race, Space and the Law*. Between the Lines, 2002, pp. 121-156. Print; Zheng, Wang. "'State feminism'? Gender and socialist state formation in Maoist China." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2005, pp. 519-551; Thobani,

Sunera. . *Exalted Subjects: The Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2007. Print.

²⁴ Pateman's original work *The Sexual Contract* went on to influence Charles Mills to write *The Racial Contract* and further, their combined work on *Contract and Domination* explores relationships of subordination embedded within the very systems of the state. In *Contract and Domination*, Mills and Pateman also explore "The Settler Contract" (35-78) and "The Domination Contract" (79-105).

²⁵ See, for example: Li, Cunxin. (2003). *Mao's Last Dancer*. [Kobo edition]. Retrieved from Fnac.fr.; Kavanagh, Julie. (2007). *Nureyev: The Life*. [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.ca.; Wyszomirski, Margaret J., Thomas A. Oleszczuk, and Theresa C. Smith. "Cultural Dissent and Defection: The Case of Soviet Nonconformist Artists." *Journal of Arts Management and Law*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1988, pp. 44-62.

²⁶ Invented rituals also play an important role in establishing nationalism and statehood as a result of modernities' logics. Rituals and traditions are no more *natural* to any one political community and its members than language; they are invented. Eric Hobsbawm discusses the invention of rituals and traditions in relation to the modern nation-state. He maintains that invented traditions tend "to be quite specific and vague as to the nature of values, rights and obligations of the group of membership they inculcate" (10). Hobsbawm continues by saying that the practices symbolizing invented traditions are "virtually compulsory," such as standing to sing a national anthem (11). Here Hobsbawm maintains that "[t]he crucial element [of the invented tradition] seems to have been the invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statues and objects of the club" (11). Put differently, status, signs and symbols and their relationship to membership are the important part, rather than the actual objects themselves. The focus remains on the emotional relationship to the processes such objects engender. These processes carry within them logics of exclusion as demonstrated in the discussions of modernities and nationalisms. As such, the enactment of nationalism through these invented traditions, becomes a regulatory practice for delimiting who can belong or who cannot. It also becomes a means through which the nation can be imagined – by seeing, hearing or reading about someone else doing the exact same series of gestures to express the same sentiment under similar or quite different circumstances. Here, affinities are expressed for 'that person who dances the same as I do' or who 'sings the same song I do,' regardless of her physical location in the world. While Hobsbawm's work provides important insight into rituals and their invocation of Western logics for nation building, classical ballet differs from Hobsbawm's account in some important ways. Hobsbawm contends that the object itself is not important, but rather that the allegiance and symbolic meanings of it are. While this holds truths for practices such as national anthem singing or even attending a ballet such as *Going Home Star – Truth and Reconciliation*, the continual (re)making of dancers' bodies function as a means of

producing the body, which then, enacts the aesthetic. Here, both the rituals and the products are important to the processes of rituals.

²⁷ In his autobiography *Mao's Last Dancer*, Li Cunxin retells how he was exposed to examples of other great dancers across national boundaries. He writes: "In the second half of that year, some ballet films were shown to us. They were Russian and had previously been banned. We weren't supposed to learn anything technical or artistic from them: we were just supposed to criticize the story. *Giselle*, for example, was clearly a story from a rotten capitalist society. We endlessly criticized the pathetic peasant girl Giselle who did nothing with her life other than desire the jewelry and lifestyle of the wealthy. We analyzed her pursuit of filthy material values. We laughed at her naïve love for the deceitful Prince Albrecht... *The Red Detachment of Women*, which we'd performed for Madame Mao, was one of these ballets and it took eight years to complete. But once I'd seen the beautiful *Giselle*, I began to doubt *The Red Detachment of Women* was quite so artistically brilliant" (14.10). As dancers are taught to learn through observation, Cunxin appreciates what the classical ballet aesthetic calls for as brilliance, and also, that the work that he dances is perhaps not so.

²⁸ Helen Thomas invites us to use dance as an example to think through politics of sexual, racial or class differences in representations of the body (1). Brenda Dixon Gottschild, in her oft-cited text, considers the geographies of black dancing bodies. Through interviews with dancers, Gottschild speaks to different aspects of how they feel their bodies are situated within the "Self-versus Other syndrome of colonialist discourse at work" (41). She refers to ballet as "this last bastion of white dance primacy" (131). On this note, Jennifer Fisher picks up on reflections made by Gottschild and other dance theorists/historians to reflect upon how ballet remains a "kingdom of the pale" in spite of Balanchine's extensive borrowing from African American music, movement traditions and aesthetics (*Ballet and Whiteness* 595).

Gender concerns figure centrally in how representation occurs. Feminist concerns with the ballerina are numerous and elucidated by a variety of scholars: Susan Leigh Foster in "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," Anna Alten in "Performing the Body, Creating Culture" and "The Moment it All Comes Together Embodied Experiences in Ballet," Alexandra Carter in "Dying Swans or Sitting Ducks?," Wendy Oliver in "Reading the Ballerina's Body," and many more. Critical dance studies scholars such as Ramsay Burt also consider the ways in which representations of masculinities and homophobia impact the construction of male dancers (*The Male Dancer, Performance of Unmarked*). Theorists in this area, however, revolve around masculinities, femininity, feminism as well as sexuality where there are very few references to transgender or genderqueer representations, possibilities or manifestations in and through classical ballet and its bodies. One of the extremely few articles I could find was from an undergraduate journal entitled "Hey ballet dress code... let's talk about queerness" (Engleman). I find this an interesting omission, as

there are a number of characters in the repertoire of classical ballet that could be thought of as genderqueer, most notably Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Bodies take many forms and, when thinking about various abilities through dance, Vida Midgelow demonstrates how Raimund Hoghe's *Swan Lake, 4 acts*, disrupts representations of dancers idealized bodies through inserting his own disabled body, into the narrative and refashioning the choreography so as to emphasize on stillness and horizontality, rather than verticality. This, in turn, centralizes ideas of (dis)ability and bodies in ways that are not typical in ballets (47-56). Elsewhere, Adam Benjamin considers how, through dancers with disabilities, dance "never had such an immediate dialogue with public attitudes, architecture and social policy as when it embraced disability" (112).

Approaches to studying ballet vary. As already mentioned, Joann Kealiinohomoku studies ballet as a particular form of ethnic dance (533). Speaking about specific ballets, Susan Leigh Foster interrogates ways in which meaning is made through ballets in her work, *Choreography & Narrative Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire*. Similarly, Jennifer Fisher examines how *The Nutcracker* figures into national identity-building projects of the United States in the mid twentieth century in *Nutcracker Nation*. One of the more troubling analyses demonstrates how dance is connected with the eugenics movement through Ted Shawn's creation of the manuscript for *The American Ballet*. Dance theorist, Paul Scolieri situates Shawn's relationship with ballet and the production of an "American Ballet" within national folk and the eugenics movement in the 1920-1930s (203).

Other dance studies scholars approach how different periods of ballet, dance or thought impact the ways ballets are choreographed and staged. For examples of this see: Deborah Jowitt's "In pursuit of the sylph: ballet in the Romantic period" (209-219); John Bryce Jordan's consideration of how heterosexual masculinities are constructed as antithetical to those qualities that are admired, if not cultivated in court dance (181); Stavros Stavrou Karayanni's analysis of how choreographic codes evolved to be filtered through Victorian ideas of masculinity and heterosexuality, thereby eschewing other forms of dance deemed to be too erotic for 'Western sensibilities' (314); and Sally Banes, who reexamines the 'canonical' ballets from a feminist perspective in *Dancing Women*.

As Banes demonstrates, gender finds its place within the narratives of classical ballet. To this effect, Jennifer Fisher examines how the codes of masculinity and femininity – largely influenced by the Western cultures in which the audience originates – find their way in classical ballet, and, in response to the charges of effeminacy of male dancers, in the 20th century, ballet has sought to portray its masculinities as being "macho." (*Maverick Men* 31-48). In fact, Fishers' work figures into an entire anthology of critical

dance scholarship concerning masculinities entitled: *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders*.

Ballet and its trainings have been used also in the construction of national identity though invented traditions. On this view, Anthony Shay sketches out how Igor Moiseyev, formerly of the Bolshoi Ballet, invented a new Russian folk-dance tradition that served to be a cornerstone in construction of the Russian national identity (237). Allana Lindgren researches how Boris Volkoff (a Canadian ballet teacher/choreographer) references salvage ethnographies in preparation of his ballets to represent Canada in the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany. Here, Lindgren writes: “That Volkoff chose to emphasize that his choreography had been based on salvage ethnographic research by the leading experts in Canada not only serves as a reminder that during the 1930s white Canadians positioned themselves as the savers/saviours of the ‘dying’ Indigenous peoples, but exposes an opportunism on the part of Volkoff, who was willing to capitalize on his limited association with the expertise of ethnographers who provided a direct link to actual Indigenous people that his choreography otherwise did not have” (420-421). Put differently, Volkoff references his “scholarly research” and links to salvage ethnographies in order to position what was effectively classical ballet, as having some authenticity as a representation of indigeneity in Canada. Further, this creation was displayed on a world stage and entered into competition with other countries and their national projects, although at the last minute its competitive nature was transformed into a festival (430).

One area of studies that have focused on the interrelationship between bodies and the narratives that the bodies produce and enact spans intersections of sexuality studies and dance studies. To this effect, Jane Desmond maintains: “dance provides a privileged area for the bodily enactment of sexuality’s semiotics and thus should be positioned at the center, not the periphery of sexuality studies” (3). Susan Leigh Foster’s latest work, “[t]o ‘choreograph empathy’ thus entails the construction and cultivation of a specific physicality whose kinesthetic experience guides our perception of and connection to what another is feeling” (1).

²⁹ For examples of this see: Daly, Ann. “The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers.” *The Drama Review*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1987, pp. 8-21; Foster, Susan Leigh. (1996). *Choreography & Narrative Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire*. [Kindle edition]. Retrieved from Amazon.ca.

³⁰ It is important to note that Saussure’s *Cours* was published posthumously and was, in fact, never designed for publication. Rather, it was a collection of notes from students who took his courses. Thus, the organization and presentation of Saussure’s theories were not able to move beyond its primary mode of explanation as would be expected in course work.

³¹ While I adopt and use the English terms of signifier and signified, Paul Cobley points out, the translations of *signifiant* and *signifié* into signifier and signified presume a materiality that is not present in Saussure's conceptual work (325). While the newer translation referenced (Harris) has adopted signal and signification, this is a more recent translation than the 1955 original. Accordingly, I utilize the English terms signifier and signified as they have gained currency in Anglo scholarship and are present in most of the works used in both this chapter and the next.

³² See for example: Frantz Fanon, who explores the hierarchies embedded in French as it manifests as a language of intellectualism through the colonial project (12-32); or Luce Irigaray, who demonstrates the masculine privilege inherent in language through her concept of phallogocentrism.

³³ Both Frantz Fanon and Jacques Derrida provide accounts of such experiences. In his chapter "Le Noir et le langage," ("The Black Man and Language") Fanon describes the ways in which colonized subjects are taught to express themselves germinates an inferiority complex as, in order to be regarded as legitimate subjects of the metropole, they cultivate their Frenchness. He writes: "Tout peuple colonisé – c'est-à-dire tout peuple au sein duquel a pris naissance un complexe d'infériorité, du fait de la mise au tombeau de l'originalité culturelle locale se situe vis-à-vis du langage de la nation civilisatrice, c'est-à-dire de la culture métropolitaine" (143) ("All colonized people – in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave – position themselves in relation to the civilizing language. i.e., the metropolitan culture" (2)).

Similarly, Derrida speaks of the monolingualism of the other, how he has only one language, but that language is not his own. In the beginning of his text writes: "Imagine-le, figure-toi quelqu'un qui cultiverait le français. Ce qui s'appelle le français. Et que le français cultiverait. Et qui, citoyen français de surcroît, Serait donc un sujet, comme on dit, de culture française. Or un jour, ce sujet de culture française viendrait te dire, par exemple, en bon français : 'Je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne'" (13) ("Picture this, imagine someone who would cultivate the French language. What is called the French language. Someone whom the French language would cultivate. And who, as a French citizen, would be, moreover, a subject of French culture, as we say" (1)).

³⁴ Maria Marcsek-Fuchs' *Dance and British Literature: An Intermedial Encounter* deals precisely with this topic, tracing encounters with dance and literary works in 18th and 19th century Britain, including but not limited to: Johnson's *Hymenaei*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Milton's *Comus*, Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master*, Sheridan's *The Rivals*, Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, and the list continues.

Likewise, the wiki Tvtropes.org has an entire entry on the “ballet episode,” where it explains 6 possible scenarios for the introduction of a ballet episode into an existing series. These are: a tough character needs/wants to explore their sensitive side, or a tough character is discovered to take ballet, a stereotypical masculine character wants/needs to understand “girl culture” so takes ballet, a male character enjoys stereotypical non-traditional masculine activities (ballet) and fears his macho friends will find out, a little girl dreams of becoming a ballerina, signs up and learns it is more work than she anticipated, a character with no interest in ballet discovers s/he has a special aptitude for it. The wiki goes on to list a rather extensive repertoire of television shows, anime and manga, films, music, web comics, and western animation. Some of the shows listed are; *Sailor Moon*, *Pokemon*, *Lois Lane* comic, *The Little Rascals*, *Despicable Me*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Community*, *I Love Lucy*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Cheers*, *The Muppet Show*, *Barney & Friends*, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *The Odd Couple*, *Murder, She Wrote*, *Friends*, *Lamb Chop’s Play Along*, *Cold Case*, *Law & Order Criminal Intent*, *Bones*, *The Flintstones*, *The Simpsons*, *Alvin & The Chipmunks*, *Babar*, *The Magic School Bus* and *The Little Mermaid* animated series. These are not including movies or films that focus entirely around ballerinas, such as: *Billy Elliot*, *Center Stage*, *Step Up*, *Black Swan*, *Mao’s Last Dancer*, *The Turning Pointe*, *Flesh and Bone*, *Dance Academy*, *Ballerina*, *Bun Heads*, and the list continues... Interestingly enough, among the list of television shows, series and other media, the shows and their audiences are not aimed at one simple demographic. This is to say the lists include media for all ages and all genders.

³⁵It is interesting to note that many of the “canonical” classical ballets no longer exist in their original forms. The original choreography has long since been lost. In the case of the *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* some of these ballets which take their place in ballet’s canonical repertoire originally failed miserably. In particular, Jennifer Fisher demonstrates that only through the alignment with the Winter Holiday season in the post-war era in the United States did the *Nutcracker* find itself a successful ballet. She goes so far as to characterize the *Nutcracker* as an immigrant who realized his full potential through the American dream. Yet, for contemporary subjects in Canada and the United States, in spite of its once failed status, it seems as if the *Nutcracker* has been a successful canonical classic text in ballet’s repertoire since the dawn of time and always in December (*Nutcracker* 44)

³⁶ Again, returning to the Royal Opera House’s video example in chapter 1, the ways in which ballet bodies were trained differ greatly across history. From what we now know about anatomy, physiology and kinesiology, it would follow that bodies trained under these different schemas would have drastically different musculatures. However, in spite of the differences in training and effect that would have on the aesthetic appearance of the dancers, many elements of classical ballet training remain the same. For example, the most basic step the plié is performed today in much of the same manner as in its original formulations. Although current dancers performing a plié benefit from the knowledge of musculature and

turn out such that they use their muscles to secure their knees, rather than, Ursula Hageli reminds us, cranking feet in a vice that would undoubtedly have caused severe knee problems for the dancers trained in this manner. In another lecture, entitled “Ballet Evolved – The First Four Centuries,” Hageli further discusses the differences and development of dance technique from the baroque period onwards including the differentials in turn out, and rises onto $\frac{3}{4}$ pointe. For a full demonstration, see Royal Opera House. “Ballet Evolved – The First Four Centuries.” Royal Opera House. 14 February 2013. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auDNcfK0Wcs>. Accessed 29 September 2018.

³⁷ In using the term articulation, I refer to Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe’s conceptualization whereby: “The other response [to issues of class identity] accepts the structural diversity of the relations in which social agents are immersed and replaces the principles of representation with that of articulation. Unity between these agents is then not the expression of a common underlying essence but the result of political construction and struggle” (65).

³⁸ A day-to-day example of this kind of conceptual work can be seen in how individuals wear signs to show their support for certain causes or ideologies or religions. Religious persons may wear a star of David, crescent or cross around their neck to signal to others their religious affiliations. Gay persons may wear rainbows or have piercings or dress in certain ways so as to signal their queerness. Ribbon campaigns also deploy this source of signification, seeing someone with a white, pink, yellow, red, blue or otherwise coloured ribbon signifies that the bearer supports the particular cause associated with the colour. These few examples foreground how we invoke the symbolic order to signal aspects of our identities to one another. Within Lacan’s framework, the masks that we wear (signifiers that we occupy) perform this task of carving out our space in the symbolic order and likewise, the signifiers signal to others the ways in which our subjectivities operate and are received.

³⁹ On this view Luce Irigaray has written on the phallogocentrism of language in *Ce sex qui n’est pas un* as has Monique Wittig in *La pensée straight*.

⁴⁰ For an example of ways that pointework has evolved in relation to the changing technologies of pointe shoes and ballets, the Royal Opera House has published a lecture entitled “Ballet Evolved: The Evolution of Pointework.” Further, through the video, former ballet mistress Ursula Hageli describes how Italian shoemaker developed a shoe with a block in the toe to help support dancers en pointe. However, prior to that point, pointework was limited. Hageli states: “initially they didn’t do any pirouettes or anything like that on their toes, they would just do dainty little exercises...where they just occasionally go up” (2:25 – 2:33). Then, with the harder shoes, newer exercises were developing “because we now had the

harder shoes” (3:21-3:51). Royal Opera House. “Ballet Evolved: The Evolution of Pointework.” YouTube. 19 August 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=510WnZQUgac>. Accessed 28 September 2018.

⁴¹ In her discussion of the evolution of terre à terre batterie, Ursula Hageli maintains that “really it was the male dancer at this time [19th century], in this period of time, that was really in the forefront and did all the really exciting steps” (2:05 – 4:17). For more information on these steps that exemplified the time when the male dancer occupied center stage, see Royal Opera House. “Ballet Evolved: Terre à terre exercises.” Royal Opera House. 12 August 2015. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAQs_rlyCKo. Accessed 29 September 2018.

⁴² Foster’s essay originally appeared in 1996 in *Corporealities*, and presented an important feminist intervention in analyses of dance, which “reject[s] the victimization of women in ballet and offer[s] an analysis that is more complex and sometimes contradictory to the work of earlier feminists” (“*The Moment*” 264).

⁴³ An interesting example of how dancers are trained in the art of pas de deux in ballet can be seen in the video examples of the Vagonava Ballet Academy pas de deux ballet exams. Here, the variety of steps and their requisite partnering skills are being demonstrated over the course of part 1 and part 2 videos from quick jumping steps to slow adagio dances and overhead lifts. In all these combinations, the male dancer is positioned so as to accentuate the grace, beauty and style of his female partner. Further, it appears as if his actions as her partner are those which guide her. However, in partnering this is far from the truth, while it appears as if the female ballerina is being simply manipulated by her male partner as some form of object, the dancer who is the ballerina requires even more strength than if she were to attempt to perform those actions on her own. To watch these video examples, see: Shevtsova, Anastasia. “Vaganova Ballet Academy, Pas de Deux Exam 2013, Zaklinsky, part 1.” *YouTube*. 11 Dec 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU3bQDuMIZ8> Accessed 29 September 2018; Shevtsova, Anastasia. “Vaganova Ballet Academy, Pas de Deux Exam 2013, Zaklinsky, part 2.” *YouTube*. 11 Dec 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrdcAY7UeEQ> Accessed 29 September 2018.

⁴⁴ Judith Lynne Hanna explains that “dance requires many of the same faculties of the brain as verbal language” (*language* 40). Further, dance shares many aspects with language where “[b]oth dance and verbal language have vocabulary (steps and gestures in dance), grammar (rules for justifying how one dance movement can follow another), and meaning...Both verbal language and dance also have arbitrariness (many of their characteristics have no predictability), discreteness (separateness), displacement (reference can be made to something not immediately present), productivity (messages never created before can be sent and understood within a set of structural principles), duality of

patterning (a system of physical action and a system of meaning), cultural transmission, ambiguity, affectivity (expression of an internal state with the potential for changing moods and situations), and a wide range in the number of potential participants in the process” (41). Accordingly dance functions as a language. If we take this point of departure and extend it to how it produces bodies (as in how language produces subjectivities), we can see how different types of dance affect the crafting of bodies in the same way that languages and the inherent object relations embedded within them produce the conditions of possibility for a person’s lived reality. On this view, “Peter Martins, director of the New York City Ballet, believes that classical ballet and modern dance are different dialects of the same language” (in Solway, 1988). By contrast, classical Indian dance, with its ancient elaborate systems of codified gestures is a different language all together” (41-42). Here, the bodies of the ballet and modern dancers are sculpted to execute certain types of movements in specific dynamic compositions. Indian dance, as identified by Hanna has a different lexicon and as a result, different moving requirements. If we looked at the ways that Indian dance’s bodies were sculpted, we would see the development of muscles required to execute specific vocabulary in different dynamic forms. This too would affect the crafting of the body. As a result, where language appears to be the gateway to subjectivity and integral to modernities’ production of the identity of the self, then dance in general and classical ballet in particular provide a medium through which a form of kinesthetic subjectivity might be produced.

⁴⁵ As a practitioner, I regularly expose my dance students to ballet repertoire as part of their dance education. However, in keeping with my political commitments, I usually try to recontextualize the repertoire and use it to tell a different story. In one example, I set a piece of choreography called “The Ugly Duckling” that borrowed extensively from the Swan Lake repertoire because at the end, the duckling turns into a swan. This was staged on dancers ranging in age from 8 – 15, there were both male and female ducklings in this piece (although they were costumed like swans). In one section of the piece where I based the choreography around the four little swans (or cygnets) variation from *Swan Lake*, one of the sets of four dancers contained a male dancer. At every competition where this piece was shown, the judges lauded the exposure of young dancers to classical repertoire in a way that might be more meaningful to them, and yet at least one of the judges remarked how it was ‘unusual’ to include a male dancer within that configuration of dancers. I illustrate this example because some of my choreographic choices did not conform to the grammar of classical ballet, while explicitly referencing it. The fact that these competition judges who are not necessarily classically trained identified the repertoire pieces, praised them, and then critiqued the way that it was being performed – when no one was performing in pointe shoes – speaks to the ways that classical ballet grammar functions. I was reprimanded *not* for reappropriating and twisting a classic to portray a story more relevant to the age group in question, but rather, for the grammatical transgressions of gendered performance.

⁴⁶ Further, concerning drag, the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo boasts an all-male cast who perform en pointe in female roles.

⁴⁷ I have made this argument elsewhere, that the masculine male pointe dancer is an aporetic figure. See: Mazurok, Katherine. "Pointes, Politics and Meanings: Re-Reading Ballerinas as Embodied Translations of Modernity-Inspired Nationalisms." *Tusaaji: a translation review* 2.2 (2013).

⁴⁸ In February 2019, Dance Magazine announced that the first company producing pointe shoes for Men. Here, concerns about male ballerinas and their specific needs in architecture of shoes are considered. The fact that this company will be an all-male pointe shoe provider and the integrality that pointe shoes serve in the art support Foster's assertion that the ballerina (male or female) with pointe shoes, serves as the phallic signifier for classical ballet. Here, as gender roles blur in performance arts, men want to make way into the symbolic realm of the classical ballet dancer through possession of the phallic pointe. For more information, read: Stahl, Jennifer. "There's a New Pointe Shoe Designed Specifically for Men" *Dance Magazine*. 12 February 2019. <https://www.dancemagazine.com/male-pointe-shoes-2628758581.html>. Accessed 8 March 2019.

⁴⁹ Concerning the aesthetic governing classical ballet, I again return to dance anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku's argument to consider ballet as a particular form of ethnic (white) dance, rather than a universal. On this view, she discusses how the concerns of classical ballet's stories are culturally specific: "Think how culturally reveals it is to see the stylized Western customs enacted on the stage, such as the mannerisms from the age of chivalry, courting, weddings, Christenings, burial and mourning customs. Think how our world view is revealed in the oft recurring themes of unrequited love, sorcery, self-sacrifice through long-suffering, mistaken identity and misunderstandings which have tragic consequences. Think how our religious heritage is revealed through pre-Christian themes, Christian holidays such as Christmas, and the beliefs in life after death. Our cultural heritage is revealed also in the roles which appear repeatedly in our ballets such as humans transformed into animals, fairies, witches, gnomes, performers of evil magic, villains and seductresses in black, evil step-parents, royalty and peasants, and especially, beautiful pure young women and their consorts" (545).

In addition to Kealiinohomoku's oft-cited text published initially in 1970, more recent concerns have examined how Ballet remains a "kingdom of the pale" according to Jennifer Fisher. Fisher maintains that ballet "is very white, meaning that pale-skinned people have dominated both onstage and backstage through its history as a profession from the seventeenth century to the present" (585). Further, Foster poses the question: "Will ballet ever ignore skin color as long as there are some artistic directors who think a "unified aesthetic" means that skin color should match as well as the costumes?" (585). Moving

through a series of examples, Foster demonstrates how ballet operates through economies of visibility which privilege paleness and sameness in its aesthetics.

Further, concerning the material bodies that perform classical ballet, Brenda Dixon Gottschild's book *The Black Dancing Body* provided a much-needed intervention dance studies in 2003 and was the winner of the congress on research in dance book prize. In this work, Gottschild conducts interviews with professional dancers in the African American community and maps a geography of black dancing bodies and the struggles they face in the professional dance industry. This aspect of her work focuses on the material realities of dancers and their bodies. Here Gottschild writes: "Whatever the constellation of traits, habits, preferences and variables that make up the black dancing body, it is clear that white dance culture has been fascinated by this construct. In general, the black dancing body has been scrutinized by the dominant culture through the lens and theory of difference. Naturally, the point of origin of any theory largely determines the outcome: differences in the dancing body of an oppressed people were occasionally valued but frequently scrutinized for signs of inferiority. In the white world, dancing bodies were measured against white ideals that ran counter to the aesthetic criteria of 'inferior' Africanist cultures, even though the dances performed by white dancing bodies were either solely or partly based on Africanist elements [as in the case with Balanchine's revolutionary style which, in many ways appropriated fundamentals of African dance]" (27).

⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida presents another perspective on the colonial language from his standpoint as a Jewish Algerian. He writes that he is a monolingual speaking subject, but that the language that he speaks is not his own, it is of the colonial Other (*Le monolingualisme de l'autre*).

⁵¹ The Australian Ballet's segment of *Ballet Anatomy* on feet demonstrates the amount of muscular control required to achieve the ballet aesthetic through the work and other practices such as jumping through foot articulation. See: "Ballet Anatomy: Feet." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Australian Ballet, 1 May 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYwntsUota0>. Accessed 10 October 2018.

⁵² For an interesting and short glimpse into the world of pointe shoe manufacturing please see National Geographic's video "Ballet Shoes: The Craft Before the Dance" which, in five minutes, takes the viewer through the manufacture of pointe shoes in the Freed's of London factory. One of the unique features of Freed's pointe shoes that is briefly mentioned through this film, but is significant to the dance world is that each Freed's pointe shoe maker has his/her own mark that is stamped upon the shoe upon completion. Thus, these commodities which look alike are stamped with an identifying feature of an individual human maker. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKeGX72V6VQ> While Freed's methods rely on natural products and traditional methods, even the newer pointe shoe companies such as Gaynor Minden that

use new-age materials still involve a large amount of human contact with the production of pointe shoes. Take a look at their short factory tour to see how these shoes are made and differ from those of Freed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T5EF-H2Erk>

⁵³ “Competition: How many pointe shoes do The Royal Ballet use in a week? (#PointesWinPrizes)”. *YouTube*, uploaded by Royal Opera House, 25 March 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwFFn62Umm4>. Accessed 14 November 2017.

⁵⁴ Pointe shoes are not manufactured in a way that is immediately wearable for the dancer. A great deal of preparation goes into ensuring that the ribbons and elastics are optimally placed and that the shank and the rest of the shoe are optimized for each individual dancer’s foot. For beginning students, preparing pointe shoes can take up to four hours per pair. For professionals, it can take as little as 10-20 minutes as years of repetition and experience make these processes much faster. To see an example of professional pointe shoe preparation, The Royal Opera House produced a video calling for donations for pointe shoes (much like their previous fundraising campaign), except this one was in 2016. At the end of the video, one dancer says: “For us pointe shoes, are one of the most important thing, because without pointe shoes, ballet don’t exist” (*How Royal Ballet Dancers* 2:03-2:10). The whole video can be viewed here: “How Royal Ballet Dancers Prepare Their Pointe Shoes.” Uploaded by The Royal Opera House. 09 November 2016. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdFW5ArdTC8> Accessed 10 October 2018.

⁵⁵ As mentioned in Chapter One, there are increasingly male dancers who don pointe shoes, however, there is not a unique lexicon for them to dance and while they challenge the rigidity of the heterosexual gender binary inherent to classical ballet, they do not provide such a challenge that it has been overhauled. At this point, pointework is still seen as predominantly performed by women and men who perform in ballet drag such as the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo.

⁵⁶ As stated in note 54, a great deal of labour goes into preparing a ballerina’s pointe shoes. The video by the Royal Ballet focusses on the time aspect and what pointe shoes mean to dancers, but the treatment of pointe shoes prior to wear is actually more brutal. Pointe shoe preparation can include sewing and placing of elastics, darning the ends of pointe shoes, scoring the bottoms with an exacto knife or blade, bending the shank in the door, hammering the blocks to soften them, burning the ends of the shoe and the ribbons or a variety of other seemingly destructive procedures. For an interesting view on the world of pointe shoe preparation, see the video produced by “En Pointe!” *YouTube*, uploaded by The Australian Ballet, 15 November 2011. www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIw8zbEf_Qg. Accessed 15 November 2017. This video demonstrates how much alteration pointe shoes undergo in 3 different ballerinas (ranging from

core to principal dancer) cases. These processes must be repeated in an almost infinite sequence as dancers may go through as many as four pairs of pointe shoes within one performance.

⁵⁷ Sarah Kaufman from the *Washington Post* published an article entitled: “Pain, satin and paper towels: What it takes for ballerinas to dance on their toes.” She interviews 3 ballet dancers about their feet and pointe work. Kaufman goes so far as to classify pointe shoes as: “tight-fitting torture chambers” (Kaufman). She further elaborates: “Pointe shoes may look dainty, but there’s an Elizabethan-corset quality to them, reflecting their seriousness of purpose: equipping the dancer to do what no human is designed to do” (Kaufman). Enumerating the list of preparatory steps dancers undergo (similar to those outlined in footnotes 53 and 55), Kaufman also talks about what dancers do to their feet inside the shoes. Instead of foam pads, she writes, one of the dancers switched to paper towels and found no measureable difference. One of the most telling images in this article is a photo where two dancers each have one pointe shoe on and then they are en pointe with the pointe shoe, their other foot is bare and shows all the tape and spacers and other things that are ordinarily inside the shoe. This demonstrates quite clearly that the nice exterior conceals a lot of pain, blisters, and other materials in an effort to achieve the ethereal aesthetic. The image can be viewed here: https://img.washingtonpost.com/rf/image_480w/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2017/05/26/Style/Images/SAFeet37397.jpg?uuiid=E5M6vj9CEeeyn_QP_O0t2w

⁵⁸ The duck-rabbit image first appeared in 1899 and was used by a psychologist to “make the point that perception is not only what one sees but also a mental activity” (Farand).

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that because of the polymer used to produce Gaynor Minden shoes, they are in fact the only shoe that does not have a decreased lifespan when dancers dye the shoes. Youtube channel Mydancetv took a trip to a Gaynor Minden factory and you can see how they make shoes differently than in videos from the footnotes in chapter I. “Gaynor Minden Factory Tour 2017.” *YouTube*, uploaded by mydancetv, 24 June 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T5EF-H2Erk. Accessed 14 November 2017.

⁶⁰ While I was unable to find this information written down, I know this to be true from my own dealings with a local pointe-shoe fitter and seller who fits my students with pointe shoes twice per year and he told me about the upcoming release of Gaynor Minden shoes in different colours and how there was no surcharge for any of the shoes, in spite of the fact that they would have to be custom ordered.

⁶¹ Chelsea Ritschel from *The Independent* writes: “Pointe ballet shoes in colours that match Asian and black skin tones are being made for the first time in the UK” (Ritschel). Other articles credit both companies and discuss the issues of skin colour and pointe shoes in ballet companies. In particular, *The New York Times* published an article entitled: “Brown pointe shoes arrive 200 years after white ones,” and

features a section with an interview with a former Dance Theatre of Harlem dancer, Virginia Johnson: “She recalled that Capezio supplied brown shoes for Dance Theatre [Harlem] for a short time, and at one point later the company’s dancers dyed their shoes with a product meant for bridal pumps. ‘Evangeline Shoe Dye,’ Ms. Johnson said. ‘I haven’t thought about that name in years.’ But since 2012, most members paint their shoes with acrylic paint, Mrs. Johnson said. Dance Theatre’s wardrobe master mixes paint to match each dancer’s skin tone” (Marshall).