

*Suite canadienne (2015): Re-Performance & Otherwise Movements*

Adam Kinner

A Thesis in the  
Individualized Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of the Arts (Individualized Program)  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

March 2016

© Adam Kinner, 2016

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: **Adam Kinner**

Entitled: ***Suite canadienne (2015): Re-Performance & Otherwise Movements***

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**M.A. INDI**

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
MJ Thompson Principal Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ricardo Dal Farra Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer Supervisor

Approved by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Faculty

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

**keywords:** dance history, dance archive, re-performance, Ludmilla Chiriaeff, Suite canadienne, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, interpellation

This thesis examines a work of video documentation made by the author called *Suite canadienne* (2015). The video documents a series of re-performances of a ballet titled *Suite canadienne* made in 1957 by Ludmilla Chiriaeff, the founder of *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal* and the first major, government-supported choreographer in Québec. Part 1 of the thesis situates the original 1957 work in the political, cultural and social context from which it emerged. It shows how the original work positioned itself as an originary work of Québec dance and manifested a “hailing” of the subject, following Louis Althusser’s theory of interpellation. The author theorizes this hailing as a mobilization of subjective arrest that posits sovereignty as arrestation-in-movement. Part 2 discusses the technique of re-performance in relation to the political, historical and nomological power of the archive. In this way, the author argues for the uses of re-performance as so many strategies for refusing the proliferation of normative culture within and through the dancing body. The thesis examines the 2015 re-performances through three of their aspects: (1) the undisciplining of the ballet body, (2) the reterritorialization of administrative architectures and (3) the performance of experimental subjectivities. The final section, the “coda,” relates all of these aspects to the notion of “otherwise movements” that perform the normative while simultaneously recasting it, allowing for real deterritorializations and lines of flight.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to warmly thank Prof. MJ Thompson for her generous help and guidance with this thesis; Noémie Solomon for being an early reader and for offering countless instances of intelligence and support for this writing; supervisors Ricardo Dal Farra and Ursula Neuerburg-Denzer for their comments and interest; Ashlea Watkin for the lending of a quiet apartment in the hot months of 2015; Emily Gan for her collaboration on the video work; and Michèle Theriault for her interest in showing the work at the Ellen Gallery.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SIGNATURE PAGE</b> .....	ii
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF PHOTOS</b> .....	vi
<b>PRELUDE: <i>Suite canadienne</i> (2015)</b> .....	1
<b>PART 1: Ludmilla Chiriaeff, 1950's Québec, And the Hailing of the Ballet Body</b> .....	7
Ludmilla Chiriaeff's <i>Suite canadienne</i> (1957) .....	7
Out of the Shadows of the Catholic Church .....	10
Ludmilla Chiriaeff, the <i>Société Radio-Canada</i> , and <i>L'Heure du Concert</i> .....	11
Ideology Has No History: Althusser's Theory of Interpellation .....	14
Ideology and Origins in Québec Ballet .....	19
<b>PART 2: Re-Performing Archives</b> .....	27
Re-Enactment and the Will to Archive .....	31
Thinking <i>Suite canadienne</i> (2015) Beyond Failure .....	34
Ballet Beyond Technique .....	35
Reterritorialized Administrative Architectures .....	39
Experimental Subjectivities .....	45
<b>CODE: <i>Suite canadienne</i> &amp; Otherwise Movements</b> .....	50
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	54
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	57

## LIST OF PHOTOS

<i>Suite canadienne (2015) installation view</i> .....	1
<i>Suite canadienne (2015) at the Palais des Congrès</i> .....	2
<i>Suite canadienne (2015) at the World Trade Centre, Montréal</i> .....	4
<i>Suite canadienne (2015) installation view</i> .....	41
<i>Suite canadienne (2015) at the offices of le CALQ</i> .....	44

**PRELUDE: *Suite Canadienne* (2015)**

From May 7 to June 6, 2015, a visitor entering the Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery for the IGNITION 11 exhibition was presented with a large television to her right as she crossed the threshold into the gallery space. On the television she would see a lone dancer, seemingly out of place, dancing in spaces that the visitor might describe as governmental, bureaucratic, corporate or, simply, institutional. She would notice the dancer's outfit: a woman's peasant outfit with a long beige skirt atop a layer of white crinoline, a white blouse with a brown bodice-like vest on top, a bonnet, white leggings, and a pair of white leather booties. The visitor may pick up the headphones available and hear the ambient sounds of the performance as it plays on the television—the footfalls of passersby, the hushed voices of onlookers, and the faint sound of jaunty orchestral music.



*Suite canadienne* (2015) installation view

Despite the female clothing, the visitor may soon notice, if she looks closely enough at his build and facial hair, that the dancer is likely a man. For the sake of this paper, we will use the pronoun “he” for the dancer (for reasons that will become clear later), and, for clarity, we will continue to use the pronoun “she” for the visitor.

If she stayed long enough, the visitor would notice that the dancer does the same dance in different spaces. He starts at the Palais des Congrès, Montréal's gigantic convention center, where the dance takes place in the center of a wide, airport-esque hallway, with shops on one side and a forest of fake pink trees (public art) on the other. Quick scene change and the dancer is performing in the cramped hallway of *Le conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* (le CALQ) where he barely fits between the elevators and the entrance. In all, the dancer performs at seven sites: in addition to the convention center and the offices of le CALQ, he dances in the basement of City Hall (which also houses the city's archives), the municipal courthouse, the Montréal



*Suite canadienne* (2015) at the Palais des Congrès, photo by Emily Gan

stock exchange, the Court of Appeal of Québec and the World Trade Centre of Montréal. All of these sites might be unrecognizable except by the odd viewer. But even if a viewer cannot specifically identify them, she will be readily able to categorize them as sites of a certain kind of



public, institutional power. In Montréal, these are the spaces of the administration of life, broadly construed.

After acclimating to the rhythm of the changing scenes, the visitor might focus more closely on the dance itself as it gets repeated in different spaces. Though he may be dressed for the part, the dancer is hardly an ideal ballet specimen. His movements lack buoyancy, his positions are crooked and his timing is just slightly off. Though he seems to be following the music and striking the correct poses, he appears flat-footed and sluggish; this is ersatz ballet—not bad but not quite right. Part of this is due to the fact that he should not be alone. Though it is true that no one else dances with him, he is also not dancing what we might call a solo. It lacks the presentational aura of a solo, the frontality and the dynamism of something choreographed to be danced alone. Instead, it is a single part of a larger group choreography, but all of his fellow *corps de ballet* dancers are absent. At certain times this is brutally obvious. There is a couples section where he places his hands on the shoulders of an absent partner. There are lifts where he has to awkwardly jump himself, and spins where he has to locomote himself. And most noticeable of all are the long pauses that punctuate the eight-minute choreography—pauses during which he simply strikes a pose and watches the absent soloists perform in front of him. Uneasy solitude has thrown him into the position of a soloist, though this position is determined not by his presence but by the present absence of others.

If he gets one thing right, it is located in the *décolletage*, that area of the upper chest from which we might presume balletic movement emanates. Though his steps are heavy, his chest has the mark of ballet royalty—the queenly way of looking alert and anxious over a thin veil of sovereign abstraction. His face, too, is almost balletic. His eyes search the horizon with the urgency of a princess watching a distant battle, and he keeps his head crooked to the side in the

demurred position of subtle expectation. But his smile betrays him yet again: it is not the abstracted smile of the ballerina gritting her teeth, but rather the smile of someone hitching a ride on an impossible task. The smile you smile when you know you are failing but you cannot stop.



*Suite canadienne* (2015) at the World Trade Centre, Montréal. Photo by Emily Gan

While the visitor might at first be unimpressed by his non-virtuosic dancing she might eventually (if she stays to see a few repetitions) begin to see something else emerge in the continued labour of the imperfect ballerina. A specificity begins to manifest in his continued labour, in the persistence and in the force of the task. His is a virtuosity not of training but of vulnerability. While at first the viewer sees his failure, she can eventually identify his (modest) success as she fills in, imaginatively, the absent dancers, the absent limb extensions and the absent ballet fluency. It is the uncanniness of the resemblance and the imposture of his queenliness that keeps her looking.

The 42-minute video is titled *Suite canadienne (2015)*<sup>1</sup> and I am the dancer depicted therein. *Suite canadienne (2015)* borrows its title from a 1957 choreography—*Suite canadienne*—choreographed by the “godmother” of Québec ballet, Ludmilla Chiriaeff, who would start *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens*<sup>2</sup> the following year. What follows here is a detailed discussion of the 2015 video within the various discourses that surround and hold it, and on which it intervenes.

In Part 1 of this thesis, following a detailed history of the social and political context from which the original 1957 ballet emerged, I show the ways that colonial origin stories and quickly proliferating media technologies intersected to give *Suite canadienne (1957)*<sup>3</sup> a political power that deserves to be examined once more in order to allow us to read the historical and political resonances of the 2015 video. This historical context makes up the bulk of this first part, which ends with a discussion of Louis Althusser’s theory of interpellation as a way of understanding the process of subjectivation that dance can (and does) activate. I argue that dance’s call of subjectivation (via interpellation) is one of its most powerful political tools. With a perspective on dance’s interpellative potential we can begin to bring into focus the politics of *Suite canadienne (2015)*.

Part 2, “Re-Performing Archives,” looks at the various discourses of re-performance that surround the 2015 video. Re-performance<sup>4</sup> is contextualized as a popular technique in the global

---

<sup>1</sup> *Suite canadienne (2015)* was made in collaboration with videographer Emily Gan. It was exhibited at the Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery in a show titled IGNITION 11 which featured works selected by Michèle Theriault and Sarah Watson.

<sup>2</sup> The current name for the company is *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal*. The name was changed to include “de Montréal” in 2001 (Howe-Beck, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> I will use parenthetical dates to distinguish between my *Suite canadienne (2015)*, a video piece, from Ludmilla Chiriaeff’s *Suite canadienne (1957)*, a choreographic work.

<sup>4</sup> I have chosen the term re-performance instead of the more common re-enactment in order to differentiate between theatrical re-enactment which involves a level of interpretation and re-performance, which holds the productive paradox in the idea of performing something once more, despite the fact that

contemporary dance scene. I examine why this might be the case. Specifically, re-performance can be understood as a way that performing bodies work on the archive, which in turn allows them access to a certain political and historical agency from which, following Peggy Phelan (1993), they are often excluded. By actualizing what André Lepecki calls “impalpable possibilities” (2010, 31) latent in the original works, re-performance expands the commons and produces difference in and around the archive. Rather than producing archival “accuracy,” re-performances should be examined for the ways that they reproduce the original with and as difference. I examine three axes by which *Suite canadienne (2015)* actualizes impalpable possibilities and produces productive disjunction with the original: (1) the undisciplining of the ballet body, (2) the reterritorialization of administrative architectures, and (3) the performance of experimental subjectivities.

The third and final part serves as a coda and issues a call for the productive disorganization of the performance archive through a multiplicity of actualizations which propose the performative inclusion of the minor. Using Ashon Crawley’s work on black performance, I explore the ways that otherwise movements (2015)—intensive, improvisational, emancipatory movements that show the capacity for things to be other than they are—respond to the violence of the normative world with productive and performative refusal. In this way, I situate *Suite canadienne (2015)* in a context of normative violence and show the ways that it might offer lines of flight that enable bodies to perform otherwise.

---

time has passed and a performance will necessarily be different. Parsing a kind of precision in relation to paradoxical task of performing-again is what I am interested in, rather than a kind of re-interpretation of an “original.”

## **PART I: Ludmilla Chiriaeff, 1950's Québec, And the Hailing of the Ballet Body**

In order to gain insight into the re-performance of *Suite canadienne*, it will be necessary to examine the original work and to situate it in Québec history of the 1950s. As we will see, my re-performance must be understood in relation to three historical currents that both surround and intersect in the original work at this time. These are (1) the rapid development of television in Québec, (2) Canada's growing nationalist cultural movements of the time, and (3) the Catholic Church's prohibition on dancing in Québec which was gradually phased out over the course of the 1950s. The renaissance of dance in Montréal that results from all three of these historical currents will play an important role in the cultural politics of the dancing body as it developed in the '50s and beyond, and it is these politics to which *Suite canadienne (2015)* addresses itself.

### **Ludmilla Chiriaeff's *Suite Canadienne* (1957)**

The original *Suite canadienne*, choreographed in 1957 by Ludmilla Chiriaeff, is saved for posterity on a DVD at the *Bibliothèque de la Danse Vincent-Warren*, a small library in one of the buildings of the *École supérieure de ballet du Québec* on Montréal's plateau. You can view it in the media center – a room next door with a few TVs and headphones you borrow from the librarian. The DVD displays a single handwritten epithet “La suite canadienne – 1955” thereby incorrectly identifying both the title of the work *and* the date (it aired in 1958, and was choreographed in 1957). There is no other information available at the *Bibliothèque de la danse* about the DVD. We are not treated to information like the names of the performers, the date of the broadcast, the composer's name, etc. I mention this not to cast a shadow on the lovely people at the *Bibliothèque de la danse*, but to give a sense of the kind of cultural object this piece is: a

poorly documented eight-minute dance that, despite being choreographed by the founder *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens*, and despite having a long run as one of the beloved repertory pieces of the company (Smith, 167), only haphazardly found its way into the archive. I later learn of its significance by way of the CBC's archivist and the various unmarked newspaper clippings at the *bibliothèque. Suite canadienne* (1957) was among the first pieces that Ludmilla Chiriaeff choreographed for her new ballet company, *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens*. It helped her win the first ever dance grant in Montréal, a \$6000 subsidy from the city to start her company (Tembeck, 35). Finally, the CBC aired it on November 6, 1958 as part of their *L'Heure du Concert* series (CBC archives).

After inserting the DVD into the television at the *bibliothèque*, the show opens on a colonial scene. A slow pan up reveals either a canon or a wagon, it is difficult to tell, and a voice-over declares that Mme. Chiriaeff has produced a “folkloric story inspired by folk dances from the beginning of the colonial era” (DVD). The dance takes place on a set that recalls a colonial-era common outdoor space – a kind of green commons. A slipshod wooden fence surrounds the scene, with an opening for the soloists to enter and exit. The black and white camera work is basic; there are a total of eight edits in the piece, with most of the action happening in the center of the screen, the camera angled down ever so slightly to give the impression that we are above the fray.

The piece starts with a group of women who gather in the center of the stage and seem to be both whispering to each other and checking to see if anyone is there looking in on them. It's clandestine, but playfully so. When the other eight dancers of the *corps de ballet* enter moments later (there are twelve members: eight women and four men) we retain the feeling of being on watch or being watched, even as the dance proceeds jubilantly. Something illicit is happening

here; is the space surrounding them full of bears or hostile natives? Or is it the fear of being seen dancing – itself an illicit activity – that the dancers protect themselves from? Is this also the source of the dancers’ enjoyment – the pleasure involved in doing something dangerous and/or forbidden? Either way, placing the dancing body in public, outdoor space reflects to the double reading of balletic movement—at this moment in Québec dance history—as both liberating (sexually, somatically) and colonizing (disciplining the body, the territory).

The group dances consist of short, eight- or sixteen-bar phrases that recall Québécois step-dancing, but with a balletic precision and stylization. At three moments in the eight-minute choreography, the soloists, Eva Von Gencsy and Eric Hyrst, enter the scene and things quickly lose their folkdance ethos. While the *corps de ballet* is dressed as peasants (bonnets, lace up vests, long skirts for the women, short pants for the men), the soloists bring an air of bourgeoisie and the matching costume: an ornate tutu for the woman, a smart unitard for the man. Balletic virtuosity and European design stand in harsh juxtaposition with folk familiarity.

The music plays the same game, using juxtaposition to simultaneously use and deny (or surpass) the folk aesthetic. Michel Perrault arranged French-Canadian folk songs for orchestra and they provide an upbeat score for the *corps de ballet*. But the music is most inventive as it accompanies the soloists; this is when it takes its boldest harmonic and melodic turns. The *pas de deux* is all romantic legato, with arpeggiating harps and wistful flutes – not your average gigue. The music, as the dance, seems to be striving to make a connection between Québec’s folk history and the promise of a balletic future. If the cultural milieu is asking how to relate Québec’s provincial, colonial past with its future, Chiriaeff’s answer here is to show the fluidity with which this provincial body and its affects can move into the high-art realms of ballet and European romanticism. The paradox of this move – a simultaneous reversion to the European

past in order to posit a future – is consistent with the post-colonial project in general in which the provinces need to harness the encompassing authority of the continent in order to transform it into a claim to a sovereign future.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting back on the opening voice-over, which calls the work a “folklore,” we see that this is not strictly true. Rather, we might say that it is grounded in a popular folk imaginary which it uses as a pivot to show the potential relevance of European dance to Québec culture. Chiriaeff is attempting to show how Québec can lose its proverbial short pants to step into its tutu, a project that runs alongside the dawning of dance’s political imaginary in the province. If there is a folklore here, it is Chiriaeff’s attempt to put the prince’s ruby slippers on Cinderella’s folk dancing feet.

### **Out of the Shadows of the Catholic Church**

The necessity to ground Québec ballet’s future in a (mythic) folk past is partly due to the fact that art dance (both modern and ballet) was an import to Québec, and a late one at that.<sup>6</sup> Although Montréal was an occasional stop on the tours of foreign dance figures like Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman and Loie Fuller (Tembeck, 6) and supported a few fledgling ballet schools starting in the 1920s and ‘30s (Tembeck, 8), dance would not gain a professional and cultural foothold in the society until the 1950s (Smith, 147). As historians of Québec dance have shown, the delay of dance’s acceptance was largely due to interdictions the Catholic Church placed on dance until well into the ‘50s.

Québec of the post World War II era was “a traditional society dominated by conservatives in the Catholic church [sic] and the provincial government... Over 80% of its

---

<sup>5</sup> See Randy Martin (1998), p. 151 – 180 for a discussion of this.

<sup>6</sup> We must imagine that Chiriaeff was familiar with the way that classical ballet had borrowed from folk traditions since the romantic era, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a young professional dancer in Berlin in the ‘30s and Geneva in the ‘40s she would have been exposed to the work of Michel Fokine, Les Ballets Russe and others (Tembeck, 34).



citizens were French-speaking Roman Catholics” (Smith, 147). The political power of the Catholic Church enabled it to effectively prevent dance from becoming a legitimate art form, largely limiting it to folk dances performed in the home (Tembeck, 4). The path to cultural legitimacy was long; as late as 1952, the Archbishop of Montréal, Paul-Émile Léger, would issue the following statement:

1. It is strictly forbidden to dance in any place within the church walls.
2. Modern dances shall not be authorized in any place under church jurisdiction [including schools, parish halls, colleges, convents, hospitals].
3. Folk dance evenings are permitted so long as the program is approved by the recreation committee [of which a priest was always a member]

(quoted in Tembeck, 34).

Dance had long been treated as a sin of the flesh by the Church, and it was a long time before it would escape such stigma. As Cheryl A. Smith (2000) argues, “Dance was considered inherently more difficult to control than the other arts” and posed the twin problems of sensuousness and foreignness to the conservative Church (152). Remarkably, even as the Church eventually eased its prohibition of folk dance at the end of the ‘40s, it still viewed ballet and creative dance as occasions for sin (Tembeck, 34). No wonder, then, that the eventual rise of dance in Québec would be championed by an outsider without local religious baggage, and would be occasioned by a radical new, quickly proliferating technological apparatus: the television.

### **Ludmilla Chiriaeff, the *Société Radio-Canada*, and *L’Heure du Concert***

Ludmilla Gorny Chiriaeff was born in Riga, Latvia and trained as a ballet dancer in Berlin before fleeing Nazi Germany for Switzerland and eventually Montréal, where she settled in 1952 (Tembeck, 34). Her arrival in Montréal was well timed, to say the least. Despite the continued crackdown on dance effectuated by clergy members like Léger, Québec society was

beginning to transition into a period of artistic and cultural renewal, breaking the shackles of the Church, in part evidenced by the publishing of the *Refus Global* manifesto in 1948 (Tembeck, 33). Most pertinently, the year of Chiriaeff's arrival in Montréal was concurrent with two major cultural events: the beginning of Québec television and the publication of the Massey-Levesque Commission's report on the state of the arts in Canada, which would serve to establish the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957.

One remarkable aspect of Chiriaeff's rapid rise to being the "godmother of professional ballet in Montréal" (Tembeck, 34)<sup>7</sup> is that it happened entirely on screen in the first years of her ascendancy. From nearly the moment of her arrival, she was awarded contracts to create choreographies from the producers of a highbrow arts program called *L'Heure du Concert*, which aired on Sunday evenings on the CBC's partner French language network Société Radio-Canada, the SRC (Tembeck, 34). These contracts, which kept coming, were what enabled her to form her company, *Les Ballets Chiriaeff*, in 1952, the same year as her arrival. As Smith has noted: "Les Ballets Chiriaeff was arguably the first ballet company created specifically for television" (273). Indeed, the company's first "live" stage performance did not occur until 1955 (Tembeck, 35).

The birth of Québec dance in the '50s was televisual, sustained by the fact that the television was enjoying a rapid proliferation in Québec, bringing Chiriaeff's ballets to more and more households – indeed to a larger audience than any live event could dream of reaching. For scale, Smith reports that the SRC enjoyed the captive market of French language viewers, because they could not syndicate English language programming from the US.

"Quebeckers...liked the new service, and acquired televisions even faster than [other]

---

<sup>7</sup> The choice of the term "godmother" might also reflect the essential "foreignness" of Chiriaeff, which doubles her influence but prevents her from being the "mother."

Canadians. 9.7% of Québec homes had TVs in 1953, and 88.8% by 1960” (Smith, 152). Even if *L’Heure du Concert* did not have the popular appeal of other shows on the network (especially after the first few years), Paul Rutherford was still able to estimate that the program reached a weekly audience on 525,000 in 1959 (Smith, 158). It would take years of touring to reach half that number in a live setting. Chiriaeff had the lucky break being a very recent immigrant to Québec who managed to reach millions of viewers with her choreographies within the first five years of her arrival, choreographies that largely came to define the course of Québec ballet for decades to come.

The confluence the SRC’s adventurous arts programing, the newfound cultural interest in dance following the Church’s restrictions, and, eventually, the flow of public money into the art form, laid the ground for Ludmilla Chiriaeff to create the structures—educational, institutional, commercial—that would serve to professionalize dance and ensure its cultural position and reproduction. After a performance of *Les Noces* at the Montreal Festival in 1956, mayor Jean Drapeau approached Chiriaeff and encouraged her to register her company so that she would be eligible for city grants (Tembeck, 1994, 35). Two years later, she created *Les Grands Ballet Canadiens* (LGBC) with a \$6000 grant from the city (Tembeck, 35). Along with LGBC, she founded the *École Supérieure de Danse du Québec* in 1965 – the first school in Québec dedicated exclusively to professional dance training (Tembeck, 38).

Her legacy is largely one of dance’s professionalization and legitimization in Québec and in this way must be viewed through the lens of the political ideologies that are at play as dance comes into new levels of visibility and concomitant levels of political power, proliferated by new

public subsidies and broadcasting technologies.<sup>8</sup> To look at her dances, and particularly *Suite canadienne* (1957), as evidence of this power does not mean that we view them with historical determinism. Rather, viewing this work should enable us to see certain qualities—certain choreographic moves—that enabled her to have the success she did. In particular, *Suite canadienne* (1957) was able to solve the problem of ballet’s foreignness through its remarkable juxtaposition of folk dance and ballet, which helped to establish a mythical (and, as we shall see, chronological) narrative of continuity. I will argue that in *Suite canadienne* (1957) we can see the urgency with which a newly popular art form had to legitimize itself as Québécois. As dance legitimizes itself across Québec society it will be important to examine the ways that choreography participates in the subjectivation of the populace through its immanent political ideologies. As Mark Franko reminds us, “dance does not become political only when the choreographer adopts politically legible content; the cultural politics of dance are always embedded in form” (2002, 57). I will use Franko’s discussion of Louis Althusser’s theory of subject interpellation to show the way that choreography provides the grounds for examining the ideological subjectivation of the Québec “self,” but at same time offers an opening to its capacity for political resistance.

### **Ideology Has No History: Althusser’s Theory of Interpellation**

In what follows, I am interested in showing the particular mechanisms at work that allowed ballet to take hold in Québec as a technique for being Québécois.<sup>9</sup> Insofar as Ludmilla

---

<sup>8</sup> Political power here refers to the economic and social influence that dance would come to have on the Québec and Canadian public. The next section will further elucidate and contextualize the ways in which we can understand dance’s “power.”

<sup>9</sup> It is useful to relate the notion of a “technique for being Québécois” to Marcel Mauss’ “techniques of the body.” In his seminal essay of the same name, he shows that these techniques (like swimming, dancing, walking, etc.) are dynamic assemblages that combine the physiological, the psychological and

Chiriaeff was successful, her dances proposed a national and cultural identity on a large scale. This identity should be read in relation to discourses around subjectivation, which Mark Kelly defines, via Foucault, as: “the process by which one obtains the constitution of the subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity” (Kelly, 87). In order to read *Suite canadienne* (2015), I must first track the various modes by which we can understand dance as creating certain modes of subjectivity that persist and resonate with certain sets of ideological cultural and political values. It is only by understanding these mechanisms that we can begin to approach the ways that choreography and, as we shall see, re-performance, can propose other capacities for the dancing body.

In his 1969 essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Louis Althusser argued that the state uses ideological apparatuses controlled by the ruling class in order to effectively subjugate individuals by means of a process he called interpellation. Ideology here is “a system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or social group” (2001, 107). It “has no history” which also means that it is eternal, and it progresses via *practice*, which is its material existence (112). Ideological State apparatuses (ISAs) are distinguished by Althusser from the repressive State apparatus. If the repressive State apparatus (the military, the police, the courts and prisons, etc.) proceeds by violence or threat thereof, the ISAs (which include churches, schools, the family, unions, political parties, broadcasters and the cultural apparatus, etc.) wield power via ideology (96). Althusser names the educational apparatus as the most important ideological apparatus since the decline of the power of the Church around the time of the Reformation (103). The ruling ideology, he says, is “an ideology which represents the School as a neutral environment purged of ideology” (105) which is precisely what enables it to do its

---

the sociological. They are assembled “by and for social authority” (Mauss, 2006, 92), which, in the moment of creation or reform, proceeds via psychological impetus. These territorial techniques both reflect and produce national and local identities. (See Mauss, 2006).

dominating ideological work; only in a space of “free thought” can ideology actively subjugate, according to Althusser. The ideological disciplining of individuals and social groups proceeds trans-historically, interpellating individuals in order not only to discipline them into reproducing the conditions which allow the ruling class to retain power, but also to render them individual, sovereign subjects, capable of free thought and a place under the sun.

Interpellation itself is a “hailing” (118) of the subject—a moment at which the subject both hears the call (e.g. “Hey, you there!”) and recognizes that it is really her who is called, thereby putting her in a subject position, but doing so of her own volition. The subject becomes subjugated, “all by herself,” as she turns and concedes that it was really her who was called. In this way, ideology beckons to us and we subjugate ourselves to it simply by stopping and recognizing that it is really us who are called. “[T]he individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject [or the State], i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjugations, i.e. in order that he shall make gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself’. There are no subjects except by and for their subjection” (123). Interpellation mobilizes subjective arrest – it is both the mobilization of a newly relationally-constructed subject, and the arresting of that subject in her various mobile (dissident) capacities.

Althusser’s theory has been taken up and criticized by a series of thinkers, most notably Foucault (1990), as over-emphasizing the role of the state in the construction of subjectivity and simplifying the relation between the subject and power. The line between subjugation and subjectivation is important here, as subjectivation implies a more nuanced process of becoming, something that exceeds the illustration of a top-down repressive state apparatus that Althusser theorized. To illustrate the point, we could compare Foucault’s panopticism with Althusser’s

hailing. The example Althusser uses is when a policeman yells “Hey you” on the street. In turning to recognize ourselves as hailed, we respond with a singular gesture that is confirmed by the existence of the policeman and our mutual recognition as hailer and hailee; in Althusser—after a short choreography in which movement is arrested—seeing is believing. The fact of having been hailed is confirmed through sight: it was “really me.” Whereas, in Foucault, believing is seeing. Panopticism shows that the process of subjectivation proceeds across time and space in a world that is relationally constructed by the subject herself. The subject is not hailed in Foucault, her movement is not arrested, but rather she learns to hail herself; in Foucault, “*the self-relation is itself a power relation*” (Kelly, 100, emphasis original). This construction complicates Althusser’s rather unidirectional notion of agency. Subjectivation, with Foucault, is not a relation of external power over internal subjectivity. Rather, “individuals... are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power. They are never the inert or consenting targets of power; they are always its relays” (Foucault, 2003, 29).

Nevertheless, dance theorists André Lepecki (2006) and Mark Franko (2002) have revived Althusser’s theory of interpellation as useful for understanding the particular dynamics of spectacle that define subject relations active in the performer-audience binary. In the sense that interpellation describes a choreography of address, Althusser’s theory can be used to understand how the experience of self-recognition proliferates in performance situations where “people become enlisted as subjects of ideology through the experience of self-recognition” (Franko, 60). It’s worth quoting Franko at length here:

“I do not conceive the agent of interpellation to be the state apparatus, as did Althusser, but rather actual performances and the movement there deployed. Yet performances are related in many cases to institutional structures at fundamental aesthetic levels. The logic linking those levels is choreographic...Aesthetics and politics as a field of inquiry redefine ideology as actively persuasive rather than flatly oppressive” (2002, 14).

Rather than situating the school, or before that, the Church, as a the locus of ideological power, which may be an oversimplification of the process of subjugation, Franko asks us to consider the interpellative potential of performance as a site in which spectators are called to subject positions via self-recognition. Although the panopticon may be more useful in understanding the tentacular power of normativity generally, Althusser's theory of interpellation is useful in the context of the theatrical codes of the proscenium in which the bifurcation of spectator and performer most directly mirror this "hailing." Franko uses 1930s dance critic John Martin's notion of "metakinesis" as the particularly visceral way that dancing bodies on stage "hail" spectators with a kind of "internal mimesis" (Franko, 61). Interpellation as a dynamic of visceral address is useful for understanding the ideological power of performance that proceeds aesthetically as well as politically.

Franko revives Althusser's interpellation expressly for his analysis of dance in the USA in the 1930s. Although the USA of the 1930s and Québec of the 1950s must not be collapsed, Franko's analysis of '30s dance centers on the aesthetic and political struggle that resulted in the cultural legitimacy of particular forms ballet and modern dance. The course of dance's cultural legitimacy in the USA is strikingly different from that of dance's legitimacy in Québec (Tembeck has noted that the cradles of modern dance were Germany and the United States in part because they were protestant and escaped dance's vilification by the Catholic Church [34]). Nevertheless, Franko's analysis of the political struggles of dance's coming into cultural awareness will prove useful in our analysis of Chiriaeff's work in Québec. If nothing else, we may at least note that the interpellative potential of dance in Québec is heightened in Chiriaeff's work because her work marked the first time that many Québécois would be exposed to ballet.



That her struggle to legitimize the form in Québec resulted in lasting institutions that still persist around Montréal bears witness to the idea that the interpellative potential of her dances was realized. The call was heard and the ballet body was hailed, mobilized in subjective arrest.

### **Ideology and Origins In Québec Ballet**

At this point it will be useful to examine some of the complex social factors at play that contributed to Chiriaeff's ability to popularize ballet in Québec.<sup>10</sup> We might start with a question that may have already occurred to the reader: why Chiriaeff? What conspired to make her the chosen choreographer to be championed by the SRC? Surely, the reader may have thought, it is not just the confluence of social and cultural factors that enabled Chiriaeff's push for dance's legitimacy. Surely, it must have been at least partly caused by her indelible talent as a dancer and choreographer, not simply her lucky television break.

Smith shows that many factors contributed to the SRC championing her, not least: her charisma, her "natural" artistry, and her previous experience dancing on screen in a Swiss film which aired in Montréal called *Danse solitaire* (151). But she also had the unique attribute of a Russian-sounding name, which increased her popular appeal. Smith writes: "Since the turn of the century, professional dancers [in Montréal] had been taking Russian stage names to give themselves a professional edge" (151). It is ballet's essential foreignness that opens the door to its co-optation in Québec. We can easily see the double bind that this foreignness places on the form: on the one hand, it can only be legitimate if it is authentically foreign; on the other hand, if it is truly foreign then it cannot truly belong, much less come to reflect and represent Québec

---

<sup>10</sup> Smith outlines the way that the television went from being something that only the rich could afford in the early fifties, to being a nearly universal home technology in the late fifties. As the medium proliferated, "highbrow" shows like *L'Heure du Concert* were eventually discontinued as the SRC needed to cater to the tastes of a mass public. (Smith, 158).

society. In order for ballet (and art dance more generally) to posit its future in and as Québec culture, it would need also to posit an origin story that can locate the ballet body *as Québécois*, satisfying political requirements of belonging. Such a maneuver becomes ideological when it proposes a generic hierarchy and disciplines the dancing body accordingly, as ballet's ascendancy in Québec was wont to do. Such disciplining *matters*, not only for dance, but also for the field of human agency generally.

In this section, I will examine the way that Chiriaeff's *Suite canadienne* (1957) can be viewed as an origin story of local ballet in order to stake a claim to Québec futurity. To do so, I will draw on Randy Martin's discussion of how Martha Graham posits an origin story for modern dance as a distinctly American art form. In order to bridge the apparent genre problem that this examination poses to my own argument, I will augment it with Mark Franko's analysis of American ballet, in which he argues that ballet is a kind of "mythical cultural capital" in North America following colonization. Finally, I will examine the critical reception of *Suite canadienne* (1957) and show Chiriaeff's own conceptualization of her politico-aesthetic project.

In *Critical Moves* (1998), Randy Martin argues that the emergence of Martha Graham as the originary figure of modern dance in the US was accompanied by a "mythology of the national self" (151) that served to erase useful distinctions between already existing genres so that a single coherent genre/self could emerge. Graham is the "quintessential modern dance self whose body gave birth to a technique for being American" (152). For Martin, the ascendancy of modern dance "is treated as evidence of the belated emergence of an authentic American character" thereby intertwining the dancing body with "a larger political project where the language of national identity serves and complicates the formation of a (nation) state" (152). Modern dance technique is a "technique for being American," and yet, as Martin shows,

Graham's distinctly American dance arises from the bodies of others not from some well within. Her myth is a uniquely appropriative one, synthesized with all the colonialist rhetoric of ahistorical transference. Martin quotes her at length as she claims that African and Native American dance are the sources of her new uniquely American dance. These are

primitive sources which, though they may be basically foreign to us, are, nevertheless, akin to the forces which are at work in our life. For we, as a nation, are primitive also—primitive in the sense that we are forming a new culture (152).<sup>11</sup>

The rhetorical and mythical appropriation of a primitive other into a “we” is how she argues, according to Martin, for “the development of dance technique [that] is but an instance of those powers that enable national formation” (153). Such a nation takes as its own what is foreign to it and in so doing erases violent histories of appropriation that might expose its seams, to say the least. This history takes shape in and as the dancing body as it undergoes a process of “national self-discovery” that “occurs in the space between [dance] technique and the state” (153). The argument hinges on the development not just of a dance performance or of a dance style, but a dance technique: a technology of self that, in theory, anyone could learn.

Graham and Chiriaeff have a world of aesthetic difference between them. But what they share is the success with which they posit dance technique as a site of national identity in the making. With Graham, modern dance technique is a complex repository of disparate culturally-constructed bodies that at once celebrates the diversity of American identity while effectively erasing its political and cultural agency. At the time, this move was more nuanced in American culture than it was in Québec culture. The reason for this difference is predominately attributable to the different courses of dance's legitimacy and development in the two nations. American dance was already a popular and culturally important medium in the 1930s (Franko, 2002). It had healthy communities of art dance, which included modern dance and classical ballet. The first

---

<sup>11</sup> Martin is quoting Martha Graham in *Martha Graham* (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1966), p. 99-100.

permanent American ballet company was established in 1932 at Radio City Music Hall, 20 years before *Les Ballets Chiriaeff* (Franko, 2002, 111). Graham's goal was to fuse what was already there into a technique that could account for the diversity of the field and, through participation and representation, unify it.

Chiriaeff had a different goal because she entered a different field. For her, the problem was not a proliferation of disparate dancing bodies, but actually an absence of such. Despite the prevalence of folk dance in Québec culture, folk dancing could never encapsulate the aspirations of political and cultural futurity—it could never proclaim “national identity in the making” because it was already made. As Jane Dudley says, “The problem with folk dance is that it stays folk dance” (quoted in Franko, 11). It needed to be colonized, as it were, with techniques that could express this futurity<sup>12</sup> and ballet was a natural (relatively timeless) way of doing that. Mark Franko identifies that ballet functions in the North American imagination as a kind of “mythical cultural capital” that supposedly occurs “natively” in each dancer—a holdover from other European imports (109). He references a scene in the Ziegfeld film *Glorifying the American Girl* in which a woman auditioning to be a chorus girl fears she is losing the audition and offers to show what she can “really do.” She then performs an impromptu ballet variation in pointe shoes which wins her the audition. Franko's interpretation, and one with which I agree, is that “classical ballet was a way of moving [that] the chorus girl never studied but rather discovered as a native resource in herself” (109). Ballet was yet another one of the technologies of the self that could be adopted unproblematically from Europe as “natural” by the North American subject—one of many sites of “mythical cultural capital” that must be rigorously taught to “naturally” occur in different bodies in order to form techniques of national identity that are hypothetically

---

<sup>12</sup> I use the term in relation to José Esteban Muñoz's concept of the idealized future – a queer futurity – in *Cruising Utopia*.

accessible to all (though practically accessible only to an elite few). Both Graham and Chiriaeff had to pose new techniques of being a citizen, and both would succeed only if they demonstrated a link with what already existed.

As we can see, the political project of nurturing a nascent professional ballet scene that capitalizes on Chiriaeff's Russian-sounding name also needs to pose an origin-tale in order to sell Québec dance to the Québécois as something that springs essentially *from Québec*. Chiriaeff effectuates this paradoxical "originizing" with her dedicated use of Québec folk dance, as she did in *Suite canadienne* (1957). See how Chiriaeff puts it in a later interview, perfectly encapsulating the way that a "technique for being Québécois" (to borrow the phrase) both relies on and posits an originary tale:

"The rest of Canada will probably never understand what happened, and judge it politically, because it finally became political...[but what truly happened] was the people of Québec suddenly looked at themselves in this little square window called television and discovered they were somebody and had something to say...it was like the rite of spring: suddenly it's ripe and the seed comes out, it brings up earth, it moves stones, it starts moving—to live" (Smith, 278).

Both Chiriaeff's foreign-sounding name and the fact that she brought the form from Europe are erased by an origin story of the dance coming directly from the earth, or the *living* earth that is perhaps also the body. The promise of ballet is not the promise of foreignness, of the exotic or the oriental; rather, it is the promise of sovereignty. Colonial power manifests in the territory of the new world not as an outpost, but as a center, as a sovereign nation—whether this nation was Québec or Canada. The European ballet form offers the Québécois access to the nation-building power of the *classical* and its sovereign authority. With Chiriaeff and the Québec public, the slipper fits. The tutu can replace the peasant dress. The call of self-recognition happens as naturally as a seed growing out of the earth, and it happens through the apparatus of the

television, a “window” through which the Québécois can finally see themselves, or perhaps see themselves as worldly, as sovereign.<sup>13</sup>

By the time Chiriaeff was interviewed in the above quote she could gloss the historical record, but if we look at the time of *Suite canadienne* (1957)’s premier, the story is rather different. Here’s one reviewer:

The choreography of this suite is a curious mixture of pure classical and character dancing that had me completely baffled. The pas de deux (beautifully danced by Eva von Grencsy and [Eric] Hyrst) seemed to me to have no relation to the ballet, the music, or Canada. Neither did the costumes of Miss von Grencsy and Mr. Hyrst, for that matter, though the costumes of the rest of the cast were admirable and Robert Prevost’s décor absolutely stunning.

(Johnson, 1957 [BDLD])

As the quote demonstrates, not all the Québécois recognized the perfect continuity between folk dance and ballet. This reviewer, at least, did not take the bait. Despite the title, Chiriaeff would have trouble coupling her European dance technique with Canadian identity.<sup>14</sup> This was a challenge that Chiriaeff had been working on for years. Indeed, the trouble with using a popular medium, like television, is that she had to appeal to a popular audience. Smith notes the strategies she had to deal with this challenge. Firstly, she performed for children at every opportunity she got (Smith, 165). Performing in schools and on children’s television, she reasoned, would help to foster an interest in ballet in the next generation and would help to populate schools and professional programs with aspiring dancers (and audiences). The other technique she used was incorporating local arts at every juncture (Smith, 166). Her use of French-Canadian folk songs in *Suite canadienne* (1957) is telling in this respect. Indeed, she

---

<sup>13</sup> I do not refer here specifically to the sovereignty movement in Québec, which would begin in earnest in the early ‘60s. And yet, to the extent that dance participated in the nation-building of Québec in the ‘50s, we may also say that it helped to enable the sovereignty movement that continues to the present.

<sup>14</sup> I realize that collapsing “Canadian” and “Québécois” will raise the eyebrows of some readers, but I argue that her title *Suite canadienne* shows the fluidity with which she could move between Québec and Canadian identities. Before the major nationalist struggles of Québec, the Québécois were treated, by Chiriaeff, simply as French-speaking Canadians.

collaborated with local composers, musicians, and designers to try to capture the Québécois spirit on stage. Mixing something familiar with something unfamiliar would perhaps give her ballets a fair viewing. And yet, she would need to do more if she wanted to posit ballet as a grand cultural phenomenon.

When Chiriaeff founded LGBC in 1957 she was no longer supporting the company with television contracts. If she wanted to continue making work she would have to tour, and this required a committed audience that would follow the company from a free broadcast in their living rooms, to a paid ticket at the concert hall. No wonder, then, that her first series of major performances with the company were called “Initiation to the dance” and took an educational tone, aimed specifically at young spectators. The series presented “the evolution of ballet from its beginnings to the present day” (“Programme” [BDLD]) and was organized in what she called a “chronological order” from traditional European ballet to a kind of local folk ballet. *Suite canadienne* (1957) came as the penultimate dance of nine in the evening. According to the program “[i]t is also through character dance itself that folklore becomes incorporated in classical ballet which it enriches and broadens” (“Programme” [BDLD]). The series was intended to “enable the young spectator...to appreciate ballet better since he now knows its language, and to derive from it a keener, more sophisticated enjoyment” (“Programme” [BDLD]). Here she is organizing the gradual influence of Québec folk dance in a chronology that attempts to intertwine ballet’s continental (and colonial) authority with its promise as a prototype of national identity. Ballet itself is “broadened” by folklore (in its appeal or in its cultural force?), and Québec plays an integral role in the process. The colonizer brings more than just sophisticated enjoyment—he brings the mechanisms for imposing “sophistication” on the population, in repeating calls to ever-changing subjectivation in the name of national identity.

This is what would enable a commentator in 1972 to claim: “(Her) influence on dance in Québec is pretty well all-pervasive. She is the single leading luminary and she has adopted the particular mystique of her adopted land with a great passion. In a sense, she is more French Canadian than the French Canadians” (in Smith, 168).<sup>15</sup> That last sentence haunts me with the force of ahistorical revisionism that is the eternal lure of the colonizer and forms the basis of his territorial/cultural claim.

Of course, claiming that arts movements are really thinly veiled political projects for ever-changing mandates of national citizenship is a ceaseless and perhaps, for this reason, needless task. Likewise, it is easier to make such arguments about the arts movements that succeed and become incorporated in national cultural identity. My point is not to argue that Chiriaeff was really a politician of dance, however one might construe such a role. Nor is it to claim that her program of ballet-ifying Québec dance was really perverse, or culturally violent and appropriative. Rather, I am interested in showing the particular mechanisms at work that allowed ballet to take hold in Québec as a method of interpellating subjects to particular identity positions. Ballet is a technique, just like modern dance in the USA was, and Chiriaeff proposed it as a technique for being Québécois. Through a broad cultural and educational program, which was bolstered for the first time in Québec by public funding, she could posit a story of folklore-cum-ballet that would so resonate in the hearts of the citizens such that ballet could represent a kind of cultural futurity. Being called “more French Canadian than the French Canadians” is a measure of her success. Going back to these dances in light of their interpellating potential shows us their embarrassing politics, but it also shows us avenues of escape, potential movements of subversion. When ballet was still being tried on for identity’s sake we can see more starkly what

---

<sup>15</sup> The commentator is John Fraser, a columnist, and the quote comes from Robert Fulford’s *An Introduction to the Arts in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1977), 93.



its technique posits, and as such we can act from the inside, as it were, as an agent of (re)historicization. Further, we might be inclined to reframe the question of Québec dance as an open one, leaving room for the hypothetical as well as for the minor.

## **PART II: Re-Performing Archives**

“We need a history that does not save in any sense of the word; we need histories that perform and can be performed”

(Jane Blocker, quoted in Clarke, 2013, 379)

To return to *Suite canadienne (2015)* we must first pass through the question of re-performance. What is the relation between the dance work that appears on the television at the Ellen Gallery and the dance work that appears on the television at the media center of *Bibliothèque de la danse*, besides the 47 years that yawn between their respective tapings? The reader is likely aware that in recent performance scholarship there has been a significant debate around performance and/of the archive. I will visit this discourse as a means of situating *Suite canadienne (2015)* but also as a means of identifying *Suite canadienne (2015)*'s singularities. I am reminded here of Myriam Van Imschoot's statement, summarizing Derrida, that along archive's "normative gesture of restoration" comes with the force of an imperative (2005). This imperative is perhaps what is most directly taken up in the re-performance of *Suite canadienne (2015)*: an imperative to revisit and re-perform these histories, an imperative nascent in the notion of archive itself. But first we must encounter the question of how the performance enters the archive in the first place. If a performance is coterminous with its event, then, as Phelan argues, it becomes itself through disappearance. The first question we will have to pass through

is: in what particular manner can we understand a performance to be archived, saved beyond its event-time? Once we can understand the qualities by which a performance remains, we can interrogate its entry into the archive as a performance itself. In order to read the re-performance on the television at the Ellen Gallery, we must first read it in relation to this archival performance: how it takes up the imperative of a “normative gesture,” produces it, but in so doing produces it differently—produces difference. It is in this difference, I will argue, that we find cleavage between, on the one hand, the archive’s ongoing imperatives that traverse the body and, on the other hand, the body’s own powers to imagine and to move *otherwise*—to produce otherwise gestures of normativity. Writer and theorist Ashon Crawley uses the phrase “otherwise movements” to describe the way that choreography can produce an ethical demand for change that is founded in the capacity for “any word, any song, any dance to be otherwise than it is” (2015). Otherwise movements, otherwise plans, otherwise dances—these are the movements that are already happening in what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney would call the black undercommons (2013). I will develop a reading of *Suite canadienne* (2015) that takes into account the capacity for ballet—and beyond it, for *dance*—to be otherwise than it is.

A discussion of performance and the archive should start in the early 1990s, when Peggy Phelan and Jacques Derrida published books that would prompt much of the discourse around re-performance. Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked, The Politics of Performance* (1993) is a treatise on the politics of performance’s disappearance, a disappearance that relegates performance to the minor (Phelan calls it “runt of the litter” [148] of contemporary art), but also gives it its “distinctive oppositional edge” (148). Performance “becomes itself through disappearance” (146). It lives entirely in the present—plunging into visibility and just as quickly retreating to memory. Because of its inevitable disappearance it is constantly bolstered by the reproductive apparatus of

the video camera. And yet, “To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology” (146). For Phelan, this ontological promise is a political one because of the way that performance resists the twin ideologies of capital and reproduction that also encroach upon it. Disappearing means being unavailable to the economies of objects and of exchange, thereby “clog[ging] the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary for the circulation of capital” (148). Likewise, if performance becomes itself only in and as disappearance, then it poses significant problems for the archive—that place where history is written with what remains.

Jacques Derrida, in a series of lectures published as *Archive Fever, A Freudian Perspective* (1994), reminds us of the nomological principle buried in the term “archive.” That is, Derrida reminds us that the archive is not only a place where things commence, but also a place where “authority [and] social order are given” (1)—a place of commandment. This is elaborated in the original Greek derivation of the word archive: *arkheion*, which denotes “a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded” (2). The archive is not simply a location of storage and of saving, but a place from whence the law is spoken. Married to the storage of documents is the “power to interpret the archives” (2) literally, *to speak the law* and this speaking is dependent both on the residence and the substrate (the material document). “It is thus,” Derrida writes, “in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place” (2). It is at once the house and the police that guard the house, and as such it is neither the house nor the guard, but the power there invested, which retreats to and is located in the (physical and vocal) address it issues: the archive is a *place* from whence to *speak* the law. This might help to explain Derrida’s statement that there is “No archive

without outside” (11) which is another way of saying that memory is the inaccessible inside (the domicile) from whence the law speaks to the surround.

How then can performance, which is given to disappearance as the condition of its becoming, become domiciled in the archive? Rebecca Schneider (2001), taking up this apparent contravention, argues that it is the archival logic itself which produces performance’s disappearance. Using Derrida’s *arkheion* as a starting point, she identifies the ways that the archive’s logic reinforces a Western-oriented imperialism which she accuses of both ocular hegemony and phallogentrism. Quoting Kobena Mercer, ocular hegemony “assumes that the visual world can be rendered knowable before the omnipotent gaze of the eye and the ‘I’ of the western cogito” (quoted in Schneider, 101). Following this, in what ways does Phelan’s theory of disappearance itself reinforce the imperialist logic of the archive? In saying that performance disappears, Schneider argues we are simply exposing our enthrallment to the western obsession with the object, the record and the document, as a continuation of that “ancient habit of mapping for monument” (102). In light of this, Schneider invites us to consider the ways that performances “remain, but remain *differently*” (105). If we can elaborate the way performance remains, we can exit the logic of the archive that emphasizes loss, a loss that the archive itself can regulate, maintain and institutionalize—indeed a loss that the archive *produces* (104). In showing the way that performance remains, we can take it seriously, again, as an anti-monumental, living history with an imperative to remain in continued performances of difference.

So then, *how* does performance remain? Schneider argues that performances remain, and always have, in the flesh. *Flesh*—that feminine-identified subcutaneous that is distinguished from the bone of the archival remain—is the site of performance’s mobile housing, its

unauthorized non-domiciliation. In the flesh of the performers and likewise in the flesh of the spectators, performances remain in their givenness to repetition—their acts and their potential to act—and the ways in which they spread agency and knowledge horizontally, offering a different notion of how history is, or ought to be, written. In understanding performative repetition as history-in-the-making, we can see the way that “the site of *any knowing* [is] body-to-body transmission” (105, emphasis original) and exit the lure of the archive’s insistence that all that remains is bone. Further, this view of the archive takes into account the metakinetic, body-to-body nature of Althusser’s interpellative subjectivation.

### **Re-Enactment and the Will to Archive**

“[B]ut it is the future that is at issue here, and the archive as an irreducible experience of the future.” – Derrida (1994, 149)

“Dancing continually recreates the archive, binding persons to the specific place where the dance occurs, rather than removing objects to a separate establishment for contemplation and evaluation.” (Susan Leigh Foster, in Fensham, 160)

An anti-monumental, anti-imperialist view of the archive makes room for performance and shows both how the archive itself performs and how *we perform it*: in its nomological power, in its power to speak and to iterate the performative of history. This mutually constituted view of the archive and performance offers us a perspective on why re-enactment is, as Amelia Jones writes, a “hugely popular strategy in the art and performance worlds” (in Clarke, 372). Recent examples abound. One can think of Toronto-based choreographer Ame Henderson’s 2014 project uncovering the unwritten performance archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario in her “Rehearsal/Performance.”<sup>16</sup> Or Fabian Barba’s “A Mary Wigman Dance Evening” in which he

---

<sup>16</sup> For more on this, see forthcoming AGO publication

re-enacts nine solos from modern dance pioneer Mary Wigman's 1930 tour of the USA.<sup>17</sup>

Marina Abramović's example is likely the most well known; a retrospective of her performance work at the MoMA in 2010 entitled "The Artist Is Present" reached a decidedly mass audience.<sup>18</sup>

Dozens of examples could follow; I only wish to remind the reader of this undeniable trend.

Could it be that if we understand the archive as a site of power that *relies* on performance in order to force it to disappear, as Schneider does, then the "distinct oppositional edge" (Phelan, 1993, 148) of performance might be sharpest when it cuts into the archive? Is the dialectic with disappearance a mode through which performance remakes the archive, and in so doing, remakes the social, folding history on itself? Does that help to explain this recent obsession with the archive—an obsession in which *Suite canadienne* (2015) takes part? In short, what is at stake in re-performance, given the above discussion of performance, the archive, and performance remains? Further, how might we understand dance's specificity in relation to the archive?

Performance scholar André Lepecki takes up these very questions in his article from 2010 "Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances." Though there are certainly other ways of understanding the impulse to re-enact (as perhaps coming from a modernist impulse for self-examination), Lepecki's perspective will prove useful because it favors re-enactment as a revisory action that is focused not on accuracy but on difference, as Schneider has suggested. In this way, re-enactment via Lepecki is full of gestures of resistance and escape.

Lepecki identifies a "will to archive" that is active in many recent dance re-enactments; indeed he argues that re-enactments in dance may be a "mark of experimentation that defines

---

<sup>17</sup> See Stalpaert, Christel (2009) "Re-enacting Modernity: Fabian Barba's A Mary Wigman Dance Evening"

<sup>18</sup> See Cotter, Holland "Performance Art Preserved, in the Flesh" in *The New York Times*, March 11, 2010.

contemporaneity” (29), so pervasive is the trend. This “will to archive” refers to “a capacity to identify in a past work still non-exhausted creative fields of ‘impalpable possibility’” (31). “Impalpable possibility” is a phrase he borrows from Brian Massumi. The sentence from Massumi reads: “[e]ach perception is surrounded by a fringe of unlikelihood, an impalpable possibility” (2002, 91) and is used to contextualize his statement that “*perceptions are possible actions*” (2002, 91, emphasis original). What is at stake here is not the possible, but the way that the possible presses against the actual, in unrealized or semi-realized actualizations, even in *unrealizable* actualizations, played on a spectrum of “unlikelihood.” Lepecki cites Deleuze as showing the way that “possibles...operate as recollections that try to become *embodied* and exert pressure toward and on actualization” (31, emphasis added). The mode of actualization is embodiment (Schneider’s “flesh”), which is how the “will to archive”—that capacity to identify non-exhausted creative fields—becomes a “will to re-enact.” Re-enacting redefines—by way of the possible and its leaning toward embodied action—what is meant by archiving and therefore what is meant by re-enacting. How is this redefining effected? Lepecki asserts that “redefining is carried out by a common articulator: The dancer’s body” (31). Indeed, the dancer’s body may have “always already been nothing other than an archive” (34)—an archive that cleaves the past as a rupture of futurity pivoting on the possibles buried in our very perceptions. This reveals how, for Lepecki, “re-enacting is an affective mode of historicity that harnesses futurities by releasing pastness away from its many archival ‘domiciliations’” (35).

How can we understand the *Suite canadienne* (2015) in relation to “will to archive” as a “will to re-enact”? If *Suite Canadienne* (2015) is concerned with bringing up the archival performance as a site of non-exhausted creative fields, what are those fields? And how could we understand the dancer’s body as the defining factor in the harnessing of other futurities? What is

at work here? I argue that *Suite canadienne (2015)* acts upon “impalpable possibility” in Québec dance precisely where it is most domiciled—that is, at its mythical and political origin, a site where the archival, nomological power over dance is strongest and the least given to re-writing. This palpable possibility takes the form of a ballet that has been re-routed to an untrained body and appears not in the authorial proscenium (that other representational domicile) but in institutional public space, albeit public space that is invested, likewise, with nomological power, this time administrative. Further, *Suite canadienne (2015)* confuses the subjectivity of the dancer, cross-dresses it, renders it anonymous and multiple, and yet stages it in an uneasy solitude. It is through these qualities that we can read *Suite canadienne (2015)*’s relation to archive and its mutual constitution with performance, showing the way that, as per Lepecki, the archive “becomes the vertiginous skin where all sorts of onto-political ‘re-writings’ take place...including the re-writing of the archive itself” (38).

### **Thinking *Suite Canadienne (2015)* Beyond Failure**

Ramsay Burt also writes about re-enacting archival dances. For him, the “inevitable failure to be faithful to an original” in works involving re-enactment by Jérôme Bel and Martin Nachbar (for instance) contribute to the ways in which these re-enactments offer “a freedom from the disciplinary and controlling structures of repressive, representational regimes” (2003, 39). But if we read re-enactments as “inevitable failure,” are we not limiting ourselves in terms of what kind of difference a re-enactment can hold and still be “faithful” to an original? It is clear that reading re-enactment as failure limits what can be meant by the archive’s palpable possibilities, therefore edifying the archive behind a wall of authority. Cultural theorist Lauren Berlant has argued that “failure” is a term that is often used to problematically dismiss and



dismantle revolutionary/utopian movements from the reductive viewpoint of the victor. In her essay “’68, or Something,” she argues that “Trying and failing...keeps the event open, vital” (1994, 133). So failure may not even be a failure after all. Rather than failure’s capacity for “freedom from disciplinary and controlling structures,” I propose that we start from the premise of accuracy—or, if you will, success. This proposal is consistent with the idea that via the archival remain, other “impalpable possibilities” exist and indeed that it is towards these possibilities that we orient any re-performance.

Beyond failure, we can begin to analyze how the reproduction of archival difference works to realize impalpable possibilities that no longer stand in a false relation with an imagined archival original but rather, are continuous with it. I will analyze *Suite canadienne* (2015) in relation its three most salient qualities, the three ways in which it brings the most acute complexity to the idea of archival accuracy. These are (1), its subversive relation to ballet technique which contravenes the de facto imperative of technical mastery present in the culture of ballet remounts; (2), its setting in the “commons” of administrative architectures; and (3) its staging of subjectivity as a plane of experimentation.

### **Ballet Beyond Technique**

*Suite canadienne* (2015) proposes an expansive and non-ideological ballet technique. Decoupled from the ideological foundations of ballet technique, which keep it largely inaccessible as a performance practice, the non-disciplined technique pictured here proposes a radical intervention in a conservative and reified field. Representing ballet *beyond* technique provides a formulation of the archive of ballet that is newly accessible.

Since its earliest years, ballet technique has been the site where failure has been used to closely guard positions of inclusion and exclusion. Technique and the training therein are the cultural sites (institutionalized or not) where we decide which bodies are able to accurately represent the dance and which bodies could only produce “inevitable failure.” The question of what a body can do quickly becomes political. Randy Martin calls this “the law of technique” which is “a juridical structuring of opportunity...that assigns credit to the existing state order for what the citizenry accomplishes by dint of their own collective labors” (1998, 20). Technique is always apprehended in relation to the way it tools the body to what is dominant in a social order. Of course, dance technique, like any technology, can be re-tooled too, and hack the dominant social order. Martin offers that “[b]odies can also be trained or learn in a manner that is inconsistent with dominance as such” (20). His analysis of Hip Hop technique offers an example of an advanced dance technique that escapes (certain dominant) regimes of control to offer a different mode of sociality.

Such an instance of hacking resonates within the project of re-performing *Suite canadienne*. A note of the personal may be called for here. *Suite canadienne* (2015) involved rehearsing the original *Suite canadienne* (1957) for a number of weeks before I taped the dance re-performances of the final work. Having never trained in ballet, my strategy was simply to watch the video and perform mimicry. Most of the work was done alone, though I did have a few trained dancers come in periodically to help me to infer movements that were not entirely visible and to give me tips about how to better execute certain movements. The experience managed to avoid the ethos of master-pupil relations that define so many situations of dance training because I simply did not have enough time to pretend that I was learning capital-B Ballet as opposed to learning this specific dance; likewise, authority was constantly re-routed to the video, rather than

to anyone in the room. To the extent that *Suite canadienne (2015)* makes a claim as a re-performance of the original, I argue that my re-performance “successfully”<sup>19</sup> reproduces—along vectors of “impalpable possibility” contained in the original—a version of the dance that is decoupled from the ideological and dominating disciplinary regime of Ballet—an aesthetic regime that still keeps ballet *the* privileged dance form in Québec with millions of dollars of public money yearly supporting its institutional structures, even though we have seen the thoroughly ideological conditions of its importation and adoption.<sup>20</sup>

*Suite canadienne (2015)* effects this decoupling in a number of ways. (1) It reproduces the dance in the wrong body. A female ballet role being danced by a male is still mostly unheard of in ballet repertoires.<sup>21</sup> (2) It reproduces the dance in a body with the wrong history. It is easy to see that this is a body that has not been through the requisite years of training to professionally perform ballet. (3) It replaces accuracy of execution with a remarkable commitment to performative agency. Dancing in public comes across as boldly performative: it may be inaccurate, but it is unapologetically public. It insists on being seen. And (4), it offers a glimmer of the play that can be affectively harnessed when the incumbent grip of the archive lessens its hold. Rather than the presentation of mastery or accuracy, this is the play of variation – the joy of doing something both the same and different.

This radically undisciplined ballet has a few effects in relation to the archive. Firstly, as Lepecki argued, it redefines the archive via the dancer’s body and the difference that the dancer’s

---

<sup>19</sup> I use the term advisedly. I am certain the performance would not be seen as technically “successful.” It is successful in relation what I have called above “the uncanniness of the resemblance” (5), rather than in relation to a disciplinary ballet ideal.

<sup>20</sup> For example, for the fiscal year 2013-14 Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal received \$2,175,000 from le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the largest single grant from the dance section (See: Appendices au Rapport annuel de gestion 2013-2014 du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec available on the CALQ website: [www.calq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.calq.gouv.qc.ca))

<sup>21</sup> Gender will be further examined in the section on experimental subjectivities.

body offers to the archive. Second, it re-writes the archive, performatively, harnessing possible futures for undisciplined, redefined ballet in Québec. This is doubled also by the repetition in the name, and the pun of the name itself: *Suite canadienne* translates as both “Canadian suite” and “the Canadian result;” perhaps *Suite canadienne (2015)* is a kind of result predetermined or made inevitable by the original. Third, it releases the archival dance from its primary and most militant domicile: the authorship of originality, which in the case of *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens*, is a closely guarded archive with authorized re-enactments advertised on billboards and sold to massive publics.

Dismantling the aesthetico-disciplinary regime of ballet training and its “juridical structuring of opportunity” while continuing to insist on *dancing the ballet*, provides a vision of ballet that tends toward inclusivity, even if it cannot manage to include everyone. Rather than reinforcing the refined othering of dancer and spectator, this is a dance that attempts to be specific without being inaccessible. Derrida writes that “[e]ffective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation” (1994, 4). By reproducing an originary Québec ballet in an untrained body, *Suite canadienne (2015)* offers an avenue to consider the ways that individuals might participate in the constitution and interpretation of the archive beyond or in spite of their (non)involvement in disciplinary training regimes. In this way, it harnesses radical futurities for a dance culture—and through it, culture in general—that is interested less in the ideological structuring of movement and more the idea that we must risk re-writing history to make a dance that matters.

## Reterritorialized Administrative Architectures

Another way that *Suite canadienne (2015)* complicates the notion of archival accuracy is through its setting in various locations which are not at all faithful to the original's staging. As I mentioned above, in the SRC televised version,<sup>22</sup> the 1957 *Suite canadienne* is staged in a kind of outdoor commons, encircled by a wooden fence. *Suite canadienne (2015)* re-performs the dance in seven locations around Montréal, locations I have referred to above as the sites of the administration of life, broadly construed, which include: the courthouses, city hall, the stock exchange, the word trade centre, the arts council, the convention centre. These re-performances make no attempt to recreate the outdoor common space of the original. How then are we to understand the changed locations? Why do the re-performances take place in such spaces rather than anything approximating the original? I argue that we must read *Suite canadienne (2015)*'s stagings in relation to the uniquely representational non-space of television. Videotaping the re-enactments in these various locations posits nonrepresentational, public space as a series of architectural "sets," refracted through the representational *frame* of the televisual. In locating the dancing body in these architectural sets that are likewise the sites of neoliberal power, *Suite canadienne (2015)* deterritorializes the dancing body, while reterritorializing public space as a space of dance and likewise a site of archival re-writing.

Philip Auslander, in his 1999 book *Liveness: Performance In A Mediatized Culture*, discusses the way that television, in its first several decades, sought to replace the theatrical experience. "Television was imagined *as theatre*,<sup>23</sup> not just in the sense that it could convey theatrical events to the viewer, but also in that it offered to replicate the visual and experiential discourse of

---

<sup>22</sup> There are no other moving-image archival remains that I have been able to find in an extensive search.

<sup>23</sup> Auslander includes proscenium dance in the term "theatre" here, as its visual representational codes were identical.

theatre in the antiseptic space of the suburban home” (1999, 23, emphasis original).<sup>24</sup> The representational visual codes of the proscenium were recreated by “a multiple-camera set-up [that] enable[d] the television image to recreate the perceptual continuity of the theatre” (19) thereby freeing theatre from the confines of the actual proscenium while retaining its visual effect. Television was a little proscenium in everyone’s home—and everyone had the best seats in the house. And what are the visual codes of the proscenium? Control of perspective, two-dimensionality and verticality—not to mention the history of theatre—make the proscenium *the* privileged site of representation historically. There is no *real* in the architectural regime of the proscenium: all action is represented, legible, identified as theatre and put on either side of an invisible fourth wall. Even bodies themselves are reduced to representations via the objectifying gaze that the proscenium choreographs. I bring this up in order to better interrogate the televisual space that defined *Suite canadienne* (1957) and the birth of Québécois ballet in general.<sup>25</sup> *Suite canadienne* (1957) is a prime example of a proscenium transposed into televisual space. Both of the two camera angles are frontal, directly mimicking the experience of watching a dance on stage.

How then do we understand *Suite canadienne* (1957)’s staging in an outdoor commons?

What is represented through the televisual proscenium in *Suite canadienne* (1957) is a non-

---

<sup>24</sup> Marshall McLuhan’s writings on media should be noted as well in the way that they prefigure Auslander’s conceptualization of television. Most directly, McLuhan argued that “the content of any media is always another media” (1987, 8), which, in the case of television, supports Auslander’s view that theatre (or theatrical performance) is the *content* of television. McLuhan emphasizes the various ways that “the medium is the message” (7) so that one cannot read the content of a medium without paying attention to the particular “subliminal charge” (20) of the medium and the way that it reorganizes the cultural matrix around it. For McLuhan, the shift in culture that accompanied the mass popularity of television cannot be understated, as it carried within the medium the changes that it would effect in the wider culture. Auslander’s work builds on McLuhan’s media-centric view of cultural agency and applies it to our conceptualizations of liveness.

<sup>25</sup> I remind the reader that Les Ballets Chiriaeff did not do a single non-televised event for its first three years as a company.

architectural space, an outdoor green space, accessible to all and yet protected from the dangerous surround. The television shows a non-representational common space so as to give the illusion of “reality,” as realist theatre does, but the space is already predetermined by representational (tele-)visual codes. The Québec body is free to dance, insomuch as it ignores its



*Suite canadienne (2015) installation view*

situatedness in a predetermined (though newly invisible) representational framework. Ideology, I remind the reader from the discussion above, does its best work in spaces supposedly free of ideology, so that subjects can be interpellated to the dominant order “all by themselves.”

*Suite canadienne (2015)* continues the logic of televisual representation but rather than creating a space illusorily free of ideology (a “commons”), it doubles the codes of representational space by bringing dance into the actual sites of dominant ideology—sites Althusser would call the ideological state apparatuses. Rather than taking place on one set, it repeats the dance seven times in different sets. Doing so calls attention to the relations between

sets (what they have in common) and at the same time it undoes the grounding of a set through the play of multiplicity. What is set here, moves.

The sets that *Suite canadienne* (2015) stages are bluntly architectural rather than phantasmically natural—indeed their architecture is all they have in common. Denis Hollier, analyzing Bataille’s relation to architecture, argues that “architecture, before all other qualifications, is identical to the space of representation” (1989, 31). This is because our concept of structure (structure of knowledge, movement, language, in auditory and visual realms, etc.) is dependent on a vocabulary and, indeed, a logic of architecture. Structure itself is architectural, and representation stands on its shoulders. “When structure defines the general form of legibility, nothing becomes legible unless it is submitted to the architectural grid” (33). In this way, architecture is a *dispositif* in Foucault’s sense of “distributing the visible and the invisible, generating or eliminating an object which cannot exist without it” (Deleuze quoted in Lepecki, 2010, 30). Hollier writes, via Bataille, that “the prison is the generic form of architecture” (1989, xii), echoing the Foucauldian concept that the prison is the emblem of the disciplinary society, its structuring logic. What Bataille, Foucault and Hollier show is that architecture is a ground zero for the structuring of subjectivity, the space wherein the hegemonic forces of disciplinary societies bear down on the subject most acutely, making them legible to a dominant order. Foucault’s panopticon is merely a conspicuous example. In architecture, “Otherness is excluded; it has no other place than the outside” (Hollier, 1989, 33).

I have argued above that the various spaces in which *Suite canadienne* (2015) is set are recognizable as sites of the administration of life, sites where the processes of subjectivation are most acute. But I would like to further argue that the architectural spaces double the representational logic of the televisual proscenium and place the dancing body squarely within



the webs of ideology that traverse public space. Rather than positing a free subject so as to better interpellate viewers (as *Suite canadienne* [1957] does), *Suite canadienne* (2015) posits a body already imprisoned by architecture, already imprisoned by the ideological moves that originate from the 1957 dance, and it uses dance to gesture towards escape.<sup>26</sup> This is only confounded by the fact that these buildings are sites of actual neoliberal power over the body.<sup>27</sup> If *Suite canadienne* (1957) uses a (false) image of the commons to stage a mythic originary for Québec ballet, *Suite canadienne* (2015) stages the dancing body in the real (pseudo) commons of neoliberal power to enact the actual struggle of the dancing body: a struggle against and *with* architecture. The entire quote from Hollier, begun above, reads: “If the prison is the generic form of architecture this is primarily because man’s own form is his first prison” (xii). *Suite canadienne* (2015) shows that dance, insofar as it “glimmers of [the] counterpower incumbent in mediate living,” (to borrow Brian Massumi’s phrase [2002, 2]), proposes possible gestures of escape.

But we will have to push further than the problematic idea of escape. In a later interview, Massumi reminds us that “the state is built on what escapes it” (2009, 19). So a dialectic of escape needs to be clarified if it is to have any political traction. One cannot escape hegemonic ideologies—they are the only frame in which we can understand our own sovereignty. Rather than escape, what we can do is change them, redefine them, or produce difference within them. Escape in this sense can best be understood as a move of deterritorialization and subsequent

---

<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting that all the spaces that *Suite canadienne* (2015) uses as sets are liminal spaces (entry ways) or spaces of movement (hallways). They are unsettled in this way and already filled with passersby. Rather than spaces of work (offices, meeting rooms) these are spaces of movement; they are on the threshold with the outside and already in dialogue with “escape.”

<sup>27</sup> I am careful not to falsely totalize the control that neoliberal society and its architectures have over the body. Michel de Certeau (1980) and others have shown the multiple ways that bodies invent everyday practices of resistance – tactics of divergent uses for public space. While it’s true that normative space holds a variety of practices, it should also be noted that certain modes of living are actively excluded from public space. The control that society has on us is not total, but it is certainly real.

reterritorialization. André Lepecki paraphrases Deleuze and Guattari to define territorialization as “an act that seizes a milieu and turns it into property by means of the mark” (2006, 66).



*Suite canadienne* (2015) at the offices of le CALQ. Photo by Emily Gan.

Could it be that the dancing body, always-already territorialized by the proscenium (marked representationally by it), is here shown deterritorialized in public space? Could it be that the representation here is not *of* dance, but rather *of the deterritorialization of the dancing body*? If this is true, then *Suite canadienne* (2015) also has the effect of reterritorializing public space as a space for dance. It helps if we think of the kind of the physicality normally brought into spaces like these. These are spaces where bodies perform normativity to the best of their abilities; businessmen rarely dance at the job. Indeed, while dancing for the filming of *Suite canadienne* (2015) I was often stopped by security guards in these spaces before I got to the end of the choreography. Perhaps that is because undisciplined dancing itself *deterritorializes the body*,

severing it from the normative milieu and making it dangerously illegible, no longer able to communicate dominant social codes.<sup>28</sup> This deterritorialization is political in that it proposes that other gestures and divergent techniques of self be included in the commons. And yet the political traction that *Suite canadienne* (2015) finds must be re-routed back to the archive where the territorialization of the dancing body is “originally” domiciled. Re-performance foregrounds a dancing body that acts upon the twin domiciliations—connected at every seam, resonating within each other—of archive and architecture. In reterritorializing public administrative space as a place where dance “comes back around,” as André Lepecki (2010) would say, *Suite canadienne* (2015) makes explicit what is hinted at in *Suite canadienne* (1957): namely, that archive and architecture are territories in which to enact new techniques of self, and that the dancing body is always a subject of these territories.

### **Experimental Subjectivities**

Here we should add a third complication, closely related to the other two, of *Suite canadienne*'s re-performative accuracy. This is the failure to stage a coherent, cis-gendered subject. *Suite canadienne* (2015)'s dancer is a cross-dressing, anonymous, silent, and strangely alone subject, not at all reminiscent of the very clear identities of the original cast. We are tempted to believe that the dancer in *Suite canadienne* (2015) could have danced a male part, or he could have invited his friends to dance with him. What are we to make of the gender confusion at the heart of this dance and of the dancer's solitude? I argue that the dancer's cross-dressing subverts the dominating gaze of the spectator by dislocating the spectator from a

---

<sup>28</sup> Curiously, the public performances I did for the recording of the video never really provoked interest with passersby. I would argue that this disinterest is evidence that undisciplined, cross-dressed ballet (even if it is not readable as such by the layman) is legible as contravening normative culture. Most passersby averted their eyes.

recognizable subject position from which to view a performance object. This dislocation is pushed further when the dancer becomes still and through stillness falls into a presence.

Peggy Phelan reminds us that the performance is a place where the gaze has a politics of its own. The theatre is above all an architecture that “evokes desire based upon and stimulated by the inequality between performer and spectator—and by the potential domination of the silent spectator” (1993, 163). The gaze of the spectator is aligned with male desire and fosters what Lacan calls “the belong-to-me aspect so reminiscent of property” (quoted in Phelan, 1993, 158). The desire of the spectator disciplines the performer with his/her gaze and claims “property” in the form of the images that are performed for him/her. But, as Phelan reminds us,

“this account of desire between speaker / performer and listener / spectator reveals how dependent these positions are upon visibility and a coherent point of view. A visible and easily located point of view provides the spectator with a stable point upon which to turn on the machinery of projection, identification, and (inevitable) objectification” (1993, 163).

One of the most pervasive “stable points” that allows us to find subject positions from which to project, identify and objectify is the stable point of gender, as it has been understood in heteronormative frameworks. The concept of gender, since it was introduced by child psychologist John Money in 1955 (Preciado, 2013, 99), has been used as a system of categorization that, as Foucault would say, produces the subjects that it subsequently comes to represent. Gender happens to be the *primary* subject position, assigned at or before birth, lasting the entirety of life, and structuring the entire framework of existence. And yet, as Judith Butler has famously shown, the construction of gender is only concrete in the way it is represented—there is nothing irreducibly “natural” behind its social construction. She writes: “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance” (1990, 43). This stylization is

performative, in J.L. Austin's sense of the word, in that it *does* the action rather than describing or supporting it. In Butler, gender is "performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1996, 25).

Without the concrete subject position of gender as a basis from which to enact the male-identified, consuming gaze of the spectator, the smooth machinery of presentation hits a snub. And there is perhaps no more gendered machinery of presentation, historically, than in the visual economy of ballet, where women and men so often conform to exaggerated gender norms, and where the sexual desire of the male gaze is only thinly veiled behind the screen of "art."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Mark Franko shows that in North America, sexualized chorus dancing is "the disavowed model" (2002, 108) for both ballet and modern dance. "The chorine [the chorus-line dancer] is the shadowy supplement of art dance" (2002, 108)—a supplement that both underscores and undermines the project of creating a popular American ballet. I remind the reader, in passing, of the strict oversight the clergy effected on the early ballets of Ludmilla Chiriaeff in Québec: "before every appearance of Les Ballets Chiriaeff, a member of the clergy came to the SRC studio to ensure that the company's costumes were not too revealing to go on the air. Their main concern seems to have been the women's breasts and legs" (Smith, 2000, 160). The sexualized performance of ballet is something that needs to be controlled and regulated because the objectifying gaze of the spectator is likewise a site of his own subjectivation. The Catholic subject (presumed to be heterosexual and male) must be protected from the sexualizing power of his own gaze.

When *Suite canadienne* (2015) stages a cross-dressing subject, it does so in an effort to destabilize the subject position of the spectator and to subvert the presentational regimes of

---

<sup>29</sup> Though some choreographers (William Forsythe and Alonzo King, for instance) have sought to unseat the gender binary of the form, most companies still strictly adhere to gender roles.

proscenium dance that mirror (and therefore help to produce) heteronormativity. Judith Butler reminds us that “the sight of a transvestite on stage can compel pleasure and applause, while the sight of that same transvestite on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence” (1988, 527). Outside of the representational frame of the proscenium, the cross-dressing subject is a threat to the very fabric of reality, which is based, for many, in stable gender codes. *Suite canadienne* (2015) must stage this subject in solitude, because, as Hollier writes, invoking Foucault, “Architectural devices [understood here as a structuring frameworks of thought] produce subjects; they individualize personal identities” (1986, x). In representational architectures we are individualized first, socialized second—hence the primacy of gender, its constant re-routing to the subject-in-solitude. To re-enact an originary ballet of Québec identity could run the risk of fortifying the male gaze by staging a coherent subject that reifies the gender binary so integral to ballet’s political ideology.

But a depiction of gender that is truly non-ideological will have to go beyond representation itself. If there is anything that Butler has shown us, it is not that we need more *representations* of gender (for representation itself is a hegemonic reductive force), but rather that we need a concept of gender beyond representation. I argue that this beyond-representation is achieved in *Suite canadienne* (2015) in the prolonged moments of stillness that themselves disrupt the representational framework of performance in which the gaze only goes one direction and in which linear temporality underscores representation’s inherent kinetics. André Lepecki, quoting performer La Ribot, writes that “stillness is a choreographic strategy, one that allows dance to step out of representation and into presence” (2006, 82). In his *Exhausting Dance* (2006), Lepecki argues, with others, that “movement is modernity’s ‘permanent emblem’ [a phrase Lepecki borrows from Harvie Ferguson]” (2006, 7) and slowing down (or exhausting)

movement is a way of disrupting our era's insistence on what Sloterdijk calls "being-toward-movement" (in Lepecki, 2006, 13). Modernity, for Lepecki, is kinetic, and stillness is a powerful mode of resistance in which the representational machine—itsself dependent on constant movement—is stopped. What does stillness do? It "presences" the body by breaking the ideological imperative of movement that subordinates the performer to the powerful (and still) gaze of the spectator. Bodies fall into presence through a stillness that disarms the gaze and returns it.

When the dancer in *Suite canadienne* (2015) stands still for two minutes in the middle of each dance segment, s/he breaks the representational imperative of "being-toward-movement" and becomes a body again. Curiously, the machinic tooling of the body that is choreography supports the objectification of the body and in this way anticipates the gaze of the spectator, pre-conforming to it, confirming its power. Choreography is a way of hiding the body, disciplining it and showing its ability to produce only images. But the body is capable of so much. As Deleuze repeatedly reminds us, via Spinoza, we don't yet know what a body can do. By re-enacting a dance that requires stillness, the body not only re-writes the archive, imbuing it with unrealized possibilities, it also imbues the subject itself with unrealized possibilities by presencing the body-beyond-gender. Gender, it appears, is that other archive in which only the body (always re-enacting, always treading where others already have) can be given the power of revision.

## **CODA: *Suite canadienne* & Otherwise Movements**

The study of dance is a study of historical agency.  
Mark Franko (2002, 2)

I have argued that *Suite canadienne* (2015) proposes three productive and interconnected disjunctions with the original *Suite canadienne* (1957). These disjunctions occur along the axes of ballet technique, staging, and subjectivity and together they reflect the politico-aesthetic endeavor of the work. First, *Suite canadienne* (2015) proposes a radically accessible and undisciplined version of ballet technique in an effort to remove ballet from the reified circles of archival and aesthetic protection, offering Ballet and its authority to those who have not been subjectivated by its training apparatus. Second, *Suite canadienne* (2015) takes its setting not in the televisually-represented commons of the original, but rather in a series of reterritorialized public spaces of neoliberal power, which function as a kind of cruel promise of a commons that is only ever an architecture of subjection. And finally, *Suite canadienne* (2015) stages a cross-dressing, anonymous, and still dancer, rather than a coherent ballet specimen. These attributes of the dancer destabilize the machinery of objectification and push the dancer's body into an uncanny presence.

All of these disjunctions operate in relation to an archive, which, as André Lepecki has pointed out, holds a range of impalpable possibilities that re-performances actualize. In actualizing these new possibilities, two things happen: performance radically *remains* in that it resonates newly in the flesh; and the archive expands beyond the protection of its domiciliation, holding and authorizing divergent histories and further avenues of performative exploration.

This particular re-performance is important because it intervenes on the history of Québec dance at the (mythic) moment of its nascence. As dance in Québec was becoming more visible and politically supported, a coherent “technique for being Québécois” needed to be



proposed that both *belonged* to Québec, but also paradoxically could be championed by a very recent immigrant to Québec with a decidedly “foreign-sounding” name. Ludmilla Chiriaeff managed this paradoxical task by disciplining the folk movements of local tradition into European ballet steps that she narrated and proselytized as a kind of progress. In so doing, she could make a claim for a ballet that was “of” Québec, which helped to legitimize and professionalize the dance field, putting into action the large-scale machinery of training, spectatorship and public funding. Reviving Mark Franko’s use of Louis Althusser’s concept of interpellation, I have argued that we must view this technique of being Québécois within the discourses of discipline and control that help to produce Québec subjectivity as a specific horizon of movements, attitudes, aptitudes, bodies, forms, and psychological processes that produce a coherent self. To the extent that *Suite canadienne* (1957) helped to posit a narrative that could guide the development of Ballet in Québec as a technique of being Québécois, then my dance should be read as a productive disorganization of the coherence of this narrative, and of the normative society that it sought to reproduce. In this way, *Suite canadienne* (2015)’s disjunctions, enumerated above, function as calls for change and serve to critique the normative world of Québec society in the form of its most established and politically supported dance tradition.

Dance’s capacity to elicit a call for change as a critique against the normative is something that scholar Ashon Crawley explores with urgency in his article “Otherwise Movements.” In the article he identifies within black social dance a restive quality, a “vibrational force” that performs the inherent capacity for things – songs, movements, choreographies or sociality itself – to be other than they are. “Twisting and elongating, [with] pulses and pauses” the black performer plays a game (if one can call survival a game) in which the primary task is to

move otherwise. Rather than disciplining oneself into the reproduction of the normative, what is called for is a radical break, a line of flight or the improvisatory imperative of variation and plurality. Such imperatives (dis)organize black sociality in sharp contrast with the normative. In such black movements, mastery and its territorializations are dismissed in favour of “the joy of being together doing the same thing differently” which holds creative multiplicity at its core.

The black experience from which Crawley writes is an experience of ongoing somatic and psychic violence that intervenes on and colours any notion we might have of the normative. Crawley’s concept of otherwise movement is offered in relation to the movements that arose in and around the events in Ferguson, Missouri after the police shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in August, 2014 – one of countless examples of the violence of everyday black life. When what we call the normative is ruthlessly oppressive then the imperative for otherwise movements raises its tenor. Black performance, Crawley argues, *must* show the capacity for things, words and movements to be otherwise than they are; if it does not do so, then it runs the risk of reflecting and reproducing the world that stills and kills black life. Otherwise movements demand otherwise logics, and otherwise values. They make the ethical demand that improvisatory lines of flight amount to something that can be taken seriously: the refusal of the normative world and the demand that we perform it otherwise. It’s a refusal of the normative that is at the same time an otherwise performance of the same.

Rather than essentializing black performance as something to be read contextually—namely, in the world of U.S. race politics—I would prefer to invoke the light that Crawley’s work (and the work of countless others, heard and unheard) shines on the violence of the normative and the various black, queer, feminine, or otherwise performances of refusal and resistance. One need not look far for evidence of the violence that supports the normative – from

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s testimony to the genocide of aboriginal children in Canada, to the Black Lives Matter movement and the violence it has responded to, to the continued vitriolic hate speech against queer people and trans people (not to mention ethnic minorities and “immigrants”) in the US and Canada. And yet all of this goes to show that white supremacist heteropatriarchy is neither a U.S. problem, nor a black problem, nor a queer problem, nor a female problem (though it importantly impacts these communities to a greater degree) – it is a problem to the very core of (post-colonial) humanity. It is a mantle that must continue to be interrogated, resisted and refused by all—especially those who stand to “benefit” from it.

I invoke these otherwise movements as a conclusion here in order to argue, once more, for the capacity of the re-performance of institutionalized dance to be a kind of refusal—a refusal of institutionalized discipline, a refusal of representational architectures of spectatorship-cum-objectification, and a refusal of gender as a concrete point from which to gaze—and indeed to be a refusal that *matters*. A refusal that performs. It matters because it emerges from the violence that stills and silences divergent life and its practices. It matters because we must continue to invent variations, otherwise lines of flight from archival protection and its cruel notion of progress in order to expose the violent logics that support the normative world. Here we might say that Lepecki’s impalpable possibility hits us with the generality of a horizon and the force of an imperative: the *possibility* of survival in an *impalpable* world. It matters because the domicile of the archive is not merely a place from which to invent new aesthetics of performance, but a place from which to perform otherwise: where the protection of society becomes generatively and disorganizationally—even joyfully—social. It’s a place where otherwise relations, otherwise

dances and otherwise spaces emerge and hold us and finally provide fleeting safety in a world manifestly unsafe for divergent bodies and their moves.

## WORKS CITED

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 2001
- Auslander, Philip (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge
- Berlant, Lauren. "'68, or Something." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 21, No. 1 (1994): pp. 124-155
- Butler, Judith (1996). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*. Vol. 40, No. 1 (1988): pp. 519-531.
- Clarke, Paul. "Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past." *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*. Eds. Borggreen, Gundhild & Gade, Rune. Copenhagen: Museum of Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013. pp 363 – 385.
- Crawley, Ashon. "Otherwise Movements." *The New Inquiry*. Jan 19, 2015. Web. Feb 7, 2016.
- Derrida, Jacques (1996). *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. (Eric Prenowitz, trans.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Fensham, Rachel. "Choreographic Archives: Towards an Ontology of Movement Images." *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*. Eds. Borggreen, Gundhild & Gade, Rune. Copenhagen: Museum of Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013. pp. 146 - 162
- Foucault, Michel (2003). "*Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76*. (David Macey, trans.) New York: Picador.
- Foucault, Michel (1990). *The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction*. (Robert Hurley, trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Franko, Mark (2002). *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Harney, Stefano & Moten, Fred (2013). *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions
- Hollier, Denis (1989). *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*. (Betsy Wing trans.). Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Howe-Beck, Linde. "Les Grands Ballets Canadiens at 50." *Dance Collection Danse: The Magazine*. No. 63 (Spring, 2007), pp. 6 – 13.
- Imschoot, Myriam von. "Rests In Pieces: On Scores, Notation and the Trace in Dance." What's the Score? On Scores and Notations in Dance. Eds. den Brande, Kristien Van & Engels, Tom & Imschoot, Myriam Von. 2005. Web. Feb 7, 2016.  
<[http://olga0.oralsite.be/oralsite/pages/What's\\_the\\_Score\\_Now/?/](http://olga0.oralsite.be/oralsite/pages/What's_the_Score_Now/?/)>
- Kelly, Mark G.E. (2009). *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*. New York: Routledge.
- Lepecki, André (2006). *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. New York: Routledge.
- Lepecki, André. "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances." *Dance Research Journal*. Vol. 42, No. 2 (2010): pp. 28 – 48.
- Martin, Randy (1998). *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Massumi, Brian. "Of Microperception and Micropolitics: An Interview with Brian Massumi, 15 August 2008." *Inflexions: A Journal for Research-Creation*. No. 3 (October 2009).
- Massumi, Brian (2002). *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." *Techniques, Technology and Civilization*. Ed. Nathan Schlanger. New York: Durkheim Press, 2006. pp. 77 – 96.
- McLuhan, Marshall (1987). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Ark Paperbacks
- Phelan, Peggy (1993). *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge.
- Preciado, Beatriz (2013). *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, And Biopolitics In The Pharmacopornographic Era* (Bruce Benderson, trans.). New York: The Feminist Press
- Smith, Cheryl A. 'Stepping Out': *Canada's Early Ballet Companies 1939 – 1963*. Diss. University of Toronto. 2000, Toronto.
- Tembeck, Iro (1994). *Dancing in Montreal: Seeds of a Choreographic History*. *Journal of the Society of Dance History Scholars*. Vol. V, No. 2.

**Media Works** (at the *Bibliothèque de la danse Vincent Warren*)

"La Suite canadienne – 1955." Record number 10172326124929905089 [DVD]

### **Unmarked Newspaper Clippings [BDLD]**

All sources named (BDLD) are from unmarked newspaper clippings at the *Bibliothèque de la danse Vincent Warren*. They come from the box labeled: Spicilèges GBC / Chiriaeff: 1 à 6, 1953 à 1964: Folder 1, “Archives 1953 – 1960 Presse / Les Grands”

Johnson, Sidney (1957)

Programme (1957)

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How To Do Things With Words*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Berlant, Lauren (2011). *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Cotter, Holland “Performance Art Preserved, in the Flesh.” *The New York Times*. 12 March, 2010: C25.

De Certeau, Michel, Frederic Jameson and Carl Lovitt. “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life.” *Social Text*. No. 3 (1980): pp. 3 – 43.

Deleuze, Gilles (2006). *Foucault* (Seán Hand, trans.). London: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles. “Postscript on Societies of Control.” *October*, Vol. 59 (1992): pp. 3-7.

Felman, Shoshana (1983). *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*. (Catherine Porter, trans.) Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, Michel (2002). *Archeology of Knowledge* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, trans.) New York: Routledge.

Muñoz, José Esteban (2009). *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.

Stalpaert, Christel (2009). “Re-enacting Modernity: Fabian Barba’s A Mary Wigman Dance Evening.” *Dance Research Journal*. Vol. 43, no. 1 (2011), pp. 90 – 95.