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A MODEL OF WOMANHOOD: IDEOLOGY AS STYLE  
IN THE WORK OF ADELINE GENEÉ AND  
MAUD ALLAN.

by

Helen Davies

B.A. (Hon.), University of British Columbia, 1990

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department  
of  
History

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## ABSTRACT

In 1908 two women performing on the London stage captivated audiences with their beauty, elegance and charm. Although Adeline Genée and Maud Allan were stylistically dissimilar, they both realized an unusually high level of professional and personal success. Popular with both the press and the general public, Genée and Allan were among the first women dancers to achieve unprecedented celebrity status. Generally, audiences praised the artistry of the two women and applauded their accomplishments. This is strange given that, at the-turn-of-the-century, women were regularly dissuaded from exploring paths that strayed from traditional middle-class ideals concerning the role of women in society.

This thesis explores the reasons why Genée and Allan enjoyed a remarkable measure of public approval when they apparently violated the dominant social ideal of the dependant woman as mother and wife. By analysing a specific dance made popular by each artist, I hope to show how Genée's and Allan's work reinforced accepted views regarding women. The thesis suggests that Genée and Allan won considerable support among British audiences through their emphasis on female grace and beauty as well as romantic themes of love and loyalty. Many people, disturbed by the significant social and cultural changes they witnessed around them, were comforted by Genée and Allan's work because it articulated a concept of femininity that was

reminiscent of the past. Finally, the thesis finds that Genée and Allan owed much of their popularity and success to their interpretation of the role of women in society.

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## INTRODUCTION

During their 1908 season, dancers Adeline Genée and Maud Allan performed works that received considerable popular support. Genée presented a romantic tragedy entitled The Dryad and Allan performed her interpretation of the biblical tale of Salomé. For the thirty-five year old Allan, The Vision of Salomé signalled the climax of her career. Genée, however, would experience other triumphs, but the year of the debut of The Dryad would certainly rank among her most notable.

Allan chose to adopt a style that was both intensely imaginative and personal. Nevertheless, she was frequently compared to the other "barefoot" dancers who had visited England before her. While she did concede that she had been inspired by her study of classical Greek dancing, she denied that she was, in any way, influenced by her contemporaries. Believing her work was unique, Allan tried desperately to distance herself from contemporaries like Isadora Duncan. In contrast, Genée proudly acknowledged her artistic heritage. She not only applauded the accomplishments of her predecessors, but also yearned to repeat them. Whereas Genée's art was built on tradition and artistic continuity, Allan's work relied on artistic inspiration that challenged established ideals. She rejected systematized dance technique because she found it too restrictive, and accordingly established herself as an expressive dancer who performed innovative works that she believed demonstrated her singularity.

Yet, in spite of their stylistic differences, both women emerged victorious at the close of the 1908 season.

This thesis attempts to understand the success of these two women who publicly departed from the course traditionally pursued by the majority of middle-class women. Forsaking the role of wife and mother in favour of a career in the entertainment field, Allan and Genée appear to emerge from history as examples of the "modern" woman who chooses self-fulfillment over self-sacrifice. How then is it that many of their most ardent admirers, as members of the middle-class, openly reject this new model of womanhood and, instead, encourage women to aspire to roles traditionally associated with women? The answer to this puzzling question is closely connected to the public perception of the two women.

Audiences excused Allan and Genée this minor indiscretion because their work served to further values treasured by the middle classes. Both in their art and in their personal life, the two women were the embodiment of feminine charm and elegance and, therefore, won the loyal support of the British public. As models of the Edwardian notion of femininity, Allan and Genée flourished.

The Edwardian understanding of femininity was complex as it implied both qualities, values and physical characteristics. Society dictated that women should be modest, trusting, passive and exhibit the highest propriety. In addition, ladies were expected to conduct themselves in a graceful fashion. Grace

involved de-emphasizing the physical properties of the body. By flowing and gliding rather than striding forcefully, women succeeded in realizing a critical component of Edwardian femininity: charm. Characterized as an intangible and elusive quality, charm, with its emphasis on subtlety, was the essence of Edwardian femininity. Illustrating qualities of charm, grace and propriety, the Edwardian lady was a peculiar blend of enchanting mystery and dependable practicality.

Primarily concerned with exploring Edwardian concepts of femininity, this thesis examines the work and careers of these two women in an attempt to understand how notions of gender are forged during a given period in history. It is the contention of this thesis that dance offers the historian a unique opportunity to examine the issue of gender since it regularly promotes and realizes the social norms and values of a particular historical period. Moreover, attitudes towards the human body are significantly influenced by the dominant social ideology, and these attitudes, in turn, reveal past perspectives on culture and society.

Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, the thesis considers a series of questions about gender, culture and notions of woman in late nineteenth, early twentieth century Britain. Finally, the thesis explores the conflict between propriety and artistry through an examination of the careers of Genée and Allan.

## CHAPTER I

## DANCE AS A CULTURAL HALLMARK

Until recently, dance history has been written, for the most part, by loyal devotees and admirers who were primarily concerned with preserving the public image of a beloved star. Consequently, one could not expect rigorous criticism or analysis. As one concerned writer observed, "ballet has not been overly self-conscious about its historical development."<sup>1</sup> With few exceptions, dance historians neglected to study dance within a larger social and cultural context. Rather than view ballet as an integral element of a culture which developed and transformed in response to the changes occurring within a particular historical period, ballet historians tended to treat their subjects in isolation, removed from external influences. They therefore attributed little significance to the changing forces of society that affected the evolution of dance.

This distorted and limited view has been at least partially rectified by a growing number of historians, sociologists and anthropologists who provide a more thorough analysis of dance and its role in society. Scholars like Lynn Garafola, Richard Axsom and Deborah Jowitt adopt new models of historical analysis that enable the historian to perform the role of a critical analyst

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hayden Axsom, "Parade": Cubism as Theatre (New York: Garland Press, 1979), p. 11.

who assesses and interprets the "facts" instead of merely recording significant events. This thesis seeks to employ a similar model of historical analysis, and to contend that the new paradigm is valuable because its inclusive and inventive method allows the historian to rescue dance from the flattering yet often restrictive and misleading images presented previously.

This is not to suggest that this "new" methodology is flawless. It is a complicated assignment to explore ideas of Edwardian femininity by examining the work of two particular dancers. Walking delicately along the proverbial "fine line" that separates academic disciplines, scholars gather information and theories from sociology, anthropology and art history and then, armed with this knowledge, sift through the accumulated material, eventually arriving at some greater understanding of the topic.

Finally, I present my findings in a kind of textual choreography. Whereas my "dance", once bound and safely stored on the library shelves, will endure, unchanged indefinitely, the dancer's work is ephemeral and changing. Created with their bodies, the dancer's text is multi-faceted and, for the historian, frequently perplexing. This confusion is complicated by the fact that, when viewing dance, spectators can view the dancer in a multitude of roles: as a professional dancer, a specific individual or a fictitious character.<sup>2</sup> Ideally, these

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<sup>2</sup>Lena Hammergren, "Different Personas: A History of One's Own?," paper presented at the Choreographing History Conference, Riverside, California, 17 February 1992, p. 3.

personas fuse together during the performance and the audience concentrates on the whole experience of the event. Nevertheless, the dancer remains a multi-dimensional figure that seems elusive and certainly problematic. Dance historians are therefore faced with a variety of difficult questions: how do we interpret movement; what does it reveal about society; do we simply appreciate the dance's aesthetic qualities or do we delve deeper and consider its social and cultural ramifications? One historian has suggested that:

historians, sociologists and philosophers....have not usually treated the knowledge contained and exercised by the body as a major source of information because of the text-centred training they usually receive.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, scholars unfamiliar with the medium routinely neglect to include dance in their studies as it is usually regarded as little more than a pleasing, yet insignificant entertainment. This opinion is inaccurate because the dancing body is, above all, about the exhibition of culture. According to dance historian Lynn Garafola,

. . .there are few aspects of the dancing body that stand outside of culture, even those -- like movement quality and physical anatomy -- that seem "natural" or inborn. Like the vernacular body, the dancing body is a representation that reveals a host of cultural meanings, including many that are tangential to the act of performance itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Mario Biagioli, "Tacit Knowledge and the Scientist's Body," paper presented at the Choreographing History Conference, Riverside, California, 17 February 1992, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Lynn Garafola, "The Legs of Ida Rubinstein," paper presented at the Choreographing History Conference, Riverside, California, 16 February, 1992, pp. 1-2.

As an expression of cultural norms and standards, dance reflects social trends and, on occasion, stimulates and produces cultural change.

'Culture', as Raymond Williams argues, is a nineteenth century invention.<sup>5</sup> Whereas previously it had meant "the tending of natural growth,"<sup>6</sup> the word underwent a number of interpretive transformations until, by the late nineteenth century, it had come to mean "not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work" but also "a whole way of life"<sup>7</sup>-- material, intellectual and spiritual. He thinks this development can be directly attributed to the changes experienced in the social, economic and political life of the early nineteenth century. By contrast and in reaction to those forces, culture reflected the personal and private experiences of society. Consequently, there were various interpretations of culture, since the experiences common to each particular cultural group differed drastically. Thus, as an integral element of our culture, dance is not disconnected from our world and does not exist in some artistic vacuum. Therefore it must be considered when we attempt to "understand" our past.

Sceptics who question the validity of dance as a topic worthy of extensive study frequently wonder, how can we learn

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<sup>5</sup>Raymond Williams, Culture In Society: 1780-1850, (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

about the past when we cannot recover the performances? A partial response to this query is that documentation of these events survives in the form of articles in the contemporary periodical press, performance programs, photographs, memoirs and biographies. While it is impossible to gain access to the original performance, the surviving "texts" afford the historian the opportunity to "reconstruct" specific events by examining a variety of primary sources that record public opinion. Equipped with this information, it is possible for the historian to advance a number of theories about Edwardian notions of femininity. We may well ask, however, how these texts will impart this knowledge.

Dance functions as a non-verbal language<sup>8</sup> that communicates a variety of messages; and the means by which one interprets these messages is dependent upon individual fluency. For example, when "decoding" the meaning of a spoken thought or idea, a listener can choose to interpret the sentence metaphorically, literally or figuratively. In either case the sense may be changed. Similarly, audiences appreciate dance performances according to their own personal "reading". But while individual interpretations may vary, they will usually correspond to the predominant social ideology. This is to say that a person's

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<sup>8</sup>According to anthropologist Judith Lynne Hanna, dance and language have devices for encoding meaning. For example;

Vocabulary	= steps and gestures
Grammar	= rules for putting vocabulary together (technique)
Semantics	= Meaning (interpretation)

understanding of art, and their response to it, is usually shaped by their own cultural experiences. For example, according to one dance historian, "the same dance form may generate different meanings as its setting, participants, and institutional frameworks change."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the same dance form can be interpreted differently according to the given historical period. In this way, dance, as a metaphor for the larger cultural context, is a valuable addition to the cultural historian's "box of tools".

It is incumbent upon the historian, however, to employ non-traditional "texts" when exploring the past. According to dance historian Deborah Jowitt,

Western theatrical dancing...has always been responsive to current trends. At its most profound, like other arts, it reflects aspects of the current world picture; at its most superficial, it acknowledges the current fashions.<sup>10</sup>

This observation suggests that dance occupies a significant position in our lives. When tracing the evolution of dance, in particular ballet, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, it is apparent that the dancing body reflects the social/political body as well as cultural styles and trends. For example, in her book Time and

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<sup>9</sup>Cynthia J. Novack, "The Body's Endeavours as Cultural Practices." paper presented at the Choreographing History Conference, Riverside, California, 17 February 1992, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Deborah Jowitt, Time and the Dancing Image (New York: William Morrow, 1988), pp. 8-9, quoted in Sally Banes, "Power and the Dancing Body," paper presented at the Choreographing History Conference, Riverside, California, 17 February 1992, p. 1.

the Dancing Image, Deborah Jowitt noted that both Swan Lake and The Sleeping Beauty functioned to caution members of the Russian imperial court against treasonous behaviour. According to Jowitt, Petipa's ballet The Sleeping Beauty, "has a moral: a breach in royal courtesy, even to such nasty adversaries as wicked fairies, can allow chaos to upset the orderly flow of events."<sup>11</sup> In considering issues of court protocol, this ballet does not merely reflect accepted behaviour, but dictates it. This example is not unusual; throughout history dance has frequently served the purposes of those people in positions of power.<sup>12</sup>

Since dance frequently mirrors life and reflects dominant social and cultural ideals, it is worth our while to examine the careers of individuals in an effort to discover how they do or do not embody the ideal of their time. For example, employing new models of analysis, historians Lynn Garafola and Richard Axson explored the career of the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev and produced works that ventured into uncharted areas of dance history scholarship. Described as the "first study of the impresario and his accomplishments to be informed by sophisticated historical methods, [and] the first to meet

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<sup>11</sup>Jowitt, Time and The Dancing Image, p. 243.

<sup>12</sup>One historian noted that "Catherine de Medici's court spectacles were not merely the expression or reflection, but the very medium of political negotiations. Queen Catherine's ballets were part of political life. . ." Sally Banes, "Power and the Dancing Body," p. 3.

professional historiographical standards,"<sup>13</sup> Garafola's book traces the development of the Ballets Russes throughout its twenty year history and concludes by presenting the impresario as an astute businessman who possessed an "intuitive understanding of how the market-place might be exploited to serve the traditional ends of high art."<sup>14</sup> This interpretation is in stark contrast to traditional characterizations of the man as a generous individual concerned only with preserving the Imperial tradition. By exploring both the financial as well as the artistic elements of the dance world, the author poses fresh and original questions which, in turn, lead to unexpected answers. Rather than merely explore the man or his company, Garafola chose to "look at the Ballets Russes as a totality - its art, enterprise and the audience."<sup>15</sup> The result is an insightful analysis of Diaghilev and his company.

Garafola's work has its limitations and she is not without critics. For example, one reviewer commented that because she lacked the background, Garafola failed to "see the connection between Diaghilev's commissioned ballets and his revivals."<sup>16</sup> This ignorance of the subtleties of music history, according to

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<sup>13</sup>Richard Taruskin, "Art and Enterprise in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes," The New Republic, 9 October 1989, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>As quoted in Taruskin p. 28.

<sup>15</sup>Lynn Garafola, Diaghilev's Ballet Russes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. xxi.

<sup>16</sup>Taruskin, "Art and Enterprise in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes," p. 30.

the reviewer, lead Garafola to ask the wrong question about Diaghilev and his modernist tendencies. Nevertheless, this same critic concludes his review with genuine praise for Garafola's detached and therefore valuable account of an extraordinary career.<sup>17</sup> Garafola's academic distance, however, was criticized by traditional dance historians. Taking exception with her treatment of Diaghilev, they accused her of failing to appreciate his artistic accomplishments and innovations. Her critics, however, failed to appreciate that Garafola was not content simply to document Diaghilev's contribution to the world of ballet. Not interested in exploring ballet in isolation, Garafola "realized that the Diaghilev phenomenon needed not another enthusiastic analyst, but an annaliste - someone who, instead of trying to get inside Diaghilev's head, would take the careful measure of this activity from without; who prefer[ed] assessing results to divining intentions."<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Richard Axsom, in his study of the Ballets Russes, determined that the 1909 Parisian debut of the company "did not mark its initial formulation", but rather signalled "the dramatic culmination of the impresario's previous activities" in the European avant-garde art movement.<sup>19</sup> By disengaging the man from the myth, Axsom presents Diaghilev as a man who,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 27

<sup>19</sup>Axsom, "Parade": Cubism as Theatre, p. 10.

involved with the artistic and intellectual elite of Europe, sought to maintain a link with the new and controversial ideas surfacing in Western Europe. When Diaghilev turned to ballet in the early 1900s he did so as one much influenced by the world around him, and was therefore willing to cast off the traditional burdens of nineteenth century balletic romanticism in favour of twentieth century modernism and experimentation.

The success of both Garafola's and Axsom's studies is directly attributed to their willingness to venture into areas not traditionally considered by historians. The result is insightful and intriguing work that challenges the reader to re-examine and re-evaluate conventional notions of dance and its effect on society. This thesis endeavours to present similarly provocative and meaningful insights by concentrating upon the careers of two individuals in an effort to understand how they exemplified social and cultural ideals of their period.

In her study Dance, Sex, and Gender, anthropologist Judith Lynne Hanna explores what makes dance a "potentially potent form of gender modelling."<sup>20</sup> According to Hanna, "dancing belongs to the repertoire of resources for sex roles scripting, which educate young and old alike about what it means to be a man or a woman."<sup>21</sup> Recognizing that "the dancing body is an important communicative vehicle to convey, re-enforce and challenge notions

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<sup>20</sup>Judith Lynne Hanna, Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

of gender and sexuality,"<sup>22</sup> Hanna, like myself, believes dance provides us an occasion to understand notions of gender. However, dance does more than reveal merely "generic" or universal notions of gender. It unveils opinions unique to a specific historical period.

Dance, "as a symbolic demonstration of manners"<sup>23</sup> that is "concerned with the cultural performatives of the body,"<sup>24</sup> regularly promotes and realizes the social values of a particular historical period. For example, during the 1830s ballerina Marie Taglioni's hairstyle was imitated all over Europe and with the advent of the "bare foot" dancers late in the century, women began to incorporate elements of dancer's costumes into their own everyday dress. However, while dancers like Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan certainly generated their own trends, their work developed in response to their changing world.

Fuller and Duncan profited from growing public awareness of the physical culture movement as well as the liberalization of traditional conventions that had previously restricted women's involvement in the public sphere. These changes produced a social climate favourable for artists experimenting with new concepts of dance. In addition, the late nineteenth century

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>Lincoln Kirstein, as cited in Evan Alderson, "Dance as a Rhetoric of Embodiment," paper presented at the International Association for Philosophy and Literature Conference, Irvine, California, April 1990, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

witnessed vast transformations in commercialized entertainment. The metamorphosis that took place in the entertainment industry was in response to the cultural tastes that developed among social groups formerly denied access to many forms of entertainment. During the early nineteenth century some sections of society, like the working and lower middle classes, had little opportunity to attend a large variety of local entertainments, but their situation had changed significantly by the last third of the nineteenth century. It was now possible for a wider section of society to take part in an entertainment "industry" that was rapidly diversifying. Consequently, citizens could now choose from a variety of entertainment alternatives that appealed to their particular cultural experience. This growing public interest in entertainment had a direct impact on dance.

Whereas previously, well-bred citizens had considered it a somewhat sordid and suspect business, dance began slowly to develop an aura of respectability. Dancers like Fuller and Duncan, who dazzled audiences with their imaginative works, soon won a loyal following of admirers. Their success, however, was largely due to their ability to exemplify the prevailing social order through their work. Careful not to overstep socially imposed boundaries, artists like Duncan, Fuller and Diaghilev presented work that, while innovative and original, did not seriously threaten the existing social fabric. Fuller, draped in yards of silk chiffon, incorporated many values and ideas of the popular Art Nouveau movement in her work; Duncan, with her

Hellenistic themes, capitalized on growing public interest in the ancient world; Diaghilev's company symbolized the modernism of the future. All three of them did not significantly deviate from a socially sanctioned ideal, and therefore were tolerated and promoted by the British public.

This is not to deny the agency of the individual, but only to suggest that we are influenced, while perhaps not totally controlled, by the dominant cultural ideology.<sup>25</sup> It is exactly this "grey" area between personal agency and cultural pre-determination that is most revealing. By examining how free individuals are to construct their own bodies at any particular period in history, we can learn a great deal about the relationship between culture and the construction of gender.

According to film maker Teresa De Lauretis, gender is the representation of an "individual in terms of a particular social relation."<sup>26</sup> Further, she correlates the socio-cultural construction of gender to the dominant social ideology. These observations are certainly substantiated when applied to the example of dance, for as Hanna observes, concepts of gender are stimulated and finally fulfilled with the "metaphor of visual images." Through the manipulation of choreography, costumes, set design and music, the dancer can convey a multitude of messages without having spoken a single word. The dancing body exercises

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<sup>25</sup>Banes, "Power and the Dancing Body," p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>Teresa De Lauretis, Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c.1987), p. 5.

a powerful force on the captivated audience and can have a lingering impact that perhaps influences an individual.

Fortunately, historians are now recognizing the importance of the body in dance scholarship. For example, historian Sally Banes recently criticized Tim Armstrong<sup>27</sup> for neglecting to consider the dancing body in his study. She comments that in his analysis of the "the complex cultural attitudes toward the uses, at the end of the nineteenth century, of this new resource in relation to the body,"<sup>28</sup> Armstrong focuses on literary examples. He does not explore the work of Loie Fuller whose use of electrical technology revolutionized the art world. Nor does he comment on Isadora Duncan's "theories of human movement as analogous to electrical currents."<sup>29</sup> By omitting the dancing body from his research, Armstrong risks producing work that is limited in scope. Similarly, by overlooking the dancer's role in forming and reflecting culture, scholars miss an opportunity to examine a variety of themes and topics from an unconventional perspective and thus arrive at different answers to imaginative questions. Studying dance can reveal the connections between culture and prevailing social ideals.

Dance plays an important role in culture and it can play a significant part in the larger enterprise of cultural history.

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<sup>27</sup>Tim Armstrong, "The Electrification of the Body at the turn of the century," Textual Practice 5 (Winter 1991): 303-325 as quoted in Banes, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup>Banes, "Power and the Dancing Body," p. 11.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Closer examination of dance and its role in society can lead to a fuller understanding of a particular historical period, as well as lead historians to better appreciate historical concepts of gender.

## CHAPTER II

## THE IDEOLOGY OF STYLE: FOOTWEAR AND FORM

In 1908 two dancers performed in London to sold out crowds of enthusiastic fans. Danish born dancer Adeline Genée had been performing in England since her 1897 debut at the Empire Theatre and had gained a loyal and extensive following over the years. Canadian born dancer Maud Allan, while she had performed at a variety of European venues, was new to the London stage. Nevertheless, both dancers enjoyed remarkably successful seasons that year. According to a London reviewer, even after her eleven years at the Empire Theatre, Genée's "popularity [showed] no signs of waning"<sup>1</sup> and throughout her performances the audience called for her to return to the stage again and again. Allan's experience was just as gratifying, with the dancer enjoying an unprecedented run of over 250 performances at the Palace Theatre. We may well ask why two dancers with such distinctly different artistic styles and personal backgrounds captivated London audiences.

Adeline Genée, with her extensive classical training, was inclined to embrace the values and ideals celebrated in ballet, while Maud Allan, through her involvement in the European art scene, advanced cultural creeds promoted by fin-de-siecle artists. Because the women's work championed two different

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<sup>1</sup>Times, 23 September 1908, (11c).

aesthetic models, it would seem likely that they espoused contrasting social ideals. This, however, is not necessarily the case. While dance regularly exemplifies prevailing social and cultural norms, it does not do this through the manipulation of only one type of aesthetic ideal. It is possible for popular opinion to find expression in a variety of dance styles and genres. The work of Allan and Genée could have communicated comparable messages regarding social and cultural standards of the period and may have reinforced existing gender stereotypes. To determine whether this was the case, we must examine the aesthetic ideology that inspired the two women, for these principles in turn influenced their work.

At age nine, Adeline Genée left her family to study classical ballet under the strict tutelage of her Uncle and Aunt, Alexander and Antonia Genée. Adeline, excited by the prospect of dancing professionally, willingly agreed to leave her family and live with her relatives. Almost immediately, she began the demanding training so critical to her chosen career. During the early classes, Alexander taught his niece simple foot work and basic technique and only when she executed these steps to his satisfaction did he proceed to the next level of instruction. With his emphasis on technical precision and attention to detail, Monsieur Genée clearly demonstrated his loyalty to the balletic tradition and, as a result, prepared his young niece to protect and perpetuate the legacy entrusted to her. Consequently, throughout her childhood and adolescence, Adeline persisted with

the daily lessons, relentlessly attempting to perfect her style and technique, with the hope that she would one day realize her dream of becoming a ballerina such as Marie Taglioni.

Taglioni, a Romantic ballerina, was the first fully to exploit the innovation of pointe. While ballerinas had been dancing on pointe for approximately thirty years, they had not been successful in refining the technique due to the flimsy construction of the shoes. By darning her satin slippers with extra thread on the sides and the tip to give her extra support, Taglioni was able to dance for longer periods of time on her toes and dazzle her audiences with her skill. The dancer also owed much to her father Filippo Taglioni who created new exercises for her foot and leg muscles so that she would develop the physical strength necessary to support the weight of her body en pointe. Debuting her accomplishment in the 1832 production of La Sylphide, Taglioni, with her small corseted waist, a wreath of flowers on her head and gauzy full skirt, was the model future ballerinas would emulate.<sup>2</sup> Her dancing was described as "graceful beyond all comparison, [with] a wonderful lightness and absence of all violent effort, or at least appearance of it, and a modesty as new as it [was] delightful to witness."<sup>3</sup> Genée, aware of the Taglioni tradition, endeavoured to achieve a similar

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<sup>2</sup>Prior to Marie Taglioni, a ballerina's costume was usually a variation of the popular Empire style of dress: a slim-cut skirt of light material with a high-waisted bodice. Margot Fonteyn, The Magic of Dance (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Fonteyn, The Magic of Dance, p. 207.

degree of poise and style. Considering that Genée's devotion to the balletic tradition shaped both her work and her life, it is worth our while to briefly explore the ideology driving the art.

Ballet historian Lincoln Kirstein, characterizing ballet as a metaphoric language, wrote of the various components that constitute the vocabulary of "dance-speech". According to Kirstein, the crucial elements of "dance-speech" are speed, grace, flexibility, lightness and brilliance of movement.<sup>4</sup> These elements, however, are accomplished only after years of self-discipline and commitment. The young Adeline demonstrated this dedication throughout her early training, and like numerous ballet dancers before her, she followed an unwavering pattern of classes. Starting with the five positions of the feet, she steadily absorbed the fundamental components of "dance-speech" and trained her body to respond with grace and ease to the demands she made of it.

Throughout her studies, Genée was constantly aware of the artistic legacy she had inherited. A biographer, remarking on the dancer's form, wrote that her style "derived from the very purest source of classical tradition."<sup>5</sup> The author's complimentary comments suggest the importance placed on the preservation of balletic tradition. Genée's connection to the

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<sup>4</sup>Lincoln Kirstein, "Classic Ballet: Aria of the Aerial." in What is Dance?: Readings in Theory and Criticism eds. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 243.

<sup>5</sup>Ivor Guest, Adeline Genée: A Lifetime of Ballet Under Six Reigns (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), p. 58.

past validated her art because, by observing respected ballet practices, she demonstrated artistic integrity and proficiency acquired through years of difficult training and self-sacrifice. According to the author, it was possible to trace the ballerina's artistic lineage through close examination of her work. For example, he detected evidence of the Russian, Danish and French schools in her work and, furthermore, traced her stylistic genealogy back to the esteemed dancer and teacher, Auguste Vestris. However, while her connection to distinguished ballet personalities of the past functioned to situate her in a historical context and thus authenticate her art, it also restricted her artistically as it required that she employ the dance vocabulary conferred upon her. Her work, therefore, celebrated balletic ideals and values firmly established over hundreds of years.

Kirstein, contrasting ballet with modern dance, wrote that ballet emphasizes aerial rather than terrestrial movement.<sup>6</sup> This aerial movement is typically displayed in the dancer's rejection of the effects of gravity; no where is this more evident than in the ballerina's use of pointe shoes. Encased in pink satin, the ballerina courageously defies gravity and rises to the tips of her toes as she endeavours to create the illusion of effortless grace and elegance. First introduced during the Romantic age of ballet (1830-1870), the pointe shoe was designed to produce an unworldly and ethereal quality. Worn exclusively

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<sup>6</sup>Kirstein, "Classic Ballet: Aria of the Aerial," p. 241.

by women, the pointe shoe "became the speech of the inexpressible."<sup>7</sup> According to Kirstein,

Its gliding movement was raised to a symbol, the symbol of imaginary worlds made real. The dancer, now rising on her toes, firmly supported on a rigid arch, neither walks nor runs, but flows.<sup>8</sup>

Freed from the laws of gravity, the dancer transcended the ordinary and presented the audience with a vision of fairy-like fantasy. This artistic triumph, however, was not easily achieved.

This apparently simple act demanded years of training to develop the strength and endurance required because what was beautiful and uncomplicated for the audience was frequently painful and difficult for the dancer. There is, however, no latitude in the ballet aesthetic for the dancer to yield publicly to physical pain. The young Genée, aware of this "rule," soon learnt not to inadvertently show any signs of the physical discomfort that commonly torments the dancer. At an early age, Genée was conscious that, as a ballet dancer, her primary objective was to infuse her movements with an ease and refinement that awed the audience, but never alerted them as to the level of skill and hard work required to realize the dream. According to one critic, Genée was successful. Max Beerbohm wrote:

Others are clever, but have not the cleverness to hide

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<sup>7</sup>Lincoln Kirstein, Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Book Company 1987), p. 245.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

it, and impress us with a sense of the responsibility to their art. Mlle. Genée, for all the high formality of her steps, seems as artless as though she were dancing for joy, with no one to look.<sup>9</sup>

This observation attests to the fact that Genée was able to realize the balletic goal of making what is highly systematized and controlled appear spontaneous and natural. This achievement exemplifies the inherent paradox of classical ballet.

In order to realize the ideal of naturalness, dancers have to endure years of strict attention to detail. They have to develop those skills that will enable them to present an image of the self that corresponds to the ballet aesthetic. In this way, they train the body to move "freely". The above remarks suggest that both the danseur and the danseuse played an equally important role during the mid nineteenth century. This was not the case. Dance historian Lincoln Kirstein noted that,

the men were in a very poor position. Male dancing under Vestris, Dauberval and Gardel had meant something. Now, even as partners the men were effaced. All solos were ceded to the ballerina, and male-dancers were little better than a support in the classic style, or in character-dancing a background for the girl.<sup>10</sup>

During this period in dance history the ballerina reigned supreme. Ballet at this time became synonymous with the female

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<sup>9</sup>As quoted in Dyneley Hussey, "Fifty Years of Ballet Music; What Genée Danced," The Dancing Times: Part I, February 1950, p. 280.

<sup>10</sup>Kirstein, Dance: A Short History of Classic Theatrical Dancing, p. 252.

dancer and men played a minor role.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, while it was not judged an ideal career choice, men did train to become dancers. Their training was, however, not as rigorous as the girl's as they were not expected to learn how to dance en pointe. Moreover, men were required to possess different qualities than their female counterparts. Tradition dictated that the male dancer complement his partner's feminine delicacy and elegance with masculine virility and strength. Consequently, the danseur commonly performed steps that directly affirmed man's physical prowess. Male technique, with its brilliant turns and high elevation, tended to stress athletic ability over artistic sensitivity. The ballerina's work, in contrast, was expected to embody feminine characteristics. Beerbohm's remarks celebrate the most important tenet of ballet for the ballerina: instinctive grace and simplicity. Shielding her audiences from the harsh reality of ballet, Genée entertained them with lovely visions of fictitious worlds free from unpleasantness. In this way she carried out the duties expected of a growing number of middle class women.

Whereas lower class women were forced to work in order to provide for their families, middle-class women were urged not to work, since "leisured women were symbols of the economic success

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<sup>11</sup>With the success of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, this situation changed somewhat. Due to Fokine's choreography and Nijinsky's skill the role of the danseur enjoyed a position of prominence. However, within the context of the British "palace of varieties", the ballerina continued to outshine the danseur.

of their male relatives."<sup>12</sup> In their new capacity, middle-class women were encouraged to concentrate their attention on the organization of the home. The ideal required that middle-class women remain at home and organize the household, raise the children and provide a proper and tranquil environment for husbands returning from the chaotic world of business. According to the ideal, women were considered the guardians of morality within the home and were characterized as gentle, sympathetic and, most importantly, submissive. Middle-class women were not encouraged to challenge the ideal, but rather "trained to accept the limitation of woman's sphere."<sup>13</sup> Middle-class sanction of this ideal meant that "each sex was to have its distinct sphere of influence: woman's superior morality was to match man's superior reasoning and business ability. [However,] woman's mission was not to be confused with man's."<sup>14</sup> Ballet mirrored this obsession with spheres of influence.

Commenting on the role of the ballerina, British art critic and balletomane, Adrian Stokes wrote:

[her] body is etherealized. She seems scarcely to rest upon the ground. She is, as it were, suspended just slightly above the earth so that we may see her better. She seems cut off from the sources of her being. Her partner guides and holds her. And he then watches her

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<sup>12</sup>Joan Burstyn, Victorian Education & the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 30.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

pas - with upraised hand, he shows her off.<sup>15</sup>

Exemplifying grace and elegance, the ballerina floated about the stage, unhindered by the physical world. Her sovereignty, however, was largely dependent upon her partner's intervention. He guided and protected her while, impressed with her delicacy, beauty and skill, he proudly presented her to the audience. Their partnership was harmonious and pleasing only so long as the two dancers fulfilled their particular roles.<sup>16</sup> Choosing a dance partner could be as involved as choosing a marriage partner. Dancers had to consider issues of physical compatibility and personal rapport; they also had to be sensitive to each others needs as well as compassionate, tolerant and understanding. As in turn of the century notions of marriage, the two dancers entered a relationship in which their duties and roles were clearly defined.

The ballerina, while outwardly delicate and tranquil, inwardly possessed the physical strength and fortitude required to perform triumphantly. Similarly, ideal English wives, destined to be man's helpmate, were encouraged to be good and delicate. They were taught to nurture as well as to be passive,

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<sup>15</sup>Adrian Stokes, "Tonight the Ballet" in What Is Dance: Readings in Theory and Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 246.

<sup>16</sup>Traditionally, a pas de deux is described as a dance for two or a dance comprised of; the adagio, a dance of love performed by the ballerina and her male partner; variations, solos by both dancers; and, finally, the coda, a number of short solo pieces after which they dance together in the finale.

gentle and dainty. Like the ballerina, however, the position of housewife required years of training and much physical and emotional fortitude. Managing her household staff, organizing meals and parties as well as handling numerous routine duties, the housewife was the example of a dedicated and skilled worker. At no time, however, were these women expected to prove their physical strength or reveal a competitive nature.<sup>17</sup> The roles of both ballerina and wife demanded that women behave in a manner that was deemed socially and, in the case of the dancer, artistically appropriate.

Adeline Genée captured the hearts of British audiences because her performances promoted values and ideals approved of in Edwardian Britain. She displayed a pure, spiritual and unsensual beauty that was "devoid of sensuous charm or voluptuous appeal."<sup>18</sup> The dancer, with her fresh and natural innocence and inborn modesty, soon won public support and favour. Furthermore, admired for her simplicity, sincerity and flawless personal behaviour, the dancer came to personify the qualities of a perfect young lady. In addition to her personal virtues, however, Genée's success can, in part, be attributed to her dance style, as classical ballet was considered legitimate art.

A Times news reporter noted that

The purity of her style is shown by her scrupulous adherence to the principles which have been handed down

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<sup>17</sup> Kathleen McCrone, Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women: 1870-1914 (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Guest, Adeline Genée, p. 102.

for the guidance of generation after generation.<sup>19</sup>

Genée's stylistic link with the past served to authenticate her art. Unlike other enterprising dancers of her day, Genée did not simply make her art "the vehicle for the parade of a captivating personality."<sup>20</sup> Throughout her career, audiences felt she exhibited a personal and artistic integrity that enchanted her admirers, as it appealed very much to their own sense of morality and social responsibility. For example, one Genée enthusiast wrote:

The art of Genée is based upon austerity. She is the antithesis of the popular conception of a dancer. Her art governs her life. . . She is always in arduous training. She practices for hours every day in a room walled with mirrors. She is a rigid tee-totaller. She dines frugally at three in the afternoon and starves till midnight, allowing herself only a cup of coffee at six. That life of martyrdom is the price she pays for her strength and her grace. Her skill is made out of self-denial.<sup>21</sup>

Praising Genée for her self-discipline and unyielding devotion to her art, the writer emphasizes the dancer's reliability and dedication. In short, he describes a suitable woman in middle-class Victorian society. With her charm, neat, light technique and irreproachable respectability, audiences were confident of the propriety of her entertainment. During the Edwardian period this social stamp of approval was extremely important if one was to succeed.

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<sup>19</sup>Times, 2 March 1914.

<sup>20</sup>Times, 2 March 1914.

<sup>21</sup>Guest, Adeline Genée, p. 103.

Accompanying the rapid social changes in Victorian Britain was a transformation of the entertainment industry. The metamorphoses that took place in the entertainment field was in response to the cultural tastes which developed among social groups formerly denied access to many forms of entertainment. Technical advances in communication and the development of modern advertising were essential parts of this transformation. They produced a leisure industry which, in turn, would eventually "shape and service the mass culture of the twentieth century."<sup>22</sup> However, along with this fundamental change in the nature of leisure came an increased sense of tension between those people who had traditionally enjoyed the benefits of leisure time and entertainment and those people who previously had been, for the most part, excluded.<sup>23</sup>

In this urban, industrialized and bureaucratized world the boundaries between leisure and work were far more sharply drawn than they had been at the beginning of the Victorian period. Bailey observes that once people were freed from the duties and obligations of work, they became, in theory, "free" to enjoy the entertainment available in the city. This "freedom" was a sort of neutral ground on which there was an element of autonomy and this autonomy made many middle-class citizens unsure and

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<sup>22</sup>Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

anxious.<sup>24</sup> For them the expansion and separation of leisure activities threatened an entrenched system of social values; therefore, activists began to lobby for a variety of reforms which would ensure the respectability and propriety of popular entertainment, believing as they did that legislation could establish a new social conformity - one that could confirm and maintain traditional social norms and values.<sup>25</sup> Convinced that popular entertainment must be made "respectable", these principled middle-class citizens were constantly evaluating artists and their work. While Genée satisfied the "respectability test", her contemporary, Maud Allan, did not always escape the wrath of local morality squads.

Allan had arranged to perform at Manchester's Palace of Varieties during the summer of 1908; several months earlier the city had established a committee to monitor the developing entertainment business and ensure that nothing indecent was presented. After submitting a request for approval of Miss Allan's engagement, the Manchester theatre manager was shocked to hear that the application had been denied. The local Watch Committee decided that, based on rumours of purported nudity and indecency, they would ban her from performing. In the ensuing confusion and controversy, two other city councils - Liverpool and Bournemouth - followed the Manchester example and forbid Miss Allan to perform. Complaints were not restricted to local watch

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

committees. English clerics also protested, outraged that she would recreate the story of a biblical character on stage.

Allan's most ardent critic was Archdeacon Sinclair. In her autobiography, My Life and Dancing, Maud recounted the time she confronted the Archdeacon on the matter of her performance. Disarming him with her personal charm and courteousness, the dancer soon identified the cleric's primary objection. Apparently, his complaint was not with the manner in which the work was presented, but, rather, the subject. According to Allan, the cleric said;

. . . do not for a moment think that I have at any time said that your work is not artistic, for I am sure from all I hear and have read that it is, and from your manner I should judge both you and your work quite serious; but, I feel there are Christians in my flock who may be repulsed at the thought of Christ's forerunner being made the subject of a scene for the stage. Or, for that matter, any biblical story being put on stage. I felt it my duty to pass this criticism upon this one number of your programme.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently, Allan responded by explaining her point of view on the subject and they parted friends. Sinclair's opinion was unusual because Allan had received royal approval after she performed privately in Marienbad before King Edward VII in 1905. Years later, Allan's pianist wrote that the King had invited her to perform in London and suggested she contact Sir Alfred Butt and say "that we [Edward VII] would like him to engage Miss Allan at the Palace Theatre so that the English public may enjoy her

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<sup>26</sup>Maud Allan, My Life and Dancing (London: Everett & Co., 1908), p. 99.

performance as much as we have."<sup>27</sup> Typically she received complimentary letters from adoring fans who welcomed her to England and wished her every success. Objection was minimal and the young dancer continued to enjoy popular success all over the country, most notably in London itself.

By the summer of 1908, Miss Allan's Salomé dance had "so fired the imagination of London society women that one of the great hostesses of the metropolis. . . issued invitations to twenty or thirty ladies whose names [figured] in Court and other fashionable lists, to attend a 'Maud Allan' dinner dance."<sup>28</sup>

The event, restricted to women only, offered guests the opportunity to appear in Salomé like costumes. According to a New York Times correspondent:

Dinner was served to an accompaniment of Salomé music [played] by an orchestra hidden discreetly behind the fortification of palms and flowers, and when the coffee and cigarette stage had been reached, some of the graceful members of the party demonstrated that they had not only succeeded in matching Miss Allan's costume, but had learned some of her most captivating steps in movements.<sup>29</sup>

The reporter claimed that this was evidence of the "insidious effect" that Maud Allan and other "classic" dancers, were exerting upon British morality. The British press, however, were quick to defend the dancer's work, writing that "Miss Allan's

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<sup>27</sup>Romayne Simmons, and D.J. Holland, "Salomé and the King," Dance Magazine, November 1967, p. 53.

<sup>28</sup>New York Times, 23 August 1908 pt.3, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

entertainment was free from vulgarity."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, reviewers described her style as "dancing of gesticulation and posture"<sup>31</sup> and, reflecting on her musicality, they noted that because "she [translated] the music into steps, [it was] possible to imagine the stage as a large keyboard."<sup>32</sup> Consequently, they wrote admiringly that Miss Allan "[had] no rival in the purely musical side of her art."<sup>33</sup> With glowing comments like these, critics became the foundation of Maud's exceptional good fortune.

Maud had, from an early age, expressed an interest in dance, but she was not enthralled with classical ballet. According to Maud, her mother had taken her to a ballet when she was a child and she was offended by the ugly pink skin of the dancers. When her mother informed her that the "skin" was, in fact, "pink fleshings [made] to represent skin,"<sup>34</sup> Maud angrily suggested that that "is why it [was] so ugly then."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the young Allan was not impressed with the "twirling on the toe-points in the padded, stiffened, pink satin, formless ballet [shoes]."<sup>36</sup> She questioned the truthfulness of ballet and decided that it was not dancing as dancing was meant to be. She,

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<sup>30</sup>Times, 11 June 1908, 10d.

<sup>31</sup>Times, 10 March 1908, 5d.

<sup>32</sup>Times, 13 February 1908, 13c.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

then, was determined to present dancing as she believed it was originally conceived. Accordingly, she looked to the classical world for her inspiration and, following the examples of other "bare foot" dancers, presented works that celebrated the ancient world. The dancer's predilection for ancient themes, however, would, in the case of The Vision of Salomé, challenge the dancer and audience alike.

As an Oriental princess in her Vision of Salomé, Allan "positioned [herself] within the ideologically charged discourse of female sexuality" typical of Edwardian Britain.<sup>37</sup> This middle-class white woman not only displayed her body in public, but, in addition, chose a non-European woman as the principal of her piece.<sup>38</sup> Allan realized that her interpretation of the "East" was apt to directly affect her career as it would probably sway public opinion. The dancer was thus faced with a dilemma. How was she to ensure that with her controversial performance of Salomé she would not compromise her newly established position within British society? Allan found her validation in the unlikely figure of London critics. One dance historian noted that "several critics in effect helped prevent [Allan] from losing caste by distancing her dancing from the supposedly

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<sup>37</sup> Amy Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled: Imperialism and the Dancing Body in England." paper presented at the fifteenth Annual Dance History Scholar's Society Conference, Riverside, California, February 1992, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

provocative dances of the East."<sup>39</sup> Applauding the dancer for distinguishing between lurid and voluptuous dancing, critics praised Miss Allan for her sensitive interpretation of the biblical tale. Nevertheless, perceptive readers would have certainly concluded that Miss Allan's work was, nonetheless, suggestive and, this, no doubt, "attracted the large audience required to obtain celebrity and wealth."<sup>40</sup> That the exotic East exerted a powerful force on London audiences is demonstrated by the publicity strategy of Allan's Manager at the Palace Theatre.

Surviving excerpts of an illustrated pamphlet distributed by Butt prior to Allan's premier performance in London demonstrate the appeal of Oriental stereotypes with the British public.<sup>41</sup> Not content with merely describing the dancer's art, the writer tempted the audience's curiosity by recounting, in shocking detail, Maud's physical features;

Her skin is satin smooth, crossed only by the pale tracery of delicate veins that lace the ivory of her round bosom and slowly waving arms. Her lovely face has a small pointed nose with sensitive nostrils, while her mouth is full lipped and ripe as pomegranate fruit, and as passionate in its ardent curves as that of Venus herself.<sup>42</sup>

Characterized as "inviting and available", Allan, in this

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 2-3.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>As quoted in Felix Cherniavsky, The Salomé Dancer: The Life and Times of Maud Allan (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), p. 162.

excerpt, symbolizes the sensual and seductive nature of the East.<sup>43</sup> The author draws on additional Eastern cliches in the description of Allan as Salomé:

The desire that flames from her eyes and bursts in hot gusts from her scarlet mouth inflect[s] the very air with the madness of passion. Swaying like a white witch, with yearning arms and hands that plead, Maud Allan is such a delicious embodiment of lust that she might win forgiveness for the sins of such wonderful flesh. As Herod catches fire, so Salomé dances even as a Bacchante, twisting her body like a silver snake eager for its prey, panting with hot passion, the fire of her eyes scorching like a living furnace.<sup>44</sup>

Had this accurately described Allan's performance, it is extremely unlikely that she would have realized the degree of popularity she did and she certainly could not have presented herself as morally upstanding member of the community.<sup>45</sup>

However, while Butt, fearing public protest, eventually withdrew all issues of the publication, he did benefit from its brief circulation. Critics writing in defence of Miss Allan's art tried to "distinguish what they saw on stage [from what was described in the pamphlet], giving Allan [and her agent] the best of both worlds: a large audience attracted by the prospect of sexual titillation and an assurance of propriety from the critics."<sup>46</sup> Remarks by an American critic, writing for The Theatre, reflect the attitudes expressed by many of his

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<sup>43</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>As quoted in Koritz, pp. 3-4.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

contemporaries; he wrote,

her dancing as Salomé, though eastern in spirit through and through, is absolutely without the slightest suggestion of the vulgarities so familiar to the tourist in Cairo or Tangier,"<sup>47</sup>

People, comforted by these reassurances, went to the theatre full of expectation and they were not disappointed. Maud presented audiences with a suitably exotic spectacle without compromising her or her audience's respectability. It seems Allan had an uncanny talent for making the unacceptable, acceptable and the ability was not limited to her professional career. Allan employed a similar refashioning of her public persona.

To commemorate her 250th performance at the Palace Theatre, Allan published an autobiography. The work, titled My Life and Dancing, documented a lifetime of memories that, in many cases are embellished and, often, simply fabricated. Presenting herself as the daughter of affluent parents, Allan wrote of a pleasant and tranquil childhood during which she and her siblings enjoyed the company of a "fat, good-natured cook", a private nurse and numerous contented domestics.<sup>48</sup> This happy childhood was a dubious reality. Her early years were fraught with turmoil and personal grief and the book sought to conceal this from her fans who she feared may have frowned upon the truth. Maud created a work of fiction that exuded the charm and naivete that appealed to Edwardian readers. Writing on a variety of subjects,

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<sup>47</sup>The Theatre, June 1908, p. 166.

<sup>48</sup>Cherniavsky, The Salomé Dancer, p.20.

the chapter that is most germane to this paper is the next to last, entitled "A Word About Women."<sup>49</sup>

Here Allan explains her views on the role of women and, in particular, women's suffrage. With the opening remark that "women should influence rather than dictate,"<sup>50</sup> Allan sets the tone of the succeeding material. She argues that, owing to their emotional personalities, women are unable to exercise impersonal and dispassionate consideration. Consequently, according to Allan, they are ill-suited for a variety of professions, in particular the legal profession. Further, in her opinion, women were not political animals<sup>51</sup> since, given the choice, they would prefer to read "some serial story in a newspaper, dealing mostly with love,"<sup>52</sup> instead of a political article. In opposing women's suffrage, Allan affirmed the Edwardian belief that woman's primary role was that of wife and mother. This is curious because, as an unmarried, childless, independent woman, Allan seemed flagrantly to defy the dominant ideal.<sup>53</sup> How do we account for this?

It is reasonable to assume that Allan realized that, as her career relied on the continued support and generosity of a number of influential men and women of the upper classes, it was unwise

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<sup>49</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 6.

<sup>50</sup>Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 110.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 117

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 7.

to associate herself with the radicals of the suffrage movement.<sup>54</sup> She did not wish to be perceived as ungrateful and critical of the very people whose patronage had resulted in her fame and fortune. Consequently, "unlike her contemporary, Isadora Duncan, . . . who critiqued the gender ideology she transgressed, Allan attempted to underplay her transgressions and to locate herself inside that ideology."<sup>55</sup> This is not to suggest that she was unsympathetic with the notion of female emancipation or that she thought women were incapable of achieving great things. While Allan did empathize with the suffragists, she condemned their tactics. She wrote:

. . .breaking windows and throwing stones will not bring woman what she wants and needs, for, just as surely as the colleges were opened to a woman, so will the ballot be given her when she is ready to receive it.<sup>56</sup>

With remarks such as this, Allan's chapter on women epitomized turn of the century attitudes about women and their role in society.

Women were expected to be submissive, defer to the authority of men and respect their judgement. Allan's words on women are frequently contradictory because while she encouraged women to further their education and choose careers in the medical profession, she also suggested that a woman's primary objective was to be an exemplary wife and mother and this required self-

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 112.

sacrifice. Her observations seem confused and poorly thought through. For example, when encouraging women to enter the colleges, she neglected to recognize that the growth of women's education was as a direct result of women agitating for change. Allan's "genuine thoughts"<sup>57</sup> on social issues seem as paradoxical as her artistic career. This disparity reveals the difficulties Allan, and women like her, endured at this time. Fearful that she might endanger her continued professional success if she disclosed personal opinions honestly in public, she chose instead to present herself as a traditional middle-class woman. She advocated that women manipulate indirect power through the "art of persuasion" and influence. Accordingly, she concluded her chapter on women by writing:

with woman swaying man to nobler and loftier ideals, the world will move to higher things, and humanity progress nearer divinity.<sup>58</sup>

Extremely sensitive to popular opinion, she chose to promote views sanctioned by the majority of Edwardians and, in that way, not jeopardize her livelihood.

The work of both Genée and Allan communicated messages that London audiences were familiar with and, more importantly, condoned. Transforming themselves into Exotic princesses or mythical creatures, the dancers captivated their audiences with visions of woman that corresponded to their own. Followers were comfortable with the images they saw as they reinforced existing

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

gender stereotypes. While on the surface, the women seemed to present contrasting visions of women they in fact presented two sides of the same coin. Genée, with her romantic and traditional ballets, was characterized as simple, wholesome and pure, that side of woman that was civilized. Allan's Salomé, on the other hand, was potentially dangerous as, once stripped of her protective veil of civility, she reverted to what was believed to be woman's primitive roots. Edwardians, however, believed that owing to the inherent paradoxical nature of woman, both elements were required to make a whole woman. Through their work, these two women exemplified the turn-of-the-century obsession with the multifaceted nature of woman.

## CHAPTER III

## UNVEILING THE SYMBOLISM

In 1908 Adeline Genée and Maud Allan entertained London audiences with their dancing. Due to the popularity of their respective pieces, London audiences eventually identified the two artists with their dance roles and regularly frequented their shows. What attracted Londoners to the theatres to see Genée and Allan and why did such apparently dissimilar artists capture the imagination of so many people? Answers to these questions can help us better understand the prevailing notion of woman in Edwardian society. By considering an example of their work this chapter will demonstrate how the two dancers embodied Edwardian notions of womanhood.

Under her maiden name of Dora Bright, Mrs. Knatchbull, a reputable English composer and pianist, wrote the score for a short ballet titled The Dryad. The work, first produced in an amateur performance at her country home, was to be presented publicly at a charity matinee organized by the Duchess of Somerset at the Playhouse Theatre on March 26, 1907. Genée, who by 1907 was a celebrated performer at the Empire Theatre in London, was approached by the composer, who asked if she would consider accepting the role of the dryad. Usually, Genée declined engagements while she was still performing at the theatre, but, according to her biographer, Ivor Guest, she was

attracted to the "poetic theme of the ballet"<sup>1</sup> and agreed to dance the part. Her decision could have been influenced by the fact that the event was organized by a number of distinguished Londoners. It is unlikely that Genée overlooked this fact. During this period most artists were dependant on the patronage of the aristocracy. Friendships with influential figures of London society would have likely guaranteed artists a considerable degree of success, and entertainers willingly participated in any cause supported by this section of society. Soon becoming an audience favourite, the piece was a vital component of her repertoire. For example, one reviewer wrote:

If we were told that only once again in life should we see Mlle. Adeline Genée dance and bidden to make our own choice of a piece for the occasion, we should choose, we believe, The Dryad.<sup>2</sup>

The short piece in two brief scenes ran just over half an hour and, on September 7, 1908, was included in the bill of the Empire Theatre for the last two weeks of Genée's London season. While the choreography was attributed to her Uncle Alexander, it was actually Adeline's own work. According to one writer, she "thought it was wise to efface herself in this respect, for the sake of her family."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Guest, Adeline Genée: A Lifetime of Ballet Under Six Reigns, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>"Dance Review of The Dryad." The Times 23 September 1908, col d, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Guest, Adeline Genée, p. 100. - At this time, women choreographers were uncommon and the act of creation was usually associated with men. If Adeline had taken credit for her work, it is unlikely that she would have been believed. It is improbable,

Described by ballet historian Mark Perugini as "one of the most perfect gems yet seen in the historic gallery of ballet,"<sup>4</sup> the press raved about the piece. In my judgement, The Dryad enjoyed wide support because it reinforced prevailing notions of gender and sexuality. Audiences, comforted by the familiar themes, were receptive to the traditionally romantic style of ballet presented by Genée as it celebrated traditional values, such as wholesomeness and loyalty. Her art appealed to that segment of the new leisure market which catered to the upper and lower middle classes. This group "wanted to be cultured, but [preferred] culture that [was] unconcerned with innovation in form."<sup>5</sup> This culture group, comprising a large portion of the Edwardian English leisure market, stressed substance over form and plot over mood. To substantiate this theory, however, we first need to examine the ballet through a detailed description of its various components (plot, music, sets, costumes) and second to analyze its themes and imagery.

Described as a pastoral fantasy, The Dryad recounts the tragic adventure of a beautiful wood nymph who, because she aroused the jealousy of Aphrodite, is imprisoned in an oak tree, only to gain her freedom every ten years between sunrise and

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however, that such a thought would have occurred to her as she had been trained for years to defer to the authority of her Uncle Alexander. Her family would probably have regarded such an action as disloyal and disrespectful.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Herbert Gans, Popular Culture and High Culture (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 81-2.

sunset. In order to secure her liberty she must find a mortal man who will remain true to her during the ensuing ten year interval. In the opening scene, the dryad emerges from the tree trunk to which she has been banished and shortly thereafter meets a handsome young shepherd who, immediately struck by her beauty, falls in love with her. She informs him that only after he remains faithful to her for ten years will she be released from the evil spell and be his forever. After a "passionate parting,"<sup>6</sup> she returns to her prison to wait patiently for his return.

In scene two the obligatory ten year period has passed and, after emerging from the tree, the dryad waits expectantly for her shepherd's return. Hearing his voice she is delirious with joy. However, when she sees him she is shattered as he enters with a human shepardess on his arm. As they pass out of sight, the dryad, abandoned and despairing, turns to her tree trunk only to find that it too is closed against her. Kneeling before the tree, the humiliated nymph pleads for admittance. Slowly it opens and offers her shelter from a world that is bleak and devoid of compassion.

At first glance, Genée's ballet appears to be little more than a simple romantic tale about a jilted lover. Upon closer examination, however, it is evident that the piece actually provides considerable insight into late Victorian, early Edwardian attitudes and values. Admirers of Genée would have us

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<sup>6</sup>The Times 23 September 1908, col.d., p. 9.

believe that her work simply advanced aesthetic attitudes that transcended social concerns, but her modest ballet did not exist in some detached, autonomous aesthetic realm. It presented imagery that conformed to contemporary social and cultural standards. How it did this will become clearer as we explore the ballet further.

Written by Dora Bright, the music was a collection of happy melodies; they were competently composed, according to one writer, but showed no unusual originality of style.<sup>7</sup> In this way it conformed to the Gans definition of the lower-middle culture group. The simple and pleasant orchestration appealed to Genée who, like the composer, was a traditionalist and, consequently, had no time for the modern composers "with their gospel of ugliness."<sup>8</sup> Ugliness was not something that Genée or her audiences tolerated. Even in the tragic story of the dryad, the ballerina stressed tenderness, innocence and gaiety over passion, pain and rejection. For example, one critic observed:

We can recognize that the appeal of Genée both in her dancing and in her acting is always one addressed without tormented subtlety to the broad human sense of sorrow, or happiness, or fun. . . Her work is explicitly, simple and wholesome.<sup>9</sup>

Genée's work was understood as balanced and, most importantly,

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<sup>7</sup>Guest, Adeline Genée, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. - This "gospel of ugliness" presumably referred to any music that deviated significantly from the popular concept of classical music. No doubt Mrs. Knatchbull and Mlle. Genée would have classified the work of modern composers like Eric Satie, Claude Debussy and Gustave Mahler unsuitable.

<sup>9</sup>Times, 2 March 1914.

entertaining. The Dryad, revealed the wide range of Genée's technique and acting ability, but also, as the Morning Post commented, "a strange power of expressing emotion with a certain piercing simplicity..."<sup>10</sup>

Unlike anything she had done in the past, the piece brought together singing, dancing and acting. The role of the shepherd was played by baritone Gordon Cleather with Genée dancing the part of the spurned nymph. Critics claimed that the fusion of music, acting, singing and dancing worked well as it offered the audience a total theatrical experience and provided Mlle. Genée a "freer scope than in the ballets in which she [was] usually seen."<sup>11</sup> Critics praised her acting ability, declaring that The Dryad brought out the actress in Mlle. Genée which, combined with her obvious technical skill, served to prove that the ballerina was an even greater artist than previously believed. However, while there is little doubt that this admiration was inspired by the dancer's technical and theatrical accomplishments, it was also due, in part, to the appeal of the plot. That is to say, the people understood the storyline as it explored themes popular with turn of the century audiences. While the ballet appeared solely concerned with recreating a classical tale, it was, in actuality, communicating a variety of contemporary themes and issues to the audience. With its brief exploration of relationships between men and women, the ballet reveals

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<sup>10</sup>Guest, Adeline Genée, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup>Times, September 1908.

substantial insights into fin-de-siecle society and culture. As evidenced by the above description of the plot and music, Genée's ballet indulged the artistic tastes of her audiences.

Genée, described by critics as innocent and tender, as the long suffering wood-nymph, exhibited behaviour characteristic of turn-of-the-century concepts of the ideal woman. "Free from the faintest suspicion of anything raw, untempered, or incomplete," Miss Genée's character sparkled "with light and air and gaiety, with beaded bubbles winking at the brim."<sup>12</sup> According to critics, she moved about the stage with child-like naturalness, oblivious to the gaze of onlookers. As the delicate and charming dryad, Genée danced gracefully without the slightest trace of effort. Her movements were clean, clear and without deception. This final observation is ironic, considering that it is the nature of ballet to make what is difficult and arduous appear simple and uncomplicated. Genée had achieved this level of proficiency only after years of personal dedication and hard work. In this way, Genée, the dancer, was like the ideal English lady.

Both the ballerina and the lady are considered to possess natural grace and elegance. But this is misleading. Just as the dancer yielded to years of demanding work in order to achieve the aesthetic ideal of the beautiful ballerina, so too the young girl endured a childhood of socialization in order to develop the skills of a proper lady. Genée's character, the dryad, was a

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<sup>12</sup>Times, 11 June 1908.

mythical creation, as was the "lady". Both were culturally constructed notions of an ideal. Nevertheless, they exerted a powerful force on society. As the dryad, Genée embodied the qualities valued in women at the turn of the century. She was loyal, devoted and trustworthy. Upon winning the love of the shepherd, she faithfully returned to her prison to patiently await their reunion in ten years. While this image of the waiting woman would certainly have had many contemporary parallels, the audience would most likely have interpreted it as the engagement period required prior to marriage, during which time the couple proved their love to each other by exercising self-control. This image is also reminiscent of the dutiful wife waiting for her husband to return from work. In either instance, the woman waits serenely in anticipation of her sweetheart's return. Audiences would, most certainly, have applauded this dignified behaviour as it typified what they most treasured in women. In addition to her patience, the dryad is also loyal and faithful.

She does not betray her lover but rather remains devoted, even after he forsakes her for another. Never malicious or vindictive, the dryad is the example of christian charity as she forgives the shepherd's treachery. Rather than admonish the young man, the nymph conceals her grief and returns to her prison, alone. Genée's choreography suggests that she did not think it appropriate for women to confront or challenge men. This sentiment is reminiscent of her own reluctance to

acknowledge The Dryad as her own work as she believed this may have diminished her Uncle Alexander's reputation as a celebrated choreographer. Like the dryad, Genée demonstrated her love by denying her own identity and creativity.

During the nineteenth century, Britain experienced a renewed interest in ancient Greece. The British interpretation of the ancient world eventually influenced English attitudes and, therefore, significantly altered English society and culture. By the late nineteenth century, ancient Greece was a recurrent theme in commercial advertising, men's and ladies' fashions, interior decorating and architectural design as well as art. Dance was not immune to contemporary aesthetic trends and it was not unusual for choreographers to choose a Hellenistic theme for their piece. Such was the case with Mlle. Genée and her work The Dryad. By manipulating Greek mythological characters and classical costuming Genée profited from the growing public interest in anything Greek. Her dryad costume is evidence of this.

Pictures of the dancer as the dryad show her in a soft, flowing costume vaguely resembling a Grecian tunic (see Appendix I). Her romantic interpretation of the classical robe, however, with its carefully draped material, presented an idealized view of classical culture; in fact, authenticity was not the dancer's primary concern. Unlike Isadora Duncan and Maud Allan, Genée preferred to present a tempered version of the classical period as she wished to avoid shocking the sensitivities of her

audience. Moreover, as frequently pointed out by Miss Duncan, any attempt at authenticity would certainly have been severely compromised by Genée's use of pointe shoes. With the exception of her arms, Mlle. Genée was encased in material from head to toe. Her legs were protected in flesh coloured ballet tights and her feet were firmly secured by ribbon in pink satin pointe shoes. In addition, while her costume appeared billowy and unstructured, the dancer was, in actuality, corseted. While the trend toward Greek Revivalism resulted in the modification of women's clothing and dancer's costumes, the majority of women were reluctant to abandon the corset completely. European designers offered women a greater variety of garment alternatives, with pre-Raphaelite and Greek style gowns eventually replacing the uncomfortable and restrictive clothing reminiscent of the mid-nineteenth century, but clothing still served to conceal the majority of the body. Yet Genée's diaphanous costume, with its cinctured waist and full bodice, drew the audience's attention to the soft curves of her hips and bosom. Mindful of fashion, Genée carefully controlled the amount of flesh she revealed. With an ankle length hem and reserved neckline, the ballerina was the vision of modesty and good taste. Moreover, with her porcelain like skin and natural freshness, Genée imparted to her audience notions of virginal purity and innocence.

Little is known about the set for the ballet. The only pictorial document that I am aware of is that which features

Mlle. Genée in her dryad costume posing in front of a rather prosaic backdrop. While this could have simply been the vista used by the photographer, it is likely that Genée's set would have closely resembled this example. Unless a full length ballet, productions of the period did not usually demand extensive or complex sets as dancers were typically sandwiched between numerous variety acts and, therefore, time constraints demanded versatility and adaptability. The inconsequence of the set is important as it demonstrates the preeminence of the dancer. Not until the dynamic constructions of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes would sets become an integral component of the complete production. At this time, however, audience attention was centred primarily on the dancer and her performance. Nevertheless, audiences would have certainly considered the set as it helped them determine the mood and intent of the piece. Genée's serene and pastoral settings would certainly have prepared the audience for her lyrical creation, The Dryad.

Sets, costumes and music functioned as signs for the audience. Armed with this information, audiences could ascertain which entertainer best exemplified their own personal tastes and values. For example, Genée's playbill, with its romantic portrait of the dancer in an idealized Grecian gown, would likely have persuaded certain individuals amenable to that style of art to attend her performance at the Empire Theatre. Similarly, pamphlets circulated by the press, announcing Maud Allan's engagement at the Palace Theatre may have convinced Londoners to

attend her debut performance. Unlike Genée's tasteful flyer, however, Allan's publicity material was sensationalist and provocative, but, nevertheless, attracted an audience to Allan's notorious performance of Salomé. Theatre owner Alfred Butt presented Miss Allan to the London press and selected invited guests in a private matinee performance on March 6, 1908, followed two days later by her public debut. The public and press were agreed; she was a success.

Hailed by critics as a dancer of unusual grace and elegance, Allan came to personify the ideals of the Edwardian era.<sup>13</sup> While Genée explored classical themes in works like The Dryad, Allan, capitalizing on growing public interest in Orientalism, presented works that were mystical and exotic. With her performance of Salomé, the thirty-five year old dancer ultimately realized an extraordinary level of artistic and financial prosperity. We may well wonder why this was the case. Like her contemporary Adeline Genée, Maud Allan's art appealed to a particular segment of the London public who supported her work and, thus, ensured her steady success. This group favoured the new, innovative work presented by the Canadian born dancer as it considered themes fashionable among them. Allan's audience included members of high culture. This group, "dominated by creators and critics"<sup>14</sup>, catered to the needs and desires of an exclusive group of the public that placed a greater emphasis on

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<sup>13</sup>Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 164.

<sup>14</sup>Gans, Popular Culture and High Culture, p. 67.

mood and feeling. Along with King Edward the VII, Allan counted many members of London's social, artistic, and political elite among her admirers.<sup>15</sup> Margot Asquith was, for a time, friendly with the dancer, inviting her to a number of social gatherings.<sup>16</sup> The dancer secured both their attention and support with her inventive style. A case in point is Allan's dance The Vision of Salomé.

The story of the biblical character Salomé was extremely popular among late nineteenth century intellectuals and socialites. According to author Bram Dijkstra, her exploits "became the true centrepiece of male masochistic fantasies."<sup>17</sup> Capturing the imagination of artists and writers like Gustave Moreau and Flaubert, the story sustained its appeal throughout the Edwardian period. Perhaps its most infamous treatment was by the English author Oscar Wilde. While Wilde's play was banned in England, it was performed on the continent and, in 1904, Maud Allan attended Max Reinhardt's production in Berlin. It has been suggested that the dancer identified with elements of the play and, as a result, was moved to choreograph her own interpretation of the fashionable story. Two years after having seen the Reinhardt production, Allan gave her first public performance of her tour de force, The Vision of Salomé. Continental reviewers

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<sup>15</sup>Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>17</sup>Bram Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 37.

praised Miss Allan's attempts to invent an original style of dance, but predicted that she would fail to win popular support. They were incorrect.

Allan's last chapter of her commemorative autobiography was dedicated to explaining her version of the legendary tale. She portrays the young princess as an innocent child who, naturally spiritual, exemplified the same qualities Allan had used in her previous chapter on women to characterize true womanhood. Her story is one of spiritual awakening. Allan, however, did not simply have her Salomé dance before Herod. She conceived of a second section that depicted the "anguish and regret [that Salomé felt] over the death of John the Baptist".<sup>18</sup> Prior to this conclusion, she characterizes the princess as an obedient and dutiful daughter who abided by the decisions made by Herod and her mother Herodias. After having performed her dance of the seven veils for her father's guests, Herod, pleased with her dancing, granted her whatever she desired. The bewildered Salomé turned to her mother for guidance who spitefully advised her to demand the head of John the Baptist. The acquiescent daughter obliged.

In the second section Salomé is transformed by the spiritual power of the deceased Baptist into a woman. During her vision, the princess "liberates her perverse and repressed emotions to the point of catharsis."<sup>19</sup> And now, Allan explained, "instead

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<sup>18</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 167.

of wanting to conquer, she wants to be conquered, craving the spiritual guidance of the man whose wraith is before her."<sup>20</sup>

Salomé, eventually regaining her composure, recognized her evil deed and, huddled over the bloody head of John the Baptist, begs for the atonement of her mother's sins. Accordingly one historian suggested, "whatever sexual threat the image of Salomé may have represented, in Allan's narrative it is completely domesticated."<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, for many people, the biblical figure was a formidable foe.

Salomé epitomized the turn-of-the-century belief in the inherent perversity of women.<sup>22</sup> As both the carnal temptress and innocent virgin, Salomé illustrated the multifarious nature of woman. For example, the princess initially appears childlike and naive when unwittingly lured into the service of her domineering mother; however, during her vision, she exhibits lewd behaviour that some audience members believed communicated woman's true emotional temperament. Allan's conduct confirmed turn-of-the-century beliefs concerning woman's primitive nature: "their eternal circularity and their ability to destroy the male's soul even while they remained nominally chaste in body."<sup>23</sup> In this way, Allan cleverly capitalized on contemporary obsessions and anxieties and through dance expressed the "very feeling and

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<sup>20</sup>Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 127.

<sup>21</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity, p. 384.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

meaning of [the] period."<sup>24</sup>

Remarking on her success, dance historian Felix Cherniavsky noted, "Maud made Salomé a mystifying mixture of the erotic and the exotic, artfully shrouded in a veil of Edwardian discretion and good taste."<sup>25</sup> One reporter wrote:

There is no extravagance or sensationalism about Miss Allan's dancing; even crouching over the head of her victim, caressing it or shrinking from it in horror, she subordinated every gesture and attitude to the conditions of her art.<sup>26</sup>

The press willingly overlooked Salomé's flagrant sexual innuendo because Allan, promoted as a great artist, was characterized as totally justified in her art. Regarding her artistry, one critic remarked how she was able to capture the mood of a given period;

Now she is a maiden who might have stepped out of ancient Athens again, now the very siren who danced before King Herod.<sup>27</sup>

Allan's was praised for accurately expressing the spirit of the East. Considered an artistic abstraction of the vulgar reality and physicality of authentic Eastern dance, critics argued that Allan's dancing was not as sexually explicit as its oriental equivalent. Allan appropriated the oriental image, but re-interpreted it for British audiences. Possibly modifying the erotic movements identified with oriental belly dancing, she distanced herself from what her audience believed was a crude

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<sup>24</sup>As quoted in Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 166.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>26</sup>Times, 10 March 1908, 5d.

<sup>27</sup>As quoted in Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p.166.

eastern model and presented them with a more refined rendition. According to critics, she succeeded in translating potentially coarse gestures into something that was beautiful and inoffensive. Allan, it seemed, presented a conveniently ambiguous demonstration of sexuality.

Not all people, however, arrived at this conclusion and Allan's early performances provoked a mixed response. One man wrote:

I was at one of her first performances in London; and there was not crowding of applause, such was usual afterwards - in fact the audience did not quite know what to make of it.<sup>28</sup>

Such was not the case with a Californian visiting London who noted, "the performance struck me as indecent, but performed in such a way as to make it appear perfectly modest."<sup>29</sup> Had Miss Allan succeeded in recreating her own version of The Emperor's New Clothes? Not quite. It seems that, unlike the Emperor's subjects, Londoners were all too aware of the dancer's lack of clothing. A Times reporter, having attended Allan's performance, warned his readers about the dancer's costume. He wrote:

It will, perhaps, be fair to the public to say that her dress as Salomé is daring; it would be very unfair to Miss Allan not to add that, like her performance, it is absolutely free of offence. There is not even the feeling that she is pulling chestnuts out of the fire.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Cecil Torr, Small Talk at Wreyland (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 105.

<sup>29</sup>As quoted in Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 169.

<sup>30</sup>Times, 10 March 1908, 5d.

Inspired by oriental examples, Allan tried to design as authentic a costume as possible (see appendix II). The result was an extremely seductive gown that consisted primarily of strategically placed beads. Wearing only gauzy harem pants and a diminutive bra-like top made of pearls and jewels, Miss Allan's "exquisitely girlish figure"<sup>31</sup> was on view for all to see. Unlike Mlle. Genée, Allan did not wear a corset, as evidenced by her exposed belly, or cover her legs with tights. Moreover, like much of her body, her feet were bare. Whereas Genée's costume only hinted at soft curves hidden under yards of material, Allan's feminine frame was bared to public view. Controversy over the "naked dancer" grew. Allan, constantly having to defend her costume, frequently wrote to local papers in an effort to explain her logic:

The dancer's body is her instrument, the raw material, just as a violin is to the violinist, and clay is to the sculptor. Is it really possible to cover up this raw material when it is precisely this that brings about the desired artistic effect.<sup>32</sup>

According to the dancer, artistic licence justified her state of undress. Clearly, for the most part, the press and public agreed.

Audiences were captivated by the daring and the excitement of The Vision. The music, with its Arabian themes, invoked exotic images of the far east and Maud, wrapped in her seductive costume, translated the notes into wondrous scenes of decadence

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<sup>31</sup>Times, 13 February 1908.

<sup>32</sup>As quoted in Cherniavsky, The Salome Dancer, p. 145.

and novelty. Crowded houses waited anxiously for her dance of passion, allurements and intoxication hoping to experience some of the uncivilized orient. With her "sinuous arm movements,"<sup>33</sup> Allan was described as "never for an instant without beauty"<sup>34</sup> and her performance was applauded for its polish and dramatic force. Critics commended the dancer for achieving a distinction between lasciviousness and voluptuousness. Describing the final moments of the piece, one reviewer wrote:

[She] finally collapses, a huddled - but still graceful, still beautiful - mass. And there you have the secret of her art, sheer beauty; every line in it, every rhythm, every movement, every posture, every pause is beautiful.<sup>35</sup>

Whether Allan had or had not succeeded the above distinction was, in actuality, of little importance. What was of greater significance was that comments such as these gave London audiences the confidence to appease their curiosity with little fear that they would jeopardize their social respectability. Consequently, Londoners flocked to see the barefoot dancer. Allan was championed as a virtuous and earnest young lady who danced with personal conviction and sincerity. Through her skilful management of popular fashion Allan landed an eighteen month engagement at the Palace Theatre and world wide notoriety.

After considering an example of each dancer's work, it is

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<sup>33</sup>Times, 13 February 1908, 13c.

<sup>34</sup>Times, 8 September 1913, 6c.

<sup>35</sup>"Maud Allan's Barefoot Dancing Stirs London," The Theatre, 8 June 1908, p. 164.

apparent that, while Genée and Allan adopted different dance styles and subjects, their work espoused attitudes about women that mirrored the dominant Edwardian viewpoint. In both The Dryad and The Vision of Salomé the central characters were manipulated by a malevolent female figure. Aphrodite and Herodias, characterized as jealous and spiteful, seem to bear little resemblance to their innocent and trusting young victims. In addition, the men, while not characterized as completely free of blame, are represented without malicious intent. They are depicted as having unintentionally inflicted pain on their heroines. In both plots, women are characterized as either virginal and pure or corrupt and ambitious, thus illustrating the turn-of-the-century obsession with the apparent duplicitous nature of woman. In addition, the central characters themselves are stereotyped caricatures of women. One is a fictitious wood nymph and the other an exotic princess who is hard pressed to control her carnal appetite. Nevertheless, the two dancers both played characters that ultimately conformed to the socially sanctioned ideal of womanhood. Like the dryad, Salomé's spirit is eventually crushed by the grief and humiliation she suffers at the hands of an uncaring woman, but both characters survive their painful encounters and endure their anguish in private. Finally, however, both women emerge as examples of good, obedient females who willingly submit to a higher authority. Most importantly though, exhibiting qualities celebrated by the middle-class, Allan and Genée personified turn-of-the century notions of charm

and, as a result, secured public support.

## CHAPTER IV

## TWO CHARMING LADIES OF THE STAGE

The closing decade of the nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of women challenging honoured traditions regarding the role of women in society. Many women agitated for increased involvement in higher education as well as for the opportunity to work and support themselves. By seeking opportunities for self-fulfilment outside the confines of the home, these vanguard women severely tested the sacred ideal of femininity that was so essential to the Victorian understanding of women. In response to this challenge, some members of the middle-class adhered to traditional standards more fiercely than ever since they were extremely reluctant to subscribe to "modern" ideals. The resulting battle saw the traditionalists fighting to prevent young women from finding alternatives to the restrictive conventions that constituted the model of the Victorian lady, for it was feared this would, in turn, irrevocably impair and perhaps destroy ancient institutions and traditions. Nowhere was the matter of women's changing role in society more passionately debated than in the newly emerging area of leisure.

Though change was slow, the new role for women had a direct impact on the entertainment market. Middle-class citizens, fearful of the effects of the gradual transformation, tried harder than ever to protect their way of life. This meant

preserving established traditions and principles. One way to accomplish this was to support activities that reflected their own ideals. Adeline Genée and Maud Allan were supported by the middle class because their entertainment was considered acceptable. Their work promoted ideals championed by the middle-class and, most importantly, both women appeared to embody qualities of womanhood they cherished. Judged to be well-bred and cultured, Allan and Genée were graciously welcomed by the middle-class community because they seemed to heed established views on the role of women in society. Allan's opinions on women's suffrage were well known and Genée was applauded for her personal modesty; though it was their charm, according to contemporary reviews, that so endeared them to their public. During this time of change it was no doubt reassuring to find two women who were so obviously adept at charming an audience.

While it is difficult to appreciate the importance the middle class placed on this quality, it is essential that we understand the concept since it is a crucial component of the Edwardian notion of femininity. One way to accomplish this is to examine the leisure industry and the impact it had on women. By examining material written by middle-class citizens anxious to regulate the developing leisure industry, we can reflect on their concerns about women participating in popular recreational activities. In opposing women's increased involvement in the physical culture movement, many anxious middle-class citizens maintained that women jeopardized their naturally feminine

qualities. This argument was made principally in the case of the fashionable pastime of cycling. I will briefly explore the development of cycling because the growth of this leisure activity led to heated debate about the detrimental effects of strenuous physical activity on women. In particular the debate revolved around the issue of feminine charm. This quality, believed unique to women, was presumed an essential characteristic of a lady.

According to historian Peter Bailey, changes in leisure activity were primarily due to social reform. A reduction in work hours afforded the British general public the opportunity to partake in leisure activity as never before. Furthermore, expanding rail transportation offered people the mobility to attend a variety of leisure activities. Women were not immune from the changing leisure market and soon began to experiment with a number of recreational possibilities. It was this aspect of the transforming leisure market that disturbed a growing number of people. Many members of the middle class feared that an increase in recreation and leisure would severely threaten the existing system of social control. Therefore, according to historian Kathleen McCrone, the middle-class male arbiters of the developing sport culture were "determined to control the direction of social change and shape the evolution of the social order to their own advantage."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kathleen McCrone, Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women; 1870-1914, p. 12.

From a middle-class perspective, leisure constituted a problem whose solution required the establishment of new rules of social conformity that incorporated leisure and recreation activities. Consequently, middle-class activists tried to make popular leisure respectable and, to this end, instituted reforms that led to the development of a model of recreation that invited distinctions as to class and gender. With its increase in popularity, it was soon evident that the role of sport within Victorian society was to be modified to suit the "needs" of the particular classes and sexes. The "specialization" of sport meant that types of physical activity promoted were closely connected to notions of class and gender. In the case of women by far the most popular of these leisure alternatives was cycling.

The bicycle's popularity was unprecedented, and nowhere was this more evident than with the growing numbers of young women who chose to participate in the "craze". Cycling became not only popular, but for a time, fashionable; with Queen Victoria ordering machines for her and her daughters to ride on the palace grounds. According to McCrone, "it was bicycling that provided women with their most significant experience of physical exercise and did more than any other activity to break down conservative restrictions."<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that the phenomenon was universally approved.

Due to the middle-class obsession with propriety and

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

respectability, debates raged over the suitability of cycling for women. While adherents stressed that "moderate" physical activity was, in fact, beneficial to women, opponents argued that physical activity was hazardous to a woman's developing reproductive system. Opponents were, however, primarily concerned that increased physical activity threatened to transform women from gentle, feminine creatures into brutish muscle machines. The controversy that resulted because of women's involvement in cycling is of particular interest to this paper because arguments frequently revolved around notions of a naturally feminine woman. By examining turn-of-the-century apprehensions regarding women and leisure, we can better understand middle-class notions of femininity. This information, will, in turn, enable us to understand the popularity of Allan and Genée.

These concerns are succinctly explored in a contemporary article by Dr. Arabella Kenealy.<sup>3</sup> Kenealy likened physical development to intellectual degeneracy, as she was convinced that women would increase their muscular power at the expense of other, more crucial, feminine characteristics. She feared that exercise would masculinize women since it would jeopardize women's greatest assets and that which made them distinct from men. That "mysterious and nameless something which for the lack

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<sup>3</sup>Arabella Kenealy, "Woman As Athlete." Nineteenth Century. vol. 45 (April 1899):636-45.

of a more definite term [is] described as charm."<sup>4</sup> This elusive quality, in Kenealy's view, was women's most notable trait.

Charm, according to Kenealy, was an attribute of a lady, and while mere muscle power was the "least of human qualities"<sup>5</sup>, charm was supreme. This quality expressed refinement, elegance and beauty and was, according to the doctor, unique to women who had been trained from an early age to exercise a healthy mental, emotional and physical balance.<sup>6</sup>

In order to strengthen her argument, Kenealy employed the example of a young acquaintance named Clara. Prior to commencing her program of physical exercise, Clara had fine features, claimed the doctor; her complexion was "sensitive and variable" and she possessed that mystical and feminine quality, charm. Kenealy, however, critical of Clara's physical activity, did not observe an improvement in Clara's health but rather the destruction of her most valuable qualities. She complained that "her glance is unwavering and direct," and that her facial expression lacked all subtlety.<sup>7</sup> She found fault with Clara's "added poise and strength" and objected that her "movement [was] no longer veiled by a certain mystery of motion which gave her formerly an air of gliding rather than of striding from one place

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 639.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 639.

to another."<sup>8</sup> Kenealy was appalled to learn that "in her evening gown [Clara showed] evidence of joints which had been adroitly hidden beneath tissues of soft flesh" and that, in addition, "her movements [were] muscular and less womanly."<sup>9</sup> Finally, her greatest disappointment is that Clara, armed with new found assertiveness, "that blemish of modern woman," says everything and leaves nothing to the imagination.<sup>10</sup>

Kenealy's objections are firmly rooted in notions of middle-class propriety and sexual stereotyping. The doctor admonished Clara for her irresponsible behaviour, suggesting that she concentrate on the duties of home and family rather than expend so much precious energy on the "awful" pastime of bicycling. Adherents of Kenealy's view believed that Clara's behaviour discredited her family and people from her rank because she was from a class which "[did] not live by muscular effort, but, being leisured, [was] at liberty to develop faculties more complex."<sup>11</sup> For women, these highly evolved skills were intangible, but distinctively feminine and, according to the doctor, "none of these...attributes [were] attributes of muscle!"<sup>12</sup> Muscle-power, it was feared, would jeopardize the elusive, but highly valued qualities of tenderness, delicacy and virtue and Kenealy

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 640.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 644.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

was concerned that, with her increased physical activity, Clara "would destroy [the] complex, well-planned balance of faculties which had been Nature's scheme when Nature fashioned Clara."<sup>13</sup>

As the prototype of the modern woman, Clara seemed to destroy the balance. With her new found strength and assertiveness, Kenealy suggested Clara embodied the selfishness of the modern age. Because rather than occupy her time performing tasks for her family, the young woman chose to cycle around the countryside, to the detriment of her family. According to contemporary reviews, however, Allan and Genée did not exhibit the same unbecoming behaviour as the young and modern Clara.

Described by critics as poised, lovely, and elegant, the two dancers emerged from the popular press as the personification of charm. With her classical training, Genée had perfected the subordination of muscle to grace and thus easily conformed to the Kenealy model of womanhood. Allan's accomplishments were more significant. Unlike Genée, Allan's "modern" dance style, with its exotic sensuality, challenged traditional notions of propriety. Moreover, Allan performed a work that had, for some time, been wrought with controversy. As the young Salomé, she presented her audiences with a woman who had, in the past, been characterized as licentious and heartless. Yet Allan herself was identified as a "good" woman and was never equated with the role she portrayed so effectively on stage. By exploring how these

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 638.

two women personified the contemporary notion of charm, we can further examine how they also embodied turn-of-the-century concepts of femininity.

The work of both dancers expressed the doctor's belief that "the subordination of muscle to womanhood should ever be kept in mind as being an infinitely higher ideal than can ever be the subordination of womanhood to muscle."<sup>14</sup> According to this notion of womanhood, "the power of swift and agile motion"<sup>15</sup> is pointless if it is realized at the expense of "a dainty, elusive quality"<sup>16</sup> that cannot be reproduced easily. Writing some years later, Allan seems to agree with this line of thought. In a chapter of her autobiography, The Human Body; My Instrument, Allan wrote that she was in the habit of exercising in the morning, but that her regime in no way resembled the drill type exercises popular with a growing number of people. According to Allan,

as soon as physical exercises become mechanical - a matter of one, two, three, and a stolid expression or one of physical pain - their virtue is gone from my point of view.<sup>17</sup>

For Allan, like Kenealy, the body should reflect the mind and, while drill was good enough for men, women should "try to harmonize motion with inspiration, be it that of music, the

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 641.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 642.

<sup>17</sup>Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 63.

graceful figure of some picture or statue..."<sup>18</sup> Characterized as emotional and artistic creatures, women were expected to inspire the men around them with their grace and beauty and temporarily rescue them from the drudgery of their day to day lives. The work of both artists functioned in a similar fashion. The two women transported their audiences to a fabulous places where, for a short time, they were charmed by beautiful and fantastical images. Kenealy's theory of charm proposed that women's most significant attributes were silent ones, such as, patience and sympathy. Both dancers exhibited one or more of these virtues in their work.

As the dryad, Genée displayed qualities cherished by the doctor and her middle-class supporters. Never malicious or hateful, the nymph endured her personal grief quietly and discreetly and, throughout her ordeal, demonstrated a personal charm that delighted her audiences. This quality was representative of many of the dancer's works. Whether presenting a role that was tragic, merry, or romantic, Mademoiselle Genée's work was consistently "free from the faintest suspicion of anything raw, untempered, or incomplete."<sup>19</sup> This was, in part, due to her chosen style of dance. The Danish dancer, always aware of her balletic heritage, endeavoured to realize the ballet aesthetic of effortless movement. According to one critic, she was successful:

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>19</sup>The Times, 11 June 1908, 10d

When Mlle. Adeline Genée stands tip-toe on a rose you do not need to remind yourself that it is a "property" rose. The leaf of a sensitive plant would not shut as she danced over it; she might pirouette on a daisy and it would not bend. So you see as you watch her - not because she is dressed as a butterfly, but because she is Mlle. Adeline Genée, who condescends for our sakes to foot it on the solid ground when she might be floating upward, like a champagne bubble, to dance her heart's fill in the air.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the modern Clara, Genée's physical strength was concealed by a "certain mystery of motion"<sup>21</sup> that infused her movements with an airy quality that seemed to defy gravity. Unaware of the degree of difficulty involved in mastering the pointe shoe or ballet technique, Genée's enthralled her audiences with dainty, graceful movements that were considered naturally feminine. Genée's art consistently expressed Kenealy's belief that the employment of muscle was honourable only when such action achieved some higher mental or moral ideal. Accordingly, "the subordination of muscle to mere muscular achievements (ie: cycling) [held] a very inferior place in the scale of doing."<sup>22</sup>

Genée, by exploiting muscle to realize the aesthetic and moral ideals forwarded in ballet, exemplified turn-of-the-century notions of charm and femininity. Beneath her gentle facade was a strong and capable woman who was publicly modest and self-effacing. Consequently, when, in 1908 she was called upon by an audience to make a speech, Genée chose to reply "through the

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<sup>20</sup>The Times, 13 June 1911, 12d.

<sup>21</sup>Kenealy, "Woman As Athlete," p. 640.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 641.

mouth of the manager"<sup>23</sup>, since she was far too shy and humble.

Maud Allan's work also demonstrated many of Kenealy's characteristics of charm, and this in spite of the controversial nature of her work. Allan's representation of an "Eastern woman-Salomé-became an ideologically unstable event [that required] the careful manipulation of available vocabularies."<sup>24</sup> Allan chose to exercise the "vocabulary" of charm and propriety championed by people like Dr. Kenealy. For the dancer to be identified as a "good" woman, she had to find a way in which to distance herself from the character she portrayed in the theatre. She succeeded in accomplishing this by presenting western audiences with what admirers claimed was a spiritual rather than a physical depiction of the "East".<sup>25</sup> This distinction proved the key to her professional and personal success as it freed audiences to attend her performances, confident that they were not discrediting themselves. Praising Miss Allan for her interpretation of the "East", critics suggested that she would "be the first to rouse London enthusiasm with a kind of dancing to which London [had] never yet taken very kindly..."<sup>26</sup> Prior to Allan's performances of 1908, eastern dancing had been frowned upon as overly sensual and physical in nature. Accordingly, one critic commented:

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<sup>23</sup>The Times, 11 June 1908, p. 10d.

<sup>24</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>26</sup>The Times, 10 March 1908, p. 5d.

this kind of dramatic dancing, in which the arms and hands and shoulders, the whole body, and even the face, are of equal importance with the legs and feet, we have, perhaps, a vague idea that it is "Eastern" and a little unpleasant, and so cut ourselves off from a source of great pleasure.<sup>27</sup>

With remarks like the above, however, Allan was assured success. It seems, however, that her good fortune was due primarily to her ability to take eastern themes and refine them for sensitive London audiences. One critic wrote:

Her dancing of Salomé, though eastern in spirit through and through, is absolutely without the slightest suggestion of the vulgarities so familiar to the tourist in Cairo or Tangier.<sup>28</sup>

While audiences were sure of Allan's "accurate portrayal of the 'spirit' of the East,"<sup>29</sup> they were also confident that "Miss Allan's entertainment was free from vulgarity"<sup>30</sup> because "public discourse surrounding Allan's Salomé consistently distinguished her performance from that of a "bad" woman or an "authentic" Oriental..."<sup>31</sup>

Allan's interpretation of the biblical princess was firmly positioned in the realm of the spiritual, a domain long associated with women.<sup>32</sup> In this way, Allan's work advanced middle-class theories about women and their role in society.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>"Maud Allan's Barefoot Dancing Stirs London," p. 166.

<sup>29</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 5.

<sup>30</sup>The Times, 11 June 1908, p. 10d.

<sup>31</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 9.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

With her emphasis on beauty, Allan conformed to the Kenealy notion of charm and elegance and the subordination of muscle to femininity. Allan's works stressed a childlike innocence and simplicity and always appeared spontaneous and unrehearsed. Ironically, while the dancer claimed to dislike the studied quality of ballet she unwittingly adhered to its primary objective -- the subordination of muscle to grace. Like Kenealy, Allan believed that movement should in no way appear mechanical. To this end she seems to have mastered, through hours of practice, the ability to move with ease and style. One critic remarked that her feet seemed "...to caress the ground [rather] than to be supported by it."<sup>33</sup> Critics and audiences were agreed that Allan was the embodiment of propriety and elegance, and that through her dancing, she depicted the qualities of woman celebrated by traditionalists. One admirer wrote to Allan:

A woman is to a man the shrine where the Highest is visibly manifested, and her beauty of form, when expressing beauty within, can drive the evil out of him quicker than anything else in the world - excepting love.<sup>34</sup>

Functioning as a vessel through which social ideals were expressed, Allan inspired audiences with her art and her personal ideology regarding women and their place in society.

Both Allan and Genée, like Kenealy, believed the "[women] should be the refining, the inspiring, the idealising element of

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<sup>33</sup>"Maud Allan's Barefoot Dancing Stirs London," p. 164.

<sup>34</sup>Allan, My Life and Dancing, p. 105.

numanities".<sup>35</sup> Women, therefore, had a responsibility to conduct themselves "appropriately". Well brought-up young women understood that they were expected to be gentle, sympathetic, and most importantly submissive. It is little wonder then that Allan advised women to influence their husbands and fathers rather than dictate to them. Allan believed that women could accomplish most anything using the highly evolved attributes Kenealy believed were unique to women: subtlety, grace, and, most importantly, charm. Their work was evidence of this certainty.

As women working in the field of entertainment, Genée and Allan obviously did not fit the mould of the ideal Edwardian Lady. Yet they both succeeded in overcoming this breach of social convention. This was, in large part, due to their ability to comport themselves according to socially sanctioned notions of femininity. Comforted and reassured by their personal integrity, the majority of British audiences embraced the two women and, in doing so, guaranteed them success.

As the suffrage movement increased in popularity and the physical culture movement threatened to sabotage the "natural" balance between men and women, many citizens felt the need to reaffirm the traditional ideology of female subordination. People, concerned and confused by the changes they witnessed, looked to reconfirm their personal beliefs and, consequently, when choosing leisure activities, they attended performances that advanced opinions similar to their own. During this time of

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

social upheaval, Allan and Genée articulated, through their art, a concept of femininity that appealed to people yearning for the past -- a past that stressed female charm, grace and elegance over assertive independence and personal freedom.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis finds that the work of Adeline Genée and Maud Allan was popular because it promoted the fashionable middle-class opinion that women should occupy a subordinate position within society. In this capacity women could be

a moral and refining influence; as sister, wife or friend, an inspiration, a comrade and a comforter; as mother, a guardian and guide; as a citizen or worker a smoother of life's way, a humaniser, nurse and teacher."<sup>1</sup>

According to this characterization, women were encouraged to be tolerant and understanding as well as to demonstrate compassion and obedience to authority. Both Allan and Genée, as evidenced by their work, concurred with this model of womanhood.

Accordingly, the two pieces examined in this thesis expressed the belief that women should subordinate their own personal desires to the needs and wishes of others. Both the dryad and the princess learned this lesson as a result of a personal ordeal. Both characters endured a private anguish for aspiring to self-fulfillment and, as a result, ultimately determined that because it was not within their power to change their circumstances, they must learn to accept their lot in life.

This would seem to suggest that Allan and Genée encouraged women to remain dedicated to their first and foremost duty: their family. Nevertheless, the careers of Allan and Genée epitomize the incongruities typical of turn-of-the-century opinions

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<sup>1</sup>Kenealy, "Woman As Athlete," p. 644.

regarding women and their position within society. Audiences willingly overlooked the dancers' irregular professions on account that their work on the stage forwarded beliefs valued by the middle classes. With their romantic and idealized visions of woman, Allan and Genée obscured their infraction of the dominant social model; thus their apparent disregard for tradition was forgiven. Moreover, as one historian notes,

as the militant suffrage movement gathered strength, the need to reconfirm the challenged ideology of women's passivity and inferiority also grew.

Maud Allan's performance of Salomé offered the British public the opportunity to confront "the threat posed to British society by demanding women."<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, the menace was successfully defeated. Allan's interpretation of the biblical tale saw the princess collapse before the head of the Baptist in recognition of his superiority and her own imperfection. Similarly, Genée, as the dryad, ultimately surrendered to the omnipotent power and conceded her feminine weakness. Both pieces served to reaffirm male dominance and, in so doing, subdued uneasiness surrounding the image of the aggressive female.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, we see that dance with its impressive ability to reflect social concerns, offers the historian an excellent opportunity to study and analyze issues of sexuality and the construction of gender within a wider context of cultural

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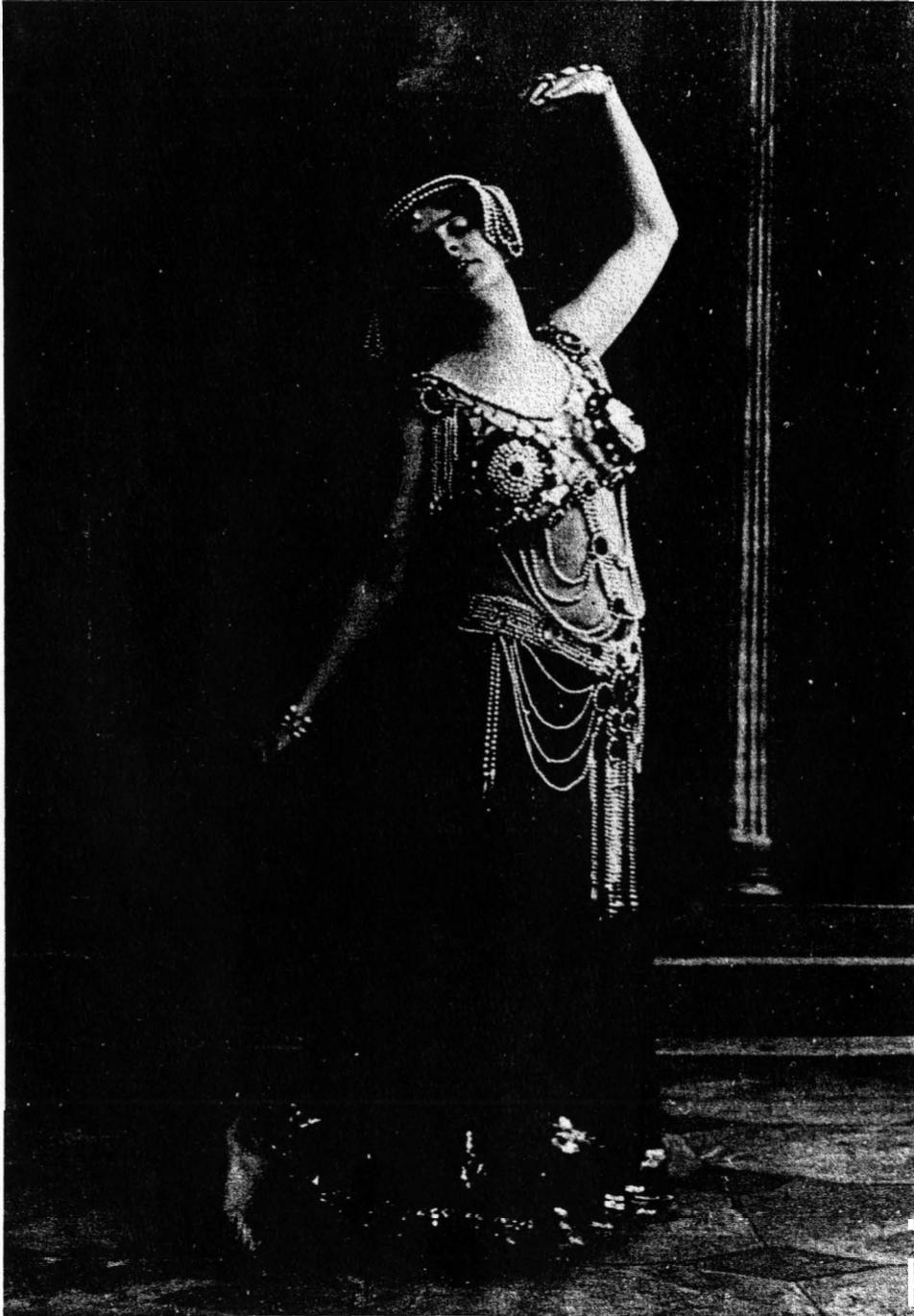
<sup>2</sup>Koritz, "Salomé Unveiled," p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

history. Finally, the purpose of this thesis has not been to provide a definitive account of this subject, but only to suggest, through the example of Genée and Allan, the possibilities inherent in this line of investigation.

APPENDIX I



Maud Allan in *The Vision of Salomé*. Photograph by Foulsham and Banfield.

APPENDIX II



Adeline Genée in  
*The Dryad*

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