

FRENZIED FLAPPERS: THE HYSTERICAL FEMALE IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY SOCIAL DANCE

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ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that the freer, more sexualized movements of social dancing in the early twentieth century (1900–1929) accompanied the beginnings of female emancipation both socially and politically. However, less explored are the similarities between the provocative, inelegant choreography of such social dances and the symptoms of female hysteria, a medical phenomenon that saw the body as a canvas for mental distress as provoked by social tensions. This essay will address the possible alignment of hysteria and popular social dance in relation to the evolving Modern Woman. It will examine the motivations of modern, ‘hysterical’ dances, and discuss their progressive status in terms of gender by considering perceived psychosomatic interactions within the female dancing body.

Keywords: Hysteria; social dance; flapper; female emancipation; body; unconscious; pathology; Paris

FOR EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY SOCIETY (by which I mean the period 1900–1929) ‘motion’ meant modernity. Technology, transportation, social mobility: everything evolved and everything moved. Exhibiting this kinetic force most voraciously were the dance halls and *thé-dansants* of the era, as the excitement of modernity was reflected in physical movement. Social dance (i.e. dance as a non-professional, recreational activity) was a statement of modern Parisian living. There was a parallel to be drawn between physical movement and mental attitude, with the freer, more sexualized movements of the body in social dances accompanying the breaking down of traditional mindsets and, most significantly, the beginnings of female emancipation in both social and political spheres. There was an evident psychosomatic interaction in the dancing, principally female body, and it was this that formed the basis of a cultural phenomenon: the collision of the social and medical spheres. Beginning in the 1870s, there was an explosion of fascination, both professional and public, for a curiously elusive nervous disorder that was sweeping the French nation, and indeed

the rest of Europe and North America. The diagnosis of hysteria, still today stereotyped as a female malady, though it was not exclusively female, ranged symptomatically from loss of voice and paralysis to violent muscular contractions.¹ The concept of hysteria reaches right back to antiquity, evolving through the centuries, yet it was intensely popularized across the final three decades of the nineteenth century.² This was principally through the work of Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, from where there emerged a steady flow of publications and demonstrations depicting the latest images and case studies of its institutionalized women.³ Hysteria was streamed into society and was, as will be argued here, to some extent assimilated with the evolution of the ‘femme nouvelle’, or New Woman. This was the modern, educated, proto-feminist female emerging in the 1890s and early 1900s who would become, in the interwar period, the Modern Woman: the controversial epitome of the Jazz age.⁴ Hysteria was a condition that saw the body as a canvas for the workings of the mind, a concept also arguably true of dance on account of its physical expression of ideas. This opens up a wide field of study concerning the influence of the medical domain on society and the arts, and its effects on gender relations and perceptions of the other.

There is a large body of scholarship on performance dance as it evolved across the early twentieth century, an era that witnessed the birth of modern dance via companies such as the Ballets Russes and individuals such as Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman, to name but a few. Since the second half of the twentieth century, there have also been a variety of scholarly works centred on hysteria studies: hysteria both as a medical phenomenon and as a cultural construct. This somewhat intangible disease laid the foundations for the emerging science of psychoanalysis in the 1890s; its social implications for the role of women place it within feminist discourse, whilst its theatricality and intrigue for writers and artists throughout its history also place hysteria within the fields of literature and the arts. Scholars such as Georges Didi-Huberman, Nicole Edelman and Martha Noel Evans have all produced extensive studies on hysteria, concentrating predominantly on its French history and providing evidence of its late nineteenth-century boom.⁵ The domains of performance dance and hysteria have also crossed paths in scholarship. The jerky contortions of the *Rite of Spring*, the madness of *Giselle*, the hypnotic veils and electric experiments of Loie Fuller; these have all been compared to the symptomatic choreography – indeed chorea – and diagnostic processes related to hysteria, by scholars such as Felicia

McCarren and Juliet Bellow.⁶ Rae Beth Gordon has also comprehensively explored the pathological influences surrounding dance and performance in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, analysing cabaret, music halls and early cinema. Her influential work examines the reflection of hysterical symptoms in these forms of performance and the era's fascination with unconscious bodily movement, hysterical enactment contributing to fears concerning the contagion of disease and degeneracy.⁷

This essay seeks to build on the existing research into hysteria and dance, and to explore the possible alignment of this theatrical, so-called 'female' malady with the very modern, quirky, jerky, animalistic social dances that were so fashionable across the early twentieth century.⁸ What was the meaning of this social motion, and why would the progressive, emancipatory dances that culminated in *la fille-jazz* (the French flapper)⁹ in any way associate the movements of institutionalized, repressed young women with a disease that had, in the eyes of some critics, never truly existed in the first place? This essay will first discuss the performative nature of female hysteria, the place of the male gaze within the disease, and the visual construct of the New or Modern Woman. It will then explore the choreography of a selection of early twentieth-century social dances as reflecting female hysterical symptoms and, finally, will discuss whether female hysteria and social dance may be viewed as forms of political protest towards a patriarchal society.

Medical documentation of hysteria under Charcot reveals that his approach was characterized by observation and performance. The neurologist would diagnose his patients visually, scrutinizing them side by side, comparing them.¹⁰ The disease was assessed, diagnosed and managed only through close analysis of its visual signs. This medical observation was then opened up for public spectacle, with Charcot's famous *leçons du mardi* (Tuesday lessons). Philosophers, writers and actors would enter the large auditorium of the Salpêtrière alongside the medical professionals and students as the female hysterics, often young women, were exhibited in a theatrical display.¹¹ The patients were viewed from every angle; they were photographed, sketched and even replicated in wax sculptures.¹² Female hysteria was, in essence, performative, a notion that seems to bear out the frequent criticism that it was a pretence; such concerns over falsity are apparent both during and after Charcot's reign. They tend to focus either on the feared manipulation of the male doctor by the patients in their excessive need for attention,¹³ or on the medical fraternity's theatrical

methods. As Didi-Huberman suggests, we could almost consider this condition, in Charcot's era, as a chapter on the history of art.¹⁴

As Noel Evans has explored, the dramatic rise in cases of female hysteria in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly amongst working-class women, may be attributed to a number of factors:

to the disruption of women's traditional roles in society, to the sudden growth of their participation in low-paying and physically debilitating jobs, to the loss of their political and ideological bases of power, and even to the atrocities witnessed during the siege of Paris and the Commune [...].¹⁵

However, hysteria's sudden increase in medical stature in the 1870s may also be linked to the rising political and professional power held by medical figures such as Charcot, and the desire to foster the nascent science of psychiatry.¹⁶ In these respects, then, performance and public intrigue were both expected and desirable, and whether pretence or not, what was undeniably central to female hysteria was its theatricality, its intriguing allure and its seeming eroticization, which was arguably what cemented its public popularity. The female hysteric, on show in the lecture theatre, was comparable to the female performers of the era, who captivated their audience through displays of provocative desires, excessive emotion, and energetic, intriguing bodily contortions. The actress Sarah Bernhardt even studied and imitated female hysterics in her stage shows.¹⁷ There was an element of frustrated charisma in the stereotypical figure of the wild, uncontrollable woman, whose illness was often perceived as being a symptom of the very nature of femininity itself: the emotional female countered the rational male.

In Charcot's era, public perception of hysteria was still dominated by the etymological and historical links between the condition and the female reproductive organs;¹⁸ hysteria was regarded as a female disorder that reeked of promiscuity, despite Charcot's publications on male hysterical patients and his ward dedicated to their care.¹⁹ As Michel Foucault has explored, by the nineteenth century the perception of madness had developed into 'l'effet psychologique d'une faute morale' [the psychological effect of a moral fault].²⁰ Immorality became a visual sign system of symptoms that could be policed by the medical fraternity, part of a wider medicalization and thus control of the social, particularly female body. In popular

opinion, hysteria was the result of unsatisfied, shameful sexual desires that provoked wanton, erratic behaviour. This sexual, moral dimension would persist in Sigmund Freud's infamous analysis of female hysteria as the bodily expression of mental trauma due to prohibited, dark desires.²¹ The hysteric, then, more than a curiosity object, was also a peculiar paradox: both repulsive and desirable, an institutionalized mad woman and a *femme fatale*, and, in every case, a *visual* spectacle, an *observed image*.

John Berger's oft-cited claim that '*men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at' resonates within the history of the visual representation of women.²² Equally important in the analysis of female hysteria is the male gaze that accompanies it, since, propped up in front of Charcot and his audiences, the patient occupied a place that was no different from that of the painted female nude, or the society wife – a visual intrigue, satisfying to the male onlooker. The Modern Woman in the early twentieth century defined herself as such through her visual image: changes in fashion, photographs of women driving and smoking, and, of course, dancing. What is interesting is the persistence of traditionalists at this time, principally within the medical fraternity, to try and attach this evolving, progressive female image to the medical sphere. Across the *fin-de-siècle* and into the 1900s, sporty female cyclists were lampooned by medical experts, accused of a degenerative activity that could be blamed for the declining birth rate and even conditions such as hysteria and nymphomania.²³ Later, the shorter, flapper-style hemlines were condemned by Natalist critics such as Dr Foveau de Courmelles, who considered these fashions a danger to the female reproductive organs, leaving them vulnerable to draughts, and therefore responsible for the declining birth rate in France after the First World War.²⁴ From the late nineteenth century in particular, there was a growing male, bourgeois concern that women would gain sexual as well as political independence, both of which would be detrimental to their traditional maternal role.²⁵ Attaching the Modern Woman to the medical sphere attempted to repress her as a scientifically proven abnormality, sick and in need of a cure, which, inevitably, was to return to her subordinate existence. The medical realm was thus undoubtedly influenced by, and attempted to impose itself upon, social politics; yet what of the medical domain was reflected in society, and why this crossing of paths?

The social-dance scene in Paris was one rapidly evolving in terms of experimental choreography. The fashionable Parisians would learn dances that were,

in many cases, international imports, often from America with African influence, the most celebrated of which was, famously, the Charleston in the mid-twenties, the syncopated rhythms of the jazz music mirrored in the dance steps.²⁶ Accounts of literary evenings organized by the literary review *La Plume* in 1903 reveal that participants danced the Cakewalk at the end of the sessions, their hands in front of them like kangaroos. Prior to the Great War, the Tango was also enjoyed several nights a week at the Bal Bullier dancehall in Montparnasse.²⁷ Indeed, a ‘tangomaniaque’ furore swept through Paris.²⁸ The immediate pre-war years also saw dancers take on animal-themed routines, such as the Grizzly Bear in early 1912.²⁹ All of these dances and more moved away from the refined, elegant glide of traditional ballroom and instead became theatrical, sexual and in many instances jerky, with the incorporation of flat feet, waving limbs bent at awkward angles, and over-zealous, even bizarre facial expressions. Formal rigidity was taken over by wild, animalistic, free, sexual abandonment, or, in another word: hysteria.

The moving bodies of these social dancers bear a resemblance to the recorded movements of Charcot’s hysterical patients at the Salpêtrière. Charcot was the first to systematize a chronological order of symptoms within hysterical attacks,³⁰ which were recorded in observational records, in sketches by Paul Richer, and in photographs by Albert Londe. During an attack of *la grande hystérie* or *hystéro-épilepsie*, the most severe manifestation of hysteria, the patients’ bodies went through a choreographic range of four principal phases that saw the body move into a variety of different postures.³¹ Citing Juliet Bellow, who aligns these hysterical symptoms with the choreography of Vaslav Nijinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*:

In the first, ‘epileptoid,’ stage of an attack, patients suffered from local muscle contractures that often manifested themselves in bent necks and wrists, balled-up fists, turned-in knees and feet [...].³²

An attack of *la grande hystérie* peaked with the notorious *arc-de-cercle* position, the patient’s back curved in a high arc, yet the symptomatic range was far more vast. Throughout the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* of 1878, a wide variety of hystero-epileptic symptoms are described in the following terms:

mouvements de latéralité de la tête, mouvements brusques des bras et des jambes [...]. La jambe droite a commencé à *sauter* très-fortement, puis a été prise d'un *tremblement* [...]. Ces secousses étaient accompagnées de *rires* [...]; les *bras* se roidissent, exécutant ou non un mouvement de circumduction plus ou moins parfait [...], les jambes sont animées de grands mouvements cloniques de flexion et d'extension.

[Lateral movements of the head, sudden movements of the arms and legs [...]. The right leg has started to *jump* very forcefully, then is overcome with a *tremor* [...]. These tremors were accompanied by *laughter* [...]; the *arms* become rigid, executing or not a movement of circumduction which is more or less perfect [...], the legs are animated by large clonic movements of flexing and extension.]³³

Without wishing to trivialize such symptoms, which formed part of what were ostensibly horrific and exhausting bodily convulsions, I would like to argue that a direct comparison of such hysterical motion with the social dances of the early twentieth century does to some extent align the two choreographically.

Recognizing this medical aesthetic, in 1913 the International Academy of authors, teachers and masters of dance, manners and deportment in France denounced dances such as the Grizzly Bear and the Tango, calling them epileptic in style and hostile to good society.³⁴ Ragtime dances were the subject of much criticism, seen by many as a diabolical manifestation that contradicted common decency, morality and Christianity, encouraging a society of crazed sinners and medically debilitated individuals.³⁵ Later, in the 1921 publication *Danseront-elles? Enquête sur les danses modernes*, dance was vilified as the root of lesbianism, errors of judgement, alcoholism and a plethora of minor to major medical complaints and disorders.³⁶ Medical professionals in Paris feared that modern dancing caused female sterility and a warped sense of maternity,³⁷ disrupting marital life and endangering the future of the race.³⁸ Individual and collective health were at risk, as dancing was thought to provoke physio-pathological and psychological disorders to jeopardize the peripheral and central nervous system.³⁹ The movements of the social-dance scene were aligned with nervous disorders, dance sceptics perceiving in the syncopated ragtime rhythms *la danse de Saint-Guy*, or St Vitus's dance, entailing symptoms of uncontrollable, jerking bodily movements.⁴⁰ Camille Mauclair remarked: 'Saint-Guy est dieu du jour [...]. Au lieu de calmer cette espèce d'épilepsie collective, il l'exacerbe' [St Vitus is

the God of the day [...]. Instead of calming this type of collective epilepsy, he exacerbates it].⁴¹

Many of the popular dances were cultural imports, fashioned far away from the wards of the Salpêtrière. One must also take into consideration the era's fascination with the primitive, and the rebellion that the modern dance forms represented against the upright, traditional ballroom holds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was a zeitgeist provoking this form of danced expression, and this essay draws on one aspect only. This was arguably, however, an important aspect. Nervous disorders were a subject of great contention, particularly during and just after the First World War with the concerns over shell-shocked soldiers. Perhaps the obsessive comparison of dance and nervous disorders as discussed above was a reflection of the era's widespread fears surrounding nervous and contagious diseases. Yet fears surrounding dance were heavily gendered. It was the female dancing body that received the most attention, evident in the title *Danseront-elles?* Dancing women were mired in the anxieties surrounding nervous disorders due to their erratic activity, yet the large-scale, female, theatrical demonstrations of Charcot's lecture theatre had largely waned by the 1900s.⁴² The medical and popular perception of female hysteria at the turn of the twentieth century was characterized firstly by nymphomania and violent sexuality, before evolving into deception and criminal behaviour.⁴³ Hysteria had developed into a failure of moral judgement, not exaggerated Charleston steps. Nevertheless, the link between wild, danced, female movement and hysteria did not disappear. Whereas before, this form of female bodily movement was considered the symptom, provoked by nerves or trauma, now wild dancing itself was the trauma: the cause of the symptoms, provoking nervous defects of judgement. In both cases, wild female movement threatened women's health and necessitated repression for fear of its insurrectional impact on the definition of femininity and the role of women. We may therefore view such female bodily movement, both in Charcot's wards of the Salpêtrière and later in the dance halls of the early twentieth century, as an affront, either subconsciously or consciously, to more traditional notions of what did and did not constitute femininity, both forms of movement provoking a reaction from the medical sphere.

There would appear to have been a psychological relation between the supposedly sexually promiscuous mentality of the female hysterical patients, with its corporeal manifestations, and the more progressive, emancipatory values and attitudes

of the Modern Woman with her choice of danced expression. Just as the female hysteric was paradoxically both repulsive and seductive for the audiences in Charcot's lecture theatre, we may now consider her both progressive and regressive. She was at once a dominated, medical commodity and a sexually liberated, modern individual, her thoughts and desires too forward for traditional society. The heart of hysteria is the psychosomatic relation of mind and body, with the notion of 'conversion hysteria', originating in Freud's studies, denoting the mind becoming the body: ideas are expressed in the body rather than the mind.⁴⁴ This mind/body relation was also being explored in French psychology, contemporaneously with Freud, for example in the theories of Pierre Janet, who perceived hysteria as a corporeal acting out of a traumatic idea.⁴⁵ There was thus rational, or at least meaningful thought contained within a seemingly irrational act. Within the context of the emerging Modern Woman, hysterical symptoms, and indeed the notion of the hysterical, 'thinking' body, arguably become political acts of protest in the face of a discriminative patriarchal society. This image of protest was then consumed avidly by the wider French and indeed European and North American public, almost as self-promotion. Juliet Mitchell associates hysteria with what she terms 'pre-political feminism':

a protest by women in terms of their definitional and denigrated characteristic – emotionality. If femininity is by definition hysterical, feminism is the demand *for* the right to be hysterical.⁴⁶

For Mitchell (referring to pre-political feminism arising at any point in history), the concept of the hysterical, emotional female is inverted so that the disease no longer subordinates but is in fact a defiant act of the woman's unconscious mind, a psychosomatic struggle which sees the body as a canvas for subconscious or repressed desires.⁴⁷ The hysterical female body was, in this light, a modern entity desperately suppressed by her conscious mind in a traumatic mental battle. In terms of social dance this was an obvious, deliberate social demonstration, through the body, of the female right to enjoyment, self-expression and sexuality and, by extension, a protest against the male gender bias. Ironically, the sexualized, hystericized female body analysed by Foucault appears to have utilized this movement vocabulary as a means of retaliation.⁴⁸ When considered in relation to the medical fraternity's anxious attempts to suppress such female personality, dance becomes a statement of an identity

that had previously been denied, or that feared expression. In each case, the motion of the body is utilized to express visually and externally a mental battle provoked by social tensions.

It must be stated, however, that this reading of the female dancing, and indeed hysterical body, is one that requires caution. As Janet Wolff has elaborated, we must be wary of assuming that the ‘use of the body is itself transgressive, in a culture which allows only the “classical body”’.⁴⁹ To state that women liberate themselves socially via a preconfigured set of bodily movements – i.e., to identify women by their body – runs dangerously close to certain strands of thought which, as Wolff states, ‘justify women’s oppression in terms of their biology’, for example their size, lack of strength, child-bearing functions, etc.⁵⁰ This also, therefore, risks alignment with the repressive, biological identification of femininity that Charcot and his contemporaries were promoting. In this light, then, the vibrating, twisting bodies of social dancers must not be considered entirely natural bodies that may be celebrated for their pure expression of female liberation. Furthermore, the dancing body is ‘socially inscribed, historically marked’.⁵¹ We should be wary of classifying these dances as aesthetically and thus politically transgressive on the basis that these dancing bodies represent, in Wolff’s words, ‘an unchanging, pre-given essence of the female’.⁵²

Whilst these arguments caution against taking a simplistic celebratory view of the female dancing body, we should not neglect the role played by social dancing in this period of history and in the growing recognition of women’s suffrage. The act of dancing with female friends rather than male chaperones, wearing more boyish fashions, and dancing with energy and humour form part of a more widely-changing lifestyle for women. The potentially liberating qualities of such a lifestyle may be seen in the desperate reaction on the part of the conservative, male, bourgeois community to attempt to repress these wild movements as medically dangerous. In spite of these attempts, across the early twentieth century women rejected wilder danced expression as a symptom and embraced it as fun, modern and progressive. At this point in history, we have not yet reached the challenges promoted by postmodern dance productions, many of which work to reveal the construction of the body in culture.⁵³ Nevertheless, for society of this era this form of female action over passivity, alongside changing mental attitudes, represented a significant step forward.

What is apparent both in hysterical symptoms and in the social-dance scene is the acknowledgement of female desire. Albeit within the confines of their medical

condition, the female hysterics arguably began to demonstrate and exhibit, however conflicted and tormented such demonstration was, their sexuality, as well as their defiance against being abused and repressed. Staff at the Salpêtrière remarked on cases of gender transgression amongst their female patients. According to Noel Evans, this transgression took the form of a lack of modesty; she cites Charles Richet commenting angrily that his patients ‘talk with men as if they were of the same sex’, displaying an audacious liberty with language.⁵⁴ This encroachment upon the male sphere led to accusations of ‘non-women’ or virility,⁵⁵ a reaction similar to the one provoked some decades later by more masculine fashions and other wilder dance moves of the social-dance scene. This hysterical gender transgression was precisely what the Modern Woman was also embracing and taking further: aligning her visual, corporeal presentation with her new, more empowered mental attitude, gradually shifting the notion of the ‘possessable’ female into one of a forward-thinking individual who acts on her own desires. One example of this was the greater opportunity within the dance halls for expressing female sexuality, and indeed solo artists such as Josephine Baker in the 1920s pioneered their own, sexually charged style. Considered retrospectively, there was undoubtedly a continuation of sexual objectification here, the observation of the desirable woman simply having moved contexts from lecture theatre to dance hall. However, the ownership of such motion took a leap forward in terms of female empowerment, and a progression away from repressed, restrictive movement.

In conclusion, the theatricality of the treatment of hysterical female patients in the latter decades of the nineteenth century created entertaining performance from corporeal distress, and unwittingly publicized the body as a means of expression, influencing theatre, dance and attitudes towards gender, sexuality and the body. Whilst the history of hysteria is a turbulent one in terms of its credibility, its role in the progression of women was a vital one. Links can be made between the ‘female malady’ and the evolving Modern Woman in the early twentieth century, most notably within the realm of dance. Social dance, in all its jerking and animalistic abandonment, became representative of the progression of this form of corporeal movement away from subordinating women to a male doctor in an institution: it now represented the Modern Woman who refused to adhere to a diagnosis classifying her as socially and medically abnormal. Traditionalists of the era recognized this similarity between nervous disorder and female entertainment, perceiving in their

flailing limbs and shorter skirts the dangers of a female revolt and the decline of the maternal role. Whilst not wishing to base female identity wholly on the body, and recognizing that the body in society is one of social and ideological construction, the choreography of the wilder social dances of this era participated in the redesigning of this construction. There was a greater effort to visually as well as politically promote a more liberating perception of women. The modernized social-dance scene of the early twentieth century allowed both men and women to participate in this visual, physical emancipation. Gender-restrictive hysteria had evolved into mass hysteria. Dance served as a physical sign system reflecting the evolution of the times; or perhaps simply, in the words of Guy de Maupassant, ‘Nous sommes tous des hystériques’ [‘We are all hysterics’].⁵⁶

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NOTES

¹ Helen King, ‘Once Upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates’, in Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter, *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 3–90 (p. 10).

² Martha Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts: A Genealogy of Hysteria in Modern France* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 10.

³ Henrik Borgstrom, ‘Strike a Pose: Charcot’s Women and the Performance of Hysteria at La Salpêtrière’, *Theatre Annual: A Journal of Performance Studies*, 53 (2000), 1–14 (p. 4).

⁴ Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 3, 6, 249.

⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l’Hystérie: Charcot et l’Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Macula, 1982); Nicole Edelman, *Les métamorphoses de l’hystérique. Du début du XIXe siècle à la Grande Guerre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003); Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*.

⁶ Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1998); Juliet Bellow, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

⁷ Rae Beth Gordon, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Rae Beth Gordon, *Dances with Darwin, 1875–1910: Vernacular Modernity in France* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).

⁸ This essay will concentrate on female hysteria. Male hysteria was also rife at this point in French history, but was merely concealed. See Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁹ Henri Joannis-Deberne, *Danser en société: Bals et danses d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Bonneton, 1999), pp. 149–50.

¹⁰ Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'Hystérie*, p. 27.

¹¹ Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 21.

¹² Borgstrom, 'Strike a Pose', p. 4.

¹³ Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, pp. 31–32.

¹⁴ Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'Hystérie*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, pp. 12–13.

¹⁶ See Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Chapter 9, and Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁷ Gordon, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Micale, *Hysterical Men*, pp. 122–24.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, 'Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique'. Suivi de 'Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu' et 'La folie, l'absence d'œuvre' (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 315.

²¹ Freud's psychoanalysis came late to France, on account of French scepticism towards accepting German-language theories. Influential in hysteria research in the early twentieth century in France was Pierre Janet, who attributed hysteria to personal distress rather than something sexual; Paul Sollier, who rejected Cartesian dualism; Ernest Dupré, who related female hysteria to compulsive lying, and Joseph Babinski, for whom hysteria was a product of suggestion and simulation. Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, pp. 96, 60–65, 86, 55.

²² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 47.

²³ Christopher Thompson, 'Un troisième sexe? Les Bourgeoises et la bicyclette dans la France fin de siècle', trans. by Fiona Ratkoff, in *Circulations (Jul. – Sept. 2000)*, ed. by C. Bertho Lavenir (= *Le Mouvement social*, 192), 9–39 (pp. 9–10, 13, 24).

²⁴ Dr Foveau de Courmelles, 'Modes féminines et dépopulation', *La Revue mondiale* (1 November 1919), 275–86; Mary Louise Roberts, 'Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics

of Women's Fashion in 1920s France', *The American Historical Review*, 98.3 (1993), 657–84 (p. 671).

²⁵ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), referenced in Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 18.

²⁶ Mark Knowles, *The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances: Outrage at Couple Dancing in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Co. 2009), pp. 61, 136.

²⁷ For the information in this and the previous sentence, I am grateful to Peter Read, Emeritus Professor in Modern French Literature and Visual Arts, University of Kent.

²⁸ Sophie Jacotot, *Danser à Paris dans l'entre-deux-guerres: lieux, pratiques et imaginaires des danses de société des Amériques (1919–1939)* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2013), p. 126.

²⁹ Jody Blake, *Le Tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-Age Paris, 1900–1930* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 38, 43; Max Rivera, *Le Tango et les danses nouvelles* (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1913), pp. 51–61, 79–83.

³⁰ Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 24.

³¹ Paul Richer, *Études cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie*, 2nd edn (Paris: Delahaye & Lecrosnier, 1885), pp. 166–67, pl. V; Didi-Huberman, *Invention de l'Hystérie*, pp. 113–15.

³² Bellow, *Modernism on Stage*, p. 64.

³³ See D. M. Bourneville and P. Regnard, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, service de M. Charcot* (Paris: V. Adrien Delahaye, 1878), 'Observation II', p. 130 (sudden arm and leg movements); p. 136 (tremors); p. 138 (laughter); p. 144 (rigid arms and/or circumduction); p. 145 (extension and flexing of legs).

³⁴ Eugène Giraudet (ed.), *Journal de la Danse et du Bon Ton: Encyclopédie de l'Éducation Physique, Chorégraphique et Protoculaire de l'A.I.D. Académie Internationale des Auteurs, Professeurs et Maîtres de Danse, Tenue et Maintien*, Volume III, 22 (Paris, 1913), p. 3.995.

³⁵ Knowles, *The Wicked Waltz*, passim.

³⁶ *Danseront-elles? Enquête sur les danses modernes*, Introduction and Conclusion by José Germain (Paris: J. Povolozky, 1921), pp. 35–37, 50–51.

³⁷ José Germain in *Danseront-elles?*, p. 12.

³⁸ Docteur G. L. C. Bernard in *Danseront-elles?*, p. 35.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–37.

⁴⁰ Fernando & Gioia Lanzi, *Saints and Their Symbols: Recognizing Saints in Art and in Popular Images*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), p. 83.

⁴¹ Camille Mauclair in *Danseront-elles?*, p. 84.

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- ⁴² Edelman, *Les Métamorphoses de l'hystérique*, p. 307.
- ⁴³ E. D. Gelfand, *Imagination in Confinement: Women's Writing from French Prisons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 86.
- ⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, trans. by Nicola Luckhurst, introduction by Rachel Bowlby (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2004 [1895]), p. 123 (emphasis in the original).
- ⁴⁵ Pierre Janet, *État mental des hystériques: Accidents mentaux* (Paris: Rueff et Cie, 1894), pp. 129–30. See also Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, pp. 58–60.
- ⁴⁶ Juliet Mitchell, *Women: The Longest Revolution: Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 117.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La Volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 137.
- ⁴⁹ Janet Wolff, *Feminine Sentences, Essays on Women and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 135.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- ⁵¹ Elizabeth Gross, 'Philosophy, Subjectivity and the Body: Kristeva and Irigaray', in Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (eds), *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1986), p. 140, in Wolff, *Feminine Sentences*, p. 133.
- ⁵² Wolff, *Feminine Sentences*, pp. 137–38.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- ⁵⁴ Charles Richet, 'Les Démoniaques d'aujourd'hui et d'autrefois', *La Revue des deux mondes*, 37 (1880), 340–72 (p. 360), quoted in Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 39.
- ⁵⁵ Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, referenced in Noel Evans, *Fits and Starts*, p. 39.
- ⁵⁶ Guy de Maupassant, 'Une femme', *Gil Blas* (16 août 1882), reproduced in *Chroniques, Textes choisis, présentés et annotés par Henri Mitterand* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2008), p. 357.

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THE HYSTERICAL FEMALE IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY SOCIAL DANCE]